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## Welcome to the summer edition of the Just Avocados newsletter.

I am pleased to communicate that as of 12 December we were 85% through our export harvest programme and well on track to finish by the third week of January as scheduled.

It has been an interesting season with the changing supply dynamics out of Western Australia painting a different picture in the Australian market than what we have been accustomed too previously. Also, there has been a stronger presence in the South East Asian markets from both South America and other NZ exporters who have historically focused on the Australian Market.

Fruit size has brought other challenges with nearly 30% of the crop sitting between 140grams to 180 grams. This outcome has played some part in the Asian markets not performing as well as they have in previous seasons and has also impacted local market returns.

I am aware that we have a large percentage of growers hanging fruit under 140grams, note that there will be a market for this later in season (if the fruit sizes); however, please note that there has been recent changes to other marketers' flow plans as they look to market right through to late February, this may push the local market opportunity out till March/April. We will keep you updated of the market conditions via our fortnightly e-bulletins.

Let's focus on the positives of the season: we grew our market share in Asia - as was a key strategy for the marketing team at the start of the season - with 40% of our programme heading there; fruit quality into Australia was much improved on last season and off the back of this we have managed to increase our Australian retail programme and minimise our exposure to the wholesale market; and we stayed true to our strategy of earlier harvest, even when it got tough.

We firmly believe that early harvest is the way forward. This industry is in the motion of change and we need to increase production and reduce costs to remain relevant and future proof our businesses.

For your summer reading you will find a market update from Jacob, Kyra updates you on her observations in the BOP, John provides insights into the fruit staining issue and Erica details her summer guide to new plantings and tree structural management.

I thank you all for your ongoing support and wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

Regards,  
Jarrod Redwood



**Jarrod Redwood**  
GM Supply and Logistics  
jarrod@justavocados.co.nz  
027 200 0295

## IN THE MARKETS

### JUST AVOCADOS MARKET UPDATE

**Just Avocados is 90% through our crop to date (as at WC 23.12.19). We will be finalising the early pool in late January and are looking at \$15 - \$17 indicative OGR for the total season**

Considering the early challenges in the 2019-20 season, it is pleasing to have seen growth in some of our prioritised markets.

Just Avocados exceeded its market share in Asia by 25% from the 2018-19 season. Total volume into Asia this season will represent 40% of your total export crop - a fantastic achievement against our total OGR strategy.

#### ASIA

Asia has had a significant uplift in market share this season which is crucial to supporting grower and exporter long term strategies. A combination of strict supply chain management and additional harvest and packing policies has meant our avocados have been received, overall, very well. We are up in market share and volume

of QR codes to connect with consumers - a technology channel that is foreign to New Zealanders respectively, but second nature in Asia, and new packaging development tailored towards our small fruit programme. Both innovations have given us the ability to educate, promote our brands (Darling Avocado and Jake's Avocado) and explain our point of difference.



by 20% - 30% in China, Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore and Korea which was a focus for the Just Avocados marketing team.

This season we have engaged in a range of instore promotions within our retail channels in Thailand. Our promotional activations have included instore displays and tastings with our retail customers which grew sales by 100% month on month, and chef demonstrations within the foodservice sector. By investing in educating consumers through promotional activity, we have been able to significantly increase our direct retail volume into Thailand and as a result increase our overall percentage of fruit in to the Asian markets.

Innovations for our avocado programme this season are the use

#### AUSTRALIA

The Just Avocados harvest, packing and operations team have done a great job in getting the majority of requested growers' crop off early which reflects the fact that we are 90% through our crop. Our last week of packing will be the third week of January, with the majority being completed prior to WC 13.1.2020.

With approximately a month to go, we expect to see our retail percentage in Australia end up at 60% - 70% for the 2019-20 season. We are ahead on retail commitment which was a key strategy for the Australian team and ensures exposure in the wholesale market is mitigated. Unfortunately, we have not seen the market at retail move north or south by more than AU\$2.00



#### Jacob Darling

GM Group Sales and Marketing  
Darling Group  
jacob@darlinggroup.co.nz  
027 582 9101

which reflects the current supply dynamics in Australia which we understand will be the new status quo.

The volume of small fruit sold into Australia only represents 5,000 trays, a significant difference to the 2018 - 19 season.

Our logistics business in Australia continues to provide us with speed to market something that we are enjoying when serving customers 3-5 days quicker than our competitors.

2020-21 is an exciting time ahead, we can expect further development of our total OGR strategy including growth in Asia, continued focus on retail development in Australia and Asia. We are in the process of building a new warehouse in Brisbane specifically for import and export which will continue to improve supply chain efficiencies and provide our customers and therefore our growers with a point of difference.

Lastly, we wish all our growers, service providers, and partners a cheerful and Merry Christmas. We appreciate all the support and hope you have a safe, relaxing festive period ahead and to a fruitful, prosperous new season in 2020. ●



## ON THE ORCHARD

### JOHN'S JOTTINGS – ORCHARD NEWS FROM NORTHLAND AND SOUTH AUCKLAND

**We are all but completed with our harvest in Mid and Far North. On the whole, the operation has gone smoothly. At this stage the set for the coming season in both districts looks promising, but as growers often say “ask me in February”.**

Rainfall has been scarce in the Far North over the last four weeks, but there has been useful amounts around Maungatapere with some growers recording 75mm in a single event.

It is a busy time on an avocado orchard now with the last harvest happening, new fruit set to look after, pests on the increase, fertiliser to be applied, and irrigation to attend to. Attention to these factors now will reap rewards come harvest next season.

A number of Whangarei growers have commented to me that they will not be growing small fruit this coming season and if it is there in February, it will be cut off!

#### CINTURING

A few growers have tried cincturing large limbs to induce buds to shoot where there is no growth points.

The cinture is performed with a hand saw and goes around halfway on the limb. Take the cut to a depth where white shavings come off the blade, around four millimetres. This is done in October/November when the sap starts to flow. The wound callouses over relatively quickly.

The success rate to date has been very good.



**New shoots emerging from a cintured limb.**

### RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PLANT PATHOLOGISTS

I was lucky enough to spend the day with three plant pathologists who are working on the tannin staining problem in the Mid North. The scientist from the University of Queensland, Liz Dann, was confident to say that it is pepper spot, which is the fungus *Colletotrichum*. They have the same issue in Queensland. The pathologists here have identified six different species of *Colletotrichum* on fruit and branches here in New Zealand.



**Typical sign of fungus on a small branch.**

To date, the best method to combat the fungus is regular pruning, which keeps wood fresh and less prone to infection, and regular copper applications.

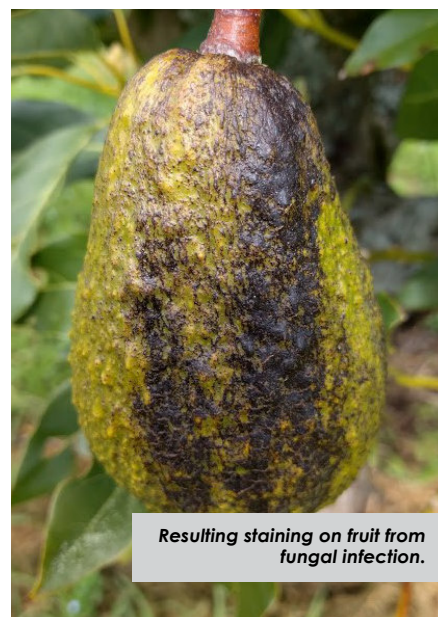
NZ Avocado is trialling a curative fungicide, but as yet it has not been released for application on avocados, and if it is, is still a couple of years



**John Emmett**

Orchard Management  
and Grower Services  
(Northland and South Auckland)  
john@justavocados.co.nz  
027 476 9087

away. Liz also said that sunscreen products over these intense summer months is worth a try to stop tissue damage which is then an entry point for the pepper spot.



**Resulting staining on fruit from fungal infection.**

Liz Dann also said that the use of silicates in the orchard is worth trying to improve overall root and tree health. There are several forms of silicates, potassium and sodium being common. I used sodium metasilicate several years ago to treat young trees that were suffering from what appeared to be phytophthora. It did have a positive effect and was very cheap to purchase. There are overseas trials that are easy to find on the internet. ●



## ORCHARD NEWS FROM THE BAY OF PLENTY

### LOCAL MARKET CONDITIONS

As we coast into the silly season that is Christmas, some growers have been waiting to harvest fruit over this coming time period when previously prices have been expected to lift. Give me a call to discuss this decision as Zeafruit have advised that the local market may not be as buoyant as it has been in previous years and advice has been to wait for a positive shift in the market. However, each orchard has their own orchard goals and priorities and many factors drive the decision to harvest such as compromised tree health, dropping or colouring fruit, personal commitments and of course payments.

### FRUITSET AND SOIL MOISTURE

Flowering and fruit set has been looking promising, however natural fruit drop due to a number of factors is still expected and rainfall this year in the Bay of Plenty is approximately 20% lower than last year to date - which could have more impact on fruit drop over the coming weeks.

Providing moisture and nutrients to the trees over the next couple of months through the cell division and fruit growth period is essential for fruit size and quality later in the season.

Soils rich in organic matter (SOM), particularly the ever-stable humus in our soils (that is like a sponge and can hold up to 90% of its weight in water) and with good mulch layers will retain moisture and nutrients more efficiently. These soils continue into dryer periods for longer and recover from dry periods faster than compromised soils, better supporting tree health and crop production.

Good levels of SOM support a strong connection with Mycorrhiza fungi and the avocado tree roots. Mycorrhiza increase the surface area tree roots can reach in soil allowing access nutrients and moisture where roots on their own might not reach.

To hold fruit set through the next several weeks, irrigation will be key in orchards with compromised soil if dry conditions continue.

To further help the soil retain moisture and nutrients, mow pasture sword or inter-rows around trees higher or allow to flower. Longer pasture growing above ground allows roots to grow deeper into the soil building

organic matter deeper, feeding biology, improves soil structure, and in some compaction zones can help to loosen soils.

### EFFECTS OF WIND

Many orchards in the Bay of Plenty have felt the effects of windfall this season with a number of wind events hitting orchards hard from every angle, often where the orchards have not been affected previously and so have not had the required shelter to protect them. If the fruit has not fallen during these events, it has been severely damaged by wind-rub having a major impact on export packout percentages.

Keeping to an annual pruning strategy will reduce the impacts of wind rub by controlling old branches that may damage fruit, allowing wind to permeate through the tree and keeping trees to a manageable height where they are less impacted by wind events.

Our packhouse staff offer a service where you can watch your fruit being processed, as well as being a rewarding experience after a year of nurturing your fruit, this is also an opportunity to get an understanding of fruit quality issues that hold fruit back from export markets.

### PESTS

We are leading into the summer months where pest pressure increases. Keep up your AvoGreen monitoring and remember you can monitor fortnightly if you are tracking population increases and decreases - this is the best way to keep on top of them. Please give us a call if you are unsure about what to spray, we can help you with your decision making.

If trees are healthy from the soil up, they are more likely to withstand pest pressure and less likely to attract pests in the first place.

If you have any areas in the orchard that you can leave unmown and create a wild flower space, this will provide food and habitat for in your orchard for beneficial species like parasitic wasps and predators to pest species. It's best if these wild flower areas are within 13 metres flight distance from the tree and are of mixed species and both annuals and perennials to provide nectar and pollen. The Apiaceae (AKA Umbelliferae family) where flowers are like an upside umbrella are important and include wild carrot, fennel, angelica, coriander,



**Kyra Fielden**

Grower Services Bay of Plenty  
kyra@justavocados.co.nz  
027 257 5028

parsley, alexander and provide habitat for beneficial insects. Other flowers to support bees and other species throughout the year are thyme, borage, crimson clover, brassica, phacelia, buckwheat, yarrow and many more. The good people at Kings Seeds can help and have beneficial insect and pollinator blends or you can let existing pasture species to flower, ensure you weed out any unwanted species.



**Angelica.**



**Borage.**

Finally, I would like to thank all of the Just Avocados Bay of Plenty growers who have all been fabulous to work with over this year, stay safe and well over the festive season and enjoy family and friends. I look forward to an exciting new production year ahead. ●



## ORCHARD MANAGEMENT WITH ERICA

### SUMMERTIME ON THE ORCHARD

We recently held our final field day for the year in the Bay of Plenty where we trialled a new approach replacing both the field day and discussion groups and amalgamating them into one as a more hands-on workshop. The feedback was great and we will be implementing these monthly workshops from 2020 kicking off with our first one in January on Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> – so save the date. The topic will be new plantings and young tree management up to year three.

Continuing on with the topic of new plantings I thought I would go through some reminders as we have a large number of growers and newbie growers planting this season.

### NEW PLANTINGS

**Watch out for sunburn on the exposed tender green stems as well as the base of the trunk upwards.** The young trees are extremely prone to sunburn resulting in poor vegetative growth, stem splitting and secondary fungal disease or even ringbarking and death. Either include sunburn products (eg. Surround) monthly throughout summer or until the stems are protected by the new flush. Apply with your foliar sprays or paint the exposed stems with a 1:1 mixture of white water based acrylic paint and water.

**Newly planted trees need regular watering.** If mother nature isn't supplying it and you don't have irrigation, then a water tank or bucket may be required. Work on around 30-50L of water through rain or irrigation or a combination thereof, per week depending on the weather. The trees will lose more water in hot, dry and windy conditions than in warm, humid conditions and water requirements can be adjusted accordingly using either the lower or higher range.

Even though the trees are receiving adequate water they may appear wilted on really hot days. Don't be tempted to over irrigate as this will cause overly wet soils and anaerobic conditions which can lead to root dieback or Phytophthora Root Rot. The wilting is the trees way of trying to minimize moisture loss. You can support the tree in these conditions and reduce



the stress on the tree by adding an antitranspirant (eg. Vapor Gard) to your foliar spray. This reduces the rate of transpiration (moisture loss) the tree experiences and keeps them happier on those very hot days.

**Insects need to be monitored and controlled.** Insects will be eyeing up the new buffet you have just provided - keep an eye out for Leafroller, Passion Vine Hopper, Cicadas, Fullers Rose Weevil and Bronze Beetle.

**Apply compost to your planting hole.** I have been working with Revital and together we have come up with a compost planting mix. This blend includes compost, vermicast, chicken manure, lime and phosphorus and is bio certified. It has a NPK of 12.5:9.5:3 and includes Magnesium and Calcium. Apply to your planting hole at 10% (e.g. 60L of compost for a 0.6m<sup>3</sup> hole) and mix evenly with the soil. Just Avocados growers receive a discounted price!

For those that are yet to plant, refer to our planting guide.

### TREE STRUCTURE MANAGEMENT

In our recent workshop we also covered what you can do on orchards this time of year with regard to structural management. Even though the chainsaws should be packed away, the hand pruning saws can make an appearance.

Doing any major structural pruning this time of year on mature trees may disrupt the fruit set causing a higher fruitlet drop than normal. This happens due to a hormonal shift in the tree with the vegetative response to structural pruning. Summer pruning also reduces late-season photosynthesis, and theoretically reduces the accumulation of reserve carbohydrates within the tree that



**Erica Faber**  
Orchard Productivity Manager  
erica@justavocados.co.nz  
027 549 8229

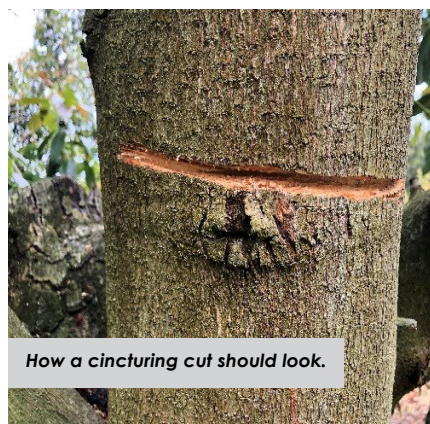
are used for early season growth in the following Spring. However, if this is not a concern to you for whatever reason and you want to continue pruning then ensure adequate sunburn prevention on exposed limbs during the hot summer months. For those who are guarding their fruit set and working towards improving production then read on.

If you are trying to improve the bearing capacity of your trees and have large voids off the main trunk where there is no lateral branching then this is the time of year when you can try initiate dormant (also known as latent) buds to shoot by taking advantage of the high sap flow, evidence of which can be seen by the active vegetative flush. By cincturing (a xylem and phloem interruption technique), you temporarily restrict and redirect the flow of reserves. Done in late spring or early summer you can initiate dormant vegetative buds below your cincture and done in autumn or winter can improve flowering or fruit set by increasing photosynthates to the flowers.



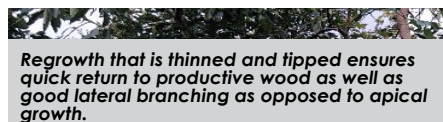


This technique can also be used on young trees to initiate a lateral branch where there is none. In this case use a sharp budding/grafting or similar knife and make a light incision through the cambium above a node. Remember to always sanitise your tools with a bleach solution when moving from tree to tree. Please contact your technical advisor or grower rep. before attempting this if you are unsure of what to do.



*How a cincturing cut should look.*

Thinning and tipping any regrowth emerging from the autumn and winter pruning on mature trees should also be done now. These shoots should be thinned out when they are about 50-60cm long, soft, coppery and easy to break out by hand. As a general rule, remove all shoots growing from the top or underside of the pruned branch as well as any shoots emerging on or very close to the pruning cut. Aim to leave a lateral shoot at a 10 and 2 o'clock angle. When regrowth is controlled and the trees have adequate resources, flowering and fruit set should occur on the new growth minimizing production loss and the structure of the tree is improved thereby optimizing bearing structure and capacity.

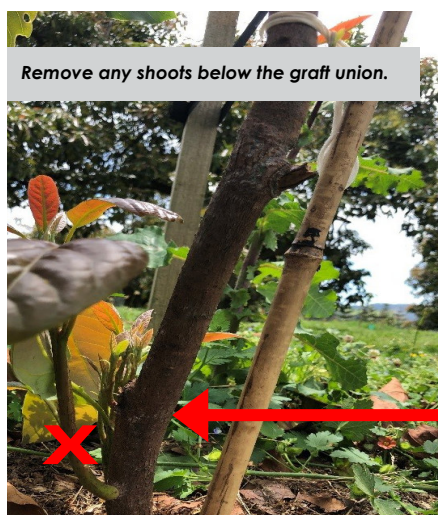


*Regrowth that is thinned and tipped ensures quick return to productive wood as well as good lateral branching as opposed to apical growth.*



*Regrowth that isn't managed results in poor tree structure and regrowth that remains vegetative and apical dominant.*

On young non-bearing trees, check near the graft union for any shoots emerging below the graft. These are rootstock shoots and should be removed. Any Hass shoots emerging within a hand's width above the graft should also be removed. If there are also any dominant side shoots competing with the central leader then either remove them or cut them back depending on where they are emerging from. We will be covering pruning and shaping young trees as part of the January workshop so if you have any trees three years old and under be sure to attend.



*Remove any shoots below the graft union.*

## FRUITLET DROP

You should be experiencing the first of two main fruitlet drop periods. This is quite normal. However, additional fruitlet drop can be experienced in the following scenarios:

- **When there is very strong vegetative growth stimulated by excess nitrogen.** This strong vegetative growth competes for resources and as the tree only has so much to go around, will shed

some of the fruitlets. High nitrogen levels will also inhibit efficient calcium uptake which is important during the first 3 months of fruit set and sizing to strengthen the cell walls and increase levels in the pulp. High levels of calcium in fruit is associated with resistance to fungal infection, improved shelf life and reduced incidences of grey pulp which is also the result of excess nitrogen. The higher than ideal nitrogen levels will also result in higher pest pressure as the leaves and fruit are soft and palatable.

- **The trees experience a water deficit.** As the rate of transpiration (water loss) increases with the increase in daily temperatures and the additional vegetative flush and sizing fruit, the demand for the uptake of water to restore the balance increases as well. This increased demand often coincides with our lower rainfall months resulting in not only inadequate soil moisture but also a shrinking in the root mass due to them drying out, further exacerbating the stress the tree undergoes. In order to reduce the overload, the tree will shed fruit. Not only does the hotter, drier conditions result in low available soil moisture but also results in inadequate nutrition uptake as there is not enough soil moisture etc to dissolve the solid fertilizer into a readily available form. Fortunately, the soft new vegetative flush which coincides at this time absorbs foliar sprays effectively and can be applied to overcome the soil limitations. Monitor soil moisture and irrigate as necessary.





## DETERMINATE AND INDETERMINATE FRUIT SET

Action is required if you are experiencing mostly determinate set where the fruitlets are exposed with no spring flush extending beyond them. This can be as a result of:

- Hanging your crop late when the tree does not have enough resources to hold crop, set and size the new crop as well as push vegetative flush.
- Not having adequate resources despite the crop having been harvested.
- Poor tree health.
- Dry soil conditions and little to no available soil water for root uptake or inadequate fertiliser/nutrition uptake due to the dry soil conditions.
- Very heavy flowering and fruit set resulting in an overload on resources and not enough to push the vegetative flush.
- Under fertilization.
- Winter leaf drop through mite damage.
- Not pruning enough the previous seasons. Pruning ensures a balance between vegetative and productive wood ensuring more balanced flowering as well as renewing flowering wood.

It is important to take steps to remedy this as the spring flush not only protects the fruit set from sunburn and provides valuable resources to the sizing fruitlet through photosynthesis but it is also next year's flowering wood and



ensures next year's return crop.

Take the following steps to encourage vegetative flush:

- Take leaf samples to ascertain the current nutrient status and correct deficiencies or low nutrient levels with foliar fertiliser sprays. This is especially important if you do not have irrigation and the soil moisture levels are low resulting in poor solid fertiliser uptake.
- Should you have irrigation, monitor soil moisture levels and irrigate as necessary.
- Increase solid fertiliser to these trees if and when there is adequate soil moisture.
- Reduce the resource load on the tree by harvesting your current crop.
- Reduce the resource load by thinning out the new fruit set or by removing about 25-30% by cutting back to 2cm wood.

There will always be a percentage of determinate set. In this instance, ensure you protect any exposed fruit with products (Surround or Bud Mate) that help prevent sunburn and ensure return value for this fruit. Which brings me to my last point ... may your Christmas stockings be filled with many happy "RETURN\$" ●