WHAT HAVE YOU GOT TO LOSE?

GUEST EDITOR: INCA PEARCE, CEO, VINEHEALTH AUSTRALIA

I love a concert under the stars. And what's not to like about getting muddy with 5,000 of your closest friends?

But I've got to say, public events in vineyards make me nervous.

Firstly, good on wineries for coming up with creative ways to draw crowds to their venues. But how many of you consider biosecurity as part of your event plan?

Think about it: you decide to hold a concert in your vines. You have 2,000 people coming from who knows where. What if one of those people has been in a phylloxera infested zone in the past week, and what if they're wearing the same pair of shoes?

Are you going to check where everyone has been? Are you going to make all visitors stand in a tub of White King for one minute? Are you going to give everyone a pair of rubber boots that are clean and safe? What's your plan for managing the risk to the health of your vines?

If you don't have a plan, that's a worry.

Do you really want to be the person responsible for spreading phylloxera into South Australia, Western Australia or Tasmania?

These tiny bugs can survive in soil without food for weeks in cool weather. They can be spread by people's shoes and clothing, as well as through plant material, farm equipment and vehicle tyres. To make matters worse, the adult forms of phylloxera are female and capable of laying eggs, so it only takes one bug to start an outbreak.

And it's not just about phylloxera – all sorts of pests, diseases and weeds can be spread on shoes, clothing and tyres.

The good news is, the risk is reduced if people don't go into your vineyards. So, wouldn't it be better to hold your events away from your vines? Or put up some temporary fencing so people can't wander into the vine rows?

To maintain and evolve our enviable 'clean, green' reputation domestically, and in important export markets, we need to continually demonstrate leadership when it comes to biosecurity.

And it's not just about public events. Biosecurity planning should be part of the management of your vineyard and cellar door. If it's not, you're leaving your most valuable asset open to destruction.

Making biosecurity part of your standard operating procedures doesn't have to be difficult. Or expensive. But it does require some thinking, some planning and some activity.

I guess your willingness to commit energy to vine health comes down to this question: what have you got to lose? ♦

PS: We're here to help. Phone me on 0418 818 543 or email inca@vinehealth.com.au if you want to chat.

This is the first in our series of Guest Editor columns. Want to get something off your chest? Email info@madiganmedia.com.au