



## Company Announcement

### AUSTRALIAN HONEY REMAINS A SAFE NATURAL FOOD

21 January 2016

The print article published by FairFax Media today and the Irish research quoted from February 2015 is an alarmist and sensationalist report of the issue of Pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) in honey.

Alkaloids are generated naturally by plants and are used as a defence mechanism. They have been detected in a range of foods including honey, teas, herbal products, milk, meat, grains and cereals.

Industry and Food Standards Australia New Zealand (FSANZ) recognises that honeys produced from Patterson's Curse (*Echium plantagineum*) will contain these alkaloids and that consumers should not exclusively eat large quantities of this honey (FSANZ 2011). In 2000, FSANZ set a tolerable daily intake of 1.0 µg/kg of body weight per day as a guide to industry and consumers when considering an appropriate food content of plant alkaloids.

The alkaloids known as echimidine and lycopsamine are the predominant ones found in Patterson's Curse honey. There is limited information on the toxicity of these alkaloids in humans, with preliminary research conducted by industry and FSANZ suggesting these alkaloids have much reduced toxicity when compared to other known plant based alkaloids.

As a result of best practice modern farming techniques, the amount of honey produced from the agricultural weed Patterson's Curse has declined dramatically over the past decade, to next to nothing. Farmer's actions to rid the country of this weed, such as less to no fallow rotation of crops, better use of more selective herbicides and the major success of biological control programs have significantly reduced the presence of Patterson's Curse. No longer do we see fields of purple flowering weeds in Australia. This change in the environment has resulted in an insignificant production of this type of honey in Australia and it is not considered a commercial honey that will be used in retail honey products.

It should be noted that there is not one single case anywhere in the world that documents human health being unfavourably affected as a consequence of the consumption of honey containing the extremely low levels of alkaloids being reported (parts per billion).

Industry is fully aware of managing the problems with Paterson's Curse honey and alkaloid content and has been doing so in association with the government regulator FSANZ for many, many years. Most notably, Patterson's Curse honey is not produced in commercial quantities in Australia. Despite this, there remains no scientific evidence illustrating that consuming such honey leads to unfavourable clinical human health concerns.

Consumers of quality Australian honey have nothing to fear and they should continue to enjoy our great natural Australian honeys without hesitation.

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