



## Potato Harvest Just Around the Corner

### Is your Harvester ready to minimize bruises?

With harvest fast approaching it is important to start planning on minimization of bruising in this year's crop. This planning should include a plan for a vine kill, which allows enough time for the tubers to mature and set skin, making them less susceptible to skinning and bruising. One option for maximizing the growing time per acre while still allowing adequate time for the tuber to mature is to match your killing to the acres you can harvest in a given period of time (most likely killing ½ of a field at a time).

Agro typically recommends the following amount of time from a vine kill to harvest for the following varieties:

<b>Centennials</b>	<b>14-21 days</b>	<b>Norkotahs</b>	<b>21-28 days</b>
<b>Nuggets</b>	<b>17-25 days</b>	<b>Reds and Yellows</b>	<b>28-35 days</b>

Excessive and late applications of Nitrogen can increase the time to set skin. Also, the speed of the kill will affect these times.

In some instance the way you apply your vine kill can directly affect the amount of damage coming out of a field. The more traffic through the field prior to harvest the more damage can occur as we have seen up to 10% damage prior to the harvester entering the field.

Now is a great opportunity to check your chain speeds and drops to allow you time to make modifications that minimize bruising through the harvester. Drops greater than 8" on cushioned chain can increase your bruising, and if you have drops greater than 8", reducing that drop by 1" can reduce your potential for bruising by 3%. This can be accomplished by either adjusting the chain speed and keeping the chains full, or by physically modifying the drop. Also check your cushioned chains for worn cushioning, which provides inadequate protection. Chain speed adjustment can also affect the amount of bruising you have other than affecting the drop height. For example, too slow a chain speed can allow back feeding, and too fast a chain speed can fling the potatoes on the receiving chain, causing damage.

In past years we have found a very strong correlation between warmer pulp temperatures and reduced bruising. Delaying the start of harvest in the morning and running later in the evening will help to minimize the harvest time under cooler pulp temperatures. This adjustment of harvest times becomes more important later in the year and a 2 hour shift in harvest times can reduce bruising by 5%.

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