

## Newsletter: February 2015

Hello Walnut Growers

I hope your 2015 Year has started well for you!

Dave Malcolm and Neville Gurr have a walnut growers' day organised:

### **WIG Field Day - Nut Quality, Nutrients, Health and Safety Management**

There will be a field day [on Sunday March 8th from 2pm to 4 pm](#) at the **West Melton Hall**.

We will be looking at the following:

- 1. Improving nut quality from harvest through to drying.** Nelson Hubber will talk about ways to ensure your consignments to the factory are of the highest quality ensuring higher returns to you.
- 2. How to interpret a nutrient leaf test result** so that you can put the right fertiliser mix on your trees. We hope to have a representative from a fertiliser company to explain.
- 3. Managing health and safety risks in your orchard.** Dave Malcolm and Neville Gurr will go through the process of identifying and managing all the risks in order to comply with Health and Safety regulations.

To register your interest and further inquiries, please contact Dave Malcolm at [dandj.malcolm@gmail.com](mailto:dandj.malcolm@gmail.com) or Neville Gurr at [gurr.n.a@xtra.co.nz](mailto:gurr.n.a@xtra.co.nz)

### Quality of supplied walnuts

Nelson Hubber has thoroughly investigated the profitability of supplied walnuts. He has found that Grade 1 quality walnuts bring the highest returns. **This is our goal!**

As the next harvest is coming closer we felt it was important that all the growers/suppliers of walnuts are aware what Grade 1 walnuts look like.

Here is a photo of grade 1 Rex



Photo of grade 1 Meyrik



It is very important that walnuts are **picked up regularly** during the harvesting season, **at least every 2 day** (especially important in wet weather).

Be aware that the light and/or diseased nuts usually fall first. Clear the orchard floor before the main crop drops. Mow low under the trees for easier pick up of your crop.

**If you experience a system failure get assistance quickly to avoid deteriorating walnut quality.**

Getting the walnuts clean and dry quickly is equally important to assure best quality. If you haven't got a washing and drying system organised it is essential to get onto it ASAP.

Here is an example of rejected walnuts! Don't even think about selling/supplying these!



The crop on the trees around here look promising.. This could be the year to get a bumper, top quality crop! It is up to us!

I am sure there will be more communication with growers about quality of walnuts etc. in the very near future. I know that there will be a video about walnut quality on our website ([www.walnuts.org.nz](http://www.walnuts.org.nz)) soon.

**Be pro-active! It is always better to think about these issues before the nuts are falling! 😊**

**Happy Harvesting!**

**WIG AGM will be held in June 2015, date to be confirmed**

**On the same date we will again hold the Annual Pickled Walnut Competition and the Best Prepared Recipe Competition**

The New Zealand Walnut Industry Group is opening its annual recipe competition to anyone who wishes to compete.

The competition will be judged by Chef Shirley Bradstock, plus 2 members chosen at random from the WIG AGM which will be held at the same venue prior to the competition.

Entries must be in the form of a prepared dish and is not restricted to any particular type of food. For example it could be a dessert or a stew.

The winner will be chosen on three criteria;

1. Outstanding use of walnuts
2. Innovative or unusual use of walnuts
3. Walnut flavour has harmony with the rest of the ingredients.

The judge's decision will be final and no other points of view will be considered.

There will be only one winning entry but others may be highly commended.

Any individual or organisation in New Zealand can submit entries and all walnuts must have been grown in New Zealand.

The New Zealand Walnut Industry Group reserves the right to use the recipe/dish for promotional purposes.

Acknowledgement will be given to the creator of the recipe and the cook. These can be different people and what you prepare does not have to be your own recipe.

**More information and entry forms to follow.**

## Walnut Standards

Have a read through the Update to the Current Walnut Standards received from Ian Sheerin. There is lots of important information.

### Updating the Current Walnut Standards – issues to be addressed

This is a brief update on submissions received and issues needing to be addressed to revamp our walnut quality standards. Quality and standards have been identified as a key issue, particularly with the current proposals to acquire grower ownership of the walnut processing company. The existing standards were last issued in approximately 2002, so there is need for an update now.

### Overseas standards

In November, two main submissions were received from grower members of WIG. The first proposed that we consider the existing standards in both Europe and the US, and work towards merging with those. As there are people wanting to export walnuts, there is merit in moving towards major overseas quality standards in potential export markets, particularly Europe. However, NZ has important laws regulating food processing and these also need to be incorporated into our quality standards, because any person or entity supplying food in NZ is legally required to comply with the relevant laws. I'll come back to this point further below.

### Food Safety Plans

The second main submission identified the need for food safety plans. These have had various names such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Plans (HAACP) and now "Food Control

Plans". Relevant to this, is that in 2014, a new Food Act was passed in NZ. Currently there is a lot of work going on behind the scenes to create regulations and a compliance regime.

**The Act will come fully into effect in March 2016.** The act requires anyone supplying food (such as walnuts) to have a Food Control Plan in place ie we all have to have one. If anyone wants to check up on what is happening, you can check the Ministry of Primary Industry (MPI) website. A good place to browse is also [www.foodsafety.govt.nz/policy-law/food-act-2014/](http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/policy-law/food-act-2014/).

MPI is aiming to make it easier for people to comply and they say that they are developing templates of Food Control Plans which we will be able to adapt to our particular orcharding operations. The new Food Act identifies various levels of risk and a walnut orchard will be categorised as lower risk as long as you are not cracking and processing nuts. Processors are viewed as higher risk, so will need more detailed food control plans. At a recent WIG meeting, it was agreed that we need to update the current quality standards to the effect that all growers will have to comply with NZ legislation, including the Food Act 2014. There was some discussion of the option of WIG contracting a consultant to develop a HACCP suitable for a walnut orchard, which would be available to all WIG members. We decided to defer this option until we can access the Food Control Plan templates currently being developed in the MPI. When these become available, it may be worthwhile for WIG to then contract in an expert to adapt a Food Control Plan for walnuts, that would comply with the relevant laws.

### Other Issues to be incorporated

1. The relevant nut **moisture levels** that should be aimed for when drying walnuts at harvest time.

**2. All livestock** must be excluded from orchards by 1 January each year, in order to reduce risk of faecal contamination of nuts (ie no animal manure should stick to the nuts)

**3. "Traceability"** has been identified as an important principle for us to plan for. This is the idea that if any package of walnuts is ever identified as contaminated, there should be a way of tracking the problem back to the source. Such "traceability" would then protect against the risk that larger uncontaminated supplies of nuts might have to be dumped (if there was no way of identifying where the contamination originated). Examples of this are recent scares with contaminated lettuces and the infamous Fonterra botulism debacle. Another example was a few years ago in the Waikato, some blueberries were contaminated with hepatitis. It turned out the source was a contract worker who unwittingly contaminated some berries. We clearly need some way of protecting against such risks of possible contamination. "Traceability" would offer some way of protecting against the risk of everyone potentially being told to dump their crop, when there might actually be a much more limited problem in one small source. Exactly how "traceability" could be incorporated needs careful thought and discussion. We will aim to issue a draft set of updated walnut standards, incorporating some of these issues in 2015.

Ian Sheerin

### Walnut Orchard for Sale

<http://www.propertybrokers.co.nz/lifestyle/rol41195/>

### Walnut trees for Sale

We have been approached by walnut growers in Eyrewell who want to sell some of their walnut trees:

We live in Eyrewell, North Canterbury, and access to our property for the walnuts will not be of issue.

We have approximately 400 walnuts (grafted) with 360 Rex and 40 Meyric.

Approximate heights for the trees are 3-5 metres (about 8 years old)

We are not sure what they are worth, we would consider realistic offers. The amount for sale is yet to be decided. But if we got the right offers, we would be looking to sell all.

Contact details - [petriekm@hotmail.com](mailto:petriekm@hotmail.com)



Kind regards

Trudi Meyer, WIG Newsletter Editor