

# FILLING UP THE HONEY BOXES

**ASH DAVENPORT** just loves being a beekeeper based in Kaipara, Northland. He looks after beehives in apiaries that produce honey, wax, pollen and other bee products.

Beekeeping in New Zealand has gone from being a home craft or lifestyle choice into a progressive industry with the value of the Mānuka honey industry heading towards \$400 million.

New Zealand is now recognised as one of the world's most advanced beekeeping countries. Honey bees are not only producing unique New Zealand honeys that are selling on the world stage, but also play a critical role in pollinating pastoral clover for nitrogen regeneration, specialised small seed crops, berry, stone fruit and pip fruit orchards.

Ash has previous experience working with bees but is now a year through his two-year apprenticeship run by Apiculture New Zealand (ApiNZ), the main industry body for apiculture in New Zealand.

ApiNZ offers the New Zealand Apprenticeship in Apiculture, which is made up of two programmes, one at Level 3 and one at Level 4, to be completed over two years.

Ash says the benefits he has gained so far includes upskilling on the science behind what he does, understanding the environment, understanding how the bees work, why they do things, and how they are able to communicate to each other.

"There is a lot more to bees than just getting stung. How they collect honey, how they pollinate, how they do their thing is quite fascinating. As a beekeeper without much experience in how a bee behaves, doing this course gives you an understanding of why they do things and how the weather affects them and how disease impacts on the hives.

"The apiculture course has opened up my mind to how the bees behave and to move forward in the beekeeping industry."

Ash works for one of New Zealand's large healthcare companies, Mānuka Health.

Mānuka Health produces Mānuka honey and other bee products that sell all over the world.

He is proud to be back working on Te Roroa iwi land after spending his school years at Concord High School in Sydney, Australia.

"Mānuka Health has a great working relationship with Te Roroa iwi. That's how I got into the role and I have been able to move up quickly to be a team leader.

"I came back home with my family to a rural community where there were not many jobs available. I had to change my way of thinking and adapt to our situation and change careers to do something more environmental.

"Apiculture has allowed me to work and live in the community. I am really passionate about my community. We live right next to our marae. It allows me to have employment while being able to contribute to my community.

"We are all focused on whanaungatanga, family orientation across generations, and living off the land and trying to create something for our future generations."

For school leavers thinking about a career in apiculture as a beekeeper, Ash says it is a rewarding career.

Looking after bees is similar to looking after other livestock, such as sheep and cows. It takes year-round dedication to ensuring your beehives are free from disease, strong, with enough food sources, to have them ready to go out and harvest or pollinate when the spring and summer come around.

You get to work in the outdoors, see the amazing landscapes of New Zealand, work with teams focussed on a shared goal and, of course, the incredibly smart bees.

It is hard work and requires dedication, but the reward when the honey boxes are full of honey – which you know consumers around the world enjoy and pay good money for – is very satisfying.

"I would say if you enjoy being outdoors, working in the environment then it would be a good career to get into. As COVID-19 is still lingering, it has been quite an eye-opener as to what jobs are classed as essential. Beekeeping was classed as essential work, so we worked through lockdown."



## KEY FACTS



- **ASH DAVENPORT** WORKS AS A **BEEKEEPER** FOR **MĀNUKA HEALTH** AND IS HALFWAY THROUGH AN **APICULTURE APPRENTICESHIP**.
- **APICULTURE NEW ZEALAND** OFFERS THE **NEW ZEALAND APPRENTICESHIP IN APICULTURE**, WHICH IS COMPLETED **OVER TWO YEARS**.
- **ASH SAYS BEEKEEPING** IS A **REWARDING CAREER**, WHICH ALSO OFFERS **STABILITY**. **BEEKEEPING IS CLASSED AS ESSENTIAL WORK**.



For more information on a career in beekeeping, visit [www.apinz.org.nz/training-and-education-nz-apprenticeship-in-apiculture](http://www.apinz.org.nz/training-and-education-nz-apprenticeship-in-apiculture)  
For more information on career opportunities with Mānuka Health, visit [www.manukahealth.co.nz](http://www.manukahealth.co.nz)