

Date: October 14, 2005

From: Lake County Department of Agriculture

A reminder for all Lake county wine grape growers

The Lake County Department of Agriculture would like to remind growers of some considerations relating to harvest and the possible spread of the Vine Mealybug (VMB). Our apologies to those of you who are mid- or post-harvest at this time. We realize that the timing of this reminder may make this information inapplicable for this years harvest, however, these issues should be addressed every year from now on to prevent the introduction and/or spread of the VMB to your vineyard(s).

As we currently do not have any known infestations of the VMB in Lake county, the primary concern to growers should be the sanitation of any and all equipment and persons entering your vineyard. With the increased use of machine harvesters, special attention should be placed there if you use one. The combination of their mode of operation and the ability to move them from vineyard to vineyard, area to area, and county to county makes them a potentially “perfect” mechanism for spreading this pest. High-pressure washing (ideally with steam) is the desired treatment when moving between blocks, i.e.- before it comes into your vineyard. Hand harvesting crews can also move the VMB from block to block, so ideally they will show up at your vineyard first thing in the morning with clean work clothes on. If a crew arrives mid-day from another vineyard, quick and creative solutions may be in order to effect some level of sanitation (supply light-weight, disposable overalls, require a quick boot wash or set up a boot dip station, etc). Another element to consider is any shared equipment. This applies year-round in general and during harvest in particular. Any tractors, gondolas, trailers, hoists, etc. that enter your vineyard should be cleaned thoroughly beforehand to insure that no “hitchhikers” are present. It has been shown that any implement that touches infested foliage can spread the VMB.

I hope this information is helpful in thinking about ways to prevent the introduction of the VMB into your vineyard(s). With this years increased voluntary grower participation in the VMB trapping program and the increased Ag. Department trapping as well, I feel we have a good level of detection trapping for VMB countywide. As of this date, no male VMB’s have been found anywhere in the county. Practicing good vineyard sanitation is the key to keeping VMB out of Lake county.

Thank you for you time in reading this reminder and I wish you a successful harvest.

Sincerely,

Steve Hajik
Agricultural Commissioner