



WE'RE ALL ABOUT AVO'S!

NEWSLETTER: SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2018

www.justavocados.co.nz | 54 Woodland Road, Katikati | 07 549 3027

Welcome to the latest edition of the Just Avocados newsletter.

The 2019 export season has so far been a season of firsts and exciting opportunities for the Just Avocados team and our growers. We made the first commercial export shipment in the industry of New Zealand Avocados to China, we established a direct Australian retail vendor code through JH Leavy & Co, we have a newly established export clearance facility at JH Leavy & Co, and have fantastic support from our Asian customer base. It's an often overlooked point that on a percentage of market share basis we are, among our competitors, the largest supporter of the emerging markets.

As most of you will be aware, we have hit a challenging part of the season as combined New Zealand and Australian volumes have reached levels that have put the Australian market under pressure. We are managing this to ensure that we achieve the optimum outcome for our growers. The next three weeks will be critical in managing the outcome and I thank those that I have spoken to with regards to harvest planning for your consideration and support of the necessary changes we have made. Moving or slowing down harvest is not something that we enjoy doing but at times it is essential to ensure we manage a softening or under pressure market.

We had great turn outs at both of our last two field days in the Far North and BOP, and thank you to John and Marion Williams from the Far North and Simon and Lizzette Turnbull from Katikati for hosting the field days. Our next field day will be in Whangarei - we are in the process of identifying an orchard, if you are keen on hosting a field day please let us know.

We will be holding the Just Avocados Trust Ltd AGM on the 29th of November this year which will follow on to a Christmas BBQ. We encourage all growers from all regions to join us. Time and date to be confirmed - keep an eye on your email inbox for the details!

In this edition of the newsletter you will find an update from John on what's happening across the growing regions, Erica will cover what to do in the orchard during spring, a guest contributor Mike Sim from Biobees shares the benefits of bumble bees as pollinators, and Jacob shares the details of our first commercial shipment to China.

Finally, last month we farewelled Greg O'Carroll, our long-standing BOP Grower Services Rep. Greg had been with Just Avocados from its inception. I thank Greg for his high level of service offered and commitment to the company over the last eight years. We are in the process of recruiting for this role and will be announcing a replacement shortly.

Regards,
Jarrod Redwood



Jarrod Redwood
GM Operations
and Grower Services
jarrod@justavocados.co.nz
027 200 0295

FEATURES

HELEN GRAY RECOGNISED WITH SERVICE TO INDUSTRY AWARD

Helen Gray's contribution to the New Zealand avocado industry was recognised at the NZ Avocado International Industry Conference 2018 gala dinner on the evening of 30 August with the presentation of a Service to Industry award.

The award presented was one of just two presented on the night and recognises service and achievements to the avocado sector. The Just Avocados team are extremely proud of her achievement.

Below is what Mike McRoberts, MC for the gala dinner, read out to the audience about Helen's contribution in the industry:

"Helen has been involved in the avocado and kiwifruit post-harvest industry for over twenty years.

She is involved day-to-day at the coal face and is an active participant at an avocado industry governance level contributing to avocado quality, EMS, AvoGreen and market access discussions across the packer forum and other NZ Avocado initiated working groups such as EMS.



Helen Gray accepting the Service to Industry award at the NZ Avocado International Industry Conference 2018 gala dinner.

Helen is passionate and driven to ensure compliance among packers, exporters and growers for the benefits of the industry as a whole.

Helen delivered a significant contribution to the New Zealand avocado industry in her role in the China audit of avocado packing facilities and procedures for the export of New Zealand avocados.

Her attention to detail was a key element to the success of this

project and has set the way and example for the rest of the avocado packing fraternity in New Zealand and she has since shared her knowledge and audit experience with the rest of the industry to help in their preparations for the same audit.

The NZ Avocado Growers' Association recognises and acknowledges Helen Gray's passion and attention to detail for the supply chain of NZ avocados and honours her as a recipient of the Service to Industry Award." ●

BOOST TO DIRECT RETAIL CHANNEL OR JUST AVOCADOS

Just Avocados' Australian retail channel has grown by 55% over the past three seasons and a further boost to this has been announced for the 2018-19 season with the specialist avocado packer and exporter to now supply a major Australian retailer directly.

"We are excited to announce we have direct vendor status with Australian retail which allows us to place a significant volume into this channel," says Jacob Darling, GM Group Sales and Marketing for Darling Group - the parent brand to Just Avocados, JH Leavy & Co and Avoworks.



Jarrod Redwood, GM Operations and Grower Services for Just Avocados says this development will benefit their growers.

"This season, 65% of our Australian programme will go direct to retail - this is a more streamlined transaction with cost savings," says Redwood.

Additionally, according to Darling, Just Avocados is positioned to see more value retained from Australian

exports by utilising newly approved facilities at JH Leavy & Co. "Our team in Australia has launched a third-party logistics division with inspection and treatment facilities.

"This development will remove time delays and costs in the supply chain for our growers as we can receive our containers directly from the port and inspect and treat them ourselves. This increases the speed of our fruit to market

which reduces quality issues through minimising stock age." Overall, according to Darling, the market outlook is positive for the start of the New Zealand export season. Darling Group's strategy is for strong volumes early in the season into the Asian markets and to then optimise the late season Australian window. ●

IN THE MARKETS

JUST AVOCADOS AND DARLING GROUP LEAD THE WAY FOR NEW ZEALAND AVOCADOS INTO CHINA

Just Avocados has exported just under 40% of our total volume as of week 42. With a challenging past few weeks, the harvest and operation team has done a fantastic job with slowing harvest throughout key growing regions. Our strategy to date is still on track, representing 49% of the total volume that has gone to Australia.

The balance of our fruit has been placed into the Asian markets early, comprising primary of Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, China and a little into South East Asia. Over 50% of the total volume shipped to Asia has come from Just Avocados. Just Avocados continues to be the leader of new market development for the industry.

To date, Asia has been pleasing this season, we have increased our market share in Korea and are continuing to grow in Taiwan and Thailand. Although the Asian markets have been a little "sluggish" over the last few weeks, we have had positive support from our customers which has allowed us to be less exposed in the Australian wholesale space.

China has been very pleasing so far this season, as volumes into this market have been light but consistent. Our strategy continues to be led by quality, and we are sticking to this approach off the back of the long-term value proposition for our growers. Targeted

consumers that understand and are prepared to pay for quality are who we continue to focus on. If we can do this well, the opportunity into this market is endless.

The Australian market has been a challenge over the last three weeks, with an oversupply of New Zealand and Australian product indicatively equating to post 350,000 trays per week, with some weeks overlapping 400,000 trays.

Our "on the ground" model in Australia has proven significantly valuable as we have been able to manage our quality for retail orders. This has been extremely valuable in a year where quality is proving challenging. Information to date also suggests we have had less containers fail as a percentage than existing exporters, and we believe there is correlation between having our own treatment and fumigation facilities on site.

The new 'Jake's Avocado' brand for China was developed to reflect the family business that is Darling Group and Just Avocados.



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

Just Avocados has been working hard to hold harvest back as we look to only hit retail requirements internationally at this time. All though we are being faced with a difficult season on an array of fronts, we are extremely confident in the outlook for the balance of the season as we lead up to Christmas. Supply dynamics suggest a strong Australian window December – January and your support at this time is much appreciated. ●

NEW ZEALAND MARKET UPDATE

Only a couple of years ago the AIC led Local-Market group considered that around 30,000 trays per week was the level at which consistency could be maintained, values stabilised and the world was at peace.

Above that volume, repeatedly, price pressures occurred.

Looking at today's volumes we see 50,000 trays entering the market, week in and week out – yet pricing has remained stable, consumption through retail and food-service has been continuous, and sustainable returns are being remitted to growers. This is undoubtedly a sign that the New Zealand market continues to develop with retail programmes that are effective through both chains. Clearly, fruit entering the market is (in most cases)

suitable for purpose. Ripening is now the norm so consumers are getting a product that is to their satisfaction.

A sign of the advancing development of our market can be observed in pricing this season. It's commonly accepted that we have a fruit profile sitting closer to size 20 than to size 24. Size 28 fruit is almost a rarity. As we look across our stock numbers, inward packing volumes and pricing we are seeing a marketing strategy that is almost 'line-pricing' these three sizes. I have to admit that's a challenging concept to understand; however, for this season a 28 sized tray will achieve a far better OGR value than a size 20 tray. In saying that, returns for both sizes are still excellent for the early stages of October.

Looking ahead, the real challenge

Glen Duseath
Managing Director – Zeafruit
glen@zeafruit.co.nz



for domestic marketers is to maintain volume. Export discussion is currently focused around a slow-down in packing for the heavily supplied Australian market with a potential cut back in packing activity. That doesn't suit us at all.

At a market volume of approximately 50,000 trays per week, growers may well be advised to look to their own back-yard (NZ) and take sustainable domestic returns with quicker payment time-frames. ●

ON THE ORCHARD

JOHN'S JOTTINGS – ORCHARD NEWS FROM SOUTH AUCKLAND TO THE FAR NORTH

FAR NORTH ORCHARD DEVELOPMENTS

The earthworks are under way for the final development in the 400 hectare project near Houhora which I mentioned in the May-June newsletter.

The diggers working here are all fitted with GPS monitors to ensure that the rows are all evenly spaced and straight. They break through the sandstone pan to allow the soils to drain away excess water and the mound also lifts the avocados roots away from wet subsoils.

The project is split into three separate orchards as the land is not in one entire block, but was three separate farms that are all a short distance from each other.

FAR NORTH ORCHARDS

Things are firing away in the established orchards with flowering and flush. Bees have been in for a week or more in most blocks. Harvest is also going well with pack outs mostly around 80% export from



Digger pan breaking and mounding ready for planting

Just Avocados growers.

I was with Sharen and Dave Watson, who have shifted to the north from Katikati, on their new orchard in Turk Valley road. A vehicle pulls up and the driver jumps out and grabs a 10lb snapper from the back and hands it over as a house warming gift. What awesome neighbours to have - welcome to Northland guys!

JUST AVOCADOS FIELD DAYS

We ran field days in the Far North and the Bay of Plenty last month that were well attended despite the inclement weather. Erica spoke about what is important on orchards at the moment as we approach pollination (see more on this on page 6), and the growers in



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

>>

the Bay also heard from Biobees about how bumble bees are a good idea to supplement honey bees (see Mike's article on page 8). Bumble bees will work in a wider range of temperatures and even in winds up to 70 kmph. Their large bodies will carry more pollen than the smaller honey bee too.



Bumble bee working an avocado flower

FRUIT SET CONDITIONS

Looking ahead at the weather forecast there are great looking overnight temperatures for fruitset. Overnight temperatures 10 degrees or higher are considered favourable for pollination. Fingers crossed it continues into later in the month as well.



Healthy white roots



New spring flush on last year's growth

HEALTHY ROOTS AND SHOOTS

There are orchards that have very good root flush happening which is early compared to most seasons. I am not sure why this would be but they have been applying foliar along with solid fertilisers. When your roots are flushing like this you will get a better uptake of solid fertiliser than if they are dormant.

I am also seeing great flush coming away on shoots that grew last year on stumps that were given the 'Erica' prune. These new shoots will fill in the canopy quickly this year. The same type of shoots on some orchards are flowering and will set fruit this spring, one year after pruning. ●

Ideal night temperatures for pollination							
Thursday 4 Oct	Friday 5 Oct	Saturday 6 Oct	Sunday 7 Oct	Monday 8 Oct	Tuesday 9 Oct	Wednesday 10 Oct	Thursday 11 Oct
18°C High	20°C High	19°C High	19°C High	18°C High	18°C High	17°C High	18°C High
10°C Overnight	11°C Overnight	10°C Overnight	10°C Overnight	10°C Overnight	10°C Overnight	9°C Overnight	10°C Overnight

ORCHARD MANAGEMENT WITH ERICA

“SPRINGING” INTO ACTION

I thought I would go into some detail on orchard management for spring this newsletter and also what is happening to your trees.

Spring is one of the busiest times on avocado orchards with the sounds of chainsaws, picking machinery and sprayers to be heard hard at work - not to mention all of our orchardists. Our to-do list seems endless; organise last pesticide sprays before the bees come into the orchards, work out harvest

strategy, get pruning done, prepare for planting, apply fertiliser, prune shelterbelts...

Your trees have come out of winter which is a stressful period for them with heavy nutrient drawdown predominately as a result of maturing fruit and producing hundreds of thousands of flowers over a cold, wet period with minimal nutrient uptake. They are also expected to maintain tree health, produce a healthy spring flush and set a wonderful crop. This is quite a big ask if you are not ensuring optimum tree health and nutrition as well as managing the harvest of your current crop so as



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

>>

not to compromise your new fruit set.

BEES

A lot of orchards in the BOP are experiencing earlier flowering than normal which means you will need to get bees in earlier. The earlier flowering period has a better fruit set percentage on average than the latter flowering period. I have already seen open flower in the orchards and a week of warm weather will accelerate flowering.

Often growers will be conservative on bee hives in orchards but when you have put in all the hard work and expense to ensure good flowering why stumble at the last hurdle and not do everything you can to ensure the best possible fruit set. The only way for fruit to set is for your little pollinators to move pollen onto flowers and lots of it.

It's a numbers game and the more players you have on the field the more goals you will score. I like to have between 8 and 12 hives per hectare depending on my flowering and tree density. I then also cover all my bases and have bumble bees in the orchard as well at a ratio of 25-50% to honey bees, depending on the weather over pollination.



8-12 hives are recommended per hectare.

I want my bees to be working as many hours as possible so I place them in groups around the orchard in the sunniest, most protected spots so that they will be active earlier, working the flowers. Place a source of water close to the hives so that the bees don't have to travel far in search of water which would mean less time working in your trees. Place

a branch or something similar in the water trough so that the bees can safely drink and not drown.

Pheromone products such as Bee-Scent™ can also be used to enhance pollination as the sprayed flowers will attract the bees onto the flowers and encourage them to work the flowers harder.

PRUNING

The chainsaws are out and I have been busy in the orchards marking limbs with some growers in preparation for pruning. Marking the limbs before the contractor arrives will save time and money and the job can be done quickly. Alternatively ensure your contractor has a good understanding of what pruning method you are following. Our pruning window is closing so ensure you have booked your contractors.

Pruning ensures better production and more consistent cropping. Remember that pruning is not just about getting light into the canopy but also ensuring good regrowth that will optimise future production.

Top tips for pruning:

- Ensure pruning cuts are made at an angle so that rain water runs off and also treat pruning cuts to avoid infection and secondary rots.
- Treat the pruned limb as well as any exposed limbs against sunburn.
- Manage your pruning regrowth by thinning and tipping to ensure better growth and also to get back into production quicker.



If left untreated, pruning cuts are prone to sunburn, infection, rots and cankers.

NUTRITION

Nutrition management is important going into fruit set. If you have managed winter nutrition well, you will have managed to maintain or elevate nutrients especially important for fertilisation and fruit set and avoided those particular nutrients bottoming out over winter. Remember also that balanced application is critical and if you were paying attention in my last newsletter article you will avoid high nitrogen levels that result in excessive fruitlet drop, high pest pressure, reduced calcium uptake and an increase in post-harvest diseases and shorter shelf life.

USE THE CIBA GEIGY CHART TO RATE YOUR TREE HEALTH

If over winter or with flowering progression, you have noticed tree decline, then assess your tree and rate it according to the Ciba Geigy chart. This will enable you to understand what remedial action to take to gain back tree health and performance.

If your tree is at a rating of 7-10 then you need to take action to prevent further decline.

Firstly, remove most (rating 7) or all (rating 8-10) of the fruit as this will be adding additional stress on the tree as it sinks nutrients and increases water loss. Any fruit on these poor health trees are of little return value as the sparse canopy will result in small, sunburnt fruit and is not worth declining your trees further.

Once the crop is off, treat the soil to get rid of the high levels of Phytophthora if necessary. Ridomil is an effective soil drench in this instance.

To encourage new, healthy root growth as well as beneficial soil microbes, apply a good layer of mulch and Mycorrhizal activators or biostimulants.

Resist the urge to prune these trees. They are in this condition in the first place due to not being able to take up resources efficiently through their root system or damaged sunburnt cambium. Therefore, maintaining as much canopy as possible is

>>

important for 1) retaining leaves that photosynthesise and produce valuable resources, 2) retaining leaves to take up foliar nutrition and 3) to help “dry out” the soil through water uptake and transpiration. The trees then need to go on a programme that encourages vegetative growth and healthy roots and not production as this would once again stress the tree.

PLANTING

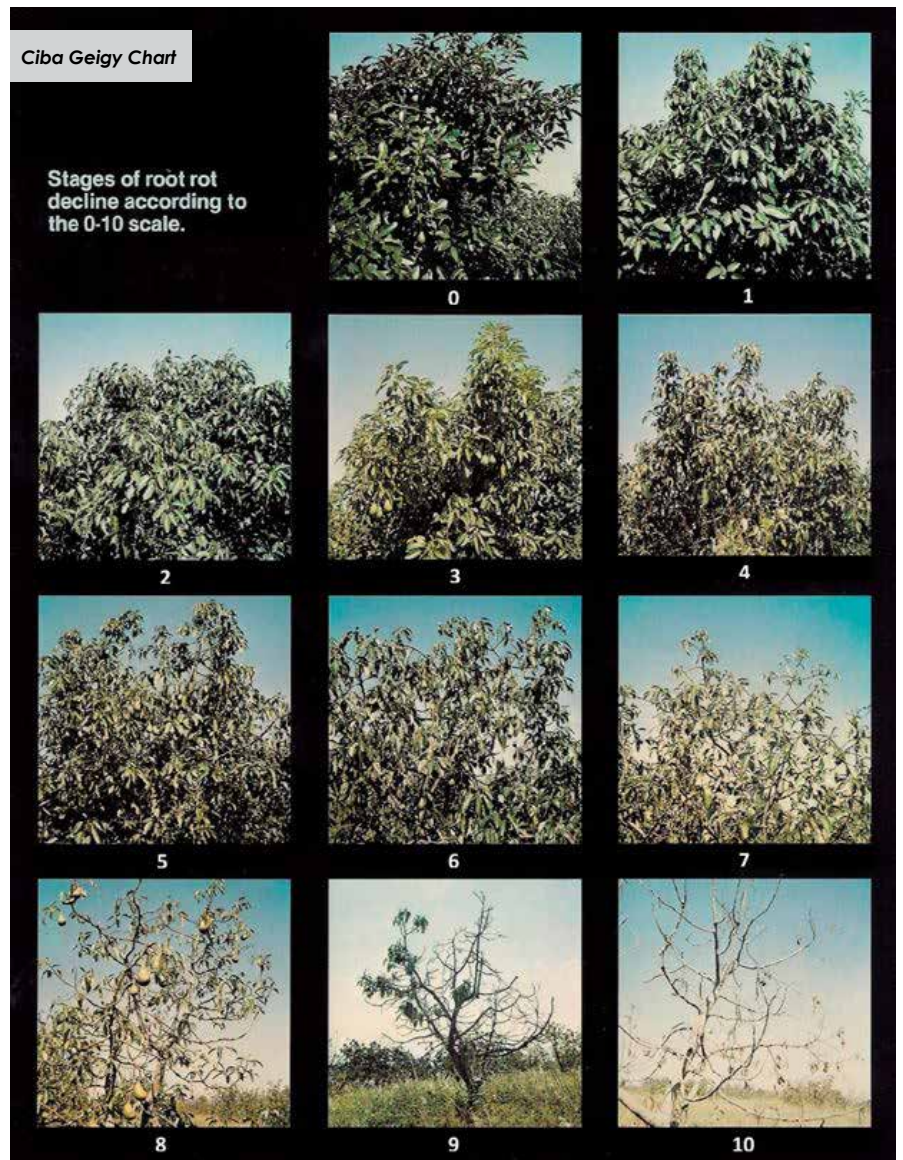
Spring is also the time where new plantings, replants or interplants commence. Soil sampling, land prep, corrections, pegging out and irrigation should have been completed in anticipation of planting.

I prefer to plant anytime from mid-October to mid-December so that the trees have a chance to establish, put on vegetative growth and build reserves before going into winter.

On receipt of your trees, check to see that you are happy with the quality and that your trees are uniform. I also harden them off for about two weeks prior to planting. This not only acclimatises them but also gives me an opportunity to apply sprays to build reserves and boost carbs, reduce the rate of transpiration and apply sunburn protectant. This extra preplanting prep not only reduces any transplant shock but also ensures that the trees start flushing and establishing quicker. I also use this “hardening off” time to start doing some light



The best time to plant trees is anytime from mid-October to mid-December



Ciba Geigy Chart

Stages of root rot decline according to the 0-10 scale.

pruning and tipping to begin training the framework for optimised production later on.

PEST MANAGEMENT

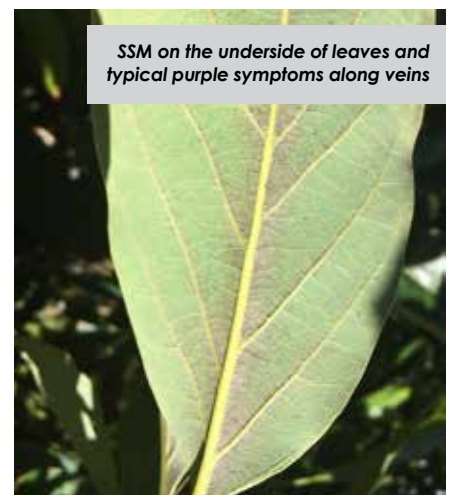
Spring also means being more vigilant for pest pressure. I have seen some orchards slip up with mite control and all the hard work put into maintaining healthy winter leaf is now lying on the orchard floor. Retaining winter leaf is important for feeding the flowers as they extend and open and also over pollination to ensure good fruit set. They also provide the reserves to ensure a good spring vegetative flush.

As the soft spring and summer flush extends, be on the lookout for leaf roller that can be found enjoying these tender fresh greens!

If you are planning on doing any insect sprays with bees around, contact your bee keeper first to arrange a night spray or discuss

bee friendly products.

On young non-bearing plants Fuller's Rose Weevil, Cicadas, Passion Vine Hoppers and Leaf Rollers can cause significant damage and set growth back. Scout for these insect pests on your young trees as we go into November and December and spray accordingly.



SSM on the underside of leaves and typical purple symptoms along veins

>>



HARVEST

And of course, spring is also the time when harvest starts in earnest.

Remember to follow industry protocols and not harvest after rain or when fruit is wet. Losing returns due to lenticel damage after a seasons hard work and expenses is unnecessary.

Also protect the harvested fruit from sunburn and keep the picking bins in the shade and covered up. And finally, we also get to taste our own wonderful crop ...

ENJOY! ●

USING BUMBLEBEES IN POLLINATION

Mike Sim from Biobees Ltd was a guest speaker at our BOP field day last month. The following is a recap of the information shared.

Bumblebees are considered fifty times more effective in avocado than honeybees and are fast becoming the super stars of pollination. Using them in your orchards is a great way to push production and reduce seasonal variability, they are also a big boost to your wild queen population.

Put them in early at 1-2% flowering to pollinate your first flowers, with four to five hives per hectare a great start.

Bumblebees are:

- Ten times more effective at close pollination (depositing pollen from the same variety)
- Twenty times more effective at cross-pollination (between varieties)
- Two to three times faster working
- Moving a lot more between trees and varieties
- Collecting both nectar and pollen on most foraging trips

Bumblebees are much more likely to have pollen on them when visiting female flowers, and are also a great insurance policy on the weather, as not only do they

work in poorer conditions, they also forage for longer each day. This is especially important if cool weather delays your flower opening until after your honeybees have knocked off for the afternoon.

Without help or huge numbers,



Bumblebees are considered fifty times more effective in avocado than honeybees

honeybees are struggling to get the job done. We know on average they're only moving about one grain of pollen per two flowers visited, with flowers overall receiving roughly 20% of the pollen they need, and close to 80% of flowers aren't getting any pollen at all. In New Zealand, we're seeing about 0.05% of the fruit set we know is possible, so there is huge room for improvement! ●

**Just Avocados Limited takes no responsibility for the outcome of using third party products, services and information as described in this article.*

Mike Sim, Biobees Ltd,
mike@biobees.co.nz,
www.biobees.co.nz*

