

"I've got a bad feeling about this one!"

By Andrew Dovaston

"I've got a bad feeling about this one!" ... were the first words spoken by Kevin about a cartage job we were about to do. He picked me at up 6.30 on a Friday evening, to help out with a 'little job'. He has a 2 tonne truck with a crane, and usually does lifting jobs like moving garden sheds or spa pools. The brief was moving 40 odd bee hives from Te Teko to Opotiki.

We arrived at the meeting point in Te Teko just before dark and were assured by beekeeper Ollie the bees were nestled away for the night, and we'd be fine. I must point out, apart from hives being on the kiwifruit orchards I was working in, I had zero bee handling experience.... I still had more experience with them than Kev did.

We started loading the best part of 3.6 million bees... the job upped now to 72 hives... (50,000 bees per hive). We found that most were bedded down for the night... apart from a very small percentage, about 20 bees, who decided they weren't really interested in the travel plans ahead, and decided to deal to the newbie Apiary technicians, we were seriously under dressed, in jeans and a hoodie! We were wearing gloves, but still managed to get stung on our hands.

It took a couple of hours loading with strops & the crane, Ollie had buzzed off somewhere, while we loaded the hives onto the truck, he then reappeared in time to head off... assuring us he'd be at the drop off point.

So here we are, all loaded up and ready head out the gate.... Were we unwittingly being involved in bee hive theft?? Was there going to be a sting in this tale? Along the way we checked the load a couple of times and pondered the possible jail sentence ahead. The mug shots would have been interesting to say the least with our swollen & blotchy faces!

The good news was I could still see out of my left eye and Kevin had the use of his right, we drove THROUGH Opotiki to Tirohanga, by 11.30pm we'd arrived at the drop off point, where we were met by Ollie, (who turned out to be a good guy after all), and his mate Lofty. Lofty wasn't a tall man, but he did have a forklift.... My new best friend! I decided to stand back in case there was another uprising among the 3.6million passengers. 15 minutes later, Lofty had emptied the truck and trailer and we headed for home.

So as I write this, we haven't been arrested for transporting stolen goods and I can just about see out of both eyes!

Bee seeing you soon!

Andrew