A response to Pinot Noir clonal genotyping has detected anomalies with both Abel and Pommard

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In the July 2025 issue of *Grapegrower & Winemaker*, Dr Chris Bourke presented a history of the MV6, Pommard and Abel clones, while referring to genetic studies that were performed at the AWRI in collaboration with Adelaide Hills Vine Improvement Inc. as described in a 2022 *Grapegrower & Winemaker* article by Prue Henschke and myself.

I enjoyed Dr Bourke's description of the history of the vines, however I would like to address some instances where the genomic data as presented in the 2022 piece were either misinterpreted or over-interpreted – which, given the technical nature of the data is very easy to do. With the benefit of experience in the analysis and access to additional, as yet unpublished, genetic data, I'd like to clarify some of the conclusions that were made with respect to the Pinot pedigree and the MV6, Pommard and Abel clones.

1. The Mount Pleasant selections (MV6, Mt Pleasant and AHVI-D4V2) do not have a close genetic relationship with the "Pommard" material (D4V2, UCD05). The details of the branching near the centre of the pedigree as shown in 2022 are generally unreliable and do not support any conclusions around their relationship.

   Subsequent Pinot pedigree work that has been performed at the AWRI since 2022 has also clarified that the MV6 and Pommard genetic groups are as unrelated as any two other genetic groups within the Pinot pedigree. There is also no genetic relationship to suggest that AHVI-D4V2 is either MV4 or MV5 (or a mix of the two).

2. While clones 114 and 667 do share a genetic link, clone 115 is not within a genetic group with these two clones.

3. As correctly pointed out by Dr Bourke, the Abel material that was sequenced (from Australian sources) is genetically related to the Mariafeld, D2V5 and D2V6 clones, which share their origins in Wadenswil, Switzerland.

However, the positioning of Abel within the Mariafeld genetic group does not totally preclude this material from being genetically related to vineyard material from within the Domaine Romanee-Conti vineyard or the broader Burgundy region. Indeed, additional pedigree work has shown that Australian "Bourgogne clones", which have origins supposedly in Burgundy but which came via Switzerland[1], are the most closely related material to the Abel clone sequenced to date.

In the end, the only way to know for sure would be to investigate the genetics of the Domaine Romanee-Conti plantings from which the Abel cutting was supposedly taken, as well as further examples of the Abel clone from throughout New Zealand, including the Ata Rangi vineyard, which contains the oldest surviving plantings of this clone. GW

1. Cirami 1993. Investigation of clone-site interaction of Pinot Noir in two distinct climatic regions. Final report to Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation.