

# The Cicerone Project Inc.

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## NEWSLETTER No 14

June 2001

**You are invited to our next seminar to be addressed by**

### **COL DORBER**

Managing Director, Australian Wool Innovation Pty Ltd

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2001, 11.00 am to 5.00pm**

**Liaison Centre, Chiswick**

He will talk on his

*"Perception of the wool industry  
and vision for its future."*

**'Putting Benchmarking in Perspective' with Jim Symon**

**We will also take you to inspect the Cicerone Farm  
so warm weather gear required**

Lunch will be available for members

Bookings essential to 6778 3871 to help with catering  
Entry \$25 for members, including lunch (includes GST)  
\$40 for non-members plus \$10 for lunch (includes GST)

**BOOK EARLY as NUMBERS STRICTLY LIMITED**

**A short AGM will be included on TUESDAY July 31<sup>st</sup>  
If you're interested in nominating for the Board of Cicerone, please contact Caroline on  
6778 3871 for details. Forms in newsletters 13 and 14  
You must be a financial member.  
Nominations have to be in writing and received by Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July**

## Contents of Newsletter 14

If you have only received the first and last pages of this newsletter, it is because you are no longer a financial member, please join us to receive the 'lost' pages! The interesting contents that you are missing include:-

Seminar details	Page 1
AGM notice	Page 1
The Mulesing survey and trial	Page 2
Footrot and your sheep	Page 3
The New Zealand Monitor farm program	Page 5
Farm Forestry in New Zealand	Page 6
Global beef industry issues	Page 7
Composite cattle information	Page 7
Merino Wether trial details	Page 8
TAFE courses	Page 9
DNA results for footrot trial	Page 9
Nettled	Page 9
Mutton .. where your CFA merino ewes go	Page 10
Click go the flies	Page 10
Nomination form	Page 11
Subscription form	Page 11
Web sites	Page 12

### The Mulesing survey and trial

This year The Cicerone Project will be conduct a trial to see if the time of mulesing has an effect on the weight gain of the lambs and the tensile strength of the weaner fleece. Our lambs will be split into two groups for a spring and an autumn mulesing. Weight gains will be monitored each month and the tensile strength of the weaner fleece will be tested at their first shearing. We will also see if there is a difference in the response between ewe and wether lambs.

As part of this trial we want to find out what is the most usual practice in the New England. When do you mules and why have you chosen this time of year in preference to any other time. What kind of mules do you perform and what treatment is used for the wound. Our trial may be able to reflect what is the 'norm' in terms of treatment, for example, so **we need your feedback**.

Please fill in the enclosed form and fax it back to 6778 3872

### Where does the name *Cicerone* come from?

It is taken from the Latin word ***ducere***, which means "**to guide or to lead**". We are an independent organisation with grazier leadership and grazier focus. All our research projects have been initiated by graziers. Join us and have your say.

# New Zealand's Monitor Farm Program

By Caroline Gaden

The aim of the Monitor Farm Program in New Zealand is to

- ◆ increase farmer's awareness of management factors which affect their business
- ◆ motivate them to modify their systems to increase productivity, increase profitability and minimise risk
- ◆ encourage them to be market driven.

Jointly funded by Wool Pro and Meat NZ, the Monitor Farms are located throughout the country and provide an important information and technology transfer service for the sheep industry.

There are over 26 farms taking part in the program at any one time, each being a member for three years. A facilitator works with the farmer along with community input from local producers, veterinarians, processors and agribusiness people. The management group meets regularly, usually each month. Newsletters are produced. Community days and an annual field day are held on each monitor farm.

Each farm produces a business plan where they identify specific production targets and goals to help improve the farm business.

In the Annual Report for 2000, each farm is listed along with the name and address of the owners. The farms are described by location; size; rainfall (all had at least twice what we have on the Tablelands!); hectares, and whether flat, hills or very steep; soil types; paddock number; livestock carried eg sheep, cattle, deer; lambing/calving %; gross income per ha; target income per ha; expenditure per ha; target expenditure per ha. Initially some farms could not provide these figures, so that became one of the first objectives so that a business plan could then be produced.

Looking through the Annual Report covering all farms in 2000, it was interesting to note some of the objectives from the different farms (*and some of these would be quite relevant to the New England*):

- Make more profit for less effort
- To have at least 14 days off farm holiday each year
- To achieve 150% lambing by 2002/3
- To fine up the fibre diameter of the wool by one micron
- To install electric fencing to accelerate the sub division program
- To use cattle to groom the pastures and reduce sheep parasites
- To increase the kg of meat sold from this farm
- To eliminate footrot from this property
- To increase the sub division from 74 paddocks to 110 by 2001 and 150 by 2003
- To adopt various monitoring activities to gauge physical and financial progress to the goals
- To lift pasture utilisation by extra eating power when we have the growth
- To improve computer skills
- To have one full weekend per month with no farm work
- To re-grass 20 ha per year
- Lamb on 1200-1500 kg DM / ha to minimise lamb losses and maximise pre-weaning lamb liveweight gain
- To do regular faecal egg counts to monitor internal parasites
- To introduce earthworms into developed paddocks
- To work out a fertilizer plan for the whole property
- To get farm costs below 50% of gross income

- To reduce chemical usage
- To plant 3 ha of forestry each year
- To plant 500 metres of shelter belts each year
- To have a three week holiday with the family

The farms monitor a range of performance indicators

- Stocking rate (sheep units per ha)
- Scanning index
- Lamb production index (wt of lamb at 70 days as a % of ewe tugging wt)
- Lamb live weight gain to weaning in grams per day
- Lamb value at sale
- Wool kg per sheep per ha
- Wool \$ per kg
- Gross income per sheep unit
- Gross income per ha
- Total farm expenses per sheep unit
- Total farm expenses per ha
- Expenses % of gross farm income
- Economic Farm surplus per sheep unit
- Economic Farm surplus per ha
- % return on assets

You can find out more at [www.woolpro.co.nz](http://www.woolpro.co.nz) or [www.meatnz.co.nz](http://www.meatnz.co.nz)

Farmers gain a tremendous amount of business expertise from this program as well as improved productivity on their properties. Three years under the local microscope can be quite daunting but the rewards seem to be well worthwhile. How do you think you would go?

## **FARM FORESTRY IN NEW ZEALAND**

Many farmers in New Zealand are planting radiata pine trees as a long-term cash crop.

It costs around \$1 per tree to plant and \$1 per tree for each of three prunings over an eight year period. (All currency is in New Zealand dollars)

Then you just sit back and watch them grow for a further twenty years until you reap the reward of \$150 to \$200 per tree.

The average radiata pine yields 2.4 cubic metres of wood at harvest, so one hectare of 28 year old radiata pine contains from 650 to 800 cubic metres of wood, harvest costs about \$10 per cubic metre.

One hectare of mature, pruned, premium grade radiata pine is usually worth \$45000 to \$60000 net to the grower. (Ref: [http://nzfoa.nzforestry.co.nz/facts\\_figures.asp](http://nzfoa.nzforestry.co.nz/facts_figures.asp)).

Not a bad investment for your superannuation or to hand on to the next generation!!

## Global Beef Industry Issues

At the Cattle Expo in Palmerston North, NZ on 21<sup>st</sup> May, **Bob Gaden** took some notes from an address given by ex-pat Kiwi **Steve Kay**, Editor, US Cattle Buyers Weekly, a weekly newsletter analysing beef industry issues, written mainly for the US processing and feedlot sectors.

Bob's interesting conclusions are noted below.... if cattle producers want like to discuss any of the points, especially the last one!!! you can ring Bob on 02 6770 1812

### *Conclusions for Australia*

- National Livestock Identification Scheme (NLIS) is inevitable for food safety and traceback, and our international customers and food retailers will force producers into it
- Australia already has a world-class NLIS system thanks to our EU commitment.
- Only a few big players in Australia are big enough to centralise their packaging of meat and food products, but it would give them significant advantages
- Centralised packaging would make cuts-based grading and other product changes, and food safety systems, easier to implement
- Beef is here to stay, but to be competitive in volume, needs to develop easier meal ideas for consumers
- US is rapidly improving its communication between producers and processors, and its sheer size and market dominance world wide will increase
- Our clean, green and disease-free reputation is invaluable
- The thought of competing head-on with US quality beef in Japan and Asia is daunting
- The option of niche marketing cuts of both grass and grain fed beef, graded by eating quality and cooking method, is just as daunting but would play to our strengths in the longer term
- Australian producers contemplating retirement should do so now, otherwise reduce their herds – the US cattle cycle drives world prices, and it says present high prices can't last.

### Some more snippets from Steve Kay's talk

by Caroline Gaden

Some interesting snapshots of US consumers, not very different to Australians:

- ◆ 60% don't know at 4pm what they're going to have for dinner
- ◆ meal preparation time 15 mins now (1hr 19 min in 1950's)
- ◆ less than half their meals are now made by consumers from the basic ingredients of meat & vegies
- ◆ traditional families (mum, dad & kids) now only make up 23% of households
- ◆ more than half of the food consumption in US is eaten outside the home
- ◆ petrol has risen 20-25 c per gallon over 3 months
- ◆ 20c per gallon adds US\$100 billion per day to costs
- ◆ oil price rises have doubled the cost of home heating
- ◆ corporate profits have fallen by 40% recently with staff lay-offs taking place
- ◆ credit card debt is rising

### CATTLE PRODUCERS

I interested in using hybrid vigour to improve your beef production? Wondered about **COMPOSITES** but not sure where to start? Well after seeing some magnificent composite cattle in New Zealand, I suggest you take a closer look at them!!

This new web site may be just what you need to give you some extra information [www.compositebeef.com.au](http://www.compositebeef.com.au) is an excellent new site already receiving praise for its information and ease of navigation.

You are also invited to attend a **Field day** on **Friday 22 June** at "Wombramurra", **Nundle**, starting at **9.00am**. Over 150 composite cattle will be on display. There is an excellent list of speakers and lunch will be available. Cost is \$30 per head. For more details phone Peter Howarth on 6769 3376.

# The Cicerone Project Inc.

invites you to take part in a

## MERINO WETHER TRIAL

to be held on the

### Cicerone Farm

A progressive wether trial with new annual intakes

**Intake** *to be middle October*

**Number** of wethers per team: *12*

**Disease:** *Wethers to be from flocks with at least MNI status*

*Before delivery must be inspected free of footrot by RLPB*

**Age:** *approx 12 months* **Shearing:** *Sept/Oct*

**Trial shearings:** *2,3,4,5years* **Disposal Age:** *off shears at 5*

Aim: To initiate and compare current bloodlines of fine and superfine merinos within the New England Region, which is an important seedstock, and breeding area. There is no information on New England flocks in the National Wether Trial comparisons because there is insufficient data at present.

**Participants will become honorary members of  
The Cicerone Project for the first year of entry of each new team**

Details of the trial can be obtained from either  
Kim Barnett (Cicerone Board member) on 02 6777 2885  
Bob Marchant (NSW Agriculture, Armidale) on 02 6773 7288

**Trial entry forms and guidelines can be obtained from  
Caroline Gaden at 02 6778 3871**

## Compare Measure Learn Adopt

There are some new **TAFE courses for specialist Wool producers** to enhance the return for their Woolclip. If you are interested contact Pauline Smith 6773 7767

### **Superfine Shed Hand's course:**

For Experienced shed hands wanting to develop specialist skills in the preparation of Superfine wool and become accredited "Superfine Shed Hands". Two day course to be held early August, Run by Armidale TAFE and the Superfine Woolgrowers Association.

### **Superfine Woolclassing and Marketing.**

For experienced Woolclassers wanting to further develop their skills in Speciality Superfine Wool preparation. The course will be run over four days including shed visits, Newcastle Wool sales and class time. Farmbis funding is being negotiated.

## **Remember the footrot trial?**

We took the sheep from the Big Ridge Site to Toogong and the field results obtained there were the same as we found here. The strains still acted as benign in the field even though the gel test told us the bacterial strains were stable (ie virulent).

Well we now have the DNA results back from Brian Cheetham of UNE. These confirm what he found with the results from Big Ridge... using his test he is still able to show which strains will act as benign in the field. In other word the DNA test is able to diagnose gel stable bacteria which are field benign.

The results were presented to the recent Australian Veterinary Conference where they were well received by all the participants.

**So where to from here?** Well Brian needs more money to do more and more of these tests from more and more strains of bacteria. This work is necessary to establish the credentials of the test

and to develop it to a commercial level. **Funding is essential ...** Look at what we have achieved with two PIRDs.... how much more could be achieved with enough funding to have someone working full time with all the necessary time, equipment and chemicals?

**The next step requires your input....**Brian applied to Woolmark for the funding to continue this work. All research projects are currently on hold during the changes associated with the wool industry. You can help by asking the new funding body, Australian Wool Innovation, to give the money for Brian so he can continue this vital work. Check out their web site on [www.wool.com](http://www.wool.com) and write to AWI, Level 5, AWA Building, 47 York Street, Sydney 2000 or send an email to [info@woolinnovation.com.au](mailto:info@woolinnovation.com.au) . **You may not have footrot now but it an ever present scourge within the sheep industry. Can you afford not to be concerned? Please support Brian and WRITE NOW.**

**NETTLED**, from the desk of **Doug Nettleship**, Editor of National Business Bulletin, June 2001

"Australia was a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol to keep its greenhouse gas emissions at no more than 8% above 1990 levels. In fact the current increase is around 16.9%. Interestingly, however, around 15.4% of greenhouse gases are attributable to methane production by livestock. This can be reduced as much as 75% with a nutritionally balanced diet. It appears that lucerne is the perfect answer. Animals enjoying lucerne are able to extract virtually all of its goodness whilst leaving little waste to result in the production of methane gas. So what should be the answer? If the average farmer substituted lucerne for grass, all livestock would then be able to say 'excuse my gas!' while the government enjoyed an inflated ego! That's a gas idea!"

**Mutton ... where your CFA merino ewes go**

Australia produces around 327,000 tonnes of mutton each year according to Peter Schuster of the MLA. It is basically a by-product of wool production and, to a lesser extent, prime lamb production.

It is estimated that we each eat an average of 5 kg of mutton per year.

There are three core domestic sectors that use mutton

- ◆ Human food manufacturing eg pies, smallgoods (54.4%) and pet food (0.9%)
- ◆ Retail by Butchers and supermarkets (13.5%)
- ◆ Hotels, restaurants and Institutions. (22.4%) where mutton is particularly popular with Chinese and Indian restaurants

According to MLA, the best means to maximise returns for mutton sheep is to try to turn off heavier animals of 22kg+ carcass weight of fat score 2 -3. For more information contact Peter Schuster of MLA on 02 9463 9236 (Ref: *Feedback* March 2001)

#### CLICK GO THE FLIES

Last season all the Cicerone lambs were mulesed at marking in the middle of November. Nothing was placed on the wound and CLICK was placed round the wound, cost 53 cents per lamb. Four hours after we finished, the heavens opened and it poured with rain and continued to rain for a couple of weeks. Nevertheless we lost no lambs and they had protection against flystrike for the whole of summer, with no more treatments needed!!!

#### 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 by returning the adjacent form with your membership >>>>>

**Measure Compare Learn Adopt**

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Phone/ 02 6778 3871

Fax 02 6778 3872

Email [cicerone@northnet.com.au](mailto:cicerone@northnet.com.au)

Web page <http://northnet.com.au/~cicerone>

## Nomination for election to the Board of the Cicerone Project Inc.

There are SIX PRODUCER representative positions on the Board and **three producer positions are open to election at the 2001 AGM**. There is also one vacancy for an EXTENSION representative. Nominees, proposers and seconders must all be current financial members of The Cicerone Project Inc. Nominations are to be sent to PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350 or faxed to 02 6772 2988 **Closing date is 20 July 2001**.

### NOMINATIONS

**Name of Nominee 1**.....

Address ..... Phone .....

Signature of Nominee .....

Proposed by .....Seconded by.....

**Name of Nominee 2**.....

Address ..... Phone .....

Signature of Nominee .....

Proposed by .....Seconded by.....

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

✂.....

**MEMBERSHIP FORM** Yes I want to continue to support the work being done by **The Cicerone Project** Enclosed is cheque to the value of \$88 (includes \$8 GST) as my subscription

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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**The Cicerone Project Inc.**

PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350

The **WOOL WEBSITE** is located at [www.wool.com](http://www.wool.com)

The **MLA WEBSITE** is now located at [www.mla.com.au](http://www.mla.com.au) and the site has been designed for rural users with slow Internet access in mind.

Keep up to date, **keep up with the kids** and get them to show you how easy it is to find a whole world of information out there in cyberspace!