

Jeff Kevern celebrates 20 years with Skeltons

In August, we acknowledged Jeff Kevern's outstanding commitment to Skeltons with the presentation of a handheld DVD camera, at our annual conference.

Since 1987, Jeff has seen some huge changes in the industry. There are now fewer growers, although they are generally bigger with corporate backing or affiliated to packhouses or grower groups. "This is a good thing from an economic point of view but it has been sad to see many owner operators drop from the industry. The days of part time growers are over," reflects Jeff.

Jeff is motivated to remain within the industry as he has his own orchard and likes to keep up with the play. "I enjoy being in the field and working one on one with growers. No two growing seasons are the same, each have challenges. It is satisfying to use my experience to develop effective solutions for growers."

Jeff looks forward to more seasons at Skeltons and cites the move to new premises as beneficial to customers. "More space allows Skeltons to increase our service and commitment to the growing industry. Come in and have a look."



Supporting industry excellence

Over the winter months Skeltons has been active as always supporting the various industry initiatives aimed at encouraging excellence.

We were present at the inaugural ICE Expo held at Whakatu in July and our team of technical advisors were involved in running the respective Young Fruitgrower of the Year and Young Viticulturist of the Year contests.

Skeltons organised the pest and disease identification section for fruitgrowing contestants. Chris Herries of Skeltons (left) puts Jonathan Walsh through his paces at the section that was held in conjunction with the ICE Expo.

Blake Herbison and James Cropper

were both involved in the chemical storage section of the Young Viticulturist contest held at Prospect Vineyard. Skeltons applauds the organisers of each of these events and acknowledges the effort to keep the aim of excellence to the fore in the horticulture industry.

We also congratulate the two Hawke's Bay winners: Ben McNatty who took out the Fruitgrower title, and Emma Taylor, who went on from our region to win the national Viticulturist of the Year accolade at the finals held at the Romeo Bragato conference recently.

Excellence is alive and well in Hawke's Bay.

SPRING 2007



THE LATEST ON PRACTICES, PEOPLE & PRODUCTS FOR A GROWING INDUSTRY

Insight

Viticulture Development Grant flying high



Patch swoops for fresh carrion

Skeltons is proud to support innovation and research into Hawke's Bay's grape growing industry via the Viticulture Development Grant. We established the grant in 2004 to enhance the competitive advantage, encourage originality and foster continual improvement within this key local industry.

The \$10,000 grant is offered in conjunction with HortResearch, Ballance Agri-Nutrients and Bayer CropScience New Zealand.

One recent recipient is Rob Beard, operations manager for Maimai Creek, Meeanee. Damage from pest birds can greatly reduce harvest yields so this vineyard is trialling biological control by way of two wild harrier hawks. Starting last July, the project harnesses the bird's natural hunting skills to deter starlings and sparrows from eating grapes.

Initially the hawks, Patch and Tiny, were fed hare or rabbit on the ground to encourage them to remain in the area. Gradually, the feeding site has been elevated with wood blocks so that the birds are now level with the vines. Rob comments, "It took a while for the birds to get used to the idea. We are hoping the birds will stay and nest here. Long term, we see this as an effective natural solution to control pests."

Skeltons director, Ian Gold supports this project, "The idea is very clever, aiming to reduce human intervention. Sustainable production is desired industry wide to save time, money and impact on the environment. Skeltons is very aware of the internationally competitive nature of the viticulture industry and ideas like this are beneficial in maintaining Hawke's Bay's niche." Information on a 2006 project inside.

Welcome aboard

Skeltons' team continues to grow as we strive to provide the best level of service to our growing base of clients.

Martin Taylor (centre) is a pip and stonefruit consultant with over 30 years working with growers to help produce good crops and good returns. Initially with Ministry of Agriculture and then in private business as Taylor Pinchin and Associates, Martin joined Skeltons at the beginning of September.

Like all Skeltons advisors, Martin's brief is to provide his clients with technical advice on pest, disease, and nutritional issues to assist them to maximise yield and quality of their crops. His considerable experience adds to, and complements, the technical knowledge of the Skeltons team.

Lynda Jane (left) joined Karen Wildey in administration mid-year. Lynda comes to us with rural property sales support experience from Property Brokers in Havelock North. Lynda is often the voice greeting phone callers and complements the overall administrative effort.

Grant McDonald (right) is our new seasonal storeman and comes



to us with 15 years orcharding experience – both as the hands and the management. He also works part time providing an orchard sprayer calibration service so is well able to 'talk the talk' with our grower clients.

Robert Ellingham has again joined the team as our seasonal delivery driver. Robert provided a sterling service on the delivery truck last year and we welcome him back for the season. (Robert was out on deliveries so missed his photo opp!)

Should you require further information on any articles in this newsletter, or on any other matter relating to horticulture, please contact us on 06 876 8029, email info@skeltons.co.nz or call our technical field team direct.

Want more information?

Sustainability – vital to our markets

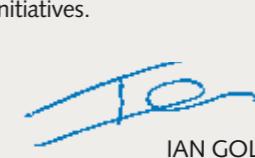
Many politically correct and popular buzzwords we so often hear relate to the environment, health and safety, product quality and even how we treat our children. Over time these words have a tendency to become trite and hackneyed.

'Sustainability' is definitely not one of those words. If we do not continually develop and pursue sustainable production techniques, we risk losing our share of export markets. New Zealand is in a unique position to capitalise on the sustainability trend, ahead of our competitors. We have sophisticated growing systems, strong knowledge and skills throughout our industries to drive sustainable production practices.

Our primary sector industries are clearly addressing the pertinent

issues. The flavour of the recent Romeo Bragato viticultural conference and the Apple Futures programme for the pipfruit industry, are clear evidence of the awareness, commitment and emphasis that is now apparent in these production sectors.

Skeltons continues to invest in industry expertise. We understand the need for high levels of knowledge to help growers achieve success. Our clients can be assured that the Skeltons team is keen, committed and proud to make positive contributions, supporting various industry initiatives.


IAN GOLD


DAVID ALLAN

TECHNICAL ADVISORY TEAM

Malcolm Crawford mobile 027 442 8947 after hours 874 8888
Jeff Kevern mobile 027 442 8945 after hours 844 0324
Andrew Whitworth mobile 027 442 8946 after hours 877 2327
Chris Herries mobile 027 443 3910 after hours 878 8306
Lachlan McKay mobile 027 444 0838 after hours 870 3833

Blake Herbison mobile 027 284 4147 after hours 870 1212
Evan Walsh mobile 027 201 3481 after hours 875 0221
James Cropper mobile 027 442 8948 after hours 876 9196
Martin Taylor mobile 027 29 888 00 after hours 879 9906

The information contained in this publication is of a general nature and should not be relied upon as a substitute for professional advice in specific cases



233 RUAHAPIA ROAD,
PO BOX 1330, HASTINGS 4215
PHONE 06 876 8029
FAX 06 878 5120
www.skeltons.co.nz



New tool to fight late potato blight

Syngenta Crop Protection offers growers a brand new compound, Revus, (mandipropamid belonging to the class mandelamides), providing the latest in potato blight protection.

In trial work to date, Revus outperformed two other standard fungicides, Sereno and Melody Duo, whilst maintaining greener canopy and increased yields.

Revus capitalises on unique Lok and Flo technology to provide quick bonding of the spray to plant tissue. Once dry, the spray cannot be washed off. Revus gradually enters the leaf tissue, providing a reservoir for continued high levels of disease control on both sides of the leaf.

Revus sets the standard for consistent, long lasting and reliable protection even in adverse conditions. Curative activity of 12 hours (prior to visual symptoms) also adds to high protection levels.

Revus belongs to the same fungicide group as Melody Duo and Acrobat and together these should not form more than 50 percent of a grower's late blight programme. Normal mancozeb protectant applications remain industry standard with suitable rain-proof adjuvants.

Revus comes in 5 litre user-friendly packs to treat 8 to 12 hectares.

Evening Primrose a natural pest remedy?

Evening Primrose is a naturally occurring vineyard weed that could prove an effective 'tool' in the fight against mealybug and leafroller caterpillar control.

This was a finding from a research project undertaken by Hawkes' Bay Grape Growers' Sustainable Winegrowing Discussion Group and partly funded by a 2006 Skeltons Viticulture Development Grant.

Researchers surveyed four vineyards across the region, collecting and identifying key insects, and assessing which insects visited which weed flowers with the purpose of identifying which weeds should be further analysed.

The nectar of the abundant Evening Primrose weed was analysed and its high sucrose / (fructose and glucose) ratio showed it has real biocontrol-enhancement potential if it flowers in late summer.

Sustainability theme at Romeo Bragato

The Romeo Bragato conference for the winemaking industry was held in Auckland in August. Blake Herbison, James Cropper and Ian Gold represented Skeltons.

The conference theme was sustainability in wine production. Organics, biological products, climate change and carbon neutrality were key subjects. The delegates were keen to embrace sustainability, and the goal of Sustainable Winegrowing NZ to have all vineyards undertake their programme by 2010, was deemed very achievable.

Strong business focus was evident with some lofty goals set for the industry of \$1 billion exports for 2010 and \$2 billion by 2015. The importance of good business management was also emphasised.

Feedback from the conference has been positive, with many commenting it was one of the best they had attended. Skeltons looks forward to working with our viticultural clients to help them achieve their production and sustainability goals.



Adam van der Meer from Pernod Ricard (left) catches up with Skeltons technical advisor James Cropper at the Romeo Bragato conference held in Auckland in August.

Frost fighting wind power

Skeltons is now the North Island distributor and installer of Amarillo wind machines for FMR Group Ltd in Marlborough.

"It is the fan's dihedral angle that sets Amarillo apart from other wind machines. It avoids coning or reduction in moved air volume," comments Blake Herbison, Skeltons viticulture technical advisor.

A 152 horsepower John Deere diesel engine drives the two blade fan. It rotates on a vertical plain atop a 10.4m tower, whilst the entire fan assembly rotates horizontally. 360 degree rotation is achieved every 5mins, giving a minimum frost fought crop area of 6ha. When the temperature drops to 0.5 degrees, operation starts automatically, continuing until the temperature rises to 3 degrees.

The 540 litre incorporated fuel tank provides 20 hours operation at 26 litres/hour fuel consumption. The electrical actuator also provides greater reliability when stop / starting with the engagement of a centrifugal clutch.

A locally-based John Deere qualified technician provides 24 hr call out service,



Blake Herbison, Skeltons technical advisor, with Rob Beard, Maimai Creek Wines in Meeanee, commissions a new Amarillo windmill.

and stocks a full range of spare parts for both windmill and engine.

Orchard heaters

Microclimate NZ concludes that the placement of 20 return stack heaters, in a 30m circle around the base of the frost machine tower, will create another 0.8-1.0 degree lift in the frost fought area. Due to popular demand, Skeltons now stocks these clean burning and easy to light heaters.

Please contact your technical advisor for further information.

Apple Futures – the way forward

The biggest change in pipfruit production this season is the launch of Apple Futures, a programme designed to maintain (or regain!) New Zealand's premium position in the world's apple markets.

Apple Futures is the next step in the evolution of the existing IFP programme. This moves our production systems towards the ultimate goal of nil detectable residues.

For the grower, this means changes to the way we use some existing chemicals and the introduction of some new products. These changes are not major but need to be understood to ensure compliance under the Apple Futures programme.

Effective disease control

The biggest driver for disease control is to ensure orchards are as close to Blackspot free as possible by end of the primary infection period, early December. A particularly tight fungicide programme can achieve this.

Effective early season control is paramount to ensure minimal residues on fruit, as from

Organic apples review

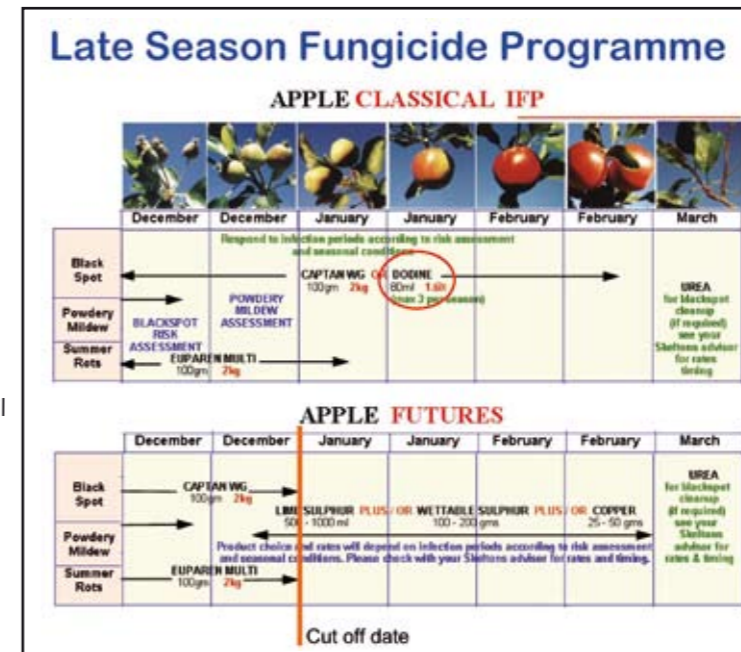
Market Conditions

Sadly organic apple prices are somewhat down from 2006. This is due to higher yields from orchards creating record volumes in the market place and increased volumes from Southern Hemisphere competitors. Currently, it appears that yields could be lower this season, due to patchy flowering in many blocks.

Blackspot

The industry continues to search for better Blackspot control methods. Lime sulphur remains the most efficacious spray material, followed by wetttable sulphur, copper and hydrated lime. In a perfect world, we would use natural organisms to combat this disease, however, it is becoming apparent that present bio-control agents are too passive by nature to have any significant impact on the aggressive Blackspot fungus.

The ultimate answer may well be, as suggested recently by Dr Jim Walker of Hort Research, the development of Blackspot



December the product choices are limited. The chart shown depicts the difference in withholding periods for specific products between IFP Classical and Apple Futures, from December onwards.

Effective pest control

The Apple Futures insect control programme also relies on good early season control to reduce residues at harvest. Another Skeltons chart outlines the difference between the products available and the cut-off dates for

Classical IFP and Apple Futures early season insect control.

For late season combined leaf roller and codling moth control, there is a new product available called Delegate. This provides excellent control of both pests and, when used correctly, has no detectable residues at harvest.

Achieving the best

With an early concentrated programme for pest and disease control, sensible use of existing products and new products later on, the change to Apple Futures should not be too onerous.

The Skeltons team has devoted considerable effort to understanding the changes and ensuring they can be successfully incorporated into growers'

programmes. If you have signed for Apple Futures, discuss your programme with your Skeltons advisor to ensure you have the best chance of success.

Skeltons late season Fungicide Programme and mid season Codling Moth/Leaf Roller charts are available on request.

APPLE futures



Malcolm Crawford, Skeltons technical advisor

whereas conventional blocks often suffer from heavier, compacted soils. Adding a "magic" brew to the soil may not be the silver bullet as sometimes promoted. If a soil has a nutrient imbalance, poor structure, lack of aeration etc, these issues need to be addressed directly:

- Apply the required nutrients,
- Adjust the PH,
- Improve organic matter with compost
- And get the drainage working.

With the right soil environment, you can expect the soil bio-life to improve over time.