

Feds give Idaho PCN program \$400,000

By John O'Connell, Capital Press

BOISE, Idaho — The USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service has allocated an additional \$400,000 toward eastern Idaho's pale cyst nematode eradication program to offset a funding shortfall due to prior federal budget cuts.

Last year, the Idaho State Department of Agriculture issued a \$1 million deficiency warrant to maintain the program despite a shortfall. A deficiency warrant is a budgetary option enabling the ISDA director to allocate unappropriated funding toward emergency issues, to be repaid later by the Legislature.



Photo submitted by USDA-APHIS

An eastern Idaho potato field infested with pale cyst nematode is prepared for a methyl bromide treatment. The federal government recently approved another \$400,000 for the program.

The program faced a \$400,000 shortfall for this season before the recent federal funding was approved, at the urging of Rep. Mike Simpson, R-Idaho.

PCN, a microscopic parasite that can reduce potato yields by up to 80 percent, was first detected in east Idaho in 2006. The eradication program, which has great trade importance for Idaho's potato industry, encompasses 2,300 acres of infested fields within a 5-square-mile radius of Bingham and Bonneville counties. Another 8,478 acres are regulated and face special sanitation requirements due to associations with infested fields.

"PCN poses a real threat to our state's most iconic crop, and keeping the eradication program on track is critical to maintaining and growing export opportunities," Simpson said in a press release.

Lloyd Knight, ISDA's administrator of the division of plant industries, said the funding will go directly to the federal program but will spare ISDA the expense of covering this season's shortfall.

"It keeps a pretty important program up and running," Knight said.

At its peak, Knight said the PCN program required about \$9 million in annual federal funding. Federal investment in the program dropped to a low of \$4.2 million last season. Knight explained there are fewer associated fields to manage, and some of the infested fields have advanced from a stage in which costly fumigation is required to a stage involving surveying.