VINEHEALTH Australia is calling for grape growers to examine and improve their farmgate hygiene practices during vintage 2017.

Vintage is a key risk time for the spread of pests and diseases, including phylloxera, due to the increased movement among regions and states of machinery, equipment, vehicles, people, footwear, clothing, winegrapes (whole or harvested) and grape products such as unfiltered juice and pre-fermentation grape marc.

Responsibility for preventing the spread of pests and diseases between states and within states is a collective effort between industry and regulators.

Vinehealth Australia says new research has given rise to changes to the footwear and small hand-tool disinfection protocol, now requiring 60 seconds immersion in 2 per cent sodium hypochlorite solution, and no rinsing of footwear or tools after immersion.

“We know from surveys of vineyard owners that farmgate hygiene is patchy,” said Vinehealth Australia chief executive officer Inca Pearce.

“And we also know that vintage is a ridiculously busy time and, despite good intentions, in the rush to pick and deliver fruit, hygiene standards can slip.”