

# WINE ENTHUSIAST

## How Bugs and Other Critters are Saving Vineyards

*Sustainable, organic and biodynamic farming practices are using insects and animals in innovative ways to shape their vineyards and care for the planet.*

BY ANNE KREBIEHL MW  
Published on April 17, 2017



*Babydoll Southdown Sheep in California's Maboroshi Vineyard.*

Working with nature, rather than against it, is the central tenet of sustainable, organic and biodynamic farming. This includes utilizing nature's army of beneficial life forms, rather than fighting against them. Insects, invertebrates, birds and mammals are all surprising little helpers in the production of healthy, wholesome crops of grapes and cider apples.

### Sheep

While the benefits of insects like ladybugs are well known—a single one of those helpful critters can devour around 5,000 aphids in its 2–3 year lifespan—four-legged animals can also prove useful.

The Maboroshi Vineyard in Sonoma County, California (one of the designated Pinot Noir vineyards at DeLoach in the [Boisset Collection](#)), has been home to Babydoll Southdown sheep since 2010.

“In late winter and early spring, they roam through the rows of vines and munch down the cover crop,” says Megan Long, communications manager for the Boisset Collection. “They contribute by eating weeds, providing natural fertilization and being part of the general holistic biodynamic farming.”

The vineyards of Nyetimber in England also get an annual visit from flocks of Romney sheep, borrowed from local farmers. “They keep the grass and weeds low and replenish valuable nutrients,” says winemaker Brad Greatrix.

“Meanwhile the farmers we partner with get a chance to rest their fields over the winter so there is benefit in both directions. Apart from that it’s joyful seeing the sheep roaming about the vineyards. By now they’ve returned to their farms for lambing season.”

The approach to farming taken by all these wineries makes sense, financially and ecologically and the pleasure of making such decisions is an enrichment in itself.