

Further phylloxera detections in Victoria: what this means for growers

Vineyard owners must improve their farm-gate hygiene to help prevent a significant pest or disease incursion such as phylloxera. This is the advice of Vinehealth Australia following further detections of phylloxera in vineyards in Victoria.

Agriculture Victoria has announced further extensions to the Maroondah Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) to the east, south and west of the existing zone. While the new detections were found within the existing PIZ boundary, the Maroondah PIZ was extended to maintain a 5km buffer zone between an infested property's boundary and the PIZ boundary.

This is the seventh extension to the Maroondah PIZ since phylloxera was first detected in the area in 2006, and follows the notification in March 2017 of an extension to the northern boundary of the zone.

A lack of available chemical or biological control for phylloxera means there is no treatment for a phylloxera-infested vineyard. The only option is to pull out the vineyard and replant with new vines that have been grafted onto phylloxera tolerant or resistant rootstock. Pulling out vines and replanting comes at an approximate cost of \$60,000 per hectare, including vine removal, new grafted vine material and new block infrastructure, notwithstanding loss of production while new plantings mature.

"We know phylloxera doesn't respect state borders. It's time for vineyard owners to get serious about farm-gate hygiene to prevent an incursion of phylloxera," said Vinehealth Australia CEO Inca Pearce.

What can growers do?

There are simple farm-gate hygiene practices that all vineyard owners/managers can implement to minimise the risk of an incursion of a pest or disease on their property.

- Know where grape phylloxera is and is not located in Australia. Know your business links within interstate phylloxera zones. Follow all state quarantine regulations surrounding movement of phylloxera risk vectors, such as machinery, grape bins, equipment and grapes.
- Use fences and gates to restrict people and vehicles accessing your vineyards. Use signs at entrances to advise visitors of reasons for this restriction. Keep a record of all visitors to your vineyard, detailing which wine regions they have visited in the eight days prior.
- Train your staff, contractors and casual labour in best-practice farm-gate hygiene. This includes looking out for and reporting any unusual pests, diseases or vine growth symptoms to Vinehealth Australia on (08) 8273 0550 or the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881.
- Only allow machinery and equipment to enter your vineyard if it is clean of soil and plant material and has complied with state quarantine disinfestation and documentation requirements. Ensure all machinery and equipment also leaves your property clean of soil and plant material.
- Instruct visitors and contractors to wear clean clothes before entering your vineyard and to clean and disinfest their footwear upon entry and exit, in accordance with the new Footwear and Small Hand Tool Disinfestation Protocol:

<http://www.vinehealth.com.au/media/Vinehealth-Footwear-and-Small-Hand-Tools-Disinfestation-Protocol-White-A3.pdf>

- Source planting material from reputable grapevine nurseries or vine improvement associations.

What is Vinehealth Australia doing?

Vinehealth Australia is working proactively to prevent an incursion of phylloxera, including:

- Reviewing the strength of South Australia's Plant Quarantine Standards.
- Planning random audits of vineyards across South Australia over the next six to eight months, to determine the level of adoption of simple farm-gate hygiene practices and to help growers minimise the risk of a pest and disease incursion.
- Activating a Responsible Visitation Campaign, focused on safe visitation to wine regions by tourists and other visitors. This issue is increasingly important given jumps in tourist movement, including a 6.5% increase in international tourists to South Australia, and a 35% increase in Victorian tourists to SA. On top of that, more than 1 million SA residents visit Victoria each year and return to SA, posing a risk of spreading pests and diseases on their return to SA.
- Rolling out several other highly visible awareness campaigns in the next six months with supporting material, focussed on farm-gate hygiene, compliance with state quarantine regulations, and identifying unusual pests or diseases.
- Reviewing South Australia's Phylloxera Outbreak Management Plan to ensure it is robust and comprehensive.
- Actively working with Agriculture Victoria and Biosecurity SA (PIRSA) to reinforce efforts to ensure compliance against state quarantine regulations, strengthen accreditation schemes that enable the movement of certain phylloxera vectors within and between states, and ensure that the management of phylloxera is an ongoing high priority for allocation of resources. Vinehealth Australia is also advocating for transparent reporting back to industry of compliance against state quarantine regulations.
- As a member of the National Viticulture Biosecurity Committee (NVBC), Vinehealth Australia is actively engaged in the process to develop a national strategy for the management of phylloxera, together with the other NVBC members and in consultation with industry.
- Vinehealth Australia is also working on a South Australian surveillance program for Grapevine Pinot Gris Virus (GPGV), which was recently detected for the first time in Australia, and will keep industry updated with information relating to GPGV.

"We are in contact with Agriculture Victoria to monitor the situation closely in the Maroondah PIZ, and will provide updates when more information comes to hand," said Inca Pearce.

"Importantly, we are asking all growers, wineries and suppliers to the industry to be vigilant and strengthen their biosecurity practices to prevent further incursions."

For a map of the Maroondah PIZ visit

http://www.vinehealth.com.au/media/maroondah_190717.pdf

Phylloxera is a reportable pest. Anyone who suspects a phylloxera infestation must report it promptly to the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline on 1800 084 881 or to Vinehealth Australia on (08) 8273 0550.

For information about phylloxera and setting up farm-gate hygiene systems, contact Vinehealth Australia on (08) 8273 0550, email admin@vinehealth.com.au.

ABOUT VINEHEALTH AUSTRALIA

Vinehealth Australia is a statutory body funded by South Australian vineyard owners to protect South Australian vineyards from diseases, pests and other conditions that may affect vine health. Its role is to develop and advocate policy, and provide current research and best practice measures to help ensure that farm-gate hygiene practices are integrated into daily vineyard operations. For more information, visit www.vinehealth.com.au

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