

OIA23-0240

25 May 2023

L. Oliver  
fyi-request-22643-e0bfc4b6@requests.fyi.org.nz

Dear L. Oliver

Thank you for your email of 1 May 2023 requesting information relating to Optimel Gel imports. Your request has been considered under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA).

*As context, I have chronic dry eyes. One of the few products that helps this condition is Optimel Gel. It is a gel largely comprised of sterile medical grade honey. It is an imported product that has been available on the New Zealand market for a number of years. I have recently been advised it is no longer available as your Ministry has apparently decided it has too high a percentage of honey...*

*As such, I would like you to provide any and all information regarding any decision that your Ministry has made that directly relates to the import of Optimel Gel into New Zealand. In particular, I would like to know why it was previously acceptable for it to be in the country but now it is not.*

Earlier this year a consignment of Optimel Gel was found to not meet the requirements of the Import Health Standard for Specified Processed Bee Products (<https://www.mpi.govt.nz/dmsdocument/1176-Specified-processed-bee-products-Import-Health-Standard->). The product was subsequently assessed and given biosecurity clearance.

The Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI) informed the importer that an import permit was required for any future consignments. The importer lodged a permit application in May 2023, and the permit has now been issued.

I trust the information provided is of assistance. Should you have any concerns with this response, I would encourage you to raise these with the Ministry for Primary Industries at [Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz](mailto:Official.InformationAct@mpi.govt.nz). Alternatively, you are advised of your right to also raise any concerns with the Office of the Ombudsman. Contact details are: Office of the Ombudsman, PO Box 10152, Wellington 6143 or at [info@ombudsman.parliament.nz](mailto:info@ombudsman.parliament.nz).

Yours sincerely



Peter Thomson  
**Director, Animal and Plant Health**