

# NZ GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION

Fuelled by Science, Tempered by Experience

GRASSLAND NEWS

[www.grassland.org.nz](http://www.grassland.org.nz)

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We get involved when the community needs us; that is the kiwi way

Warwick Lissaman

So when the Grassland community specifically is called upon it is up to us to front up. The gradual removal of people with specific skills from regional communities into centralised locations challenges us in many ways and in this issue we report back to the members on the AgResearch Future Footprint.

Each and every year we hold an annual conference in a regional location; each year we hear of regional and site specific issues and solutions that the community has developed to address those issues, where specific issues areas of research, tech transfer, or farm systems change are required NZGA membership is always to the fore.

Our NZGA network is 'fuelled by science and tempered by experience' - the very key to adoption and innovation, so when a community comes out and calls on us to address specific issues for Central Otago, the Northland or other regions, NZGA has been, and will continue to be, at the front line.

In this vein, I put forward a case and ask the question 'what does it take to ensure community initiatives driven by passion and commitment are successful?' An action group formed recently with a vision of eradicating Chilean Needle Grass in Marlborough and decided we want rid of this pest plant. The next step is to have the wider community including other regions to adopt the same vision.

Working in conjunction with the Marlborough District Council's biosecurity staff, formation of the CNGAG is the

result of a clear message received from a community meeting. "This is a fantastic initiative and we (the Council) fully support this project and will be working with CNGAG and the community as much as we can," says Shona Sam, senior biosecurity officer with the Marlborough District Council. "It will be a hard graft but with the motivation and drive coming from the community, everyone can benefit from it."

Within the group there are a number of landowners experienced in the use of the chemical Taskforce, which is a new tool showing promise in helping to eradicate the pest. The use of Taskforce has helped galvanize the effort to see that CNG spread is contained and that in the fullness of time eradicated.

"As NZGA community members we all have a role to play in assisting these sort of initiatives in ways that allow local communities to focus on the elimination of potential spread and known infestations, and community education" Warwick says.

"We have this opportunity to eliminate plants in known areas and stop the spread to new areas; what it will take is

**Reminder: There are still outstanding invoices for the 2013/14 year. If you are still to receive your Proceedings or the new Forage book this may be why.**

## Erratum - Research and Practice 8; 4th Ed

NZGA wishes to notify members of an error that has occurred in our recent publication. We are disappointed that the mistake was not caught during the extensive review that we undertook. The error is in the Table on page 33. Please delete reference in the Table on page 33

and replace with the attached correction below to the Table on page 31.

**Jeta** is a perennial ryegrass bred by DLF Seeds in New Zealand.

### ERRATUM

#### Cultivar

Late heading (+8 days to +21 days) tetraploid

Jeta

#### Breeding

NZ

#### Marketer

DLF

#### Endophyte Strain

AR1



NZGA for over 80 years

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(Cont'd from previous page)

everyone buying into the vision of the CNAG and that is to rid Marlborough of known infestations within 15 years. On your property you may determine a shorter time period is achievable and this Action Group is set up to give you access to the tools to enable you to achieve this."

This plant has the potential to make sheep farming along the east coast of NZ a thing of the past, NZ cannot afford for that to happen. If we do not do something this pest plant will invade the hill and high country, not just in Marlborough, North Canterbury and Hawkes Bay, but anywhere annual grasses grow, including arable areas. This is an example of a bio-security threat which has not been granted a classification high enough to ensure funding for eradica-

tion, how can NZGA assist?

So what to do - It is easy to form an 'Action Group'; develop a strategy, develop individual bio-security plans for properties with or without the pest currently, resource the community with the tools for removal of pest and all will be well.

However nothing is quite that easy as we all know, and this is where your expertise and feedback can make a huge difference to the wider community you are part of. With plant pests understanding the plant physiology, determining the pest distribution and density all play a big part in the best strategy.

If you can assist this group please offer.

## AgResearch meeting with NZGA 09/04/2014

NZGA Executive representatives: Warwick Lissaman (President), Graham Kerr, Professor Derrick Moot.

NZGA outlined that NZ Grassland Association are a key stakeholder group in the pastoral sector with over 900 members, who have enjoyed a long and valuable association with AgResearch, and prior to that with DSIR and MAF.

We outlined that through an on-line survey NZGA members asked that some particular points of concern with the "Future Footprint" (FFP) proposal be raised with AgResearch, and discussed. This letter is to inform members of the feedback from the meeting with Dr Tom Richardson, Andrew McSweeney and Dr Greg Murison.

### **1) NZGA members concerns were expressed about the potential loss of key staff through this major relocation process.**

AgResearch responded that they have undertaken a major investigation as to the best direction forward for their organisation, which had many factors including future research, working more closely with Universities and industry, the best balance of land and buildings (many of which need upgrading), the balance between have critical mass in research and regional research, and believe the FFP to be the best way forward.

AgResearch commented that the process has a long lead in time to the final implementation in 2017. This has advantages and disadvantages in relation to staff retention and recruitment. With an ageing staff profile, up to 25% will be at possible retirement age by 2017.

AgResearch indicated they are having meaningful discussions with each individual about how they might be affected, and are providing assistance in shifting and relocation. This long lead-in allows this to be as mutually advantageous as possible, and staff do not have to make a final decision until six months before the moving date. However, the long time period also means a significant period of uncertainty and stress for many staff.

Where AgResearch see gaps developing they will look to recruit or train staff to fill these.

### **2) NZGA expressed concern that the FFP appears to be a retreat by AgR from regional research and extension.**

AgResearch responded that they are not retreating from regional research, and are actually looking to expand their 'farm systems' capability, which they see as currently under-resourced.

They indicated they plan to maintain capability to deal with regional issues (such as within the Horizons and Southland regions) and staff numbers working in regional research and extension would not decrease. They recognised there were local issues that could not be addressed from central hubs.

However, they indicated other parts of research (e.g. lab based) can be undertaken at any location, and their desire is to consolidate research around the Palmerston North and Lincoln hubs and better collaborate with other institutes such as the two Universities.

The FFP is based around their need to underpin the co-location of scientists at these locations, and to rationalise and upgrade facilities at the four campuses, and identified that the current location of staff are a result of historic mergers of various science organisations rather than a strategic plan to meet key sector stakeholder needs.

### **3) NZGA indicated that history tells us closures lead to less real time research into regional specific solutions. AgR have already retreated from Northland, Wallaceville, Tara Hills, Gore and Winchmore and thus lack a true regional footprint, and arguably the retreat to the hubs will deliver even less for our membership.**

AgResearch responded that those Invermay and Ruakura staff working on regional research will remain in those regions. Regional issues are best served from those locations.

They indicated that for other regions stakeholders like

NZGA members would continue to have access to AgResearch scientists in the same way they do now. For example AgResearch scientists will continue to speak at field days as they do now, in support of the pastoral industry.

AgResearch is actively engaged with Levy paying organisations and sought to partner with these to deliver tech transfer messages to the regions. They do not see a return to the days of local MAF stations as viable – and are not funded by central Government to provide these – and reiterated that they are better able to speak to groups rather than provide one to one dialogue. They suggested the education of the agribusiness community by them was an important part of ensuring information is delivered to the regions.

#### **4) NZGA expressed members concerns about the disruption this process is causing in delivering science.**

AgResearch responded that this is a major relocation, the biggest for a science institution in New Zealand. They have had a range of responses from staff, some positive about the change, but for others they know that this is a difficult process, and they will lose some people from the organisation.

AgResearch have tried to mitigate this through communicating with all affected individual staff about assistance they can offer in the move.

#### **5) NZGA indicated that the FFP appeared to be taking AgResearch scientists further away from the application of research on-farm.**

AgResearch responded that they now have a philosophy to identify your 'next user' rather than an 'end user'. They are actively seeking to identify the next user in a pipeline and the FFP would aid that process by allowing collaborative groups across organisations to benefit

from each other's expertise.

#### **6) AgResearch also made the following comments.**

The FFP will help create vibrant environments at the hubs, together with the level of science building and facilities required to attract world class scientists and to encourage young people into the profession requires modern science facilities. The Government and other science institutions have agreed that collaboration around the provision of such facilities is required and therefore they are supporting the creation of the hubs. AgResearch indicated the hubs will provide a much better opportunity for AgResearch to get undergraduate and post-graduate students on campus, from adjacent Universities, and raise the profile of what they do. They see that as a real benefit of the proposed hubs

#### **Conclusion**

NZGA member feedback was given due recognition and discussed openly with AgResearch.

It is fair to say the changes required with the Future Foot Print plan are a significant disruption on one hand, and on the other arguably a major investment in the future of NZ Agriculture.

As members we encourage you all to look at the AgResearch FFP, does it align with the 2011 sector strategies and science roadmaps; with the eye to seeing if what is important to you is included; if not, then it is our responsibility as individuals to convey that.

Member feedback is welcomed by AgResearch, either through your levy payer organisation, direct to AgResearch or via NZGA.

The NZGA Executive wish to thank AgResearch for the opportunity to meet, and discuss the issues on behalf of our membership.

Warwick Lissaman

## **Australasian Dairy Science Symposium 2014**

**Hamilton, NZ, November 19-21**

The **deadline** for submission of abstracts is looming – **Friday 23rd May** in fact! Please click on the following link to [www.adssymposium.com.au](http://www.adssymposium.com.au) to download the abstract template and guidelines.

And, also take a moment to inspect our excellent plenary programme of invited speakers covering the following topic areas:

- Resilient Dairy Systems for the future
- Environmental sustainability
- Forages
- Young stock
- Precision Farming
- Nutrition and Animal Health

Questions in terms of abstract content should be directed to our conference chair, John Roche

([john.roche@dairynz.co.nz](mailto:john.roche@dairynz.co.nz)) while logistics and submission questions to either myself or Donna Sykes on [donna@estherprice.com.au](mailto:donna@estherprice.com.au).

We look forward to seeing you in Hamilton in November.



## Alexandra Conference 2014 - "A Land of Difference - Farming in extremes"

The year is moving fast and conference is only 6 months away so what is happening:

- Conference papers are due to the editor in the next week or so.
- The LOC are working hard on the Alexandra end
- The executive is drafting a programme that we hope meets everyone's expectations.
- Our sponsors are already keen to support the conference again this year.



### Travel and Accommodation

Alexandra is approximately a 1hr drive from Queenstown airport, 2.5 hr from Invercargill airport and 2 hr from Dunedin Airport. Alexandra is a small town and similar to Gore it will be those that are best organised that will stay close to the venue.

All accommodation bookings are being coordinated through Helen Scoles at the Central Otago Visitor Centre in Alexandra. We are hoping most attendees can get rooms close by but the spill over towns will be Clyde (5-10min drive) and Cromwell (30min drive).

She would like delegates to complete the form and return it direct to her so they can coordinate the bookings. (available on the Events page of the NZGA website <http://grassland.org.nz/eventdetails.php?eventnum=20>)

The rooms they have on hold are to be held until 31st August and will then be released if not booked.



## Science Updates

### International Grassland Congress 2013

The papers from this conference are available to be downloaded at this link

<http://www.internationalgrasslands.org/publications>.

This is one large pdf file containing all the papers. To make it easier for our members I have lifted all the NZ authors papers from this pdf and they are lodged individually on our website on the Proceedings page under Research and Practice.

<http://grassland.org.nz/proceedings.php>.

If I have missed your paper let me know and I will organise to add it as well. Hopefully this makes access easier.

### Using big data - wikinewzealand.org

Building knowledge enables informed decisions, which leads to better outcomes. Data alone does not build knowledge, but it is a crucial component. This website brings New Zealand data together in one place and in accessible formats.

### Technology Use now and in the future?

A recent study of technology use by cropping farmers in Australia has shown some interesting trends in data use. The four main technologies used are email, text messag-

ing, the internet and Apps.

	Used regularly	Used less often	Expect to in 2yrs
Email	75%	90%	90%
Internet	55%	80%	80%
Text	60%	80%	80%
APPS	25%	45%	60%

Others such as podcasts, twitter, facebook and linkedin are all at about 5%. What would the figures be for NZ sheep or dairy farmers? The next question is what Apps do our farmers have to use? What would farmers want from an APP. If anyone has suggestions please let me know.

The Western Australian Agriculture Authority have a **Sheep Condition Scoring App** for iPhone or iPad <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/sheep-condition-scoring/id825370276?mt=8>.

They have developed other APPS that I have yet to look at - for cropping and fly strike. These are all available on iTunes.

