Endemic Pests Fact Sheet

Tomato Blight Early/Late *Genus: Phytophthora infestansis*

What is it?

Tomato Blight, early/late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*is) a disease which is caused by a fungus-type organism that spreads quickly in warm, wet weather and attacks the foliage and fruit of tomatoes, causing rotting.

How is it transmitted?

Airbourne spores especially in windy conditions. Warm, rainy, and windy weather creates ideal conditions for blight to spread, especially in areas like Pukekohe. Spores can travel easily.

What symptoms to look for

Early blight, look for spots on leaves with yellowing of the lower leaves. The affected foliage eventually turns brown, shrivels, and dies. **Late blight,** look for irregular greenish-brown, mushy spots along the edges of leaves. Dark patches may also appear on the plant's stem. A greyish mold often develops on the underside of leaves or the stem. Leaves eventually shrivel and die.

Impact

Whilst Early Blight is less destructive, if untreated, Late Blight can lead to fruit rot and can devastate crops within 48 hours. Without prevention, the blight can quickly spread, especially under ideal weather conditions, leading to widespread crop infection.

Where is it present?

North America, South America, Europe, Asia, New Zealand, Australia

How can I protect my plants?

Remove lower leaves to improve air circulation, and apply preventive fungicides to protect crops, if maximum residue levels (MRLs) are not exceeded. Maintaining good hygiene is important, though it may not fully prevent spores from entering a greenhouse through open vents. Clean cutting tools. Copper-based products may control or slow down blight, but full coverage of the plant is necessary to be effective.

Information compiled from

GROWER 2 GROWER

TomatoesNZ

Figure 1: Early Blight
https://cropaia.com/blog/early-blight-of-tomato/

Figure 2: Late Blight
plantura.garden/uk/vegetables/tomatoes/tomato-late-blight

If you see any unusual pests or plant symptoms, call the MPI EXOTIC PEST AND DISEASE HOTLINE 0800 80 99 66