



📷 Thea Campbell, 10, and her brother Thomas, 12, taste some honey at her parents' shop "Honey I'm Home", a honey specialist shop in Maylands. Picture: PerthNow, Daniel Wilkins

WA News

Why honey is WA's new liquid gold

Trevor Paddenburg | PerthNow

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THE humble honey bee is behind a WA liquid gold rush.

Medicinal honey is the new buzzword in the apiary industry and the State's unique jarrah and marri honey is soaring in global demand, as new testing reveals it is packed with antioxidant and antimicrobial properties.

The prized honey – which has been found to eclipse the health benefits of New Zealand's famous manuka honey – is now fetching as much as \$1000 a kilogram in speciality stores in Asia.

WA's strict quarantine laws means bees here are unaffected by pests and diseases, leaving our honey untainted by antibiotics or pesticides.

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📷 Thea Campbell, 10, tastes some honey at her parents' shop "Honey I'm Home", a honey specialist shop in Maylands. Picture: PerthNow, Daniel Wilkins

Driving the liquid gold rush is a new certification process – developed by industry and food testing laboratory ChemCentre with the aid of a \$500,000 State Government grant – that for the first time has proved the health benefits of WA “monofloral” honey, including jarrah and marri, also known as red gum.

ChemCentre principal food scientist Ken Dods said his research showed jarrah and marri honey was unique to WA with “higher levels of antimicrobial activity than manuka honey”.

WAFarmers beekeeping section president Leilani Leyland agreed WA monofloral honey had “antioxidant levels that are very high and lots of natural activities for healing”.

Michael Bellman, the WA manager of Capilano-Wescobee, the State’s biggest honey supplier, said the health benefits of WA’s most prized honey were already being reflected in skyrocketing prices in Asia. “The Asian market is screaming for our honey. There are 4000 tonnes of honey produced a year in WA and we can’t get enough of it,” Mr Bellman said.

“One customer in China sells 250g of jarrah honey for \$250. You’re talking \$1000 a kilo. That’s the potential we’ve got.”





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He said the wholesale price in WA for marri honey had jumped 50 per cent in three months to \$10 a kilo, while “jarrah is now anything up to \$50-\$100 a kilo, depending on the anti-bacterial levels”.

Ben Fleahy, whose family-run Bee Happy business supplies honey to Capilano and exports to Asia, said the health benefits of honey are not “just an old wives’ tale – now there’s science to back it up”.

Stephen Davies, managing director of WA’s Davies Apiaries, said the new certification process would drive demand and spark the “transformation of the industry”.

Also driving the liquid gold boom is a new Co-operative Research Centre led by the University of WA and set up to boost the value and capacity of the honey industry.





📷 Driving the liquid gold rush is a new certification process — developed by industry and food testing laboratory ChemCentre. File image Picture: PerthNow

Spokeswoman Dr Liz Barbour said the price of WA honey and bee products “doesn’t reflect their unique, pure qualities” with “one of the healthiest honey bee populations in the world”.

WA investors in the honey business include Andrew Forrest’s Minderoo Group which is poised to start exporting premium WA honey to Asia and the Middle East under its Harvest Road brand, while Kerry Stokes holds a stake in Capilano Honey.

Caught up in the beehive boom are Perth youngsters Thomas and Thea Campbell, aged 12 and 10, who love honey gathered from their own hives.

The pair come from a family that revolves around honey. Their father Tristan Campbell is doing a PhD on beekeeping and has about 60 hives that supply some of the honey to his wife Blaine’s speciality bee products shop, called Honey I’m Home, in Maylands.





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