

# Heightened biosecurity threat warning to wine industry

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THREATS to the state's wine industry from insects, viruses and bacteria are increasing, warns Vine Health Australia chief executive Inca Pearce.

She will describe some of the looming pest and disease risks during a keynote address

to the 10th Australasian Soil-borne Diseases Symposium at the National Wine Centre this week.

The Adelaide-based biosecurity authority provides advice and support to grape growers in the hope they will take the threat seriously and defend their vineyards against invasion.

"There's always a tone of complacency or apathy," Ms Pearce told *The Advertiser*.

"That 'it won't happen to me, I've got a lot of other things I'm focusing on in my grape or wine business and this one doesn't rise to the top', but what we're trying to say, is this is a significant risk and it should be incorporated into

business continuity planning." A recent survey of South Australian vineyard owners revealed considerable room for improvement in "farm gate hygiene". These are the site-specific biosecurity activities required to minimise the risk of pests, diseases and weeds entering a property.

Ms Pearce said the number

of exotic plant pest incursions in Australia had doubled in the past seven years.

Last year brown marmorated stink bugs were intercepted at Port Adelaide when they arrived in a shipping container of timber from the US, destined for wine barrels in SA. In vineyards, the bugs eat the grapes, reducing quality and yield. If

they are harvested along with the grapes, they taint wine.

But the tiny pest insect phylloxera remains the biggest threat, encroaching on our borders with New South Wales and Victoria.

Meanwhile, grapevine pinot gris virus, first detected in 2016, is "now just another virus that growers have to manage".