



Stung!

by Phil Lester

It was a warm summer day when Janet went out to check the fences. She rode to a far corner of her farm, parked her quad bike, and began walking through the paddocks. The sheep watched as she climbed the hill. Birds sang in the native forest. The sun shone, and a light breeze stirred the leaves of the trees. It was a great day to be alive.

Then, suddenly, Janet's foot sank into a hole. She had stepped into a wasps' nest! At once she heard a loud buzzing and felt a sharp pain in her leg. In a matter of seconds, thousands of wasps were all around her.

The noise was incredible. The furious insects covered her clothes and crawled under her shirt and shorts, and all the time, they were stinging. Each sting felt like a burning-hot needle jabbing deep into her skin. Janet pulled handfuls of wasps from her hair and clothes, but there was no let-up. The stinging went on and on and on. She felt like she was on fire.



Janet ran, but the swarm of wasps followed. She rolled on the ground, trying to squash them, but it didn't help. She was desperate. Maybe the wasps were attracted to her T-shirt. She pulled it off and threw it away. It made no difference. Still the wasps kept stinging and stinging.

Finally, she ran down the hill and threw herself into a small stream. It was only then that the wasps gave up their attack.



Janet knew she had to get help fast. She had been stung hundreds of times all over her head and body. She pulled out her phone. Her heart sank – no signal!

At that moment, she felt horribly isolated and alone. Her quad bike was a long way away. She would have to walk for forty minutes to reach it and then ride for another fifteen minutes to get to the farmhouse.

There was no option. Janet began walking. The pain was intense. After a while, her legs hurt so much that she had to stop.

“Keep calm,” she told herself. “Focus on breathing slowly.”

She tried her phone again – still no reception. Janet knew she had to keep moving. If she lay down, she might never get up again. Somehow she willed herself to start walking once more.





Janet staggered on until at last she reached her quad bike. She tried her phone again, and this time she got through. An ambulance was on its way!

Janet rode the last few kilometres to the farmhouse, getting there just as the ambulance arrived. The paramedics jumped out and ran towards her. They covered her with cold, wet towels and injected her with medicine to relieve the pain and fight the effects of the wasp venom.

Some time later, Janet heard the sound of a helicopter. It landed in a paddock nearby. The helicopter flew Janet to hospital. She had received hundreds of stings. It took months for some of the scars on her back to heal. She was lucky – she had survived. But today, Janet still shivers when she hears the buzz of an insect nearby.



AUTHOR'S NOTE

“Stung!” is based on the true story of Janet Kelland, who stepped in a wasp nest on her sheep farm near Taumarunui in March 2014.

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The Ministry of Education and Lift Education would like to thank Janet Kelland for allowing us to share her story in “Stung!”.

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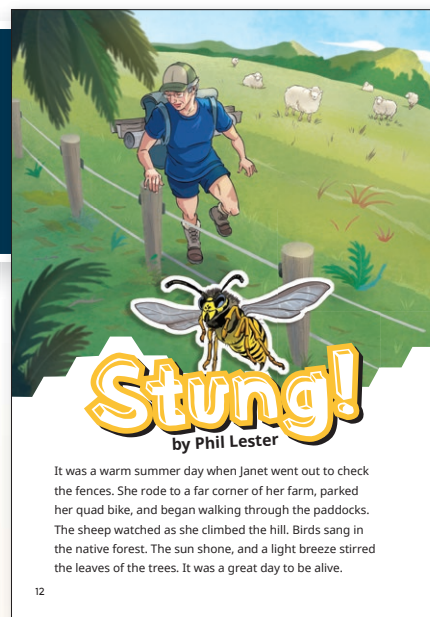
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