

LC 445

WATERCORE OF APPLES

Watercore is a physiological disorder of apples. It is characterized by clear, almost glassy areas in the flesh. It starts at the core and spreads out into the flesh. Watercore usually appears in fruits which are overripe. It may also occur on fruit exposed to the sun and be associated with sunburn. Excess pruning or excess nitrogen may also bring it on. Watercore usually starts after the weather suddenly turns cooler in September or October. When the fruit is mature, a rainstorm which brings cool weather, can trigger its development almost overnight. It is not caused by irrigation.

Watercore is common in some varieties, i.e. "King." Some people like this varietal as the flesh is much sweeter. Mild watercore usually is not noticeable, but fruit with severe watercore usually breaks down in storage. It is more common in large fruits.

The easiest and most reliable way to reduce the amount of watercore is to pick the apples at the proper maturity. Sooner or later, most overmature apples may develop watercore. Pick the ripest apple on the tree, slice it equatorially and examine the core area. If you see watercore, pick the entire crop. Good pruning and limb propping to reduce sunscald can reduce premature watercore. Calcium sprays used to control bitter pit have also reduced the occurrence of watercore.

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Adapted from information provided by Robert Stebbins, OSU Extension Tree Fruit Specialist, emeritus.