



New Zealand Grassland
Association (Inc)

Hosting a Grassland Conference

Guidelines for the
Local Organising Committee

January 2014

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Introduction

The New Zealand Grassland Association (NZGA) Conference has been held since 1931, and is a major event for both the NZGA and the New Zealand pastoral industry, typically with 250-400 attendees of farmers, researchers, consultants and from agribusiness.

It alternates between North and South Islands, and is held across differing regions to encompass the variation in climate and farming systems found through New Zealand.

These guidelines are designed to help, through covering many of the learnings of previous conferences. Parts of the conference are flexible, where in doubt discuss things with the NZGA Executive.

An objective of the NZGA is to keep the Conference registration cost at a reasonable level to allow good attendance, through a combination of strong sponsorship, a good (not luxurious) level of facilities, and the work of the Local Organising Committee (LOC).

The work, time and effort put in by the LOC is greatly appreciated by the NZGA.

Conference Objectives

- To deliver a smoothly-run, informative, stimulating conference that covers major regional and topical pastoral issues.
- Two-way communication – visitors learn about the host region, and the host region learns from visitors.
- Communicating new developments, latest research results and industry opinions.
- Networking with others in the pastoral industry.

Format

The conference is usually held over three days in early November. The format is typically:

- Starts 8.30-9 am on a Tuesday morning, finishing 2-3pm on Thursday afternoon. This can vary depending on the location and venue constraints.
- For first two days, mornings taken up with sessions presenting papers and two afternoon field tours. For third day (Thursday) all sessions are presenting papers. This could vary depending on requirements (e.g. one full day field tour).
- The Conference Dinner is held on the last night (Wednesday evening)
- The AGM is normally held on the Wednesday night prior to the Conference dinner
- Additional social events can be planned

These timings are flexible in discussion with the NZGA Executive

NZGA Executive

The Executive are elected members (apart from the Executive Officer) who are charged with the running the NZGA. This comprises the President, Vice President, Executive Officer, Editor, and five committee members.

In addition, the chairperson of the Local Organising Committee (LOC) is a co-opted member for the conference year. A NZGA Exec member is appointed to assist each LOC.

The Executive greatly appreciates the work, time and effort put in by LOCs, and is available to provide assistance and advice where required. Any problems, concerns or queries can be referred to the Executive Officer or President.

Current NZGA Executive

Warwick Lissaman (President for 2014-2015, farmer)

David Stevens (Vice President, AgResearch)

Warren King (AgResearch)

Graham Kerr (Agriseeds)

Laurie Copland (farmer)

David Chapman (DairyNZ)

Derrick Moot (Lincoln University)

Executive Officer - Marie Casey

Responsibilities

The LOC and Executive work together in preparing for the conference but a broad outline of the responsibilities of each is listed below:

LOC

The LOC organise venue, dinners, social events, field tours and running of the event. This includes:

- Select and book venue(s)
- Choose regional themes for conference
- Provide itemised budget (April-June)
- Organise field tours
- Select field tour speakers and facilitators
- Provide input into conference registration form
- Publicity (national publicity in liaison with the Executive Officer)
- Maintain conference registration desk at conference
- Venue management, catering, audio-visual systems

Executive/Executive Officer

The Executive's role is to support the LOC, organise papers, co-ordinate registration and National sponsors of the NZGA, and produce the proceedings. This includes:

- Ratify conference location
- Choose national themes for conference Nov
- Call for papers early Dec
- Select papers
- Prepare draft conference programme on website (Exec member with this responsibility not EO)
- Select session chair people
- Coordinate national (Level 1) sponsors
- Ratify budget (June/July)
- Endorse field tours and visit venue (June/July)
- Prepare conference programme & registration form (can be done at LOC level)
- Registration – EO and Finance manager
- Publish the Proceedings (Editor)
- Arrange national publicity
- Provide accounting/budget spreadsheets if required
- Supply NZGA Signage/banners if required (currently held by W Lissaman)

Budget

The objective of the NZGA Conference is to, if possible, make a small profit. The budget is set collectively by the LOC and the Executive.

- The EO provides a budget template (based on previous conferences).
- The LOC are responsible for the local budget, and calculating local costs (e.g. venue,

sound system, dinner, bus hire) and income from any local sponsorship.

- The Executive provide likely income from National sponsors, and an estimate on the likely number of attendees to budget on.
- The Executive will decide the conference registration rates each year (they will not be the ones in the budget template as these will be from the previous year).

NZGA will pay in advance for some conference requirements such as venue deposits or part payment to small companies or local volunteer groups.

Sponsorship

There are three broad levels of sponsorship:

- **Premier (Naming rights)**
- **Level 1 (Gold)**
- **Level 2 (display)**
- **Level 3 (other)**

Conference sponsorship has been increasingly important in supporting the conference in recent years. Sponsorship arrangements have now changed so that the sponsors support the conference as a forum for technology transfer rather than as straight publicity for their company. It is important that all sponsors contributing to the same level receive equal treatment

Other types of sponsorship may be negotiated with the LOC. Generally at least \$60,000 is required for the financial viability of the conference and to retain the relatively low registration cost.

The Executive is responsible for obtaining and managing all Premier and Level 1 (Gold) sponsors, which provide the core of the Conference sponsorship. This largely comes from a "family" of sponsors (see NZGA website for these) which have been associated with the NZGA for a long time.

The LOC may negotiate with local sponsors (e.g. banks, tractor or ute dealerships, vineyards, Councils) but must consult with the Executive Officer to ensure consistency, and there is no conflict of interest. The Conference is not a forum for trade displays.

All sponsors must sign a sponsorship contract, supplied to the LOC by the Executive Officer.

Conference Theme

Major Theme

Conference publicity is helped by the use of a major theme. The major theme should reflect the themes of the conference should exhibit features of the region in which the conference is being held. Both the theme and logo should then appear on all publicity and correspondence.

The LOC are responsible with developing a theme. This needs to be ratified by the NZGA Executive.

Session Themes

The LOC should draw up a list of potential conference topics and select six to eight themes to be confirmed by the Executive at the December Executive meeting. These themes may relate closely to specific regional farming practices and issues. The National Executive reserves the right to identify themes of national relevance.

Paper Selection

Once the themes are decided, the Executive calls for paper offers for the Conference. The papers are selected at the March Executive meeting. Usually preference is given to appropriate papers from local scientists, consultants, commercial representatives, and farmers. Farmer papers are generally well received and it is desirable to have two to four of these. It is up to the LOC to solicit local people to submit these papers.

Programme & Proceedings

The Exec organises the Conference programme in conjunction with the LOC.

The conference programme is drafted after the March Executive meeting, ideally finalised at the June/July meeting, and available by mid-August for people to view when registering for the Conference. It is drawn up by both the LOC and Exec.

Programmes are emailed or mailed to a variety of national organisations.

A printed programme should be supplied to all delegates at arrival at the Conference. This can be combined with the "Field Tour Booklet" into a single booklet.

Conference Proceedings

The Proceedings, containing all the papers presented at the Conference, are published before the conference, which is the responsibility of the NZGA editor. Copies of proceedings will be supplied to the LOC immediately prior to the Conference to be given to all delegates when they register.

Field Tours

Typically this is two half days or one full day (other options such as replacing a field tour with workshops could be considered).

A key role for LOC is organising these field days. The purpose of the field trips is to:

- Give delegates an insight into farming in the region.
- Acquaint them with local grassland management practices.

For more detail refer to Appendix 4.

Field Tour Booklet

A field trip booklet giving the background data for each stop is essential, and should be included in the delegates' conference folder. This provides background information for delegates and saves time discussing farm details during the field trip.

Attendance by LOC Representative

The NZGA will pay for airfares, accommodation, conference fees, and other reasonable costs for one person from the LOC (generally the Chair) to attend the conference held in the year before the one in their region.

General

Social Events

A successful innovation has been providing sponsored refreshments the evening prior to conference to enable delegates to mix socially (optional).

Conference Dinner

For the Conference Dinner, MCs and entertainment are NOT a preferred option (but can be discussed with the Executive). The conference dinner has a number of award presentations (see "NZ Grassland Trust Awards" below) which take up a significant amount of time at the dinner. We have found that delegates appreciate some time to catch up.

NZ Grassland Trust Awards (NZGT)

The LOC will be asked to nominate two local farmers to receive a NZGT award in recognition of their contribution to pastoral agriculture in the region. For details see Appendix 7.

At the dinner the NZGT will make awards to two local farmers, a life member and the "Ray Brougham Trophy" for services to the pastoral industry. These awards are made by a member of the NZGT.

Registration Process (Exec responsibility)

All conference delegates including those for the LOC should complete a registration form or register on-line at the www.grassland.org.nz Events page.

Registering at the start of the Conference

An easy to find area should be set up for delegates to register for an hour on the night preceding the Conference, and from early on the first morning of the Conference.

The great majority of delegates will be pre-registered, and can collect a name tag, conference programme, proceedings and sponsors material. See Appendix 5 for more.

Alternative Tours

Not required. Where appropriate suggestions can be made about local "what to do's" for people who arrive early or stay on after the Conference.

Insurance

The NZGA has insurance with to cover potential losses and damage to any equipment that is used. The NZGA has public liability insurance through Crombie Lockwood, Palmerston North. This covers NZGA members or those acting directly for the association and provides insurance against gross negligence to the point where the injured party may claim for exemplary damages. This, however, is a very rare event in New Zealand.

Feedback

At the end of each conference, it would be appreciated if LOC members give feedback to the Executive on all aspects of the conference, and suggestions to improve future conferences.

Complimentary Registrations

LOC Members

The **LOC chairperson** has the discretion to allocate up to 10 complimentary registrations to LOC members. These registrations do not cover the costs associated with meals, accommodation etc.

Media

Bona fide members of the media are entitled to complimentary registration including lunches, but not the Conference Dinner or accommodation.

Level 1 Sponsors

Each Level 1 sponsor receives a complimentary conference registration. This does not cover conference dinner or accommodation.

NZGT Award Winners

The two NZGT Farm Award winners and their partners receive complimentary Conference Dinner tickets but pay all other registration fees if they wish to attend some or all of the conference sessions.

Australian Grassland Organisations

The NZGA has a reciprocal agreement with the New South Wales and Victorian Grassland Associations whereby visiting Presidents or their nominee have complimentary registration including meals and the Conference Dinner. Accommodation costs are not included.

Conference Timetable

Conference Year – minus two

November Discuss potential location at AGM during conference

Conference Year – minus one

May/June Hold first meeting to form LOC and book venue and accommodation

September LOC choose themes and logo

Start to contact sponsors

November Venue confirmed at conference AGM

December Themes confirmed at Executive meeting

Conference Year

March Papers accepted for conference

April LOC select field trip stops, chairpersons and speakers

National publicity begins* (exec responsibility)

June/July Executive visit to view venue and possibly field trip stops

Budget and programme finalised

July/August All sponsors confirmed

All papers refereed

Programme circulated

September Start of newspaper advertising

Registrations start coming in

October Local paper run through carried out* paper advertising not usually justified

Start of radio advertising* Hokonui best option locally

Proceedings printed

Oct/Nov CONFERENCE

December Collating invoices for payment and forwarding of all documents to the Executive Officer

Appendix 1 - Forming the Local Organising Committee

There are many ways to organise a LOC. The following is suggested.

An initial meeting to form the LOC is normally chaired by a local member of the NZGA Executive or a local advocate for the conference. A wide range of people involved in agriculture (consultants, farmers, commercial representatives, and researchers) are invited to the meeting and a core from this group form the LOC.

A chairperson and a secretary/admin officer are chosen. The latter records the minutes of the LOC meetings and sends a copy to the Executive Officer, and is responsible for collating the budget and sending accounts to the EO for payment.

Sub-committees

At the second meeting of the LOC it is recommended that members be allocated responsibility for a certain task. These tasks include:

- Finance/Sponsorship (discuss with EO as often local sponsorship is not required)
- Publicity
- Venue
- Field Tours
- Social Events

Progress is reported at each LOC meeting.

In the conference year, sub-committees can have more frequent separate meetings from the LOC to discuss the details of specific tasks. As the conference draws nearer more LOC members can be co-opted as required.

Professional Conference Organiser

Professional conference organisers have been used for some conferences, and can help with the organisation of the Conference.

Please discuss this with the Exec and EO before contracting their services as there can be risk of duplication with the EO's role.

Appendix 2 - Conference Venue and Accommodation

Before the conference is confirmed at a location, the Executive must be satisfied that there is a venue capable of holding all delegates in one room (depending of the location this could be 250 – 400 people), and has accommodation (in-house or close by) for typically 150 - 300 people.

In some Conferences co-current sessions may be required, where two (or occasionally three) rooms may need used simultaneously. It is advantageous to have a venue with multiple rooms or where large rooms can be split.

Venue requirements

- large room for over 250 delegates
- extra spaces for concurrent sessions or workshops (holding 100-120 people),
- suitable space for morning and afternoon teas as well as sponsor displays
- internet/Wi-Fi strongly recommended
- suitability for audio-visual and sound

Simplest - choose a hotel complex where both the venue and most of the accommodation can be provided.

Consider access to conference rooms and ability to move people quickly around the venue. It is useful if the presentation room has an unobtrusive entry point so that latecomers can enter the sessions without distracting the speakers or audience.

Accommodation

The LOC will need to investigate availability of hotels and motels (block booking conference dates – but be aware that if delegates are searching online the rooms will all show as booked).

The delegates bear the final responsibility for ensuring their accommodation requirements are met.

Personnel at Venue

The sub-committee responsible for the venue needs at least five people present at the conference including a Venue Manager (usually the sub-committee chairperson), an expert to look after the visual aids/sound system (this may need to be contracted out), a lights person, someone to put on and take off lapel microphones, and someone to ensure that delegates move from lunch or teas promptly back to the sessions. Most of the work is carried out during the conference.

Appendix 3 - Financial

Conference Budget

The conference budget template should be drafted as soon as practicable (at the second meeting) and finalised by June/July. Prior conference budgets will be made available by the EO. The budget template includes an executive administration cost.

When the budget is submitted to the Executive a copy of the LOC meeting minutes should be attached. This assists understanding any non-standard budget items.

Conference Accounts

The Executive Officer handles finance on behalf of the LOC, and the conference accounts are included in the main Association accounts (as a separate Job code), which are audited. It is important that there is a clear audit trail for all income and expenditure.

Income (registration and sponsorship) - Will be handled by the Executive Officer.

Payments

All invoices and receipts should be sent to the Executive Officer at the beginning of the month for payment on the 20th. All invoices need to be approved by the LOC before payment. Although we try and pay bills as soon as possible the Audit Committee Process means that this will still be at least 7 working days after receiving approved invoices. The Executive Officer can process credit card payments.

NZGA will pay in advance for some conference requirements such as venue deposits or part payment to small companies or local volunteer groups.

- It is ESSENTIAL an invoice is obtained for each payment made (with payee's GST number where applicable) to be forwarded to the Executive Officer. **NB: ensure that payments to non GST registered people do not include the GST**

It is important that **all** conference income and expenditure be channelled through the NZGA bank account. It is not acceptable, for example, for some income to be banked to a private account of one of the conference organisers, and repaid at a later date; or for cash payments to be made from money not banked.

The LOC does not need to file GST returns.

Payment for Consultants or Facilitators

When looking at using consultants as facilitators, for example, they should first be approached on the basis of making a voluntary contribution. However, where the LOC has established a need to pay for these professional services a recommendation is to be recorded in the LOC minutes to go to the Executive and an amount entered in the budget accordingly.

Written Financial Report

This should be provided as soon as possible after the conference, preferably by January for an October/November conference, but in any event before mid-March to allow conference details to be included in the NZGA annual accounts which close on 31 July. (Maybe done by EO).

Appendix 4 - Field Tours

The purpose of the field trips is to:

- Give delegates an insight into farming in the region.
- Acquaint them with local grassland management practices.
- Where possible fit into, and illustrate, the Conference theme.

Selection of Stops

This is best carried out by the LOC nominating a number of potential stops that are linked to the conference themes. The field trip sub-committee plus the LOC chairperson should inspect all the potential stops and select the preferred ones together with speakers. No more than two stops should be included in any one afternoon. If the stop is at a large property with many facets, then it is advisable to let this occupy the whole afternoon. A wide range of farm activities should be covered without undue concentration on one farm management or technical aspect. **Each stop should have an alternative wet weather venue.**

Excessive time spent travelling in buses should be avoided with preferably no more than one hour spent travelling in any segment.

Stop Management

Once selected, each stop should have an LOC subcommittee member appointed to liaise with the speaker(s) and organise the stop. Speakers at each stop (including the farmer) should contribute practical pointers of relevance to the farm or local region, and avoid technical lectures. At one of the two stops on each afternoon, the whole group could be divided into three smaller groups that circulate around three stops each with their own leader. This format helps facilitate discussion. Alternatively the delegates can be split into two groups alternating between two stops in one afternoon.

Each stop should involve the delegates in walking over pastures and viewing stock rather than sitting in one place for long periods. Experienced facilitators should be used as chairpersons, and good cordless microphones provided for chairpersons and speakers (need to handle windy conditions). Portable toilets should be provided at each stop.

Field Trip Booklet

A field trip booklet giving the background data for each stop is essential, and should be included in the conference folder. This provides background information for delegates and saves time discussing farm details during the field trip.

Buses

These are a major cost item and quotes should be obtained. A bus should be taken around the field trip stops with the field trip sub-committee. Adequate air conditioning and sound systems are needed in each bus.

Eating prepared lunches on the bus (collected in a paper bag as delegates leave the venue) saves time and has become a popular practice. In addition fruit juice should be available midway through the afternoon. Each bus should have a local commentator with a prepared script describing historical and geographical as well as agricultural features. As little time as possible should be spent getting on and off buses – filling buses individually outside the venue and numbering the buses helps the process.

Appendix 5 - During the Conference

Transport

The LOC may organise transport to take delegates from the nearest airport/s to their accommodation and then from the venue to the airport at the end of the conference. This can be carried out, for example, using a local small bus shuttle company.

Daily transport between the venue and accommodation may also be provided or organised.

Registering at the start of the Conference

An easy to find area (with good signage) should be set up for delegates to register for an hour on the night preceding the Conference, and from early on the first morning of the Conference.

The great majority of delegates will be pre-registered, can be ticked off, and be given:

- A name tag in a round-the neck lanyard. The EO can supply the lanyards which are reused. Name tags must be printed on BOTH sides in as large a font as possible, as they flip.
- A conference programme
- Copy of the proceedings containing the papers presented
- NZGA hat, pen and A5 writing pad. This is provided by the EO.
- Sponsors material. The sponsors provide material, including leaflets, but also other items (e.g. pens, water bottles)

The LOC need to organise, and budget for, a bag or satchel to give to delegates when they register containing all this material. If you need help with this contact the EO.

Announcements

A specific person should be designated for the whole conference to make announcements regarding events and logistics, to assist with the smooth running on the Conference. These might include things such as:

- Things need to run to time, so please move promptly when asked
- Specific OSH requirements
- How morning/afternoon teas might operate.
- Where buses are leaving from
- If people are late to a session where to enter room
- Reminders on sun screen, wet weather gear

Presentations

It is ESSENTIAL that presentations are both heard and seen.

PowerPoint is the standard method of visual aid presentation. This and the sound system must be thoroughly tested to reduce the risk of problems developing during conference sessions.

Two large screens may be needed and these should be clearly visible by all the audience. Each session has a sponsor, whose logo should be put up on the screen at the start of that session if possible.

Paper Sessions

Each paper session typically consists of four to five papers each of 10-15 minutes with 5-10 minutes for discussion. Sessions are chaired by Executive members, appointed by the Executive. The LOC should brief session chairpersons on logistical requirements and other matters. It is essential for all local speakers to have a run through of their paper before the conference. Local farmer speakers should have a suitable LOC member assigned to help them prepare their papers and visual aids.

Microphones for question time

Generally most speakers have time to answer several questions on their paper. For people to hear these 2 roving microphones are needed. Where a number of people want to ask questions, the session chair will decide who asks questions.

Lunch and Tea Breaks

Lunches and morning and afternoon teas are generally served close to the conference room. Layout of the drinks/food should be planned carefully with 4-6 separate stations for both speed of distribution and flow of people. Putting the milk and sugar on separate table's speeds up the process remarkably.

NZGA AGM

The AGM is usually held around 5.30-6.00 pm on the first or second afternoon. The AGM requires a meeting room should be near to where the evening meal is to be served so that delegates can attend on time.

Appendix 6 - Publicity

Local

The LOC should establish a Publicity Sub-committee to develop and implement a comprehensive publicity strategy and programme.

At most conferences, local people make up at least half of the delegates and publicity should be targeted at them. The best publicity is the conference programme with its attached registration slip. Local newspaper and radio advertising should support this publicity.

Any publicity targeting registration should occur well before the Earlybird registration closes off (usually 30 Sept).

Another important responsibility of the Publicity Sub-committee is to ensure that local (and national) press reporters are aware of the conference and encouraged to attend. Good press coverage of the conference is regarded favourably by sponsors and encourages future involvement.

The Executive Officer will send out conference programmes and other material to NZ agricultural journalists.

National

Most non-local delegates are members of the NZGA and receive publicity through newsletters. However, national papers and farming magazines can help publicise the conference to notify non-members from outside the region through regular media releases from the LOC, in conjunction with the Executive Officer. These should start around nine months before the conference, and some could feature "teasers" from four or five topical/controversial papers to be given at the conference.

A number of Internet sites offer the opportunity for publicity including the NZGA's home page (www.grassland.org.nz), RSNZ, AgResearch, No. 8 Wired, NZIPIM, and those of other industry organisations.

Don't forget to use LOC members networks.

Appendix 7 - NZ Grassland Trust Awards

NZGT Awards are made each year at the NZGA Conference, usually at the Conference Dinner. They include the 2 farming awards and two special awards, the regional award and the Ray Brougham Trophy, recognising effort above and beyond the normal career contribution that benefits the regional and national pastoral agriculture industries in some particular way.

The trustees administering the Trust's fund are all NZGA past presidents. The current chairman is Gavin Sheath, and the secretary-treasurer is Dr Bruce Belgrave, Grasslanz.

Farming Awards

Each year the Trust makes up to two awards, for excellence in grassland farming, to enterprises within the designated Annual Conference region. Nominations are solicited from the LOC and individuals, consultants and relevant organisations in the host region, and are usually the farm-owning partners, but can be managers or sharemilkers.

The major requirements sought include:

- Good grassland farming - an impressive, profitable grassland-based business, run for at least five years on the property.
- Innovative approach - using the latest grassland technology effectively.
- Sustainable management - a good degree of sustainability in the enterprise and a strong responsibility for environmental matters.
- Communication skills - passing on good grassland farming skills to others in the region, including local effort.

Each winner receives a framed certificate and five years' NZGA subscription, to enable them to accumulate the latest grassland information through the NZGA Annual Conference and its Proceedings.

The NZGT Regional Award

This award was introduced in 1997 and is made to an appropriate person, usually based in the region where the annual NZGA Conference is being held. It recognises exceptional effort that supports technology development and application, to help maintain New Zealand farming's competitive edge.

The Ray Brougham Trophy

The Ray Brougham Trophy was instituted in memory of Dr Ray Brougham, director of DSIR's Grasslands Division from 1970 to 1985, an NZGA Life Member and GMT Chairman, who died suddenly in late 1993, not long after having organised the XVII International Grassland Congress in New Zealand and Queensland, arguably the most successful event of its kind.

When Ray died his family donated a bronze statue of a seed sower, and the Trust associated it with its special award for an outstanding national contribution towards the New Zealand grassland industry.