

# B-QUAL AUSTRALIA

## Newsletter

December 2018

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### *Chairman's Message*

#### **Contamination of honey and the importance of record keeping**

There has been a lot of interest lately regarding contamination of honey including the accuracy of various testing methods. Whilst I am not going to discuss the testing methods, this has highlighted the need for everyone to keep accurate records for both contamination and biosecurity reasons. Not only is this a good management practice but also covers you legally and is in fact a requirement under the Australian Honey Bee Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice 2017 for all beekeepers. Templates can be downloaded from [beeaware.org.au](http://beeaware.org.au) if you don't already have some.

Contamination is not just imported honey. It can include any sugar syrup or supplements you may be feeding your hives for whatever reason e.g. building up for pollination or trying to survive during drought. Antibiotics can also show up in your products so remember to declare it.

The important message here is to be aware of what you are feeding your bees. Make sure you source from reliable manufacturers that state the ingredients of the supplements.

Better safe than sorry!

On behalf of myself, the board, Michael and Laina, we wish you a merry and safe Christmas and a prosperous new year.

*Wayne Fuller*

Chairman.

B-QUAL Australia Pty Ltd

# B-QUAL NEWS

Negotiations are continuing which will see B-QUAL become an accredited 3<sup>rd</sup> party National auditor.

Stemming from discussions held and a MOU being put into place with South Australia, and ongoing discussions with New South Wales DPI, it was decided at a recent National Bee Biosecurity meeting in Canberra that a subcommittee with representatives from the states and B-QUAL be formed to report on progress and to present an accreditation scheme outline to the next NBBP committee meeting in March 2019 to expedite the scheme nationally.

Progressively through 2019 hopefully we will see accreditation approvals from the various states which in turn will ensure B-QUAL as the industry leading standard and assist in Quality Assurance and Food safety of the highest level giving industry, governments and the consumer complete confidence in our industry quality.

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At the October B-QUAL board meeting it was resolved to confirm an increase in membership fees, the first in many years. The increase of \$ 25 per annum has been applied to recent membership invoices. Mindful of the ever increasing costs on businesses the Board tried to limit the increase to the absolute minimum. However with the substantial growth of B-QUAL in the last year and increasing costs of that growth we reluctantly had to make the decision. It was also resolved to increase fees by CPI in coming years.

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We are pleased to report 59 new application enquires have been received by B-QUAL since June 2018. As these applications complete their self-assessments and first audits our membership numbers will reach record heights, thus further enhancing the B-QUAL program within the industry.

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Due to external commitments two directors could not offer themselves for re-election at the October AGM.

Dr Nicholas Chantler, (Tasmania) and Martin Drake (Victoria), both resigned.

The board expressed thanks to both parties and especially noted the work Nicholas had done in reviewing the B-QUAL manual.

Rodney Ruge (Queensland) was elected to the board of Directors.

The B-QUAL web site has now been updated to include a list of B-QUAL members (name only) who have given their permission for publication. Provision has been made to include your email address if you request it . If you decide to have your email address on the page just email it to Laina at the office and she will organize it for you.

The access to the list appears on the home page. We see this inclusion as a public recognition to those members operating at B-QUAL standard.

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Umbrella Groups.

The Board is very interested in promoting Umbrella Groups for smaller beekeepers. These groups can be of any number but must be affiliated with a beekeeping club or association. The club or an authorised officer of the club would be required to undertake an internal audit of the group which would address the B-QUAL standards and rules. The group would then be subject to an external annual B-QUAL audit.

We would like to hear from any club or association that wants to participate in this program by contacting B-QUAL at [bqual@ausqual.com.au](mailto:bqual@ausqual.com.au). For further information.

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With the retirement of Trevor Weatherhead AM as the Executive Director, the AHBIC Executive is pleased to announce that they have appointed Sarah Paradise as the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Sarah was previously the CEO for the Institute of Foresters of Australia and the Executive Officer for the Australian Forest Growers based in Canberra.

In her new position Sarah will also act as B-QUAL Company Secretary.

Sarah will officially commence her duties 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2019.

We welcome Sarah into the B-QUAL family and look forward to working closely with her

# B-QUAL Partnerships

Gells Honey

Marybrough Victoria

Being a part of B-QUAL since its beginning in early 2000 I still struggle to understand why we have not got a bigger participation rate than there currently is.



With food security where it is now, it is so very important that we are all in some sort of trace ability system that can ensure all consumers that our industry is doing all that it can to make sure the products we produce are safe. So why not be a part of our own industry's QA program?

I started recording most things we did in a diary just as a matter of interest, later on down the track at the end of each year the diary was packed away never to be seen again . So when the development of bee record books came available I was one of the first to start to use them; and I have found them great and easy to use, and also now can just grab one from the past and see where we where 2 or 3 years ago or even longer ago.

Yes, it does take a little time to fill in and yes, sometimes it is hard timewise to fit in, however if time does not allow I can still fill it out the following day or two. The two B-QUAL books are of great benefit as the extracting book stays in the shed and filled in when we extract and clean up, the apiary book, we have one for each load and each load is numbered to match this and has been very beneficial to us.

B-QUAL encouraged us to have a barrier system and in turn has made management of each load of bees much easier to keep track of and of course with the new Bio security out now for all states B-QUAL just slots in perfectly without too much hassle.

Managing any disease issues that may arise in any load is always now controlled within that one load and not spread throughout the entire operation, honey samples sent are easily identified to each load making any traceability a lot quicker for us.

Does B-QUAL make us produce more honey, probably not, however B-QUAL does help us produce a safe food. The consumers can be sure that in our operation we are doing our best to be certain that the product that we are producing is as safe as we can possibly make it with records that can verify our movements which also are audited for further protection.

The extraction shed now is clean and tidy and this is a direct result of B-QUAL for the program found many faults with small areas that honey could have been contaminated from, so now, these have been rectified and all is good we did not have to correct these immediately but just to correct the situations when we could afford them and that is what is good about this program it's a learning tool and not a hammer.

*Ken Gell*

Director

Gells Honey. Maryborough Victoria

## Are you up to date with the new food label laws?

The information that is required on your honey labelling in Australia and New Zealand is prescribed by the **Food Standards Code**. Complying with the **honey labelling requirements** of the Food Standards Code will ensure that your honey can be sold legally. All packaged foods sold in Australia must comply with the labelling requirements stated within the Food Standards Code.

Honey is a product that sells according to its looks and so the information you give on the label is not only a legal requirement but can also be a sales aid. This is usually all the information that the consumer has to go on in deciding whether to buy the product. For example, it is not possible for the consumer to know, just by looking, whether the product is authentic honey. Therefore, attractive, informative and effective labelling is important. It is best to market honey indicating its exact geographical origin: this gives the consumer confidence in the product, and to some extent to visualise and feel identification with a blossom or a region. In addition to attracting customers to the product, the label on honey should give the following information.

1. The name of the food. Packaged food must be labelled with a name or description that will not mislead consumers. **“Honey” is a prescribed name and that name must appear on the label.**

2. Weight of the contents (e.g. 500g); **must** be shown.

3. The source of the honey such as yellow gum, mixed floral, etc, can be included but is **NOT** mandatory.

Research suggests that consumers want quick and accurate information to help decide what food to buy.

Food labels are required by law to carry essential information so that consumers are informed of the nature and properties of foods prior to purchase – this includes statements about the presence of allergenic ingredients. Some information may also voluntarily be offered on food labels by food businesses, giving consumers greater information to make informed purchasing choices. Food businesses must also ensure that they are not potentially misleading or deceiving consumers with any claims that are made on food labels (whether intentional or not).

Therefore food labels need to be clear, consistent and honest. It is against the law for suppliers to mislead or lie about where their food product comes from.

If a priority food was grown, produced or made in Australia, its country of origin label will also feature:

- A kangaroo in a triangle logo to help you quickly identify that the food is Australian in origin;
- A bar chart and text identifying the proportion of Australian content in the food.

As a honey or honey products vendor it is likely that you will be required to comply with the **Country of Origin (Australian) Food labelling information Standard of 2016 (The Standard)**

The standard marks are for food products that were grown, or produced, or made (substantially transformed) with 100% Australian ingredients. The standard mark will have the kangaroo logo, full bar chart and text. All the below are acceptable marks (logos) for raw honey



Honey is classed as a priority food and the label must show the name. It is illegal to use logos as above without an explanation clearly showing the percentage of Australian content in raw honey. All examples above should show the full bar infill and include **“100% Australian Honey”** text.

The words “Australian Honey”, “Product of Australia”, “Produce of Australia”, “Produced in Australia” or “Made in Australia” are all acceptable. Priority foods can only claim to be **produced** or **grown** in Australia if they contain 100% Australian ingredients.

The standard does not set a minimum size for the country of origin element on your labels, only that it must be displayed in its entirety in English, be legible and prominent. In other words, be clearly visible so consumers can understand it. The standard allows for packages with a surface area of less than 100cm<sup>2</sup> to omit the kangaroo and bar chart elements and simply include the explanatory words in a box.

### Honey in the FSANZ Standard is defined as:

#### Standard 2.8.2 Honey

**Note 1** This instrument is a standard under the *Food Standards Australia New Zealand Act 1991* (Cth). The standards together make up the *Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code*

#### 2.8.2—2 Definitions

**Note** In this Code (see section 1.1.2—3):

**Honey** means the natural sweet substance produced by honey bees from the nectar of blossoms or from secretions of living parts of plants or excretions of plant sucking insects on the living parts of plants, which honey bees collect, transform and combine with specific substances of their own, store and leave in the honey comb to ripen and mature.

#### 2.8.2—3 Requirement for food sold as honey

A food that is sold as ‘honey’ must:

- (a) be honey; and
- (b) contain:
  - (i) no less than 60% reducing sugars; and
  - (ii) no more than 21% moisture.

#### 2.8.2—4 Prescribed name

‘Honey’ is a \*prescribed name.

In other words, to meet the code, the honey on your frames should be mostly capped (and therefore de-hydrated or “ripened” by your bees). This also means that your honey won’t ferment and will have a longer shelf life.

The composition of honey varies from one floral source to another. The average composition of Australian honey produced from native and exotic plants is: water 15.6%, fructose 42.5%, glucose 30.6%, sucrose 2.9%, minerals 0.16% and other constituents 8.24%. Honey is a natural food. Every effort must be made to maintain its natural qualities during processing and storage and to ensure it has a long shelf life. It should receive minimum heat treatment.

#### Product Identification

It is essential that each batch of honey produced be identified so that the product is traceable in the event of a recall (B-QUAL program allows this without any additional recording). Honey recalls are rare due to the stable nature of the food. However, honey is not exempt from the requirements.

The Food Standards Code 1.2.2 has details of lot identification as;

A “lot” is defined as a quantity of food which is prepared or packed under virtually the same conditions, usually from a particular preparation or packing unit and during a specific time ordinarily not exceeding 24 hours.

Your lot identification can take many forms however it is typically the harvest, extraction or the packing date.

For example, if you extract honey once in 2018, then your lot identification could be “2018”. In a better year where you extract honey in January, March or April your lot identifications could be “01/18”, “Mar2018”, or “04/2018”.

The lot identification on your honey labelling can also be a best before date provided you can correlate the best before date to a specific batch of honey.

#### The Name and Address of Supplier

All honey labelling must include your name and address. The Food Standards Code 1.2.2 specifies this requirement. The label must show:

- Your name or your registered business name;
- Street address, including number street name, town or suburb, state and post code;
- You cannot use a post box number or a website address as an alternative to physical address details. You can include such detail on your packaging but not as the main contact source.

### Honey on its own does not require any health or allergy warning statements.

- You do **NOT** have to declare the presence of pollen, propolis or royal jelly on your honey labelling;
- Similarly, your labelling does **NOT** have to carry a warning about not feeding honey to infants under 12 months of age due to the risk of botulism.

Under the label standard bee pollen only needs to be declared when the pollen itself is presented as food or if pollen is an ingredient in food. It is advisable to add an “advisory statement” if selling bee pollen or propolis separately. An example of an advisory statement can be:

<p><b>Food:</b></p> <p>(a) Bee Pollen</p> <p>(b) Or a food containing Bee Pollen as an ingredient.</p>	<p><b>Advisory statement indicating that:</b></p> <p>This product contains bee pollen which can cause severe allergic reactions.</p>
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Propolis and royal jelly are treated precisely the same. Further information can be found in **Food Standards Code Schedule 9 Mandatory Advisory Statements**.

**In the case of royal jelly, a more authoritative statement is required as suggested in the Standards:**

### 1.2.3—3 Mandatory warning statement—royal jelly

For the labelling provisions, if a food is or includes as an ingredient royal jelly, the following warning statement is required: **‘This product contains royal jelly which has been reported to cause severe allergic reactions and in rare cases, fatalities, especially in asthma and allergy sufferers’.**

**Note** The labelling provisions are set out in Standard 1.2.1.

Nutrition Information		
Servings per package: 33 Serving size: 15g		
Avg Qty	per serve	per 100g
Energy	212kJ	1416kJ
Protein	0.05g	0.3g
Fat -total	0g	0g
-saturated	0g	0g
-trans	0g	0g
Cholesterol	0mg	0mg
Carbohydrate	12.5g	83.1g
-sugars*	12.4g	82.5g
Sodium	2.3mg	15mg

\*Sugars naturally occurring in honey.  
**Ingredients:** 100% Pure Australian Honey.  
 Store at room temperature.

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### Nutrition information.

Nutrition information must be included in your label.

Any health claims you wish to include are usually something in addition to what is stated in the Nutrition information panel. The two should not be confused and any health claims you make for marketing reasons must be accurate and truthful. It is **not** mandatory to have health claims on your labels.

**Ingredients.** With some exceptions, food labels must include a statement of ingredients (the term ingredient includes additives). However as “honey” is a prescribed name, this word **must** be used on the label and **no further breakdown is required**.

The Food Standards Code 1.2.5 states that date marking is not required on food with a best before date of 2 years or more.

### Weights and Measures

In Australia, it is normal to indicate the net weight of the honey in the package rather than volume. The weights should be expressed in kilograms (kg) or grams (g). Weights and measures declarations are regulated in Australia by the **Australian National Measurement Institute**.



Remember to include the 100% text if you produced your own honey.

It is imperative that you never mislead your customers by making representations about your honey that are not true. In general terms, you must be able to substantiate any claims you make and this may mean that you have to keep documentation in support of your claims. This is where B-QUAL documentation will assist.

**For added customer satisfaction include your B-QUAL logo on your container.**

Lastly it is valuable if space allows to provide additional product information for the consumer, such as explanations and taste descriptions. In order to do so, use creativity. Some beekeepers provide information to their customers about the granulation of honey and how to liquefy it should it set hard. It is important to point out that granulation or candying of honey is a natural process, and that the quality of the product is not affected at all, nor has it gone bad. A text that candied honey may be reliquefied by placing the container in a hot water bath at preferably 35 °C but certainly no more than 45 °C until liquefied would be advisable.

*The above is not intended as definitive legal advice. Producers are strongly advised to consult State department websites for confirmation as each State may have different requirements. Label regulations for each State can be found at:*

Queensland. [www.health.qld.gov.au/labelbuster](http://www.health.qld.gov.au/labelbuster).

NSW. [www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/labelling](http://www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au/ip/labelling)

Victoria. [www.2health.vic.gov.au/food\\_labelling](http://www.2health.vic.gov.au/food_labelling)

Tasmania. [www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/foodact](http://www.dhhs.tas.gov.au/foodact)

South Aust. [www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/food\\_composition](http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/food_composition)

West Aust. [www.agric.wa.gov.au/food](http://www.agric.wa.gov.au/food)

## Joining B-QUAL

1. Do you operate over 50 hives?, or
2. Do you sell to the general public at market stalls?, or
3. Do you sell to retail outlets?, or
4. Do you sell to a honey packer and distributor?, or
5. Do you export your honey?, or
6. Do you undertake Pollination Services?, or
7. Do you undertake Queen bee production?, or
8. Do you undertake pollen production?, or
9. Do you undertake comb honey production?, or
10. Do you undertake propolis production?, or
11. Do you sell packaged bees?.

**YES** to any of above



IF YOU HAVE ANSWERED **YES**

TO ANY OF THE CATEGORIES LISTED  
PLEASE CONSIDER JOINING B-QUAL.

For further information contact

B-QUAL Australia Pty Ltd

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*B-QUAL the beekeeping standard.*

As previously referred to we have had 59 new enquiries since June, many of these beekeepers have already progressed through the initial self-assessment stage and have completed their first B-QUAL audit. If you have made an enquiry but unsure of your next steps please contact Laina on 1800 630 890 or email [bqual@ausqual.com.au](mailto:bqual@ausqual.com.au) and we will be pleased to help guide you through your next steps to your initial audit and full B-QUAL membership. You have made the first step in requesting a certification pack, let's work together to achieve your first audit and complete the process.

## Good record keeping has multiple benefits.

Article by Jessica Millar

Bee Biosecurity Officer – Swan Hill Agriculture Victoria



Keeping beekeeper records as per the Australian Honey Bee Biosecurity Code of Practice, which all beekeepers should be complying with, and the BQUAL assurance program has a number of benefits. These benefits as described by Karla Williams (DPI Tasmania) in the June BQUAL newsletter article include; tracing, identifying and isolating disease, market access and quality assurance as per the BQUAL program.

There are a number of other benefits to beekeepers in keeping records, particularly in the event of hive theft. Beekeepers can use records to provide police with key information regarding movement dates of hives, number of hives and conditions of hives. They can also provide other key identifier facts such as if the hives were recently re-queened.

### **Do you know how many hives you have on a site and when you last inspected them?**

If the answer to this question is no, then it will be difficult to make an accurate police report of hive theft. As a beekeeper did you place a load of 96 or 108 hives? Were the hives singles, doubles or triples? Did the hives have honey? What is the location of the site? When did you last inspect the hives?

Swan Hill Police said “Beekeepers that can provide accurate records to police, greatly assist the investigation into stolen hives”.

Up to date and accurate hive records are also invaluable to support insurance claims.

### **Within your apiary operation do other key people know the locations of your hives?**

In the unfortunate event of illness or death and your hive numbers and locations are unknown by family or business partners, there is a risk that unattended hives could become diseased resulting in decreased hive value. This scenario has sadly been experienced by families of a beekeeper where nobody in the family was aware of the location of a significant number of hives. Years later the hives were found in an abandoned and worthless state.

Please ensure you keep written and accessible records using your preferred method.

As a reminder, your State Bee Biosecurity Officer (BBO) can provide registered beekeepers (50+ hives) and employees with a token to complete the bee biosecurity online training (BOLT) course at no charge. All beekeepers with 50+ hives should also be submitting honey test for the presence of American Foulbrood (AFB) as per section 10 of the Code.

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## SAMPLES FOR DIAGNOSIS TO CONFIRM AFB

Signs and symptoms of AFB can easily be confused with EFB, sacbrood, chalkbrood, over-heated or chilled brood. Accurate diagnosis of the presence of AFB can be obtained by submitting samples of suspect diseased material to a Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in your State.

Two types of samples are acceptable for the diagnosis of AFB; smears of diseased brood on microscopic slides, and sections of brood comb containing diseased brood. Smears are preferred for AFB diagnosis as they are non-destructive as compared to comb samples, they are easily sent via the post and they are quickly processed by the laboratory.

Honey samples provide an effective means of tracing infection sources when AFB spores are detected in honey.

However, an AFB positive honey sample is insufficient to make a diagnosis of AFB. A diagnosis of AFB can only be made based on the detection of diseased brood infected with AFB spores.

## Rodney Ruge. New B-QUAL Director.

With his recent B-QUAL appointment Rodney has supplied the following information for those who do not know him.

My father ran a small apiary to supplement his farm income and this is where I developed an interest in bees, the rest is history so in a sense you could say I am a second generation beekeeper.



My commercial beekeeping career started in 1985 when I left my job as foreman in a stockfeed mill, after purchasing extra beehives.

From there with the help and support of my partner Vanessa it has grown into a 2000 hive family operation and now still involves Vanessa and also our 3 sons.

Our main focus is bulk honey production but due to increased demand in recent years the pollination service side is growing.

We have been members of B-Qual since its inception in the early 2000's and I am a great believer in quality assurance as it gives traceability and assists in producing a quality product.

Due to the recent bad media publicity of honey I believe it is more important than ever that beekeepers should have a QA system in place.

I served on the Queensland Beekeepers Association executive for 7 years 2 of those years as state president and have a passion to pass this industry on to future generations in a better shape than when I started out but at the same time keeping a common sense approach.

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## Food safety and quality assurance

Stakeholders in the honey industry recognise that quality and food safety standards are required by customers, wholesalers and regulators. The industry must comply with the requirements of Food Standards Australia New Zealand including the development of a HACCP-based food safety program – to ensure that honey products meet international, national, and state and territory food safety requirements.

The B-QUAL food safety program is a voluntary program for apiarists and honey-processing businesses, ensuring that the honey bee industry's standards meet best practice, and domestic and international market demands. The program is owned by the Australian Honey Bee Industry Council, managed by the B-QUAL board and Aus-QUAL.

For more information or to sign up to the program contact B-QUAL at [bqual@ausqual.com.au](mailto:bqual@ausqual.com.au)

If you have an associate or know of another beekeeper not in B-QUAL or you are in a club or association please forward this newsletter to them the more interest generated in B-QUAL the better for all of us and the industry as a whole.

If your club or association would like to go onto our mailing list please advise [bqual@ausqual.com.au](mailto:bqual@ausqual.com.au) or Don Muir 0404 38 1942. We would also like to see associations or clubs post a link to our newsletter at [www.bqual.com.au](http://www.bqual.com.au)