Controlling potato beetles with Bt

**Problem**
Potato beetles can develop rapidly, especially in warm summers on late-maturing crops, causing extensive damage to the potato plants.

**Solution**
In the case of a large infestation, direct control measures e.g. the use of biological plant protection products like Novodor are justified. Novodor contains a bacterium, *Bacillus thuringiensis* tenebrionis (Bt), whose toxins (protein crystals) destroy the intestinal tract of potato beetle larvae.

**Outcome**
The *Bacillus thuringiensis* has a selective effect and is not harmful to bees. Disadvantages: It only is effective against young larvae stages, it is very UV sensitive and its effect is reduced strongly in case of temperatures above 30 °C.

**Practical recommendation**
Check the state of infestation
- When the potato plants start to emerge, walk the field every 7 days in a straight line and check plants at regular intervals.
- If clusters of eggs are found on more than every third plant, apply Novodor four days after discovering the first clusters.

Apply the agent
- Dissolve 5 l of Novodor in 500 l of water per hectare of potatoes.
- Novodor can be applied together with copper products.

Optimal conditions:
- The potato beetles are still in an early larval stage (L1 to L2).
- Temperature between 15 °C and 25 °C.
- Avoid direct sunlight: spray late in the evening or when the sky is overcast.
- No rain is due within 8 hours after spraying.

**Comments**
- After a successful treatment, the larvae will turn black after a few days.
- If the effect is insufficient, the larvae will stay mobile. In this case, the treatment should be repeated within the following 10 days.

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Evaluation and sharing of the results

Use the comment section on the Farmknowledge platform to share your experiences with other farmers, advisors and scientists! If you have any questions concerning the method, please contact the author of the practice abstract by e-mail.

Further information

Links

- The subpage Pest and disease control\(^1\) on the information website farmknowledge provides information on the control of potato-related pests.

- The technical leaflet Organic Potatoes\(^2\) (German edition) contains further tips on preventive measures against yield-reducing potato beetle infestation as well as references to extensive publications on this pest. The English version of the guide will be available in summer 2017 at FiBL-Shop.

- The posts Potato Beetle\(^3\) and Organic Methods for Controlling Colorado Potato Beetle\(^4\) inform gardeners on how to control the potato beetle.

About this practice abstract and OK-Net Arable

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Permalink: orgprints.org/31592

OK-Net Arable: This practice abstract was elaborated in the Organic Knowledge Network Arable project. The project is running from March 2015 to February 2018. OK-Net Arable promotes exchange of knowledge among farmers, farm advisers and scientists with the aim to increase productivity and quality in organic arable cropping all over Europe.

Project website: www.ok-net-arable.eu
Project partners: IFOAM EU Group (project coordinator), BE; Organic Research Centre, UK; Bioland Beratung GmbH, DE; Aarhus University (ICROFS), DK; Associazione Italiana, per l’Agricoltura Biologica (AIAB), IT; European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services (EUFRAS); Centro Internazionale di Alti Studi Agronomici Mediterranei - Istituto Agronomico Mediterraneo Di Bari (IAMB), IT; FiBL Projekte GmbH, DE; FiBL Österreich, AT; FiBL Schweiz, CH; Ókológiai Mezőgazdasági Kutatóintézet (OMKI), HU; Con Marche Bio, IT; Estonian Organic Farming Foundation, EE; BioForum Vlaanderen, BE; Institut Technique de l’Agriculture Biologique, FR; SEGES, DK ; Bioselena, Bulgaria
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This project has received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 652654. This communication only reflects the author’s view. The Research Executive Agency is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information provided.