



# WE'RE ALL ABOUT AVO'S!

NEWSLETTER: JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2019

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

With the 2018/19 export season now complete, focus has well and truly shifted to planning for the season ahead. From a volume perspective, all signs indicate that we are looking at an improved season.

As mentioned in the last newsletter, all-market access is the key to managing any sized crop – as proven by this past season.

Things you should now be thinking about are:

- Have you signed the China and Thailand register?
- Is your spray programme conducive to allow all-market access?
- Do you understand the chemical withholding periods?

If you are unsure about any of the above, please speak to either Kyra or John for assistance.

Crop estimation will once again be critical to extract the best returns out of the market, and it is pleasing to note that the Just Avocados 2018/19 crop estimate vs actual trays exported was an improvement from the 2017/18 season. However, we still have room for improvement - and this will be a focus for your grower services team.

I will once again remind you that understanding your individual drivers and orchard goals are the key to us delivering value, so take some time to think about what you want to achieve this season and how we can assist - whether it's orchard health, harvest plans and timing, current crop loading and future production or technical support. We have worked hard on providing a model that provides flexibility, and the detail in the planning is how we can achieve this. We will be meeting with you all over the next couple of months to discuss this.

In this newsletter, Jacob provides a high level 2018/19 marketing overview, John covers pruning and information on fruit staining and Erica explains the fruit set conundrum and potential factors that influence fruit set. Kyra's first newsletter contribution gives you an update as to what she has been up to and Helen covers off the ever-increasing demands of compliance - don't forget that when it comes to compliance we have an experienced team who can assist with all facets.

For those of you who attended the field days, I hope that you had a great time and got real value out of these days - please feel free to pass on any feedback you have.

Soon we will advise the dates for our end of season meetings and I look forward to catching up with you all.

Regards,  
Jarrod Redwood



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## FEATURES

### KATIKATI A&P SHOW

**We had a fantastic time at the Katikati A&P Show a few weeks ago!**

Thanks to everyone who came down for a chat – and to try our amazing avocado ice cream. Here are a few photos from the day. ●



### CONGRATULATIONS, HELEN TANNER!

**Helen Tanner, our Group Accountant, competed in her 7th NZ Masters Games last weekend - in Artistic Gymnastics and Trampoline - and came away with three medals.**

Helen won the Woman's Gymnastics (40-50 year division) and the Trampoline categories. Helen's team also placed 2nd overall.

Helen now has her sights set on competing at the Australian Masters competition in October and we look forward to sharing her results later in the year. ●

## IN THE MARKETS

### JUST AVOCADOS MARKET UPDATE

**Just Avocados has completed its 2018/19 export season and is preparing for a big 2019/20 season. Excited by key achievements, we're looking forward to announcing our financial results and KPIs that have been completed for the year.**

While the season has been challenging, we continue to highlight the importance of our newly developed business model and the advantages we have seen with fruit speed to market. In a challenging environment for all, we are pleased to see our investment truly paying dividends for our New Zealand grower base.

Our direct retail programme exceeded committed volumes and we're looking forward to developing and growing this channel for our grower base in years to come.

This year, Asia has benefited the

pool greatly – placing 25.7% of our total volume into a range of “key markets”. This meant that we enjoyed strong returns for all sizes throughout the season.

We are thrilled with our outcome in the Chinese market, having targeted a small volume of fruit to ensure we can connect premium quality with a premium channel. While quality was not “top drawer” this season, we are pleased that our partners in Shanghai have been left with a good taste in their mouths in preparation for the approaching large crop.

2019/20 is an exciting time for Just Avocados – we are looking at a large crop, and a business model that we feel is going to seriously impact how growers determine value through their packer/ exporter partners. Allowing growers to pick a large portion of fruit early to ensure minimal quality issues,



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### SUPPLY UPDATE - WEEK 7 MARKET REPORT

Last time I reported activity to you, the industry was in a mess from our perspective. Fortunately, as I pen this note, the issue has somewhat abated and normality has almost returned to the domestic market.

As you would imagine, there has been a lot of commentary and discussion over the last three weeks. Not everybody has been happy with the concerns raised in our market updates. However, the net result was a poorly managed over-supply creating false pricing which has now led to a market shortage and rapidly increasing values. Maybe I am one

of the few who sees the stupidity in that from an industry viewpoint.

As we look forward to next week and beyond, it is clear product supply is already short. Values have lifted significantly and already discussions are underway about how long supply can last. It is clear pricing will lift further; the key now is to manage inward supply so the lifting values are not impacted by excess volumes – in other words supply above and beyond requirement. Supply needs control especially given late season fruit drop and high maturities.

My view is that we will be looking at \$30.00+ per tray equivalent

higher pack outs, and lower waste are our focus moving forward. Linking this with a business that owns and fully controls their supply chain really provides our growers with a point of difference.

Sales receipts across all markets are still being finalised and all the growers will be updated on final returns at coolstore door and OGR levels when this process is completed. ●

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coolstore door minimums next week – potentially higher but that will be confirmed on Thursday once we have reviewed stock volumes and forward pricing which we will complete mid this week. ●

## ON THE ORCHARD

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

#### FAR AND MID NORTH

**The last of the export fruit came off in the second week of January. On the whole, the fruit from the Far North packed out well for export - even into the latter stages of the season.**

Good tree health contributes to this, and even though the north had wind, it did not have the more devastating and shorter duration wind events that the Bay of Plenty suffered through the growing season.

#### PRUNING FOLLOW UP

I have been thinking of cost-effective and time-efficient methods of painting the exposed limbs after a heavy prune for some time now. We experimented on our Far North orchard with a label rate of Surround, a sunscreen product applied through the airblast sprayer. After a bit of trial and error we found that applying it early in the morning with no wind, and the fan on the sprayer turned off, managed to achieve a very good result. It is important to protect newly exposed bark from the sun to avoid damage that can affect production.

*A well-covered tree with Surround.*



There is a new space-age looking orchard sprayer in the Bay of Plenty that a contractor recently purchased. With a 3500L tank and dual volute fan, it has the horsepower to spray both sides of a row of trees up to 10m in height. It is an impressive machine, and is probably outside the reach of most orchardists.



*The latest in orchard sprayers.*

A lot of growers are bringing in chip or mulch to their orchards, particularly to help with trees that are struggling for good health. The chip provides a nice aerated medium for the roots to grow into, out of what could be a wet soil environment. Mulch also contributes to the organic levels in the soil and increases microbial activity.



*A good pile of quality chip.*

#### MID-NORTH FRUIT STAINING

NZ Avocado has engaged a scientist from Lincoln University to look into the cause of fruit staining that plagues some properties in the Mid-North. The last two seasons have seen losses of up to 25% due to the mystery stain. There are a number of theories around, but none of them are proven. It starts showing up in January and seems to keep developing through the summer months. I was with a group

on one Managawhai orchard and we found a few fruitlets showing up the stain. Normally at this time of year there is a lot more.

*Early stages of fruit staining.*



*Fully developed stain on mature fruit.*



One difference this year is that to date, the region has been a lot drier than other years, which may be contributing to the lower incidence. It is encouraging to see NZ Avocado doing something positive to assist growers in this region. ●



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## ORCHARD MANAGEMENT WITH ERICA

### FRUIT SET CONUNDRUM

It can be extremely frustrating for a grower who feels they are doing everything possible to ensure good tree health and optimum production, to then experience poor fruit set. We know that there are various factors that affect fertilisation and fruit set, namely:

- erratic dips in temperature
- carbohydrate reserves and the starch content of floral tissue
- fertiliser management and the nutrient status of the tree
- inducing strong vegetative growth during the period critical to fruitlet retention
- competition between the fruitlets and vegetative & root growth for resource reserves and photosynthates
- poor pollen germination or poor pollen tube growth
- failure in seed development due to genetic abnormalities in the developing embryo or embryo abortion
- low soil moisture content and water deficit stress during flowering and fruit set will cause excessive flower and fruitlet drop
- concentrations and ratios of different hormones
- hanging fruit late
- canopy management
- pollinators and pollinisers

The list goes on and on - some of these we can control and others



A well-balanced tree with good fruit set.

we can't. So, if we are ticking all the boxes we can control, why do we get poor fruit set, caking or excessive fruitlet drop? And why does this manifest in some trees within the same orchard and not others, or in neighbouring blocks or orchards?

On the whole, fruit set is looking really good this season, with good volumes and fruitlets sizing nicely. Currently some fruitlet drop is being experienced which is normal for this time of year and expectedly more so on really heavy-set trees or trees experiencing moisture stress in this hot, dry weather in orchards without irrigation.

However, there are a few growers that I am aware of that have experienced the frustration of poor fruit set or caking.



A cuke is formed when pollination and fertilisation have occurred but the embryo either does not form or aborts before the completion of seed formation. These fruitlets with abortive seeds are no longer nourished by the seed but by small amounts of phytohormones and resources found in the mesocarp and continue to develop into seedless avocados.

These orchards, which are all in close proximity, are all on completely different fertiliser programmes, harvested at different times and have had their bees brought in at different times as well. Temperature is to blame you may surmise, yet there are some trees within the same block or in neighbouring blocks that have set fruit and experienced the same abiotic influence. What makes this even more interesting (or you may think



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more frustrating), is that on one particular orchard two blocks that are in the cooler, lower areas and were frosted last season are the only blocks to set perfectly normally this season. The rest of the orchard had minimal to no fruit set on the trees. Why did the two blocks that were previously frosted and located in the lower areas set fruit and not the neighbouring blocks slightly higher up?

The differences were 1) the crop load on these two blocks was minimal due to the previous season's frost and 2) their first stages of open-flower was most likely later than the other blocks that haven't set successfully. Flowering is usually seen to start earlier in the warmer areas of orchards. We know that the earlier stages of flowering set better than the later stages and that ovule viability can decline from around 70% in early flowering to near 10% at the later stages and that these are the ones most likely to drop. If these two blocks were in the earlier flowering stage at the same time, most of the other blocks were towards the end of their flowering; could we deduce that there was an abiotic influence that was more favourable for fruit set at this particular time? Could the other blocks have experienced dips in temperature, delaying the female opening stage into the late afternoon or evening when pollinators were not active?

No research globally is yet to definitively provide the answers to

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this conundrum. I think researchers can agree that there is not one determining factor but a myriad of factors that interact and can contribute to this phenomenon. The avocado industry is still in its infancy and the more we learn, the more we realise how little we actually know about this crop and how much there still is to learn. But as growers, what can we do until we have those answers? We can observe and take note and hopefully provide some insight and answers for when incidences like this occur or to provide answers for the future.

### OBSERVE AND TAKE NOTES

Many growers see flowers on their trees but don't actually observe them more closely and are often not aware at what percentage open flower stage they are in. Is an "on" tree at a different flowering stage than a neighbouring "off" tree? What are the minimum and maximum

temperatures at the different stages? At what time of day are the male and female phases functioning? How active are the pollinators and are they coinciding with the female phase? What is the crop load? Is the crop still on or has it already been harvested? What type of weather is occurring over pollination and fruit set?

Below are some examples of observations to keep in your "pollination and fruit set diary" that can provide some insight and clarity for your particular orchard and its conditions.

#### 10 Sep 2018

It has been cold the last two days with overnight temps at 5°C last night and 7°C the night before and today a maximum of 14°C, 2mm of rain and SW gusts up to 25km/hr. Observed the first

open flowers in D-Block on the eastern side of the trees. By 5.30pm the female functioning stage had closed and the male stage was opening. No bees around but observed a hover fly. On all other blocks the Hass flowers are closed but the Fuerte is already about 30% open.

#### 10 Oct 2018

The nights have been cold with temps down to 8°C and forecasts to continue for the next four nights. Phasing seems to have been reversed with male pollen shedding phase morning to early afternoon. Lots of bees observed and 3 blowflies - all collecting nectar. Blocks A-F at about 40% open flower but Blocks G-H only at 10%. Blocks E and F have been strip picked and a 25% quadrant prune has commenced in these blocks. ●

## COMPLIANCE IS ALIVE AND WELL

**Thank you to everyone who completed the pass through Food Act registration via NZGAP and to those growers who were happy for JAL to complete on their behalf.**

NZGAP/HortNZ were to start trialling the Food Act registration, verification and reporting process with one grower group in the New Year. By the end of January they were expecting to have a clearer idea on what each step looks like for grower groups. As yet I have not received any information on that process.

By the time the next round of NZGAP inspections start we will have a new checklist with the added questions built in; my understanding is that the following five points will be covered: Records, People, Places, Products, Processes.

Reading the details about each point, I can see there may be more records to be produced in the future. But this will be easy to cover once the requirements have been added to the checklist. Thank you to the growers who have agreed to an external audit from AsureQuality – a necessary part of the NZGAP process

made so much easier by your assenting to be inspected again.

### AVOGREEN

Looking at the latest monitoring reports, I see that thrip and leafroller are increasing on some orchards. Having seen so much thrip damage during the packing season it would



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be good to get on top of those little critters before they get too much of a hold.

All we need now is some rain! ●

## SETTING GOALS FOR THE SEASON AHEAD

It's two months since I started as a Grower Services Representative for Just Avocados Ltd. It's been a delight to work with our dedicated team and to meet very passionate growers while walking through their orchards, learning about the history of their trees and the goals for each orchard, which vary greatly with each grower.

Already I can see the importance of knowing what each grower's expectations are around harvesting with the potential of higher fruit volumes this season. I will make it my priority to ensure we understand and know what your orchard goals are for this coming season so our operations team can be prepared with the best flow plan for harvesting, packing and exporting your fruit in a timeframe that works for you, your orchard and the markets. Have a good think about your orchard goals, crop estimation and harvest timing. I will be visiting over the next couple of months to discuss season planning.

By the end of February I should be AvoGreen accredited, meaning I can monitor orchards on the spot when visiting. Looking through the microscope lens is like peeking into a whole other world. I think it's important to observe not only pests but the



Adult steelblue ladybird.



Mature larva of steelblue ladybird.

beneficial species like ladybird larvae and lacewing larvae that predate and parasitise pests.

Monitoring pests is more important than ever with requirements for exporting but also for local market compliance. NZGAP is now compulsory with liability falling on local market produce marketers. I have been working very closely with the compliance team updating records for AvoGreen monitoring,



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with the Food Act being incorporated into NZGAP and also compliance for exporting to markets like China and Thailand.

We are continuing the small discussion groups this year where we'll have informal discussions to share ideas, experiences, and provide support in a relaxed environment on orchards. Please register your interest with me by phone or email. We'd love to have you along.

I look forward to working with growers this coming season. If I haven't met you yet, you will be on my list to see. Please feel free to contact me if you haven't heard from me already. ●



Bay of Plenty field day.

## FEBRUARY FIELD DAYS

Thank you to everyone who attended our recent field days in the Bay of Plenty and Whangarei. There was a great turnout at both events and lots of knowledge shared.

A special thanks to Sid and Tessa Turnbull and Slim and Sandra Rotherham for hosting us at their orchards! ●



Whangarei field day.

