DAFWA creates new tool to prevent bacon-flavoured wine

Summer is officially here which means vineyard owners are taking extra care to ensure their vines are being protected from the heat.

Thanks to the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) and the University of WA, the job has been made easier with the assistance of a smoke taint reduction tool.

The Smoke Taint Risk calculator – or STAR – has been developed to help the wine industry recognise the danger periods for smoke taint in wine.

Project leader Glynn Ward said it would be a major asset for the wine industry in reducing the risk of smoke taint from bush fires, especially during the summer months. “Smoke exposure of vines and development of smoke-related characteristics in the resulting wines is an increasing issue for the wine industry internationally,” Ward said.

“Wines made from grapes exposed to smoke during sensitive growth stages can taste of smoked meat, disinfectant, leather, salami and ashtrays – not a big selling point in a competitive marketplace.”

The risk calculator predicts the timing of grapevine growth stages and its associated risk to smoke uptake and taint development in wine for different varieties of grapes.

Information can be entered at any time during the season to generate the predicted risk for key varieties in any wine growing region around Australia.

According to Ward, the STAR integrates this to produce a time series graph of predicted risks.

The information generated can then be used by land and forest managers in their burning and smoke management decisions.

It will also help vignerons and winemakers decide on smoke taint reduction strategies in their vineyards and wineries.

Contact: The Smoke Taint Calculator can be accessed at agric.wa.gov.au/star.