



Common auger beetle (*Xylopsocus gibbicollis*) - pest of viticulture

Dana Fisher, Viticulture Development Officer and Stewart Learmonth, Entomologist, Manjimup Horticultural Research Institute

Common name

- Common auger beetle

Origin

- Native to Australia

Pest of...

- Mature vines, Semillon seems most susceptible
- Unknown pest status in native species of trees

Description

- **Larvae** - develop internally in branches of certain types of wood, after sap flow has been cut from the parent plant. In vineyards, they feed within pruned canes.
- **Adult** - small brown beetles approx. 2 mm long and 1 mm wide, with a rounded head. The end of the abdomen appears as if it has been sliced off. Adult beetles actively fly.

Habits

- Little is known of the detail of the habits of this insect, but the adults appear to be attracted to volatile chemicals given off by plants when they have recently died, excised from the parent plant or under stress. Adults probably enhance this process by internally ringbarking vine canes to enable their premature senescence and they become a suitable place for the beetle to lay its eggs.

Life cycle

- Adults emerge from infested canes during summer. They probably lay eggs in vine canes after this time and up to spring. Large flights of beetles have been recorded in both spring and again in late summer.
- Larvae are most abundant in vine canes in summer, but only in canes from the previous season - dried out canes from earlier seasons are not infested.

'Looks like' - similar insects

- **Small fruit tree borer** (*Xyleborus dispar*) - smaller than common auger beetle, but less common in vineyards.



Note: Other insects which bore into the wood and canes of grapevines include: fig longicorn beetle (*Acalolepta vastator*), large auger beetle (*Bostrychopsis jesuita*), elephant weevil (*Orthorhinus cylindrirostris*), vine weevil (*Orthorhinus klugi*), fruit-tree borer (*Maroga melanostigma*) and vine borer (*Echiomima* sp.). Although all of these borers have been recorded as causing some economic damage in vineyards in Australia none have been recorded in vineyards in Western Australia.

Damage and loss

- Internal girdling of canes by adult beetles results in a weakening of the cane that causes it to snap when being laid down on cane pruned vines.
- In situations of heavy infestation, copious sap exudation from butts, arms and canes of vines commencing dormancy may reduce their vigour in the following season.

Monitoring

- Sap exudate from vine butts, leaders and canes from late summer to early winter indicates the presence of the beetle.
- Problems with canes snapping during vine pruning also indicate that the beetle is present.
- Adult beetle flight activity and relative abundance through a season can be monitored using sticky traps beneath which are hung containers of methylated spirits.
- Certain varieties of vines are more susceptible - Semillon is most susceptible.

Control options

Cultural

- mulching pruned canes to enable them to dry out should break the cycle of the beetle within a vineyard. It would be necessary to sweep pruned canes from under vines to the inter-row for best effect.
- maintaining good vine vigour may help in reducing the infestation level.

Chemical

- methidathion is registered for this pest, but the cultural control option is recommended.

This information has been written for Western Australian vineyards and some modifications may be required for other states.