

# WINE BUSINESS MONTHLY

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## REVIEW OF THE INDUSTRY

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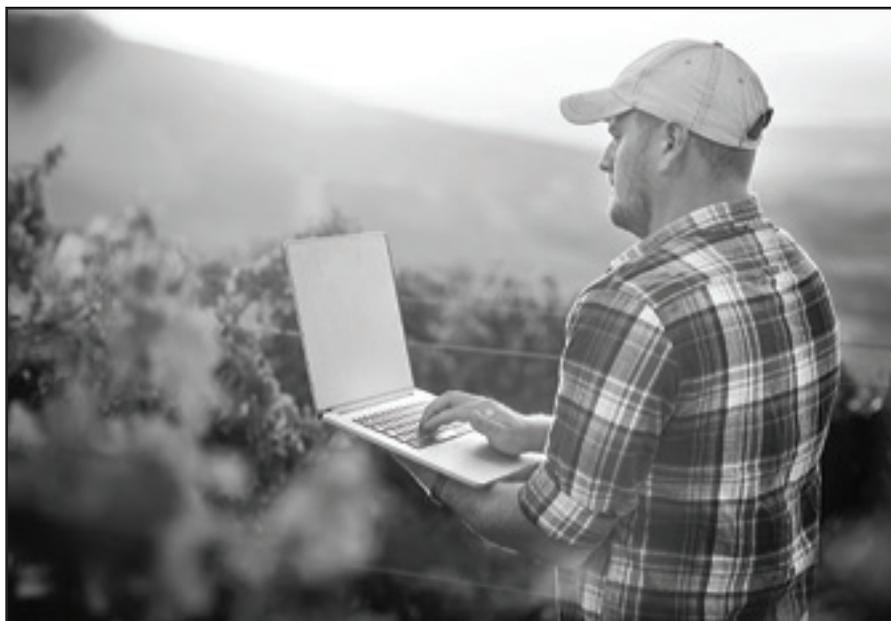
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### Invasive Argentine Ant

During the course of its research, the Virus Focus Group discovered that dealing with one invasive pest, the vine mealybug, also means dealing with invasive Argentine ants. Argentine ants can, and will, carry a mouthful of mealybug eggs along a drip irrigation line, deposit the eggs elsewhere, giving birth to a new colony of mealybugs.

Growers are now accepting the need to also control ants, but the Virus Focus Group realized that there is no efficient ant control method for Argentine ants in larger vineyards. Accordingly, during the summer of 2019, the LWC worked with **Kris Tollerup**, professor for the **UC Agricultural Research and Extension Center**, on ant bait trials. Research results will be ready to share in early 2020.

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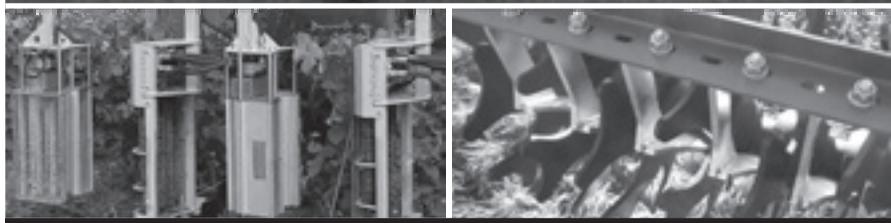
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This little ant is carrying a mouthful of mealybug eggs along a drip irrigation line—off to start a new colony of mealybugs on a grapevine.



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### Mystery Vine Collapse

Since 2010, throughout California, a phenomenon known as “mystery/sudden vine collapse” has been occurring. Vines that appear healthy except for stunted shoots push out fruit then, within a matter of weeks, the entire vine is dead.

**Charlie Starr**, an independent pest control advisor, and **Paul Verdegaal**, retired **UCCE** Farm Advisor, along with several other scientists, have been studying the collapsed vines for the past 10 years. They tested many theories, including *Phylloxera*, *esca*, *Phytophthora* and even lightning strikes, but were unable to solve the mystery.

In July 2019, UCCE plant pathologist, **Akif Eskalen**, and UC Davis FPS lab director, **Maher Al Rwahnih**, joined Starr and the others in studying both the collapsing and healthy vines from four affected vineyards. They thoroughly tested rootstock and scion samples for fungal and viral pathogens. Every collapsing vine tested positive for a leafroll virus and a vitivirus. Trunk disease pathogens were isolated from each sample, but they were not the same pathogens.

The research continues, and, at this point, it looks like the answer is a combination of issues, including leafroll virus-sensitive rootstock, leafroll virus, vitivirus and another, unknown stress, possibly trunk pathogens, crop or water stress, etc., which leads to the collapse. Collapse symptoms and positive test results for both a leafroll virus and a vitivirus have been confirmed on Freedom, O39-16 and 101-14 rootstocks, but there are likely more affected rootstocks.