

UPCOMING MEETINGS

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 29, 2008: Regional Research Roadshow Co-sponsored with UC Davis.

Wine & Roses Garden Ballroom, 2505 West Turner Rd., Lodi

Registration 8:00 – 8:30am. Talks 8:30 – noon followed by lunch.

RSVP: Please RSVP to 209-367-4727 by Nov. 13, 2009

Tentative Agenda:

- Practical Sanitation Strategies – Dr. Linda Bisson, UC Davis
- Vineyard practices to wine composition to wine sensory – Dr. Hildegard Heymann, UC Davis.
- Nematicide delivery via resistant rootstocks – Dr. Mike NcKenry, Cooperative Extension Specialist, Kearney Ag Center, UC Riverside
- Information concerning crop adjustment, canopy management and irrigation to control crop loss if extended hang time is employed. – Drs. Nick Dokoozlian or Luis Sanchez.
- Identification of factors that influence the level of tannins and polymeric pigments in grapes and wines – Dr. Doug Adams, UC Davis
- Can yield predict winegrape quality – Dr. Mark Matthews, UC Davis

NOVEMBER 13, 2009: Current Issues in Vineyard Health UC Davis Extension. 9:00am – 4:00pm, Da Vinci Bldg, 1632 Da Vinci Ct., Davis, CA. For more information call (800) 752-0881.



RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

LODI·WOODBRIDGE
WINEGRAPE COMMISSION
2545 W. TURNER RD.
LODI, CA 95242





Human Resources, Worker Safety, and the Lodi Wine Community

BY CLIFF OHMART Sustainable Winegrowing Director, Lodi Winegrape Commission

Lodi winegrowers have long recognized the importance of Human Resources in running a successful business. This is evident by the prominent role it plays in the programs they have developed, such as the Lodi Winegrower's Workbook 1st and 2nd editions and the Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing program. One of the biggest accomplishments is the development and implementation of Farm Safety Day, sponsored by the Lodi Chamber of Commerce, where Lodi growers and others in the wine community come together one day each year to train in both Spanish and English over 500 vineyard workers on important worker safety issues.

Human Resource issues, such as worker safety, are one of many aspects of sustainable winegrowing that one can always improve upon. Government regulations designed to improve human resources practices are constantly changing. It can be very difficult and time consuming for growers, particularly small ones who do not have the finances to dedicate an employee to Human Resource issues, to keep up with the latest regulations. Moreover, when working conditions become unsafe and a tragedy occurs, such as the deaths of several workers due to heat stroke this summer, compliance officers come out to the farms in force looking for violations of regulations.

Worker safety issues are very complex. As I already mentioned, worker safety regulations change often and it can be hard to keep up. Some of the regulations are vaguely written so it is unclear to growers what is required for compliance. Some regulations are expensive to implement. In some cases cultural beliefs or economic factors make workers reluctant to come

forward when working conditions are not adequate or they are physically unwell.

There are many other Human Resource issues to also be concerned about such as wages and hours, harassment, discipline, grievances, compensation, benefits, union organizing, privacy rights, drug policies, etc. Sometimes a grower may be out of compliance with a regulation and not even know it. It is important for growers to know there are resources available to help keep up with all these issues. It is also important that growers are aware of their legal rights in these matters.

Because of the ever increasing importance of Human Resource issues in growing winegrapes in the Lodi region, LWC will hold a series of meetings over the next year devoted to bringing a range of important issues to the attention of grower members and providing links to resources that will help deal with them effectively. Two organizations have come forward to help with these meetings: Saqui & Raimondo, Counselors to Management (www.srlaborlaw.com); and Farm Employers Labor Service (FELS, www.fels.org).

Saqui & Raimondo is a law firm dedicated to representing employers. They practice in areas of Labor Relations, Employment Counseling, and Management Development. As a part of their business they conduct training seminars and have offered to do some for LWC on important Human Resource topics. FELS is a subscriber member organization affiliated with the California Farm Bureau Federation. They assist members in complying with labor laws and avoiding labor relations problems.



TOPICS:

Weather	Weed Pests
Dry Soil Conditions	Vine Mealy Bug
Harvest	Fall Check List

After a dry beginning in March, scattered spring frosts in April, lots of smoke cover from wild fires and generally dry and windy conditions through the summer; harvest arrived. Bud break occurred about the long term average in mid March, as did bloom around early to mid-May bloom, the lighter than average crop and moderate temperatures brought harvest just a little on the early side with Sauvignon blanc, Pinot grigio and some white Zinfandel picked beginning the first week of August.

Some mid season varieties sped up in development and Sangiovese, Syrah, and red Zinfandel were ready by September 1st. As harvest continues, the late season varieties are maturing well ahead of normal. Colors and flavors seem to be developing well, with good acid levels. The pace of harvest has been reasonable, but has increased in rate lately with a mix of varieties ready to pick. As of the first week of September we had 13 days above 100°F compared to an average of about 12 for a season. The hot weather started with a brief round in June, but intensified during a July heat wave. A little bit of heat can help ripening, but



when temperatures soar above 95 to 100 for a week and more the vines begin to loose ground and even “shut down”.

The 2008 season was as dry as 2007, but with a little better deep moisture compared to last year. There have been some variable responses of vines to the dry windy conditions, with many vines showing yellow basal leaves and less growth while at the same time some areas of the same vineyard or even vine showing good new growth in response to irrigation. And there were some vines with berry shrivel or parts of clusters raisining, but not attributable to disease, nutrient deficiency or excessive exposure; somewhat similar to the dry conditions seen in of 2003 and 2004.

The dry year does require more irrigation and attention to timing, especially under a regulated deficit irrigation strategy. Besides the effects of the spring frost, increased costs of pumping, we have seen less crop damage due to sunburn or water stress. Summer bunch rot was minimal, but may have occurred where irrigation was increased with concern of the dry soil conditions, especially in Zinfandel and Petite Sirah. Unfortunately, not a lot can be done to prevent summer bunch rot other than managing irrigation on a fine line between providing enough water to keep the vines from being excessively stressed and too much water that might cause tight clusters and thin berry skins. The bottom line is moderate vine stress through adequate and well timed irrigation.

Even though the extremely hot temperature may have slowed the vines down, low relative humidity (at least until last week) and lighter crop loads kept harvest early and will finish it off fast.

FALL CHECKLIST

- ✓ If the weather stays dry, post harvest irrigation to help maintain soil moisture is more than okay until rains are steady.
- ✓ Little to no nitrogen should be applied now, but potassium now (or early next year) is okay. It won't “move” like nitrogen. To get full benefit of compost, it needs to be disked in.
- ✓ Make a note of any problem weed species that may be increasing.
- ✓ Mark any vines with excessive red leaves and/or leaf roll for monitoring of fruit quality next year of for possible removal before then.
- ✓ Renew your Ag Waiver Discharge membership.
- ✓ Update your air pollution mitigation plan if you have 100 acres or more in a single vineyard.
- ✓ Also, review your pesticide use reports and get everything up to date as there is continued interest to keep agriculture “accountable” for problems real and perceived.
- ✓ For VMB, Lorsban (chlorpyrifos) post harvest can help keep it checked until the summer control program. The new material Movento has performed well in research trials as a post harvest alternative. Be careful of sprays before a storm, especially near natural drains and waterways.
- ✓ Gophers, voles and squirrel activity are still common and may deserve attention with baits, gas cartridges, fumigant pellets (usually better in spring), trapping, shooting, or a combination of several of the methods. Remember ground squirrels are fair game, tree squirrels require a depredation permit. Owl boxes can help stabilize rodent populations, but do not control them.

There were a lot of yellow basal leaves and stressed vines in late spring and through the summer hot spells. That may have been hard to avoid unless your vineyard is located on deep soil and/or you started increasing water ahead of the heat spike. And even with

that it may have taken a little luck this year to avoid some early leaf senescence of basal leaves from water stress. Vines will tolerate some leaf loss, up to 20%, if a full and healthy canopy is in place. Fortunately deep soil moisture was good early on, even if it was below average amount. For the intensity and duration of temperatures, there has been relatively minor loss to sunburn or water stress, but overall yield could be slightly affected by smaller berries and some shrivel or burn.

Insect pests and spider mite pressure appears to be average or light, but there have been a few scattered problems especially with late season leafhoppers. There was some powdery mildew before the hot weather, but that was well suppressed later. Vine Mealy bug is still spreading throughout the county. So it's good to be on the lookout and aware of any new infestations, often indicated by sooty mold or excessive honeydew in clusters, spurs or cordons. A high degree of ant activity in and around vines can also indicate problem spots. Good places to begin looking before harvest are where birds tend to roost.

With more habitat areas and native or natural landscapes, less use of residual herbicides and with more tolerance for weeds, it is more important than ever before to monitor and to control some of the more noxious and troublesome weeds BEFORE THEY SEED. Star thistle is also more of a problem along roadsides and it requires attention or it will dominate mowed areas, row middles and habitats.

For many varieties such as Pinot grigio, Petite Sirah, Sauvignon blanc, Zinfandel, Colombard, even Chardonnay and the newcomer Pinot noir; demand is good and prices may improve slightly. The demand for Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot are less of a concern, as crops are below average. The crop across varieties and sites appear to be about 10 to 15% below average on a per acre basis.

More small wineries and more labels along with some competition medals help everyone get some recognition for all the hard work and risk. For the region as a whole and the Lodi District in particular recognition continues to increase in spite of challenges. Demand is still growing and the lighter crop seems to have set the stage for better prices. At the same time, besides the effects of the extreme temperatures, costs are rising and it may be difficult to cover the increases easily or completely. The good news is quality will be good this year and winegrowing is still considered in a positive light by the general public, receiving some credit for efforts to comply with new regulations, while contributing to the economy. The weather and the economy will tell us how good a year we will see for both quality and returns as harvest unfolds.

Good luck as 2008 finishes up.



Get Financial Assistance to Join the Lodi Rules Program

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) has made it possible for qualified growers to get financial recognition for joining the Lodi Rules for Sustainable Winegrowing certification program. Through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), NRCS will pay growers a per acre cost share for implementing IPM practices that are a part of the Lodi Rules program.

EQIP provides a voluntary conservation program for farmers and ranchers that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality as compatible national goals. EQIP offers financial and technical help to assist eligible participants install or implement structural and management practices on eligible agricultural land. EQIP contracts provide incentive payments and cost-shares to implement conservation practices. Implementation of IPM in vineyards is one of the conservation priorities EQIP is cost sharing. By joining the Lodi Rules program growers will meet the IPM requirements for EQIP. The cost share will at least cover the cost of applying for certification under the Lodi Rules program.

Interested growers should contact NRCS at (209) 472-7127 extension 3, for information on how to apply for the EQIP program. Applications need to be completed and submitted to the NRCS office by October 31, 2008.