

Dr Alison Popay – 2021 recipient of the Ray Brougham Trophy

Dr Alison Popay is the recipient of the 2021 Ray Brougham Trophy, awarded by the NZ Grassland Trust in acknowledgement of contributions to pastoral agriculture. In awarding the Trophy to Alison, John Caradus (chair of the Trust) stated that the unique ecology of New Zealand pasture systems needs unique researchers. They need to have a grounding in the wider ecological principles such as population dynamics, also understanding the fundamental drivers of the physiological responses of our pests. When building knowledge to develop biological control the New Zealand pastoral system is unique because it is built on forest soils and incomplete ecosystems, while providing new pest challenges to imported grasses and legumes. Alison Popay has spent a career developing this expertise, with particular emphasis on the essential symbiosis between ryegrass and its endophytes, and the role of this interaction with the ecology of our ruminant-grazed pastures.



As well as a dedicated and impactful science career, Alison has been fully engaged in the development and delivery of messages for industry through her roles in the Plant Protection Society and the New Zealand Grassland Association. Alison's expertise was recognised through commercial developments. She was part of the Endophyte team that received the 2018 AGMARDT Technology Transfer Award and the 2018 Pickering Medal from the Royal Society of NZ for the development of AR37 – an endophyte strain, released in 2007, valued at \$3.6 billion to the NZ economy. This team also received the AgResearch Technology prize for this work in 2014. When combined with our modern ryegrass genetics, this endophyte provided a suite of chemicals that provided protection for the plant from insect pests and provided a safe forage for the grazing ruminant.

Through her contributions to the field of New Zealand pastoral entomology, biological pest control and particularly the understanding and applications of the ryegrass/endophyte symbiosis Alison is the Ray Brougham Trophy winner for 2021. The NZGT Trustees congratulate Dr Popay.

In accepting the Trophy, Alison emphasised that she had always been part of a team, working on a challenge with a cross-disciplinary approach. She was originally educated in ecology, and it was



this integrative background that resulted in her ability to contribute to the endophyte-host-herbivore interaction that has been her work. Motivated by her love of research and science, and the people with whom she has had the pleasure of working, the fact that the research has been adopted has also been a driver. Industry and farmers have embraced the new technologies around endophyte, and animals have benefitted - as has the economy.

Details of the Ray Brougham Trophy seminar series will be circulated in due course.