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page 1 of 1

Phylloxera warning

Wine Australia and Vinehealth Australia are encouraging grapegrowers considering planting or replanting grapevines to use phylloxera-resistant rootstocks to future-proof their business.

Grape phylloxera is one of the most serious biosecurity risks facing Australia's grape and wine industry.

There are 83 genetic strains of phylloxera in Australia with the potential to devastate vineyards and wreak economic devastation.

While impacts are dependent on the strain, once vines are infested they typically die within six years — but the effects on yields are felt much sooner.

Once infested, the only solution is to replant on resistant rootstock, selected based on site conditions and phylloxera strain.

Wine Australia research, development and extension general manager Liz Waters said applying best practice farm gate hygiene and investing in resistant rootstocks should be considered as an insurance policy for grapegrowers across Australia.

"While alone it cannot stop the spread of phylloxera, one of the most effective long-term practices is planting vines grafted on phylloxera-resistant rootstocks so that, if there is an outbreak, the immediate economic impact is reduced," Dr Waters said.

She urged grapegrowers to use Wine Australia's free online Grapevine Rootstock Selector www.grapevinerootstock.com to pick the best rootstocks for their vineyard and seek expert assistance from their local nursery.