SILVER SCURF *(Helminthosporium solani)*

Silver scurf of potatoes is caused by *Helminthosporium solani* and occurs in many potato producing countries including South Africa. Diseased tubers may not be certified as limited infection is allowed on certified seed. Moisture loss may also occur which may result in poor quality seed. Silver scurf also spoil the appearance of potato tubers resulting in the downgrading of consignments destined for the consumer market.

Disease symptoms

Small light brown blemishes which darken with time, occur on the tuber surface. Under storage conditions favorable for the disease, blemishes may enlarge rapidly and the entire surface of the tuber may become affected. Severely infected tubers may become shriveled, and will therefore be in poor condition when planted.

If diseased tubers are planted under conditions optimal for potato cultivation, silver scurf usually has little effect on growth and tuber yield.

Black dot and Silver scurf produce similar blemishes on the tuber and may occur simultaneously. Young Silver scurf lesions appear more sooty and the margins are more definite. Silver scurf lesions have no sclerotia.

Optimal conditions for disease

The disease is transmitted by infected tubers. The pathogen is not an active soil inhabitant and the soil is not considered as an important source of inoculum. Infection can take place any time during the growing season while the tubers are still in the soil. Tubers may also become infected during storage. Optimum conditions for infection are temperatures between 20 and 24°C and a high relative humidity.

Other Hosts

Silver scurf only infects the tubers of potatoes.