



## Early-season soil and root health key for potato crops

**T**he first 60 days in the life of a potato crop sets the stage for harvest success. The challenge is that most of the disease issues farmers have to deal with during that time occur under the soil, so the choices you make before planting are critical.

“Your highest yield potential happens before you put the seed in the ground,” says Justin Dalebozic, Bayer’s Fruit and Vegetables Sales Agronomist for Manitoba and Saskatchewan. “Potatoes are a high-value crop, so you want to be proactive about protecting it from disease — you want to put your best foot forward and make sure it’s as healthy as possible coming out of the ground.”

He says that means understanding your disease risks then choosing a seed-piece treatment and in-furrow products that will help to improve soil and root health accordingly.

Dalebozic says that seed-borne fusarium is the main driver for seed-piece treatment

selection because it’s such a widespread problem in potato-growing regions. But other seed- and soil-borne diseases, like *Rhizoctonia solani*, black and silver scurf, black dot, root rots and more, plus early-season insects and nematodes are all factors to consider when it comes to protecting potatoes through those first two months of growth.

Dalebozic says Bayer has a solid lineup of early-season potato products that tick many of those boxes,

“**Emesto® Complete** fungicide and insecticide seed-piece treatment definitely checks the box on seed-borne fusarium control, plus the other major diseases,” he says, “including seed-borne rhizoctonia and tuber rot. Plus, with the addition of an insecticide, Emesto Complete offers early protection from aphids, Colorado potato beetles and potato flea beetles.”

“After choosing a seed-piece treatment, growers need to make a choice on in-furrow products,” says Dalebozic. If you’re worried

about black dot, he suggests looking into **Velum® Rise** fungicide/nematicide. “Velum Rise is an effective nematicide, but the driving force is the fungicide package,” he says. “It does a good job on black dot and that’s an earlier season disease than people think — black dot infection can start early, but the symptoms don’t appear until much later. Velum Rise really is your best foot forward when it comes to suppressing black dot. It’s also an excellent product for control of diseases caused by *Rhizoctonia solani* (black scurf, stem and stolon canker) as well as suppression of early blight which is a very common disease in potatoes.”

When it comes to **Minuet®** biological fungicide, Dalebozic likes to quote a colleague: It does a little bit on a lot of things. “It colonizes the root area to protect against an ever-growing list of diseases,” he says, adding that it’s a biological Bayer continues to work on because it offers activity against so many pathogens. “Adding Minuet to your program is adding another active, yes, but the addition seems to provide better control, overall.”

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