



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL RESOURCES
BOARD OF PESTICIDES CONTROL
28 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0028

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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Date: June 30, 2009

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EMERGENCY MEETING OF BOARD OF PESTICIDES CONTROL

- WHO:** Maine Board of Pesticides Control
- WHAT:** Emergency Board Meeting
- WHEN:** Wednesday, July 1, 2009, 1:00 PM
- WHERE:** University of Maine Cooperative Extension Pest Management Office, 491 College Avenue, Orono
- DETAILS:** The Maine Board of Pesticides Control will be holding an emergency meeting to consider a request from the Maine Potato Board, Maine Department of Agriculture, and University of Maine Cooperative Extension for an emergency rule that will allow the Board to issue reciprocal licenses to out-of-state aerial applicators willing to apply fungicides to control Late Blight, *Phytophthora infestans*, and other disease in potatoes.
- BACKGROUND:** Potato Late Blight is the single most devastating fungal disease of potatoes worldwide and was the cause of the Irish potato famine of the 1840s. Unusually heavy rainfall has prevented potato growers from entering their fields with ground application equipment. The Central Maine, Northern Aroostook and Southern Aroostook areas have been most affected, receiving well over ten inches of rain in June. This extensive rainfall has meant growers have been unable to adequately protect their potato crops with fungicide applications. Ground sprayers have become mired in fields and the lack of suitable spray weather has prevented Maine-based aerial applicators from meeting the demand of all the growers who are trying to comply with the Cooperative Extension recommendations for a five-day fungicide application schedule.

The key to successful control of late blight is prevention and the growers only option is aerial spraying of fungicides when the fields are too wet for ground equipment. There is a need to identify additional out-of-state applicators that are willing to come to Maine and spray these fields. Because the regular timeframe to prepare for and take the required exams commonly exceeds thirty days, there is a need to speed up that process by allowing pilots to become licensed on the basis of equivalent certification from their home state.

The Board recognizes the emergence of late blight's threat to Maine's potato crop which is valued in excess of \$125 million. Loss of this crop would severely harm the general welfare of Aroostook County, if not the entire state.

The Maine Board of Pesticides Control is the lead state agency for pesticide regulation. It is an administrative unit of the Maine Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources, with policy decisions made by a seven-member, public board.

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