



B-QUAL Australia Pty Limited

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NEWSLETTER

B-QUAL UP AND WORKING FOR YOU

The following newsletter has been put together to further assist industry participants in developing their individual B-Qual programme. A number of exciting developments have occurred since the last newsletter and these will be detailed to participants in the near future. In this edition, we examine some of these developments and welcome your feedback with individual questions you may have regarding the overall programme.

1. Approved Chemicals

A number of queries from beekeepers have been received on approved chemicals for use in extracting facilities. AQIS has advised that a listing is available at www.aqis.gov.au/chemlist. This list was drawn up to assist the meat industry, however, meat cleaning etc is much more difficult than honey so, if it is suitable for meat and deemed safe there should not be any problem for honey.

2. B-Qual Review

Following a comprehensive review of B-Qual, new administrative arrangements will be phased in over the next few months. This has culminated in the appointment of Aus-Qual to administer the day-to-day operations of the programme. One of the areas identified in the B-Qual review was the importance of privacy to industry participants and Aus-Qual has in place a stringent privacy policy. They also have enormous experience in the administration of similar programmes in the meat and horticulture industries.

If you have any queries concerning the B-Qual programme please do not hesitate to contact this office.

Australian Honey Bee Industry appoints service provider to its B-QUAL program

The Board of B-QUAL is pleased to announce that after a considerable screening process AUS-QUAL Pty Ltd has been appointed to manage the B-QUAL program.

AUS-QUAL brings to the program considerable and invaluable experience in the development, implementation and maintenance of industry programs similar to ours.

Additionally and of equal importance the engagement of AUS-QUAL as a third party services provider will deliver to the program a level of independence that can only be achieved through an organisation which specialises in the delivery of such programs. This level of independence will encourage input and involvement in the program from all sectors of the Honey Bee industry.

Operationally, AUS-QUAL will report to the B-QUAL Board with respect to Standards and Policy and will take on the responsibility for the implementation of the program.

Who is AUS-QUAL?

AUS-QUAL™ Pty Ltd is the wholly owned subsidiary of AUS-MEAT Limited. AUS-QUAL was formed to provide commercial services utilising AUS-MEAT's extensive skill base, outside of the traditional Meat and Livestock Industry. AUS-QUAL™ is the national service provider for a number of Agriculture and Horticulture sectors.

AUS-QUAL™ Pty Ltd provides a range of certification services and is accredited by the Joint Accreditation System – Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ) to certify quality management systems against the ISO 9001-2000 series international standard. In addition AUS-QUAL™ provides certification of HACCP based Food Safety Programs for the food production, processing and food service sectors. Additionally, through AUS-MEAT the company is a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

AUS-QUAL currently manages programs for a number of industry organisations, including the following:

- The National Feedlot Accreditation Scheme,
- CATTLECARE Ltd,
- FLOCKCARE Pty Ltd,
- The National Saleyard Quality Assurance (NSQA) scheme,
- Freshcare Auditing,
- Animal Health Australia through the Ovine and Bovine Johne's Disease Market Assurance Programs, SheepMAP and CattleMAP,
- EU compliance audits for AQIS and the Australian beef industry, and
- The Australian Renderers' Association.

For further information please contact Mr Bevan Blacklock or Andrew Little at AUS-QUAL on 1800 630 890.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

B-Qual has entered a new era as we enter into a partnership with Aus-Qual. For many weeks negotiations have taken place to have Aus-Qual help administer the B-Qual program and this should help free up the AHBIC office to deal with many industry issues.

Aus-Qual is no stranger to quality programs as they already run other agriculture programs such as Freshcare, Aus-meats and Cattle care. With their knowledge of such systems we hope that they can give B-Qual a much needed boost.

The partnership with Aus-Qual will help solve many of the concerns that were found in the B-Qual review while also keeping in line with the B-Qual business plan.

I take this opportunity to congratulate Wescobee for the introduction of a 5 cents per kg bonus for those suppliers that are B-Qual accredited, this being the start of what will come for all beekeepers that have taken on board this quality program.

Some states are still struggling with workshops so just a reminder. Please ring or send in registration forms to the office to make sure that your name is on the list, as we need numbers before we can hold workshops.

There are still many questions on council regulation and B-Qual. B-Qual is a food safety program, quality and biosecurity program designed for our industry needs. You still need to be aware of all building and legal requirements in your shire's boundaries. B-Qual does not have the power to override any regulations that exist such as building permits, sewer and drainage requirements etc.

Ken Gell

New Director Appointed to the Board of B-Qual Australia Pty Limited

Mrs Dawn Smith of Honey Down Under Pty Limited has been appointed as a director of the board of B-Qual. Congratulations to Mrs Smith on her appointment and we look forward to working together to enhance the continued success of the B-Qual programme.

I am looking forward to my new role as a director of B-QUAL. I have been involved with B-Qual's quality assurance program for the past two years – firstly to implement a Food Safety Plan for Honey DownUnder and secondly as a B-Qual Auditor/Facilitator, quality accrediting apiarists under the Approved Supplier Program.

As a B-Qual Director, I will work towards increasing beekeeper support of B-Qual whilst ensuring that B-Qual provides the necessary information and support to

beekeepers to enable them to progress through the program in a straightforward and cost effective manner to achieve accreditation.

I am available to discuss any queries or concerns that you may have. I can be contacted on the following phone numbers.

Home & Office (07) 3376 1726/20

Warehouse (07) 3271 2830

Dawn Smith

B-Qual and Business Management (Further Facilitation) Workshops in Queensland

The courses below have received approval and subsidy from FarmBis Queensland.

Courses	Venue	Date	Cost
B-Qual Food Safety	Mudgeeraba, Gold Coast	Saturday 27 March	\$ 88.00 (primary producers Qld) \$ 220 (non Primary Producer or NSW beekeeper)
Business Management- Further Facilitation	venues to be advised (North of Brisbane)	25 and 26 March	\$ 68.00 (primary producers Qld) \$ 170 (non Primary Producer or NSW beekeeper)
Business Management- Further Facilitation	Stanthorpe Gold Coast	Thursday 6 May Saturday 22 May	\$ 68.00 (primary producers Qld) \$ 170 (non Primary Producer or NSW beekeeper)

Additional persons per business \$ 20.00 each

Bookings to be made to : Qld Coordinator, Paula Dewar, 2157 Lake Moogerah Road, Kalbar Qld 4309

Phone 07 5463 5633 Fax 07 5463 5619 or email: dewar@hypermax.net.au

On receipt of your booking, venue times etc will be advised.

Training Workshops

It is pleasing to see better interest in NSW for B-Qual training with courses being held at Lismore, Kempsey, Glen Innes and Orange towards the end of 2003. Rosie Stern and Bruce White are developing a PowerPoint presentation for future training courses that will include beekeeping photos to make the training clearer. Where possible part of the training includes a visit to an extracting plant and apiary where the B-Qual forms can be filled out. A special thanks goes to the beekeepers who provided the plants at Kempsey, Lismore and Glen Innes and bees at the last two mentioned locations.

All beekeepers who have attended the B-Qual workshops for the development of a HACCP based Food Safety Program should now be filling in record sheets in their record folders in preparation for the B-Qual Auditor. If you require support for the implementation of your Food Safety Program, a B-Qual facilitator will be available at the NSW Beekeepers Conference in Ballina in May to help each individual business.

If you are interested in support for your Food Safety Program complete the details below and return by email, fax or mail.

✂.....

I am interested in making an appointment to review my progress with my B-Qual Food Safety Program at the NSW Beekeepers Conference in May 2004 at Ballina.

Name:.....

Address:.....

Time (1 hour allocated per business)

Tick the required time

8.00 am	<input type="checkbox"/>	01.00 pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
9.00 am	<input type="checkbox"/>	02.00 pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.00 am	<input type="checkbox"/>	03.00 pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.00 am	<input type="checkbox"/>	04.00 pm	<input type="checkbox"/>
12.00 noon	<input type="checkbox"/>	05.00 pm	<input type="checkbox"/>

Stephen Ware

B-Qual Australia Pty Limited

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FORMS MUST BE RECEIVED BY THE B-QUAL OFFICE NO LATER THAN 30TH APRIL – PLACES ARE LIMITED – FIRST IN, FIRST SERVED

Honey Extracting Facilities

Honey extracting facilities are comprised of the honey extracting room, full super storage and empty super storage and includes other areas where honey is exposed to the possibility of contamination.

The key areas for beekeepers to consider are:

1. Building construction. –
 - Concrete floors should be sloped to allow water to drain away easily. Where a flat surface is already in existence the surface needs to be smooth and not crumbling. Coating systems are available for concrete. Industrial vinyl or food grade ceramic tiles are also suitable. Cleaning with a mop etc is fine.
 - Where the floor meets the wall it is recommended that a cove be formed. A cove is a rounded surface ideally 75mm radius, many beekeepers have found 50mm more practical. The cove may be formed concrete, extruded aluminium (Painted to prevent corrosion by chlorinated water) or vinyl folded up the wall over a plastic insert to form the cove under the vinyl.
 - NOTE: Floor surfaces should be relatively smooth. A smooth shiny floor is a recipe for falls, use matt finishes and slightly “grippy” surfaces. In high risk areas it may pay to even sprinkle a little grit onto the flooring system when it is applied.
2. Walls and Ceilings –
 - Wall surfaces should be smooth and easily cleaned. Refrigeration panelling is popular and provided all joints (including the strips where the coving meets the wall surface) are sealed they form an excellent vermin proof wall. An added advantage is that panel being insulated is suitable for cool rooms for wax moth control and at low temperature for warming rooms. Also in common use is Villaboard and in some cases Colorbond sheeting.
 - Doors should have appropriate sealing devices to control vermin access.
 - Ceilings should also be smooth and easily cleaned. Avoid ceilings being over 3 metres high as they are difficult to reach.
 - Supply of electricity, hot water, cold water and steam is recommended through the ceiling. Ensure all such intrusions are sealed where they come through the ceiling.
3. Windows –
 - Mounting windows flush with the inside of the walls is recommended. If a sill exists slope it down at a 45degree angle to prevent it becoming a storage space. For a small sill perhaps a piece of coping could be fitted.
 - Sash windows that lift up are preferred over sliding windows. The track will need to be regularly cleaned to remove bees etc from the track area. Windows for food facilities do exist that do not have the “trough” allowing debris to fall to the outside of the building. Beekeepers have also found that with rooms being so well sealed they do not dry out very well and as a result develop mould problems. The solution can be either a ceiling ventilation system or an internal screened window that can be left open and allows the room to dry out. Once dry, the window is shut.
 - Windows must be screened to prevent entry of vermin.

4. Ventilation –

- Air replacement or movement attracts a lot of attention in the food industry. The use of air conditioners, powerful fans is common with beekeeping operations. In many cases because the rooms open into a sealed building, doors are left open and fans create very good air movement. Air conditioners and evaporative coolers (For dry climates) also assist in controlling dust and drying the rooms.

5. Power and Lighting –

- Ensure a qualified electrician installs all electrical installations.
- Never lose site of OH&S requirements.
- Covered/shielded lights are part of every States food law. It is a major non-conformance if lights are not covered.
- For wash down areas, ensure waterproof fittings are used. Ceiling lights should be IP65 standard. Also recommended are sealed mercury vapour lights.
- Power can be installed through either the floor or ceiling. Opting for the floor creates clutter and difficult areas to clean. Think about the ceiling access points, they are much cleaner.
- Lights should be positioned near to the uncapper and extractor to provide a good viewing environment for operators.
- Do not install lights directly above operators, they attract bees which when stunned by the light, drop onto operators, stinging them.

6. Hygiene –

- Dedicated hand wash facilities located just inside the main access door or just outside the door is highly recommended. B-Qual Auditors will look for clean hand wash only basins.
- The area should be equipped with liquid pump action germicidal soap and paper hand towel dispensers.
- A waste paper bin (Without a lid!) should be located next to the basin and is emptied each day when the plant is in use.
- DO NOT wash paint brushes or mops etc in the hand wash basin!
- A separate sink for washing mops, buckets etc should be located in the facility.
- Toilets, eating areas, storage of chemicals such as cleaning and sanitising agents, paints, thinners, medications etc should be stored away from the extracting facility.
- Cleaning instructions for staff should be clearly displayed and a record of each days cleaning signed off. The sign off sheet should be separate to the main instruction sheet.
- The entire facility should be litter free to discourage the attraction of vermin.

Conclusion –

Honey must be treated as a food and as a result our extracting facilities should reflect the standards generally accepted by the community at large. A clean operation is easily recognised just as the reverse applies to a poorly cleaned and maintained facility. The industry through B-Qual has the opportunity to create for itself a wonderful image that promotes the Australian Honey industry world wide.

(Next Newsletter – Mobile Extracting Plants.)

Bill Winner

Report from Wescobee Limited

It is now well over a year since the first training courses for B-Qual were held and generally the industry has been slow to take it up. Nevertheless strict demands being put to packers by our clients and supermarkets means more and more we need to have Quality Assured product. There is no doubt that there are beekeepers that are ready for final audits while others are still formulating their QA plans or are only using part of the system.

Late last year Wescobee committed to support this Australian industry initiative. As such we believe that the way forward is to provide an incentive to beekeepers to become Quality Assured. To this end Wescobee announced it will pay an additional 5 cents per kilo over and above any listed price/grade to beekeepers who are B-Qual Certified. This incentive makes it an industry first and puts other Australian packers on notice to provide the same tangible incentive to their beekeeper suppliers. We believe this incentive will provide an on going benefit over and above any packer whom is just providing an audit at no charge (or claiming back part of a subsidy that the beekeeper may get).

To illustrate in practical terms what this means, let's assume that in your operation you have 450 hives. On average professional beekeepers (in W.A.) can yield over 200 kilos per hive so at the very least 150 kilos per hive or thereabouts would not be unreasonable in a normal production year. Let's say again that 50 of those hives were unproductive, so the beekeeper therefore could produce 60,000 kilos of honey (206 drums) in a normal year. That would return an additional \$3,000 per year to you the producer. If the cost of a B-Qual audit and compliance was even as high as \$1,500 (it may not cost you this much) there would still be a net gain of an additional \$1,500. Now I don't know about you but if I saw a free gift of that amount being offered for very little extra effort, I would certainly get my operation into B-Qual fairly quickly.

For Australia to stay ahead we need proactive beekeepers rather than reactive. The time is running short for Australia to claim we have the best honey etc as many nations are now developing their own QA systems and this will be further addressed at the coming world conference on residues found in honey. May I suggest you all support B-Qual and take some affirmative action today by getting your self QA certified.

Ed Planken – CEO Wescobee Limited

Items in the Next Edition include:

- ❖ Mobile extracting plants
- ❖ New training programmes
- ❖ Food safety laws state by state
- ❖ Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) update
- ❖ Industry's queries answered