Pierce's disease - report from southern California 2001

22 Nov 2004 by JR

John Hicks of Maurice Carrie Winery and Van Roekel Vineyards contacted me the other day to ask why I had included his region, Temecula in southern California, in the list of five world wine regions that 'have become less exciting since the last edition' of the World Atlas of Wine that *Decanter* magazine insisted on squeezing out of me for a long interview in their November 2001 edition. (The others, by the way, were Beaujolais, Moldova, Alsace and Rheingau.) I explained to him that I'd added Temecula as a rather flip allusion to the prevalence of the vine killer Pierce's disease there rather than making a quality assessment and this is his reply:

> 'Pierce's disease is still a problem though it remains unclear how extensive the damage is. We don't find the glassy-winged sharpshooter in the traps anymore so the spraying program appears to have been effective. We are seeing 10-20 per cent losses in our vineyards. Some growers have reported up to 50 per cent losses. (However, that figure may be due to the fact that there's a pot of federal relief money to be doled out.)
>
> The outlook is still good in the region. We have new wineries opening and there is replanting going on. This could be a good opportunity to replant with varieties that are better suited to the climate.'

Sounds good that the vector insect is being controlled here, but even 10 per cent losses each year must be a bit depressing. We haven't heard much about PD further north in California recently. Is this for reasons of discretion or because the sharpshooter has been gunned out of town? Does anyone out there have any up-to-date information?