

*Issue 1: July 2020*

## Welcome from Michael Franks

Welcome to our grower newsletter, Kiwi Connect, keeping you connected with up to date Seeka and industry news, technical information and events.

The weather has certainly played its part in keeping pressure on growers, orchard managers and contractors for winter pruning delivery. Seeka has supplemented the local labour supply with RSEs who have been unable to go home due to border restrictions. The repatriation programme is changeable and Seeka is working closely with MBIE and our joint RSE partners to minimise disruption to the winter work programme. For some groups the repatriation home is overdue with plans for this to occur over the next two months while other groups are still waiting for their countries to put a plan together. With our border remaining closed, there is uncertainty around the RSE labour being available for the spring and summer work.

Indicative 2020 kiwistart rates have now been agreed by the Industry Advisory Council (IAC). After a considerable consultation process, adjustments to pre 25 March indicative rates have been made across all varieties and growing methods. Seeka Growers Council have a representative on the taste review group and Seeka is actively engaged on your behalf, contributing to how the maturity testing and taste programme looks for 2021 and beyond. There are many decisions to be made to be ready for the 2021 harvest.

The Zespri sales programme remains strong with the over 100 million trays of fruit having been delivered to customers, this milestone being reached 1 week ahead of last year. The summer fruit season in the Northern Hemisphere has not impacted on demand and the average of 5 million trays delivered to customers each week. The first forecast from Zespri is due at the end of August and using this, the entity team will calculate individual grower forecasts.

Seeka is committed to continued investment in people, technology and innovation and post harvest capacity to support our growers and their growing business. With over \$140 million invested over the last 5 years and recent projects such as the Oakside new coolstore build, and the nearing completion of Kerikeri site, we are well positioned to continue looking after your crop.

Regards,

Michael

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## Seeka Growers Council nominations

Seeka Growers Limited will be holding its annual meeting and dinner in September. We are seeking interest and nominations for standing for the council. Seeka Growers Council meetings are monthly and open to all Seeka growers to attend. If you are interested in attending a meeting or putting forward a nomination please contact your Client Relationship Manager.

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## Managing cicadas and passionvine hopper (PVH)

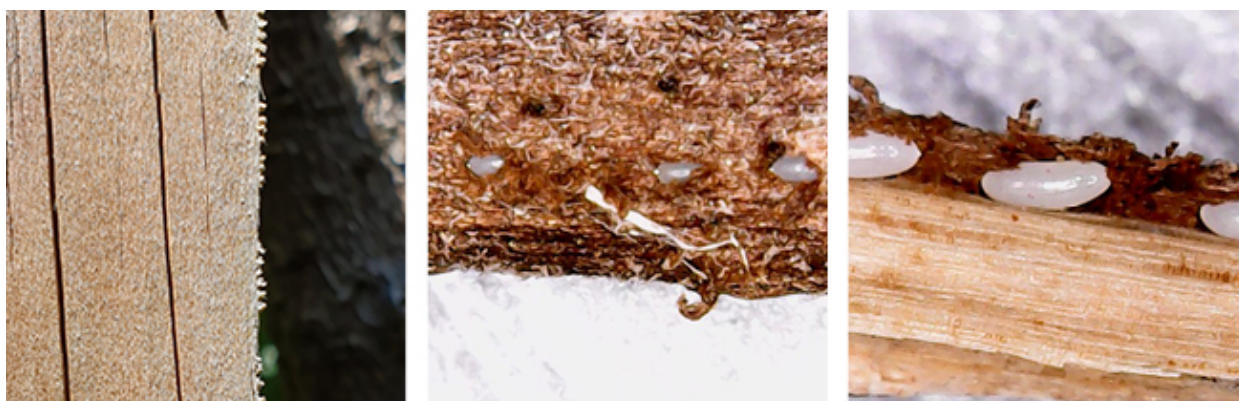
The warm and dry summer has led to high reject rates from sooty mould for many growers. An increase over summer leads to high populations again next season, so it's time to tackle them over winter.

First task is finding the pest causing it and where it's located. Your packrun reports over harvest show a reject analysis that defines if sooty mould was caused by PVH (classified as sooty mould) or cicadas (classified as cicada blotch).

Your results can help you create a plan to reduce pest numbers and to increase fruit numbers for export.

Winter control options:

- PVH and cicada: Ensure winter prunings are intensively mulched. A second mulch may be needed to ensure large sections of cane are broken down sufficiently. This is especially relevant for Cicada.
- Cicada: There is evidence that reflective under canopy mulches such as Extenday may help reduce nymphs emerging and prevent some newly hatched nymphs entering the soil. For conventional growers, applications of Assail and Engulf during the dormancy period are recommended to kill eggs in exposed egg rafts.
- PVH: Conventional growers are encouraged to apply Assail and Engulf late in the dormancy period to kill eggs in exposed egg rafts. Off-orchard, spraying or removal of alternate host plants that neighbour kiwifruit blocks will help to reduce host sites for the pest. It may be worth leaving the odd sentinel plant that will be the first port of call to check for nymphs. Host plants for PVH include bracken, blackberry, barberry and many ornamentals. On-orchard, the removal of old fruit stalks off canes, and an application of mineral oil to wooden posts have been used this past season in trial work and have shown promising results. Clearing a track of all scrub outside of the shelter is recommended as PVH will often congregate before moving into the orchard giving you time for earlier detection.



*Pictured: PVH eggs on a post and under a microscope.*

For more information contact Ethan England, Kiwifruit Technical Officer, on 021 0215 7062 or email [ethan.england@seeka.co.nz](mailto:ethan.england@seeka.co.nz).

Introducing Jon Merrick, Seeka's newly appointed Organic Kiwifruit Category Manager.

Jon has a history of working on the land. After being raised on a dairy farm in Pyes Pa, he left school to become an orchard cadet, and went on to manage and lease orchards. Jon decided organics was the way forward and never looked back.

Jon started up and ran a successful corporate team building company for a number of years, and eight years ago returned back into the organic kiwifruit industry. Welcome to the team Jon.



More about Jon:

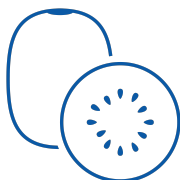
- BioGro Board Director and chair of the BioGro Impartiality Committee
- Chair of FAB families achieving balance non-profit organisation working with families in need
- Exec of COKA (Certified Organic Kiwifruit Association)
- Exec of the newly formed Certified Organic Avocado Growers as an organic avocado grower

Get in touch with Jon

Email [jon.merrick@seeka.co.nz](mailto:jon.merrick@seeka.co.nz) or call 027 355 6834

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## Winter chilling



August is quickly approaching and budbreak enhancement practices near. Warm days and cloud cover at night means winter chill is still low for many regions compared to the previous season.

High altitude Te Puke and Coromandel are the only regions with higher levels of winter chill compared to last season.

Chill units are accumulated by counting each hour under 7 degrees across May, June and July. The table below shows chilling hours up until 20 July:

Region	% of 2019 Winter Chill	2020	2019	2018	2017
Kerikeri	96.8%	122	126	226	220
Coromandel	113.5%	253	223	345	272
Katikati	86.4%	261	302	351	384
Omokoroa	91.9%	331	360	378	460
Tauranga	75.6%	248	328	390	436
Te Puke Low Altitude	73.8%	333	451	407	352
Te Puke High Altitude	106.0%	406	383	367	374
Whakatane	87.2%	361	414	475	446
Opotiki	79.8%	268	336	399	361

**May and June average temperatures:**

May and June average temperatures are shown below illustrating that we've had a slightly cooler May but an unusually warm June compared to 2019, which hasn't helped in accumulating those much needed chill units. Remember these weather stations could be different to your own orchard, so it's best to record average hourly temperatures on your own orchard. [Use the OPC Budbreak Date Predictor found here](#) for guidance on bud breaker application timing.

Region	Month	2020	2019
Kerikeri	May	15	15.2
	June	12.8	12.3
Coromandel	May	12.91	13.74
	June	11.68	10.67
Katikati	May	12.12	12.88
	June	12.23	9.85
Omokoroa	May	11.31	12.22
	June	11.36	9.31
Tauranga	May	12.11	12.38
	June	11.72	9.13
Te Puke Low Altitude	May	11.44	12.00
	June	10.97	8.75
Te Puke High Altitude	May	10.61	11.46
	June	10.49	8.48
Whakatane	May	11.64	12.30
	June	11.28	9.01
Opotiki	May	12.66	13.03
	June	11.91	9.38

For more information contact Ethan England, Kiwifruit Technical Officer, on 021 0215 7062 or email [ethan.england@seeka.co.nz](mailto:ethan.england@seeka.co.nz).

## Budbreak enhancement

### Orchard tips before spraying starts

If you use budbreak enhancement practices, such as Hi-Cane, please consider the following points before spraying starts:

- Use of AI nozzles and a drift reducing agent are required (ie. Driftstop at 150-200 mls/100L)
- Neighbours must be notified at least 24 hours before spraying. Make sure you have up to date contact details for them. It is a good idea to re-notify if the conditions were unsuitable on the first attempt
- Poor coverage on canes or applications made in unsuitable conditions can lead to poor budbreak. Ensure sprayers are calibrated correctly and aim to spray only when conditions are optimal:
  - Ensure Hi-Cane is mixed completely to the correct concentration and sprayer ground speed is maintained as per the calibration data. Water rate should not exceed 700L/ha
  - Temperatures should be rising and above 9°C before applying and avoid windy conditions. HW canes must be dry for optimum HiCane penetration whilst a little moisture on GA canes is

generally fine

Using water sensitive papers to ensure Hi-Cane coverage is adequate is highly recommended. Place the water sensitive papers at various locations throughout the bay such as in the leader zone, 2 wires out and centre of the row.

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## Market access and scale control

Maximising market access availability is an ongoing important focus for the industry. There are currently indications from China specifically that may have an impact on how we manage specific pests going forward. This may include how we are monitoring, recording and responding on orchard and postharvest to prevent pest finds at the Chinese border. We will keep you updated.

Common scale is one of the pests identified, which can not only increase reject rates during packing; it can also affect market access. What markets your fruit can enter is based on residue tests and phytosanitary inspection results. This is an inspection during packing where 600 fruit is collected in a phytobatch from multiple sizes and inspected under a magnification lens. Any pests or seeds are recorded and forms the basis of assessing market access.

For example, clearing organic SunGold kiwifruit to Japan needs less than 20 scale insects across the 600 fruit sample. Different markets have different criteria and it is important for the wider grower pool to have enough clean fruit to send to different markets.

Good scale management for conventional and organic growers involves:

- Understanding where the scale population is in your orchard. If you signed up for KiwiGreen last season, please refer to the KiwiGreen monitor detailed report, accessible on the [Seeka grower website](#). The report shows scale numbers row by row, helping you understand if you have hotspots or if scale is coming in from shelters
- Removing host trees from shelters can help, such as Willows, Poplars and Pittosporums
- Consider removing old stag-horns from your leaders and lime sulphur applications where lichen are providing cover for the scale. As for agrichemical applications, conventional growers can apply oil during dormancy and follow up in spring with Bifenthrin (Assail/Venom), Spirotetramat (Movento) or Thiacloprid (Calypso) based products
- Organic growers have organically certified mineral oil in their arsenal. Best practice scale management for organic growers and for more information, [check out Zespri's infographic here](#)

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## You're invited: Kiwifruit field day - Managing sooty mould

Join Seeka's technical team on Tuesday 28 July in Te Puke to hear more about the pest, where it's coming from and what's creating the most damage. [Click here to find out more and register](#).

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## Circular sustainability at Seeka 360

Seeka's focus on circular sustainability in the form of two giant worm farms is ready for production at Seeka 360, Te Puke.

Nicola Neilson, Financial Controller and Rob Watkins, Equipment Division Manager led the build. Installed out the back of Seeka 360 in a tunnel house are two 12.5 meter long, 2.5 meter wide worm farms, officially called continuous flow vermicomposter systems.

The farms were imported from America and arrived just before level 4 lockdown.

Technology keeps the farms thriving with a continuous flow of product. The biological input for the farms comes from kiwifruit waste, including dry dust and leaves from our post-harvest facilities. Automatic cutters slice through the product once per week, pushing finished vermicompost onto the concrete below, which is collected for spreading onto orchards.

It's going to be a slow and steady start using the worms we already have and keeping in line with our goal to create a circular system – being restorative and regenerative by design and reducing waste.



## RSE accommodation complete at Ngai Tukarangi Trust

Ngai Tukarangi Trust, a large Seeka kiwifruit grower based in the Bay of Plenty and Hawkes Bay, opened new seasonal accommodation in Matapihi on Monday 6 July.

It's a significant milestone and aligning to their strategic vision. The accommodation is modern, purpose built and will house up to 24 RSEs from the Pacific Islands who work on the orchards. It's tailored to social living with sleeping dorms, common lounges and an open plan kitchen. Kihi Ngatai led the blessing of the whare.

The official opening was attended by members of the Trust and local community, Seeka was represented by Fred Hutchings, Chairman; Michael Franks, Chief Executive; Jim Smith, GM - Growers and Marketing; Andrew Weatherley, Client Relationship Manager and Turi Ngatai, Maori Relationship Manager.

Ngai Tukarangi's Pacific Island RSEs who were expected to be the first to stay were unable to travel to NZ due to border restrictions, and the honour went to some of Seeka's RSEs from the Soloman Islands who are the first living there thanks to the Trust's generosity.

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## Exclusive economic update with the Governor of the Reserve Bank

Adrian Orr, Governor of the Reserve Bank delivered an exclusive monetary policy and economic update on Wednesday 1 July.

Adrian set the scene of the New Zealand economy, sharing insights into why the economy hasn't crashed as hard as we may have expected it to, what they are doing to be sustainable and environmentally friendly, and if we can visit the money vault in Wellington.

View the session below.



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## Avocado harvest starts in the Far North

The first avocado harvest for the new season started last week at Mapua Orchard in the Far North. Gordon Collett, Client Relationship Manager shares how the day went.

The team were shown how to prevent harvest defects, split into teams with designated blocks and select picked fruit 220 grams or heavier to meet market demand.

The orchard is two and a half years old and part of a 200 hectare high density orchard. It's part of three orchards under one management, totalling 400 hectares and



making it easily the largest in NZ. The trees have reached 60% of their target size so there was plenty of low hanging fruit to pick.

How to prevent fruit damage during harvest?

- A quality controller is present and checking for controllable defects in packing bags and bins
- New floating double axled picking trailers
- Used kiwifruit picking bags with low volume restrictions
- The clippers were also fitted with small digital GPS loggers to show the heaviest and lowest harvest areas and the productivity performance of the picker

32 bins were picked and shipped off to Seeka Kerikeri for packing.

How did packing go?

Packouts were excellent with minimal rejects, a testament to fruit quality and the attention to detail during harvest. 88% of fruit was in the large count of 55-80 and 8% at count 100.

*Pictured: Picking a small, compact tree.*



## Beanies for our RSEs

Katikati's local newspaper, Katikati Advertiser, called out for winter clothing and supplied a beanie knitting pattern to help RSEs stay warm over winter.

A few ladies at the local retirement village knitted beanies and they were fortunate to come through one of our packers, Ruth Hawkins and to the RSEs at Seeka Main Road.

Christine Bromley from our employment team says, "Smiles of delight and excitement have been seen when the workers received their beanies and we are seeing them being worn in the packhouse and out in the orchards."

## Dates for the diary

- 28 July, Kiwifruit sooty mould field day - Te Puke
- 12 August, Seeka Growers Council meeting - Seeka 360

## Quick links



- [Frankly Speaking](#)
- [Seeka Grower Login](#)