



The 'Who's Hitchhiking With You?' campaign encourages tourists to play a role in vine health by not walking amongst vines.

Next steps for vital biosecurity program

The biosecurity risk landscape is rich and diverse, with machinery, vehicles, equipment, grape material and people working in the industry all playing a role in the matrix.

And while tourists have always been considered a minor biosecurity risk, the increasing numbers of visitors moving around wine regions – particularly from overseas – are pushing this group up the risk ladder.

Vinehealth Australia's Responsible Visitation Campaign (RVC) was focused on this increasingly important risk creator group.

The campaign was co-funded by Primary Industries and Regions SA

(PIRSA) and supported by the South Australian Wine Industry Association (SAWIA) and Winemakers' Federation of Australia (WFA).

While the RVC was initially planned as an awareness campaign, early in the development process it was clear that an education phase was required.

In response, the team at Vinehealth Australia created the Wine Tourism Biosecurity Program for cellar door and tourism staff. A total of 211 participants from the Barossa, Adelaide Hills, Clare, McLaren Vale, Langhorne Creek, Coonawarra, Limestone Coast and Yorke Peninsula attended a free training session in February and March.

The Vinehealth Australia team took participants through an innovative program focused on:

- The key biosecurity risks for cellar doors.
- Practical solutions to reduce risk.
- Language to use when talking to tourists about biosecurity.
- Tools on offer from Vinehealth such as consumer friendly signs.

"A key recurring question from cellar door staff was in relation to knowing which tourists pose the biggest risks," said Inca Pearce, CEO of Vinehealth Australia.

"We suggest asking visitors where they have been in the past three



Lucy and Darren Golding, from Golding Wines in the Adelaide Hills. Golding is a Responsible Visitation Campaign test site.

weeks. If they have walked in or near a vineyard in a wine region interstate or overseas, then that risk needs to be managed. We recommend not allowing that person in your vineyard. But if they haven't been near a vineyard in the past three weeks, that person presents a lower risk to harming the health of your vines."

Next steps

Vinehealth Australia has received interest from other states to deliver the training program to cellar door and tourism staff on a user pays basis.

Vinehealth Australia is also sharing materials developed during the RVC, such as flyers, videos and written content, with other states and regions.

"We want to ensure this message gets out as widely as it possibly can," said Inca Peace, CEO of Vinehealth Australia. "We know our Responsible Visitation Campaign

has only scratched the surface of biosecurity risk management in the wine tourism space. We had limited money and time, but we're extremely proud of what's been achieved. And we hope this campaign will encourage the wine industry and the organisations that govern the industry, to create biosecurity plans to prevent the spread of destructive pests, diseases and weeds by visitors to cellar doors and regions."

Visitors, risks and solutions

While the Wine Tourism Biosecurity training program was being rolled out across the state, six well known cellar doors were set up as tests sites for the RVC.

Skillogalee Wines in Clare, Charles Melton Wines in the Barossa, Golding Wines in the Adelaide Hills, Bremerton Wines in Langhorne Creek, Angove Family Winemakers in McLaren Vale and Zema Estate

in Coonawarra were supplied with cellar door signage, disinfestation kits and biosecurity training.

And while these companies are unique in the wine styles and experiences they offer their visitors, the biosecurity challenges they face are common.

Each winery has a cellar door surrounded by vines. And most of these vines aren't fenced, which means easy access for visitors who may unknowingly spread a pest, disease or weed on their shoes or tyres.

"We do see people wander into our vineyards. The vineyard is the source of our livelihood, so protection of this precious resource is imperative," said Richard Angove, Director at Angove Family Winemakers McLaren Vale where there are 20 hectares of vines, the oldest planted in 1930.

"Most concerning to us is that there is no treatment for phylloxera – no spray or antidote – so if South



Wine Tourism Biosecurity signage at Charles Melton Wines, Barossa.

Australia does have an infestation it will be with us for good. And with so many vines on their own roots, one small outbreak could have a long-term impact on our wine business and the wider economy.”

Following their RCV training, Angove is working on biosecurity protocols for their cellar door and other parts of their wine business.

At Golding Wines, where 32 hectares of vines surround a popular cellar door and wedding venue, keeping visitors out of vine rows is a constant challenge.

“This usually happens near the car park and slightly away from the cellar door so it’s often unbeknown to us until we see a photo appear on social media,” said Lucy Golding.

“Before we joined the Vinehealth program as a test site, if we saw anyone in our vines, we wouldn’t have approached them and asked them to leave the area, as we wouldn’t have wanted to cause an awkward situation.

“Now that we have clear consumer-facing signage and our staff are trained, we do feel confident to approach our visitors and let them know about the dangers of spreading pests and diseases by walking in vineyards.”

Golding Wines offers vineyard tours to selected groups and has processes in place to manage risks. “We have a list of questions that determine a set of actions to allow a safe vineyard tour,” Lucy said.

“If we deem that an individual is going to put our vines at risk because of potentially contaminated shoes or clothing, we provide shoe covers or offer a foot bath. Suspect clothing, for example, a jacket or hat worn in a contaminated region within the past 21 days, has to be removed before that individual can take part in a tour.

“All tours are hosted by a Golding Wines employee who ensures the correct protocols are adhered to.”

Golding is also planning the launch of Wine Safari tours, where small groups will be taken on a scenic drive around the property, with stops at three viewing/photography platforms.

“We will start the tour at the cellar door with a glass of bubbles and a chat about our history and we will

work in a message about biosecurity at this point. We have determined that the critical question to be asked of our guests is: have you been out of SA or travelled from interstate to SA in the last 21 days? If the answer is no, then we are comfortable with taking that individual on tour with no further action. If the answer is yes, then we ask a series of more detailed questions; where, when, and take the appropriate action regarding their shoes, clothing and equipment.

“As we are about to launch this experience, we have come up with what we think will work well in theory, but we will put it all to the test and make modifications to our approach if and when needed.”

“The wine industry is South Australian tourism's backbone and its decimation would mean so much more than saying goodbye to your favourite drop.

Lucy agrees that biosecurity is not only important to her business, but the entire South Australian wine industry.

“We stand to lose so much. The introduction of phylloxera to our industry and the subsequent death of our vines would seriously impact our business due to loss of production and the loss of our most precious asset,” she said.

“If a 5km quarantine zone were to be placed around our property because of a phylloxera outbreak, we would not be able to process any of our grapes as we don’t have a winery onsite. This would obviously be disastrous for our wine business.

“And tourists and visitors want to visit healthy vineyards. Disruption to our tourism activities would have a negative impact on the public side of our business. At a state tourism level, the fact that we can market ourselves as clean, green and phylloxera free is a major advantage to have over other states. We do not want to lose that.”

Lucy said many people are unaware that South Australia is free

of many of the pests that damage vines in other parts of Australia and the world. “People outside the industry in particular don’t even know that these pests exist, so they can be spread unwittingly. That’s why I feel that this public awareness campaign is so important. Education and information is the key to keeping SA phylloxera free.”

Rebecca and Lucy Willson, winemaker and marketing manager at Bremerton, are passionate about keeping Langhorne Creek’s vines healthy. “Vine biosecurity is at such a critical stage that it is now up to all of us to ensure the future of our wine industry,” Rebecca said.

“The wine industry is South Australian tourism's backbone and its decimation would mean so much more than saying goodbye to your favourite drop. Remember to follow South Australian quarantine laws, and don’t walk in the vineyards when you visit our beautiful wine region, Langhorne Creek. It’s up to those who know SA wine is too good to lose to spread the word, not the Phylloxera!”

At Zema Estate in Coonawarra, Nick Zema has seen behaviour change in visitors since a number of consumer-friendly signs were put up. Large signs have been placed in strategic locations at common vineyard entry points and the messages are legible from many metres away.

“We know from past behaviour that people visiting the cellar door will sometimes wander into the vines, but the new signage is working a treat! We haven’t had many comments, but we’ve certainly noticed a behaviour change with visitors reading the signs and now looking at the vineyard from a distance,” Nick said.

As well as putting up signs, Nick and his team are asking visitors where they have been in the past 21 days and including biosecurity activities in standard operating procedures.

If you’d like to know more about the Responsible Visitation Campaign or the Wine Tourism Biosecurity Program, you can visit www.vinehealth.com.au or phone (08) 8273 0550.