

Sugar beet growers get pest alerts

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

The Pacific Northwest Pest Alert Network in late June notified sugar beet growers in southwest Idaho and eastern Oregon about powdery mildew, cercospora leaf spot and loopers.

The advisories did not worry Wendell Robinson, agricultural manager for grower-owned cooperative Amalgamated Sugar's western region.

"At this point, everything is manageable and treatable," he said.

Robinson said beet fields should remain healthy overall if growers stay aware of pest and disease threats and know how to treat them.

A crop consultant with J.R. Simplot Co. found powdery mildew in fields near Adrian, Ore., and Parma, Idaho, a June 23 alert said. Staff with Amalgamated Sugar confirmed the finding.

The alert said several fungicides are available to treat powdery mildew, and that applications should be repeated every two to three weeks depending on the disease pressure and



Capital Press File
Powdery mildew and cercospora leaf spot have been found in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon sugar beet fields.

chemistry used. A network publication said the fungus — whose spores can blow in from plants that carried over from winter, including previously infected seed beets — causes small white patches on leaf surfaces. Widespread in several Western states for more than 40 years, it is often treated with sulfur dust.

Powdery mildew is "more or less a recurring problem we are having in the Treasure Valley" of southwestern Idaho and eastern Oregon, said Amalgamated Sugar Plant Health Manager Oliver Neher.

"Most of the time we see it in early July and it moves from west to east, he said. "We are seeing it this year a little bit early."

Neher does not expect powdery mildew to be more of a problem than usual. Timely application of fungicide makes it fairly easy to control, he said.

The network on June 25 advised beet growers to start scouting for CLS as temperatures rise, beet field rows start closing and irrigation stays intense. Favorable conditions for the fungus that causes CLS materialize when average nighttime temperatures exceed 60 degrees and humidity is 90 percent or higher for at least five hours, the alert said.

An increase in fungicide resistance makes proper chemistry rotation important in treating for CLS, the alert said. It recommended consulting with

Amalgamated field staff.

Sugar beet growers can control CLS by applying fungicide in a timely manner and by not over-watering crops, Robinson said.

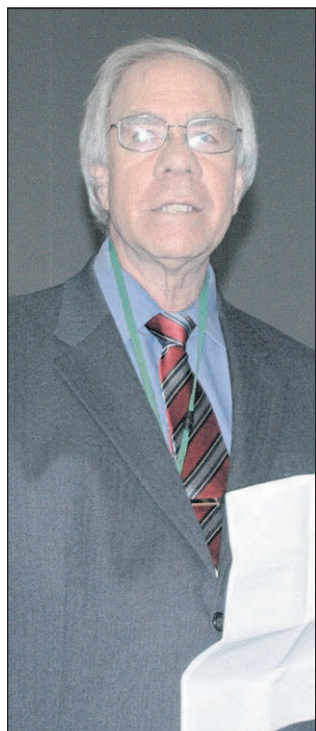
CLS was not a big problem in southern Idaho and eastern Oregon until four to five years ago, Neher said.

"We saw a shift in temperatures and irrigation methods," he said. As more irrigators used sprinkler pivots and hand lines, the moisture part of the equation became more favorable for the fungus that causes CLS, he said.

If this year's wildfire season is active, smoke conditions could increase relative humidity and in turn keep conditions favorable for CLS as leaves stay moist longer, he said.

Also June 25, the network said Amalgamated Sugar reported that loopers, which are minor leaf-feeding pests controllable with biological or chemical means, were found in fields in the Caldwell, Idaho, area.

Robinson said the small, worm-like loopers often are controlled by applying a pesticide in conjunction with regular fungicide applications.



Matthew Weaver/Capital Press File
David Weller, research leader for the USDA wheat health, genetics and quality research unit in Pullman, Wash., hopes to advertise soon for a researcher to study starch damage. Weller says the hiring process will take roughly six months.

USDA to add another researcher for falling numbers

'A-Team' working to solve starch damage problem, leader says

By MATTHEW WEAVER
Capital Press

The USDA will fund a new researcher to tackle a starch damage problem that in the past has cost Pacific Northwest wheat farmers tens of millions of dollars.

In the Omnibus appropriations bill last April, Congress approved \$1 million for falling number research at the USDA Agricultural Research Service.

Wheat growers and commissions in Idaho, Oregon and Washington requested funding for the position.

The new researcher will help develop new wheat varieties resistant to starch damage, as well as study environmental factors that trigger the problem and improve the falling number test, said David Weller, research leader for USDA's wheat health, genetics and quality research unit in Pullman, Wash.

Many factors can lead to low falling number test results, Weller said, including wheat variety, temperature fluctuations and weather.

Further research will hopefully lead to a model to help growers and industry members determine when conditions cause starch damage.

Weller hopes to advertise the new job soon. He estimates the hiring process to take roughly six months.

The search for the researcher will be nationwide, he said, and include an advisory committee to screen candidates, who will visit the Washington State University campus, deliver a seminar and meet with faculty and commission members.

In 2016, low falling number test results hit a large portion of the Pacific Northwest's wheat crop, costing growers between \$30 million and \$130 million in discounts.

The hope is for the funding to continue in the future, Weller said. "This is not something we're going to solve in a few months."

Weller called the group of "world-class" researchers working on the project from USDA, WSU, Oregon State University and the University of Idaho the "A-Team of falling number."

"We are all working as a team in a seamless effort to address all aspects of this particular problem," he said. "We are working night and day, as hard as we can, to find solutions."

Apple forecast up; labor, trade worries remain

By DAN WHEAT
Capital Press

The first forecast for this fall's U.S. apple crop is up 3.6 percent from the 2017 crop, which should be manageable, but big concerns linger about labor, fruit quality and exports, a top Michigan apple producer says.

Total U.S. fresh and processed production was estimated at 257.9 million, 42-pound boxes at the Premier Apple Cooperative meeting in Syracuse, N.Y., on June 26.

The USDA unadjusted figure for 2017 is 248.6 million boxes and the large 2014 crop was 272.2 million boxes, while the record was 277.3 million boxes in 1998.

"We have a couple factors impacting this season's marketability. No. 1 is whether we have sufficient labor to pick on a timely basis to give us the quality we need, and the other issue is trade, that



Dan Wheat/Capital Press
Limbs cut to control fire blight are piled in an Okanogan, Wash., orchard. An early estimate of Washington's 2018 apple crop is down partly due to fire blight while the national estimate is up.

our biggest trading partners are or will be instituting tariffs," said Don Armock, president of Riveridge Produce, Sparta, Mich., who attended the New York meeting.

Lack of immigration reform, including resolving DACA (Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals), and increased immigration enforcement all weigh heavily on the

immigrant community who make up most of the tree fruit workforce, Armock said.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids on a meat packing plant in the upper Midwest and President Donald Trump's tweets about swift deportations unsettle the labor force, he said.

As in Washington state, more large and mid-size ap-

ple growers in Michigan and New York are turning to H-2A-visa foreign guest-workers, he said.

"We can't be taking chances on (domestic) workers who may or may not be legal," he said.

Unless resolved soon, tariffs by Mexico, Canada, India and China in retaliation for U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum, undoubtedly will affect U.S. apple exports, Armock said. It is unknown to what degree, he said. Typically, 30 percent of U.S. apples are exported.

Mexico is imposing a 20 percent tariff on U.S. apples, India is adding 25 percent on top of its 50 percent tariff, China added 15 percent to a 10 percent existing tariff and will impose a 25 percent July 6 in retaliation for U.S. tariffs related to intellectual property theft. Canada has not set any tariff on apples.

"When you insult (Canadian Prime Minister Justin

Trudeau like we have, people take a bit of an anti-American stance," Armock said.

Of the 257.9 million-box Premier estimate, Washington is 152 million boxes, down 4.9 percent; Michigan, 33.5 million, up 43.1 percent; New York, 31 million, up 7.8 percent; Pennsylvania, 11.7 million, up .3 percent; California, 5.5 million, up .4 percent; and Virginia, 5.1 million, down 2.2 percent.

Oregon is 4.2 million, up .8 percent and Idaho is 1.5 million, up 19 percent.

The Washington estimate is down partly because of a higher level of fire blight, said Mark Seetin, director of regulatory and industry affairs of the U.S. Apple Association, Vienna, Va.

The Washington State Tree Fruit Association will forecast the Washington crop in August and U.S. Apple will give a national crop estimate at its annual Outlook conference in Chicago, Aug. 23-24.

Idaho Barley Commission contributes to research post

By BRAD CARLSON
Capital Press

Part of the Idaho Barley Commission's planned fiscal 2019 spending includes the first of five annual contributions to an endowment to help fund a post-doctoral researcher to work alongside Christopher Rogers, the University of Idaho endowed barley agronomist at Aberdeen.

The commission on June 21 approved directing \$70,500 per year for the next five years to the UI Foundation to build the endowment. The UI College of Agricultural and Life Sciences in turn will guarantee funding for the research position working with Rogers, said commission administrator Kelly Olson.

The post-doc research position is



File photo courtesy of Jerry Brown
Barley is harvested in Caribou County, Idaho. The Idaho Barley Commission has voted to add to the University of Idaho Foundation to help fund a post-doctoral researcher.

now funded directly by the university for one year, and the commission wants to ensure the position continues, she said.

The commission this year completed its \$1 million commitment — \$200,000 per year for five years — to

the endowment that created the UI endowed barley research agronomist position that Rogers holds. Lacking that line item and some one-time expenses in fiscal 2018, the fiscal 2019 budget the commission approved is down 12 percent to \$688,167, Olson said.

Commissioners approved estimated income of \$713,840 for fiscal 2019. Income for fiscal 2018, ended June 30 and reflecting fourth-quarter checkoff collections, was not available to add to the University of Idaho Foundation to help fund a post-doctoral researcher.

File photo courtesy of Jerry Brown

Idaho's 4,000-plus barley growers pay a 3-cent-per-bushel checkoff at the first point of sale. The check-off is designed to enhance growers' profitability through research, market development and promotion, and information and education programs.

The commission does not engage in legislative lobbying, which is one of the tasks of the separate Idaho Grain Producers Association.

4th of July Deadlines

With the 4th of July being on Wednesday, we need to move up the following deadlines:

News Display and Legals
Friday, June 29th - 12:00 Noon

Classified Display
Tuesday, July 3rd - 10:00 AM

Classified Line Ads
Tuesday, July 3rd - 12:00 Noon

Have a Safe and Happy 4th of July!

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