

# Timely update for SA Plant Quarantine Standard

Vinehealth Australia has undertaken a comprehensive review of the phylloxera-related conditions in South Australia's Plant Quarantine Standard. Through the industry consultation phase, it is working in partnership with industry to ensure these conditions are strong and current.



Adult phylloxera. Image courtesy Agriculture Victoria Research.

**S**outh Australia's enviable phylloxera-free status is in part due to a set of conditions that outline entry requirements for grapes, grape products, machinery, equipment, diagnostic samples, grapevine material and vineyard soil that could carry phylloxera into the state. These conditions form part of a document called 'South Australia's Plant Quarantine Standard' (PQS).

Maintenance of strong borders has never been more necessary for the grape and wine industries from a biosecurity perspective. It is timely that, as an industry, we review the range of potential entry pathways for phylloxera into South Australia and assess whether the current entry conditions detailed in the PQS for these pathways are adequate.

## Why the review?

We are operating in a rapidly changing and heightened global biosecurity landscape, where the potential for introduction of a pest, disease or weed into South Australia from interstate or overseas has never been higher. Use of contract labour and machinery moving between properties has increased, as has the movement of grapes, grape products, machinery and equipment between states and regions. Visitor numbers from overseas and interstate are also rising. There continues to be further detections of grape phylloxera in Victoria inside established Phylloxera Infested Zones and most recently in a Phylloxera Risk Zone.

South Australia's wine industry is well worth protecting from a biosecurity incursion. SA has 57% of the national

vineyard area planted to winegrapes (75,566 hectares), worth \$2.35 billion to the state's economy. South Australia also has some of the oldest winegrape vines in the world and much-loved and internationally recognised wine brands to protect. Significantly, 72% of SA's vineyard area is planted on own roots, susceptible to grape phylloxera.

The conditions relating to phylloxera in South Australia's PQS (7, 7A, 8 and 8A) have not been reviewed in their entirety for at least 10 years since the release of the National Phylloxera Management Protocol (NPMP) in 2009 – a document that underpins the disinfestation procedures in all state import regulations.

Importantly, the 2009 NPMP presented disinfestation treatments against various phylloxera risk vectors. The efficacy of these treatments at that time had only been tested on one or two phylloxera strains. More recently, Agriculture Victoria has assessed the effectiveness of these same disinfestation treatments on seven phylloxera strains, representing different known lineages of our endemic strains. It is vital that disinfestation practices in our PQS reflect our contemporary scientific knowledge and are effective against these key phylloxera strains if we want to keep them out of South Australia.

Vinehealth Australia continues to field calls from growers who have difficulty interpreting the PQS; an indication that the format and readability of the document also warrants improvement, which in turn should increase adherence to the entry requirements.

## A considered and thorough review process

Vinehealth Australia has undertaken a comprehensive review of the current PQS in order to propose a



Tractors, grape bins and harvesters can all carry phylloxera.

suite of changes to industry, aimed at strengthening the state's borders. This review involved:

- Completion of a pest risk analysis for grape phylloxera to evaluate the risk of entry, establishment and spread of phylloxera based on current\* PQS entry conditions for all risk pathways from each of the three Phylloxera Management Zones. Identification of the risk pathways for which the overall risk estimate is above a 'very low' rating, indicating a strengthening of import requirements is warranted.
- Evaluation of the latest published research on phylloxera disinfection procedures undertaken by Agriculture Victoria. This work highlighted some practical issues affecting efficacy of disinfection procedures and, most importantly, identified a current disinfection procedure that is ineffective against some phylloxera strains and therefore needs urgent updating in the SA PQS.
  - Initiation of a tri-state meeting between Vinehealth Australia, Agriculture Victoria and Department of Primary Industries New South Wales to discuss this latest science and agree in principle on required regulatory changes.
- Full analysis of phylloxera conditions 7, 7A, 8, 8A in the current SA PQS v13.0 October 2017\* and the rewrite of these conditions into a single consolidated condition, proposed as 'Condition 7'. From this analysis, 85 changes have been proposed and categorised into three themes:
  - *Readability:* improving industry's ability to understand the entry conditions and how to comply with them;

\*Since the time of writing this article, a new version of the SA PQS V14.1 March 2019 has been published.



- **Completeness:** ensuring entry conditions have been outlined for all risk pathways that can be regulated; and
- **Science:** integrating new science on phylloxera disinfection treatments into practice.
- Discussion and validation of the proposed set of changes with Primary Industries and Regions South Australia (PIRSA).
- Development of a consultation pack for industry, available at [www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/sa-pqs-consultation](http://www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/sa-pqs-consultation).

### Industry consultation – an important step

The industry consultation phase of this review is critical. It provides the opportunity to convey the rigour and thought behind the suite of proposed changes. Equally, it provides industry with the opportunity to gain confidence in the review, the reasoning behind proposed changes, to offer additional changes for consideration, and the opportunity to evaluate the effect of proposed changes on the supply chain.

As a means of beginning industry consultation on the suite of proposed

changes to the PQS and background work underpinning these proposed changes, Vinehealth Australia produced a consultation pack available at [www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/sa-pqs-consultation](http://www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/sa-pqs-consultation).

This comprehensive pack is a ‘one stop shop’ for industry of all the relevant materials produced during the review and includes the proposed new Condition 7, a full list of proposed changes, the state pest risk analysis for phylloxera, an evaluation of recent phylloxera research, frequently asked questions and a feedback form.

Targeted and general communications to South Australian vineyard owners, wineries, carriers, contractors, laboratories, interstate regulators, and the nursery and vine improvement sector is occurring, advising of the PQS review and consultation pack, and seeking feedback to the proposed changes by 30 June 2019.

A long consultation window was seen as necessary to ensure adequate time to review the changes and provide an opportunity to assess the effect of any changes on their business.

A number of meetings have been held with regional associations and their technical committees to introduce the aim of the review, outline how the review was done and discuss the consultation process. On subsequent visits, each group was taken through the proposed changes in detail.

“Feedback from these sessions has been very encouraging,” said Vinehealth Australia’s technical manager Suzanne McLoughlin. “Not only have these sessions provided participants the opportunity to shape the final product and gain greater awareness of current entry requirements into South Australia for phylloxera risk vectors, but they have also allowed for focussed discussion of general biosecurity issues for Vinehealth Australia to address in time.”

### Next steps

Between now and the end of the consultation period, Vinehealth Australia will finalise consultation, review the feedback provided from each consultation session and produce an updated consolidated Condition 7 for recommendation to PIRSA and the Minister for Primary Industries and Regional Development for endorsement.

## A selection of the proposed changes

### READABILITY

- Consolidation of current Conditions 7, 7A, 8 and 8A into a single Condition 7 for grape phylloxera.
- Addition of a flowchart to communicate current requirement for importer registration and direct inspection as a required component of importation.

### COMPLETENESS

- Entry of a harvester from a Phylloxera Exclusion Zone (PEZ) to require cleaning and a certified statement verifying it has not worked in a Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ) or Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) in the previous six months (compared with the current two-week period).
- Strengthened focus on the cleaning step for grape harvesters to improve efficacy of dry heat treatment.

- Photographic timestamped evidence of dismantled parts in the heat shed to be produced when dry heat treatment required to be undertaken as a condition of entry for importing harvesters.
- Data logger evidence to be presented during application of import when either dry heat or hot water treatment is undertaken for machinery and equipment.
- Addition of heat treatment as a valid disinfection treatment for grape bins alongside hot water.
- Prohibition of winegrapes from a PRZ.

### SCIENCE

- Increased time specification of 40°C dry heat treatment from two hours to three hours to ensure efficacy against known key endemic phylloxera strains.



Balnaves of Coonawarra viticulturist Pete Balnaves.

### **Pete Balnaves: PQS review is vital**

For Coonawarra viticulturist Pete Balnaves, the rules for allowing the entry of machinery and equipment that could carry phylloxera into South Australia should be as strict as possible.

“There are risks that we shouldn’t be prepared to take, to keep our industry safe,” Pete said. “We don’t want to create trade barriers, but our wine industry here in SA is too important to risk.”

Pete, viticulturist at Balnaves of Coonawarra, is supportive of the review of SA’s Plant Quarantine Standard (PQS) and sees the proposed new Condition 7 as a strengthening of the import conditions for allowing phylloxera risk vectors into the state.

“It’s been a decade since the phylloxera conditions in the SA PQS have been looked at, so this detailed review by Vinehealth Australia is timely, relevant and very important,” he said.

“If people are going to use the PQS correctly, it needs to be easier to read and understand, with fewer grey areas. Grey areas can lead to

misinterpretation, which has the potential to be catastrophic.

“And we know a lot more about the science of phylloxera now, so our import conditions must match the knowledge about methods, temperature and time for killing phylloxera bugs. For example, we know now that we need to increase the time duration of the 40°C dry heat treatment, as the current two hours is not effective for killing all key phylloxera strains. It’s good to see the duration of this treatment increased to three hours in the new proposed Condition 7.”

Pete said it was good to see comprehensive industry consultation occurring, to ensure the PQS review process was robust.

And while the PQS review is welcomed, Pete said there also needed to be more industry accountability for following the guidelines.

“Vinehealth Australia can facilitate, the government can legislate, but it’s up to individuals to take responsibility for their own properties,” Pete said.

“You wouldn’t let a stranger walk through your house without permission, so why do we let people, machines

and equipment onto our vineyards without checking that they’re safe? This PQS review has highlighted to me the importance of vineyard owners being better gatekeepers.”

Pete said state-wide work to prevent phylloxera and other pests and diseases from entering SA was also vital, including a comprehensive phylloxera surveillance program and outbreak planning for South Australia.

“We need to make sure Vinehealth Australia – formerly called the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board of South Australia – has the funding it needs to do this work,” Pete said. “It would be great to see the state government also funding this work, in line with the support offered to the horticulture industry for fruit fly prevention.

“South Australia’s 2.35 billion wine industry, which represents 60% of the Australian wine industry, is a sector worth protecting, any way we can.”

The PQS Consultation Pack is available here: [www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/sa-pqs-consultation](http://www.vinehealth.com.au/industry/sa-pqs-consultation).