

**Terra Vitae Vineyards
February/March 2009**

KELTERN VINEYARD, HAWKE'S BAY

Since the early season report, the vines have grown well as the weather has been kind with warmer than normal temperatures and little rain, especially through the more critical latter part of the growing season.

The staff have all been busy with the usual activities of mowing, weed control, trimming, leaf removal and foliar spraying. As per usual, contract labour gangs have been involved with bud rubbing, shoot thinning, leaf plucking, crop thinning and net clipping activities. Speaking of nets, they're all on now and we have moved into 'pre-harvest mode' with bird scaring as the sugar levels rise and the avian critters take an active interest in the crop – it's an ongoing challenge!

Flowering went well with warm temperatures experienced over this critical period resulting in good fruit set and less 'chickens' (i.e. small berries) in those varieties/clones that are susceptible to that condition. As a result, the bunches are fuller and heavier than normal, requiring fruit thinning on most blocks, although early season shoot removal made this task easier, especially on the Super Premium and Reserve blocks where lower yields are required.

The inter-row flower planting went well with plenty of insect activity observed in the rows. Early and mid season monitoring has indicated good insect pesticide control has been achieved to date.

With the dry season we have experienced, keeping on top of the irrigation requirements has also been critical to maintaining canopy condition whilst controlling shoot growth. Soil moisture monitoring has been an essential activity to facilitate this.

At the moment all aspects are looking good and we could be harvesting a little earlier than normal, although anything could happen as we are so dependant on the weather – fingers crossed!

Mark Dixon

Vineyard Manager

TWYFORD GRAVELS, HAWKE'S BAY

Great growing conditions since pre flowering have left us with a large amount of fruit. We are busily working our way through the varieties, thinning the crop down to target levels to achieve the required quality and ripeness.

Dryness and very high temperatures are again the features of our summer. There is currently an irrigation ban on water from the Ngaruro River and some wells in the area have run dry. Fortunately, we are unaffected by this.

We have now reached full veraison, meaning fully red bunches, so nets are going on for bird protection. At this stage the season may be one week early but the final result will be determined by the weather over the next six weeks.

Phil Holden

Vineyard Manager

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TAYLORS PASS VINEYARD

The summer on the whole has been good, with hot dry conditions. Hopefully this will continue through to the end of harvest. I'm sure you are fully aware that there are drought conditions in many parts of the country and Marlborough has not escaped this, with temperatures well into the thirties for the latter part of January and also for the early part of this month. As I write this report, it is hovering around the 35deg mark!! At times the Awatere River, which we rely on for irrigation water, has been very low and restrictions have been imposed on those growers with lesser consent rights. It has not affected our vineyard, as we have 'A' class water rights, which allows us to irrigate almost without interruption.

We are now into the back end of the growing season and the vines are going through veraison. This is where the berries soften up and the vines now put their energy into ripening the fruit. The vines have come through in great health and we should be looking at a good harvest. My thanks goes to my dedicated team at Taylors Pass, who put in long hours to make sure the vineyard is looking at its best and performing to the highest standard.

At the moment we are very busy trimming and leaf plucking the vine canopies to maximise conditions to produce top quality fruit. We are also getting ready to put on nets and load up the shotguns. The bird bangers are already out to protect the grapes from birds.

We are awaiting the arrival of our new harvester to replace our current machine. This is the latest model out of France and is a real step forward in technology for harvesting, spraying, and general vineyard work. We also have the field day coming up in March, so I look forward to seeing some of you in Hawke's Bay then. Harvest will start towards the later part of March and will be over by the end of April, so hopefully it's going to be an excellent finish to the season.

Garrie Armstrong
Vineyard Manager

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SEDDON VINEYARD REPORT

Summer has continued to track a little later than normal, which pushed flowering further in to December. The result was slightly warmer temperatures over flowering, which combined with the warm spring last year has meant that crops have been extremely heavy. We have therefore been busy regulating crops to ensure that the grapes ripen and we produce quality product and minimize the possibility of over production this year - all for the long term good of the industry.

We are in to veraison now and with it come the birds – so we have been dusting off the shotguns and preparing to put nets on high risk areas of the vineyard. It tends to be the Pinot Noir and Pinot Gris varieties which birds target the most!

Thankfully the grass has stopped growing after an unusually long mowing season and we are now able to complete a few other tasks. We have a new spray shed which will speed up filling times and provide secure storage for chemicals, now that our volumes have increased due to the vineyard expansion. It has been designed to double as tractor/sprayer storage, which makes it quite a cheap shed.

HIGGINS ROAD UPDATE

Given the wet start to spring, the young vines have had a good start and are already at the top wire (1.8m) in the early varieties. We have managed to get through the season without spray guards which has saved both time and money. All of our staff have put in extra effort, working extended hours to get through the block in time, so a big thank you needs to go to them. It is certainly not a five minute job to go out and mow the vineyards now, so it takes a lot of planning to keep the vineyard at a high level of presentation.

We are in the process of completing our irrigation system with the Higgins Rd pump and mainline upgrade underway. We have been operating from the Seddon site, which shows some of the flexibility that we designed into the system. During winter we will be able to link the two sites into one system which will make life a lot easier.

Going forward, we will be completing a few cosmetic jobs around the site, including native plantings around the pond and fences. All the headlands will be worked up and grassed down in autumn which will just about complete the project.

I hope you enjoy the pictures taken in January 2009!!

Carl Jackson
Vineyard Manager



NEW SPRAY SHED



Sav Blanc along Marama Rd



Pinot Noir Block, most vines nearly to the top!



Riesling vines are just pushing the top wire in places