

Chris Henry, Murdoch Wines- Gimblett Gravels, HB.

Murdoch Wines, (Full BioGro -15ha), aims to produce wine that express the “terrior” of the Gimblett Gravels. It grows to produce high end ‘Bordeaux blends’ and Syrah. The vineyard site is low vigour, 80% metals with patches of silt spread throughout, clearly evident when observing vine vigour. Any cultivation of the soil is avoided, for reasons of soil conservation and weed emergence. An effort is being made to improve water retention and vine health with mulching and composting. On the basis of soil and tissue test results, fertilisers (Marine-Phos, Kieserite and Humates) will be broadcast early spring. Foliar sprays of magnesium are combined with seaweed for extra nutrition and biological benefits.

Cultural practices for weed control are tractor mowing the inter-row and hand mowing between vines when required. A thick layer of mulch is placed around replanted vines to deal with initial weed control. In dormancy, sheep are used as a clean-up.

A light mechanical leaf pluck is undertaken pre flowering and a bunch trash blow at berry shatter (when flowering is absolutely completed). These are followed with a timed hand leaf pluck to aid late season disease control. The level of vigour aimed at is to grow plants to the top wire and not trim at all.

No organic insecticides are used or needed for mealy bug or leaf roller control. To assist beneficial insect numbers (and the look of the vineyard), seeds of naturally occurring vineyard flowers are being broadcast this spring.

Powdery mildew and blister mite carry over from the previous vintage (2008/09) was dealt with by a once only lime sulphur application at woolly bud. Excellent control of powdery mildew and Erinose mite was achieved in 2009/10 with multiple low rates of wettable sulphur sprays at 14 day intervals, ceasing at veraison.

Botrytis control was assisted by Botry-Zen applications at berry shatter and pre-bunch closure. Several applications of low rates of Bacillus Subtilis were applied after veraison. No botrytis was found this season

High and unseasonal January rainfall justified 2 applications of copper oxide a fortnight apart as a protectant against downy mildew infection – copper is not normally applied. No downy mildew was found.

All sprays with the exception of lime sulphur and seaweed alone contained Protector^{hml} (at 0.5% of water volume) as an adjuvant to improve coverage and efficacy of the companion product.

Water rates commenced at 250litres/ha and concluded at 650litres/ha.