TRUFFLE SEASON 2026

A Season of Patience, Challenging Weather and Surprising Discoveries

What 124 hunts across 42 Victorian truffières revealed about the 2026 truffle season.

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The 2026 truffle season was one of patience, frustrations and surprises. An unusually warm start to winter delayed production across much of Victoria, while fluctuating temperatures created some unusual ripening patterns.

Yet despite the challenges, most farms performed well, with many producing more truffles than the previous year.

Over the season, I completed 124 hunts across 67 days, visiting 42 farms and harvesting more than 360 kg of truffles. Covering farms across a wide range of Victorian microclimates provided a unique opportunity to see how weather, soil and farm management influenced production.

2026 | SEASON AT A GLANCE

360 kg+	124	67	42
Harvested	Hunts	Hunting days	Farms visited

The big story: Warm conditions delayed ripening, while waterlogging, soil compaction and insect activity affected some farms. Year-round management remained critical.

A Heart Felt Goodbye to Kovu

At start of the truffle season, I had to say goodbye to Kovu, my first truffle dog. After a long battle with arthritis, complications were significantly affecting his quality of life and after exhausting all medical options the hardest decision to end his suffering had to be made. He got to have one last truffle hunt in the last week of May at Double Oaks Estate in Lancefield. Only walking down one row but still finding truffles and doing what he loved best. He will live on in my logo with us on every future truffle hunt.

From June through to the start of September Zara took the reins and was solo truffle dog. I had predicted Kovu would be in retirement this season, so I had accommodated the bookings to account for only having one working dog prior to the season starting.

Zara did an amazing job and I feel that keeping busy and working with me full time was very good for both her and my adjustment to life without Kovu.

A Warm Start Put Growers on Hold

May and early June were unseasonably warm. Several cold snaps and frosts arrived, only to be followed by temperatures climbing back into the mid-20s.

For farms accustomed to starting their harvests in early June, the lack of truffles was concerning.

By mid-June, I was receiving regular calls from worried truffière owners asking how other farms were performing and whether they should be concerned about their own lack of production.

Fortunately, the number of farms I visit across Victoria allowed me to identify patterns between different regions and microclimates.

The warmer areas were experiencing delays of around three weeks, while cooler areas were generally delayed by one and a half to two weeks.

This allowed me to reassure growers that patience was needed. Rather than harvesting too early, many farms simply needed more time for the truffles to develop their aroma.

When Black Doesn't Necessarily Mean Ripe

The fluctuating temperatures produced another unusual result.

The short cold snaps appeared to trigger truffles to begin ripening. When temperatures rose again, however, the process seemed to stagnate.

The result was something I had rarely encountered in previous seasons: truffles with completely black interiors but very little aroma.

Normally, interior colour is a useful piece of information when assessing ripeness. This year, it became much less reliable.



Image 1: Uneven ripening of a truffle. Uneven ripening of a truffle with the beginning of rot in the centre

Some truffles found in June were black internally and had a subtle aroma, but never developed the strong aroma expected of a fully mature truffle. In some cases, heavy rain followed and appeared to remove any remaining opportunity for the truffle to finish ripening.

It made relying on smell particularly important this year.

It was also, perhaps, the year when having a cold would have been particularly inconvenient. Fortunately, I managed to avoid one during the busiest months of the season.

Too Much Water Can Be a Problem

The early season was also relatively wet, and a number of July harvests contained more rotten truffles than usual.

The bigger concern, however, was seen on farms with long-term drainage problems.

On these properties, the issue wasn't necessarily an abundance of rotten truffles. Instead, there were simply fewer truffles present when the season began.

There are several possible explanations. Waterlogged soil can reduce oxygen availability and potentially interfere with truffle formation. Alternatively, truffles may have formed but rotted and decomposed before the season began.

This highlights why soil moisture needs to be monitored all year.

One of the simplest checks is to walk the truffière after a significant rainfall event and look for areas where water remains or pools.

September to November is an ideal time to do this, when spring rainfall can expose drainage problems that may still be addressed before the next crop begins forming.



Image 2: Truffle Dog, Zara, picking up the scent of the truffle literally down stream of the truffle and following the aroma back up to the source.



Image 3: A very rainy but productive hunt at Scotch Hill Truffle Farm, Neerim, Gippsland in Mid-August.

Compaction Encourages Truffles Towards the Surface

Soil compaction was another recurring issue.

On compacted farms, I generally found more surface truffles, which were consequently more vulnerable to rot and insect damage.

Compaction restricts the movement of oxygen and moisture into deeper soil layers. When conditions deeper in the soil become less favourable, the truffle fungus may remain closer to the surface.

> *"If I can pluck a truffle from the ground without needing a spade most of the time, the soil is probably in good condition. If I need the spade for most truffles, the soil is likely too compacted."*

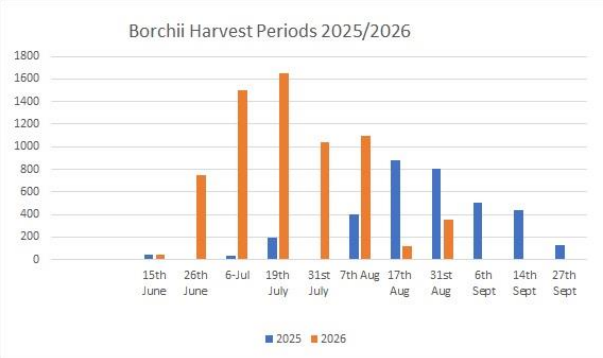
Borchii Arrived Early

It wasn't only *Tuber melanosporum* that responded to the unusual weather.

Tuber borchii also ripened considerably earlier than usual.

In previous years, the average peak harvest has been around mid-August. This year, the peak was around mid-July.

At one farm, the season began in June rather than the usual late July and finished at the end of August instead of late September. See below graph comparing borchii harvests at one farm between 2025 and 2026.



This overlap between the winter and spring truffle seasons produced an unexpected result.

At three farms, I discovered *Tuber borchii* even though they were not known to have been inoculated with borchii.

My suspicion is that the borchii fungus may have been present for years. However, I would not normally hunt these properties in September and its presence had simply gone unnoticed.

The unusually early borchii season revealed something that may have been there all along.



Image 4: An example of tuber borchii.

Warm Weather Kept the Bugs Active

The warmth also had an effect above ground.

Insect activity continued well into early July, increasing insect damage on farms that had not adequately controlled insect populations before the season began.

Once again, the lesson was that preparation for harvest starts well before the first truffle is found.



Image 5: Example of insect damage on a ripe truffle.

Weed Mats Were Coming Out at the Correct Time.

One management practice that was particularly pleasing to see was the removal of weed mats at the appropriate time.

Most farms I visited had removed their weed mats at the appropriate stage, generally around years three to four.

Weed mats can significantly help in the first few years of the truffiere and allow for stronger truffle fungus producing truffles earlier. However, after the 3rd year they need to be removed as they have fulfilled their purpose.

Turning Harvest Data into a Hunting Tool

Technology also played a bigger role in the 2026 season.

Over the past two seasons, I have been working with the developer of the Truffle Grower App, beta testing several changes and features.

These included different coloured markers, ripeness classifications and the ability to produce an easily readable PDF harvest report for clients.

The response was extremely positive.

Clients enjoyed receiving their harvest results and truffle maps after a hunt. For those already using the app, I could import their maps, add harvest information and markers, and return the updated information to them.

But another real value became apparent during one particular hunt.

Because I only had one dog this year and hence was restricted by time, I could search only around 60% of the trees on one particular visit.

The owner couldn't join me, but provided an export of their Truffle Grower App map showing previous harvest locations.

I could see exactly where the historically productive areas and trees were.

Rather than spreading the limited hunting time evenly across the property, I could concentrate on the areas with the strongest historical production.

The result?

An additional 2 kg of truffles.

It was a good demonstration of how historical harvest data can become an extremely valuable tool when combined with real time hunting.

An Accidental Reinoculation Experiment

An interesting outcome of analysing the data from the truffle grower app came from a Gippsland farm I visited weekly.

Using the Truffle Grower App, I documented the truffles found across the property. In total, the farm produced 764 truffles in 2026.

But the numbers themselves weren't the most interesting part. The most interesting aspect of this farm was what happened the previous year and its follow-on effect for this year.

The previous year, the grower had run out of reinoculation truffle and had only been able to reinnoculate half of the farm.

This unintentionally created an interesting comparison between two sections of the same truffière.

The northern section had received most of the reinoculation. The southern section much less.

The harvest results showed substantially more truffle in the reinoculated northern section (see image 7).

Because the two areas were on the same property, many environmental conditions were shared, including weather, water availability, soil conditions and general growing conditions.

This observation provides an interesting indication that reinoculation has contributed positively to truffle production.

There is, however, an important variable that needs to be considered. The northern rows run approximately north-south, while the southern rows run east-west. Row orientation can influence sunlight reaching the soil, which can also influence yields. Where some sites are best suited to N-S orientation and others E-W.



Consequently, the results cannot be attributed solely to reinoculation.

Nevertheless, the scale of the difference makes this an extremely interesting observation.

Image 6: Truffles found in Gippsland, VICTORIA.

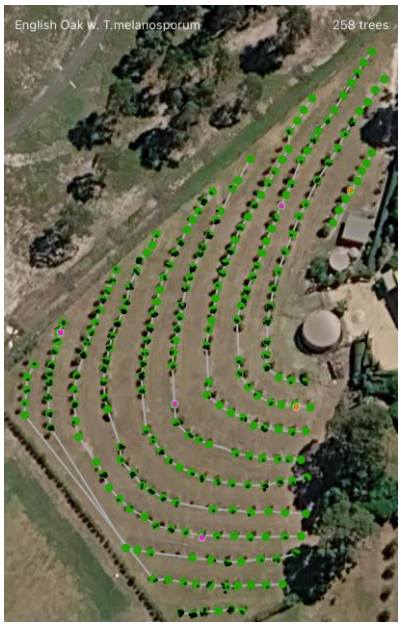


Image 7: Truffle distribution during the 2026 season at a farm in Gippsland, VICTORIA. Trees are green dots and truffles black dots.

A Season That Reinforced the Importance of Year- Round Farm Management

Despite the unusual conditions, most farms performed well in 2026.

The season started two to three weeks late, yet many farms ultimately produced more truffles than the previous year.

The farms that encountered the greatest difficulties tended to be those with underlying drainage or soil compaction issues.

Perhaps the biggest lesson from the 2026 season is that although harvesting may occupy only around three months of the year, growing truffles is a 12-month job.

Drainage, soil structure, moisture, weed management, insect control and reinoculation all form part of the ongoing work required to maintain a productive truffière.

Weather cannot be controlled. A warm winter or exceptionally wet period can't be prevented.

What growers can control is how prepared their farms are when those conditions arrive.

The 2026 season demonstrated that the work done throughout the year can make all the difference when the weather doesn't behave as expected.

And, as this season proved, unusual conditions don't just create challenges — they can also reveal new information, uncover hidden production and provide valuable lessons for the seasons ahead.

A Special Thank You and Special Introduction

A special thank you to my darling Kovu for all his hard work the last 8 seasons. He absolutely loved the truffle hunting game and he loved meeting all of you at your respective farms. Without all you lovely truffiere owners he wouldn't have been able to live such a full and happy life doing what he loved.



Image 8: Kovu the Belgian Shepard truffle hunter from 2017-2026.

Another special thank you to Zara who did such an amazing job this year being the solo truffle hunting dog for Canine Truffle Hunting. She grew up with Kovu and always had a doggy friend. Although the truffle season was a good distraction, she also loves canine companionship. I didn't want to leave it too long with her not having a friend. So, from July I was scouring the shelters searching for the right breed, temperament, personality, drive, and age to adopt a 1–2-year-old dog to be a truffle dog apprentice. There were a few in the shortlist and I met a couple of them and did some scent work training in the shelter yards to assess how much they enjoyed the scent game, how they were with new people/children, how they got along with Zara ect.



Image 9 Truffle dog Zara happily posing with her harvest.



Then I met Roxy, a 1.5-year-old koolie x kelpie. It was clear she was a smart dog; she picked up the game within minutes and had high drive to work. Her high drive is what lead her to be surrendered twice over. A high drive dog who is bored and home alone for 8 hours a day is a recipe for mischief. She finished the beginner course the first week I had her. Found her first truffles on the last hunt of the season, 7 days after adopting her (see image above). We are now working through intermediate along side obedience work. So far, she is smashing it and I am putting updates on the socials for people to follow along. All going to plan, my clients will get to meet her next truffle season.

Most importantly Zara and Roxy are the best of friends already. Zara is the master dodger. So even though Roxy may have the speed of a young dog, Zara's clever manoeuvring can out wit Roxy with spins and dodges and is keeping Roxy on her toes which she loves. Roxy is learning all about the human world and I am getting her ready for the biggest adventure of her life. To visit the countryside, play scent games and enjoy all the fun of truffle hunting.



Images 10/11/12: Roxy's first truffle hunt. The blossoming friendship of Roxy and Zara.

