

Practical Neighbor and Community Relations

Often most neighbor-vineyard problems arise from lack of knowledge about what is occurring in the vineyard. Meeting with your neighbors can help alleviate problems in the future.

1. **Communication.** Make sure neighbors know how to contact you. Pass out business cards to neighbors, post your telephone number at vineyard entrance.
2. **Information.** People want to know what, how, why and when things are happening in the vineyard. They are usually concerned about perceived health risks from pesticide drift, and the inconvenience from dust and noise.

People appreciate it if you explain some of the reasoning behind your pesticide decision-making. Before you meet with neighbors at their house or in the field, know the answers to the following types of questions for the pesticides you are using. Neighbors appreciate knowing there is reasoning behind your pesticide usage.

Here's a sample scenario for an application of sulfur dust to prevent powdery mildew.

	Question	Answer
What?	Is being applied?	Sulfur dust. Sulfur is approved for use on organic vineyards.
Why?	Is it applied?	Sulfur helps prevent powdery mildew on the grapes.
How?	Will it be applied?	It is applied with a dusting machine pulled behind the tractor. We have bought a special machine that can be turned off as the tractor drives around the vine rows.
When?	Will it be applied?	The first application is usually in April, and will occur every 10-14 days through June. A powdery mildew index based upon the weather is used to determine scheduling. The dusting occurs at night because the wind is less likely to be blowing.

Here's a sample scenario for an application of Provado to reduce sharpshooters.

	Question	Answer
What?	Is being applied?	Provado, at less than 1 oz per acre.
Why?	Is it applied?	We monitored sharpshooter counts with the yellow sticky traps you see. When they start flying in the spring, we spray Provado to prevent them from spreading Pierce's Disease.
How?	Will it be applied?	It is applied with an electrostatic spray machine. The machine charges the particles, so they spray adheres better to the leaves of the grapevine.
When?	Will it be applied?	The first application is in the spring, with another possible in July. It is usually applied in the early morning.

Let neighbors know plans can change according to weather. If it is too windy, an application may be delayed. Rain and heat can also change schedules.

Outreach

Introduce yourself to new neighbors as they move in. If there are many neighbors surrounding your property you may wish to invite them out to the field.

Field Day Suggestions

1. Give a personal invitation to closest neighbors, hand them a flyer yourself.
2. Invite community leaders, including teachers, supervisors, and council members.
3. Post flyers at local stores.
4. Inform newspapers of your meeting.
5. Invite someone from the Ag Commissioners office. They can help talk to the neighbors if you would like.
6. Offer an incentive. Food or wine made from your vineyard works great.
7. Hand out business cards at your meeting.
8. Review pesticide practices, and the seasonal nature of vineyard work.
9. Have neighbors meet your field manager and some workers.
10. Be kid friendly, have some tractors and equipment for kids to look at.

Follow Up

1. **Respond.** If someone calls with a complaint, make sure to return that phone call within a day. Often, people just want to hear an apology if you happened to make a mistake.
2. **Accommodate simple requests.** Try to work on a compromise if a neighbor has a reasonable request. Maybe you can start dusting their side of the field first during the late evening. You may wish to notify neighbors when sulfur dusting will occur. Don't make promises you can't keep. If you can't meet a request, just let the neighbor know it is not possible.
3. **Lower noise levels.** Often people are more disturbed by noise than the actual spraying.
 - a. Limit the number of tractors in one field at a time.
 - b. Test new equipment for noise levels before you buy it.
 - c. Keep equipment running properly.
 - d. Have employees park cars away from houses and talk quietly during nights.
 - e. Fill equipment tanks away from neighborhoods.

Benefits

1. You will be called first, instead of a complaint to the Ag Commissioner or police department.
2. Neighbors will watch out for your vineyard. If a pipe breaks they will often call to let you know.
3. People are generally proud to live next to a vineyard. They will often buy and serve guests wine that came from your vineyard.
4. Cooperation might improve with the neighbors. They may consult you for Pierce's Disease resistant plants to put in their yard. You might let them use your vineyard access to assist in backyard landscaping projects.