

Special Disease Alert – July 3, 2006

The alert below went out to Connecticut grape growers on Monday morning July 3, 2006.

The regular scouting report will be slightly delayed because I have had so many calls today.

Many of you may now see the cluster damage I had predicted a week earlier. But this is a special alert with regard to downy mildew which is present at high levels at two commercial vineyards in Stonington and North Stonington. Each vineyard has a wonderful crop, but downy mildew infections of the fruit can make the juice worthless so the battle is not done. In other parts of the state I don't see the levels of downy I see in the Eastern Connecticut.

I know that many people are relying on protectants to control downy mildew. Under the conditions we have had, the grapes are largely unprotected even if applications of protectants went on every 7 days. When there are prolonged wet periods, it is advisable to include a systemic material in the mix.

Below is the text of my message to one of the growers with the downy mildew epidemic. Remember this only applies to downy mildew. To everyone, don't forget your black rot controls as signs of this fungus are steadily increasing.

Quick update to you on what I found in the scouting yesterday (Sunday, July 2) at your farm. Downy mildew was present in greater amount than in my last scouting a week before when it was present in only one block, but now present in all blocks. You may have already applied a control, but just in case you haven't I thought I would alert you because if it goes to the fruit it can destroy the quality of the juice. You have a great crop it would be a shame to lose it now.

I don't know if you have been using protectants or a systemic material, but it might be wise to use a systemic with some backward action to destroy an existing infection. One of the simplest materials to use because of effectiveness, low cost, and low toxicity are the phosphorous acid materials. Your protection is reliable for 10-14 days depending on rate even if it rains. Here are the materials labeled for use in CT:

mono- and di-potassium salts of phosphorous acid:

Agri-Fos
Agri-Fos Systemic Fungicide
Fosphite
Prophyt

phosphorous acid:

Phostrol

Pay attention to the application rate per acre as some people have experienced some leaf "burning" on some varieties, but it is suspected that it is due to inappropriate application rates. My experience is that often what people call burning is the destruction of the infection--crisping of the areas invaded by the fungus. This is just a precaution to follow the label rates. If you want to be super safe, go with the low rate per acre.

A second comment I wanted to make is people are seeing the damage I had predicted in my previous report. You should document this damage, be it from disease or related to poor flower development due to the extreme wetness and low light intensity we have experienced. There may be disaster funding to partially compensate for losses so have your documentation in order

in case it becomes available. I will take specific notes estimating damage in my next scouting rounds.