



December 1, 2021

**To Our Valued Partners, Potato Board Counterparts, Industry Organizations, Retail and Wholesale Customers, Friends and Neighbours,**

Last week was a difficult week for us all. We all know how hard growing safe, healthy food can be, even without trade disruptions like those that we are currently facing. We know how difficult it is to get food to market and onto people's plates. We are communicating with people from all levels of government, customers, industry associations on both sides of the border to pull together to get this resolved.

The language used by CFIA in the Ministerial Order implies that all of PEI has potato wart. That is not the case. The total area with a detection of potato wart was less than 1 acre out of this year's 84,500 acres in potato production. These potatoes from the two infected fields cannot leave PEI. They will be processed. We are not shipping potato wart infected potatoes off PEI. We have an agreed upon Management Plan and risk mitigation measures, and the situation is very much under control. The routine mitigation procedures are in place, such as washing and sprout nipping potatoes even on production from fields not associated with potato wart detections. This is an abundance of caution to ensure the quality of product you've come to expect from PEI Potatoes.

Today, it's potato wart in PEI. Tomorrow, it could be something in another Canadian province. Our industry has a long track record of working together to find solutions to problems; we need to do the same now. We need to always follow the science and have faith in the plans we collectively put in place to minimize risk and protect both our potato industry as well as the markets we supply. We need to help each other to move our perishable crops in a coordinated effort. We have to work together and advocate with our federal counterparts to get this situation resolved as quickly as possible. The knock-on effects of these trade restrictions will be significant unless the resumption of PEI fresh exports to the United States comes very soon.

Prince Edward Island needs you to lend your voices to ours to help open the border and avoid further disruptions to national fresh markets, lack of supply for processors, and the potential for wasted potatoes at a time of increased food insecurity and high food prices. Please speak up and speak out.

We truly appreciate the calls, the emails, and offers for assistance from those who have reached out. Locally, our Island is pulling together in a way even we could have never predicted. It's been humbling, inspiring and encouraging. We need your support and your assistance to get to the end of this as quickly as possible, to get back to business as usual. Let's work together to make that happen.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Greg Donald". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Greg" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Donald".

Thank you.

Greg Donald

General Manager, PEI Potato Board

Enc. FAQ's

## FAQ:

Q: What actually IS potato wart?

A: Potato wart is a fungus (*Synchytrium endobioticum*) that infects potato tubers, creating cauliflower-like growths that make potatoes unmarketable. It is spread through contact with infected soil or seed potatoes. Potato wart tends to be very site-specific within a field, not being widespread spatially. However, it's unique creation of hardy resting spores can result in viable spores being present in the soil for 40 to 50 years. PEI is not shipping potato wart infected potatoes off PEI.

Q: Is potato wart a risk to human health?

A: Potato wart is of no risk whatsoever to human health. While it renders potatoes unappealing and unmarketable, there is no risk to human health from potato wart. Therefore, there is no basis for removal of PEI potatoes from grocery store shelves due to concerns over potato wart. We are not shipping potato wart infected potatoes off PEI.

Q: Can potato wart spread through fresh potatoes?

A: The risk of the spread of potato wart through fresh potatoes is virtually non-existent. Washing and grading greatly minimizes the risk that potato wart spores are transported in soil. Application of sprout inhibitors then significantly impair the ability for these potatoes to produce a viable plant in the extremely rare circumstance that these potatoes would be planted in a commercial field. The potato wart fungus requires an actively growing plant to multiply and produce viable spores.

Q: How many new detections of potato wart have been found in 2021?

A: There have been only two new detections of potato wart reported in 2021. These detections have been found in a relatively small area of both fields. These fields are associated with past detections of potato wart and were always destined for processing in Prince Edward Island. They cannot be shipped off PEI.

Q: How many fields in PEI have been found to have potato wart?

A: There have been 33 fields in Prince Edward Island have reported finding potato wart since 2000, either by detection on tubers or detection in soil samples. These fields (known as Index Fields) are no longer permitted to have potatoes grown for fresh or seed purposes. The total area of infected fields equals less than the 0.7% of the land in potato rotation in PEI.

Q: What does a potato wart “infestation” mean?

A: Infestation is a CFIA term with definition under the Plant Protection Act, and reflects that the pathogen has been detected, but does not shed light on the level of potato wart present in the province. This is not a quantitative term, and quite frankly is an inflammatory term.

Q: Is Prince Edward Island the only place with potato wart?

A: No, potato wart has been found in a number of countries all over the world. Potato wart has been found on every continent. The majority of countries in Western Europe have previously reported finding potato wart. The Netherlands continues to have an active management plan for potato wart while simultaneously being the number one exporter of seed potatoes in the world. The United States reported potato wart most recently in 1987, before the disease was found in PEI.

Q: How is potato wart managed in Prince Edward Island?

A: Preventing the spread of potato wart is managed through the Long Term Domestic Potato Wart Management Plan, developed by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency after consultation with USDA. Under this plan, detections of potato wart are thoroughly investigated and quarantine of “index fields” is implemented. In addition, adjacent and associated fields are placed under surveillance for a number of years, with regulated testing, cleaning and disinfection, and tuber monitoring required. There are also regulations placed on these fields with relation to end use of potatoes.

Q: Has any province, state, or country detected potato wart traced to Prince Edward Island potatoes?

A: No, there have not been any detections of potato wart in any other provinces, states, or countries that can be traced back to potatoes from Prince Edward Island. This reinforces the success of the Long Term Potato Wart Management Plan.