

Summary of the Field Results for the Footrot Trial Phase II

During the spring and summer of 1999 the first phase of the Producer Initiated Research and Development (PIRD) and WoolMark funded Footrot trial took place. Our results were published in the April 2000 issue of the Cicerone Newsletter (number 6).

The sheep from this phase of the trial were over-wintered in their plots in Armidale. The two virulent strains, white and green ear tags, were removed from the trial on welfare grounds. We kept the red ear-tags (field benign, lab benign, benign control), the orange ear-tags (clean control), the pink, blue and purple 'test' strains. These sheep were drenched and shorn in their plots and foot baths of disinfectant were used by dogs and people whenever they entered and left a plot.

During this time it was finally agreed that the sheep should go to a different climatic area and see what happened with these 'odd' strains of footrot. We appreciate the great support from John Seaman, Program Leader, Flock Health in NSW Agriculture who was instrumental in finding a suitable site at Toogong in the Molong Rural Lands Protection Board (RLPB).

On 1st September the sheep were transported to Toogong for Phase II of

the work. To ensure no cross-contamination occurred, each animal was physically carried onto the truck and they were transported in separate straw covered pens according to ear-tag colour. At Toogong they were individually carried off the truck to keep the footrot strains apart and then placed in separate plots.

A new local set of virulents were included in Phase II of the trial and new clean monitor sheep were added.

The plots in Toogong were very lush with plenty of white clover, sub clover and lucerne. A wet spring continued to ensure ideal conditions for the development and transmission of footrot.

The sheep were footscored each week by Footrot Advisory officers from the local RLPB and other nearby Boards who were interested in the results. This took place from their arrival in September until the middle of December.



You get some idea of the lush conditions from this photograph of Col Somerset and another RLPB inspector with the sheep in one of the Toogong plots.

The results are shown in the following graph. Footscores 3A, 3B and 3C do not translate well onto graphs, so the following conversion was used (as in the presentation of the Phase I results)

Footscore 1	= Graph score 1
Footscore 2	= Graph score 2
Footscore 3A	= Graph score 3
Footscore 3B	= Graph score 4
Footscore 3C	= Graph score 5
Footscore 4	= Graph score 6
Footscore 5	= Graph score 7

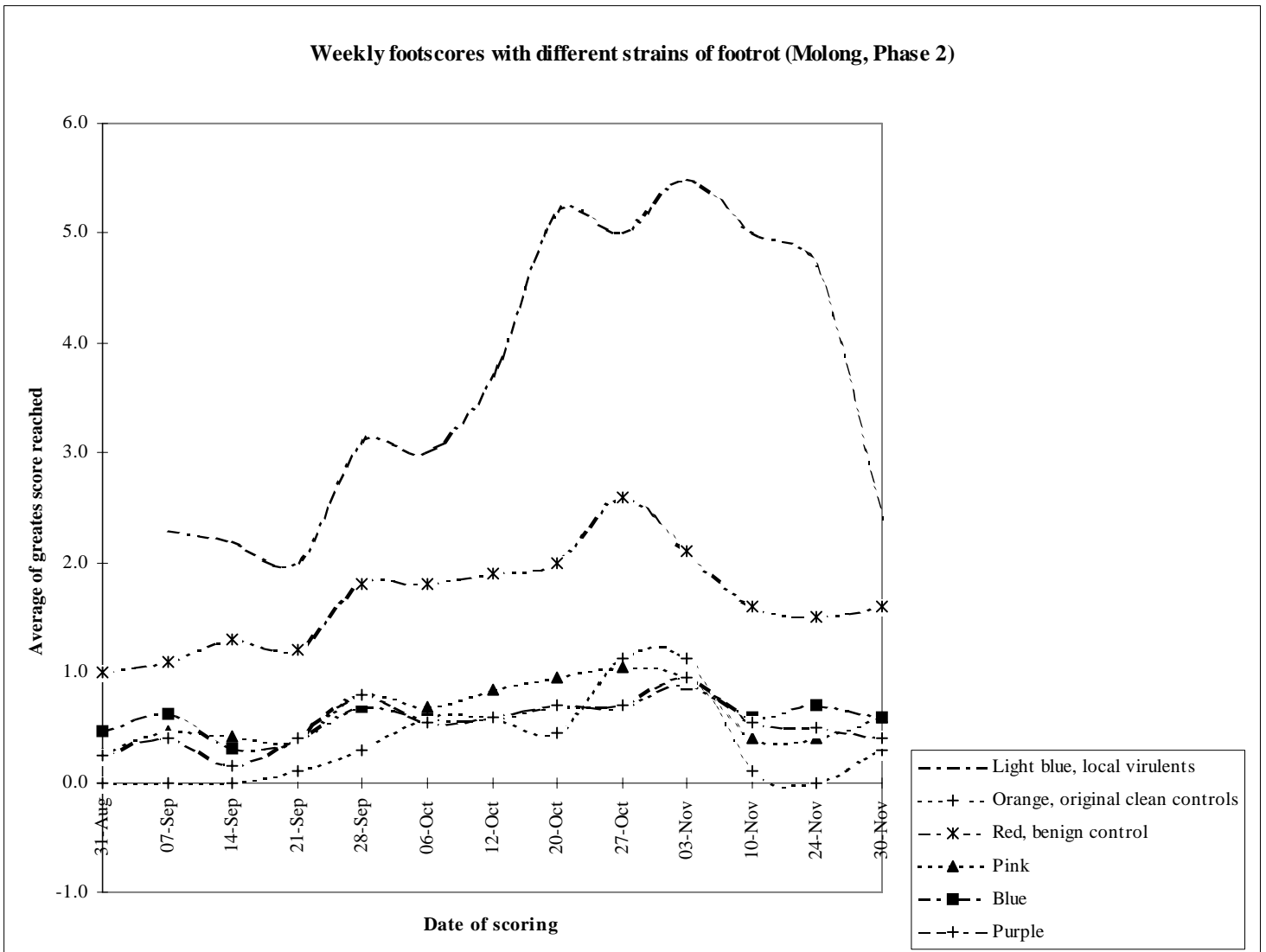
A Field Day was held for RLPB advisory officers, local producers and Cicerone members on Friday 10th November. On this day the animals with the virulent strain were footpared and treated to keep flies out of their feet. On the graph the marked drop in the virulent footscores indicates this time. The general trend downwards indicates the start of the drying off period in the pasture.

However the results still show that the three 'test' strains of pink, blue and purple ear-tags remained behaving in a benign fashion, despite the lush conditions they did not 'break out' into full blown virulent footrot. This backs up the findings from Phase I of the trial.

Dr. Brian Cheetham of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of New England (UNE) will be doing his DNA analysis on swabs taken from these sheep and we keenly await his results. conducted a DNA analysis on swabs taken from these sheep and his results confirm the field behaviour, enabling him to pick the sheep which are field benign even if the gel test suggests that the strain is virulent.

The sheep have now all been given injections of antibiotics and will be foot-bathed and then transported to the Elizabeth McArthur Agricultural Institute where Dr Richard Whittington of NSW Agriculture will be doing blood tests and antibody work on them.

So the Cicerone sheep have proved to be very valuable assets in the research on the various strains of footrot. We are most grateful to the original owners of the sheep who donated them to the project. We are also grateful to Mr Henry Thomas of Toogong, a cattleman!, who kindly allowed us to use his land for Phase II of this trial. Finally many thanks indeed the various Footrot Advisory Officers, especially those from Armidale and Molong, but also those from all round the State who have shown a keen interest in the trial and results.



We are most grateful to the funding from Producer Initiated Research and Development (PIRD) and WoolMark which allowed us to do this work.