



Quarantine changes welcomed by wine industry

The new phylloxera conditions in South Australia's Plant Quarantine Standard have been welcomed by the wine industry, writes **Cindie Smart**. What are the key changes and why is the PQS important?

It's a well-known fact that pests and diseases don't respect state or regional borders. COVID-19 has starkly illustrated that.

But with one of the world's worst pests and grapevine killer, phylloxera, present in some parts of Australia and not others, there are controls in place in each state and territory to prevent its spread.

One of those controls is South Australia's Plant Quarantine Standard (PQS), which provides the entry requirements for plants and plant related products, such as machinery, into the state.

On 21 July 2020, following a major review of the phylloxera conditions in the SA PQS by Vinehealth Australia, significant changes came into effect.

"The new consolidated phylloxera condition (Condition 7) in SA PQS Version 17 is a big improvement on the previous multiple phylloxera-related conditions, which were difficult to read and understand, and weren't based on the latest science about what's required to kill phylloxera," said Vinehealth Australia CEO Inca Lee.

"It's now critical that every person in the wine industry understands these changes, assesses the impacts on their

business, communicates relevant changes to their supply chains and implements any necessary practice changes to ensure they comply."

The new Condition 7 includes a large number of changes which are categorised into themes of completeness, science and readability. It includes entry conditions for all risk pathways that can be regulated and integrates new science on phylloxera disinfection treatments.

Key changes in Condition 7 now include:

- Steam as a sterilisation treatment method for all machinery or equipment being imported into SA is now prohibited;
- The entry of used netting, trellis posts, vine guards, dripper tube, wire and clips into SA is now prohibited;
- The entry of winegrapes grown in a Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ) into SA is now prohibited;
- Alignment of entry requirements for equipment from a PRZ with tougher standards applicable for equipment from a Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) and Phylloxera Interim Buffer Zone (PIBZ);
- Alignment of entry requirements for grape marc, with that of winegrapes.

"But the work is not finished. The PQS review will be ongoing to maintain alignment with new science and contemporary biosecurity knowledge," Lee said.

The intent of the PQS review was to protect South Australia's \$2.15 billion wine industry by strengthening the conditions for entry of potential phylloxera vectors.

"We have some of the oldest vines in the world in SA and we are collectively custodians of our viticultural assets," Lee said.

"Our industry currently operates in a heightened biosecurity landscape and is more interconnected than ever before. We need to be constantly looking for ways to protect our vines from pest and disease incursions."

McLaren Vale winemaker Drew Noon was involved with the PQS review through the McLaren Vale Phylloxera and Biosecurity Working Group. He said the changes to the SA PQS were a welcome step in the right direction.

"The updated PQS is more targeted and more rigorous. Some of the changes were obvious – prohibiting the entry of used netting, trellis posts, dripper tube,



McLaren Vale winemaker Drew Noon.

wire and clips that we can't clean of soil and plant material is a no brainer," Noon said.

"And banning the entry of winegrapes grown in a Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ), considering the detections of phylloxera in these zones of late, is a very important change.

"I'm also pleased to see that steam has been banned as a sterilisation treatment for machinery and equipment being brought into SA, as we know that it's not a reliable way to kill phylloxera in practice."

Easier to read

Noon said the new phylloxera condition in the PQS was also much easier to read. "For those of us who are interested, and we all should be, the Plant Quarantine Standard has always been a tough read. If you wanted to know the rules about importing a used harvester, or some vine cuttings from interstate, it was hard to find the right information," he said.

"The changes mean that now anybody can read and understand the rules. But the work is not finished. There is a huge ongoing job to be done to protect South Australian vineyards from phylloxera.

"The National Phylloxera Management Protocol last published in 2009 is in urgent need of review and updating, particularly in relation to disinfestation procedures, the rules around the rezoning of Phylloxera Risk Zones to Phylloxera Exclusion Zones and even considering whether current zonal management is the most effective strategy."

Noon said these were just three of a number of key focus areas that require consideration as part of a much broader national strategy for managing phylloxera.

"The Yarra Valley situation is concerning, and it requires a whole relook at the way we manage phylloxera in Australia," he said.

"But while the national rules for phylloxera management are being reviewed, we need to do all we can to protect our vines on the ground in South Australia. And that's why this review of our state's PQS is so welcome.

"Now it's up to the wine industry, including contractors and the tourism sector, to act responsibly, and not contribute to the entry of phylloxera into South Australia."

Lee said protection of South Australia's wine industry from phylloxera and other significant pests and diseases could only be achieved through the collective efforts of industry and government.

"We're asking industry to maintain focus on compliance with South Australia's updated PQS to avoid inadvertently introducing and spreading phylloxera," she said.

"We also ask you to strongly encourage your neighbours, suppliers and community to follow the rules. We urge you to also continue your focus on implementing strong farm-gate hygiene practices to the collective benefit of the South Australian wine industry."

The comprehensive review of the phylloxera-related conditions in South Australia's PQS was led by Vinehealth Australia. It included completion of a state pest risk analysis for grape phylloxera and an evaluation of recent phylloxera

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research around efficacy of disinfection protocols. Recommended changes arising from these pieces of work were reviewed in detail with Biosecurity SA, prior to extensive consultation with industry over a 12-month period. A consultation pack was created and distributed to more than 3,300 industry stakeholders

seeking feedback. Proposed changes to the PQS were discussed face-to-face with more than 150 stakeholders across 39 meetings, covering 10 viticultural regions or zones in South Australia. Final recommendations refined through the industry consultation stage were then made to Biosecurity SA and the Minister

for Primary Industries and Regional Development for endorsement.

Vinehealth Australia has outlined the key changes incorporated into Version 17 of South Australia's PQS and what they mean to the viticultural industries in a flyer, available on its website here: <https://vinehealth.com.au/regulation/sa-pqs/>

Education is key

After travelling to Victoria's Yarra Valley last November for Vinehealth Australia's Phylloxera Immersion Tour and witnessing first-hand the damage caused by an incursion, Riverland vineyard owner David Zadow is a firm supporter of quarantine rules and education about biosecurity.

"Having clearly defined and easy to understand rules about the movement of machinery, equipment, plants and other materials into South Australia is extremely important," Zadow said.

"Education for all people entering SA is also important. There should be information at the border telling people to not park or walk near any vines if they have recently been to a Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) or Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ)."

Zadow said he would also like to see border officials handing out on the spot fines for not adhering to the phylloxera condition in SA's Plant Quarantine Standard.

"And it's also important for growers to use the resources available, like the teams at Vinehealth Australia and Biosecurity SA," he said.

"I recently imported some new and used equipment from New South Wales that hadn't been used in vineyards. I wasn't sure if the machinery was situated in a PIZ, so I contacted Vinehealth Australia and Suzanne McLoughlin confirmed it was actually on a property in a Phylloxera Exclusion Zone, so there was no risk on that front.

"I also spoke to PIRSA-Biosecurity SA and they were extremely helpful in



Riverland grower David Zadow

relation to the questions I had about import requirements.

"I think that if all grapegrowers and equipment importers knew about the ways in which they can be supported, then biosecurity may be the first thing they think about when purchasing equipment from interstate. Education is critical."

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