

BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR INTEGRATING SHEEP IN VINEYARDS

HOW IT WORKS

Through the act of grazing, animals stimulate the plants they nibble on to shed some of their root fibers. At the root level, this causes the plants to look for more nutrients needed to re-grow. This kind of intentional and metered grazing can, in turn, increase root growth, microbial biomass and activity in the soil.

Source: Soil Life



WHY DO IT?

- Manage weeds (resident vegetation) and/or cover crops
- Increase soil organic matter through residual ground cover and addition of dung
- Increase biodiversity in your operation
- Decrease herbicide use **
- Decrease tractor passes and labor costs **
- Possibly lessen fire fuel load
- and... Smile a bit more, because sheep are cute

BONUS! IMPROVED SOIL HEALTH

With an increase in soil organic matter (SOM), soils are known to have:

- greater water infiltration rates,
- increased nutrient cycling abilities,
- greater water holding capacity,
- improved aeration and
- improved root growth.

**AVERAGE COST SAVINGS

Reduction of 1-3 mowing passes

Reduction in 1 herbicide application

Increased efficacy of pre-emergent herbicide

Potential additional labor savings depending on methods used

Grazing in vineyards has been shown to have NO significant impact on:

- grape yield
- berry quality
- grapevine health
- soil compaction
- soil salinity/pH

ADVICE FROM VINEYARDS THAT GRAZE

- Start small and have a back up plan
- Be clear and realistic about your goals and expectations
- Build trust with a grazier
- Keep good records
- Be conservative on timing at the beginning
- Consider developing community partnerships
- Know that you will need to protect young vines and probably make some irrigation repairs
- Think about other ways this can build on your income - agritourism, meat or wool sales

FIRST STEPS

- Determine your goals and capacity
 - Why are you wanting to use sheep?
 - How much land do you want to graze?
 - Do you have the appropriate infrastructure?
- Learn as much as possible: reach out to neighbors or friends that have already integrated sheep and ask LOTS of questions, watch videos, read articles...
- Contact a grazier and begin to build a relationship



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COMPLETE BEST MANAGEMENT
PRACTICES GUIDE**

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