

Vineyard Bio-Security

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Wine and raisin grapes in our region are especially vulnerable to imported pests. Already in Merced County but found only in isolated vineyards is phylloxera. Phylloxera causes a decline in infested vineyards those results in ultimate removal if not controlled. It cannot be eliminated but can be suppressed by repeated on-going insecticide treatments. Amazingly we have not had any glassy-winged sharpshooter infestations even though they have been found as close as Fresno County. The worst pest of all is probably the vine mealybug. Vine mealybugs can infest both the fruit and the root systems, causing a real mess. Aggressive insecticide programs are needed to control the vine mealy bug.

Soil and roots can carry the vine mealybug and phylloxera. The leaves, canes or fruit can carry glassy-winged sharpshooter or vine mealybug. Remember that you must exclude adults, immature forms and egg masses. The egg masses are very difficult to see so a quick scan of leaves stuck in equipment is not sufficient.

In all cases, the best prevention is exclusion. In most cases, imported pests hitch hike in on equipment. Especially harvest equipment. They can also come in on other types of farm equipment and even on service trucks. Farm owners and operators have a right to ask about the origin of equipment and trucks coming onto their farms. It is reasonable to ask that equipment and trucks are steam cleaned or pressure washed before transporting to your farm. Be especially wary of trucks and equipment coming from the central and southern San Joaquin Valley Counties. Inspect all equipment coming from another ranch for soil, or any plant parts.

I have posters and hand-outs about glassy-winged sharpshooter and vine mealybug that you can post or print out for employees. Cooperative Extension also has a variety of publications on grape pest management topics.