

<b>COMPLAINT NUMBER</b>	20/156
<b>ADVERTISER</b>	Abeeco Ltd
<b>ADVERTISEMENT</b>	Manuka Honey of NZ, Website
<b>DATE OF MEETING</b>	1 July 2020
<b>OUTCOME</b>	Settled – advertisement amended

#### **Advertisement:**

The Manuka Honey of NZ digital marketing advertisement promotes its various honey products by taking about viruses in a blog post called "Can Manuka Honey stop me getting a Virus". The blog post talks about what a virus is, the types of viruses there are, whether Manuka honey can stop viruses, what products are best for stopping viruses, ingredients to look for and lastly, what else you can do to prevent viruses. The blog ends with a buy now button that links to products as well as references used for the blog.

#### **The Chair ruled the complaint was Settled.**

#### **Complaint:**

A blog post on the Manuka Honey of NZ website

(<https://manukahoneyofnz.com/blogs/manuka-honey-blog/can-manuka-honey-stop-me-getting-a-virus>) makes the following claims about their honey products in relation to COVID-19:

"So, can Manuka Honey stop me getting a virus? Well, it may not stop it but it does seem to be able to boost your immune system to minimise the risk of you getting a virus, reduce viral activity and help you recover quicker.

It's been trusted for centuries by healers all over the world. At a time when we receive a lot of mixed messaging, perhaps now is the time to trust in natural ingredients that have stood the test of time. Use High MGO Manuka Honey as part of your COVID-19 protection plans."

"How to choose the best Manuka Honey product for preventing or treating a virus?"

At Manuka Honey of NZ we've selected a range of the best Manuka Honey products to help you protect yourself. Research suggests that even eating medicinal grade Manuka Honey may offer benefits, or you can select from our specialist antiviral and immune-boosting products."

"Select your antiviral Manuka Honey products now at Anti-Viral & Immune Support"

These claims are in breach of the ASA's Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code Rule 2(a), as they have not been substantiated. Although the company has given some references at the bottom of the blog post, none of the references appears to constitute robust evidence for claims that any of Manuka Honey of NZ's products can "minimise the risk of you getting a virus", "reduce viral activity" or "help you recover quicker". There's certainly no backing to the claim that consumers should "Use High MGO Manuka Honey as part of [their] COVID-19 protection plans". Also, one of the listed products have been shown to be "antiviral", and any claim that they are is premature at least, and given the available scientific literature likely to be wrong.

As these claims are not backed up by good quality evidence (and what appears to be absolutely no evidence for the particular products being sold), they are likely to mislead consumers - breaching Principle 2 of the code. Given how socially irresponsible it is to be making these unfounded claims, in a time when so many people are desperate to do

anything to help protect themselves from a deadly virus, the advert appears to also breach Principle 1 of the code.

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

**Principle 2: Truthful Presentation:** Advertisements shall be truthful, balanced and not misleading. Advertisements shall not mislead or be likely to mislead, deceive or confuse consumers, abuse their trust, exploit their lack of knowledge or without justifiable reason, play on fear. This includes by implication, omission, ambiguity, exaggerated or unrealistic claim or hyperbole.

**Rule 2 (a) Truthful presentation:** Advertisements shall be accurate. Statements and claims shall be valid and shall be able to be substantiated. Substantiation should exist prior to a claim being made. For medicines and medical devices, therapeutic claims must be consistent with the approved indication(s) (for medicines) or the listed intended purpose (for medical devices).

**The Chair** noted the Complainant's concerns the website advertisement was making unsubstantiated therapeutic claims and playing on consumers fear of Covid-19.

The Chair accepted the complaints to go before the Complaints Board, for adjudication as to whether the advertising breached the Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code. As part of the self-regulatory process, Advertisers have the option of amending their advertising to comply with the Advertising Codes.

The Advertiser reviewed the website content subject to complaint and amended the statements subject to complaint to support compliance with the Therapeutic and Health Advertising Code.

Given the Advertiser's co-operative engagement with the process and the self-regulatory action taken in amending 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:** Complaints **Settled – advertisement amended**

#### **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](http://www.asa.co.nz). Appeals must be made in writing via email or letter within 14 calendar days of receipt of this decision.