



## SHEEP AND VINE BIOSECURITY RISK

If you're planning to agist sheep on your vineyard, taking the time to consider biosecurity risks when entering into an agistment agreement can help avoid a plant pest, disease or weed being introduced into your vineyard.

Using sheep to control midrow and under vine growth is an alternative to slashing and spraying and has the potential to reduce vineyard management costs.

But before agreeing to agist sheep, there are several things for vineyard owners to consider, including biosecurity risk. To protect both yourself as the vineyard owner, and the potential agistee, a written agistment agreement is recommended.

On the following page we outline what a written agistment agreement should address from a biosecurity perspective.

While animal health, access to water and fencing are outside the bounds of this fact sheet, they are also important considerations as part of the agistment agreement.

**SHEEP GENERALLY GRAZE VINEYARDS POST-HARVEST UNTIL BUDBURST, FEEDING ON WEEDS AND MID ROW GRASSES. ENSURE BIOSECURITY RISK IS ADDRESSED WHEN CONSIDERING AGISTING SHEEP.**

**Vinehealth Australia is the wine biosecurity expert, providing information and tools for best practice operational biosecurity, and supporting vital biosecurity programs and research.**



## A written agistment agreement should address the following:

- The agistment history of the sheep: if the sheep have previously been agisted in vineyards in a Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) or Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ), do not accept them for agistment in a vineyard in a Phylloxera Exclusion Zone (PEZ). It is also not advised that sheep are moved for agistment either between vineyards located within a PIZ, or PRZ, or moved between vineyards within these Phylloxera Management Zones.
- Weed transfer: to minimise the risk of weed transfer into your vineyard, ask if the sheep have been on a previous property with problematic weeds. Requesting that sheep be shorn prior to entering your vineyard is also preferable to reduce the potential for fleeces to be hitchhiking weed seeds. Ensure you also advise the potential agistee of any harmful weeds on your property that could be tracked off when the agistment ends.
- Agrochemical residues: ensure you advise the potential agistee of any re-entry periods for grazing that apply (these might be from chemicals already applied before the agistment period, or chemical applications planned during the sheep occupancy).
- Determine whether you need to request a 'National Sheep Health Declaration' from the potential agistee, if this is a state requirement.

## Upon signing of the agistment agreement

Assuming you have determined from a phylloxera perspective that the sheep to be agisted do not pose a potential risk to your vineyard and that your vineyard is in a PEZ:

- Ensure you have sighted the National Sheep Health Declaration (see above) if applicable.

- Discuss farm-gate hygiene requirements of the sheep truck with the agistee: query if the truck has been near vine rows in a PIZ or PRZ for at least 29 days prior. If yes, communicate with the agistee that this poses a heightened phylloxera risk to your vineyard unless the truck has been heat treated at 45°C for 1.5 hours or at 40°C for 3 hours, prior to leaving the PRZ or PIZ. If this disinfection has not occurred, request that an alternative truck is required to transport these sheep to your vineyard. Also communicate to the agistee that the sheep truck must be clean of all soil and plant material upon arrival at your vineyard.

## Upon arrival of the sheep truck at your vineyard:

- Verify that the truck is clean of soil and plant material upon entry to your vineyard.
- As you would for other visitors to your site, require the truck driver to sign in via your visitor record book and answer questions as to where the truck has been (in terms of phylloxera management zones) for at least 29 days prior and where the driver has been within the same timeframe.
- Avoid loading/unloading the sheep directly down vine rows.
- Limit unnecessary movement of the driver down your vine rows.
- Retain agistment records for the entry and exit of sheep to your vineyard.

## Upon exit of the sheep truck from your vineyard:

- Ensure the truck is clean of all soil and plant material.

**For further information, refer to Vinehealth Australia's website [www.vinehealth.com.au](http://www.vinehealth.com.au) or phone (08) 8273 0550.**