



If you haven't tried Amber Drop Honey, you're missing out on something pretty special. What began as an interest in bees and rescuing colonies that had established themselves in unsafe locations, such as inside houses and sheds, has led Ana Martin and Sven Stephan to establish their own business. The couple currently manage 55 bee colonies, and their business (and love for bees!) is growing ...

What brought you to John's River to live?

I came to Australia over 20 years ago. Sven arrived about 10 years ago, and we met seven years ago, when he came as a customer to a café I co-owned in the Central Coast. We lived there for a few years. Two years ago we were looking for a property and were getting frustrated with how crazy the real estate market was.

Whilst on holidays in Europe (totally jet lagged), we stumbled upon a Facebook post that featured a farm around Wingham. We had nothing better to do in the early hours of the morning, so we started checking out what other properties were available in the area.

Once we found our current farm, we made an appointment to see it on the same day we arrived back in Australia (which in hindsight, was a bit crazy!) So maybe it was the sleep deprivation, but we decided to buy it on the same day we saw it. We moved permanently in September last year.

Where did your fascination with bees begin?

For Sven, it began when he was young, but he never got a chance to learn beekeeping whilst he was growing up in East Germany.

When the Indigogo campaign for the Flow Hive came out about two and half years ago, we started investigating more about bees, and we found out how badly they were doing all over the world. We started watching videos and reading articles and once you start learning about them, you cannot help but be more interested in

how amazing they are.

Your business, Amber Drop Honey, kind of began a bit by accident! Explain how you came up with the idea of relocating bee colonies to a safer location and ultimately producing your own honey ...

When we decided to do something to help the bees, we were thinking small scale ... one or two hives in the backyard, just for our use, and to give honey to friends.

We joined the Central Coast Beekeeping Association, and we found out that a good way to get a colony for free was to be on the swarm list and get a phone call when someone needed a colony removed.

We didn't know that a lot of colonies make a home inside walls, in chimneys, sheds, and that many beekeepers find it messy or don't have the tools to open gyprock walls, climb up on the roof etc. in order to collect them.

Sven is a kitchen installer by trade and has done some building work, so he had the tools and the know-how. He started getting a lot of these calls, and he ended up with 35 colonies within the first four months. Nine months into it, we had quite a bit of honey, and Sven was so passionate about it that we decided to give it a go as a business venture.

There must have been some interesting - possibly even scary - moments for you guys, as bees are definitely creatures that need

to be handled with care. What are some of your favourite bee-related memories?

Sven was moving a couple of hives from our house in Empire Bay to a farm in Sommersby. Sven's parents were visiting, and his dad wanted to go with him and help him carry the bees.

One of the hives was a two storey nuc [nuclear colony] and even though they thought they had strapped it correctly, on one of the curves driving back it must have moved enough to let bees out. In less than a minute, they had thousands of bees flying around in the car. They had to very quickly grab their suits and get out of the car to put them on, and then they drove the rest of the way fully suited.

"I don't think I have ever been so quick to jump out of the car and into a suit, and I can still see the faces of the other drivers as they saw us driving around in full suits and surrounded by bees," Sven says.

How many bee colonies do you currently care for?

At the moment, we have about 55 colonies. Each colony can have between 50,000 and 60,000 bees in summer. In winter, the population in a hive dwindles down to conserve resources.

What honey products do you produce - and how do you market them?

Regular, creamed and ginger honey, as well as comb honey, and we are also developing other

“ We feel that bees are 'the canary in the mine', *and their difficulties in surviving are a clear indication that we are coming to a tipping point in our environment.* We feel that in general people do not quite comprehend the extent of the destruction we are creating ...

flavours. We go to different markets all the way from Newcastle to Bellingen, and we have a few stockists in the area. You can also purchase our honey online.

If you are a beginner beekeeper, we can help by providing you with the boxes, and we are starting to get a course together to teach the skills we have learnt ourselves.

Why are you so passionate about bees and their survival into the future?

We feel that bees are “the canary in the mine”, and their difficulties in surviving are a clear indication that we are coming to a tipping point in our environment.

We feel that in general people do not quite comprehend the extent of the destruction we are creating, and we do not think about where our rubbish goes to, what happens to the plastic we use only once, how the animals we eat are treated, how we are decimating fish in the ocean and how many species we are driving to extinction. We put the blinkers on and go on consuming, like there is no impact.

Everyone can make a difference, even by making small changes in our day to day choices. The way we have chosen to do so is by helping the bees and by creating a business that has its basis on rescuing colonies that might otherwise be destroyed and by trying to educate customers to make better decisions.

Five percent of our sales go to “Save The Bees Australia”, as our way of giving back.

Where can we find out more info?

info@amberdrophoney.com.au
www.amberdrophoney.com.au
Ana 0403 896 248.

Thanks guys.