

MISTY VALLEY

NURSERY NEWSLETTER



REX'S PRACTICAL TIPS #3 Autumn 2005

CROP ASSESSMENT

I have published the odd paper on crop assessment in the past. Given that veraison is upon us in the warmer areas and soon to find its way to the mainland, a wee reminder won't hurt.

What are the reasons for crop assessment?

- Knowing what's out there in the vineyard can help with budgets and cashflow predictions.
- If we know what our average weight is per vine we have a chance to manipulate quality.
- Consistent and even handed production is better for vine health and balance.
- Spare a thought for the winemaker. He has finite tank and barrel space and processing time. He needs to know what you will deliver. Telling him when it's in the gondola just won't do.

So there are some really good reasons to know what your tonnage is, and the good news is that it is surprisingly simple to work it out every year.

With practice, your crop assessment can become surprisingly accurate. The method I use rarely has an error rate greater than 10%. This is accurate enough to please the fussiest winemaker or bank manager.

My method is based on the following reasonably reliable rule of thumb.

Without going into the physiology of berry development, simply understand that for every site, rootstock and clone, the percentage weight gain that each berry makes from just prior to veraison until harvest is more or less the same every year. (This is not absolute weight gain but percentage).

So the method to use:

1. In October (normally around Labour weekend) you should go out and do your bunch counts. It's really important that you mark specific representative bays in the vineyard and count the same ones every year. You should do this for every variety, clone and rootstock combination in the vineyard.
2. Immediately prior to veraison, **(the timing for this is critical. It should be as close to veraison as possible but prior to any berry softening)**, take representative samples of bunches and weigh them. Remember that the greater the sample, the more accurate the result.
3. At harvest, again take representative samples and weigh them.
4. Calculate the average weight of bunches at each time and then the percentage difference in bunch weight gain from pre veraison to harvest.



If you go through this process every year for several years you will find that there is only small variation in percentage weight gain from year to year. You can use this factor to give a sufficiently accurate estimate of crop load. The good thing about this is, that it happens at the time of the season when crop reduction can be done, should it be necessary.

Rex.

At Misty Valley we are developing a web site where all of the practical tips will be published for ease of reference. More information on this web site will be available in the next issue.



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