

## *Plant Disease Notes*

# **Rhizopus Fruit Rot of Strawberries**

**R**hizopus fruit rot, or leak, is primarily a postharvest or storage rot, but it may also occur in the field on ripe fruit. The disease is caused by the fungus *Rhizopus* spp.

**Symptoms.** The initial symptoms appear as water-soaked fruit spots that gradually turn light brown. The fruits rapidly soften and collapse, and their juices leak out. Under humid conditions, the fruit is rapidly covered with a dense, fluffy coat of white fungal growth (mycelium and sporangio-phores). The sporangiophores develop black sporangia (each containing thousands of spores), which give fruit a pincushion appearance.

**Persistence and Transmission.**

*Rhizopus* is a saprophyte (able to live on decaying organic matter). It survives on crop debris in or on the soil between growing seasons. The fungus invades fruit through

wounds and uses enzymes to break down and kill tissue ahead of the actual fungal growth. Disease development is favored by warm, humid conditions. The fungus produces large numbers of spores that are easily spread by wind or insects.

**Control.** Rhizopus fruit rot of strawberries can be controlled by the following strategies:

- Use good sanitation practices in the field. Remove all plant debris and ripe fruit from the field.
- Apply fungicides during the fruit-ripening period.
- Handle fruit carefully during picking to prevent wounding.
- After harvest, cool fruit rapidly to 46° to 50°F. Rapid post-harvest cooling of fruit is essential for disease control.



*Your Experts for Life*

## **ANR-939**

**Edward J. Sikora**, *Extension Plant Pathologist*, Professor, Entomology and Plant Pathology, Auburn University

---

Use chemicals only according to the directions on the label. Follow all directions, precautions, and restrictions that are listed.

---

**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

---

Issued in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, and other related acts, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) offers educational programs, materials, and equal opportunity employment to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, veteran status, or disability.

Web Only, **Revised May 2004**, ANR-939