



VINE MEALYBUG ALERT

FOR GRAPE GROWERS

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AUTHOR: Cindy Fake, Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor, Nevada & Placer Counties

There is a new pest threatening grapes in California and it may be invading Placer & Nevada counties. Vine mealybug (VMB) is new to California, but potentially extremely damaging to grape growers and our foothill wine industry. It is not the same as grape mealybug. Unlike other mealybugs, vine mealybug infests all parts of the grapevine and can kill vines.

VMB first appeared in the Coachella Valley in the early 1990's, and has since spread to other California grape growing areas, probably via infested planting stock. Serious infestations were found in El Dorado and Sacramento Counties in 2002. To date, it has not been found in Placer or Nevada, but it is likely that it is here. If you have grapes, particularly vines planted between 1998 and 2002, you should be aware of the signs of vine mealybug presence and be on the lookout for it. In California, VMB has not been found on plants other than grape, so mealybugs on other plants are not of concern.

Vine mealybug overwinters on vine roots, in bark crevices and bud scales. As the weather warms and plants leaf out, the

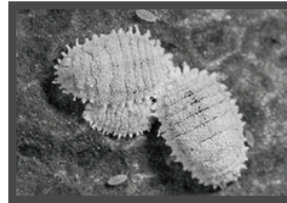
pests move up to the leaves and canes, and eventually to grape clusters.

Vine mealybug females are small, less than 1/8 of an inch long, oval, and covered with a white, powdery wax. The female mealybug is unable to fly, so it must be carried to a new area by humans, movement of equipment or vines.

Vine mealybug sucks plant sap, causing vine weakening, and it may transmit leafroll viruses. Initial damage is minor, but increases as the population grows, and the pest can kill vines. VMB produces large amounts of honeydew, to the extent that it may look like melted wax on bunches. The honeydew is then colonized by black sooty mold, which coats leaves and bunches.

Eradication and control can be difficult, so early detection of infestations is essential. If you have grapevines, monitor them regularly during the growing season for signs of mealybug:

- **Ants** moving up and down the vine



Actual size: ●

- **Honeydew** in large quantities – almost like dripped wax
- **Sooty Mold** – black powdery film on honeydew
- Look for mealybugs on **backs of leaves** in summer

Eradication and control of the pest can be difficult, but if pests are found, the vineyard must be treated to stop the spread of the pest. You may also want to consider releasing parasitic wasps (*Anagyrus pseudococci*). They are available from: Foothill Agricultural Research (FAR) Insectary (909) 371-0120.

If you are a commercial grower & think you have vine mealybug, please call the Farm Advisor at UC Cooperative Extension (530) 889-7385 and bring in a sample to be identified.

For backyard grapes, please call the Master Gardeners at (530) 273-0919 (Nevada) or (530) 889-7388 (Placer) and bring in a sample to be identified.

References

Vine Mealybug. 2003. UC Statewide IPM Project. <http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/r302301911.html>

Mealy Bugs in California Vineyards. 2002. UC ANR Publication 21612.



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Placer County

WEB SITE: ceplacervevada.ucdavis.edu

Nevada County



11477 E Avenue (Bldg 306, DeWitt Center)
Auburn, California 95603
(530) 889-7385
FAX (530) 889-7397
E-Mail: ceplacer@ucdavis.edu

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United States Department of Agriculture, University of California, Placer and Nevada Counties cooperating.

255 So Auburn (Veterans Memorial Bldg)
Grass Valley, California 95945
(530) 273-4563
FAX (530) 273-4769
E-Mail: cenevada@ucdavis.edu