

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Call for improved farm-gate hygiene

Vinehealth Australia is calling for grapegrowers to examine and improve their farm-gate hygiene practices in the lead up to vintage 2017.

Vintage is a key risk time for the spread of pests and diseases, including phylloxera, due to the increased movement around regions and states of machinery, equipment, vehicles, people, footwear, clothing, winegrapes (whole or harvested) and grape products such as unfiltered juice and pre-fermentation grape marc. Responsibility for preventing the spread of pests and diseases between states and within states is a collective effort between industry and regulators.

Today is the time to review your farm-gate hygiene. New research has given rise to changes to the footwear and small hand tool disinfection protocol, now requiring 60 seconds immersion in 2% sodium hypochlorite solution, and no rinsing of footwear or tools after immersion. See the attached **Footwear and Small Hand Tool Disinfestation Protocol** for more information.

“We know from surveys of vineyard owners that farm-gate hygiene is patchy. And we also know that vintage is a ridiculously busy time and, despite good intentions, in the rush to pick and deliver fruit, hygiene standards can slip,” says Vinehealth Australia CEO Inca Pearce.

“Vintage is going to be a little later this year, which gives vineyard owners the opportunity to spend time examining and improving their farm-gate hygiene and biosecurity practices.”

Vinehealth Australia strongly advocates adopting these 10 practices as a minimum this vintage:

1. Review links with interstate vineyards, wineries, contractors and suppliers. Are those businesses in a Phylloxera Infested Zone (PIZ) or Phylloxera Risk Zone (PRZ)? Understand the regulations and documentation required for the movement of grapes, must, unfiltered juice, marc (pre- or post-fermentation), machinery and equipment used in vineyards, diagnostic samples, soil, grapevine cuttings, rootlings, potted vines, within and between states.
2. Provide training for all vineyard staff including contract and casual labour on hygiene protocols.
3. Restrict access to your property with fences and gates.
4. Use signs to advise restrictions of entry to your property.
5. Require everyone other than staff to report on arrival at your property. Keep a visitor log, recording vineyard regions each visitor has visited in the past 8 days and check whether there has been a visit to a vineyard in a Phylloxera Infested or Risk Zone in Victoria, New South Wales or Queensland.

6. Do not allow unauthorised vehicles to drive within your vineyard and provide a vineyard vehicle for use if necessary. Provide parking for visitor vehicles away from vines on a hard pack surface.
7. Check machinery and equipment (including small hand tools and technical equipment) to ensure it's cleaned of all soil and plant material before it's used on your vineyard. Ensure it complies with state quarantine regulations for cleaning, sterilisation and proof of origin and is accompanied by required documentation. Provide a wash down facility to enable cleaning of machinery and equipment before it leaves your property.
8. Ensure all people who come onto your property disinfest their footwear upon entry and exit in accordance with the new Footwear and Small Hand Tool Disinfestation Protocol. Ensure visitors and contractors wear clean clothes before starting work on your property.
9. Only plant with certified, pest-free propagation material.
10. Regularly inspect your vines for anything unusual or different. Seek help to identify what the problem is.

Vinehealth Australia is working hard behind the scenes to support vineyard owners in their efforts to prevent the spread of pests and diseases during vintage and beyond.

For example, this month Vinehealth Australia has initiated the building of an online 'winegrape biosecurity legislation' tool. This tool will help users by outlining the legal requirements associated with the movement of a chosen vector, such as 'harvester', once 'from' and 'to' locations are identified.

In addition, contact details and electronic links will be provided to assist users to complete required biosecurity documentation.

"The tool will be simple and easy to use," says Inca Peace. "We feel this has the potential to raise the awareness and understanding of legal requirements and improve compliance with these requirements among users of the tool.

"We are in the process of contacting relevant biosecurity staff in state government departments to progress this idea and we're working towards release in February 2017."

For more tips and details on farm-gate hygiene visit <http://www.vinehealth.com.au/>

For a copy of Vinehealth Australia's vintage biosecurity checklist visit <http://www.vinehealth.com.au/resources/vintage-biosecurity-practice-checklist/>

— ENDS —

#### **ABOUT VINEHEALTH AUSTRALIA**

Vinehealth Australia (formerly the Phylloxera and Grape Industry Board of SA) is a statutory body funded by South Australian vineyard owners to protect South Australian vineyards from diseases, pests and other conditions that may affect vine health. Its role is to develop and advocate policy, as well as provide current research and best practice measures to help ensure that farm-gate hygiene practices are integrated into daily vineyard operations in South Australia.

For more information, visit [www.vinehealth.com.au](http://www.vinehealth.com.au)

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