

Klickitat County, WA
Vines and Ovines Project Newsletter #3 – Final Report

November 2009

Goldendale Sheep Producer Paulette Lefever Holbrook

Good News for Klickitat County Vineyard Owners

The WSARE / UCANR¹ Vines and Ovines
Project in Klickitat County

Lessons learned:

Shortly after local bud break 2009, Paulette Lefever Holbrook, a sheep producer in Goldendale, WA, sheared, extensively handled, and immunized eight of her year-old Suffolk-Hampshire ewes and one mature ewe. In July the ewes were moved to the organic vineyard of Brian McCormick in Mosier, OR where they were housed in a pipe pen confinement area. Temporary electric net fencing was installed around the confinement area and the selected vineyard aisles. One day after the move the ewes underwent the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR) grapevine aversion protocol and were turned out in McCormick's vineyard to graze.

Throughout the week-long period, the ewes grazing behavior was continuously monitored; on separate occasions two different ewes nibbled grapevines and underwent repeat aversion training which extinguished each animal's grapevine grazing.

One of the year-old ewes died of pneumonia the day after returning from the vineyard grazing to the home ranch. Following the necropsy, the flock's veterinarian, Carl Conroy, DVM of Mid-Columbia Veterinary Clinic, suggested two possible study-related causes of death: the ewe may have had a pre-existing asymptomatic respiratory illness such as Ovine Progressive Pneumonia (OPP) which was fatal when compounded by the stress from ingesting the lithium chloride (LiCl) aversion training bolus. In the alternative, Dr. Conroy stated the LiCl bolus may have caused a rumenitis which in turn led to the fatal pneumonia. These potentially important findings were submitted to UCANR for review.

- Preventive health measures including up-to-date immunizations, and clearance by the flock's managing veterinarian will best prepare the sheep for successful aversion training and management.
- Successful introduction of newly averted sheep into a vineyard is most effectively managed by a shepherd on duty full-time during the first few days of grazing. The shepherd's work is expedited by marking each sheep with an individual identifying symbol and using binoculars for surveillance.
- Effective vineyard floor grazing can be enhanced by accustoming the sheep to feeds that are the same as or similar to the vineyard floor flora before introducing them into the vineyard. In the alternative, their accustom feed or other attractants can be strewn across the vineyard floor prior to turning them into the vineyard to graze.
- Good sheep management is markedly enhanced by the use of a containment area with sufficient clean, fresh water and shade where sheep return to rest safe from predators. It is here the sheep will return throughout the day; and it is here they can be most easily handled when necessary.

The KC Vines and Ovines experience yielded a great deal of information about integrating grazing animals into vineyard maintenance. For further discussion please contact Paulette at 509- 261-0006.

¹ This project was funded by Western Sustainable Agriculture and Education (WSARE) and conducted by the University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR).