

SEED QUARANTINE

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In order to fully understand the subject of my talk I feel that a little review is necessary to clarify our present position in regard to importation of seed potatoes. The Department of Agriculture and the potato industry agreed early in 1967 that the Ring Rot Law as it was called and as it appeared in the statutes was not a practical and adequate protection to the fast growing potato industry. The enforcement of the Ring Rot Law was practically impossible. Thus, for the potato industry to depend on Legislation as it existed or could be amended by the Legislature was not adequate or possible. The Department of Agriculture with complete concurrence of the potato industry, namely the Potato Commission, went to the interim agriculture committee for the Legislature and discussed the problem and requested that they propose and support a bill repealing the Ring Rot Law. The law had to be repealed to avoid legal conflict with adequate rules and regulations to be established. The interim agricultural committee proposed the repeal and the Legislature accepted the committee's recommendation and the law was eliminated in 1969. This then left us with an open field to make rules and regulations that would in fact give the industry the best protection possible in regard to seed potatoes. The potato industry and the Department of Agriculture both agree that one of the most important regulatory functions that could be accomplished to help the potato industry would be to regulate in some manner the seed sources that the industry was to use. I think that most of you growers would agree that one of the main precautions that you can take is to have a good clean seed source. This is the reason for all of the effort over a period of two years in repealing the law and now establishing a seed potato quarantine.

The quarantine system allows the industry, by hearing, to change any of the requirements in an orderly and quick manner. The fallacy in having this type of regulation on the statute books is the need to wait for the convenience of the Legislature to make the necessary changes. You as an industry also must recognize that we have at each Legislative Session, a fewer number of Legislators who are interested and understand agricultural problems. The industry is also changing very rapidly and the need for regulation changes increases with industry development.

The department made a special effort to contact all seed sources possible so that the quarantine we contemplated adopting would not be too restrictive. The State of Washington is going to be a large importer of seed potatoes. We conferred with our usual seed sources in the United States, such as Montana, Idaho, California, North Dakota, Minnesota, and others. We also made it an international affair by having contacts with British Columbia and Alberta in Canada. The result of these meetings and meetings with the Washington potato industry has produced our present quarantine. The quarantine was effective as of November 10, 1969, and established the regulations we have agreed are necessary to protect the potato industry. We will now discuss these requirements.

REGULATION I - ALL SEED POTATOES MUST HAVE BEEN PRODUCED AS A PART OF A CERTIFIED SEED POTATO PROGRAM IN THE STATE OR COUNTRY OF ORIGIN AND ACCEPTED AND CERTIFIED BY THAT PROGRAM. We have found in our investigations no certified seed potato program which allows any tolerance for Bacterial Ring Rot and I think it is generally agreed that it is far easier to pick up and determine Bacterial Ring Rot in a field inspection and during the seed potato growing and handling, than at any other time before planting.

REGULATION II - SHIPPERS OF SEED POTATOES INTO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON SHALL GIVE NOTICE PRIOR TO SHIPMENT TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, P. O. BOX 310, MOSES LAKE, WASHINGTON, TELEPHONE 509-RO5-9121. In explaining this, the department has devised a card which can be mailed by the inspector or the seed grower postage free. The Washington State Potato Commission has printed the cards and the cards are presently in the hands of all known seed sources so that this procedure can begin when the seed is shipped. This is necessary to insure a greater measure of control on seed coming into the State of Washington and this procedure was discussed with the people mentioned above to be sure that it would not be too restrictive since we in the State of Washington need every source of good seed possible.

REGULATION III - RECEIVERS OF SEED POTATOES IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON ARE REQUIRED TO NOTIFY THE STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE THROUGH THEIR AREA INSPECTION OFFICE. This was done since we have the power of regulating our own receivers within the State of Washington. We can require it and this then gives us an additional check so we will be aware of seed potato shipments into our state and also allows us to get samples for seed lot trials and also gives us a possible lead on those shippers from outside of the State of Washington that are not complying with our request that they notify us through our card system.

REGULATION IV - QUALITY AND CONDITION INSPECTION REQUIRED PRIOR TO SHIPMENT OF SEED POTATOES INTO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON. Number 4 has given us a greater problem than any other item so far discussed in the quarantine. I am sure most of you know that seed potato sources are generally in an isolated area and not too accessible to inspection facilities during the time of shipment. The Washington growers at our hearing, however, were emphatic that grading prior to shipment was desirable and needed to insure Washington growers of useable seed. We in the department also felt that seed with excessive amounts of rot, freezing injury, and etc., could cause us some serious problems of a related nature. The seed sources heretofore not using grading procedures have agreed to accomplish this. We will also accept the grade established in a certified seed program if such is the case and the lot actually meets the requirements established in the program in regard to grade.

REGULATION V - SHIPPERS CONTEMPLATING BULK SEED SHIPMENTS INTO THE STATE OF WASHINGTON MUST FILE ADVANCE NOTICE WITH THE STATE WHICH WOULD INCLUDE VERIFICATION OF SEED POTATOES BEING SHIPPED IN BULK AS BEING A PART OF A CERTIFIED SEED PROGRAM IN THE STATE OF ORIGIN AND ACCEPTED AND CERTIFIED BY THAT PROGRAM AND FURTHER INDICATE HOW THE BULK SHIPMENTS WILL BE IDENTIFIED AND SEALED FOR PROPER DELIVERY. Bulk shipments is another real problem since identification is difficult. This Number 5 item places the entire burden on the shipper, and we will have this year to observe how it works. We will be able to exercise the versatility of quarantine by making the necessary changes, if any are necessary, as we become more involved in bulk seed potato movements.

REGULATION VI - THE DEPARTMENT WILL RETAIN A SAMPLE AT NO COST TO IT OF EACH LOT OF CERTIFIED SEED PRODUCED OR RECEIVED IN THIS STATE FOR SEED OR COMMERCIAL PRODUCTION. SUCH SAMPLES WILL BE RETAINED FOR ENTRY IN WASHINGTON SEED LOT TRIALS. This requirement was a direct request from the industry and makes it very plain that we will observe seed growth, etc., through our seed lot trial program. The industry and the growers feel that this is one asset that is, or can produce, real results in helping our potato producers. The seed sources also will be aware that we are observing this seed in this manner and it will allow us to notify the states or countries of origin of how their seed did in fact produce or react in our area. In those cases where there are some serious problems we can recommend or suggest that their seed programs be updated to possibly alleviate the problems that we observe at these seed trial plots.

The need for some uniform system in determining infestation of seed potatoes is necessary, particularly in regard to Bacterial Ring Rot. The department has adopted regulations concerning sampling procedures and Washington State official determination. The regulations are designed so that they will protect both the seed grower and the commercial potato grower. The rules for sampling are definite. The disposition of the potatoes, if in fact they are infested, is prescribed in the regulations promulgated by the department. The rules, regulations, and quarantine we have been discussing have all been designed to protect the commercial grower in every way possible so that seed potatoes used in Washington are the best available. The rules in regard to infestation are designed so that our seed sources will receive equitable treatment from the State of Washington since the potato industry needs all the good seed sources available to it.