

COMPLAINT NUMBER	19/053
COMPLAINANT	M Honeychurch
ADVERTISER	doTERRA NZ
ADVERTISEMENT	doTERRA NZ, Unaddressed Mail
DATE OF MEETING	18 February 2019
OUTCOME	Settled – advertisement removed

Advertisement: The doTERRA brochure advertisement promoting essential oils said the oils are used for a very wide range of physical and emotional applications. The brochure lists various ingredients such as lavender, lemon and peppermint and the health benefits these can provide.

The Chair ruled the complaint was Settled.

Complainant, M Honeychurch, **said:** doTERRA's flyer for their essential oils makes therapeutic claims about their oils. On the front page of the flyer, a claim is made that the essential oils Kill viruses and bacteria, and have Safe benefits without the side effects. On the back of the flyer, there is a list of Common Uses of doTERRA Essential Oils, which includes the following therapeutic claims:

Lavender - Neutralize insect bites and stings, Regenerate burns and damaged skin

Lemon - Sanitize-eliminate germs, viruses and microbes, Soothe sore throat

Peppermint - Reduce chest congestion, Calm headaches and cough, Ease digestive complaints, Easy air, Clear lungs and sinuses, Improve respiratory discomfort, Calm asthma attacks and symptoms, Soothe cold and flu discomfort, Calm cough

Digestzen - Ease stomach and digestive discomfort, Relieve nausea and motion sickness

Calm heartburn and acid reflux.

On Guard - Natural antiseptic

Each of these (Lavender, Lemon, Peppermint, Easy air, Digestzen and On Guard) is a doTERRA essential oil, and the therapeutic claims for these products appear to have been made despite a lack of good quality evidence being available to back the claims up.

These claims breach Principle 2 of the ASA's Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code, as they appear to not be truthful, and are likely to be misleading to consumers. This misinformation about the efficacy of doTERRA's products is likely to mislead potential buyers into thinking that the products are able to help them with medical conditions such as bites, stings, burns, viral and bacterial infections, sore throats, headaches, coughs, colds, influenza, digestive issues, respiratory problems, nausea, heartburn and acid reflux.

No evidence has been given on the flyer to back up these claims, and it seems unlikely that essential oils are capable of inferring these medical benefits to consumers. At the very least there's a paucity of evidence for the claims being made, and that should be reason enough for doTERRA to refrain from making the claims. Rule 2(a) has been breached by this lack of substantiation.

Principle 1 of the code has been breached, as it's socially irresponsible for doTERRA to make unsupported therapeutic claims to consumers about their products.

Rule 1(b), which says that Advertisements shall not contain any claim... that the products... have no side effects has been breached, as the flyer states on the front Safe benefits without the side effects.

Rule 1(c) has been breached, as the claims portray unrealistic outcomes for people's health if they use these essential oils.

The Advertiser, doTERRA NZ, **said**: “Thank you for bringing the above to our attention. doTERRA takes compliance very seriously.

Upon receiving the aforementioned claim, doTERRA immediately consulted with the Wellness Advocate in question, and the flyer was removed from circulation. Further training has since been provided to assist in ensuring materials are void of claims that breach the relevant section of the Advertising Codes of Practice - Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code, Principles 1 and Principle 2, Rule 1(b), Rule 1(c).

In doing so, we feel this satisfies the concerns in the correspondence received.

We are committed in taking steps to comply with relevant laws, policies and regulations, and will continue to ensure messaging put forth by our Wellness Advocates are aligned with this goal.”

The relevant provisions were Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code - Principle 1, Principle 2, Rule 1(b), Rule 1(c);

The Chair noted the Complainant’s concern that the Advertiser’s flyer for doTERRA’s essential oils contained unsubstantiated therapeutic claims about the benefits of various ingredients, which were misleading.

The Chair acknowledged the Advertiser had removed the flyer, after receiving the complaint.

Given the Advertiser’s co-operative engagement with the process and the self-regulatory action taken in removing the advertisement, the Chair said that it would serve no further purpose to place the matter before the Complaints Board. The Chair ruled that the matter was settled.

Chair’s Ruling: Complaint **Settled – advertisement removed**

APPEAL INFORMATION

According to the procedures of the Advertising Standards Complaints Board, all decisions are able to be appealed by any party to the complaint. Information on our Appeal process is on our website www.asa.co.nz. Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 days of receipt of this decision.