

Top 10 Best Practices

Nora Olsen and Mike Thornton, researchers with the University of Idaho, developed a list of the top 10 best practices for potato growers.

1. Find suitable fields.
Pick fields that do not have the potential for excessive clods and rocks that make soil separation at harvest difficult.
2. Fertilize properly.
During the season, maintain a balanced fertilizer program that avoids deficiencies or excesses of nutrients, such as nitrogen or potassium, that can lead to increased susceptibility to bruising and skinning.
3. Manage moisture.
At harvest, manage moisture conditions so that soil is relatively easy to separate from tubers on the primary chain and so that tubers are neither dehydrated nor overly hydrated.
4. Monitor tuber temperature.
Monitor the temperature throughout the harvest period and stop digging when pulp temperatures are below 45 degrees Fahrenheit or above 65 degrees to minimize bruise and decay.
5. Avoid large drops.
Avoid drops of more than 6 inches onto hard surfaces on all machinery.
6. Run conveyors at capacity.
This reduces the relative drop height between pieces of equipment.
7. Pad all impact points.
Use padding at all impact points and replace when worn out.
8. Pile potatoes in stages.
This helps to prevent rollback.
9. Reduce pressure bruise potential.
Match pile height to ventilation design capacity for the storage, maintain high humidity and avoid large delta T differentials.
10. Educate equipment operators.
Provide education so they understand the first nine items on this list.