

Summary

Vine Mealybug Workgroup Meeting

California Department of Food and Agriculture, Room A-477

Sacramento

December 16, 2003

Attendees:

John Arellano, Arellano Management Services
Cynthia Johnson, Vino Farms
Cliff Ohmart, Lodi-Woodbridge Wine
Steve Quashnick, California Association of Winegrape Growers
Al Rossini, Rossini Farming
Ross A. Jones, California Table Grape Commission
Jim Raisner, Sonoma County Grape Growers Association
Elizabeth Giannini, Lodi District Grape Growers
David Haggmark, Vintage Nurseries
Steve Huffman, Vintage Nurseries
Pete Evans, Vintage Nurseries
Dave Feauer, Vintage Nurseries
John Duarte, Duarte Nursery
Craig Stoller, Sunridge Nurseries
Steve Maniaci, Sunridge Nurseries
Craig A. Weaver, Buena Vista Vineyards
Nick Frey, Sonoma County Grape Growers Association

Dave Whitmer, Napa County Department of Agriculture
Eric Lauritzen, Monterey County Department of Agriculture
Ted Davis, Kern County Department of Agriculture
Bill Stephens, El Dorado County Department of Agriculture
Steve Burton, El Dorado County Department of Agriculture
Scott Hudson, San Joaquin County Department of Agriculture
John Westoby, Sonoma County Department of Agriculture

David Haviland, University of California, Cooperative Extension-Kern County

Ted Rieger, Wine Business Insider

Dan Hamon, USDA-APHIS, PPQ

Dennis Mayhew, CDFA
Nathan Dechoretz, CDFA
Larry Bezark CDFA
Jerry Campbell, CDFA
Bill Sandige, CDFA
George Loughner, CDFA
Stephen Brown, CDFA
Kris Godfrey, CDFA
Ray Gill, CDFA
David Godfrey, CDFA
Mike Pitcairn, CDFA
Bob Dowell, CDFA
Stephanie Balsdon, CDFA

Major Outcomes of the Meeting

- The existing Nursery Pest Cleanliness Standards will be amended by way of the issuance of an advisory that describes a two-part detection method for the vine mealybug (VMB). This method will include trapping for male VMB and follow-up visual inspections for females as necessary.
- An agricultural commissioner and an industry representative will be added to the VMB Workgroup Outreach Committee and this group will develop and coordinate outreach activities focusing on information sharing on the web as well as with traditional methods.
- The Integrated Pest Control Branch and Pest Exclusion Branch, Nursery Services staff will bring together a group that will include the county agricultural commissioners and industry representatives to address the issue of risk of VMB movement associated with independent budders; and how to educate the industry and stakeholders to reduce the potential impacts from the movement of the VMB via this practice.

Introductions

Nathan Dechoretz described how the VMB Work Group was established in response to industry concerns. Participant introductions followed. Larry Bezark coordinated the first part of the meeting that provided updates in several areas of concern.

Chemical Treatments (slide presentation)

Dave Haviland gave a slide presentation, updating those present on the chemical control treatments for VMB. Some highlights of his presentation included how Lorsban® is effective when applied in December or March; however, Applaud® is not effective when applied during the winter. Drip irrigation seems to be more effective than flooding. Dave Haviland also stated how the French Plow method is not greatly successful, but more so than the flood method.

The nurseries are putting programs together, and have been testing hot water treatments. Overall, the two and 20-minute hot water treatments are too extreme, but the five to 10-minute hot water treatments seem to be more effective.

Dave Haviland also stated that the data being showed is lab data, although some testing has been performed in the field, where the few mealybugs that survived were deeply embedded in cracks in the bark.

Nurseries in Kern County have adopted a multi-layer control protocol. All budwood is hot-water treated, bird netting is used, along with equipment sanitation and employee training.

Walt Bentley and Kent Daane may be able to post this information on the website, including anything that may be helpful for a grower such as pictures, pheromone trapping, and so forth.

Outreach

There was a lot of discussion regarding outreach and the availability of information through the Internet. Even though it was mentioned later that all people who need this information do not have access to websites, the outreach subcommittee needs to meet

to develop additional information. The UC website address is: <http://vinemealybug.uckac.edu/VMB.htm>

Disbursement of traps and lures/Results of the trapping season

Kris Godfrey distributed a packet titled "Update on Vine Mealybug Trapping and Distribution." Since the map was prepared, Ventura County trapping information was submitted, indicating the county was negative. Currently, there are 16 counties that have the mealybug and 18 counties where trapping to date has been negative. Even though the map shows infested counties, some sites have only 10 infected vines in one row, which are being spot treated and eradicated. The website will be updated with the addition of this map.

Kris Godfrey stated that there are over 60,000 traps available for monitoring. Kris may be contacted for their use or for more information. There are currently nine counties that do not have a program; both Yuba and Solano counties will be beginning a program in the spring.

Results of field visits regarding bulk grape movement

Larry Bezark reported that both hand and mechanical harvesting methods and movement of bulk grapes were briefly studied this season and the results are being tabulated.

Research

Mike Pitcairn reported that the University of California and the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) are currently conducting research. Classical biocontrol is underway, and new species of natural enemies of the VMB have been located in South Africa and Egypt. Insecticide trials are currently being conducted by Walt Bentley, who is also doing pheromone research with Kent Daane.

Industry Perspective

Nick Frey shared his opinion regarding stopping the spread at the nursery and grower level, and concerns about winery sanitation. Nick stated that there could possibly be incentives for growers to report infestations; this information could help to limit the spread of the VMB, as it is dangerous and counter-productive to keep this information hidden. Nick also mentioned that available resources are limited. Nick is supportive of a uniform statewide approach.

Nursery staff present indicated concern about unscrupulous budding operations and the need to address this issue. There was discussion regarding nurseries making available hot-dip services for customers. Nurseries want to be able to show that they are in compliance with regulatory constraints, and need clear protocols to do so.

Agricultural Commissioner's Perspective

Dave Whitmer had a meeting in Napa with those that have identified infestations to share what they are doing, their successes, etc. The educational component will be key to the success of treating and eradicating VMB.

County Agricultural Commissioners Perspective Points of Consensus

1. County Agricultural Commissioners recognize the concerns about VMB as a serious threat to the grape industries in California.
2. There are simply not enough resources for counties to accomplish the standards set in proposed ordinances (trapping, delimitation, survey, origin certification, etc.).
3. It may become difficult for counties to even maintain current activities due to fiscal constraints being placed on local government.
4. A statewide solution to the pest cleanliness of grapevine nursery stock is preferred to individual county ordinances. It is important to maintain a level playing field for industry partners.

It is important to educate nurseries regarding the disposal of green waste, even though there is not yet conclusive evidence that this dumping may be contributing to the spread of the pest.

General Discussion

Nathan Dechoretz facilitated the general discussion. There was consensus that the existing model ordinance is not a viable process, especially because of the limited resources available for the trapping protocol. It was clear from the discussion that there are concerns that only clean stock should be available from nurseries and that independent budding operations can be a source of VMB movement. Diligent nurseries set the standard for the industry in regard to compliance with existing guidelines for movement of grape nursery stock. Vineyard managers should be aware of the source of the various forms of nursery stock they are adding to their operations, for their sake as well as their neighbors.

Several options for limiting the movement of VMB were then presented by Stephen Brown, of the CDFA who provided the following summary:

VMB Regulatory Options

New Statewide Regulation for Grapevine Propagative Material and Nursery Stock

Pro:

- Uniform protocol
- Can cover nursery stock and all propagative material

Con:

- Not a statewide issue; affects six to seven counties
- No feasible eradication component proposed
- No statewide survey completed (or national survey)
- The Governor's freeze on new regulations effective until mid-April 2004
 - Does not meet exemption criteria related to public health and safety
 - Does not constitute an emergency
 - No statutory or judicial deadlines for implementation
- Must comply with Administrative Procedures Act, justify actions based upon pest risks and assess economic impacts on businesses, ability to compete, etc.

- New state mandate would have to be funded by Department unless requested by all county commissioners
- No new resources, cannot charge for certification
- Will not prevent movement of host material by the unscrupulous

Use Existing Nursery Stock Cleanliness Standards Regulations

Pro:

- Uniform protocol
- Regulatory authority already exists for actions
- Funding source already exists through nursery contracts with counties for non-certified grape nursery stock – approximately 2,500 acres
- Funding source already exists for Department's Registration and Certification Program – approximately 2,500 acres
- Use buyer-seller agreements between generally infested production and planting areas
- Counties request all shipments blue-tagged

Con:

- Requires two-stage, trapping and follow-up visual nursery surveys at origin to find infested nurseries
- Not a statewide issue, excessive number of buyer-seller agreements generated
- Requires diversion of funds from existing county contracts for survey and compliance activities
- Requires diversion of Department's R & C resources or IAB approval for additional funds
- Only regulates nursery stock produced, handled or offered for sale (grower can move own bud-sticks and plants)
- Survey cannot be conducted until spring, may lose this winter's shipping season, except R & C Program will determine if it can immediately require mandatory hot water treatment
- Will not prevent movement of host material by the unscrupulous

Adoption of Standard County Ordinance

Pro:

- Uniform protocol (or not approved by Secretary)
- Can cover nursery stock and all propagative material
- Deals with local issue affecting six to seven counties
- Local enforcement can begin when ordinance approved

Con:

- Requires specific origin certification based upon two-stage, trapping and follow-up visual survey or treatment protocols, increases origin workload
- No new resources, cannot charge for certification
- Will not prevent movement of host material by the unscrupulous