



Septoria Blotch of Field Peas

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Septoria blotch is usually a minor disease occurring sporadically in Victoria and South Australia but has caused major crop losses in NSW. The disease is often seen on senescing plants late in the growing season. The disease can be prevented by stubble management and crop rotation.

Symptoms

The disease is mainly found on the lower, senescing parts of the plant and pods. Diseased areas on leaves are of indefinite size and shape and are yellow then straw coloured to light brown (see figure 1), often with a lighter centre and a pale yellow halo on the margin. Several such blotches may join together to cover the entire leaf. Within the lesions, pin-point sized black fruiting bodies of the fungus may be seen (see figure 2). Diseased tissues may dry off prematurely.



Figure 1. Typical leaf lesions caused by Septoria.

Economic importance

This disease occurs sporadically and seldom causes significant yield losses. However, losses of up to 40% have been reported in some susceptible pea varieties.

Disease cycle

Septoria blotch is caused by the fungus *Septoria pisi*. The fungus survives from one season to the next on infected pea trash and seed. Spores of the fungus are carried by wind from infected trash, into the new crop. Infection is found on the lower foliage where the humidity is high following rain or heavy dews. The disease is favoured by warm temperatures (21-27°C) and extended periods of high humidity. Secondary spread occurs during the growing season. Rain splash assists in spreading the disease within a crop. Whilst seed transmission can occur it is unlikely to be important.



Figure 2. Fruiting bodies of septoria on infected pea leaf and tendrils.

Management

Before sowing

Crop rotation

The septoria blotch fungi survive in soil and on old pea trash. It is only safe to re-crop an area with peas after all pea debris has decomposed.

Destroying pea stubble by grazing, burning and cultivation will help in reducing the pea debris more quickly. This also minimises the amount of inoculum available to infect new crops.

Chemical control

No foliar or seed applied fungicides are registered for use on septoria in field peas in Victoria.

More Information

- www.dpi.gov.au/notes (click on Crops and Pastures, then select Legume crops)
- Wurst M, Hawthorne W, Nikandrow N, Ramsey M, (2002) *Winter Pulse Disorders: The Ute Guide*.
- *Victorian Winter Crop Summary*.

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