

Cover Note

Communication Statement for Members Only Reference

*****This cover note is not for distribution outside of the Association membership and accompanying Communication Statement outlining the position of frost is for Members Only Reference *****

The reason for playing the effect down for the region is related to marketing. In 2003 and 2011 the industry media gatekeepers began to form opinions on the quality of the entire vintage outcome for the region before the vintage had occurred. In both cases those vintages were talked down, making it difficult to sell wine from that vintage, regardless of the outcomes individuals had.

The wine media and other industry participants are always keen for news, bad news is always the easiest to write.

We are fully aware of the devastation that the frosts have caused in Coonawarra and the effect that this may have on some individual businesses, but it will be counterproductive to portray this to the wider wine community.

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Coonawarra Vignerons position on frost

November 2017

On the morning of Saturday 4 November 2017, Coonawarra experienced what is termed a 'black frost'.

There are two types of frost:

1. A radiation frost that tends to affect vines from the ground up, and is quite common; and
2. The so called 'black frost' which is a cold air mass that moves into a region from usually dryer parts of the country.

The black frost effects the vine from the top down and it can be hard to quantify the effect. Typically, black frosts freeze shoot tips and then slowly move down to the fruiting zone.

These types of frost are unusual in a number of ways as they can affect sites that are not normally seen as being cold, while leaving vineyards that are normally frost prone.

In Coonawarra the effect has been quite patchy; which is in our favour. Fortunately, this frost did not occur two weeks ago as the impacts would have been much more severe as the new bunches were unprotected and sitting at the top of the canopy.

This recent event demonstrates the importance of access to good quality water through the water allocation planning process. Water remains the most effective frost protection when applied with overhead sprinklers. Water is also important in situations of partial damage in re-invigorating the vine to recovery.

Normally we have five to 10 frosts per year, however black frosts only drop about once a decade.

Vineyard managers will now be assessing the situation and using strategies to minimise the effect of the frost for the remainder of the season. As grape growers we are constantly adjusting to these seasonal challenges.

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