

The Cicerone Project Inc.

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NEWSLETTER No 13

**DO YOU THINK WE'RE WORTH
TWO CARTONS OF BEER TO YOU?**

**WE KNOW WE ARE WORTH
AT LEAST A WHOLE PALLET!!!**

**JUST LOOK AT ALL THE TRIALS AND ALL THE
RESULTS YOU WILL MISS IF YOU DON'T JOIN**

The following is a list of the trials we have completed, or are ongoing, or have planned to start this year as a result of your suggestions. We aim to investigate and find answers, not just demonstrate already proven technology.

- ◆ **Footrot trial Phase 1 Armidale RLPB** (completed). This trial showed that some footrot strains which are gel stable (ie lab virulent) act as benign in the field. Thus some producers may be placed in quarantine even though their strain of bacteria is acting as benign in the field. The DNA test developed in conjunction with this trial can detect which strains are truly virulent and which are truly benign.
- ◆ **Footrot trial Phase 2 Molong RLPB** (ongoing). This trial showed the same results were obtained with the same strains of bacteria when moved to another climate. These results are being presented at the Australian Veterinary Conference in May.
- ◆ **Footrot trial development of boots**. We now have access to a boot, which can be placed on sheep to help prevent the spread of footrot or can help with the chemical treatment of feet. This PIRD trial was to continue this year.

- ◆ **Cross breeding trial** (ongoing) We have applied to MLA via PIRD to look at carcase assessment and carcase composition of 6 meat breeds of sheep. We have been doing growth rates which will go to Lamb Plan. No other trial of this type has been started locally.
- ◆ **Wether trial** (October start) We need to get data from the New England area onto the National data base especially with the implications of the disease status in relation to OJD and subsequent movement of sheep interstate or within different status areas. These trials used to be run by NSW Agriculture but they no longer do so.
- ◆ **Sustainability and profitability of three styles of Grazing management** (ongoing). This important trial is on a farm scale and therefore far more relevant to producers than the 'one acre plot' work which may have been published. We are therefore subject to the same problems faced by the farmers - drought, cold weather, supplementary feeding, organising contractors etc. Thus our results are far more 'real' and therefore more acceptable to the producers.

We have subdivided a 200 ha Central Learning Farm into 3 equal 50ha farms ensuring soil type, slope and drainage is even over the three farms (the remaining 50ha periphery is for other work as listed above)

- Farm A has a high input of fertiliser (seed is direct drilled, all eight paddocks to receive super)
- Farm B has a lower input of fertiliser, three of the eight paddocks only, seed out with the super, close to the district average. Thus A and B can be directly compared as their inputs are different.
- Farm C is to have the same inputs as Farm B but there are more paddocks (16 which can be subdivided with laser fence to 32+) so the grazing time and rest time per paddock is different. Thus Farm B and Farm C can be compared, as it is the grazing time and animal rotation which is different.

We are monitoring pasture changes, soil tests and all costs eg labour, fertiliser, animal health, supplementary feed, lambs produced, wool produced, fleece weights, micron etc so we can compare profitability and sustainability of all three farms.

The following 5 trials are also part of the overall work on the profitability and sustainability on the three farmlets. Despite taking detailed measurements for only 9 months, we are already seeing marked differences between the three farmlets in worm egg counts and lamb growth rates.

- ◆ **Worm monitoring** (ongoing)
- ◆ **B 12 weaner trial** (completed)
- ◆ **Chelated mineral weaner trial** (completed)
- ◆ **Lamb numbers and ewe and lamb growth weights and fat scores** (ongoing)

- ◆ **Wool strength** etc (planned for shearing 2001 and 2002) We are looking at fleece weights, micron, tensile strength at shearing to see if there are any differences between the wool from the three farmlets.
- ◆ **Alternative treatment immediately off shears in a cold climate in the month prior to lambing** (planned for our shearing time in July). The only relevant work done on this has been work on ‘rugs or no rugs’ as treatments in relation to wool contamination. Our trial is to look at the survivability of ewes from the time as they come off boards post shearing in July to lambing a month to six weeks later. We want to look at a number of treatments suggested by district producers eg rugs, spray with water, spray with lanolin, spray with Scotchguard, spray with canvas waterproofing agent, smear with lanolin etc. This work would have relevance in all cold climates where sheep are shorn in winter eg the Northern and Southern Tablelands of NSW.
- ◆ **Effect of time of mulesing on hogget wool strength** (planned to start in Nov) Again no work has been done on this aspect as most mulesing research has looked at the wound shape, size and fly strike etc. We want to mules the lambs at different times and then look at the hogget fleece to see where any break may be, thus making use of the new OFDA technology available. Again this has been asked for by local producers and will have Australia wide implications.
- ◆ **Laser fence trial** (planned ASAP). A local electronic company is developing the laser fence and we will be involved in the field trials that are due to start soon. This technology has great potential especially anyone using rotational or cell grazing systems.
- ◆ **Tree growth and its effect on welfare of the grazing animal** (planned to start November). Many district graziers have heard some of the theory but need to see a planned trial for them to be convinced there is any economic benefit from this The only local work done has shown some differences but the paddocks used had great variation in both aspect and the pasture analysis. This could have contributed to the results obtained. There are animal welfare and profitability issues to research here and the results will be of interest throughout the country.
- ◆ **Tree growth and its effect on the surrounding soil/pasture** (planned to start November) Graziers need to see demonstrated biodiversity benefits. This is to look at sustainability and therefore profitability issues. In the past some of the SGS work done has not looked at profitability. This is a vital aspect of our work.

Combined with all the Cicerone seminars, field days and workshops, we know you get very good value for your membership money not only can you claim back the GST component, but the membership fee is tax deductible for all you graziers.....

**SO PLEASE RE-NEW YOUR SUBSCRIPTION
OR PLEASE SUPPORT US BY JOINING**

**THE NEXT SEMINAR AND FARM INSPECTION
WILL BE 31st JULY**

We are still working on the format of the day
Details will be in Newsletter 14

The AGM will be on TUESDAY July 31st
If you're interested in nominating for the Board of Cicerone,
please contact Caroline on 6778 3871 for details.
You must be a financial member.
Nominations have to be in writing and received by
Friday 20th July

MERINO WETHER TRIAL

- ◆ **Get some New England statistics onto the National data base.**
- ◆ **You want the best .. are you getting it?**
- ◆ **Comparative trials can help you decide.**
- ◆ **Enter a team.**
- ◆ **Ask your ram supplier to enter a team!**

OCTOBER ENTRY

Details in NEWSLETTER 14.

**Looks as if Newsletter 14 is going to be a key to
some useful information...don't miss out...**

please JOIN US! (and yes I checked out the prices of cartons [\$28] and
pallets [\$1970] so there are about 70 cartons to a pallet depending on the brew!)

THE FARMER'S WIFE

Make the beds and cut the lunches,
Get the washing on the line;
Stop the kids from throwing punches,
See they reach the school on time.
To the woodshed, do some chopping,
Fill the wood-box, light the fire;
Drive to town and do the shopping,
Got a puncture - change the tyre!
Pick a part up for the baler
And a fan belt for the ute,
Load the calf feed in the trailer,
And the stuff to spray the fruit.
Wait in line to do the banking,
Listen to a neighbour grump.
Buy some oil to stop the clanking
In the fire fighting pump.
Drive back home and start unpacking
Clear the mess that's on the seat;
Through the door her husband's tracking,
Stop for half an hour to eat.
By the shed the calves need feeding
Judging by their cries intense.
Feed the calves and do some weeding,
Then help strain the sagging fence.
Still some time so slash the bracken
Before returning to the house,

Still her pace she doesn't slacken,
The farmer's most proficient spouse.
In the kitchen, meal preparing,
From the tea-pot pour a cup;
Then it's to the school repairing,
Time to pick the children up.
Listen to "Three Golden Wishes"
(That's David's book that must be read)
Clear the kitchen, wash the dishes,
See the children off to bed.
House and farm accounts need doing,
Work on them an hour or so;
Do some television viewing,
Then it's off to bed she goes.
How on earth does she keep going,
Living such a hectic life.
But this busy too and fro-ing,
Is normal for the farmer's wife.
Few there are who sing her praises
Or about her ever tell.
I, for one, a cheer raises,
For the job she does so well.

By Philip R Rush

Taken from

"Australian Poems that would Stun a Sheep"

OKAY how about all you men get out of that chair right now and go and give your spouse a big 'thank you' hug for all the work she does!!

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A letter to you all from Board member Jim Scott

Dear Readers,

This newsletter will be the last one sent to our wider distribution list of members and non-members. Our Board has decided that whilst we need to continue to provide information to the community at large, we also need to provide value to our members - otherwise, why should they remain loyal members? So, whilst we will continue to hold some meetings which are open to the public, we will increasingly be attempting to focus our work on what is relevant to our **financial members**.

As a Board member since the creation of Cicerone in 1998, allow me to suggest to all readers why you need to support an organisation such as this.

Cicerone has as its aims to get adoption of more profitable and sustainable systems for the Northern Tablelands graziers. It is attempting to do something that other agencies have had trouble achieving to your satisfaction. During the formation of Cicerone we heard statements like:

"We need to access all that information in those filing cabinets."
"The traditional research and extension agencies aren't giving us producers what we want."
"Farmers should be involved in evaluating research for possible adoption".
"The big question is how can one be profitable AND sustainable?"

So, what has Cicerone achieved already?

- We have been successful in getting a substantial long-term commitment of funding from Woolmark.
- We have adopted the motto "compare - measure - learn - adopt". This means we must be able to see realistic comparisons in order to make up our minds. It also means we are keen on continuing to learn.
- Cicerone has surveyed over 350 local producers to find out what issues are important to them - with a detailed report compiled by the Rural Development Centre.
- We have been able to recycle our income earned to help offset our costs. Last year that amounted to over \$40,000 of income that went back into relevant research for you!
- We have held numerous learning days on footrot, the wool stockpile, marketing, animal breeding, Internet, weeds, etc.
- We have designed and created a learning farm containing 3 farmlets starting off at the same point but branching apart by adopting different strategies towards profitability and sustainability. Differences are starting to appear.
- After a workshop at which you told us to study benign and virulent footrot, we have now asked the hard questions about footrot in a research trial and have found out that the laboratory tests for footrot are not as reliable as previously thought. This included DNA testing by the University to confirm differences. This research is likely to lead to improvements in diagnosis of virulent footrot and could save millions of dollars for Northern Tablelands graziers.

We were initially excited when our financial membership grew steeply to over 80. However, the Board is now concerned that our membership numbers must keep increasing. This is especially true now that the Woolmark Company has been transformed into the new body Australian Wool International - we don't know yet what that means for us.

We all need to back this new endeavour. It IS producer controlled, being led by a producer with a majority of producers on the Board. It HAS delivered substantial benefits to our local region already. It CAN deliver so much more but it needs your membership, your active support and your participation to ENSURE it continues to succeed.

So, please spread the word - if you want to have a producer-led research and adoption facility in YOUR region, then it needs your active support, and especially your membership. The more members we get, the more representative we become and the more attractive we are for funding of research and adoption ideas by either research bodies or even by commercial companies eager to evaluate their products under commercial conditions.

A similar producer group in the cropping area of Victoria has over 500 members! It is up to you. If you think Cicerone has done a good job, then please lend your support by maintaining your membership and by spreading the word to increase membership.

In the coming months, we plan to be adding more value to your membership. Come along and let your voice be heard at our Annual General Meeting to be held in July. Let's make the Northern Tablelands even more profitable and sustainable!

If you have been to one of our meetings or field days, you know they are well run. If you haven't been to one, come along and learn. Membership only costs \$80 p.a. and even that is tax deductible!

For any membership enquiries, please contact our Executive Officer, Caroline Gaden on

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TAX INVOICE

The Cicerone Project Inc.

ABN 15 314 685 367

reminds you that

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

are now due

One year membership is \$88 (includes \$8 GST)

Hear the results of all our trials

Have your say in research.

Please join us!

Measure Compare Learn Adopt

Return to The Cicerone Project Inc., PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350

✂.....

Yes I want to continue to support the work being done by **The Cicerone Project**

Enclosed is cheque to the value of \$..... as my subscription renewal

Name.....

Address.....

Postcode Phone Fax

Email.....

The Cicerone Project gratefully acknowledges the funding support given to them by the former AWRAP, now Australian Wool Innovation

Newsletter Editor: Caroline Gaden, Executive Officer of The Cicerone Project Inc.
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