



B-QUAL Australia Pty Ltd

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This edition of the June 2021 B-QUAL Newsletter presents a precis of the B-QUAL annual report and update given to all State Associations at their annual conferences.

It is printed for the interest of those members who were unable to attend their respective conferences.

B-QUAL Annual Report to State Conferences 2021

Highlights:

- Membership enquiries remained high with 55 new enquires
- Some of these are progressing toward 1st Audit
- Becoming financially stable
- Maintained high audit numbers'
- No loss of membership
- Received Commonwealth Government grant to establish The Australian Honey Library and Traceability program
- Received Agrifutures grant to produce 6 training videos
- Worked with the CRCHBP and UWA to develop web app for digitisation of B-QUAL
- Invited to join National traceability and QA programs
- B-QUAL industry image greatly enhanced.

Although a difficult year for many, we have had 55 new program and membership enquiries with some of those already progressing towards first audit stage.

We have worked towards making the company financially secure.

Our auditors have completed a large number of audits consistent with past numbers by way of both onsite and desk audits so our audit integrity and coverage has remained in place.

I am also very happy to report given the challenges of the last year of, fires, drought, floods and Covid we have not lost one program member, so I think that shows the importance of B-QUAL that our members place on the program for their businesses.

We were successful in obtaining a \$ 209,000.00 grant From the Australian Government to establish the Australian Honey Library and we are currently working with CRCHBP and University of WA on this program.

We were also successful in obtaining a small grant from Agrifutures which enabled us to produce 6 videos ranging from an Introduction to B-QUAL, Levels of B-QUAL, Financial Management, How B-QUAL has helped my business to a video on the National Biosecurity code of Practice and lastly a fantastic presentation from Dr Rob Gordon on Mental Health, all these videos can be seen on our website.

www.bqual.com.au

We have partnered with University of WA and CRCHBP to develop the B-QUAL digitisation web app and this is now in field trial by some 20 odd B-QUAL members in every state of Australia and hopefully on successful feedback all members will have free access by next season. Again this app holds great potential to assist members in their on-site record keeping and should greatly reduce their audit times thus offering some cost savings on their audit costs.

B-QUAL has seen its industry image greatly enhanced and we have been invited to join a number of food industry advisory groups and participate in traceability and assurance programs.

We currently have a seat on the NTAG National Traceability Advisory Group,

GS1 Global traceability steering committee

and other Traceability and Research organisations and programs.

WHY IS B-QUAL BECOMING SO INVOLVED IN FOOD TRACEABILITY?

Some beekeepers might say Q A and food safety only applies to the big suppliers, big players companies like Woolworths, Coles, Hive & Wellness, Beechworth etc, but not to me. Well let me say more than ever traceability and food provenance is becoming important to every producer big and small and that includes even a low risk food like honey.

You may sell direct at farmers markets, small retail outlets, or supply to a major packer but consumers and governments are placing more emphasis than ever, on their quality of purchase and this will only become more relevant in the future. Even now organisations that run farmers markets in some states are beginning to seek Quality Assurances from stall holders, large organisations are asking for proof of supply so into the future you are going to have to supply documentation of proof of supply and conformance.

Honey fraud is a growing problem throughout the world and B-QUAL is trying to protect our members by being involved in these traceability programs to be able to be on the front foot and advise members and public of the latest information.

In fact at the Australasian Honey Bee 2021 Research Conference is to be held in Perth, in June, we have a 2 day B-QUAL workshop prior to the conference at which honey fraud and Anti-counterfeiting your product, and Packaging for hive to table delivery will be featured. Hosted by Dr Caroline Francis (RMIT), who has made this subject the centre of her research. This event is free of charge including all refreshments to B-QUAL members.

THE AUSTRALIAN HONEY LIBRARY

- Working in partnership with University of Western Australia and CRCHBP.
- Program duration August 2020 to June 2022

As mentioned earlier during the year we received a Federal Government grant of \$ 209,000 to deliver an auditable and digitised traceability system.

The overall aim is to strengthen consumer trust and boost Australia's safe and premium food profile by developing methods to ensure the integrity of supply chains that deliver our premium honey products to domestic and international markets.

The honey library program in collaboration with the CRCHBP, and University of WA. is managed by B-QUAL as lead manager and ultimate owner of all data; therefore guaranteeing the integrity for Australian beekeepers and their involvement in this major project. Although some countries have partial honey library's in place or are working towards establishing one, from our research no country will have a library which will be as detailed as ours and certainly not to the extent of the chemistry and honey palaeontology, and DNA mapping coupled to the hive to jar traceability so the claim that this is world's first and best is absolutely justifiable. Our flora database already extends to nearly 1000 plants important to our industry.

Australian Honey Library

- Improve the palynology (pollen identification) associating a honey to a biogeographical region.
- Build an extensive science backed Australian honey library to verify authenticity and counter adulteration claims.
- Provide provenance of honey products by traceability and testing and batch numbering.

The database we are constructing will not only be the largest and most complete library of Australian honey, and give beekeepers the ability to offer their customers traceability and provenance assurance of their products, but will assist the industry when information is required to support or protect an area with flora information which would be able to be supplied outlining its importance to the honey bee industry.

It will improve the palynology (pollen identification) which associates a honey to a biogeographical region.

Honey, as some claim is the world's third most adulterated food after olive oil and milk so developing the library will be an important vehicle for verifying Australian honey around authenticity and adulteration claims.

It will also complete the provenance of your honey and give satisfaction to your clients that your product meets all standards and best practice and can be verified by the batch numbering system.

Australian Honey library

- Conduct testing via HPTLC to meet CODEX standards.
- Successful testing will result in an Australian Batch Number or similar identification tag.

All honey will be tested by selected authorised laboratories utilising the HPTLC (High Performance Thin Layer Chromatography) method and meet the CODEX honey standard by using seven individual tests.

Moisture content, Fructose, Glucose, Maltose and Sucrose, Water insoluble solids
Electrical conductivity, Diastase activity and Hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) content pH

After successful testing the supplier will be given an Australian Batch Number or similar identification symbol proving the authenticity of that honey.

Quick analytical tests are also being developed to look for correlations with the more intensive methods, such as High Performance Thin Layer Chromatography and different spectroscopy systems. Hopefully, these low cost-effective tests will open the opportunity to beekeepers and or packers to increase their testing and improve quality control before batching and packing.

Sample collecting has begun but has been limited to B-QUAL members throughout Australia to enable us to confirm that all procedures and privacy issues have been successfully implemented and working properly before approaching the wider industry. We have also developed a collection app which takes the collector through the steps required to ensure the chain of collection supply integrity.

All is now confirmed and working as planned so we will be approaching the wider industry in coming weeks and will also ask State Associations to help us promote sample collections.

HELP US TO COLLECT SAMPLES



As mentioned a lot of effort has gone into specifying the amount of data we required to complete the testing regimes, data analytics, and biogeographical information and the proper and secure handling of sensitive data the library will produce.

We are confident now that all these security and privacy issues are in place, so the work of collection has commenced.

As I mentioned initially we asked B-QUAL members only to do the first collections so we could ensure all privacy and other systems were in place.

We now are approaching all Australian beekeepers to collect and in next week or so I will be writing to all State Associations asking if they will put a link on their web sites to our collection guide, and you will also be able to download from www.bqual.com.au

All we want is 2 x 400ml jars of your honey.

We have an easy to use collection app, it is not frightening but there are 4 pages to the app which asks for all required information.

How to register

Easiest way is to go to our website www.bqual.com.au or email B-QUAL at bqual@ausqual.com.au.

Or look for a link on your State Association website if provided.

Once we get your application we will forward a parcel containing jars and collection data.

And it is important to remember that strict privacy protocols are in place to protect your privacy, and sample collection in no way is a judge of your honey or beekeeping practices.

We Supply

- Shortly after your acceptance to collect you will receive 2 x 400ml jars.
- A return pre paid and addressed Australian Post bag (*so no postage expense to you*)
- Hard copy instructions
- If you wish to contribute more than 2 varieties we are happy to supply extra so specify how many jars you need.

What will happen to your samples?

- Analysis will include 7 CODEX tests
- The signature for the flora in each region will be determined.
- Palynology or pollen count will be undertaken on a sub set of samples.
- A portion of your sample will be long termed stored by B-QUAL
- When tested your results will be emailed to you.

I should also at this point publicly thank Dr Liz Barbour (CRCHBP) and Professor Sharon Purchase (Uni WA) and their research teams for the tremendous effort they have put into the program and the work on developing protocols and testing regimes to ensure our program integrity. A lot of work does go on behind the scenes and is not immediately visible to the general public but I assure you we have some great researchers working on this program.



Analysis will include the 7 CODEX tests:

- Moisture content
- Fructose, Glucose, Maltose and Sucrose
- Water insoluble solids
- Electrical conductivity
- Diastase activity
- Hydroxymethylfurfural (HMF) content
- pH

The honey will be split into sugar and non-sugar and both run on using High Performance Thin Layer Chromatography. With enough samples, the signature for the flora in each region will be determined.

Palynology or pollen count will be undertaken on a sub-set of the samples.

The remainder of the honey will be long-term stored by B-QUAL as a Library for reference for new analytical technique development.

When complete, your results will be emailed back to you.



In addition to the library B-QUAL will also deliver an auditable and digitised traceability system, this program is currently being field tested and will form part of the digitisation of the B-QUAL program which we have already commenced earlier this year, in collaboration with the CRCHBP (Collaborative Research Centre Honey Bee Products).and Uni of WA. This will give our members a quicker, more efficient and site friendly way of importing their audit data.

Digitisation app



The web app will assist members to adhere to best practice policies and to maintain extensive records regarding their operations. These records are maintained for traceability and recall purposes in the event of a food-health safety or biosecurity incident and will show proof of National Biosecurity Code of Practice conformance.

The application is designed to improve the traceability of honeybee products through the value chain, to improve the efficiency of the auditing process and hopefully will reduce audit times and therefore audit costs to our members.

It will enable you to upload existing record documents, photos and PDFs from your existing record files and test results and etc.

WHAT WILL IT DO?



It covers all aspects of your operation including.

Your profile (that is trading name, BQ number, address contact details etc.)

Site and facility locations

Site inspections

Biosecurity incidences

Harvesting

Purchases

Audits

All the relevant information required under our program.

It is currently undergoing field testing by a number of B-QUAL members in every state and to date response and feedback has been excellent, and I must say that the feedback from our testers has been useful and many suggestions have been built in or are being included in the app.

We thank those testers who really have taken a lot of effort and applied themselves to the task at hand to ensure that the app will deliver constructively.

At the moment the app will only be available to B-QUAL members.

B-TRACE

- The Board has also made the decision to investigate the development of a lower level assurance program.
- This will benefit the smaller operator of 100 – 150 or so hives.
- We are engaging with a number of State and Industry parties to verify content.

It is now mandatory in most states that beekeepers maintain records of biosecurity related actions and observations. B-QUAL is investigating the introduction of B-TRACE a lower level app based program that will provide all data required to conform to the code and to complete an on line desk audit, in a drop box type simple app.

If you are a smaller producer and currently do not have an accredited program in place B-TRACE will be designed for you. Readily record and make available hive record information that satisfies the requirements of the National Biosecurity Code of Practice and basic traceability.

One low annual fee will give access to the B-TRACE app and includes the desk audit, which gives you and your customer's proof that your product has been produced to accredited QA and best practice.

As your business grows and you wish to move up to full B-QUAL membership your past audits and records will assist in this move.

As this project progresses we will provide further information to State Associations and web site.

WHY NOT JOIN US!!

- If you have not yet joined a certified audited QA program please consider joining and supporting your industry owned world's best program.
- It will cost you less than one coffee a day
- For more email: bqual@ausqual.com.au





B-QUAL video presentation Queensland Beekeepers Association conference Gold Coast June 3rd 2021



Wayne Fuller (Chairman) and Don Muir giving the B-QUAL report at the NSW Beekeepers conference Tamworth May 18th 2021

B-QUAL acknowledges and thanks our financial partners: ***Please support those who support us.***



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