



Woodshield posts are made of pine and coated with a 6 millimetre layer of plastic.

# CCA restrictions encourage vineyard trellis post rethink

By FRANK SMITH

THE trellis posts most commonly used in Australian vineyards are made of pine treated with the chemical preservatives creosote or copper-chromium-arsenate to protect the timber against termites and wood rot.

New restrictions on the use of copper chrome arsenate for treating timber came into effect in July this year.

The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority reviewed CCA timber treatments because arsenic could be absorbed through the skin, swallowed or inhaled if the treated timber was burnt.

"Following this review, CCA has now been declared a restricted chemical product from 1 July", APVMA Pesticides Program Manager Raj Bhula said.

"This means CCA products can only be supplied to, and used by, suitably trained persons authorised under a relevant state or territory law from that date.

"The APVMA does not have regulatory powers to control the use of CCA-treated end-products – our powers extend only to the point of sale of the chemical itself – and this step tightens up the requirements for industry and retailers to ensure users of such

## AT A GLANCE

- CCA regulations tightened
- Confusion about organic use
- Vineyard use permitted for now

products are well-informed of the risks and permitted uses."

CCA can continue to be used on timber intended for vineyard trellises but it cannot be used on high-contact timber structures. This includes garden furniture, picnic tables, exterior seating, children's play equipment, patio and domestic decking, and handrails.

The major concern is the lack of a safe disposal method. CCA treated posts cannot be burnt and must be disposed off by burial with possible contamination of the soil.

According to the Victorian Department of Primary Industries, organic standards regarding CCA treated posts vary. Under most standards, existing posts do not have to be replaced when a vineyard converts to organic, but new posts must not be treated with CCA. Creosote is acceptable to some codes but generally discouraged.

Alternatives are posts treated with Alkaline Copper Quaternary, steel or plastic options and posts

made from termite tolerant native timbers.

ACQ is a copper-based preservative treatment, which unlike CCA does not contain chromium or arsenic. It has been approved under at least one Australian organic standard. However, ACQ-treated radiata pine posts are not as strong as those treated with CCA.

Steel and concrete posts can damage mechanical harvesters. Galvanised posts corrode quickly in coastal districts or areas with saline soils, although some steel posts now on the market have improved construction patterns and protective coatings

Plastic posts made from recycled plastic are termite, rot and corrosion-proof, but have limited load-bearing capacity. Recycled plastic posts have performed adequately in a cool climate vineyard, but failed in a hot inland vineyard. The manufacturers claim a service life of more than 50 years.

Use of these posts would have the side benefit of reducing the amount of plastic waste going to landfill, and the posts themselves are recyclable.

Some native hardwood timbers are suitable, although likely to be expensive. In some cases these may be harvested from wood lots on the property.

A more recent development is plastic coated pine. These are marketed as Woodshield posts. They are made by machining a pine post and coating it with a 6 millimetre layer of plastic.

"The recycled plastic is waste from the agricultural industries," Woodshield sales manager Ashley Davidson said. "We take the old used dripper tube or irrigation pipe off the vineyards or farms, recycle it and put it back out on a post.

"Then in 50-plus years, the tested life span of the plastic, you can strip it, chop it up and recycle the plastic again. The wood can be mulched, chipped or turned into firewood. Because it is non-treated there are no chemicals to worry about."

The manufacturers claim a 40 per cent to 50pc greater strength than CCA treated timber posts and greater ability to bend before breaking.

Each end has a hard cap encapsulated inside and the recycled plastic is extruded over both the cap and the timber post, completely sealing it.

These options are worth considering for a new trellis system, but there is no need to replace existing CCA treated posts.

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## China chasing Canberra wine

By JOHN THISTLETON

CHINA cannot get enough of Australia's premium wines, according to a specialist exporter.

Inland Trading Company principal Greg Corra, who is about to send his biggest wine consignment worth \$US500,000 (\$A487,000) to a supermarket chain in China, says although the industry is facing a difficult market, the hurdles were not insurmountable.

He said if it were not committed to other markets, he could sell every drop of Canberra's Clonakilla premium wines to China.

An award-winning entrepreneur of Wamboin in New South Wales, Mr Corra was commenting on the latest industry analysis which says import tariffs are holding back the potential of wine exports to China.

Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences executive director Kim Ritman said economic analysis showed removal of China's import tariff could lead to a fall in the Chinese retail price for Australian wine by about 12 per cent for bottled wine and 17pc for bulk wine.

Mr Corra said getting supplies was as important as the tariff hurdle.

"If we could source more premium wine we could sell it. We have allocations from producers which need to be spread across markets," he said.

Mr Corra said many Australians believed there was a glut of wine, and often referred to a wine lake hanging over the domestic market.

A disastrous 2011 vintage meant some producers did not make any premium wine, and this year many producers were likely to be 30 per cent down on production at the premium end of the market.

"There is absolutely no wine lake at the moment," he said. The telling factor is the way bulk wine prices are going up in this country, beyond what you would ever expect."

He said a Canadian winery had sought wine from him three years ago to blend with other wine, which cost \$250 a litre.

"I could not find a similar wine at \$450 [these days]. Yes, a lot is related to vintage, but a lot of it is also related to the fact Australia no longer has a wine lake as everyone would like to believe," he said.

**Details: clonakilla.com.au**

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