

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE

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PRESS NOTICE

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POTATO BLIGHT

THE NEED FOR SPRAYING

Potato blight has appeared in several widely scattered areas. During the last few weeks the disease has been present in the early potato districts of the South-west and South Wales, and is now reported from Somerset, Hampshire and the Holland Division of Lincolnshire. It is unusual for potato blight to occur in these districts as early as June.

Under certain weather conditions the disease may spread and do considerable damage by destroying the tops before there is a full yield of tubers. The only safeguard at this stage is to spray or dust the crops with copper-containing sprays such as Bordeaux or Burgundy Mixture or one of the ready-made potato sprays.

Spraying is a protection and not a cure, and to be effective it must be done before blight appears in the crop. Normally, the best time to apply the first wet spray is just when the plants are meeting between the rows, but if blight has been reported in the area the sooner the first spray is put on the better. If blight spreads, a second and even a third spray at intervals of about three weeks may be necessary. Dry dusting should begin at once and be repeated at intervals of 10 days or a fortnight. The susceptible varieties - King Edward, British Queen and Up-to-date - should be treated first.

Full use should be made of all spraying and dusting machines, and any machine that is not being used by its owner should be lent to a neighbour who needs it. Potato growers who require further advice on spraying should apply to their County War Agricultural Executive Committee.