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Phylloxera spreads north in the Yarra Valley

New detections of phylloxera have seen the boundary of Victoria's Maroondah Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) boundary extended to the north – incorporating four additional vineyards.

While the new detections were found within the existing PIZ boundary, it has been extended to maintain a 5km buffer zone between an infested property and the PIZ boundary.

While the size of the extension appears large, Vinehealth Australia said it encompasses national and state forests and aligns with main roads. For example, the Healesville-Kinglake Road was the first main road to the north, therefore the Maroondah PIZ has been extended to this point.

Inca Pearce, Vinehealth Australia chief executive officer, said the extension to this PIZ boundary was a concern.

“Phylloxera doesn't respect vineyard boundaries or state borders. We must work together nationally to ensure we stop the spread of phylloxera,” Pearce said.

“Vinehealth Australia recognises the need to act with urgency to respond to a constantly evolving biosecurity environment, with trends in trade, tourism, climate change and business ownership increasing the extent and nature of biosecurity risks. These new detections underscore the urgency.”

Pearce said the new infestations are a reminder for growers and vineyard managers to report any suspect vine decline early.

“If your vines are declining, investigate quickly to identify the cause. If you suspect a phylloxera infestation, you must notify your state agricultural department or Vinehealth Australia,” she said.

“And it's imperative that vineyard owners, managers, staff and all visitors respect state plant quarantine standards and implement best practice farm-gate hygiene on every property. Biosecurity is a team game and we are only as strong as the weakest link.

“Vineyard owners, wineries, contractors and carriers must understand the regulations and documentation required for the movement of grapes and grape materials, machinery and equipment, diagnostic samples, soil, cuttings, rootlings and potted vines, within and between states. And ensure all people who visit your property clean and disinfest their footwear on entry and exit, in accordance with the Footwear and Small Hand Tool Disinfestation Protocol.”

This latest boundary extension is the sixth expansion to the original Maroondah PIZ, which was established in 2006 following the first detection of phylloxera in the Yarra Valley.

Grape phylloxera is a small insect that lives on the roots of grapevines. Once established, death of own-rooted vines is inevitable.

Vinehealth Australia said it was imperative for vineyard owners and managers to check any links they might have with businesses operating in the extension area. Vinehealth Australia also welcomes calls about the Maroondah PIZ on (08) 8273 0550.

For interactive maps showing Phylloxera Exclusion Zones (PEZ), PRZ and PIZs across Australia’s grapegrowing regions visit: <https://maps.phylloxera.com.au/virtual/pmz/>

For information about movement requirements for phylloxera risk vectors visit: <http://www.vinehealth.com.au/essentials/regulations-and-policies/phylloxera-regulations/>

Or: <http://www.vinehealth.com.au/essentials/regulations-and-policies/national-phylloxera-management-protocol/>