

Exotic threats of Onions: *Botryotinia squamosa* – Leaf Blight, leaf rot.

What is it?



Botryotinia squamosa lesions on onion.
Image David B. Langston, University of Georgia, www.ipmimages.org

Botrytis leaf blight (BLB) is a fungal disease that occurs in many of the onion growing areas of the world. It affects only species of the genus *Allium*, but has the greatest impact on onions and garlic. The causal organism, *Botryotinia squamosa*, causes leaf spots (lesions) and maceration of leaf tissue resulting in leaf dieback and blighting.

Older leaves are more susceptible to lesion formation and blighting. Under favourable environmental conditions (high rainfall, extended periods of leaf wetness, high relative humidity, and moderately warm temperatures, between 12 and 25°C), leaf blight can result in significant reductions of onion bulb growth and yield.

The fungus may over winter in infected plant material, or may survive in the soil as small, dark-brown sclerotia. During moist periods with moderate temperatures, fungal spores that arise from sclerotia or infected leaves and debris are dispersed. These spores land on susceptible tissue, and infection occurs. This disease can spread rapidly when environmental conditions are favourable for development.

What do I look for?

Initial symptoms of the disease are small elliptical white to straw-coloured lesions of 1-5 mm diameter, which mostly occur on the side of the leaf exposed to sunlight. Each lesion is usually surrounded by a greenish-white halo that appears water-soaked. A lengthways sunken slit often occurs in the centre of the lesion. The older leaves are the most susceptible and they typically wilt and blight within 5-12 days of infection and lesion formation. The pathogen in some instances can infect the outer tissues of the bulb, causing a disease known as small sclerotial neck rot.

Where is it found?

B. squamosa is found in many temperate regions across the globe, such as China, Japan, Korea, Europe, Mauritius, North and South America, New Caledonia, and New Zealand.



Botryotinia squamosa lesions on onion.
Image Integrated Pest and Crop Management, University of Wisconsin
<http://ipcm.wisc.edu/piap/onions.htm>

Reporting

Growers may report suspected exotic pests to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline (1800 084 881) or can directly contact their relevant state agriculture or primary industries department.

To minimise the risk of disease or pest spread, samples should not be moved until they have been checked by an expert.

This fact sheet is part of the National Onion Industry Biosecurity Plan. For more information about the Biosecurity Plan, please contact Plant Health Australia.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact
Plant Health Australia

Phone: +61 2 6260 4322
Fax: +61 2 6260 4321
www.planthealthaustralia.com.au

ABN 97 092 607 997

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