

Final Report

Avocado Retail Education 2024 (AV23007)

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Avocado Retail Education 2024 (AV23007)

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Public Summary

The objective of the Avocado Retail Education 2024 program was to address staff knowledge and identify gaps on a retail level surrounding variety characteristics, quality and stock management, storage practices, product merchandising and shelf management.

The project was designed to help grow demand for avocados through addressing the key barriers to consumers purchasing avocados and to improve the knowledge among retail staff. The program through repeated store visits aimed to better inform fresh produce staff on industry standards around how to display, store and monitor the quality of avocados on a store level.

The program objective was achieved by:

- Briefing and training a field team to train and report on staff knowledge and best practices regarding storage, display and quality monitoring.
- Interacting with retail staff – predominately fresh produce staff to obtain feedback to better understand gaps and how these can be improved.
- Focusing on how stock is stored and the movement of stock through stores, to assist in identifying how quality issues may arise.
- Communicating and reporting back through a tableau dashboard weekly. Illustrating results were collated by the field team visiting stores.

Introduction

The Avocado Retail Education 2024 (AV23007) was contracted to address the staff knowledge and practice gaps identified by Hort Innovation (see Projects AV2206, AV15010, AV12013, AV15011, AV19003) at a retail level on the different varieties (Shepard and Hass) and quality management including stock management, storage practices, product merchandising and shelf management.

Specifically, the 2024 Avocado Program Education Program is an extension of the 2023 program, with two key objectives.

1. To address the key barriers to consumers purchasing Australian Avocados, notably:

- poor quality (ripeness at time of purchase).
- go off too quickly.
- poor quality, bruise easily.

2. To improve the knowledge among retail staff around:

- varietal attributes.
- correct handling.
- storage, ripening and display of avocados in-store.

This will lead to an increased demand for Australian Avocados, driving purchase intent, conversion at the shelf and ultimately an increase in consumer satisfaction due to improved quality.

The Program is built around a field team (merchandisers) that are deployed into a selected number of Coles and Woolworths stores, multiple times, to conduct surveys on retail staff and shoppers, undertake audits of avocado fixtures and storage, and to train retail staff on 'best practices'. Merchandisers will have to deploy a Back of House poster in the store's storage/staff room.

Merchandisers are trained by D2C through informational videos and training material supplied by Hort Innovation. D2C customised the training material for the merchandisers on an engaging eLearning platform. This is used for top-up training of merchandisers and to also train retail staff.

Keywords

Avocado; Woolworths; Coles; Retail Education; Best practice; Merchandisers; Dashboard

Methodology

This project deployed a field team into 800 retail stores during a 3-month period between March through to June 2024. Each store was visited at a minimum of 7 times throughout the project duration. During visits, the field team conducted:

- surveys with 7,346 retail staff (Appendix 1)
- surveys with 5,694 shoppers in store (Appendix 2)
- Undertook 6,113 merchandising and handling audits (Appendix 3)
- Delivered retail staff training on ‘best practices’ handling, storage and merchandising to 7,346 staff (Appendix 4)
- Delivered back of house (BOH) posters on correct storage and handling to stores (Appendix 5)

Staff and Shopper Survey Execution

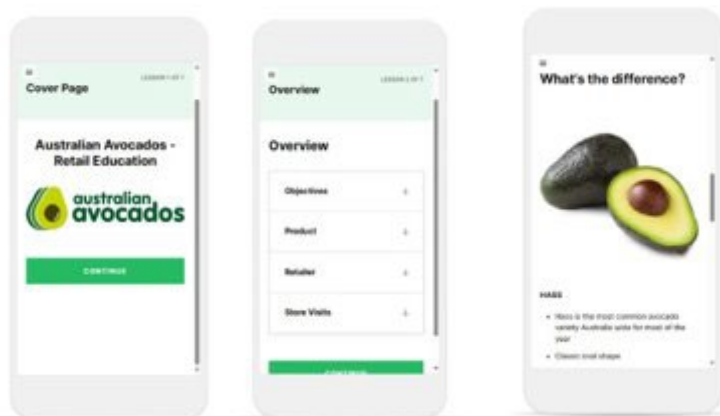
Online Training Resources

Staff training is delivered via the Australian Avocados Retail Education eLearning platform EdApp, a mobile learning management system (LMS), and used by the merchandisers on their phones (or other devices) when in-store to assist in training and educating retail staff. See below screenshots of the eLearning platform created for the program.

Different eLearning modules were created for Coles and Woolworths suited to their store operations and merchandising standards.

The program included the following capabilities:

- Pictures of ‘best in class avocado displays and fixtures in-store for both Hass and Shepard varieties.
- Pictures of how to display and rotate stock based on ripeness for both Hass and Shepard varieties.
- Pictures of how staff and shoppers can test for ripeness and select the avocado that best suits their needs (eat now, eat later).
- Q&A for retail staff about the differences between Hass and Shepard varieties and which one best meets their recipe needs (spreads, salads etc).
- Q&A for retail staff on supply chain management, notably how to store Hass and Shepard varieties.



Merchandising & Handling Audits

A dedicated resource at D2C head office contacted the fresh department store manager or their 2IC 3-4 weeks prior to the Program going live, to inform them of the merchandisers visit and the objectives of the Program (in some instances additional stock will need to be ordered for an expected uplift in sales). The relevant merchandiser contacted the store 24 hours prior to their shift to inform them of their visit, the objectives of the Program, and the time they will be visiting the store.

To ensure that the 2024 Avocado Retail Education Program was implemented correctly, D2C engages their state managers and 2IC's, team leaders and mystery shoppers to visit D2C field staff in-store.

- Each week a team of D2C auditors visit new and existing staff to ensure they are representing the client's brand in the best possible way.

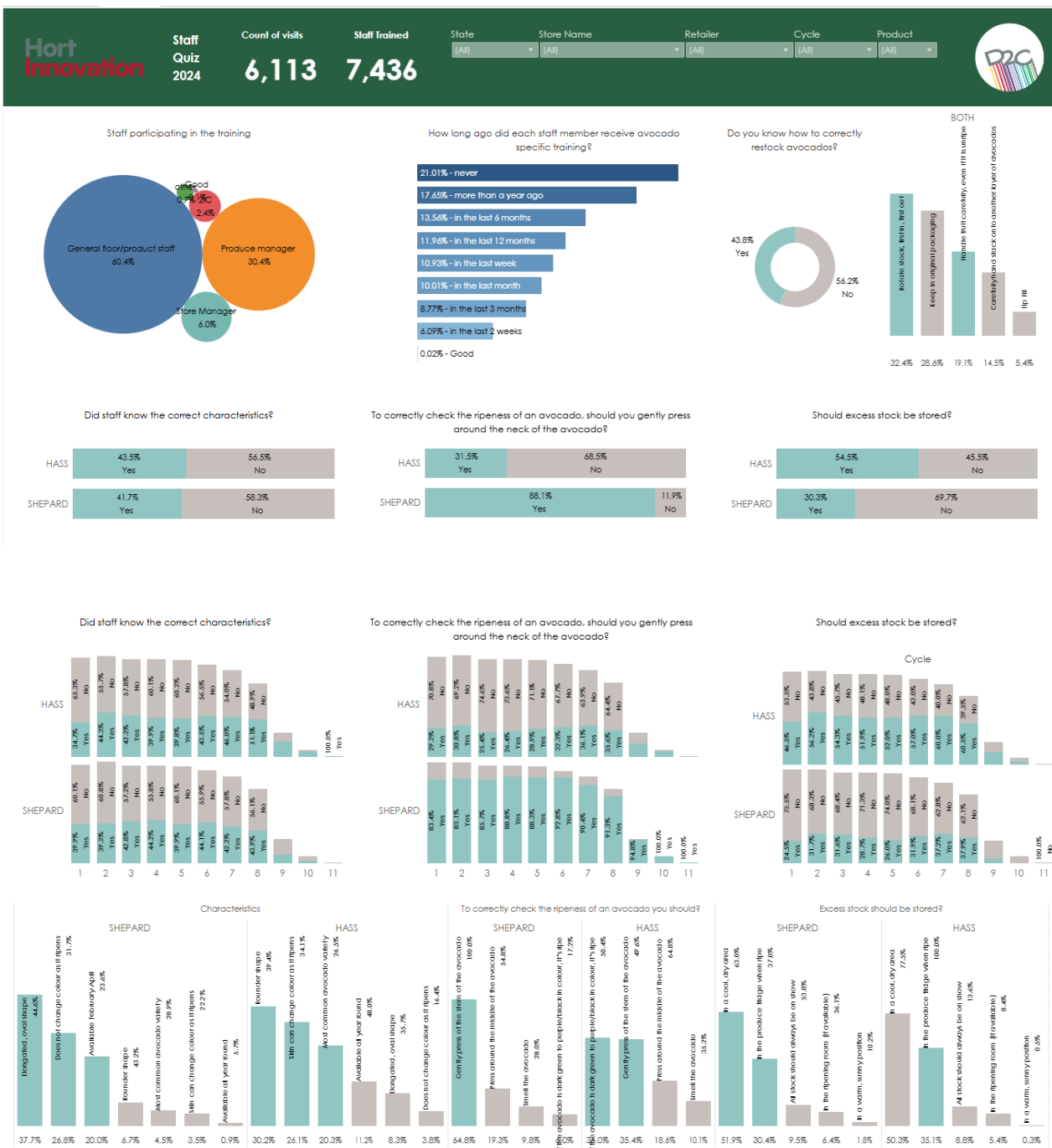
- All staff are visited by auditors at least once a fortnight.
- The results of the auditing are immediately made available to management and the relevant account manager.
- On occasion a client has been refunded the cost of the shift and had it rescheduled free of charge if the results of the audit are unsatisfactory.

Program Results Dashboard

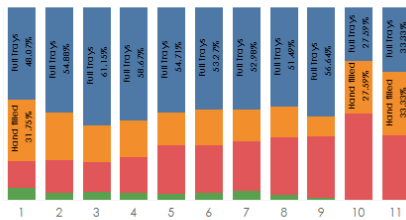
As part of this project, an online live dashboard was established to enable:

- Real-time results of surveys, audits and training progress
- Deep dive on individual stores
- Exportable reports for industry and retailer presentations

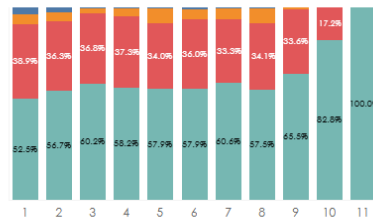
Below is an example of the dashboard, please note detailed results are covered in ‘Results and Discussion’.



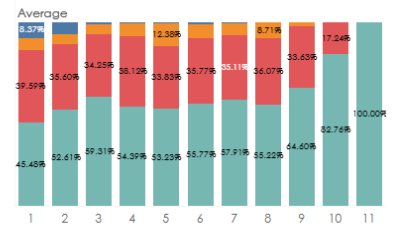
Progress - How do fresh produce staff refill avocados in this store?



Progress - How supportive was the produce manager of the Program?



Progress - How supportive was the store manager of the Program?



Could the staff provide examples of existing avocado training materials that are used to onboard new staff?



How do staff report back to category team on quality and/or ripeness issues?



Could the staff provide examples of existing training materials that are used to onboard new staff?



Data Management and Security

All merchandisers were equipped with devices (iPads, Tablets, phones) to collect answers to the questions in the survey whilst in-store. D2C uses the latest survey software that is intuitive and makes it simple to capture information whilst in-store and reduces the number of data entry errors (drop-down menus, predictive text, GPS geofencing). This survey is expected to be completed whilst the merchandiser is in-store. Before and after photos are reviewed at a head office level at D2C in real time to ensure that the merchandiser does not have to return to the store to complete the task again.

D2C has a dedicated validation team at head office working with smart data algorithm editing tools that review every report, line by line to ensure the following:

- Survey has been completed accurately (all fields filled in), spelling and grammar is correct, plus data parameter detection.
- Double checking of outlier data, including contacting individual merchandisers to confirm numbers, data etc.

Both data and reporting servers are hosted in Sydney. Report hosting servers undergo SOC II audits which is the highest standard of security protocol, matching US government security standards. D2C's local data is stored in Microsoft Office 365 servers located in Australia. Security protocol includes MFA and data stored in Microsoft Cloud. Endpoint Security is provided by Sophos Endpoint Protection.

Results and discussion

Merchandising Practices Results

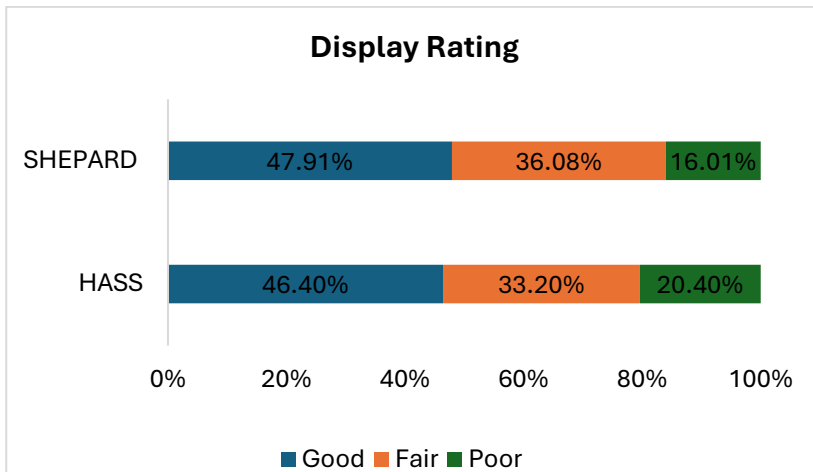
Display Standards

Visual cues were presented to brand ambassadors (examples of excellent, good, fair and poor, and eat now / eat later where relevant) for brand ambassadors to reference when ensuring displays are correct as per the retailer standard and with the relevant merchandising point of sale material.

In addition, D2C head office team audited photograph submissions and reviewed their score in comparison to cues.

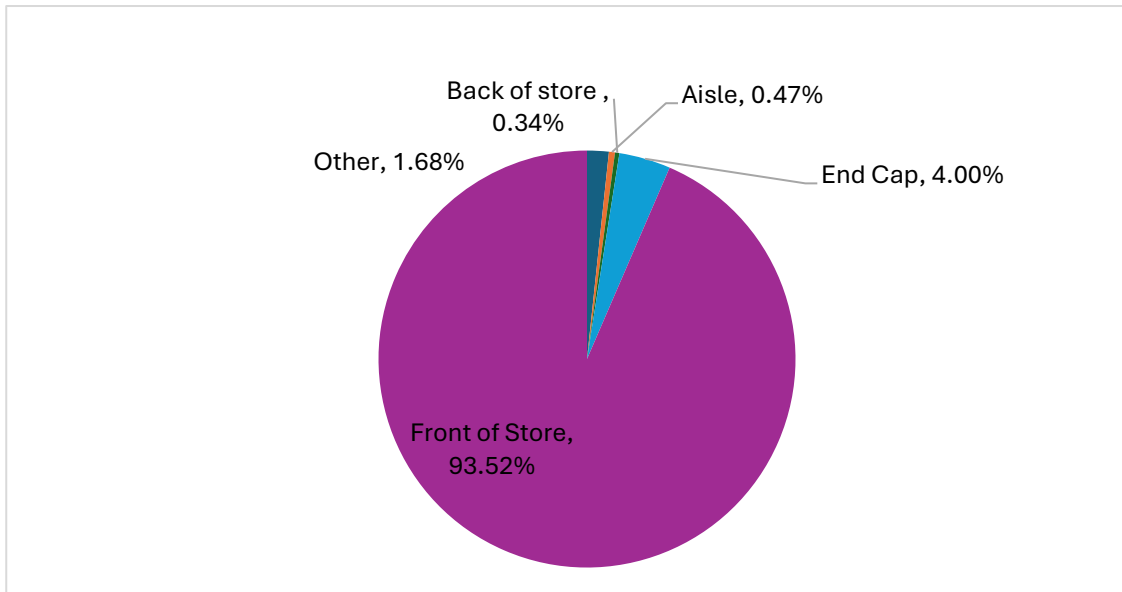


Results showed opportunities to improve the displays with around 30% of displays being rated fair and 15-20% poor. A key focus should be firstly ensuring ripe fruit are available to consumers and removing bruised, rotten and overripe fruit.



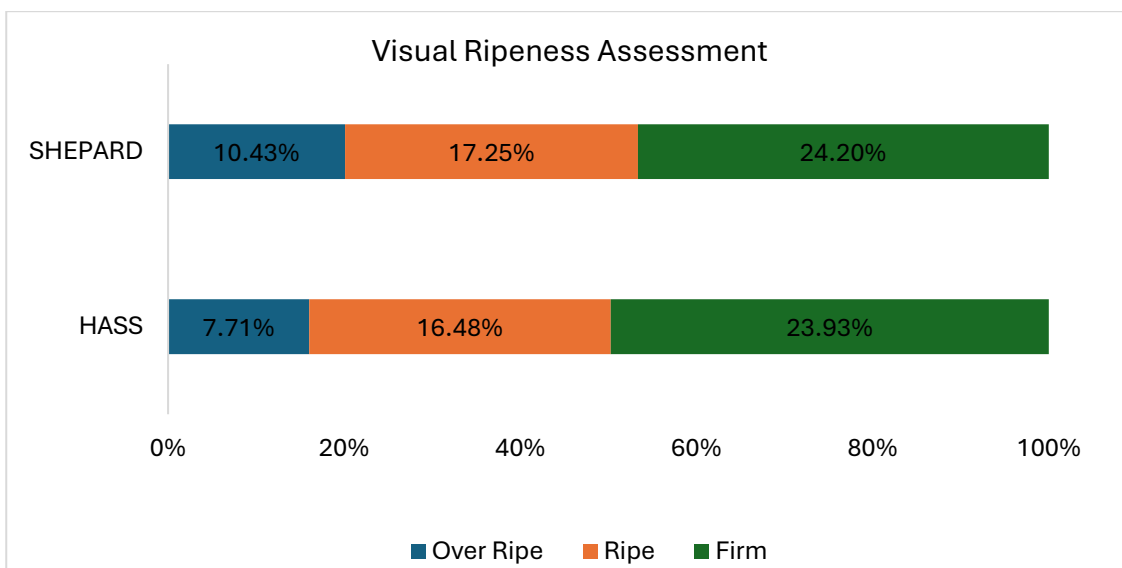
Position of Avocado Displays In Store

It was positive to see 93.52% of avocado displays being at the front of store. Other locations recorded were end caps, aisles and back of store. Between the two major retailers, there was an 8.63% difference to the number of displays at the front of store. Monitoring and maintaining the front of store position is important to driving category growth into the future.



Visual Ripeness on Display

Ripeness was initially assessed visually against a visual ripeness chart to estimate the proportion of ripe fruit on display. On average between the two retailers, approximately 24% of the fruit on display was visually assessed to be unripe/firm.



For Shepard, 24.20% of fruit were firm, 17.25% were ripe and 10.43% were over ripe.

An opportunity exists to reduce both over-ripe and firm fruit on display through effective stock and supply chain management.

Fruit Quality Appearance on Display

Fruit quality was assessed visually with staff trained on external defects that are acceptable (such as minor nodule damage and blemish) and defects that are unacceptable (such as indentation from bruising and rot).

Quality of Fruit Examples

Hass Avocados



Excellent

- Range of colours, flesh not smooth (ripe and nearly ripe, no unripe)
- No indents, skin marking, or punctures



Good

- Some overripe (very dark green)
- Some indents, skin markings



Poor

- Overripe
- Indents, skin markings, and punctures
- Rot

Shepard Avocados



Excellent

- No indents, skin marking, or punctures



Good

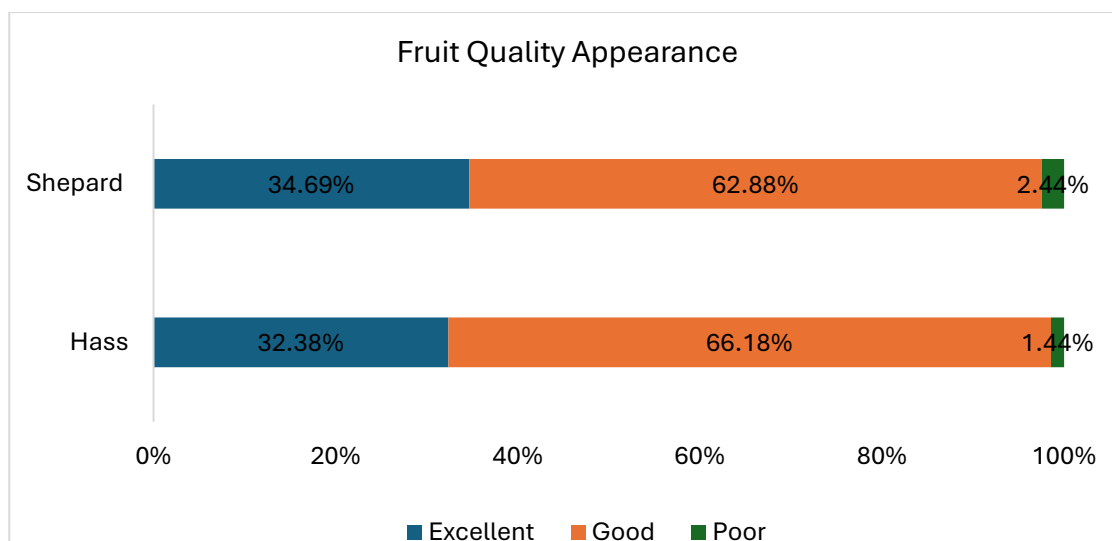
- Some indents and light markings



Poor

- Overripe
- Indents, skin markings, and punctures
- Rot

The fruit quality of both varieties was mostly rated as good or excellent, which was a great result to see. We note that the Monitoring Avocado Supply Chain Quality (AV22011) project is currently quantifying internal fruit quality at retail point of sale.



Information was collated on ways in which staff report back any quality issues from store to management. It was apparent that a range of mechanisms are being used to report quality issues including:

- Mark as waste on the retailer system and dispose (40.85%)
- Report back to Produce Manager (29.66%)
- App (12.11%)
- Yammer (11.29%)
- Don't report, just dispose of poor-quality fruit (5.59%)
- Email DC (0.51%)

Merchandising Execution

The D2C field team worked with the retail produce staff to improve displays by tidying overall display, replenishing where required, flagging quality issues on display, ensuring any stickered fruit is displayed with the sticker facing upwards, sorting fruit by stage of ripeness (for WW eat now, eat later), ripe fruit is constantly available, first in first out, rotate ripest fruit left to right facing the display, remove bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from the display.



Product Characteristics

Staff were taken through an eLearning module, from this they were then surveyed, and asked to select the correct characteristics of each Avocado, see question below. For a response to be recorded as correct staff must select ALL correct responses.

18. Please select the below characteristics of a Shepard Avocado (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer) *

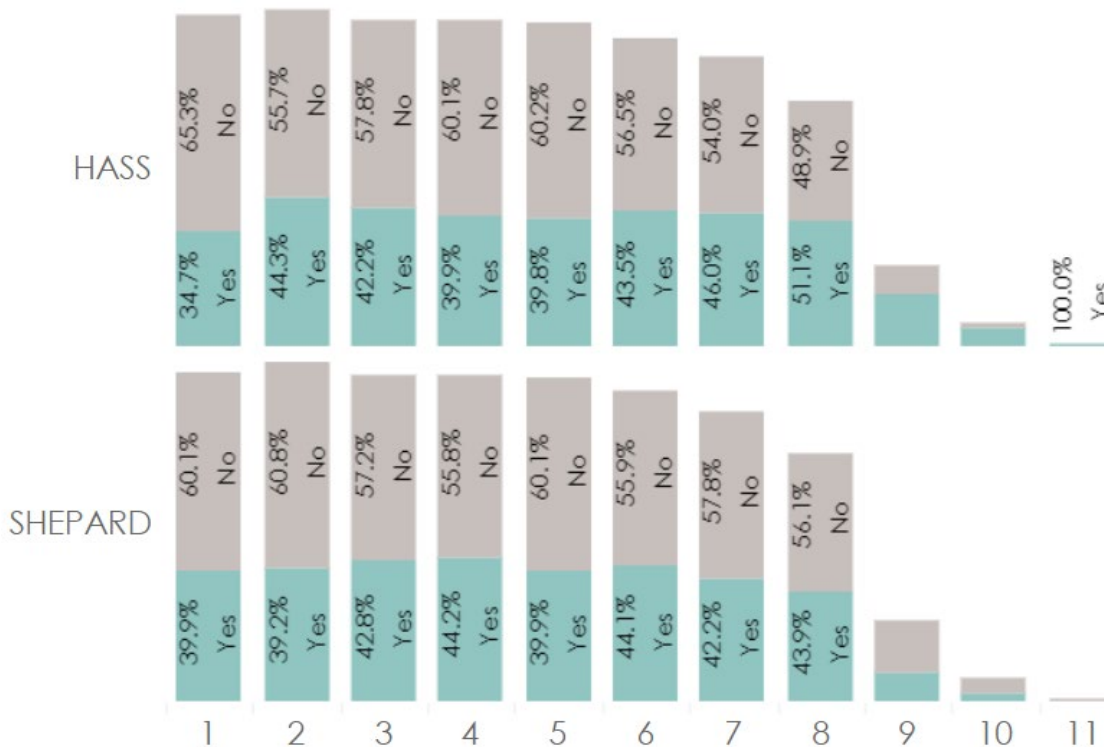
- Elongated, oval shape
- Rounder shape
- Does not change colour as it ripens
- Available all year round
- Most common avocado variety
- Available February-April
- Skin can change colour as it ripens

19. Please select the below characteristics of a Hass Avocado (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer) *

- Elongated, oval shape
- Rounder shape
- Does not change colour as it ripens
- Available all year round
- Most common avocado variety
- Available May-January
- Skin can change colour as it ripens

From the progression graph it is apparent that there has been an increase in knowledge compared to visit 1 which only saw 34.7% answering this question correctly increasing to 51.1% correctly identifying characteristics of a Hass avocado. The same stores were visited each cycle from weeks 1-8, visits completed from weeks 9-11 were significantly lower and therefore not measurable.

Did staff know the correct characteristics?



Staff Knowledge of Ripeness Cues

Brand ambassadors tested retail staff knowledge of ripeness cues through a multiple-choice question where retail staff had to select all correct options to pass. The correct answers were for Shepard (*Gently press the stem of the avocado*) and for Hass (*Gently press the stem of the avocado & if the avocado is dark green to purple/black in colour it is ripe*). As shown in the graph below the correct answers are highlighted in teal and the incorrect answers in grey.

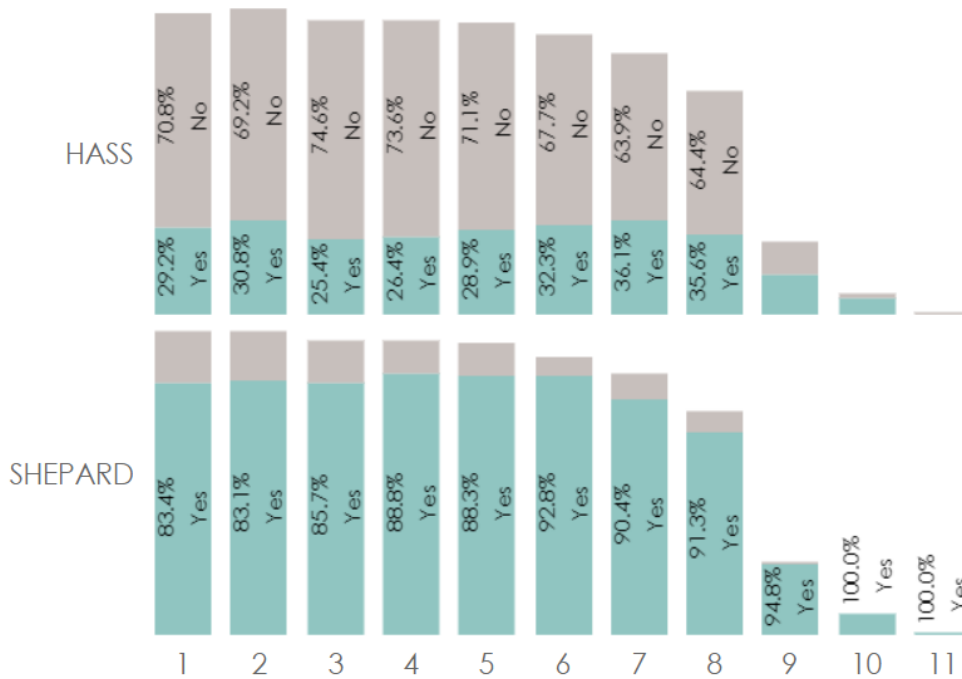
36. To correctly check the ripeness of a Shepard avocado you should: (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer) *

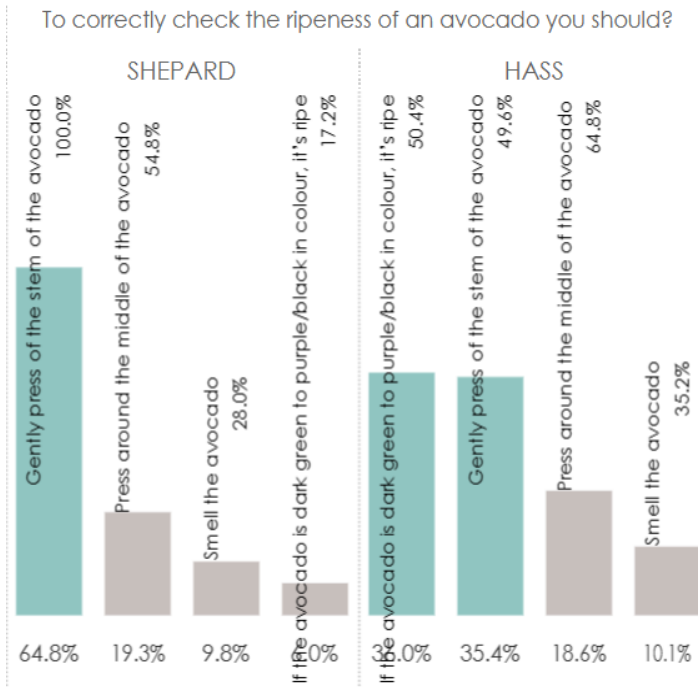
- Gently press of the stem of the avocado
- Smell the avocado
- Press around the middle of the avocado
- If the avocado is dark green to purple/black in colour, it's ripe

37. To correctly check the ripeness of a Hass avocado you should: (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer) *

- Gently press of the stem of the avocado
- Smell the avocado
- Press around the middle of the avocado
- If the avocado is dark green to purple/black in colour, it's ripe

To correctly check the ripeness of an avocado, should you gently press around the neck of the avocado?

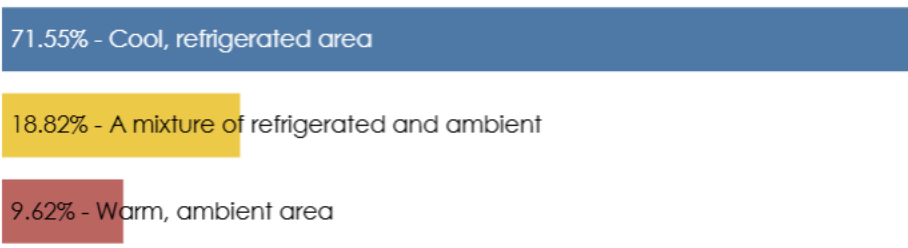




Back of House Storage Practices

The retail team were surveyed on the correct storage practices. This was broken down by both varieties of avocados. Of those staff who were surveyed 71.55% correctly identified the correct way in which to store excess Hass stock. For Shepard each retailer differed – Woolworths (Ambient location) Coles (All reserve stock to be stored in the cool room) 24.25% of staff noted that stock should be stored in a mixture of refrigerated and ambient, with a majority selecting refrigerated only.

What temperature were Hass Avocados in the stores back room stored at?

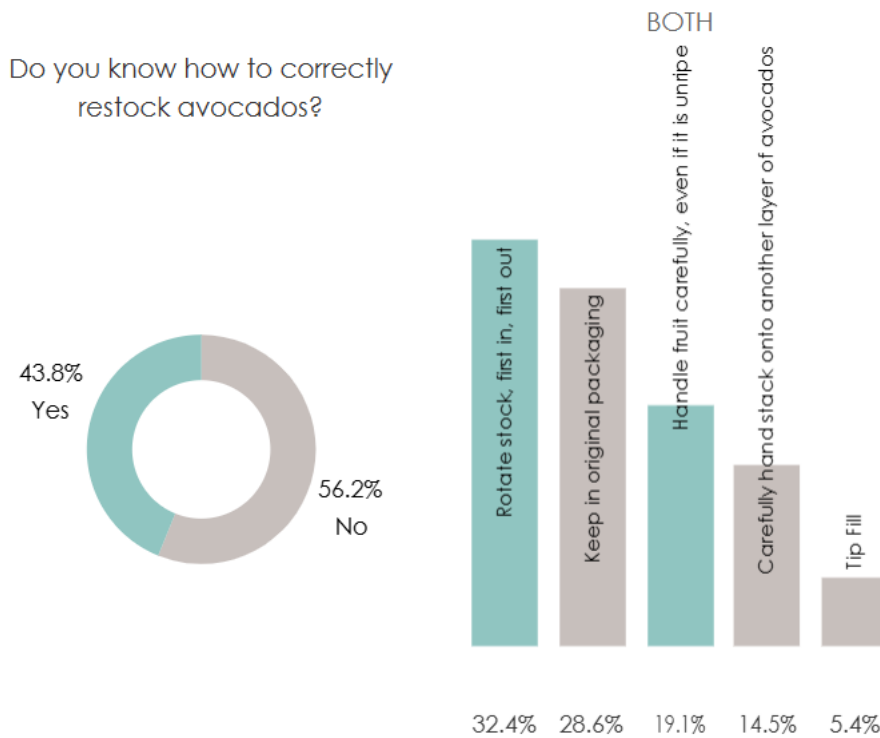


What temperature were the Shepard Avocados in the stores back room stored at?



Restocking Practices

Of the staff that participated in training and completed the survey, 43.8% correctly understood and knew how to correctly restock avocados in store. Just noting that for this to be counted as a ‘yes’ staff had to select both correct responses as shown below, (the correct responses: Rotate stock first in, first out & Handle fruit carefully, even when unripe)



Staff Training Results

Current Training Practices – frequency and methods?

Of the 6,113 staff trained, 21% had not received avocado specific training, a further 17.65% noted training was provided more than a year ago. The most common form of training provided to the retail team was online/in App training which accounted for 27.02%.

How long ago did each staff member receive avocado specific training?



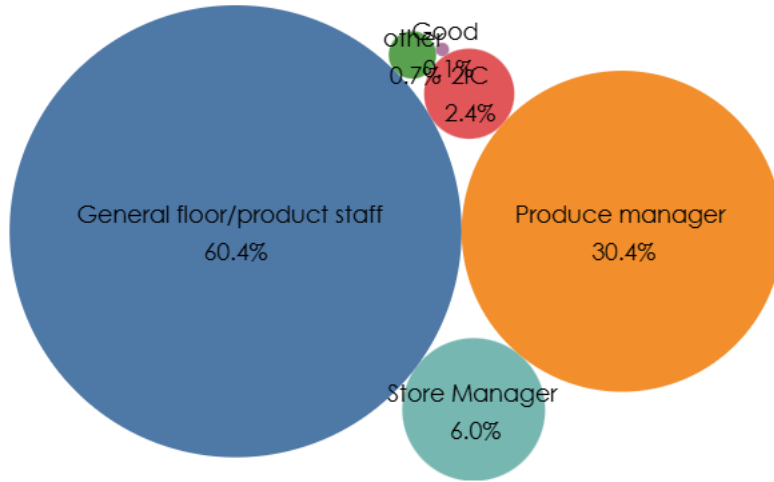
Could the staff provide examples of existing training materials that are used to onboard new staff?



Who was trained in this program?

The below graph illustrates the different levels of staff trained across the program. As shown a large majority were produce floor staff at 60.4%. Produce and store managers made up almost 40% of the remainder. To note, training and surveying management is dependent on their availability ie. RDO’s and/or time pressures made it difficult to speak to management at every visit.

Staff participating in the training

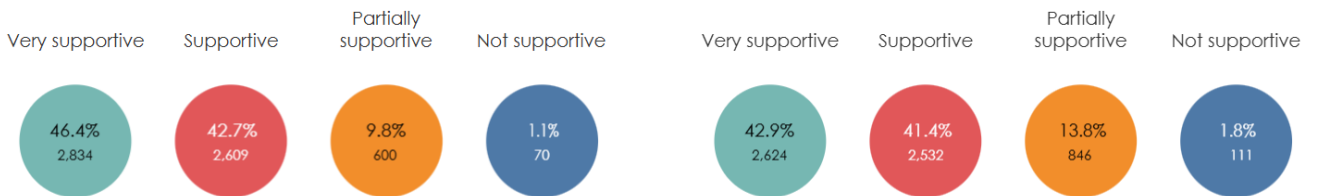


How supportive were staff of the training they received in this program?

Store and Produce managers were supportive of the program. Of the 36.4% of managers, over 40% were very supportive of the program and its objectives.

How supportive was the produce manager of the Program?

How supportive was the store manager of the Program?



What are some considerations for training retail produce staff?

Every store and location differ in terms of customer foot traffic, staffing, and management scheduling. This then determines who the field team trains and surveys during their visit. Fresh produce staff are targeted in store, the field team are mindful that visits are conducted during a regular business day where restocking, merchandising and customer service are all priorities of the team, however communication is paramount in explaining the purpose of the visit and how this program will benefit the team.

Shopper Survey Results

Point of Sale Signage

- 69.58% of those surveyed did not notice any in store signage/produce POS when selecting avocados to purchase.
- Of the 30.42% that did notice signage, 64.10% said that this helped with making their avocado choice.

Confidence in choosing a ripe avocado

- The field team reported that 65.3% of shoppers who were surveyed had an excellent/good overall knowledge on avocado quality and how to test for ripeness when purchasing in store.
- 20% of shoppers noted that signage and 14.3% that greater education would increase consumer confidence when selecting avocados during their shop.

Knowledge on differences between Hass and Shepard Varieties

- The D2C field team rated consumer knowledge 55.7% as good and 19.3% as excellent with only 25% of shoppers having only a fair understanding of how to differentiate between Hass and Shepard varieties.

Purchase Intent

- 66.10% of shoppers surveyed in store were purchasing avocados on the day.
- Of this, 73.78% of those purchasing avocados said they were on their shopping list.

Notable differences between Retailers

Retailers were provided summaries of their individual results mid-way and at the conclusion of the project via a presentation where results were discussed. A summary of improvement opportunities is below:

- Current training frequency is low with 20.92% of all 7,334 staff interviewed having never received avocado specific training and a further 17.67% had received it more than a year ago
- Presentation quality in key markets potentially due to high traffic and in-store resource constraints to restock displays.
- Staff retention of product attributes remains low across both varieties.
- Back of House Storage Practices are mixed across both varieties and retailers.
- Approx. 20% of staff are squeezing around the middle of the avocado to test for ripeness across both retailers and varieties.
- Mechanisms to report waste back to the business are mixed within each retailer.
- Re-stocking practices are mixed within each retailer
- Stock to replenish displays was not available at 60.46% of store visits
- Noticeability of point-of-sale material varied between both retailers by approximately 10%. This could be due to the variability in the number of point-of-sale touch points, size and colour scheme.

Outputs

Output	Description	Detail
E-Learning Platform	An E-Learning platform was created to assist the team on how to properly identify the quality of the	Link - https://rise.articulate.com/share/y6UHGseviTNhyukQOsxyS5PakZ7fnM5A

	fruit and displays in store.	
BI Dashboard	A BI Dashboard has been created – this was updated weekly to show changes and improvements across the multiple visits to each store.	Access provided to Hort Innovation
800 stores engaged in the program.	400 Woolworths stores and 400 Coles stores were visited across the program.	Store list to be provided to Hort Innovation
6,113 store visits have been completed.	Of the 800 total stores, field staff visited each store 7-8 times. The small percentage of stores visited 8 times was based on their specific needs and if additional visits were required.	Store list to be provided to Hort Innovation. Excel with all results to Hort innovation
6000+ avocados displays were improved.	As part of each store visit - the infield team were required to assess displays and identify whether these were (excellent, good or poor) based on the examples they were provided.	All images available via Power BI dashboard

<p>800 BOH posters installed</p>	<p>A ‘Back of House’ poster was created in line with retailer specific guidelines for storage and displays. The in-field team were instructed to place these in each store’s back of house, ensuring relevant retail staff (fresh produce) had access to this key information. D2C staff were required to take photos of this up in the store's back room.</p>	
<p>7,436 retail staff were trained by D2C merchandisers.</p>	<p>Through an E-learning module retail staff were taken through training. Once completed, were required to complete a quiz based on the information in the module, and results were published on the program’s dashboard.</p>	<p>Woolworths - https://rise.articulate.com/share/ll0HtcqS9sZNqmzcgj1ONBdXoF_hya2v</p> <p>Coles- https://rise.articulate.com/share/cDo1LHvPBs9W2KDOXY5EoJcF9nieYUG_</p>
<p>5,694 shoppers were surveyed by the D2C team.</p>	<p>A shopper survey was created for the 2024 program. D2C staff when assessing displays spoke to customers – asking whether they were</p>	<p>Appendix 2 of shopper survey Full results as another appendix</p>

	<p>purchasing avocados, if they could determine if an avocado was ripe or not, if signage impacted their purchase decision. The results from this survey are available on the program’s dashboard.</p>	
<p>Industry Communications & Extension Activity</p>		<p>Guacamole E-Newsletters</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 April 2024 <p>Industry Webinars:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 April 2024 Webinar April 2024 - Avocados Australia Online - R&D Brief Webinar (youtube.com) • 12 July 2024 Webinar <p>Industry Presentation Files:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 April 2024: 240412-AV22011-April-webinar-presentation-slides.pdf (avocado.org.au) • 12 July 2024: PowerPoint Presentation (avocado.org.au) <p>Retailer Presentations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May/June 2024 • August/September 2024

Outcomes

Outcome summary

Outcome	Alignment to fund outcome, strategy and KPI	Description	Evidence
Improve the merchandising displays in retail stores	Merchandisers in store rated the presentation quality of both Hass and Shepard Avocados. Merchandisers also recorded if there were Eat Now Eat Later stock available.	79.6% of Hass displays and 84% of Shepard displays were rated as good by merchandisers. It was reported that 15.9% of stores had Eat Now Eat Later stock on display.	Dashboard access with full store results and images enabled.
Deliver an interactive program that engages staff in avocado best practice	Merchandisers rated how supportive and willing store managers and produce managers were to take part in the program.	The majority of store managers and produce managers were supportive of the program and willing to take part. 42.9% of store managers were very supportive of the program however, 1.8% were unsupportive. 46.4% of produce managers were very supportive of the program however, 1.1% were unsupportive. 30.4% of produce managers and 6% of store managers participated in the avocados training.	Survey
Quantification of retailer staff knowledge	Merchandisers surveyed staff on key practices and how to properly identify each variety of avocado.	Of those who were surveyed, 55.7% said they could differentiate between Hass and Shepard avocados. 48.5% said they understood how to properly test an avocado determining its ripeness	Survey
Understanding of shopper behavior and knowledge levels	Merchandisers rated shoppers' knowledge by completing a survey.	71.3% of shoppers were confident choosing an avocado at the right stage of ripeness.	Dashboard access with full store results and images enabled.
Understanding the effectiveness and value of point of sale	Merchandisers asked shoppers' in store if signage had a direct impact on their choice of avocado.	When surveyed, 69.58% of shoppers said that they did not notice any signage or product information on the display.	Dashboard access with full store results and images enabled.
Improve the number of retail staff provided specific avocado training in the last 6 months	Identify gaps; staff were asked how often training is made available to them.	Of the staff who were trained in store, only 13.56% of staff received avocado specific training in the last 6 months.	Dashboard access with full store results and images enabled.

<p>Knowledge & Awareness on deficits in retail education and merchandising.</p>	<p>Merchandisers in store asked staff directly if training material is readily available and/or how often retail management supply to staff.</p>	<p>6.09% of staff have received avocado training in the two weeks however, 21.01% never received avocados training. 36.73% of staff could not provide examples of avocados training material to onboard new staff.</p>	<p>Dashboard access with full store results and images enabled. Results shared with retailers.</p>
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Monitoring and evaluation

Key Performance Indicators were set at the start of this program to build on the 2023 results.

Key Evaluation Questions

Key Evaluation Question	Project performance	Opportunities for improvement and future development
Improve Hass avocado displays meeting best practice standards from 73.9% to an average of 85%	An improvement of almost 6% in the quality of displays from the 2023 program. 79.6% of Hass displays were rated as good or excellent over the course of the program.	Continuous monitoring and ongoing training to ensure displays meet benchmark quality.
Improve Shepard avocado displays meeting best practice standards from 66.8% to an average of 85%	Shepard displays recorded a much larger improvement in quality in comparison to the 2023 program. 84% of Shepard displays were rated as good or excellent by merchandisers, this is a 17.2% increase.	Continuous monitoring and ongoing training to ensure displays meet benchmark quality.
Improve staff knowledge on Hass varietal aspects from 35.2% to 75%	Average 46% in the last 4 weeks of the program. A 5% increase from the first 4 weeks of the program. This data should be interpreted carefully, noting that there were three enter options for this question, people may have thought they could only select one correct option. Questionnaire edits are recommended for the next program.	Continuous monitoring and ongoing training to ensure existing and new staff understand the key differences of each variety and how this influences care and handling.
Improve staff knowledge on Shepard varietal aspects from 41.2% to an average of 75%	Average 44% in the last 4 weeks of the program. A 2% increase from the first 4 weeks of the program. This data should be interpreted carefully, noting that there were three enter options for this question, people may have thought they could only select one correct option. Questionnaire edits are recommended for the next program.	Continuous monitoring and ongoing training to ensure existing and new staff understand the key differences of each variety and how this influences care and handling.
Maintain 98% staff knowledge on Shepard and Hass ripeness cues	When staff were asked about ripeness and what cues are to be measured when determining the ripeness of an avocado, 94.8% of staff correctly identified how to test ripeness for Shepard while only 36% for Hass. The lower result for Hass is due to there being two correct cues and staff were only selecting one, so data should be interpreted carefully.	Staff selected the correct cues for Hass, colour and pressing on the stem, however, for this to be counted as correct, both options had to be selected. For the 2025 program we recommend only providing one cue to ensure this measures more accurately.
Improve staff knowledge on care and handling from 62.8% to 75% compliance rate	Staff when quizzed on the correct care and handling, 54.4% of staff correctly identified storage and handling practices for Hass and 30.2% for Shepard.	Continuous training on best practices in store to ensure actioned in store for all current and new staff.
Improve store manager support of the program from 38.6% to 60% for store managers	97.9% of store managers were supportive or very supportive of the program.	Staff demonstrated they like to be engaged. Store managers can be time poor.

Improve produce manager support of the program from 42.6% to 75% of produce managers	98.9% of produce managers were supportive or very supportive of the program	Staff demonstrated they like to be engaged Store managers can be time poor.										
Train staff in how to correctly restock avocados with care and consideration to support reducing bruising	43.8% could correctly identify the correct restocking practices.	More regular training and education in store. Casual staff turnover sits quite high so regular visits will benefit how stock is handled and stored.										
How are staff refilling displays?	49.30% in full trays 19.10% hand stocking 22.20% layering more than one layer high 9.50% tip filled	More regular training and education in store. Casual staff turnover sits quite high so regular visits will benefit how stock is handled and stored.										
How often are staff receiving training?	21.01% of staff members had never received avocado specific training 17.65% of staff members received training more than a year ago 11.96% of staff members received training in the last 12 months 13.56% of staff members received training in the last 6 months 8.77% of staff members received training in the last 3 months 10.01% of staff members received training in the last month 10.93% of staff members received training in the last week 6.09% of staff members received training in the last 2 weeks	More regular training and education in store. Casual staff turnover sits quite high so regular visits will benefit how stock is handled and stored.										
How are staff receiving training?	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Method</th> <th>Percentage</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Induction in-person...</td> <td>4.27%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>In person training</td> <td>6.38%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No training materials</td> <td>25.60%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No training materials</td> <td>27.02%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Method	Percentage	Induction in-person...	4.27%	In person training	6.38%	No training materials	25.60%	No training materials	27.02%	With over 36% of staff in stores not having received any training materials, a focus to provide ongoing training is needed.
Method	Percentage											
Induction in-person...	4.27%											
In person training	6.38%											
No training materials	25.60%											
No training materials	27.02%											

Recommendations

The retail staff environment is transient and casual staff turnover is high. Results and data generated from the program show that continued efforts into retail staff education is key to ensuring staff are well informed and have the most up to date information regarding storage, care and handling of Avocados. Targeting key retailers, scheduling revisits equally and consistent data collection meant that over time, incremental improvements were achieved.

The feedback from management in-store (store and produce managers) was positive with over 80% supporting the program and its initiative to improve the knowledge of fresh produce staff. Some areas of greater focus when planning the 2025 program would be:

- Incentivize training to increase engagement – offering incentives to staff to encourage greater engagement and continued training on best practices.
- Better understanding of the mediums which work best in store to provide training and give space to report and record any quality and/or informational gaps.
- Consider enabling retailer dashboard access to individual store results in real-time and view images.
- Run an ongoing, all-year round program of the Avocados Retail Education Program, with visits spread out over the whole year (minimum 8 months – eg Nov to July) to provide consistent support and training.
 - Given the turnover of retail staff, and the proliferation of casuals, training needs to be regular and ongoing.
 - The visits to stores should be once a month, over a minimum of 8 months.
 - Ongoing programs undertaken in the past show that the long-term benefits of training staff impact sales significantly.

Intellectual Property

< Enter 'No project IP or commercialisation to report' >

Appendices

Appendix 1

Retail Staff Quiz

1. Store Visit Date & Time
2. What State are you in?
3. Which Store did you visit?
4. What is your staff title?
 - a. Store Manager
 - b. Produce Manger
 - c. Fresh/General Team Member
 - d. Other (Please detail)
5. Please select the below characteristics of a Shepard Avocado (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer)
 - a. Elongated, oval shape
 - b. Rounder shape
 - c. Does not change colour as it ripens
 - d. Available all year round
 - e. Most common avocado variety
 - f. Available February-April
 - g. Skin can change colour as it ripens
6. Please select the below characteristics of a Hass Avocado (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer)
 - a. Elongated, oval shape
 - b. Rounder shape
 - c. Does not change colour as it ripens
 - d. Available all year round
 - e. Most common avocado variety
 - f. Available May-January
 - g. Skin can change colour as it ripens
7. To correctly check the **ripeness** of a Shepard avocado you should: (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer)
 - a. Gently press of the stem of the avocado
 - b. Smell the avocado
 - c. Press around the middle of the avocado
 - d. If the avocado is dark green to purple/black in colour, it's ripe
8. To correctly check the **ripeness** of a Hass avocado you should: (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer)
 - a. Gently press around the stem of the avocado
 - b. Smell the avocado
 - c. Press around the middle of the avocado
 - d. If the avocado is dark green to purple/black in colour, it's ripe
9. To correctly **restock** avocados, you should: (multiple choice, can choose more than one)
 - a. Tip Fill
 - b. Keep in original packaging
 - c. Rotate stock, first in, first out
 - d. Carefully hand stack onto another layer of avocados
 - e. Handle fruit carefully, even if it is unripe
10. **Excess** stock of **Shepard** avocados should be stored: (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer)
 - a. In the produce fridge when ripe
 - b. In a cool, dry area
 - c. In a warm, sunny position
 - d. In the ripening room (if available)
 - e. All stock should always be on show
11. **Excess** stock of **Hass** avocados should be stored: (multiple choice, can choose more than one answer)
 - a. In the produce fridge when ripe
 - b. In a cool, dry area
 - c. In a warm, sunny position
 - d. In the ripening room (if available)
 - e. All stock should always be on show

Appendix 2

Shopper Feedback Survey

1. Are you purchasing avocados today? (Y/N)
2. If Yes, were they on your list, or an impulse purchase?
 - a. List
 - b. Impulse
3. If No, why not (Text)
4. Are you confident in how to choose an avocado at the right stage of ripeness?
 - a. If Yes, how do you know? (Text)
 - b. If No, how could you be educated to choose with confidence (Text)
5. Did you notice any signage or product information by the avocado shelf? (Y/N)
 - a. If Yes, did they help you with making your avocado choice? (Y/N)
6. What could improve your experience when shopping for avocados (Text)
7. What would make you want to buy more avocados? (Text)

Appendix 3

Merchandiser Audit Survey

1. Store name/location
2. Date/Time
3. What position in store are the Avocados located?

4. Is there Shepard avocado stock displayed? Y/N
5. If Yes, how much? (number of trays)
6. If Yes, what was the quality of the fruit? (Multiple choice, please refer to photos shared on training)
 - Excellent (no marks, punctures or split skin)
 - Good (light bruising, no punctures or split skin)
 - Poor (marks, punctures, split skins and indentation)
7. What percentage of fruit on display had external damage? (Multiple Choice)
 - (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
8. If Yes, what was the average ripeness of fruit?
 - Firm (not ready to eat) (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Ripe (ready to eat) (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Over ripe (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
9. If Yes, how would you rate the overall presentation? (visual cue provided Coles and WW differs). Multiple choice:
 - Good (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Fair (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Poor (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)

10. Is there Hass avocado stock on show? Y/N
11. If Yes, how much? (number of trays)
12. If Yes, what was the quality of the fruit? (Multiple choice, please refer to photos shared on training)
 - Excellent (no marks, punctures or split skin)
 - Good (light bruising, no punctures or split skin)
 - Poor (marks, punctures, split skins and indentation)
13. What percentage of fruit on display had external damage? (Multiple Choice)
 - (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
14. If Yes, what was the average ripeness of fruit?
 - Firm (not ready to eat) (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Ripe (ready to eat) (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Over ripe (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
15. If Yes, how would you rate the overall presentation? (visual cue provided Coles and WW differs). Multiple choice:
 - Good (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Fair (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)
 - Poor (0% 25% 50% 75% 100%)

16. Is there Eat Now and Eat Later stock available? (Woolworths ONLY) (Y/N)
17. If Yes, how many trays?
 - Eat Now (Specific)
 - Eat Later (Specific)
18. What percentage of stock is Eat Now, and what percentage of stock is Eat Later?
 - 25%
 - 50%
 - 75%
19. Is this display set up correctly? Is the stock placed accordingly? (Y/N)
20. Does the Avocado fixture in this store feature “how to choose” or Eat Now/Eat Later Point of Sale materials? (Y/N)
21. If No, why is this not available in store?
22. How do fresh produce staff refill avocados in this store?
 - Tip filled (boxes of fruit “poured” onto the display)
 - Hand filled (individual fruit carefully transferred)
 - Full trays replaced when empty, inclusive of original packing (1 layer high)
 - Full trays, more than one layer high
23. Was there stock available (trays) to replenish the display in the store’s stock room? Y/N
24. If Yes, how much:
 - Hass
 - Open ended – please leave a textbook so staff

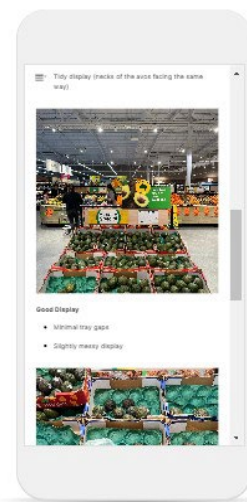
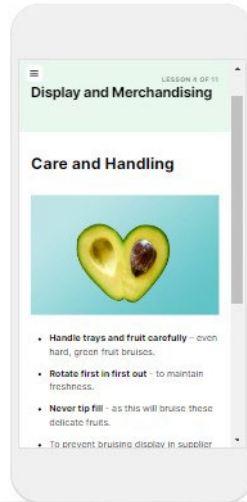
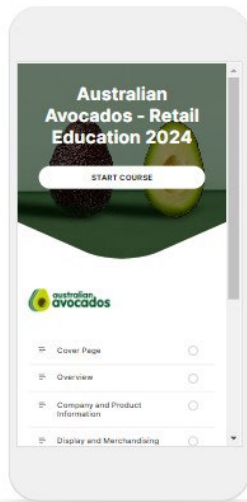
 - Shepard
 - Open ended – please leave a textbook so staff
25. How is stock stored (Checkbox)
 - Cool, dry area

- Warm, sunlit area
 - In a ripening room
 - Other (please detail your answer)
26. What temperature was the Hass stock stored at?
 - Cool, refrigerated area
 - Warm, ambient area
 - A mixture of refrigerated and ambient
 27. What temperature was the Shepard stock stored at?
 - Cool, refrigerated area
 - Warm, ambient area
 - A mixture of refrigerated and ambient
 28. How did the staff say they rotated the stock on display?
 - first in first out (ripest fruit from left to right facing the display)
 - the stock that is in front in the storage room
 - overripe stock first
 - unripe stock first
 - other (text)
 29. How did the store display the avocados?
 - sorted by stages of ripeness
 - ripe fruit consistently available
 - removed bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from display
 - other (text)
 30. How many retail staff participated in your training? (range 1-10)
 31. What were the staff titles that participated in the training?
 - General floor/product staff
 - Produce manager
 - 2IC
 - Store Manager
 32. How long ago did each staff member receive avocado specific training?
 - in the last week
 - in the last 2 weeks
 - in the last month
 - in the last 3 months
 - in the last 6 months
 - in the last 12 months
 - more than a year ago
 - never
 33. Could the staff provide examples of existing training materials that are used to onboard new staff?
 34. Are staff competent in knowing how to handle ripe vs unripe avocados according to best practice? (Y/N)
 35. How do staff report back to the category team on quality and/or ripeness issues?
 36. How supportive was the produce manager of the Program?
 - Very supportive
 - Supportive
 - Partially supportive
 - Not supportive
 37. How supportive was the store manager of the Program?
 - Very supportive
 - Supportive
 - Partially supportive
 - Not supportive
 38. How many shoppers did you speak to? (range 1 to 10)
 39. How would you rate the shopper's overall knowledge of the difference between Hass and Shepard avocados?
 - Excellent (confident on the differences, all answers were correct)
 - Good (confident on the differences, most answers were correct)
 - Fair (could acknowledge differences, more incorrect answers than correct)
 - Poor (very little knowledge at all)
 40. How would you rate the shopper's overall knowledge avocado quality and testing for ripeness? - Excellent
 - Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 41. Other comments on your visit to the store?
 42. Please attach pictures to the report. Please see visual cue for the standard of photo we are seeking. BEFORE IMAGE
 43. Please attach pictures to the report. Please see visual cue for the standard of photo we are seeking. AFTER IMAGE
 44. Please attach pictures to the report. BOH Poster

Appendix 4

Staff Training on ‘best practices’ handling, Storage and Merchandising

<https://rise.articulate.com/share/y6UHGseviTNhyukQOoxyS5PakZ7fnM5A>



Appendix 5

Back of House Poster

SHEPARD POSTER

Display and merchandising | Shepard avocados

Care and handling

- Handle trays and fruit carefully - even hard, green fruit bruises.
- Rotate first in first out to maintain freshness.
- Never tip fill as this will bruise these delicate fruits.
- To prevent bruising, display in supplier boxes. Carefully hand stack the second layer as this will bruise these delicate fruits.

Ripeness

- Press gently at the neck of the avocado to test the level of ripeness.
- Firm: 2-3 days until ripe.
- Semi-firm: good for slicing or 1 day until fully ripe.
- Soft: ready to eat/spread or store in fridge.

Storage

- All reserve stock of avocados are to be stored in the cool room as indicated by the pink carton label.

Display

- Displays sorted by stages of ripeness.
- Ripe fruit consistently available.
- First in first out, rotate ripest fruit left to right facing the display.
- Remove bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from display.

Shepard avocados
Skin is always bright green, even when ripe.

Press gently at the neck to check when ripe

Coles

Display and merchandising | Shepard avocados

Care and handling

- Handle trays and fruit carefully - even hard, green fruit bruises.
- Rotate first in first out to maintain freshness.
- Store and display in original supplier cartons only.
- Never tip fill as this will bruise these delicate fruits.
- To prevent bruising store and display in supplier boxes.

Ripeness

- Press gently at the neck of the avocado to test the level of ripeness.
- Firm: 2-3 days until ripe.
- Semi-firm: good for slicing or 1 day until fully ripe.
- Soft: ready to eat/spread or store in fridge.

Storage

- Ambient location (17°C)

Display

- Displays sorted by stages of ripeness.
- Ripe fruit consistently available.
- First in first out, rotate ripest fruit left to right facing the display.
- Remove bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from display.

Shepard avocados
Skin is always bright green, even when ripe.

Press gently at the neck to check when ripe

Woolworths

Display and merchandising | Shepard avocados

Care and handling

- Handle trays and fruit carefully - even hard, green fruit bruises.
- Rotate first in first out to maintain freshness.
- Store and display in original supplier cartons only.
- Never tip fill as this will bruise these delicate fruits.
- To prevent bruising store and display in supplier boxes.

Ripeness

- Press gently at the neck of the avocado to test the level of ripeness.
- Firm: 2-3 days until ripe.
- Semi-firm: good for slicing or 1 day until fully ripe.
- Soft: ready to eat/spread or store in fridge.

Storage

- Ambient location (17°C)

Display

- Display on Eat Now (back on carton and on individual pieces, or on fruit ripens) and Eat Later in line with POS kit.
- Ripe fruit consistently available.
- First in first out, rotate ripest fruit left to right facing the display.
- Remove bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from display.

Shepard avocados
Skin is always bright green, even when ripe.

Press gently at the neck to check when ripe

Woolworths QLD/VIC

HASS POSTER

Display and merchandising | Hass avocados

Care and handling

- Handle trays and fruit carefully - even hard, green fruit bruises.
- Rotate first in first out to maintain freshness.
- Never tip fill as this will bruise these delicate fruits.
- To prevent bruising, display in supplier boxes. Carefully hand stack the second layer as this will bruise these delicate fruits.

Ripeness

- Press gently at the neck of the avocado to test the level of ripeness.

Storage

- All reserve stock of avocados are to be stored in the cool room as indicated by the pink carton label.

Display

- Displays sorted by stages of ripeness.
- Ripe fruit consistently available.
- First in first out, rotate ripest fruit left to right facing the display.
- Remove bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from display.

Hass avocados
How to choose the perfect one.

HARD (Eat in 2-3 days) | FIRM RIPE (Eat in 1-2 days) | RIPE (Good for 2-3 days) | SOFT RIPE (Eat now)

Coles

Display and merchandising | Hass avocados

Care and handling

- Handle trays and fruit carefully - even hard, green fruit bruises.
- Rotate first in first out to maintain freshness.
- Store and display in original supplier cartons only.
- Never tip fill as this will bruise these delicate fruits.
- To prevent bruising store and display in supplier boxes.

Ripeness

- Press gently at the neck of the avocado to test the level of ripeness.

Storage

- Fruit and veg cool room (2-5°C)

Display

- Displays sorted by stages of ripeness.
- Ripe fruit consistently available.
- First in first out, rotate ripest fruit left to right facing the display.
- Remove bruised, rotten and overripe fruit from display.

Hass avocados
How to choose the perfect one.

HARD (Eat in 2-3 days) | FIRM RIPE (Eat in 1-2 days) | RIPE (Good for 2-3 days) | SOFT RIPE (Eat now)

Woolworths