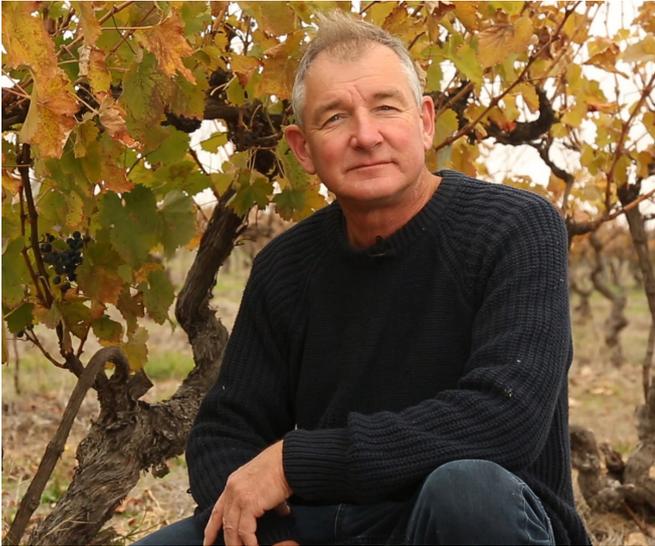


# SMALLFRY WINES

## CANE LAYERING REJUVENATES 125 YEAR-OLD BAROSSA VINEYARD



With 40% of Small Fry Wines' 18ha property made up of vines planted during settlement of Barossa, it's no wonder Eutypa dieback is an issue for the winery.

Owners Wayne Ahrens and Suzi Hilder have been tackling Eutypa for more than 10 years on their 125+-year-old vineyard at Vine Vale, systematically treating individual vines through layering. The process involves layering a cane from the original Eutypa-affected vine under the soil and growing it back up to the trellis. It is a savvy strategy in an established vineyard, as the newly-created vine is a clone of the original. It is also proving to be successful, with some vines that were part of the couple's early attempts at layering now making up 30% of the vine's cordon length.

They have also found that the new vine and its root system supports the original vine, sustaining it for longer. "Normally the [old] layer would wither and die within a few years, but in this case, it's actually grown,"

said Wayne. "So that tells me that while the new root system is feeding the [new] vine, it's also feeding this old part of the vine, so we're actually maintaining the existing structure."

### PRESERVING THE AVERAGE AGE OF MATURE VINEYARDS

When a vine does die, Small Fry Wines choose to replant a new vine in the gap, rather than taking the drastic measure of replanting the whole vineyard. "We're trying to maintain the average age of the vines in this block as high as possible," said Wayne. "If you think about it, if we replace one vine in a hundred every year, then the average age of the vineyard stays the same.

"In order to get a young vine going in an established vineyard I need to do a fair bit of preparation. It involves digging a reasonable-sized hole and adding compost and gypsum...but it's certainly possible to grow young vines in amongst the old vines."

### HEALTHY VINES ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO FIGHT EUTYPA

At the core of their vine renewal program is a quest to constantly develop the condition and health of their vineyards through a biodynamic program. "I think fundamental to combatting Eutypa in the vineyard...is improving vine health," said Wayne. "The healthier and stronger the vine is and the more vigour it has, the more it has the capacity to combat the disease and maintain yield.

"I think the biodynamic practices we're employing with composting and soil mineralising and increasing organic matter levels in our soils are really helping us to fight the expression of Eutypa."

*For more information on Barossa's focus on sustainability go to <https://www.barossawine.com/vineyards/resilience/> or contact Nicki Robins, Viticultural Development Officer, Barossa Grape & Wine Association at [nicki@barossa.com](mailto:nicki@barossa.com)*