

GROWER PROFILE: MEET NICK & NERIDA HORNER

BY SACHA HARTY

Set amongst the lush rolling hills of Northern Rivers NSW, just 6km south of Bangalow and a mere 20km inland from Byron Bay, is the quaint and welcoming town of Newrybar, the place where the equally welcoming 'Hornery family,' have occupied land for nearly 45 years!

In 2001, son Nick, joined his parents Jeff and Robyn farming passionfruit. Fast forward 10 years, and in 2011 Nick and wife Nerida took over the farm 'Arika' and haven't looked back since. Trading as 'N & N Hornery,' they grow the sweetheart variety. They grow approximately 6500 vines across 16 acres, of an overall 40 acre farm.

Nick and Nerida have three children, Gus (9), Edie (7), and Charlie (4). What they love most about growing passionfruit is the lifestyle. The fact that the whole family can be together at their peaceful place of work along with the flexibility it gives them raising a young family. As with any work, farming has its downsides. For the Hornery's, it's simply that it is hard to have down-time and long family holidays. But this aside, Nick and Nerida both agree that the positives outweigh the negatives!

Where would Nick and Nerida choose to go if they actually could go on an extended holiday? For Nick, it's sun and surf in an overwater bungalow in Bora Bora! This is no surprise given Nick's years on the water, competitive surfboat rowing locally and abroad.

And what would Nerida choose as her destination of choice? A family trip to the soft peaks of the Canadian ski fields. As well as being an avid skier, Nerida has a passion for horse riding, and quite the talent for song writing.

In fact, Nerida and her sister have won a number of international song writing competitions! Certainly no lack of skills and accomplishments amongst PAI growers!

Whilst on the topic of skills, Nick and his parents have for the past few years poured their skills into grafting their own plants onto home grown rootstock on-site in their greenhouse. Nick and Nerida have even taken tackling disease into their own hands and are trialling a cover crop with a radish and mustard seed blend, in an attempt to get rid of the problematic *Fusarium Solani*.

Keeping it in the family, Nick's brother also works on the farm, and given Jeff and Robyn live on 'Arika,' they too are never far from the action. Even the kids play their part, picking up and helping out mum and dad when fruit is on.

And let's not forget dog Banjo, working 24/7 with few complaints!

Finally, if there's one thing Nick and Nerida have learnt on their passionfruit growing journey, that could help new or experienced growers on their journey, it's to pay attention to the detail... Don't let things go. And don't be afraid to ask for help from experienced growers, as there is so much to learn from sharing time and knowledge with each other.

If you're a current PAI grower member you can ask questions directly through the online Grower Forum, even posting pictures of a pest or disease that you need help to identify. Contact Sacha if you need help to access the forum.

Thank you Nick & Nerida for sharing your life with us.

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If you're new to passionfruit, a top tip from Nick is to stay on top of the detail and don't let a problem go and get out of hand ...

Cover crop in paddock where vines had suffered from *fusarium solani*





Nick, Nerida and Charlie in the paddock

A few of their 'Flavicarpa' rootstock plants

The packing line is an oldie but a goodie