



October newsletter - aka frost fighting

With pruning finished, vines all tied down and budburst started, it's time to start thinking about the 2010 vintage. Though unless we protect the vines from spring frosts there won't even be a 2010 vintage to talk about and it is this time of year good viticulturists really earn their keep.

For them, it will be a matter of staying up all night making sure the wind machine runs when it is supposed to, but not waste time and money by running it needlessly.

During any frost fighting night oversleeping, letting the machine run out of fuel, breakdowns due to poor maintenance and a myriad of other scenarios can spell economic disaster.

So the past couple of weeks have brought out the mechanic in all of us, servicing the wind machine, making it work perfectly for when the temperature drops below zero we will be happily making wine in April and not sitting at the bank managers desk.

Frost fighting is basically done in three ways.

- 1) Spraying water on buds which freezes and forms a protective layer of ice around the shoots preventing everything inside from getting below freezing point. (Shoot tenderness determines how cold it needs to be for damage to occur, but vines can usually handle up to minus -1.5c without damage).
- 2) Using helicopters to bring warm air down from higher up and displace the colder air at vine level. Also the friction of air movement generates heat.
- 3) Using wind machines which work exactly as a helicopter and really are the only choice as putting lots of water on in the spring cools the soil down and slows the grape vines growth affecting ripening . Because of dilution and rot issues water cannot be used in the autumn if needed. Helicopters do work well but at \$1500/hour it only takes only 35 hours of flying and you can own a wind machine.

The next newsletter should come from Singapore, where I will be working with a new distributor in what is fast becoming a very big market for NZ wines. However if there is no newsletter you will know Singapore Slings got the better of me.

Grant

