

# Root knot nematodes on lettuce

*Meloidogyne incognita, M. hapla, M. javanica*



Damage to lettuce (DAFF Archive, Bugwood.org)

Prevention	Monitoring	Direct Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before planting, sample for nematodes at the end of a growing season, when crop residues remain (when nematode populations are high):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect soil and root samples from 10 to 20 locations in the field, at a depth of 15-25 cm, using a cylindrical sampling tube, trowel or shovel. Emphasise taking soil samples across rows rather than within rows</li> <li>• Take one sample per 5-10 acres. Samples should be taken when soil is not extremely wet or dry</li> <li>• Add a 1-2 pint sub-sample to a plastic bag. Keep well sealed and at ambient temperature and light levels. Send these to a lab</li> <li>• If at least 5 root knot nematodes are found in 200 g soil then consider control options before planting, or planting a less susceptible crop (see below)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Adjust planting dates to cooler times in the season when nematodes are less active</li> <li>• Plant clean seed from a certified source</li> <li>• Plant transplants rather than seeds if possible as they can be more resilient to nematodes</li> <li>• Encourage healthy plant growth by maintaining optimal irrigation and fertilization levels. Healthier plants are more resistant to nematode damage</li> <li>• Clean farm tools and machinery with water after working in different areas of the field to prevent spread of nematodes</li> <li>• Do not introduce soil from an infested field into one which is not infested</li> <li>• Rotate every season with groundnuts, cereals (maize, sorghum, millet) and nappier, onions or garlic as these crops are less susceptible to nematodes</li> <li>• Plant marigolds, <i>Tagetes erecta</i> or <i>Tagetes patula</i> as a cover crop before planting tomatoes since these plants suppress nematodes. Grow them as solid planting for an entire season. Cut or mow plants before flowers open to prevent seed getting into soil.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look out for:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Roots: stunted and knobby/swollen, mild to extreme deformation</li> <li>• Leaves: may turn greyish green with chlorotic outer margins. Wilting and slow recovery when watered. Yellowing</li> <li>• Seedlings/transplants: may be stunted or die if infestation is high</li> </ul> </li> <li>• If nematode infestation is low, symptoms may not be apparent until later in the crop season when nematode numbers have increased</li> <li>• Symptoms usually seen throughout entire field rather than in patches</li> <li>• Symptoms can look similar to that of nutrient deficiency (stunting, leaf discolouration). However, this does not result in root galls caused by nematodes</li> <li>• Check for nematodes by digging up plants from several areas of the field and checking for galls. If 25-30% of the plants show symptoms then consider taking action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• After harvest, solarize soil by ploughing fields, moistening the soil and covering using a plastic sheet for 4-6 weeks during the hottest part of the year</li> <li>• Alternatively, plough infested fields deeply to expose soil to sunshine for a month during the hot seasons before planting the next crop</li> <li>• Leave the field fallow for 1-2 years to lower nematode populations. During this time, keep the soil moist but remove weeds. Nematode eggs will hatch but will not have anything to feed on so they will die.</li> </ul>

Note: Pesticides may be available to control this pest. Please check with the Ministry of Agriculture in your country to find out which pesticides are registered in your country and the local restrictions for their use.