



University of California Cooperative Extension – Kern County

NEWS RELEASE

1031 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue • Bakersfield, CA 93307 • 661-868-6200 •



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Joe Nunez, Farm Advisor
Vegetable Crops/Plant Pathology
661-868-6222

BACTERIAL DISEASES OF TOMATO

Processing tomatoes are already being planted in the Central Valley and spring has not officially arrived yet. Last year's spring rains and cool temperatures caused major problems on tomatoes with nearly every tomato grower dealing with bacterial speck. Last year's long, cool and wet spring was ideal conditions for bacterial speck. Many growers had to treat on a weekly basis until early summer. With that still fresh on everyone's mind growers will likely stay on top of bacterial speck this year.

Bacterial speck is caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *tomato*. Bacterial spot looks very similar to speck but is caused by another bacteria, *Xanthomonas campestris* pv. *vesicatoria*. For practical purposes it is academic whether the cause is bacterial speck or spot. They each cause very similar plant injury, behave similarly, and are managed the same way.

The main thing to consider this year after following a severe bacterial speck like last year is that the bacteria can survive on the previous crop debris. Because most processing tomato fields are on buried drip, it is common for growers to plant processing tomatoes for several years in a row in the same field. So there is a very good likelihood that many fields will be planted into soil that is carrying a high amount of bacterial speck infested debris.

It would be prudent to check fields closely very again this year for bacterial speck even if we have a much warmer and drier year as compared to last year. The bacterial speck load is likely to be very high in many tomato fields. If conditions are correct it may show up in a field very quickly.

Copper fungicides and copper fungicides in combination with mancozeb are still the products of choice for bacterial speck. There are some systemic activated resistance (SAR) products available that may used to enhance traditional treatments. ■