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Dr Albin AW Baecker

PROGRESS REPORT JULY 2002

Evalution of field liners on gum posts in the experimental vineyard plot at Elsenburg, Stellenbosch.

Professor Archer refered your enquiry to me. It is correct that we received 300 gum posts with Field Liners through Dr Graham Shelver during 1997. These posts have been installed in a field experiment at Elsenburg, a experimental farm, of the Provincial Department of Agriculture of the Western Cape. The posts are in and field trial where the influence of different pruning methods are evaluated. The quality (condition) of the posts we received were of a much poorer standard than the normal creosoted pine posts we normally use. Not all the bark was removed and the posts outerlayers were very rough. Although we were very sceptical of the quality of the posts, they are still surviving. During the last 5 years the vineyard only received 3 supplementary overhead sprinkler irrigations during the year. Until now no rot is visible on any of the posts. At the end of last year permanent micro irrigation has been installed and the vineyard will now receive more intensive irrigation. During this coming harvesting season some of the vines will be mechanical harvested and we will be able to evaluate the effect of the strain mechanical harvesting puts on the posts.

On 13 June 2002 Paul Joubert visited the experimental site with me. He took some photos of the posts fitted with Field Liners. As far as the above ground observations are concerned there is no visible evidence of rot on the posts fitted with Field Liners. Although the posts seem to have lost most of the creosote coverage there is no creosote leaching visible on the soil surface around the posts. However, in the case of the creosote treated pine posts no Field Liners were fitted and some leaching on the soil surface around the post is noticeable. At this stage we do not want to dig up some of the Field Liner to see if there is any leaching of creosote at the base of the posts. It will cause too much damage to the adjacent vines and we cannot afford this in the current vineyard experiment.

At this stage it is evident that the Field Liners are serving their purpose to prevent the rotting of the part of the posts that are in the soil and might prove to be environmental friendly.

Kindest regards

Danie van Schalkwyk

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