

## REGULATIONS

# Honey labels: the basic rules

If you intend to sell honey at a market or store, you must label it correctly. Sue Carney explains



August 2019

**1 THE WORD HONEY.** Sounds obvious but it's surprising how often beekeepers assume everyone else will know what's in the jar. It's the law to declare the name of the food you are selling. You can add other descriptions (such as the floral source, where the hives are located, your 'brand',

degree of processing or other terms that will appeal to potential purchasers). But however else you dress it up, the word honey must appear on the label in clear, prominent and legible text somewhere.

**2 WEIGHT OF PRODUCT** This is best expressed in grams. 350gr, 400gr and 500gr are common honey jar sizes. Weigh the jar, add the contents and subtract the weight of the jar from the final weight. Make sure you use accurate scales.

400gr

**3 YOUR NAME AND STREET ADDRESS.** This is so you can be contacted after the item has been purchased. The legal minimum is for an Australian street address of 'the supplier'. You can include a PO box, email address or website if you wish as an additional contact point but these options don't replace the requirement for a physical address.

**4 COUNTRY OF ORIGIN PANEL.** This is required on packaged food sold to consumers in Australia. You must use the standard mark with three components – the kangaroo in a triangle logo, a bar chart showing the percentage of Australian ingredients, and appropriate explanatory text. The standard doesn't require the CoO label be a minimum size but the information must be 'legible' and 'prominent'. To generate a panel that you can then use on your honey packaging, go to [originlabeltool.business.gov.au](http://originlabeltool.business.gov.au) For locally produced honey you can choose from a selection of descriptions, such as Produce of Australia, or Australian Honey.



expressed as both average quantity per serve and average quantity per 100gr. Find the [calculator online at foodstandards.gov.au](http://calculator.onlineatfoodstandards.gov.au) and input 'honey', and the size of your pack. (For serving size, see next page.) The online tool will do the rest.

**6 LOT IDENTIFIER.** This is important in case there is an issue with a batch of honey. The identifier can be in any form that would allow all honey produced and packaged at one time to be traced. So, if you pack only one lot a year, a simple year date is sufficient; if you pack throughout the season you will need something more precise.

**7** If your honey contains other ingredients, such as flavourings, the label needs **A STATEMENT OF INGREDIENTS** listed in descending order of weight. It will also need a warning statement if it contains substances such as nuts, milk, cereal or bee pollen. (Check the details carefully if you think this applies. FSANZ has a user guide to [warning statements](http://warningstatements.gov.au).) If your honey package contains only honey you don't need to include separate statement of ingredients since you have already called it honey according to point 1.

*Ingredients:  
Honey, ginger,  
cinnamon, nutmeg*

**8 ONLY TRUTHFUL STATEMENTS.** You must not use statements that are incorrect or likely to create a false impression. Don't call it organic unless you can meet the requirements set out in the [national standard for organic produce](http://nationalstandardfororganicproduce.gov.au), and don't make any other claims that you cannot prove. That includes health and wellbeing claims -- an area of consumer marketing that is highly regulated. (See next page.)

~~*This will make  
you live  
FOREVER!*~~

**DO YOUR LABELS COMPLY?** Now's the time to check and make any necessary changes so you are ready for next season.

*The information in this article is for general information purposes only. It should not be relied on as a substitute for legal advice.*

**5 NUTRITION PANEL.** This is less complicated than it looks. Food Standards ANZ has a [nutrition panel calculator](http://nutritionpanelcalculator.gov.au) that will generate all the data you need. The standard set of information must include a serving size, the number of those serves in the package, and the levels of energy, protein, total fat, saturated fat, carbohydrate, sugars and sodium

## REGULATIONS

# HONEY LABEL FAQs

### Do I need a Best Before or Use By date?

Date marking information is optional if the food has a shelf life longer than two years.

### What is a 'serve' of honey?

When creating the nutrition panel for your label you need to include the serving size and declare how many servings are in the container. Serving sizes are not defined in the Food Standards Code, but the authority's guidance is that it should be a realistic portion of the food that a normal person might consume on one eating occasion. Typically, supermarket honey brands use 15g as a serving size.

### What is the definition of legible?

It needs to be indelible – as in it won't rub off or become unreadable under normal conditions. It needs to be distinct – in other words readable on whatever background it is printed on. It needs to be easy to read: in most cases the size isn't prescribed although warning statements, where required, can have a prescribed minimum size dependant on the pack size.

### Do I need to warn about not feeding honey to babies?

Local beekeepers often get confused about this. Some countries require a warning statement but Australia does not. The warning relates to the risk that the immune systems of very young children (under 12

months) cannot cope with [botulinum spores](#) in honey. You might want to advise your customers but you aren't required to do so by law.

### Can I make health claims about honey?

Health and nutrition claims are governed by precise requirements in the Food Standards Code and in other consumer legislation in order to protect Australians from misleading or harmful statements. You need to fully understand what you can and cannot say, and what evidence you need to hold or include on your labels, advertisements or other marketing materials. You cannot make therapeutic claims — that is, refer to the prevention, diagnosis, cure or alleviation of a disease, disorder or condition without satisfying the Therapeutic Goods Administration that your product is a therapeutic item. This is a complex area. Food Regulation produces a [decision making guide to getting your claims right](#).

### Do I need a label if I sell from my premises or fill jars to order?

You don't need a label if the honey has been made and packaged on the premises from which it is sold, or if it is packaged in the presence of the purchaser. But if you are running a business from your premises you will need to check that you are complying with any council requirements such as zoning restrictions.



## DELVING DEEPER: SOURCES TO CONSULT

Food Standards Australia New Zealand at [foodstandards.gov.au](http://foodstandards.gov.au) This is a statutory authority at federal level. It develops the [Food Standards Code](#) which is enforced by all state and territory governments and local councils. Find the details of the code that relate to your honey sales; use the [nutrition panel calculator](#) to generate the data you need for your labels; and discover information about food safety, warnings, recalls and other topics presented in a number of [user guides](#).

The [Australian Competition and Consumer Commission](#) at [acc.gov.au](http://acc.gov.au) applies the Trade Practices Act to ensure that businesses operate competitively, efficiently and honestly. It makes sure the Food Standards Code is complied with in Australia, in particular representations that are made about [food on labels and in marketing](#). The ACCC has a FAQ section relating to the [Country of Origin labelling regulations](#).

[Business.gov.au](http://Business.gov.au) has created an online tool to help you understand whether you need to use a Country of Origin panel on food labels. The site also has general information on running a small business and on regulations that apply to [selling products and services in Australia](#).

## QUIZ

# Test your Bee IQ

Who is the odd one out?

- A) Cedar
- B) Émile
- C) Lorenzo
- D) Moses

ANSWER ON PAGE 13