

FLOODS AND DISEASE SIGNALS SAD END TO 2012 VINTAGE

Unprecedented rainfall and overland flooding signalled the end to the 2012 vintage with remaining fruit (predominately Cabernet Sauvignon and Muscat Gordo Blanco) suffering devastating losses in terms of yield, quality and ultimately price.

The Board has been talking to many growers in the region about their losses through its role in collating the costs of the floods to crop and infrastructure in a bid to get assistance funding made available.

What is Available?

- One off payments to those directly affected:** Those growers and effected persons that were evacuated were provided with a one off sum of \$1,000 per adult and \$400 per child to immediately offset some of the costs associated with losses and accommodation costs incurred. If you have yet to take up these funds please go to your nearest Centrelink office.
- Low Interest Loans:** Eligible primary producers within the City of Griffith and the Local Government Areas of Leeton, Carrathool and Murrumbidgee can apply for up to \$130,000 in loans from the NSW Rural Assistance Authority. Applications can be completed by your accountant or a rural advisor. The first two years of the loan there are no repayments required. Growers should consider this assistance closely, as reducing an overdraft at your bank with high interest and replacing it with this could assist.
- \$15,000 Grants:** Grants are available to assist with the clean-up of vineyards that have been affected by the floods. Details and application forms can be obtained from the Board office or the NSW Rural Assistance Authority online. At the time of writing

these grants were not available for growers in the Carrathool Shire. The Board is working with the NSW Department of Primary Industries to collate the losses in this shire to ensure that we obtain this funding for the producers.

The Board is also seeking further assistance

The Board has been very vocal in trying to get the reinstatement of the federal interest rate subsidies. These are exceptional circumstances being faced by growers and require government to assist in any way possible. Losses in the region may be as high as 30,000 tonnes and the industry could lose its production capability. The Board will continue to voice the concerns of its grower base to State and Federal Governments.

Image: Many images of the tragedy similar to this were sent to the Board offices



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TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF PAYMENT 2012

As many growers would have noted from previous newsletters the Board no longer is able to set and enforce the terms and conditions that wineries pay their growers. The removal of the legislation has taken a number of years as the Board (with the support of a majority of growers) has been successful in presenting a convincing argument to the NSW Government that the legislation was required in this region due to the number of defaults that have occurred.

The Board and growers in 2010 presented a sound case to the NSW Wine Grape Market and Prices Inquiry that was headed by The Hon. Tony Catanzariti whom at the time was a NSW Member of the Legislative Council.

The recommendations from the Inquiry were very positive for the industry and would have enabled the Board to retain the ability to set and enforce terms and conditions of payment along with many other positive aspects for the industry. The current NSW Government dismissed the majority of the recommendations with a number yet to be responded to due to the Government waiting for the completion of a review into the Wine Industry Code of Conduct which had actually been completed at the time of their response.

In the absence of terms and conditions of payment legislation wineries and growers are free to negotiate their own terms of payment (when you are paid for the grapes delivered), although many growers have reported wineries that have actually altered these prior to the 2012 vintage without consultation or negotiation with their grower base (which have been reported to the NSW Small Business Commissioner).

Growers that have concerns or problems with being paid should still contact the Board. The Board believes that if the NSW Government is made aware of any continuing poor practice in this area it may look to legislate this again. In South Australia the entire state's crop is subject to statutory terms and conditions of payment.

What does this mean to the Board?

Without terms and conditions of payment legislation the Board now has to enter into Agency Agreements with wineries for them to deduct and forward to it the statutory fees and charges, and reports on the production from the region.

The Board has been successful in obtaining the support of many wineries following the Riverina Winemakers Association support of the proposal to deduct the levy

for the Board for a fee of 5% which equates to approximately \$0.20 per tonne of the \$3.90 levy. Previously this was done as per the legislation. So the costs of Board operations has increased in 2012.

The region's largest purchaser of local winegrapes, Casella Wines has advised that the Board that it will collect the fee and donate this to a local charity as opposed to keeping these funds. DeBortoli Wines has advised that it will not be deducting the levy, although the Board is currently seeking their reconsideration of this position.

All wineries that do not agree to deduct the fees will need to be subjected to an audit paid for by the Board. This will occur as soon as possible so that growers can be invoiced for the levy as early as possible.

The Board understands that there will be some resistance by growers that are currently in a difficult financial position. However the levy of \$3.90 per tonne is based on the expenditure budget of the Board as presented to growers at its budget meeting for 2012. The amount was approved by a formal motion by growers at the meeting and will be applied to the industry services of the Board, i.e. representing growers. **The fees and charges are compulsory and if not paid by your winery are payable by the grower.**

Invoices to growers will be sent out once the data is collated by our staff and these will show whether you have outstanding fees and charges owing on your winegrapes. Growers wanting to know which wineries have contacted the Board and entered into an agreement to deduct the fees and charges can contact the Board office during business hours.

Growers that are interested in how your money is spent should attend the Board meetings that are held for all members in June (AGM) and November (Budget) each year. All information relating to the 2011 expenditure of the Board will be sent to growers shortly within its Annual Report for 2011 and the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan is available for download from our website.

The Board members and staff are always prepared to discuss these matters with growers.

The Board understands that all growers are facing extremely difficult times and that is why we are continuing to work toward obtaining assistance for growers during these tough economic conditions.

FLOODED VINEYARD CASE STUDIES

Fundamental management of flooded vineyards

Flooding across large areas of New South Wales and Victoria during March 2012 has resulted in flooded vineyards in several of the states' winegrape-growing regions. These case studies aim to inform growers of some immediate issues to consider and issues for next season based on others observations'.

Flooding may be caused by from heavy localised rains, flood waters slowly flowing across the landscape or a combination of both. Whatever the cause, the duration and timing of flooding are important to consider. Flooding of well-drained soil types, where water disappears in one or two days, usually has little impact on vine growth. Where flood water is slow to recede, either due to soil type or the volume of water, some issues may arise.

When soil becomes waterlogged, it becomes anaerobic as air is forced out from pores in the soil. Roots need air to function, and waterlogged roots will die over a period of time. However, flood events from 2011 have shown vines are resilient, and can return to production in the following season without significant side-effects. To minimise the impact of flood on vineyards, water should be encouraged to drain away, or pumped from the vineyard **as soon as possible**.

Observations from vineyards flooded in 2011 include:

- for the best outcome, drain or pump all surface water as soon as possible
- increased vigour noted in the following season
- some reduced yield observed in the following season (variety-dependent)
- increased disease pressure in the following season (associated with higher rainfall and disease pressure in year of flood)
- possible leaching of nutrients.

Considerations for the growing season following a flood:

- areas with poor soil drainage (impervious sub-soil) are most likely to have dead vines
- cold, wet soil may result in unthrifty vines early in the season (restricted spring growth)
- sudden vine collapse, resulting in vine defoliation, may occur in poorly drained areas
- high disease pressure during the flood may result in increased spore load and disease pressure in the following season. Improved spray programs, particularly around flowering, are important to minimise crop loss to disease
- more water shoots may grow on some varieties
- flower and berry set may be influenced resulting in lower yield
- increased soil water content may result in more vigorous vine growth later in the season, thereby reducing airflow in the canopy
- increased weed seed distribution and weed growth is common
- waterlogging and leaching may decrease soil nutrition; consider soil testing and nutrient applications.



The duration and timing of a flood are important considerations for growers. Photo G. Moulds

Additional information prepared by DPI Victoria on managing grapevines and crop during a flood, and management following a flood, is available online:

Managing crop recovery after flooding - grapevines

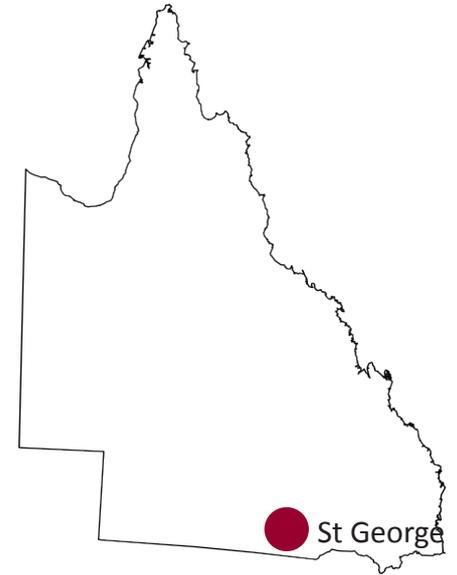
www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/horticulture/wine-and-grapes/after-flooding-grapevines

Checklist for flood recovery - grapevines

www.dpi.vic.gov.au/agriculture/horticulture/wine-and-grapes/checklist-for-flood-recovery-grapevines

ST GEORGE, QUEENSLAND

St. George, located in south-east Queensland, has a Mediterranean climate with hot, dry summers, cold winters and an annual rainfall of 531mm. Over the past three years, the St. George region was flooded three times: March 2010 (13.4m record), January 2011 (13.2m record) and February 2012 (14m record). The strong La Niña event in the last three years resulted in widespread flooding across many parts of Queensland and many rainfall records were broken in St. George.



Case Study One: St. George, Queensland

The St. George vineyard grows both tablegrapes and winegrapes, with harvest occurring between December and February. In the 2011 flood, huge volumes of water travelled downstream to St. George from heavy falls in other parts of Queensland. Some blocks were entirely submerged by 2.5m of water, which took around four weeks to recede, and resulted in total crop loss. Vines were covered in mud and debris, but two weeks later, healthy green growth was obvious. Only a few vines died after being totally submerged. On higher unharvested blocks, vines were in only 1m of water and grapes were sound and successfully hand harvested. In 2012, the yield was substantially lower, primarily due to wet weather at flowering. Based on the observations by the grower between completely submerged and unsubmerged vine rows, a reduction in yield, directly due to flooding was not seen.



This St. George vineyard was covered in mud and debris once flood waters of 2.5m had receded (left), but healthy green growth ensued just a fortnight later (right). Photos D. Blacket

All young vines, planted only five months earlier, drowned after being completely submerged for four weeks and required replanting. In 2012, the flood submerged the replanted young vines for one week and around 70% of the vines recovered and re-shot.

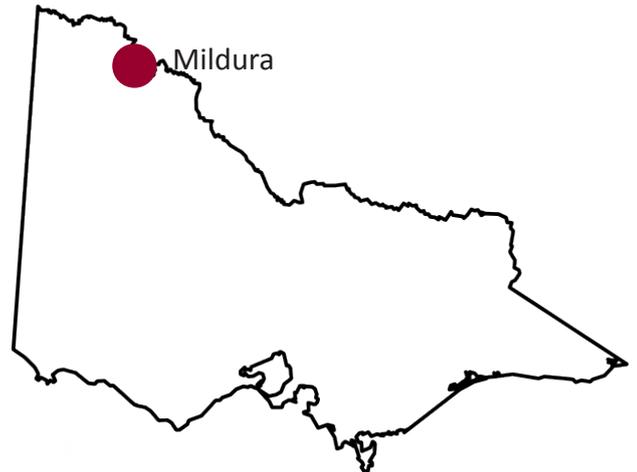
To assist recovery after each flood, the grower made several fungicide and foliar fertiliser applications to prevent disease on new foliage and maintain leaf condition prior to senescence. Soil testing was also undertaken to assess nutrient loss, and necessary fertiliser applications were made.



These young vines planted in the St George vineyard were submerged by flood waters for one week (left) and once water receded, recovered and re-shot soon after (right). Photos D. Blacket

MURRAY DARLING, VICTORIA

Mildura, the main centre of the Murray Darling wine region in Victoria, has an average annual rainfall of 276mm. In 2010–11, a strong La Niña event resulted in cooler temperatures and significantly higher than average rainfall. In early February 2011, with soil already significantly wet from earlier rains, 185mm of rain was recorded in 24 hours in Mildura and up to 240mm in surrounding areas. The rainfall was the highest ever recorded for the region and resulted in widespread flooding. Following the floods, many blocks were unpicked, due to bunch rot and poor harvester access.



Following the high incidence of downy mildew, botrytis and other rots in 2010–11, growers again observed high disease pressure in 2011–12. Wet soil and a higher spore load saw disease unexpectedly occur in many cases, even when conditions were considered unsuitable. Growers who remained vigilant and stepped up their fungicide programs, particularly around flowering, had fewer problems than those who relied on their usual spray program.

Case Study Two: Red Cliffs, Victoria

The affected vineyard, planted with Sultana, remained unharvested in 2011 because of significant berry split and bunch rot caused by rain. The flood water was 300–600mm deep through the vineyard and remained on the surface for at least six weeks. Further rain resulted in downy mildew infection, which was followed by defoliation of susceptible leaves.

In the 2011–12 season, several vines did not arise after winter dormancy. Pruning and budburst on other vines progressed as normal with strong shoot growth early in the season. As the season progressed, some vines suddenly collapsed, resulting in complete defoliation. In most cases, this was due to an impervious sub-soil which led to poor soil drainage and vine root death. Poor berry set and lower yields were also observed in this block, as was reported on many varieties across the region, most likely due to cool weather during flowering, rather than the flood.



Flood waters in this Red Cliffs vineyard remained on the surface for more than six weeks and new growth was later affected by downy mildew (left). The following season, some vines grew poorly or died with growth in the majority of the vineyard unaffected. Photos G. Moulds

Case Study Three: Irymple, Victoria

Following the rain, this vineyard was up to 1m under water. The vines, Merlot (D3V14) planted on Schwarzmann rootstock, were not harvested in 2011 due to excessive bunch rot. After two weeks, the flood water naturally receded from the vineyard. However, cool and wet conditions continued, resulting in late-season downy mildew and poor cane lignification.

In the 2011–12 season, shoot growth was strong, resulting in reduced canopy airflow and higher disease pressure. Increased watershoot production was also observed. Due to cooler conditions, the flowering period was longer than usual and produced an inconsistent set, resulting in yield at 10t/ha, down by around 50% on average yield. Veraison and harvest were about two weeks earlier, due to lower yields.



February 2011



March 2012

In 2011, this Irymple vineyard was submerged in 1m of flood water (left), leading to increased shoot growth, disease pressure and water shoot production in 2012 (right). Photos L. Simpson

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HELPING RURAL AUSTRALIA INTO THE FUTURE

We provide **free, independent, professional** and **confidential** assistance to farmers and small rural business.

We assist clients to become more self-reliant and manage change more effectively by fully assessing your enterprise and business options.

We give you the **tools** and **support** to make informed financial and business decisions by:

- analysing your cashflow and viability
- preparing budgets and profit & loss statements
- identifying risks in your business
- improving your ability to plan
- identifying Government assistance
- completing action plans
- identifying advice or training
- family decision making
- estate, retirement and pension issues
- farm debt mediation, bank applications/reviews



RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLING SERVICE

NSW - Southern Region

Your Local RFCS NSW-SR Counsellors:

Kevin McCrum	Griffith/Leeton	02 6964 2420	Murray Freshwater	Deniliquin	03 5881 5766
Carl Scroope/Eddie Redfern	Ganmain	02 6927 6622	Graham Christie	Coleambally	02 6954 4179
Darren Macartney	Hay/Balranald/Goolgowi	02 6993 4130	Linda McLean	Lake Cargelligo/Hillston	02 6898 1151

We know your area, your industry, your issues

WORKCOVER SMALL BUSINESS REBATE PROGRAM

The NSW Government WorkCover Authority is providing a rebate to eligible business of up to \$500 to help your business be smarter and safer through the "small business rebate program."

The small business rebate gives up to \$500 (full cost) back to small business owners who purchase and install safety equipment to address a safety problem in their workplace. It is open to small businesses or sole traders with up to 20 full time employees or equivalent, from 1 March 2012.

Free safety advisors are also available to help build safety skills for you and your staff.

Eligible safety equipment

The small business rebates cover a broad range of safety solutions to give small businesses the flexibility to fix specific risks in their individual workplace.

The rebate can be used to assist with the purchase and installation of safety equipment that addresses:

- Manual handling
- Hazardous noise
- Slips, trip and falls
- Injuries from moving object
- Chemical and dangerous goods

The rebate is provided after the solution has been purchased or implemented and excludes GST, freight and insurance.

Applying for a rebate

Step 1: Attend a free WorkCover safety event

Any eligible WorkCover safety event, live webinar, workshop, program, event, or have a free advisory visit from a WorkCover business advisory officer or inspector from 1 March 2012.

Step 2: Implement your safety solution

Select and implement an eligible safety solution listed in the rebate application brochure. Get a paid tax invoice and receipt (or proof of purchase).

Step 3: Complete the application form

Complete and sign the rebate application form and attach a copy of your paid tax invoice and receipt.

Step 4: Post within six month of attending the WorkCover safety event

Send the rebate form to WorkCover within six months of the advisory visit, safety workshop, live webinar, program or event by:

- Fax to 02 9287 5759
- Email: businessassist@workcover.nsw.gov.au
- Post to: Small Business Rebate, WorkCover NSW Locked Bag 2906, LISAROW, NSW 2252



Terms and Conditions

You can claim for more than one eligible solution on your application form but can only apply once for the Small business rebate program. For example, you could purchase a number of safety solutions to prevent falls from a height - such as scaffolding, edge protection, and industrial fall arrest equipment - and include all three invoices in your one rebate application form. The application form outlines the terms and conditions for claiming a rebate and the eligible solutions that qualify.

Further information

Download a rebate application brochure or call 13 10 50

<http://www.workcover.nsw.gov.au/FORMSPUBLICATIONS/publications/pages/smallbusinessrebate.aspx>

MORE COMPLIANCE STAFF THAN EVER PATROLLING WATER



Department of
Primary Industries
Office of Water

2 April 2012

More compliance staff than ever patrolling the State's water supplies

NSW Water Commissioner, David Harriss, today announced that the NSW Office of Water had hired 11 new staff to monitor and enforce compliance with NSW water laws to ensure sustainable supplies for all users.

"The NSW Government has strong water management legislation that makes it a crime to take water without a licence or breach licence conditions," Mr Harriss said.

"The NSW Office of Water has a dedicated Compliance Branch to monitor and enforce compliance with NSW water laws and the recent recruiting of 11 new staff means that people who do the wrong thing are more likely to get caught."

Mr Harriss said that the new staff had already started work and were located in the regional offices at Tamworth, Dubbo, Leeton and Deniliquin.

"The positioning of these new staff provides a more strategic approach to monitoring, detecting and investigating non-compliance across New South Wales."

"They will be working on a range of tasks, including auditing compliance with licence conditions and investigating reports of alleged non-compliance."

Mr Harriss said that while the vast majority of water

users acted responsibly, water theft was a serious issue because it reduces the value of entitlements of other legitimate water users, can do irreversible damage to the environment, impacts upon the production of the State's food and other vital industries, as well as potentially threatening town water supplies.

"Modern technology enables the NSW Office of Water to effectively patrol such a large area by using satellite imagery, real-time water meter data, mobile operating systems and risk-based categorisation of water sources."

"The new officers will work closely with other NSW Government departments, local councils, irrigation corporations and of course the public, who can make confidential reports of alleged non-compliance to the Office of Water via their 1800 phone line or email address."

"These new staff have already been out in the field in recent weeks - visiting 41 properties, resulting in several infringements being identified."

"The message is clear to the minority of people who do the wrong thing, the chances of getting caught are real and the penalty far outweighs any benefit that might be achieved," Mr Harriss said.

If you suspect someone in your community of taking water illegally, interfering with a waterway or aquifer, or breaching their licence conditions, make a confidential report to the NSW Office of Water via phone: 1800 633 362 or email:

watercompliance@water.nsw.gov.au

IMPORTANT DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Murray Darling Basin Authority - response to plan

Due Date: Monday 16th April 2012

Email: submissions@mdba.gov.au

Riverina Field Day

Date: Friday and Saturday, 11-12th May 2012

Venue: Griffith Show Ground

Wine Grapes Marketing Board - Annual General Meeting

Date: Monday 19th June 2012

Venue: Yoogali Catholic Club, Yoogali NSW 2680

WINE GRAPES MARKETING BOARD - proudly serving winegrape producers since 1933

182 Yambil Street (PO Box 385) GRIFFITH NSW 2680 Phone: (02) 6962 3944 Fax: (02) 6962 6103

Email: board@wgmb.net.au Web: www.wgmb.net.au Office Hours: 8:30am - 5:00pm Mon - Fri

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