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# Leafhopper feeding behaviour on three grapevine cultivars with different susceptibilities to Flavescence dorée

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## **Scaphoideus titanus Ball feeding behaviour on three grapevine cultivars**

## 2 with different susceptibilities to Flavescence dorée

## 3 Authors

4 Matteo Ripamonti<sup>1,2</sup>, Federico Maron<sup>1a</sup>, Daniele Cornara<sup>3b</sup>, Cristina Marzachì<sup>2</sup>, Alberto

5 Fereres<sup>3</sup>, Domenico Bosco<sup>1\*</sup>

## 6 Affiliation

- <sup>1</sup> Department of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences (DiSAFA), University of Turin, Grugliasco (TO), Italy;
- 8 <sup>2</sup> Institute for Sustainable Plant Protection National Research Council of Italy, IPSP-CNR, Torino, Italy; <sup>3</sup>
- 9 Instituto de Ciencias Agrarias, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, ICA-CSIC, Madrid, Spain
- <sup>a</sup> Present address: Vit.En. Centro di Saggio, Calosso (AT), Italy.
- <sup>11</sup> <sup>b</sup> Present address: University of Berkeley, Department of Environmental Science, Policy, and Management,
- 12 Berkeley, CA, USA.
- 13 \* Corresponding author: domenico.bosco@unito.it
- 14

## 15 Abstract

Scaphoideus titanus (Ball) is a grapevine-feeder leafhopper, and the most important vector 16 17 of Flavescence dorée of grapevine (FD), a disease associated with phytoplasmas belonging to ribosomal subgroups 16Sr-V–C and –D. FD is a major constraint to viticulture 18 19 in several European countries and, so far, its control has relied on roguing of infected plants and insecticide applications against the vector. Detailed knowledge on different 20 levels of the multifaceted phytoplasma-plant-vector relationship is required to envisage 21 22 and explore more sustainable ways to control the disease spread. In the present work, S. 23 titanus feeding behaviour was described on three grapevine cultivars: Barbera (susceptible to FD), Brachetto, and Moscato (tolerant to FD) using the Electrical Penetration Graph 24 (EPG) technique. Interestingly, no differences were highlighted in the non-phloem probing 25 phases, thus suggesting that the tested cultivars have no major differences in the 26 biochemical composition or structure of the leaf cuticle, epidermis or mesophyll, that can 27 affect the first feeding phases. On the contrary, the results showed significant differences 28 in leafhopper feeding behaviour in terms of the duration of the phloem feeding phase, 29 longer on Barbera and shorter on Brachetto and Moscato, and of the frequency of 30 interruption-salivation events inside the phloem, higher on Brachetto and Moscato. These 31

findings indicate a preference for the Barbera variety, that appears a more suitable hosts for the leafhopper. *Scaphoideus titanus* feeding behaviour on Barbera correlates with an enhanced FDp transmission efficiency, thus explaining, at least in part, the higher susceptibility of this variety to FD. The mechanisms for the non-preference for Brachetto and Moscato are discussed, and a possible antixenosis is hypothesized. We propose that breeding for resistance against FD should take into account both plant traits associated with the response to the phytoplasmas and to the vector.

#### 39 Keywords

40 EPG; Electrical Penetration Graph; leafhopper vector; Vitis vinifera; cultivar

#### 41 **1. Introduction**

The leafhopper Scaphoideus titanus Ball is the main vector of phytoplasmas associated 42 with the Flavescence dorée of grapevine (FD), a disease spread in most European 43 viticultural countries (EFSA, 2020) that causes severe reduction of yield and quality of 44 45 grapes, requires roguing of infected plants and leads to uneven-aged vineyards (Morone et al., 2007). FD is associated with phytoplasmas belonging to the 16SrV group, 46 subgroups -C and -D (Davis and Dally, 2001; Lee et al., 2004; Martini et al., 2002), and it 47 causes severe losses to European viticulture (EFSA, 2016). Although different insect 48 species are competent for the transmission of FD phytoplasmas (FDp), S. titanus is by far 49 50 the most important vector, being strictly associated with Vitis plants and thus sustaining both primary (from wild grapevines outside the vineyards to cultivated vines) and 51 52 secondary (from vine to vine within the vineyard) disease spread (Maggi et al., 2017; Ripamonti et al., 2020). Control of FD relies on prophylactic measures, such as the use of 53 healthy propagation material, as well as on compulsory measures in infected vineyards, 54 namely roquing of infected plants, and insecticide treatments against the vector (Bosco 55 56 and Mori, 2013). However, the large-scale application of insecticides is a concern to 57 human health and environment, priming cascade ecosystem effects (Desneux et al., 2007) with a strong negative impact on pollinators (Tosi et al., 2018). For this reason, recent 58 studies focused on identifying sources of resistance to FDp phytoplasmas within the 59 grapevine germoplasm (Eveillard et al., 2016; Ripamonti et al., 2021), that would represent 60 61 the best strategy to minimise damage and limit FD spread and insecticide applications. Grapevine tolerance to FDp may be due to a direct response of the plant against the 62 pathogen or mediated by some resistance against the vector, or by a combination of the 63

64 two. Resistance against insects occurs when plant structural or chemical traits deter 65 herbivore feeding and thus minimize the amount of herbivore damage experienced by the plant, while tolerance occurs when plant traits reduce the negative effects of herbivore 66 damage on crop yield (Mitchell et al., 2016). As an example, it was demonstrated that 67 resistant tea cultivars sustained lower phloem ingestions for Empoasca vitis (Miao et al., 68 2014). Moscato and Brachetto are grapevine varieties tolerant to FD, as demonstrated by 69 70 Ripamonti et al. (2021) using transmission experiments with S. titanus under controlled 71 conditions (Ripamonti et al., 2021). The reduced S. titanus survival on Moscato observed 72 by the above mentioned authors, suggest that vector-host interaction could be the pivotal factor underlying Moscato tolerance to FD. S. titanus is monophagous on Vitis species, 73 74 mainly Vitis vinifera and naturalized rootstocks of V. riparia in Europe, while in North 75 America, V. labrusca and V. riparia are reported as the preferred host plants (Chuche and 76 Thiéry, 2014). Although the species is regarded as monophagous, it shows a good level of 77 plasticity and can feed on plant species of different families, e.g. Vitaceae, Fabaceae, 78 Ranunculaceae (Caudwell et al., 1970; Trivellone et al., 2013). Plant resistance against sap-sucking insects can be conveniently investigated by Electrical Penetration Graph 79 (EPG), that describes the nutrition pattern of a sucking insect on a given plant genotype, 80 81 by identifying possible altered nutrition on non-suitable genotypes (Backus et al., 2020; 82 Lucini et al., 2021).

Here we expand the first findings on *S. titanus* behaviour on grapevines, by analyzing the
vector probing behavior on three varieties with a different degree of susceptibility to FD:
one susceptible, Barbera, and two tolerant, Moscato and Brachetto, through the Electrical
Penetration Graph (EPG) (Backus and Bennett, 2009; McLean and Kinsey, 1964; Tjallingii,
1978).

EPG is a powerful tool to describe pierce-sucking insects' probing behaviour, previously 88 applied to describe S. titanus feeding behaviour on Cabernet-Sauvignon cuttings (Chuche 89 et al., 2017a, 2017b). EPG studies on different plant cultivars/genotypes provide precious 90 91 information for the epidemiology of vector-borne plant pathogens, also permitting the 92 identification of traits making a Vitis genotype unsuitable for the vector. A number of EPG 93 studies aimed at identifying plant resistance to insect vectors have been performed on planthoppers (Kimmins, 1989), whiteflies (Jiang et al., 2001; Rodríguez-López et al., 2011) 94 95 and aphids (Caillaud et al., 1995a, 1995b; Garzo et al., 2018; Sauge et al., 1998). Among these latter, EPG was applied to identify resistance factors involved in virus transmission 96 97 inhibition (Chen et al., 1997) as well as the presence of antixenosis (Kordan et al., 2019).

Besides those on *S. titanus* (Chuche et al., 2017a, 2017b), few EPG studies have been
conducted on Deltocephalinae leafhoppers (Carpane et al., 2011; Kawabe and McLean,
1980; Lett et al., 2001; Stafford and Walker, 2009; Trębicki et al., 2012), and very few of
these are relevant to phytoplasmas/mollicutes transmission (Carpane et al., 2011; Chuche
et al., 2017a).

103 The aim of this study was to compare *S. titanus* probing behaviour on three different 104 grapevine cultivars characterised by different susceptibilities to FD, in order to better 105 characterize the mechanisms underlying varietal tolerance/susceptibility to this 106 phytoplasma disease.

#### 107 **2. Material & Methods**

#### 108 **2.1.** *S. titanus* collection and rearing

To establish a S. titanus laboratory colony, in January/February 2019 two-year-old 109 110 grapevine canes with eggs were collected in vineyards of the Piemonte Region. The selected sites were known to host a high population of the leafhopper in the previous 111 112 summer, as estimated by yellow sticky traps captures of adults. The collected canes were 113 stored in a cold room at 6±1°C, covered with plastic film to avoid egg desiccation, until use. When needed, grapevine canes were transferred into an insect-proof greenhouse at 114 115 24 ± 2°C and maintained damp by daily water spraying. After four weeks, canes were 116 isolated in a cage together with a three-week-old broadbean plant as a food source for the 117 nymphs. After egg hatching, the broadbean plant was replaced every three weeks. Nymphs were reared under controlled conditions inside a greenhouse chamber,  $T = 24 \pm$ 118 119 2°C, with no humidity and photoperiod control, from the beginning of April to the end of September 2019. As FDp is not transovarically transmitted, and all the plants used for the 120 121 rearing and the experiments were phytoplasma-free, all S. titanus used in the experiments were phytoplasma-free. For the EPG experiments, adults emerged from 7-21 days were 122 used (modified from Chuche et al., 2017a), since in this time frame they were sexually 123 124 mature, highly active and not subjected to high mortality (Bocca et al., 2020; Mazzoni et al., 2009). 125

#### 126 **2.2. Plant rearing**

The test plants were obtained from phytoplasma-free *V. vinifera* cuttings of three different
cultivars, Barbera N. - Clone I-AT 84, Brachetto N. - Clone I-CVT 20 and Moscato Bianco
B. - Clone I-CVT 190 as described in Ripamonti et al. (2021). Grapevine cuttings were

grown in a greenhouse at  $24 \pm 2^{\circ}$ C, with no humidity and photoperiod control, inside 0.9 L pots (2:2:1 topsoil, clay, perlite), and watered once a week. Cuttings were used when three- to five-months old, and periodically pruned in order to keep them within 80 cm height . Broadbean plants used for *S. titanus* rearing were seedlings maintained in a growth chamber ( $24 \pm 2^{\circ}$ C, with no humidity and photoperiod control) in 2.4 L topsoil, five per pot, and watered twice a week.

#### 136 **2.3. EPG setup and data analysis**

137 Selected adults were collected and anesthetised with carbon dioxide for 5 seconds in a glass tube, then immobilised at the edge of a cut pipette tip connected to a vacuum pump 138 under a stereomicroscope. A small drop of water-based silver glue (EPG Systems, 139 140 Wageningen, The Netherlands) was placed on the pronotum of the insect, then a gold wire of 18 µm (previously attached with solvent-based silver glue (Ted Pella Inc., USA) to a 3 141 142 cm copper wire in turn attached to a brass nail with melted stain) was positioned on the dried drop, and covered with another small drop of silver glue. Before the EPG assay, 143 144 insects were starved for a 30-minute period, during which they were attached to the electrode and hanged, inserting the nail in a polystyrene base. 145

146 The substrate voltage probe was inserted in well damped soil of a potted grapevine 147 cutting, and S. titanus, attached to the assembled electrode, was connected to a probe and positioned onto the abaxial surface of a leaf. The feeding behaviour was then 148 monitored for 8 hours with a Giga-8dd DC-EPG amplifier (EPG Systems, Wageningen, 149 The Netherlands), inside a Faraday cage to isolate the system from external electrical 150 151 noise. Input resistance used was 1 giga Ohm, output set at 75x gain and plant voltage adjusted so that the EPG signal fitted into +5V and -5V. All recordings were done between 152 153 June and August 2019, and started between 11:00 and 11:30 a.m. every day.

A total of 153 recordings were done, each day a total of 6 recording were run. Each single recording was represented by a different plant-insect combination, one male or one female on one grapevine plant. Potted plants of the three varieties were randomly arranged in the Faraday cage for every recording and discarded after use. In case of falling from the leaf, the insect was repositioned. At the end of the recording, dead insects were noted and excluded from further analyses.

#### 160 **2.4. EPG acquisition and marking of EPG files**

Recordings were acquired and marked using Stylet+ software (v01.30, Electrical 161 Penetration Graph Data Acquisition and Analysis, EPG Systems, Wageningen, The 162 Netherlands). Waveform marking was conducted accordingly to Chuche et al. (2017a) and 163 Stafford & Walker (2009), focusing on the following waveforms: np (non-probing activity), 164 pathway-phase (phase "C"), active ingestion (phase "G") of mesophyll (<60 seconds) or 165 xylem sap (>100 seconds) (see Stafford & Walker, 2009), passive ingestion of phloem sap 166 167 (phase E), interruptions during ingestion (phase N of Chuche et al., 2017a). For more 168 details, see Supplementary File S1.

Once marked, all the recordings were singly selected for the successive analysis. In particular, recordings with electrical noises, bad electric connections, or when insects fell from the plant for more than 20% of the recording time, were discarded from further analysis.

#### 173 **2.5. Statistical analysis**

All the statistical analyses were conducted on R software v4.0.3 (R Core Team., 2020). 174 Selected recordings were analysed through a package of the software R ad-hoc produced 175 the EPG called 176 for analysis on recordings, Rwaves (Chiapello, https://github.com/mchiapello/Rwaves). Rwaves conducts summary statistics on the input 177 178 recordings on a set of variables of EPG analysis (Table 1), producing a table including the values of all the variables for all the input recordings. The resulting table was composed as 179 follows: every row corresponded to a single recording (represented by the unique 180 combination of one leafhopper and one grapevine plant), while every column represented 181 182 a single EPG variable. Once obtained, the table was subjected to modifications to enhance readability (packages dplyr, tidyr, stringr: (Wickham, 2019, 2020; Wickham et al., 2020), 183 184 and descriptive statistics were run (Tables 3, 4, 5, 6 and Supplementary File S2). Univariate analyses were conducted starting from Generalised Linear Model (GLM) of 185 different families specific for the nature of the variable: quasi-Poisson or negative-binomial 186 187 for counts, Gamma or inverse-Gaussian for positive continuous variables, beta-regression for proportions (packages stats, betareg, MASS: Cribari-Neto and Zeileis, 2010; Venables 188 and Ripley, 2002). Goodness-of-fit for every model was evaluated plotting half-normal 189 plots with simulated envelope against deviance residuals, with 95% confidence level (hnp 190 package: Moral et al., 2017). Homoscedasticity for every model was evaluated through 191 Levene's test (car package: Fox and Weisberg, 2019). In case of rejection of the null 192 193 hypothesis, heteroscedasticity-consistent standard errors (sandwich package: Zeileis et

al., 2020) were calculated and considered for pairwise-comparisons. Comparisons among 194 195 groups were conducted with least-square means method and Tukey method for p-value adjustment, at 0.05 significance level and 95% confidence intervals (packages emmeans 196 and multcomp: Hothorn, Bretz, & Westfall, 2008; Lenth, 2020). Cultivar, Sex, and their 197 reciprocal interaction were selected as explanatory variables. If no significant effects were 198 199 found for Sex and Cultivar x Sex, the GLM was run with Cultivar as the only explanatory 200 variable. GLMs summaries were reported in Supplementary File S3 using package itools 201 (Long, 2020). Packages ggplot2 (Wickham, 2016) and ggpubr (Kassambara, 2020) were 202 used to produce Figure 1, and Supplementary File S4 and S5.

203 A multivariate Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA, Legendre & Legendre, 2012) 204 was conducted through the vegan (Oksanen et al., 2019) and ggordiplots packages 205 (Quensen, 2018), considering all the variables except multi-collinear ones, that were 206 excluded from the analysis, based on a correlation coefficient higher than 0.95 (usdm 207 package: Naimi et al., 2014), in order to strengthen the predictor value of the model. 208 Starting from 25 variables, 5 variables were found to have collinearity problem, and were 209 thus excluded from further analyses. The remaining variables were standardised (Hellinger method, Legendre & Gallagher, 2001) and subjected to CCA, with Cultivar, Sex and their 210 211 interaction as explanatory variables. The CCA result was confirmed through a permutational Multivariate Analysis of Variance (perMANOVA; Anderson, 2001). 212

The complete R code will be made publicly available on GitHub (https://github.com/matteorpm).

215 Table 1. EPG variable selected for the study.

Variable	Abbreviation from Sarria et al., 2009 (implemented in Rwaves)	Abbreviation from Backus et al., 2007	Type (NS: non- sequential; S: sequential)
"Number of non-probing periods"	n_np	NWEi np	NS
"Total duration of non-probing periods [s]"	s_np	WDi np	NS
"Time from 1st np to 1st probe [s]"	s_npto1stprobe	-	S
"Duration of the 2nd non-probing period [s]"	s_2np	-	S
"Number of probes"	n_Pr	NPi	NS
"Total probing time [s]"	s_Pr	PDi	NS
"Total duration of pathway phase [s]"	s_C	WDi C	NS
"Number of active ingestion phases"	n_G	NWEi G	NS
"Total duration of active ingestion [s]"	s_G	WDi G	NS
"Number of phloem ingestions"	n_E2	NWEi E2	NS

"Number of sustained (> 600 s) phloem ingestion"	n_sE2	NWEi sE2	NS
"Total duration of phloem ingestions [s]"	s_E2	WDi E2	NS
"Mean duration of a single event of phloem ingestion [s]"	mean_E2	WDEi E2	NS
"Duration of the longest phloem ingestion [s]"	s_longestE2	-	NS
"Total duration of non-phloematic phases [s]"	s_notE	WDi C-G	NS
"Time from 1st probe to 1st phloem ingestion [s]"	t_1E2.exp	-	S
"Time from 1st probe to 1st sustained (> 600 s) phloem ingestion [s]"	t_1sE2.exp	-	S
"Time of 1st sustained phloem phase [s]"	t_1st_sE2	-	S
"Percentage of probing time spent in phloem ingestion [%]"	percprobtime_E2	-	NS
"Percentage of probing time spent in pathway-phase [%]"	percprobtime_C	-	NS
"Percentage of probing time spent in active ingestion [%]"	percprobtime_G	-	NS
"Potential E2 index [%]"	E2index	-	S
"Mean frequency of Np interruptions during phloem phase [mHz]"	mean_fr_Ninterrup	-	NS
"Percentage of time spent in Np interruption during phloem phase [%]"	percNinterrup_E2	-	NS
"Number of Np interruptions during phloem ingestion"	n_Ninterrupt_E2	NWEi Np	NS

216

## 217 **3. Results**

Number of recordings obtained from male and female *S. titanus* adults on the three grapevine varieties are summarised in Table 2. In particular, 51-cultivar specific recordings were acquired, of which a fraction was selected for further analysis (31 for Barbera, 32 for Brachetto, 37 for Moscato), as described in Material and Methods section.

Table 2. Number of total and selected recordings of *S. titanus* feeding behaviour on three grapevine cultivars.

Cultivar	Total recordings (females,	Selected recordings
	males)	(females, males)
Barbera	51 (25, 26)	31 (18, 13)
Brachetto	51 (25, 26)	32 (13, 19)
Moscato	51 (25, 26)	37 (16, 21)

No significant differences in acquiring successful EPG signals among cultivars, possibly caused by human errors, were found (Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 0.36811, df = 2, p-value = 0.8319). From now on, when referring to recordings, only the selected ones will be considered, unless otherwise stated.

Irrespective of the cultivar, most of the insects started probing within the first minute from their access to the leaf (median  $\pm$  SE = 41  $\pm$  21 s). Waveforms were graphically summarised in a temporal progress representation (Figure 1). An overall larger area of phloem phase was found for leafhoppers feeding on the Barbera variety.





234 Figure 1. Temporal progress of S. titanus stylets activities on three grapevine cultivars 235 during the 8-h EPG recording. Probing behaviours were represented as percentages of 236 leafhoppers in a given phase (non-probing, pathway phase, active ingestion of xylem sap, passive 237 ingestion of phloem sap) at 1 h intervals, starting from hour 0 (start of the recording) to hour 8 (end 238 of the recording). a) Graphs produced considering all recordings; b) graphs produced considering 239 only recordings where a phloem phase was present. The total number of recordings used to 240 produce Figure 1 are reported in the third column of Supplementary File S2 (all recordings) and 241 Table 3 (phloem recordings).

Values of non-phloem variables of all selected recordings are reported in Supplementary 242 243 File S2. No differences were identified in the variables among the three grapevine varieties. The proportion of recordings with phloem phases were not significantly different 244 among cultivars (Supplementary File S6, Pearson's Chi-squared test, X-squared = 245 246 0.026378, df = 2, p-value = 0.9869), as almost half of the recordings (45% for Barbera, 247 44% for Brachetto, 43% for Moscato) showed phloem phases, irrespective of the cultivar 248 (Supplementary File S6). No differences were highlighted among cultivars for all the non-249 phloem variables (Supplementary File S5), when considering the recordings without a 250 phloem-phase. Further, the non-phloem variables were analysed for recordings with phloem phases (Table 3). Number of events and their duration for the non-phloem phases 251 252 did not differ among groups (Table 3). Interestingly, the total time spent by the insect with 253 stylets inserted in the plant tissues ("Total probing time") were similar among the three 254 Vitis genotypes. Some differences were found for the related variables "Number of nonprobing periods", and "Number of probes", as higher values were recorded for both 255 256 variables on Brachetto, compared to Barbera. On Barbera, females showed fewer 257 "Number of active ingestion (from mesophyll or xylem) phases" than males. No 258 differences were observed between sexes on the other varieties. No significant differences 259 among cultivars were found for the "Number of phloem ingestions", or for the "sustained" (longer than 10 minutes) ones (Table 4). Although the "Mean duration of a single event of 260 261 phloem ingestion" did not differ significantly among cultivars, a longer duration of phloem 262 ingestion events on Barbera was evident. Indeed, significant differences were found for "Total duration of phloem ingestions", "Duration of the longest phloem ingestion", and 263 264 "Time from first probe to first sustained phloem ingestion" between Barbera and the other 265 two grapevine varieties (Table 4). "Time from first probe to first phloem ingestion" was shorter on Barbera compared to Moscato, with an intermediate duration recorded on 266 Brachetto (Table 5). This also suggests a preference of S. titanus for Barbera. For the 267 "Total duration of non-phloematic phases", for which an effect for the leafhopper sex was 268 269 found, a difference was recorded between S. titanus feeding on Barbera and on Moscato, 270 at least for females. Scaphoideus titanus also spent a higher percentage of time in the 271 phloem ingestion phase on Barbera, compared to Brachetto and Moscato varieties and, 272 consequently, less time in pathway- and active ingestion phases (Table 5). Since the 273 presence of "Np" (typical interruption between two different passive ingestion phases) in 274 phloem phases has been repeatedly recorded (Chuche et al., 2017a; Supplementary File 275 S1 of the present work), three variables were introduced for their description in the present

work and are reported in Table 6: "Mean frequency of Np interruptions during phloem phase", "Percentage of time spent in Np interruption during phloem phase", and "Number of Np interruptions during phloem ingestion". The second and third variables showed significant differences between leafhoppers feeding on Barbera and those feeding on the other varieties, underlying different phloem feeding behaviour on the former variety. 281 Table 3. Median ± SE of non-phloem variables related to recordings presenting phloem phases. Every row reports a single combination of grapevine Cultivar and leafhopper Sex. Every column reports a specific variable. Comparisons between rows were done with a specific GLM family 282 for every variable: guasi-Poisson or negative-binomial for counts, Gamma or inverse-Gaussian for continuous time variables, beta-regression for 283 284 proportions. Cultivar, Sex and their interaction (Cultivar x Sex) effects for every variable were evaluated. In case of no effect for Sex and Cultivar x 285 Sex, the GLM was run with only Cultivar as explanatory variable (indicated in the tables with the \* sign after the specific variable name). In case of 286 effect for Sex or Cultivar × Sex, GLM was run with all the three explanatory variables (indicated in the tables with the \*\* sign after the specific 287 variable name). Post-hoc comparisons were conducted with least-square means method and Tukey method for p-value adjustment, at significance level as 0.05 and 95% confidence intervals, and represented by letters for every specific group. GLMs specific details (family, coefficients, 288 289 standard errors, AIC, BIC, R2) are reported in Supplementary File S3a-b.

			Number of	Total duration of	Time from	Duration of	Number	Total	Total duration of	Number of active	Total
	•		non-	non-probing	ist np to	the 2nd	or probes	probing	pathway phase	ingestion phases	duration of
Cultivar	Sex	n	probing	periods [min] *	1st probe	non-	*	time [min]	[min] **	**	active
			periods *		[s] *	probing		*			ingestion
						period [s] *					[min] *
Barbera	female	8	9.5 ± 1.7 a	80.8 ± 22.8 a	33.5 ± 41.5	108 ± 143.4	9.5 ± 1.8	397.2 ±	96.1 ± 18.5 b	8±6.9 a	3.2 ± 3.8
					а	а	а	22.8 a			а
Barbera	male	6	14 ± 1.9 a	32.3 ± 47.7 a	19±11.8 a	22.1 ± 43.8	12.5 ±	446.6 ±	124.9 ± 36.6 ab	42 ± 11.1 b	21.2 ± 8 a
						а	1.9 a	47.5 a			
Brachetto	female	6	21 ± 6.1 b	164.8 ± 32.1 a	48.5 ±	45.9 ± 80.9	21 ± 6.1	313.9 ±	175.1 ± 30.4 ab	52 ± 23.3 b	34.3 ±
					216.8 a	а	b	31.8 a			13.7 a
Brachetto	male	8	16±2 b	174.8 ± 20.9 a	63.3 ± 80.7	42.5 ± 48.5	15.5 ± 2	303.9 ±	160.3 ± 25 ab	51 ± 15.3 b	36.9 ±
					а	а	b	20.5 a			11.6 a
Moscato	female	7	16 ± 3.3	105 ± 24.9 a	87.6 ±	40.9±96 a	16 ± 3.2	374.5 ± 25	231.5 ± 36.5 a	47 ± 9.9 b	26.3 ± 7.5
			ab		169.5 a		ab	а			а
Moscato	male	9	18.5 ± 3.5	168.8 ± 28.3 a	54.6 ± 24.2	22.9 ± 79.5	17 ± 3.6	310.5 ±	154.9 ± 24.7 ab	33 ± 14.3 b	22.5 ±
			ab		а	а	ab	28.3 a			19.5 a

290

Table 4. Median ± SE of phloem variables related to recordings presenting phloem phases. The Table was drawn as detailed for Table 3.

Cultivar	Sex	n	Number of phloem ingestions *	Number of sustained (> 600 s) phloem ingestion *	Total duration of phloem ingestions [min] *	Mean duration of a single event of phloem ingestion [min]	Duration of the longest phloem ingestion [min] *	Total duration of non-phloematic phases [min] **	Time from 1st probe to 1st phloem ingestion [min] *	Time from 1st probe to 1st sustained (> 600 s) phloem ingestion [min]	Time of 1st sustained phloem phase [min] *
Barbera	female	8	13 ± 2.7 a	2±0.4 a	301.9 ± 37.7	23.4 ± 11 a	240.2 ± 38.4	107.4 ± 20.1 b	76.7±9.5 b	111.7 ± 27.3 b	114.1 ± 27.1 b

					а		а				
Barbera	male	6	14 ± 1.3 a	$2.5 \pm 0.7$	190.3 ± 48.4	12.7 ± 3.1 a	158.3 ± 41.3	156.2 ± 37 ab	104.4 ± 32.9 b	131.1 ± 34.2 b	133.5 ± 34.1 b
				а	а		а				
Brachetto	female	6	7±3.8 a	1±0.6 a	83 ± 33.2 b	5.7±4 a	50.2 ± 25.6	208.1 ± 43.2 ab	135.4 ± 15.3	156.6 ± 63.7 a	157.1 ± 63.3 a
							b		ab		
Brachetto	male	8	18±5.9 a	2±0.6 a	53.9 ± 26.1	3.5 ± 7.9 a	38 ± 13.9 b	237.6 ± 25.6 a	167.1 ± 43.4	229.2 ± 49.2 a	240.5 ± 47 a
					b				ab		
Moscato	female	7	10.5 ± 4.5	1±0.4 a	37.6 ± 42.7	3.1 ± 3.5 a	20.2 ± 30.9	283.4 ± 44.6 a	187.1 ± 50.8 a	267.8 ± 62.3 a	270.7 ± 65.1 a
			а		b		С				
Moscato	male	9	25.5 ± 3.8	1±0.3 a	47 ± 11.8 b	2.3 ± 0.6 a	13 ± 7.1 c	257 ± 33.8 a	107.8 ± 54.6 a	203.9 ± 55.8 a	208 ± 55.5 a
			а								

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## **Table 5. Percentage variables related to recordings presenting phloem phases.** The Table was drawn as detailed for Table 3.

Cultivar	Sex	n	Percentage of probing time spent in phloem ingestion [%] *	Percentage of probing time spent in pathway-phase [%] **	Percentage of probing time spent in active ingestion [%] **	Potential E2 index [%] *
Barbera	female	8	75 ± 6.6 b	22.4±6 a	0.7 ± 1.1 a	77.7±8.1 a
Barbera	male	6	51.2 ± 9.4 b	38.5 ± 9.2 ab	8.3 ± 1.7 ab	66.1 ± 16 a
Brachetto	female	6	26.9 ± 9.3 a	60 ± 7.1 bc	13.4 ± 3.2 ab	29.1 ± 7.7 a
Brachetto	male	8	14.6 ± 7.4 a	54.3 ± 5.3 bc	9.5 ± 4.2 b	48.3 ± 10.2 a
Moscato	female	7	11.6 ± 10.9 a	75.9 ± 8 c	9.9 ± 2 ab	48.6 ± 14.2 a
Moscato	male	9	11.9 ± 4.4 a	55.4 ± 4.9 bc	7.5 ± 3.9 b	32.1 ± 9.5 a

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## Table 6. "Np" phloem-interruptions variables related to recordings presenting phloem phases. The Table was drawn as detailed for Table 3

Cultivar	Sex	n	Mean frequency of Np interruptions during phloem phase [mHz] **	Percentage of time spent in Np interruption during phloem phase [%] *	Number of Np interruptions during phloem ingestion *
Barbera	female	8	9.4 ± 0.8 b	1.4 ± 0.7 a	148.5 ± 27.2 b
Barbera	male	6	14.6 ± 1.9 ab	3±1.6 a	167.5 ± 58 b
Brachetto	female	6	16.7 ± 1 ab	6.8 ± 5.8 ab	88 ± 27.8 a
Brachetto	male	8	19±3.1 a	9.7 ± 7.3 ab	38.5 ± 26.2 a
Moscato	female	7	15.5 ± 3.4 a	16.2 ± 4.6 b	44 ± 20.6 a
Moscato	male	9	19.8 ± 2 a	11.8 ± 5.3 b	53 ± 16.1 a

A constrained Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA) was conducted to explore the 296 297 comprehensive effect of the explanatory variables Cultivar, Sex, and their interaction with S. titanus feeding behaviour (Figure 2). The CCA is a graphical representation of the non-298 299 multi-collinear variables more related to the different groups. In particular, considering the 300 absence of effect for Sex and Cultivar × Sex (Table 7), ellipses were drawn containing 301 99% confidence intervals for the standard errors related to Cultivar variable. Again, this 302 representation highlighted the difference between *S. titanus* feeding behaviour on Barbera, 303 on one side, and on Brachetto and Moscato, on the other side. Moreover, CCA shows a 304 clear correlation between phloem variables and Barbera cultivar.



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Figure 2. Canonical Correspondence Analysis (CCA) on recordings with phloem phases. The new condensed CCA variables explained 28.7% (CCA 1, x axis) and 1.9% (CCA 2, y axis) of the variability. Cultivar-specific recordings were grouped with ellipses, representing 99% confidence intervals for the standard errors, and the centroid of each was represented. Every point represents a single recording, colour refers to the grapevine cultivar and shape refers to the leafhopper sex. Original variables were plotted and reported with their acronym (Table 1 for

acronym interpretation); all variables start from the intersection of the axes and are projectedaccording to their unique composition of CCA 1 and 2.

Results of the CCA were confirmed through a perMANOVA (Table 7), which highlighted

significant differences among Cultivars, while no significative differences were found for

316 Sex or the interaction of Cultivar and Sex.

Table 7. perMANOVA results based on Bray-Curtis dissimilarities, using all the non-multicollinear EPG variables (as described in Materials & Methods section). Df: degrees of freedom;
SumOfSqs: sequential sums of squares; F: F statistics values by permutations; Pr(>F): p-values,
based on 9999 permutations (the lowest possible p-value is 0.0001).

	Df	SumOfSqs	R2	F	Pr(>F)	signif
Cultivar	2	0.21459034	0.24924254	6.867267	0.0001	***
Sex	1	0.02922068	0.03393925	1.870225	0.1269	
Cultivar × Sex	2	0.02344144	0.02722678	0.750167	0.6142	
Residual	38	0.59371753	0.68959144	NA	NA	
Total	43	0.86096998	1	NA	NA	

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#### 322 **4. Discussion**

In this work, the probing behaviour of the FD leafhopper vector *S. titanus* on grapevine varieties with different susceptibility to the disease was analysed, to highlight possible differences that can account for different transmission efficiencies. As phytoplasmas are phloem-limited in the plant, vector acquisition and transmission abilities are related to phloem feeding phases, and thus a plant genotype that does not sustain efficient phloem feeding may be less prone to infection.

To understand if probing behaviour of S. titanus may contribute to explain 329 tolerance/susceptibility mechanisms of grapevine genotypes, the FD highly susceptible 330 331 Barbera and the FD tolerant Brachetto and Moscato varieties (Ripamonti et al., 2021) were compared. Indeed, S. titanus showed a feeding preference for the FD highly susceptible 332 333 Barbera variety. To describe S. titanus-grapevine interaction, total probing time was 334 subdivided into different probing phases, mainly related to the inter/intra-cellular 335 movements of the stylets (pathway-phase), the active ingestion of mesophyll or xylem sap, 336 the passive ingestion of phloem-sap.

337 A preference of the leafhopper for Barbera was suggested at first by the overall higher 338 proportion of S. titanus feeding on phloem of this variety (larger area under the phloem 339 phase), compared to Brachetto and Moscato in the temporal progress area graph. 340 However, it is possible that duration of phloem phases was underestimated in this study, 341 as well as in those of Chuche et al. (2017a, 2017b), and indeed longer recording times can 342 possibly highlight longer durations of phloem ingestion, as hypothesized for Dalbulus 343 maidis (Carpane et al., 2011). Under our experimental setting, eight-hour recordings were 344 long enough to allow 50% of the insects to reach the phloem phase, irrespective of the 345 cultivar. This recording time was chosen for the experiments as it represents a widely used standard in EPG studies, and because in previous experiences, Chuche et al. 346 347 (2017b) showed that, in average, 27% of the S. titanus probing time was spent in phloem 348 feeding phases with four hour recordings. According to our results, most of the cultivar-349 dependent differences in S. titanus lies in phloem feeding behaviour. Actually, leafhoppers 350 spent more than 50% of their probing time feeding on the Barbera phloem, while on the 351 other two cultivars spent less than 20%. This result is in line with an enhanced possibility 352 of acquisition and inoculation of phloem-limited agents, like FDp in the case of Barbera 353 (Galetto et al., 2014). Although the "Potential E2 index", a parameter regarded as a 354 reliable indicator of phloem acceptability (Alvarez et al., 2006; Girma et al., 1992), was not 355 significantly different among the tested cultivars, higher values were recorded for Barbera, 356 further supporting a possible preference of the leafhopper for this cultivar. Moreover, since 357 only half of the vectors reached the phloem phase during the 8-hour recordings, we cannot exclude that the amount of time was not sufficient to obtain a more descriptive feeding 358 359 behaviour from all leafhoppers. Dramatic differences were highlighted in the "Total 360 duration of phloem ingestions" on the different cultivars, while the "Number of phloem ingestions" and "sustained phloem ingestions" were similar. The former was actually the 361 variable accounting for the highest differences in phloem phase among cultivars, and 362 suggests that S. titanus prefers Barbera phloem to Brachetto or Moscato ones. Since no 363 364 differences were recorded among cultivars in the percentage of leafhoppers reaching 365 phloem, but "Total duration of phloem ingestion" and "Duration of the longest phloem 366 ingestion" were higher on Barbera, it can be hypothesized that Brachetto and Moscato phloem saps contain some repellent compounds disturbing phloem feeding. During the 367 phloem phase, the main waveforms were related to the passive ingestion of phloem and to 368 369 the interruption between two different passive ingestion phases (mainly "Np"). These 370 interruptions were already described for S. titanus by Chuche et al. (2017a) and for

Circulifer tenellus by Stafford and Walker (2009), and were suggested to represent 371 372 salivation events. Two are the main functions of saliva in piercing-sucking insects: i) production of stylets sheath in the inter-cellular pathway phase (sheath saliva) or ii) dilution 373 374 of to-be-ingested sap and the suppression of defensive mechanism by the plant through effectors (watery saliva) (Miles, 1972; Tjallingii, 2006; Will, Furch, & Zimmermann, 2013). 375 376 According to Chuche et al. (2017a) and Stafford & Walker (2009), the "Np" interruptions 377 found during *S. titanus* ingestion of phloem sap correspond to watery-salivation events. 378 This type of salivation is related to the inoculation of persistent-propagative agents from 379 the insect salivary glands into the plants tissues (Hogenhout et al., 2008). Therefore, the greater number of interruption-salivation events on Barbera, that are a reflection of the 380 381 longer phloem phase, can explain, at least in part, the high susceptibility to FDp of this 382 cultivar. Phytoplasma spread can be regarded as a function of insect acquisition efficiency, 383 which is directly related to the duration of the phloem feeding phase, and of the inoculation 384 efficiency, which is putatively related to the absolute number of watery salivation events, 385 these latter also occuring during phloem feeding phase. According to this hypothesis, on Barbera, the vector acquires and transmits efficiently, because it feeds longer in the 386 phloem and produces a higher number of salivation events compared to Brachetto and 387 388 Moscato. Indeed, Galetto et al. (2016) demonstrated that FDp acquisition by S. titanus depends on the grapevine variety, with high efficiency from the most susceptible ones. 389 390 Also, on Brachetto and Moscato a high frequency of Np interruptions events were 391 recorded, but phloem phase was much shorter, leading to a lower absolute number of 392 salivation events. It is worth noting that, when the three grapevine varieties were exposed 393 to equally infected leafhoppers, Brachetto and Moscato showed a strong tolerance against 394 the infection (Ripamonti et al., 2021). This is a clear indication that either the inoculation, 395 more than acquisition, has a major impact on transmission efficiency, or plant genotype account for different susceptibilities. The high frequency of Np interruptions on the tolerant 396 397 varieties can be explained by the presence of repellent compounds in the phloem saps. Brachetto and Moscato are aromatic varieties (Pollon et al., 2019) and they are genetically 398 399 related (Raimondi et al., 2020). Their leaves contain high quantities of terpenoids (Mazza 400 et al., 2003), and this class of compounds can be transferred through the plant via the phloem flux (Zhang et al., 2016) like other defence compounds (Will et al., 2013). Hence, it 401 can be speculated that S. titanus disturbed behaviour may be associated with the 402 403 presence of aromatic compounds, that act as repellents in Brachetto and Moscato 404 phloems. Repellent compounds can therefore act as antixenotic compounds. Antixenosis,

defined as the modification of herbivore behaviour by plant factors, which results in the 405 inability of a plant to serve as a host (Kogan and Ortman, 1978; Kordan et al., 2019), is a 406 well-known factor determining host plant resistance. Terpenoids and other volatile 407 compounds have well-known antixenotic activities in different plant-insect interactions 408 409 (Chand et al., 2017; Koul, 2008; Messchendorp et al., 1998). Antixenosis may represents 410 a valuable factor to be considered in the development of grapevine resistance against S. 411 titanus, de facto causing a reduction in the inoculation efficiency of FDp. Indeed, 412 leafhopper survival is reduced following a 7 day exposure to Moscato compared to 413 Barbera (Ripamonti et al., 2021). Further research is needed to clarify possible Moscato antibiosis effect on S. titanus. 414

415 In our study, the leafhoppers started probing within the first minute, regardless of the 416 grapevine variety. No evident differences were highlighted in the non-phloem related 417 variables, as well as on total probing time. These results suggest that tested cultivars have no major differences in the biochemical composition or structure of the leaf cuticle, 418 epidermis or mesophyll, that can impact the first feeding behaviour phases. Grapevine 419 420 trichomes are of the non-glandular type, subdivided in prostrate or erect (Gago et al., 2016). Interestingly, Barbera has a highly dense trichomes surface in the abaxial leaf 421 422 blade (OIV, 2007), suggesting a possible repellence towards piercing-sucking insects (Smith and Chuang, 2014). Nevertheless, Barbera was the most suitable variety for S. 423 424 titanus among those tested. For leafhoppers, data on trichome density acceptability are 425 available mainly for species of the Empoascini tribe, that are mostly insensitive to trichome density on leaves. This is the case of Empoasca vitis on grapevine (Pavan and Picotti, 426 427 2009), E. terminalis on soybean (Nasruddin et al., 2014), and E. fabae on potato (Kaplan 428 et al., 2009). On the other hand, E. fabae and Amrasca devastans tend to avoid high trichome density when feeding on edamame (*Glycine max* (L.)) and cotton, respectively 429 430 (Menger et al., 2018; Murugesan and Kavitha, 2010). As for S. titanus, it can be concluded 431 that a dense abaxially pubescence does not hamper nutrition on grapevine.

This work failed to identify clear differences in feeding behaviour of males and females. Although small differences between sexes were recorded for some variables, no differences were highlighted in the multivariate analysis conducted through CCA followed by perMANOVA. On the contrary, Chuche et al. (2017b) reported that males feed more in the phloem, compared to females. Following the analysis of our EPG recordings, we conclude that no clear differences in feeding behaviour can be identified. Although

unlikely, we cannot exclude that the different grapevine varieties used in the studies mayexplain for this difference.

Future research should focus on antixenotic compounds in *V. vinifera* genotypes, and their role in vector-associated resistance to FD. On the other hand, plant secondary metabolites involved in defense mechanisms against pathogens, such as polyphenols, particularly vein flavonols and flavanonols (Kedrina-Okutan et al., 2019, 2018) may play a role in plant resistance towards the phytoplasma. All these grapevine genetic traits should be regarded as a natural resource to be exploited to obtain tolerant genotypes for a more sustainable viticulture.

447

#### 448 **5.** Conclusions

The results of the present work indicate that Barbera variety is a better food source than 449 450 Brachetto and Moscato for S. titanus. Indeed, the leafhopper showed longer phloem 451 ingestion, with an absolute higher number of watery-salivation events, on grapevines of 452 the Barbera cv. This latter feature is consistent with the high susceptibility of Barbera to FDp, as watery salivation have been associated with the inoculation of persistent-453 454 propagative agents from the insect salivary glands into the plants tissues. When feeding 455 on Brachetto and Moscato, S. titanus showed reduced phloem nutrition, possibly due to 456 antixenotic factors such as terpenoids, given the aromatic nature of the two varieties.

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465

## 466 **Author contributions**

Conceptualization: DB, CM, MR. Data curation: MR. Formal analysis: MR. Funding
 acquisition: DB, CM. Investigation: MR, FM. Methodology: AF, DC, DB, MR. Software: MR.

- Project administration: DB. Supervision: AF, DB, DC. Visualization: MR. Writing original
- draft: MR. Writing review & editing: DB, CM, AF, DC.

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