

MEDIA RELEASE

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NATURAL HEALTH PRODUCTS INDUSTRY 2022 AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

Natural Health Products NZ has announced the winners of its annual industry awards, including the Supreme Award for the best overall entry:

SUPREME AWARD	Keraplast Manufacturing
MARKETING AWARD	Keraplast Manufacturing
CAWTHRON INSTITUTE INNOVATION AWARD	Blis Technologies
THE FERNMARK LICENCE PROGRAMME GROWTH AWARD	Me Today
BUSINESS RESILIENCE AWARD	Vitaco Health (NZ)

Natural Health Products New Zealand is the industry body for Aotearoa New Zealand's natural health and complementary products sector, representing the industry's interests locally and abroad.

Awards Head Judge Peter Lehrke, Natural Health Products NZ Director, says the annual awards celebrate an innovative sector that continues to build on the value it adds to New Zealand's economy.

"As the year's winners attest, the natural health products sector combines cutting-edge science, adding value to primary industry products, and using locally sourced natural ingredients to create outstanding products that are highly sought after in local and export markets.

Award winner overviews

SUPREME AWARD: KERAPLAST MANUFACTURING

Keraplast Manufacturing's core business involves extracting powerful bioactive keratin proteins from sheep's wool in a manner that is both unique and protected by a strong intellectual property

portfolio. The company is based in Lincoln and grew out of research funded by New Zealand woolgrowers' levies.

Keraplast Manufacturing was judged the Natural Health Products NZ Supreme Award winner due to its highly innovative approach in developing its KeraGEN-IV product. It is sold as an ingredient for other companies to utilise in their own consumer products.

KeraGEN-IV's success involved savvy product development based on robust science, and clever branding and marketing.

Despite being launched during last year's Covid lockdown, demand for KeraGEN-IV has exceeded expectations to the extent that Keraplast has now reached production capacity in its current plant and is planning a move to a bigger plant in late 2023.

The judges were highly impressed with Keraplast's story of clinically proven efficacy and innovation in developing an ingredient that supports our primary producers in the wool industry. See the Marketing award summary below for more information.

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MARKETING AWARD: KERAPLAST MANUFACTURING

This award recognises a company that has achieved exceptional results from the implementation of an outstanding marketing campaign.

Lincoln-based Keraplast are global experts in bioactive keratin recovery, creating branded ingredients for world-leading personal care and beauty products.

But most people have never heard of keratin, so the challenge was: How to market a powerful, bioactive protein to people who know nothing about it? The answer lay in the personal care and beauty markets' rapidly growing interest in collagen.

Because Keraplast's unique keratin proteins promote the development of collagens IV and VII, Keraplast was able to develop a branded ingredient for the Inner Beauty market capable of riding on the shoulders of the collagen giant.

The judges were impressed with Keraplast's well-articulated plans that went beyond 'business as usual' and required innovative marketing-based solutions.

The ability to associate a seemingly unlikely ingredient – keratin protein extracted from wool - with a human health juggernaut in collagen was an overwhelming success as judged by the numbers.

The judges applauded the use of solid consumer insights in a B2B marketing plan and also felt the descriptive naming of this trademarked ingredient keraGEN-IV was an elegant branding solution.

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CAWTHRON INSTITUTE INNOVATION AWARD: WINNER – BLIS TECHNOLOGIES

This award recognises outstanding innovation demonstrated in any facet of the entrant's business.

Dunedin-based Blis Technologies develops and manufactures innovative probiotic solutions. Founded on the research of Professor John Tagg (University of Otago) the company was formed in 2000 to develop probiotic based solutions for human health applications.

Blis launched its Unconditional Skincare Co. brand in 2021, featuring its hero product BLIS Q24® Live Probiotic Hydration Serum, a unique live probiotic serum.

Unconditional Skincare Co. is the world's only skincare brand licensed to use BLIS Q24® – currently the only commercialised probiotic skincare ingredient that is natively found on healthy human skin. The judges noted Blis Technologies' courage in entering the skincare market with a product containing a probiotic given the significant microbiology-challenge this presented.

They were impressed with how the adaptability in Blis's innovation was led by very complex science, and robust and disciplined processes.

The judging panel said: “Blis’s challenge and solution were well articulated with success across a range of parameters including verification by independent research.”

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THE FERNMARK LICENCE PROGRAMME GROWTH AWARD: ME TODAY

This award is made to the company with the highest percentage increase in total revenue.

Me Today was founded by Michael Kerr in 2018 after his wife, Nikki, was diagnosed with stage three breast cancer. It was through his and Nikki’s search for a trustworthy, New Zealand based skincare and supplement range that the concept of Me Today was born.

The Auckland-based company creates skincare and supplements based on science and tradition, with every product formulated in New Zealand using high-quality ingredients.

Me Today began with just 5 employees and in under three years has acquired a Mānuka honey company and grown to 17 staff in their head office and 25 beekeepers based in Taupō.

It now has 51 SKUs, 17 supplements, and 34 skincare products. Me Today’s products are sold in seven countries worldwide, with the range and stockist locations being rapidly expanded. They are now in 7 countries worldwide and rapidly developing their range and stockist locations.

With this, the Me Today group saw a 530% net sales increase for the last financial period.

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BUSINESS RESILIENCE AWARD: VITACO HEALTH (NZ)

This award recognises a company that has demonstrated exceptional resilience in 2021 amidst and despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Vitaco Health Ltd began as a company in 2007 as a merger of two Australasian health & wellness companies: Nutra-Life Health & Fitness: a leading supplement and sports nutrition manufacturer. Healtheries of New Zealand: one of New Zealand's most trusted brands and largest and oldest health food and supplement manufacturers.

It employs over 400 health-passionate people, exporting and distributing products worldwide.

Transitioning in 2021 from keeping Covid-19 out, to managing the new Covid strains, brought with it many challenges, the biggest of which was how to continue to support team members.

The judges were impressed with the impressive lengths Vitaco took to mitigate against Covid in the workplace.

“Vitaco have done an exceptional job of supporting their business, their staff and their families.”

The company's efforts resulted in a raft of successes reported against brand share, volumes, new product development, and staff engagement.

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