

Bees safe

THERE were no serious incidences of bee poisoning from the application of chemicals to avocado trees in audited avocado orchards last year, according to Neale Cameron, independent bee auditor and president of the BeeSafe Agrichemical Group.

Mr Cameron attributes this in part to the strong stance the New Zealand Avocado Industry Council (AIC) has on bee-safe spray practices.

"I'm very impressed with the way the Avocado Industry Council has come on board," he said.

Bees are threatened when chemicals are applied under the wrong conditions, so growers need to be careful when spraying crops.

AIC chief executive Alan Thorn said there were potential penalties for growers who use irresponsible spray practices, including putting in jeopardy their right to export their avocado crop.

Top bee safe tips:

- Grass must be mown before spraying, removing as many flowers as possible
- Make sure insecticide application is done within the recommended time frame before beehives are introduced to the orchard
- If using an organic or fungicidal product during flowering, spray when bees are not foraging (before 8am and after 5pm) and if possible use a low fan speed
- If willow shelters are in flower look at using an alternative product
- Keep in touch with neighbours, especially when different varieties or crops are involved.
- For more information on being bee safe phone Jonathon Dixon on 0800-AVOCADO or view the Avocado Pollination Best Practice Guidelines at www.nzavocado.co.nz