

Seed growers' meeting report

The seed growers' meeting in Ashburton on August 16 was well attended with some 30 growers present.

Willem Schrage also gave an insightful presentation about his experience as a seed inspector. An interview with Willem will appear on the next issue of the *NZ Grower* magazine.

Rule changes

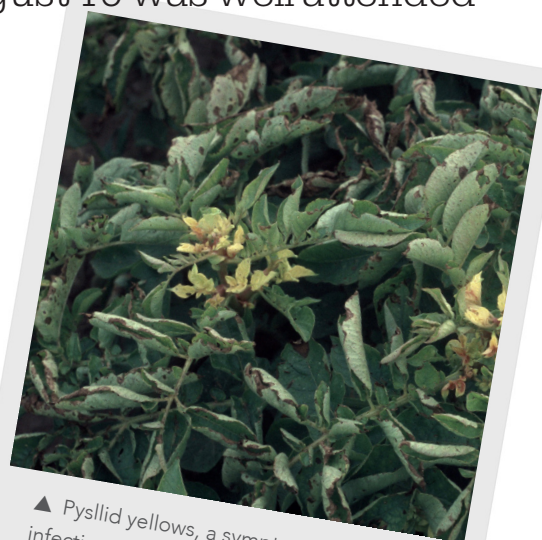
In April the Seed Potato Certification Authority proposed some rule changes in the scheme. These have now been consulted on with growers and will come into effect on November 1. An important part of our process is to discuss rule changes with growers and to listen to your feedback before any changes are introduced. The scheme needs to have rules that are achievable and deliver the best possible outcome. A good example of this consultation process is the new Liberibacter symptom tolerance – the tolerance was modified following discussion with growers.

The tomato-potato psyllid transmits Liberibacter, the disease causing zebra chip symptoms in tubers. Ever since the arrival of Liberibacter in New Zealand the Seed Authority has been considering whether measures

should be introduced into the scheme. Last season inspectors were asked to record levels of Liberibacter symptoms in seed crops. The conclusion was that Liberibacter is fairly widespread but at a low incidence in crops – no more than 0.2% and usually less. The authority considered setting a tolerance that matched the virus tolerance, but following discussion with growers, agreed to set the tolerance at 0.2% for G1–G6 (and zero for G0). If a grower thinks the inspector's decision is incorrect the grower can ask for a sample to be tested for the presence of Liberibacter. If the result is negative the crop will be passed.

The authority also passed a rule allowing part crops to be rejected or downgraded, instead of the whole crop. This can occur when there is a part of a crop clearly affected with disease or another fault, and it can be segregated from the rest of the crop. The affected portion has to be clearly marked and, if downgraded, entered into the scheme as a new entry.

Facilities producing tissue culture and minitubers for the scheme must now



▲ Pysllid yellows, a symptom of liberibacter infection. Image courtesy Whitney Cranshaw, Colorado State University.

be approved by the authority as meeting the requirements of the scheme. Three facilities have been through the process of documenting their procedures and being audited. These three facilities (Alps Seed Ltd, Aspara Pacific Ltd, and Alex McDonald Merchants Ltd PT Scheme) are now approved, and tissue culture and minitubers will only be accepted into the scheme from these facilities.

The rule changes come into force on November 1 and the full rules can be found on the Potatoes NZ website: <http://bit.ly/PNZSeedCertRules>.

Fees

There will be no change in fees for the 2016–17 seed year. ☑

Stephen Ogden, Secretary
New Zealand Seed Potato Certification Authority

◀ Seed growers' meeting, Ashburton,
August 16, 2016

