Potato blackleg and soft rot

*Dickeya dianthicola*

The Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development has confirmed the detection of *Dickeya dianthicola* in seed potatoes and dormant dahlia tubers in Western Australia, and is responding with measures to contain the pest, determine spread and assess the feasibility of eradication.

What is *Dickeya dianthicola*

*Dickeya dianthicola* causes soft rot and blackleg in potatoes. It is a serious pest (bacterium) that was not previously known to occur in Australia. Overseas data has indicated significant yield losses in potato crops.

*Dickeya dianthicola* can also infect other crops such as globe artichoke, chicory, dahlia and flaming Katy.

Other pathogens already present in Australia can cause similar soft rot and blackleg symptoms. However, *Dickeya dianthicola* is more aggressive and causes disease at lower infection levels.
Symptoms

The first symptom of the disease can be poor emergence due to rotting seed tubers. Plants wilt and typically have slimy, wet, black stems extending upwards from the rotting tuber.

Infected tubers are macerated and have a tapioca-like appearance, but may not have the pungent smell associated with typical blackleg.

*Dickeya dianthicola* can be present in a plant without causing symptoms, particularly if temperatures remain low. Symptoms often develop after a period of hot weather, especially when plants are also stressed.

How does it spread?

It is generally accepted the main source for blackleg infection is latently infected seed tubers.

On-farm biosecurity practices, such as good farm hygiene and early reporting of suspicious symptoms should be in place to prevent the entry, establishment and spread of pests and diseases. Practical advice and information to assist is available through the Farm Biosecurity website [farmbiosecurity.com.au](http://farmbiosecurity.com.au)

Reporting

Growers can report any unusual plant symptoms by:

- Calling the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE**

1800 084 881

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