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NIASA and BioSecure HACCP accreditation helps Fleming's navigate cross-jurisdictional trade

COVID-19 has highlighted the complexity in commerce taking place across state borders. But strict adherence to best-practice NIASA and BioSecure HACCP accreditation can help maintain plant health and biosecurity within production nurseries and when working across different jurisdictions.

That's according to Jess Fleming, fruit tree production manager at Fleming's Nurseries Queensland. Jess, under the guidance of her father, well known horticulturalist Wes Fleming, has brought success to the 60-acre production nursery which specialises in sub-tropical fruit trees along with ornamental trees and shrubs.

Jess, part of the fourth generation of tree stock producers, moved to Queensland to manage the nursery when Fleming's acquired the Sunshine Coast business formerly known as Birdwood Nursery, which has been running for over 40 years. Today the nursery employs between 40 and 50 full time staff and grows more than 400,000 plants per year.

Fleming's has built its foundation on strict processes, plant protection and biosecurity protocols across their entire business, placing a focus on plant health and government accreditation. It's commitment to ensuring high health plant production was certified in 1993 under the Queensland Nursery Voluntary Accreditation Scheme, and further in 1996 where the business obtained accreditation under the new Nursery Industry Accreditation Scheme Australia (NIASA).

Fleming's plant protection and biosecurity credentials were further bolstered in 2011 when they became the first production nursery in Australia to achieve BioSecure HACCP certification as Birdwood Nursery.

With sub-tropical trees facing pressure from endemic pests and diseases as well as interstate regulations, Jess says that maintaining a high standard of plant health and implementing best management practices is crucial for continued customer satisfaction.

"Without these procedures we would have significantly more pest and disease incursions in our nursery and this would cost us time, labour and an increase in plant death," she said.

"Embedded into our plant protection and biosecurity is traceability – understanding the pathways that our plants take across the nursery, to customers and across state lines. Robust traceability gives us the ability to identify the source of issues and rectify problems immediately, and where needed we can set new procedures in place to mitigate further risks."

Over time, the business has developed, implemented and maintained BioSecure HACCP certification by working to always better their standards, levels of control and strict procedures throughout the nursery.

"As a production nursery, we have customers and partners across the country, where regulations differ state to state. We must satisfy interstate biosecurity regulatory requirements associated with the entry conditions of each of these states, making it critically important that we ensure plants are healthy and we meet all biosecurity requirements prior to shipment leaving our nursery," Jess said.

"It is preferable for our business to have a proactive approach to plant protection and biosecurity rather than a reactive approach.

"The standards we have set have helped us train staff, making high health plant production and plant biosecurity second nature within the business. Our



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staff know that poor plant management practices and procedures can have real life consequence for the business, so our staff are aware that being vigilant in plant health practices is critical to reducing pest and disease incursions around the nursery and maintaining our accreditations.

“Maintaining healthy plants provides confidence to our customers that we are supplying them with high health tree stock, no matter where they are located. This allows them to maximise productivity, ensuring their livelihood and protect the wider nursery and farming industries, as well as the environment, from both established and exotic plant pests and diseases.”

As a NIASA, EcoHort, BioSecure HACCP and now an Avocado Nursery Stock Specification certified business, maintaining high plant health and nursery hygiene is critical, so the business is often guided by the NIASA and BioSecure HACCP Manuals and procedures.

“Nursery hygiene is critical to maintaining our certification, so in addition to keeping a clean nursery, we are also constantly risk monitoring and assessing what is introduced to the nursery and utilising the NIASA and BioSecure HACCP Manuals and procedures to maintain high levels of plant protection and biosecurity,” Jess said.

“We have a strict code of practice that helps us reduce the risk of pests and diseases entering and becoming established in our production nursery. It is important to us that staff have the knowledge and protocols to reduce pest and biosecurity risk through good sanitation practices, frequent monitoring of each crop, site surveillance, inspection, management and recording of all incoming goods to maintain freedom from introduced pests.

“Our best management practice guidelines cover crop hygiene, crop management, site management, plant protection and water management. They provide a holistic approach to ensuring that the product that we deliver to the customer is consistent, healthy, strong, and ready for planting. We are giving our plants the best start, to ensure that they thrive once they leave our nursery.

“Undoubtedly, the success of Fleming's is our continuous and unrelenting dedication to the production of high-quality trees that have formed the

backbone of our reputation over 100 years. Through our NIASA and BioSecure HACCP accreditation, we have maintained our business viability by ensuring a high-quality product is delivered to our customers. “In five to 10 years, we would love to see the uptake of NIASA and BioSecure HACCP certification industry wide to continue upwards and reach new markets, all the while maintaining high quality plant stock, bringing peace of mind to Australian farmers and households.”

Implementing a robust plant protection program such as BioSecure HACCP is an effective way to manage everyday plant protection and mitigate biosecurity risks within production nurseries and ensure businesses meet interstate market access requirements.

To learn how your nursery business can access the BioSecure HACCP manual, please head to: <http://nurseryproductionfms.com.au/biosecurehaccp-certification/>



BioSecure HACCP is the national nursery industry on-farm Plant Protection and Biosecurity Program for production nurseries, growing media manufacturers and greenlife markets.

It is managed under the strategic levy-funded project, National biosecurity and sustainable plant production program (NY20001).

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This project has been funded by Hort Innovation using the nursery research and development levy and funds from the Australian Government. For more information on the fund and strategic levy investment visit horticulture.com.au



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