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TREATING MYCODERMA - WHITE SURFACE FILM

Mycoderma is a wild surface yeast which causes wine spoilage by consuming alcohol while producing some acetic acid (vinegar acid). It first appears as small white spots on the liquid surface and generally is an indication that too much air is reaching the wine. Given continued access to air, these spots will grow until they cover the entire liquid surface with film and eventually will cause the wine to be undrinkable.

If noticed early enough, mycoderma can be treated with sulfite so that spoilage is stopped and the wine can be recovered. To do this, we recommend the following three steps. For each 5 gal. of wine:

1. Remove physically as much of the film as possible using a small spoon or gravy baster. Discard any wine removed with the film. Allow any particles which fall down into the wine to settle to the bottom of the container. This may take a day or so.
2. Prepare a 5 gal. glass carboy as a receiving container. Make sure it is clean and thoroughly rinsed. Wet the inside of the carboy with stock sulfite solution (made according instructions on the package label) and place 1/4 measuring teaspoon dry sulfite crystals in the carboy bottom. Siphon the mycoderma infected wine into the carboy, being careful to leave all sediments behind in the infected container.

If the wine still contains any solids which have not settled, the mycoderma particles can be removed by straining through several layers of fine cloth in a funnel. When the receiving carboy is about half full, add a second 1/4 measuring teaspoon of dry sulfite crystals and continue with the siphoning and/or straining. When the carboy has been filled to at least the base of the neck or a little higher, add a final 1/4 teaspoon of sulfite crystals. Extra wine may be necessary to fill the carboy properly. Close the carboy with a fermentation lock or well sulfited cork. The above procedure will have added 3/4 level measuring teaspoons of dry sulfite crystals to the wine and should cure the problem. Be sure the carboy(s) are kept full and sealed until the wine is siphoned off for bottling.

3. Clean the container and all equipment which contacted the infected wine thoroughly and sterilize it by washing with a solution of about one oz. liquid chlorine bleach in a gal. of warm water. Rinse the equipment thoroughly free of the chlorine. Carboys can be stored many months by placing a few cups of stock sulfite solution in the bottom and stoppering with a cork.

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