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Vine lover: Phylloxera aphids are a pest for wine growers and were first spotted in Victoria in 1877.

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Vineyard biosecurity: Call to arms to rid state of phylloxera

GUS McCUBBING, The Weekly Times

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VINEYARD owners are being urged to improve their farmgate hygiene to help prevent major pest or disease incursion, following further detections of phylloxera in Victoria.

Agriculture Victoria has branded the insect the No. 1 threat to grapevines in Australia after the Maroondah phylloxera infested zone was extended.

The pest, which can easily spread, destroys grapevines by eating away at the roots and leaves until the plant dies.



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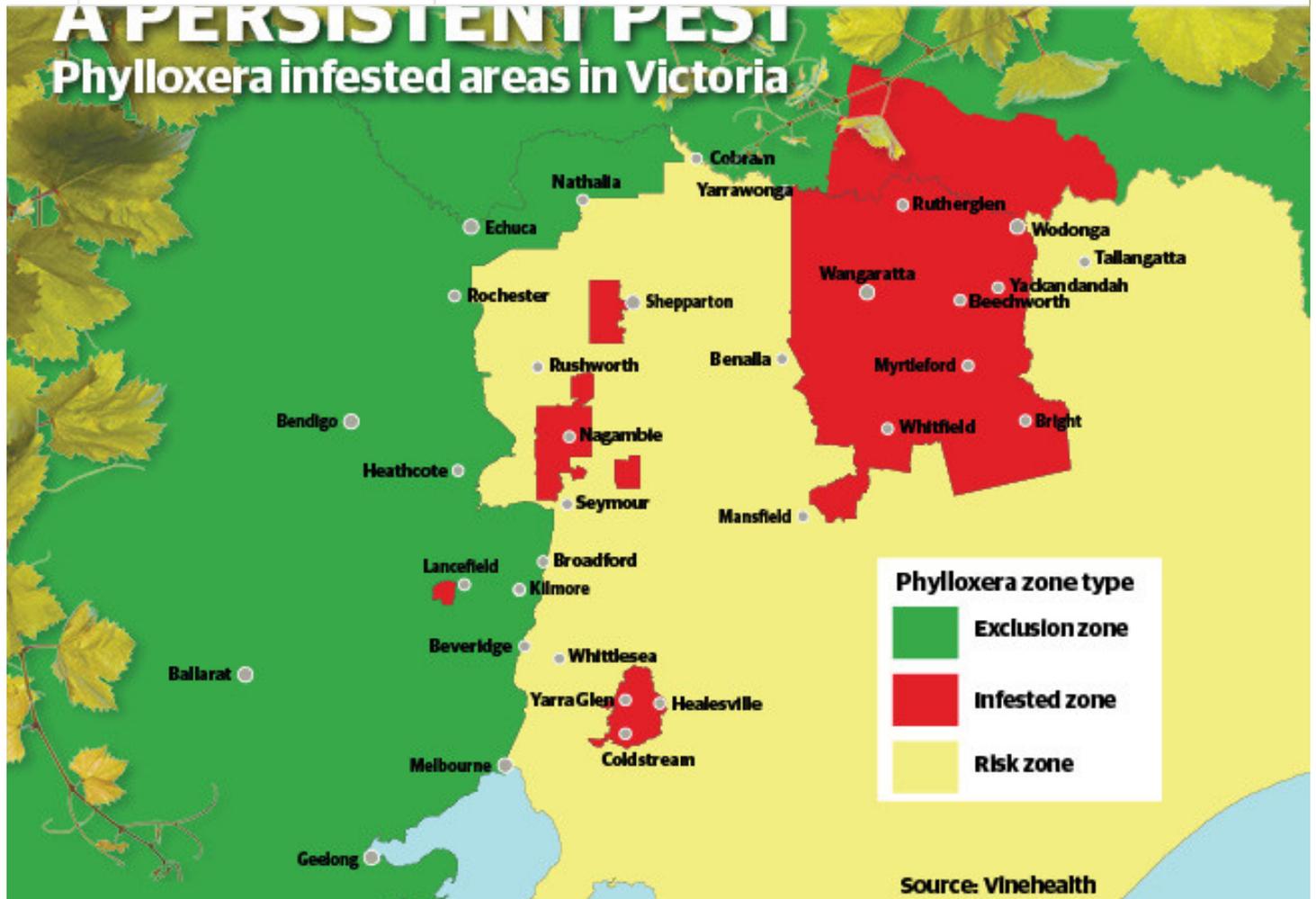
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In order to prevent further spreading of the pest and to protect the grape industry the Victorian Government uses different management zones.

These include phylloxera exclusion zones, which must be protected from the introduction of the pest, and phylloxera infested zones, which are established to prevent the insect spreading further.

While an estimate of the total financial damage phylloxera has caused the Victorian wine industry is currently unavailable, a spokeswoman from Agriculture Victoria said the use of the control zones had already paid dividends.

“In 2012, a benefit-cost analysis was completed on phylloxera exclusion zone activities for viticulture in Victoria (and) the analysis found the benefits of the



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said.

“If you have phylloxera in your vineyard, some of the phylloxera in the soil can get into the tread of a tire, or a shoe, and can then be transported to other parts of the vineyard ... and if the harvester isn’t cleaned and sterilised, it’s very easy for them to transport phylloxera from one vineyard to the other,” she said.

“So that’s why we have all the quarantine regulations that restrict and further controls on the movement of those vectors.”

As a result, Ms Pearce said the group was asking all growers, wineries, and suppliers to the industry to be vigilant and to strengthen their biosecurity practices. “It really is simple things, such as putting signs on the front of your gate in very clear, explicit language that people entering your property must respect biosecurity systems,” she said.

“It’s about not allowing people to walk down among vines without firstly sterilising their boots.

“And of course any equipment and machinery that comes on to your property needs to be clean of plant and soil, and you need to know where that’s come from.”



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