

# *Cicerone Newsletter*

Issue 98/1

July, 1998

## Message from your Producer Chairman

*Hugh Sutherland*

A public workshop to Launch Cicerone was held on the 19th May, 1998. Since then the Board elected from participants on the day has been progressing all the issues raised. These principally fall into 3 areas.

- To structure Cicerone so that members are able to get the most out of it,
- To further ideas for workshops and seminars that were highlighted on the day as being a priority, and
- To investigate the potential, in identified areas, of validating existing research for local conditions or facilitating new research projects to solve local problems.

The Board has organised its first forum, on footrot, for 30th July, 1998. Prominent industry and research experts will be discussing the challenges of the recent identification of footrot in the New England. The purpose will be to provide information to producers via presentations and providing the opportunity for questions.

After the morning session, **Cicerone subscriber members** will meet with these experts to satisfy that all local concerns will be addressed and, where possible, discuss ways to improve the situation via information or further research.\*

## What is Cicerone?

Cicerone is a producer-led initiative to increase the relevance of research and extension efforts on the Northern Tablelands.

The overall aim of the Cicerone Project is to increase the profitability and sustainability of grazing-based agriculture on the Northern Tablelands, by facilitating research, organising and creating extension activities, and working together to provide an environment in which researchers, extension agents and farmers can co-develop new ideas and techniques.

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*Aim is to increase the profitability and sustainability of grazing-based agriculture on the Northern Tablelands*

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A key feature of the Project is that it is led by producers and involves individuals and groups with stakes in the success of Northern Tablelands agriculture.

It is intended that the Project will serve the interests of its financial members and of the community at large by dissemination of information, creation of new knowledge and reduce the risks involved in these processes.

### **What is a Subscriber Member?**

One who has expressed an interest in joining/supporting Cicerone and who has paid their subscriber fee of \$80. This will entitle the subscriber to vote at general meetings, to stand for election to the Management Board and to obtain privileges not available to general members of the public - such as in-depth discussions about your problems with the experts at our forthcoming Footrot Day.

#### **Join us!**

If you wish to join, you can do so at the Footrot day or else send your cheque for \$80 made out to Cicerone to: **The Treasurer, Cicerone, c/- Hugh Beattie 161 Rusden St Armidale 2350**

**STOP PRESS!**

**July 30, 1998**

**FOOTROT DAY**

**See over**

### **Your Cicerone committee:**

The following were elected at the recent inaugural general meeting of Cicerone:

- Hugh Sutherland - producer rep. (Chairman)
- Hugh Beattie - producer rep. (Treasurer)
- Jim Scott - UNE rep. (Secretary)
- Tim Wright - producer rep. (also SGS rep.)
- Sonia Williams - Landcare rep.
- Clare Bentley - NSW Agriculture rep.
- Lachlan Fulloon - producer rep.
- Kim Barnet - producer rep.
- Rob Woolaston - CSIRO rep.

### **Report on Workshop held at Chiswick to form Cicerone**

**(May 19, 1998)**

#### Research and Extension Projects

Taken as a whole, the research and extension needs expressed by the participants point to a research and extension program for Cicerone that includes at least one major project with a holistic approach, supported by a number of more tightly focussed projects on specific topics.

Both the land management and grazing and feeding groups identified projects that involve the comparison of whole farm systems of meat and wool production. The aspects of system performance that the participants felt should be evaluated included native and introduced pasture performance and composition, livestock performance and health, economics, performance in climatic extremes, and social and environmental effects. The aspects of management that might be compared included, various grazing and pasture management systems, including 'cell grazing' type systems, the levels of fertilizer and chemical inputs, and the inclusion of trees and shrubs. Participants believed that the first step in such a project should be to collate and review relevant work that already been done, and so identify principles that producers may be able to use on their properties. The extension of the findings from this project might be done in a number of ways, such as workshops to assist in understanding the

principles and their application, and field days demonstrating the adaptation of principles on focus farms around the region.

A number of more tightly focussed projects were put forward by participants and, in many cases, these could form just one aspect of the broader, more holistic, project described above. Topics, not in any order of priority, include:

- improved medium to long range climate prediction,
- identification of better performing grass species,
- re-establishing clovers in pastures,
- cropping,
- testing for virulent and benign footrot and the role of zinc and selenium in footrot,
- blowfly control,
- internal parasite control,
- calving problems, and
- regional benchmark analysis.

Again, participants emphasised in most cases that these projects should start with the collation and review of existing information, followed by packaging of relevant and useable information and its extension in the ways described above.

In making choices among these topics, the findings of the grazier survey might be used to identify topics that are likely to have wide appeal in the region, while the remaining topics could be refined and elaborated at a future workshop.

#### Workshops, Field Days, Education and the Central Farm

The pattern that seems to emerge from the wide range of suggested topics and guidelines for conducting these activities is that participants are looking for activities of two basic kinds. Informational activities involve the presentation of information that can largely be accommodated within what producers already know. Educational activities involve thinking more reflectively about what one wants from farming, learning new ways of looking at things and focussing on understanding general and perhaps unfamiliar principles.

Participants seemed confident that a range of informational activities could be conducted during field days and workshops. Field day and workshop

topics, not in any priority order included:

- comparison of fodder production and conservation methods,
- economics of particular enterprises,
- techniques of cropping and pasture establishment,
- understanding end use of farm products,
- organising a marketing co-operative, and
- use of futures, hedging, options etc.

In contrast, participants emphasised their concerns about how educational activities might be conducted. This suggests that Cicerone will need to take particular care in organising educational activities to ensure that best practice in adult learning is followed. Issues that were important to participants included recognition of prior learning and practical experience, and learning in a supportive environment. Topics for educational activities included:

- current trends and future options in the restructuring of agriculture in New England,
- the process of setting personal and family goals on the farm,
- identifying and understanding the root causes of many of the problems that are currently being treated as symptoms,
- principles of conducting experimental research and testing on farms, and
- using computers and the Internet.

Of course, activities do not have to be solely informational or solely educational, they can be both. The main point for Cicerone is to recognise when suggested topics are more educational than informational and to ensure the activity takes place in an appropriate learning environment.\*

Did you receive an invitation to join but have not done so yet?

Support New England research, demonstration and extension by becoming a subscriber.

In the future, subscribers will be invited to trial comparisons on their own properties.

Would you like to join?

If you wish to join, and have not done so yet, please fill out the following and send your cheque for \$80 made out to 'Cicerone' to The Treasurer, Cicerone, c/o Hugh Beattie 161 Rusden St Armidale 2350. If you intend coming to the Footrot workshop, you may choose to join on the day.

Your name:

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Address:

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Tel:

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# *Cicerone*

Cicerone is a New England farmer led research network which allows producers to have a real say in relevant research for this region. A public workshop was held in May 1998 where a number of issues of concern were identified by producers. Footrot was one.

Cicerone invites you to a forum:

## **FOOTROT IN NEW ENGLAND**

9.15 am Thursday 30th July 1998

Armidale Bowling Club Cost \$5

which aims to

- To provide information on the current status & problems associated with footrot;
- Create a better understanding between producers and regulatory authorities about the procedures used, their limitations, and the impact of both disease and its control;
- Identify R&D needs to address the footrot issue.

### **Public Forum - 9.15am to 1.30pm**

A series of presentations which give the background to the current situation of footrot in the New England; and provide insight into current knowledge of and research into Footrot. Speakers and topics include:

- NSW Agriculture State Co-ordinator for Footrot - Rob Walker
- Armidale Rural Lands Protection Board
- Bruce Allworth - Consultant/Woolgrower/member of Footrot Advisory Committee
- Prof John Egerton - Researcher, member of Footrot Advisory Committee
- David Alley - Footrot Contractor
- The Impact of Footrot - New England graziers give their story
- Dr Betty Hall & Dr Bruce Chick - Consulting Veterinarians
- Longer term Strategies for Footrot Control - eg genetic control, DNA testing etc

### **Cicerone Meeting - 2.15pm to 4.00pm**

Speakers will meet with Cicerone subscriber members and through discussion and workshop sessions determine if and how the current problems can be overcome.

Focus will be on determining the R&D areas that need to be addressed.

*Producers are invited to become subscriber members of Cicerone. Your participation is important in ensuring that your research funds are spent on topics that are relevant. Cicerone will help set priorities for research and will disseminate information via workshops, seminars, forums and field days. Annual Subscription is \$80; cheques should be made out to 'Cicerone' & sent to The Treasurer, Cicerone, c/o Hugh Beattie 161 Rusden St Armidale 2350, or may be paid on the day.*

This day is made possible by the support of

**Cicerone**

Southern New England  
Landcare Co-ordinating  
Committee

# PROGRAM FOR THE DAY

## The New England Footrot Story

9.30	Welcome - outline and conduct of the day	Chairman of the day
9.40	NSW Agriculture's policy and program for the eradication of Footrot	Rob Walker State Co-ordinator for Footrot
10.00	Armidale RLPB An Overview of Footrot in New England and Current Policy and Activities	RLPB- John Macfarlane DVO & Geoff Green
10.15	Views from the Footrot Contractor who carried out the survey which revoked New Englands Protected Area Status	David Alley
10.25	The Impact of Footrot New England Graziers tell their story	TBA
10.40	Questions from the floor on the presentations	
10.50	Morning Tea	

## What Do We Know About Footrot?

11.20	Experiences and Concerns of 2 Local Practicing Veterinarian Advisers	Dr Betty Hall, Dr Bruce Chick
11.40	Views from a consultant/woolgrower/Footrot Advisory Committee member	Bruce Allworth
12.00	What research has told us; what research is currently underway	Prof John Egerton
12.20	Research into longer term strategies for the control/prevention of Footrot (eg Genetics)	TBA
12.35	Questions from members of the panel	
12.45	Questions from the floor	
1.20	Summary and Close of Public Forum	Chairman of the Day

## How do We Resolve the Issues?

After lunch at 2.15pm members of the panel will meet with Cicerone subscriber members and through discussion and workshop sessions determine if and how the current problems can be overcome. A particular focus will be on determining the R&D areas that need to be addressed.