May 2012

**Save the Date!**

**Our Summer Grower Conference is scheduled for Wednesday, July 25th.**

More information will follow

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### Mark Your Calendars for these Upcoming Events:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>May</th>
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<td>30</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>JJ Bencal 4616 Simmons Rd. Ransomville NY 14131</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>Paul Bencal 2645 Albright Rd. Ransomville NY 14131</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Summer Grower Conference North East Lab</td>
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<td>Thompson Ag Twilight Hanover Center Hanover NY 14136</td>
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**Coffee Pots run from 10:00am-Noon**
Freeze damage and Vineyard IPM
Tim Weigle

A quick tour around the belt shows damage increased, in some cases significantly, from the freeze event during the weekend of April 28 and 29. A broad brush assessment of the belt shows that Erie County and Cattaraugus Counties in New York have some of the heaviest damage, as well as, the eastern section of Chautauqua County in the Hanover area. Damage tends to lessen as you move from Sheridan to Ripley although there are a number of vineyards on the south side of 20 in the Portland area where it still looks like winter, while right across the road on the north side is starting to green up with primary and secondary shoot growth getting started. It appears that vineyards in the Northeast and Harborcreek area did not get the same level of damage from the last freeze event although that is not true for all vineyards in the region. Once you start looking more closely at specific vineyards, or start looking around in some of the traditional frost prone sites, it is easy to find areas where damage is greater than the broad stroke average.

So, the take home message from this should be that you cannot manage your vineyard operation unless you know what is going on in each vineyard block. Take the time to get out and see what damage, if any, has occurred in each part of each vineyard blocks. Once you have assessed your level of damage, you will need to make decisions on how to alter your vineyard IPM strategy to cope with blocks where there will be little or no crop.

To give you an idea of the location and severity of freezes Table 1 shows the occurrence of damaging temperatures by location and date.

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*Figure 1. provides a graphical look at the percent primary bud loss by location. The sites used in this evaluation are the same sites used in the 9-site research project “Characterizing the effect of location and Crop Load on Vine and Fruit Development in the Lake Erie Region” currently being conducted by Terry Bates and funded through the Lake Erie Regional Grape Research and Extension Program, Inc, National Grape Cooperative and the New York Wine and Grape Foundation.*

*Locations are related to weather instruments found on the Network for Environment and Weather Applications website at http://newa.cornell.edu*

**Bold indicate freeze events(temp at or below 28°F) when potential for significant green tissue damage exists**
Lake Erie Regional Concord and Niagara Freeze Primary Bud Damage Assessment
May 15, 2012

- Sheridan, NY: 7,520 Acres - 57.1% Damage, $4.3 million
- Route 5, Portland, NY: 1,648 Acres - 35.8% Damage, $0.6 million
- Route 5, Northeast, PA: 2,064 Acres - 13.4% Damage, $0.27 million
- Sheridan Escarpment/Versailles, NY: 2,488 Acres - 100% Damage, $2.5 million
- Route 20, Portland, NY: 8,235 Acres - 24.9% Damage, $2.0 million
- Northeast, PA Escarpment: 432 Acres - 6.1% Damage, $0.2 million
- Portland, NY Escarpment: 708 Acres - 4.5% Damage, $0.3 million
- Harborcreek, PA: 10,241 Acres - 28.9% Damage, $3.7 million
Economic Impacts of 2012 Frost and Freeze Events
Kevin Martin

Economic Value of Potential Crop
A perfect storm of conditions hit the Lake Erie Region to maximize the economic impact of the weather related events. Historically high bulk juice prices, high crop potential and ten frost or freeze events resulted in a substantial decline in the expected value of the crop. Crop insurance, potential disaster payments and modified production practices will lessen the negative impact somewhat.

This region has nearly 31,900 acres of Concord and Niagara production. With 2011 weather conditions contributing to above average fruiting potential, production should have been 205,000 tons. Such production would yield 10.1 million gallons of 68 brix concentrate, conservatively valued at 152 million dollars. A more aggressive valuation of the total crop would reach 200 million dollars.

Estimated Value of Lost Crop
Based on the GPS maps of the belt and a weighted average of damage based on its proximity to the nine sites, 37% primary bud loss should be expected. That translates to a 30% reduction in crop size assuming an average performance of secondary buds. Local climate variation and multiple frost events have made an accurate assessment slightly more challenging. Despite some very cold temperatures damage varies from less than 5% primary loss to 100% damage. As Rhiann Jakubowski’s map indicates, lower damage levels on the escarpment impact only a small percentage of total acreage. This estimate assumes average secondary bud development. However, secondary bud damage may be average 15%-20%.

Assuming, overall, a 30% reduction in crop size the total direct economic loss for the industry would range...
between $45 and $60 million. Gross farmer loss would be approximately $13.5 million. That total loss is reduced by the potential for crop insurance claims. 15%-20% secondary damage would increase farmer loss from $13.5 million to $14.6 million.

**Farm, Industry, and Local Economic Impact**
This region should be aware of the impact this direct loss may have. There is a multiplier effect on these losses that will change spending patterns for farmers, processor employees and farm workers. Changes in spending patterns can impact small business revenue and sales tax. A small county in New York State actually uses the milk price as a factor in budgeting sales tax revenue. Keep in mind that business expenses do not result in sales tax. Any impact on sales tax that a county sees from lower milk prices or grape crop would be due to a multiplier. A multiplier effect in this scenario is a community effect, see figure one for illustrative purposes.

Another factor in this economic loss is the global nature of the business. This loss is not shouldered entirely by the region. Using bulk juice as a valuation, rather than retail price helps focus on what value this region adds. Even so, shareholders, distributors and others will feel some of this economic loss.

**Crop Insurance**
It will take some more research to try and get a handle on the potential value of crop insurance claims. It will depend significantly on block identification and volatility. With total average estimated crop loss at 50%, the average grower with CAT coverage would not have a claim.

We know the losses are acute in certain blocks and growers have the ability to separate blocks and insure for higher levels of coverage with buy up plans. The specific and isolated character of severe damage illustrates the importance of buy-up plans that allow for higher levels of coverage and claims on non-contiguous blocks. The significance of the frost damage may lead to CAT insurance claims, but buy up coverage will provide enhanced payments to prevent significant cash flow issues for the majority of growers.

An average grower can obtain 75% yield coverage with a 100% price election for approximately $30 per acre. With that type of coverage a total loss would provide an income of $1040 per acre. That level of payment would allow many growers to break even in their fiscal year because processor payments are delayed, while crop insurance payments are not. For the crop year, most growers would have a loss of about 25%, far more manageable than 100% loss. Growers, on average, do not carry crop insurance at these high levels. On average, growers with 100% loss will realize a loss much greater than 25%. Growers with lower than average yields will also realize a greater economic loss, even with high levels of buy-up insurance coverage.

**Realizing Savings Through Decreased Production Practices**
Lower crop potential may change the intensity of production practices throughout the growing season. Basic levels of investment to ensure a good crop potential and vine size for 2013 will substantially limit the potential for savings. Weed control and an early season spray program will not provide any significant return on the 2012 crop but will in 2013. A reduction in fertilizer use will vary based on vineyard conditions and soil tests but growers could realize savings in this area of $80 per acre. Working in less expensive chemicals into the rotation for both disease and weed programs could result in a savings between $50 and $100 per acre. Again, that would depend on historical chemical use, specific to each farm.

Growers may be a little more aggressive in curtailing production practices than recommended. The harsh reality is that it will likely result in higher costs during the 2013 growing season or decreased crop size in 2013. The higher cost and decreased crop size in 2013 could not come at a worse time. It is in that time period, not presently, when growers will be experiencing the economic loss of this frost. While the 2012 crop year will be a moral challenge, only the 2013 crop will be a financial one.
Management Checklist for Frost Injured Concord and Niagara Vineyards in 2012
Andy Muza and Tim Weigle

Vineyard Maps – developing accurate vineyard maps should be an important component of your vineyard management strategy. These maps can be used to keep block by block historical records for soil and petiole testing, fertilizer applications, pest scouting (weeds, diseases, insects), pesticide applications, crop estimations, and yield. This season these maps will also be useful for pinpointing the extent of crop injury levels due to frost. Fortunately, vineyard maps can be obtained free of charge, to members of the Lake Erie Regional Grape Program, by contacting Rhiann Jakubowski by e-mail (rmj78@cornell.edu) or calling (716) 792-2800 ext 210.

Frost injury assessments - assess injury levels in each block by the end of May so that you can document crop losses to the insurance adjuster. Keep assessment records and take pictures to support your claims. This information will also enable you to plan your vineyard management strategies for the season. Contact Tim Weigle (716–792–2800, thw4@cornell.edu) or Andy Muza (814–825–0900, ajm4@psu.edu) for information on assessing injury levels.

Contact your crop insurance agent - Document any phone calls/visits by insurance representatives. When the adjuster visits your farm, review your records with them and accompany them on their evaluation of your blocks. Consult with the adjustor concerning the insurance company’s vineyard management requirements for frost injured vineyards.

Contact local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office – It is important that FSA is aware of the extent of crop loss so that this information can be reported for potential qualifications for a disaster relief program.

Weed Management – management of weeds is critical so do not cut corners even in blocks with frost injury. Keep to your planned herbicide program to assure good weed control under the trellis. If you decide to try a post emergence herbicide program then applications should be made while weed growth is less than 6” or before weeds go to seed. In a dry year, only 1 or 2 of these applications may be necessary.

Disease Management – Phomopsis is a main concern due to high inoculum levels in a majority of vineyards. An early season spray (e.g., 3”- 5”) would be beneficial in most blocks. The Immediate Prebloom and Postbloom sprays (10 – 14 days after immediate prebloom) are critical. The need for additional sprays can be determined by block depending on disease levels, environmental conditions and potential crop. (See suggested disease management guidelines included in this newsletter).

Insect Management – Grape Berry moth in high/severe risk sites will still need insecticide applications in areas that will be harvested (See NEWA website at http://newa.cornell.edu for Grape Berry Moth Degree Day Model). A higher level of foliar injury can be tolerated in blocks with low – moderate crop levels so insecticide applications may not be needed for foliar pests such as Japanese beetle and grape leafhopper in these areas.

Scouting – continue to frequently scout vineyard blocks throughout the season to be aware of unexpected pest problems that may require attention.

Nitrogen application – nitrogen rates may be greatly reduced or eliminated depending on the extent of crop loss based on your block by block assessments. At the very least, in frost injured sites, you may want to hold off on nitrogen applications until after bloom (within 2 weeks postbloom) when you will have a better idea of crop potential.

Crop Estimation – At about 30 days after bloom conduct crop estimates in each block to get an idea of potential yields. (See Crop Estimation and Thinning Table http://lergp.cce.cornell.edu/Bates/Crop_Estimation_Table_071603.pdf for information on how to conduct crop estimates). Record crop estimates by block on your vineyard maps. This information will be useful for your crop insurance claim and allow you to fine tune your pest management strategy for the remainder of the season.

Trunk renewal/vine fill – This season would be an excellent opportunity to concentrate on trunk renewal by keeping suckers for trunk injured, unproductive vines. Additional shoot growth in low yielding blocks should also provide an ample supply of long canes for layering to fill in missing vines in the row.
Minimal Spray Programs for 2012 Vineyards Affected by Freeze Damage
Tim Weigle, Andy Muza, Bryan Hed and Jody Timer

The unprecedented early bud swell (and beyond!) combined with the frequent freeze events over the past several weeks have many in the Lake Erie grape industry wondering what the season is going to have in store for us. The prospect of not having much, if any, crop in a number of vineyards across the region have questions being asked of what the minimal vineyard management practices are to keep a vineyard in shape for future seasons.

While the reduction in cash flow that comes with a limited crop makes it tempting to eliminate a majority of the practices that cost money, it is important to keep reminding yourselves that since grapes are a perennial crop, the decisions made this year will impact what happens in a vineyard block – often times for years to come. With that in mind we have developed a proposed minimal pest management program for Concord and Niagara vineyards that have been affected by the 2012 freezes. Thanks also to Wayne Wilcox who provided his expertise as part of the discussion.

The major point that we kept going back to, was the need to know what was going on in a particular vineyard block. So the first step in the decision making process is to get out into vineyards and collect information on a block-by-block basis. Getting out and assessing the amount of Phomopsis infections while rating bud damage will give you the information you need for the start of the season.

**Weed management** – no matter what type of damage your vineyards have received from the freezes, YOUR WEED MANAGEMENT PROGRAM SHOULD NOT BE SHORT CHANGED. Uncontrolled weed growth will provide a management nightmare for years to come as perennial grasses and broadleaves can become established in the span of one growing season and the annual weeds will produce enough seeds to fill the seed bank under the row for years to come. You can push the pencil to determine if a program combining pre emergence and post emergence herbicides is more or less expensive than a post emergence program where applications will be necessary each time weed growth reaches 4- to 6-inches in height. In dry years we have seen where one post emergent application has done an excellent job while in wet years it can take up to three applications. Calculating the cost of not only the herbicides, but the cost of labor, equipment and diesel fuel for both programs will help you to keep costs down.

**Disease management** - you should be looking at a minimum of three fungicide applications in vineyard blocks where Phomopsis infections are present. Last year was a banner year for Phomopsis cane infections so there is plenty of inoculum going into this season in a majority of vineyards. Check on a block-by-block basis for the presence of Phomopsis.

**3- to -5” shoot growth** – While many vineyards are past this point, those where primary and secondary bud loss has occurred have yet to reach this stage. Phomopsis application of an EBDC (e.g., Dithane, Penncozeb), Ziram or Captan using the moderate rate. Drive every row, and shut down nozzles so material is applied only to the area along the cordon. This will help to save money by increasing deposition of material (more bang for the buck) while decreasing the number of times the tank will need to be replenished (as opposed to spraying the entire height of the trellis while driving every other row). Look to reduce the volume of air early in the season using Andrew Landers tips on improving spray application found on his website at http://web.entomology.cornell.edu/landers/pestapp/grape.htm

**Scout vineyards at 12” shoot growth.** At this time you should be able to easily examine clusters and also check out the vines for Eutypa. IF you see powdery mildew in either Concord or Niagara vineyards where there is still the potential for a crop you should consider starting your powdery mildew program now. While we did not have a severe powdery mildew problem across the belt last year (so inoculum levels should be lower), the extended forecast is calling for days frequented by cloudy skies and rainfall, the environmental conditions which favor early season powdery mildew infections. Catching powdery infections early could be critical in vineyards which did have a powdery mildew problem last season.

**Immediate Prebloom** – Spray every row with adequate water to ensure excellent coverage. For Concord and Niagara with a crop

Use an EBDC and a newer chemistry for
powdery mildew (i.e. Quintec)
For Concord and Niagara with little or minimal crop
Use an EBDC + the least expensive Sterol inhibitor (SI) you can find that you think still works in your vineyards.

Immediate Post bloom (this spray will follow the immediate prebloom application by 10- to 14-days depending on weather conditions) Spray every row with adequate water to ensure excellent coverage.
For Concord with a crop
Vivando (PA and NY) or Torino (Note – should be available in PA this season) + Ziram
(Viavando and Torino are fungicides which are very effective against powdery mildew)
For Niagara with a crop
Revus Top + Ziram (The addition of Ziram is for Phomopsis protection. Before adding Ziram determine the severity of Phomopsis infections from previous years - this seasons inoculum - as well as the weather conditions up to this point in the season – to get an idea of how much inoculum may still be available).

For Concord with little or no crop
Sovran (PA and NY) or Abound (NY only)
For Niagara with little or no crop
Revus Top

Note – Continue to scout blocks throughout the season. Depending on environmental conditions and the disease situation in each block an additional fungicide application(s) may be necessary after the Immediate Post bloom spray.

Insect management - is pretty straight forward.
Continue to monitor vineyards for steely beetle and climbing cutworm, as they were active prior to the freezes and are still out. If you have viable clusters you will need to watch for the regular suspects, rose chafer, Japanese beetle and grape berry moth and the slew of secondary pests that may pop up and become a problem. If there is little or no crop there will be few insect pests to worry about. Grape rootworm is becoming more of a concern in recent years and a quick look at all vineyard blocks around late June/Early July could catch a problem before it gets out of hand.

If you have any questions on your vineyard pest management options or IPM strategies please feel free to get in touch with any one of us.

Pest Management and Crop Insurance
Tim Weigle

With Crop Insurance, or relentless freezes of 2012 being the hot topics lately, it is difficult to get anyone too excited about pest management this spring.

However, vineyard pest management and its affect on your crop insurance claim can be extremely important. Contact your crop insurance agent immediately to let them know of the potential for damage that you are seeing and to find out what their minimum requirements are as far as vineyard maintenance are concerned. All too often we have seen where growers become discouraged after a freeze or frost event and severely limit the inputs into an affected vineyard, only to find out at the end of the year that the crop that is present (usually at a tonnage higher than expected) has been ravaged by disease, grape berry moth, and weed competition. It is at this point where the crop insurance adjuster (some from out of the area with limited experience with grapes) comes in and starts to question the production practices used.

We have already heard the stories of claims being denied because even minimal vineyard weed, disease and insect management practices were not applied to affected blocks. Do not let this happen to you.

The take home messages are:

1. Contact your crop insurance adjuster after each event that you feel has caused injury to your crop.
2. Document the loss with written statements, a diary of sorts, and photos. If you need documentation of the low temperatures over the course of this spring they can be found for the 11 NEWA weather instruments in the Lake Erie region on the NEWA website at http://newa.cornell.edu/
3. DO NOT WALK AWAY from your vineyards. Grapes are a perennial crop and need at least minimal weed, disease and insect management so you do not increase your pest problems for future years. No matter what the damage from freeze or frost, weed management should be accomplished this year.
Editor’s Note: The information contained in this newsletter is revised from the many Crop Updates (the LERGP weekly electronic newsletter) and other mailings that have been sent out this spring in response to the multiple freeze events that have occurred across the Lake Erie Grape Belt in 2012. With the cost of printing and mailing we cannot provide the same information via hard copy on the same frequency. We will make every effort to get the information you need to manage your vineyards via newsletters, but encourage you to sign up to receive the Crop Update, and this newsletter, by email to get the most current information on a more timely basis. If you are currently not receiving the Crop Update send your preferred email address to Kate Robinson at kjr45@cornell.edu.

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