



Hemp could be the saviour of bees and good for people at the same time

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[Bees pollinating on hemp could help prevent diseases and protect bee populations.](#) (Supplied)

The medicinal benefits of Manuka honey are well known, and it has turned into big business for Australian and New Zealand producers.

But could there be others types of medicinal honey produced from tea trees, or even medicinal cannabis?

Researcher David Rudd, of Southern Cross University, is working with a north coast New South Wales farmer to test that theory.

Dr Rudd has been testing the honey from the Jenbrook tea tree plantation in Alstonville, the second oldest in the country.

The results look promising.

Flavonoids are antioxidants with anti-inflammatory and immune system benefits.

Dr Rudd said the benefits may also stem from the nectar in the trees.

"Nectar often contains bioactive metabolites that sometimes impart anti-microbial activity to the plant itself," he said.

"The process of converting nectar to honey, and honey storage, causes fermentation of simple carbohydrates, which also results in fermentation products that have well known anti-microbial activity."

Dr Rudd is confident honey from Jenbrook's tea tree plants, called Meluka honey, will be beneficial.

"I have seen some of these products in chemical profiles of tea tree honey," he said.

Tech investment firm backs Jenbrook

A WA investor has put \$1.49m into Jenbrook Pty Ltd.

Eve Investments has bought 50 per cent of the company that currently supplies raw tea tree oil, extracts and honey products to the US.

Demand is strong and Jenbrook expects to double revenue this financial year.

The money from the deal will be used to speed up the development process for Melaleuca (or Meluka) honey, and finance other work that has just commenced into honey produced from bees pollinating on cannabis plants.

Ben Rohr, investment director at Eve Investments, said there was a lot of interest in medicinal honey since the evidence around Manuka honey was published, and honey from tea trees could be the next big thing.

"The success that Manuka honey has had in China is phenomenal," he said.

The results from Southern Cross University are being eagerly awaited but Mr Rohr said the indications were positive.

"The Meluka honey has been produced and we are very encouraged by those results," he said.

"However, we'll wait until Southern Cross University completes those results before releasing anything."

Jenbrook principal Bryan Easson confirmed the early results of the Meluka testing were "more than favourable".

"We've taken samples of the honey produced and had the compounds identified," he said.

"You've got to know the true source, identify them in the plant material, and then see what is produced in the honey, and that's basically the stage we're at."



[The health benefits of honey produced from bees pollinating on Manuka trees has been proven.](#)

(Supplied)



[Tea tree plantations like this one at Robyndale Farm, owned by Jenbrook in the Bungawalbyn Valley Basin in northern NSW, could soon be producing medicinal honey.](#) (Supplied)

Bee health could be improved

Mr Easson is passionate about the potential health benefits for bees in the research.

Bees are threatened worldwide with diseases, and allowing them to feed on tea trees in native environments and in hemp plantations could help prevent some of those diseases.

"Bee health is the critical part of it," Mr Easson said.

"That's what prompted us to become involved in the research, with the knowledge that there are a lot of serious diseases devastating the production of honey, and the loss of bees in pollinating crops throughout the world.

"Without bees we don't have a world."

He said the results of those trials were also encouraging.

Mr Easson said research work was being done in conjunction with another beehive producer, while the analytic work and scientific evidence was being conducted in laboratory situations by industry specialists.

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