B-QUAL
Australia Pty Ltd

Approved Supplier Program

ACCREDITATION STANDARDS

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"The Australian honey bee industry's' own quality assurance program."

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1 Chemical Standards

- An ordering system is established for recording the purchase of all antibiotics and/or other chemicals.
- Recommended antibiotic and/or other chemical treatment procedures, including the recording of dose rates, are used. Records of workers authorised to use chemicals are maintained.
- All bee colonies or materials treated with antibiotics and/or chemicals are identified and recorded on the vendor declaration to ensure that any withholding periods are observed. The number of colonies treated in an apiary are also recorded.

2 Biological Standards

- The likelihood of product contamination is minimised through the use of personal cleanliness and clean handling practices. Workers with health conditions do not handle product if there is a risk of impacting food safety.
- Location of apiaries away from genetically modified crops is recommended.
- Hive management includes a control program for diseases, pests and parasites.
- A vermin control program is established and all reasonable measures are taken to prevent animals and pests from entering hives, processing areas and transport vehicles.
- Buildings, equipment and vehicles are maintained in a clean condition.
- Procedures for handling hive materials in the apiary and during transport or processing minimise water, microbial, dust, soil and other foreign matter contamination of honey products.
- Low temperature storage or fumigation of honeycombs is used for pest control in stored equipment.
- Adequate clean cold water and hot water or steam are available for cleaning.
- Adequate toilets, hand wash facilities and one-use hand towels are provided.
- Adequate drainage is provided.
- Sewage, trash, and other refuse in and from the building and immediate premises are disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner.

3 Physical Standards

- Foreign objects are removed from hives and/or processing area.
- Broken boxes/frames are removed or reconditioned.
- Processing area lights are covered.

4 Quality Standards

- Product is identified according to floral source.
- Australia New Zealand Food Standards Code - Standard 2.8.2 - 3. Food that is sold as 'honey' must: (a) be honey, and (b) contain: (i) no less than 60% reducing sugars; and (ii) no more than 21% moisture.
- Honey producers and/ or packers importing honey from overseas shall conduct a risk assessment of approved suppliers to determine if adulteration testing is conducted.

5 Management Standards

5.1.1 General

- The manager has responsibility and authority to:
    i) approve or reject all components of process materials;
    ii) approve all procedures impacting on the identity, quality, and purity of product;
    iii) monitor the production processes and instigate corrective actions if required.
- A food safety program based on HACCP principles and compliance with the Food Standards Code has been implemented.
- All staff engaged in production, processing and packing have relevant training, knowledge and skills to perform tasks. Workers receive relevant instruction in food safety, bee husbandry, bee health and honey processing.

5.1.2 Records

- A vendor declaration (or delivery docket) is completed for packer processing.
- Hive material is clearly identified for traceability.
- Records of harvesting dates, location and honey source are maintained.
- All outgoing product is clearly identified and documented for traceability.
- A system is established to ensure that invalid or obsolete documents are promptly removed from use.
- A checklist or procedure (internal audit) to verify compliance with the industry quality assurance program is established.

5.1.3 Facilities

- The flow of components through the building or buildings is according to enterprise flowcharts, which aim to minimise contamination.
- Design, construction, maintenance and cleanliness of the processing area minimise the likelihood of product contamination.
- Suitable areas are available for receipt, processing, labelling, storage and dispatch of product.
- Design and construction comply with B-QUAL Standards.
- Appropriate ventilation and natural and/or artificial light are available in the processing area.
- Product is stored under cover where practicable for protection from the likelihood of contamination, adverse environmental conditions and overheating.

5.1.4 Equipment

- Plant equipment is of an appropriate design and is maintained in good working order. Equipment is cleaned and maintained at appropriate intervals. Cleaning records are kept.
- Food grade grease is used above the food line.
- Best industry practice for carrying supers of honey and extracted supers minimise the likelihood of product contamination during transport. Loads are covered during transport.
- Drums for reuse are checked for damage, deterioration and contaminants. Suspect drums/containers are not used.
- Food grade equipment is used for honey processing and storage.
- Drums, Pails/Buckets or IBC's – food grade containers.

5.1.5 Stock

- All stock is rotated so that the oldest stock is used first or according to honey varieties or packer demands.
- All rejected stock is identified and disposed of appropriately.
- Disposed of appropriately as per biosecurity standard. Note if burning then fire permit from relevant authority may be required.
- The distribution of product can be readily determined to facilitate its recall if necessary.
- Disposed of appropriately as per biosecurity standard. Note if burning then fire permit from relevant authority may be required.

5.1.6 Processing

- Representative samples of product are collected, identified and stored for the required time period for testing and examination if required.
- Product is graded, stored, blended, processed and stored to meet food safety and customer quality expectations.
- Product is processed according to optimal time/temperature conditions to produce quality product.
- All food products for retail sale have tamper evidence packaging.
- All storage containers have tamper evidence packaging (not just food products for retail sale as some may be selling to packers)

5.1.7 Labelling

- Documentation for all in-coming product is checked and product is assessed for appropriate labelling, damage and contamination.
- All outgoing product is clearly identified and documented for ownership traceability. They are labelled according to legislative requirements and appropriate records are maintained. Obsolete labels, labelling and other packaging materials are removed.

6 Biosecurity Standards

6.1 Integration of Biosecurity

- Compliance with the B-QUAL Program Standards, Records and work instructions form part of the industry Biosecurity Plan.

6.2 Introductions

- Where feasible, queens, package bees, or hives of bees and hives are only purchased from B-QUAL certified suppliers within Australia.
- Health status is assessed prior to purchase and again on arrival.
- Comply with AQIS entry and release requirements for imported queen bees.
- Any imported genetic material e.g. Semen, not just queen bees.

6.3 Declarations/Testing

- If disease status is not known, all second hand beekeeping hive equipment is sterilised (excluding equipment used in organic production) or a vendor declaration is obtained.
- Honey culture tests are used to identify the presence of AFB
- Yearly honey culture tests
- Culture or slide
- AFB testing mandatory

6.4 Feeding

- If the disease free status of bee food is not known, no non-irradiated bee derived products are used, except in the production of organic products.
- Feed is only purchased from quality assured suppliers operating a biosecurity program.
- The number of external bees foraging at feeding sites is minimised.
- The feeding of honey to birds is discouraged.

6.5 Vehicle and people movements

- Vehicle and people movements around apiary sites and extraction plants are minimised. Legal requirements for moving bees are complied with.
- Vehicles are cleaned thoroughly if contamination is suspected.
- The processing plant is secured when unattended.
- Clean for seed/weed transfer

6.6 Disease spread in and between apiaries

- Add inspections at least yearly as per biosecurity manual.
- Add spills to be cleaned up
- Culture or slide
- Personal hygiene – clean hands/gloves/hive tools/equipment/etc.

6.7 Ferals

- Precautions are taken against swarming and robbing bees, particularly if a disease hot spot is suspected.
- Isolate captured swarms for six months.

6.8 Apiary Sites

- Where possible, apiaries are not placed near honey packing or beeswax rendering plants.
- Placing apiaries near neglected apiaries or stored, used beekeeping material is avoided. The relevant Government agency is notified if neglected apiaries are located.
- Placing apiaries near rubbish tips or known areas for open feeding of birds is avoided.
- Hives are inspected and diseased hives treated or removed before placement on sites.

6.9 Disease spread in and between apiaries

- Where feasible, introductions are segregated and managed separately and placed under surveillance for at least six months or until satisfied of their status.
- Honey and bee materials are 'bee-proofed' during transport and adequate storage facilities are provided to prevent robbing by bees.
- Hives, particularly brood combs, are inspected on a regular basis.
- Honey spills, exposed bee combs and wax are covered to prevent robbing by bees.
- Honey and bee materials are secured against external contamination when unattended.
- Authorities are contacted if a notifiable disease or parasite is suspected or hives experience unusual sickness or death.
- Appropriate measures for disease control are taken and any treatment details are recorded.
- A broad-based barrier management system for disease control has been developed.
- The smoker and hive tool are cleaned before commencing work at each new apiary and after being used on a suspect diseased hive.
- Robbing of open hives is minimised when working.
- All second hand extracting equipment is cleaned.
- Honey containers are cleaned inside and out, dried and sealed.
- Robbing bees are controlled by bee-proofing buildings and keeping honey spillage's covered.
- Sewage, trash and other refuse in and from buildings and the immediate premises are disposed of in a safe and sanitary manner.
- Wastewater is disposed of through a digester or other appropriate method.
- Beekeepers abide by the Codes of Practice for Conserved Lands.

7 Standards for Specialised Activities

7.1 Pollination Standards

- The Biosecurity Code of Practice, Australian Food Standards, tB-QUAL Standards, best industry practices such as NSW DPI AgGuide *Pollination using honey bees* and other relevant authorities requirements are complied with.

- A written agreement for crop specific pollination services is recommended.
- The health, strength and conditions of bee colonies are adequate to effectively forage crops and effect pollination to recommended standard or above for the crop.
- Crops are monitored for adequate bee foraging and pollination activity.
- Honey supplies are monitored for adequacy and supplementary feeding is provided if required.
- Bee colonies are not aggressive.
- Beehives are located to maximise the potential for effective pollination.
- Toxic insecticides in the vicinity of hives and foraging areas are avoided.
- The B-QUAL Biosecurity Plan is closely adhered to.
- Recommendation for Pollination Services course.

7.2 Queen Bee Production Standards

- Breeding stock are sourced from stock instrumentally inseminated, stock mated in an isolated area or select tested queen mother stock.
- Age and nutrition of grafted larvae in cell raising colonies are assessed. Larvae are well-fed and not more than 24 hours old when grafted.
- Adequate numbers of nurse bees are present in cell raising colonies.
- Natural or supplementary pollen and nectar are abundant during the complete production period.
- Adequate numbers of mature genetically suitable drones are provided around mating apiaries.
- Queens are caught from mating nuclei at a suitable age.
- A knowledge of bee health allows recognition and treatment of bee diseases.
- Breeders have a demonstrated basic knowledge of the principles of inheritance of bee characteristics.
- Only irradiated honey is used as a honey source for queen candy.
- Only new cages and material are used for queen shipments.
- The B-QUAL Biosecurity Plan is closely adhered to.
- All export consignments are covered by AQIS health certification.
- Transport, storage, finance arrangements and the necessary documentation are in order prior to sales.
- Recommendation for Queen Bee Rearing course.

7.3 Pollen Standards

- The Australian Food Safety Standards, the B-QUAL Standards, the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Product (if applicable) and relevant authority requirements are complied with.
- Pollen collection is avoided from crops treated with pesticides and from genetically modified crops.
- Pollen for human consumption is collected every 2-3 days using sanitary methods.
- Pollen for feeding back to bees is collected every 5-7 days.
- Where possible, pollen containing a high crude protein content is collected.
- The moisture content of pollen for human consumption is reduced to between 2.5 and 6.0%.
- Where possible, pollen is frozen for 24 to 48 hours immediately following collection to eradicate insect pests. The pollen should be thoroughly cleaned to remove any foreign objects.
- After collection, pollen is stored correctly and processed as soon as possible to prevent deterioration. Foreign material is removed.

- Pollen is packaged in clean, airtight containers and is labelled according to legislative requirements. No fumigants are used.
- B-QUAL honey packer quality standards are complied with.
- It is recommended that pollen is gamma irradiated before being fed to bees.

7.4 Comb Honey Production Standards

- The Australian Food Safety Standards, the B-QUAL Standards, the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Product (if applicable), the B-QUAL Biosecurity Plan and relevant authority requirements are complied with.
- Only new foundation and comb is used.
- Frames/section materials are new or thoroughly cleaned before use.
- Procedures for handling hive materials in the apiary and during transport minimise water, microbial, dust, soil and other foreign matter contamination of honey products.
- Only floral sources displaying slow crystallisation are utilised.
- Approximately 95% of cells are fully capped before the comb is removed.
- Cold rooms or CO2 treatment are used to control wax moth during storage.
- B-QUAL honey packer quality standards are complied with.

7.5 Propolis Production Standards

- The Australian Food Safety Standards, the B-QUAL Standards, the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Product (if applicable), the B-QUAL Biosecurity Plan and relevant authority requirements are complied with as well as international standards.
- Procedures for handling hive materials in the apiary and during transport minimise water, microbial, dust, soil and other foreign matter contamination of hive products.
- Collection inserts are thoroughly cleaned before re-use.
- Cold rooms or CO2 treatment are used to control wax moth during storage.
- B-QUAL honey packer quality standards are complied with.

7.6 Royal Jelly Production Standards

- The Australian Food Safety Standards, the B-QUAL Standards, the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Product (if applicable), the B-QUAL Biosecurity Plan and relevant authority requirements are complied with as well as international standards.
- Larvae for grafting should be less than 24 hours old.
- The likelihood of contamination is minimised through the use of personal cleanliness and clean handling practices. Workers with health conditions do not handle product if there is any risk of impacting safety.
- Larvae are removed from all started cells, prior to harvesting of royal jelly.
- Freshly collected jelly is strained to remove larval skin following moulting and then placed directly into appropriate storage.
- Freshly strained jelly is placed under refrigeration at the correct storage temperature soon after being harvested.
- B-QUAL honey packer quality standards are complied with.

7.7 Package Bee Production Standards

- Package bees are produced according to best industry practice and they comply with regulatory and B-QUAL biosecurity requirements.
- All export consignments are covered by Department of Agriculture and Water Resources health certification.
- Transport, storage, finance arrangements and the necessary documentation are in order prior to shipping.

8 Organic Production (Guidelines)

DISCLAIMER: Organic Certification is not obtained through B-QUAL, but with other certifying bodies. There is a long transitional period to become certified organic. It is advisable to discuss this with an appropriate certifying authority.

8.1 Guidelines

- Inspection and certification is in accordance with the National Standard for Organic and Biodynamic Produce 3.7 and the approved certifying organisation.

8.2 Management Plan

- An organic management plan that demonstrates the operation development and organic integrity is maintained.
- Production is not alternated between organic and conventional methods.
- Potential risks and consequences of sources of external contamination are addressed.
- Products produced from synthetic chemicals, genetic engineering or ionising radiation are not used.

8.3 Conversion

- Hives must be under a system of inspection for at least 12-months before any products can be labelled as organic or bio-dynamic.

8.4 Bee Origin

- Selection of bees is based on vitality, resistance to disease and suitability to region and climatic conditions. Acquisition of any bees is from organic production units, where possible. If purchases are from non-organic sources, the extractions for the following 12 months are not to be labelled and marketed as organic product.

8.5 Siting

- A map of appropriate scale lists hive locations and documentation provides evidence that demonstrates the organic status of these areas. Nectar and pollen sources within a radius of 5 km from the apiary site consist of organically produced crops and/or spontaneous vegetation. Pollution sources such as agro-chemicals are not within this radius.
- Apiary sites have adequate supplies of clean water, natural nectar, honeydew and pollen. They are also placed in low ant activity areas.
- Records on the number, location (including maps), condition and colony management are maintained.
- Apiaries are clearly labelled with the operator registration number. Individual hives have an identification code that relates to each section of the hive. Apiary movements are registered with the certifying body. Locations are regularly updated.

8.6 Feed

- Hives are left with sufficient reserves of honey and pollen to survive between production flows.
- Hives are fed only under extreme climatic or other extenuating circumstances.
- If artificial feeding of bees is required, the extractions for the following 12 months are to be labelled non-organic

8.7 Disease

- Disease prevention in beekeeping is based on the selection of appropriate low susceptibility strains and disease control is encouraged through management practices, which do not include the use of antibiotics.
- Colonies with American Foulbrood are destroyed.
- The use of synthetically compounded materials for health care is prohibited except where the imminent health of the colony is threatened. If treatment is required, the hive is removed from the foraging area and taken out of organic production. Bee products harvested for twelve months following the use of such antibiotics is not certified organic and foundation wax is replaced.
- Refrigeration or freezing is recommended for wax moth control in storage areas.
- Following is the list of products for possible use for pest and disease control or hive disinfecting: caustic soda; lactic, oxalic, acetic, formic acid; sulphur; etheric oils; bacillus thuringiensis; heat (flame, hot water), and; wax or paraffin dipping. Pests are controlled by cold room treatment for stored equipment. Check with the certification body and State Departments of Agriculture with respect to the acceptability of using these products.
- Botanical compounds such as menthol and vegetable oils are not used within thirty days of a honey flow, or whenever honey supers are on the hive.

8.8 Management

- Bottom boards are scraped routinely to remove accumulations of wax and other debris that serve as food and shelter for wax moths.
- Settling tanks and/or strainers/centrifuge are recommended for removal of foreign materials.
- Queen Bees do not have their wings clipped.

8.9 Harvesting

- Bees are removed from hives by the use of bee escape boards, shaking, brushing, forced air blowers, or smoker fuel made only from natural, unprocessed substances.

8.10 Materials

- Hives are made of materials that present no risk of contamination to the environment or apiculture products. Particle board and/or toxic wood preservatives are not used in hive construction or maintenance, and only exterior surfaces of the hives are painted.
- Comb foundations are made from pure certified organic beeswax. Wood frames are to be used.
- Beeswax for new foundations is sourced from organic production units. The wax is derived from capping's, or where certified foundation is used. Comb honey is only eligible for certification if the foundation used is certified as organic.

- Physical treatments such as cold rooms and steam or direct flame are permitted.
- Only approved products are used for cleaning and disinfecting materials, buildings, equipment and utensils.
- Hives are only coated on the exterior with paraffin or beeswax mixtures, naturally compounded paints or non-contaminating acrylic paints subject to approval.

8.11 Extraction

- Honey is only extracted from certified hives and colonies that comply with forage areas that meet the organic requirements.
- Chemical repellents are not used during honey extraction operations.
- Only combs above a queen excluder are used for honey extraction.

8.12 Processing

- Processing equipment is thoroughly cleaned with hot water and dried prior to processing.
- Temperatures below 40°C are used during extraction and bottling.
- Surfaces in direct contact with honey are constructed from food grade materials or coated with beeswax from certified sources.
- Extracting facilities comply with all organic processing regulations.
- Irradiation is not used in the production process.

8.13 Packaging

- Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC) is not used for packaging.
- Packaging material complies with food standard regulations.

8.14 Labelling

- Products produced in accordance with the Standard are clearly and accurately labelled according to the Standard.
- Labelling of organic honey grade or colour complies with honey industry standards. Organic honey labelled by floral source is produced solely from that single floral source and not blended with any other honey.

8.15 Testing

- Any detection of synthetic chemicals may lead to decertification.

8.16 Storage

- Products are handled in a manner that prevents contamination or substitution with substances or products not compatible with the organic standard.
- Storage containers are cleaned and dried before use.
- Honey is stored in food grade containers.

8.17 Specialised Activities

- Production of queen bees, pollen, royal jelly, comb honey and propolis that are classified as organic are only produced from apiaries that are certified as organic.