

# Colorado Beetle



The Colorado beetle (*Leptinotarsa decemlineata*) is not established in the UK and is a notifiable quarantine pest, whose introduction is prohibited under the EC Single Market Protected Zone arrangements for Plant Health. Colorado beetles are most commonly intercepted in spring and early summer on a wide range of plant produce from the Continent including parsley, salad produce and ware potatoes.

Colorado beetle adults will mate before overwintering deep in the soil, so that when they emerge the following spring, females can lay eggs immediately, once a suitable host plant has been found. As well as potatoes, this can be any one of a number of plants from the potato family (*Solanaceae*) such as nightshade weeds, tomato, aubergine and pepper. Adult beetles are usually imported as "hitchhikers" on plants and produce they do not feed on, such as leafy vegetables and grain, which have been grown in fields that previously had potatoes in the rotation. They can also be introduced direct on imported potatoes themselves.

It is important to remember that a breeding colony could be established by a single fertilised beetle escaping detection.



## Suggested measures to be taken by Importers

Seek assurance from your exporter that the UK's Protected Zone requirements are recognised and consignments are free from Colorado beetle.

**We recommend this forms part of any commercial contract.**

- Inspect produce carefully on arrival and avoid mixing consignments if possible so that each batch can be identified, and more importantly, traced back to its origin, should a problem arise.
- Avoid importing re-exported produce from continental Europe which does not comply with the UK's Protected Zone arrangements (such as produce intended for non-Protected Zones in mainland Europe).
- Ensure staff can recognise Colorado beetles. Display posters and other publicity material prominently on site.
- **Contact your local Defra Plant Health & Seeds Inspector if you find or suspect the presence of Colorado beetle in consignments.**

## Suggested measures to be taken by Exporters

Under the EC Single Market arrangements for Plant Health, **the onus is on the exporter to ensure freedom from Colorado beetle if**

### Warning posters and leaflets are available from:

Defra  
Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate  
HQ, York  
Tel: 01904 455174  
Fax: 01904 455197  
Email: [planthealth.info@defra.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:planthealth.info@defra.gsi.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.defra.gov.uk/planth/ph.htm](http://www.defra.gov.uk/planth/ph.htm)

### produce is being exported to the UK.

To prevent the introduction of the Colorado beetle, whilst ensuring imports enter the UK without time-consuming delays, it is recommended that:

- Produce from areas where Colorado beetle is known to be present should not be grown in a field where potatoes were grown the year before, if intended for export to the UK.
- Potato crops should be treated to give good control of Colorado beetle during the growing season.
- Potatoes or other fresh vegetable produce destined for export to the UK should not be packed directly in the field of production and should be covered by a clean sheeting material (not plant haulm or soil) when transported from the field.
- Packing stations should be encouraged to adopt good standards of hygiene and be designed to prevent insect contamination during grading from soil or leafy material brought from the field, or debris from trimmings.
- Plant debris should be disposed of safely away from the packing station.
- Potato tubers should be thoroughly cleaned immediately after lifting, even if intended for storage. Colorado beetles can eat their way into tubers whilst in store to hibernate over winter and cannot be removed prior to export without damaging infested potatoes.



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