

# The Cicerone Project Inc.

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## NEWSLETTER No 17

December 2001

### Dates for your diary

#### **Weaning day**

At the Mulesing day, a number of you asked to see the lambs at weaning time. You are invited to come on **Wednesday 19th December**, at 9.00am at the Cicerone yards

#### **Cicerone Farm Planning Day**

Friday 21<sup>st</sup> December. Meet at 9am at the Cicerone yards for a Farm walk and farm planning discussion

#### **Harnham Landcare Family Christmas Party**

is being held on 8<sup>th</sup> Dec 2001 at John and Ann Maher's Gostwyck Station Family BBQ and Fireworks. Phone 6778 4107 to book in

#### **New England Merino Field Days**

To be held on 12 and 13 January 2002 at Walcha. Ring Janet Carter for details 6778 7335

#### **Late March 2002**

*Learning from the Masters* a seminar where those folk with a lifetime of experience can pass on some tips to the younger generations. If you'd like to nominate a speaker, please let Caroline know their details (phone 6778 3871)

#### **WOOL EXPO**

**2 -12 May 2002 Invite your out-of-Armidale friends and family for this great week. Ideas needed for seminars and field days that YOU want to see. Phone Caroline 6778 3871**

#### **Prograze**

Do you want to know how to "drive" one of your main "profit drivers" - your pastures? If so, then NSW Agriculture, in conjunction with the Cicerone Project, will be offering a Prograze course with a focus on the 3 differently managed farmlets on the Cicerone Farm at Chiswick. It will enable producers to see quite different pastures as well as visiting each others properties to develop the skills necessary to understand the pasture and animal benchmarks you need to be able to get those profit drivers accelerating on your farm! We will organise dates to suit the group. For more course information, contact Bob Marchant on 6776 5000 or register your interest with Caroline Gaden on 6778 3871

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**As a Christmas present to non-members, you'll receive ALL pages of this newsletter!  
To ensure you get full contents of future newsletters, please support us by joining!  
Ring Caroline 6778 3871 for more information**

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### **Green light for PIRD program for the meat industry**

The successful Producer Initiated Research and Development (PIRD) program will be continued following a review that clearly showed the benefits to producers, Meat and Livestock Australia's (MLA) Dr Len Stephens announced recently.

More than 30,000 cattle, sheep and goat producers have had an interest in on-farm R&D through more than 200 projects conducted in the 10 years since the PIRD program began.

MLA Livestock Production Innovation general manager Dr Stephens said the decision to continue the program followed industry and producer consultation on the results of the independent review.

Applications from livestock producer groups for funding in 2002-2003 are now invited. Producer groups can apply for funding of up to \$10,000 over two years to help them address local issues and ultimately improve their bottom line.

PIRD coordinator Gerald Martin said the funding could be used for a range of purposes including project management, workshop and educational programs.

Projects underway now include two groups of Victorian cattle producers researching live cattle ultrasound measurements to help with breeding and management decisions. In another project, beef producers on Cape York are trialing supplements that they hope will enable their cattle to be turned off earlier for the live cattle market.

"The strength of the PIRD program is that it allows producers to choose the local issues for their research and development," Mr Martin said.

So if you have an idea to do with meat, rather than wool, that you would like to see researched, please make contact with Caroline on 6778 3871 so she can put together an application for PIRD funding **BEFORE CHRISTMAS PLEASE** so she has time to do the necessary background research.

## **FOOT and MOUTH DISEASE ... we must keep it out!**

**You must act quickly and stop all stock movement immediately and you must have someone in charge who is prepared to make decisions.** These were the two key elements to emerge from a recent meeting held in Armidale to discuss Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD). Speakers included Cumbrian farmer **Peter Allen** and Brigadier **Alex Birtwistle**, the army commander who organised the clean up operation when it was obvious that local authorities were unable to cope with the scale of the disease.

Peter Allen gave us a diary of events and showed how in one week the disease had spread throughout England and Wales from the Longtown and Hexham markets in the north of the country.

The policy of slaughtering infected and contiguous farms can only be effective if the disease is identified, confirmed and animals slaughtered within 24 hours. Initially this target was not met in the UK because there were not enough vets and not enough phone lines and authorities insisted on samples being sent to the lab for confirmation... this wasted precious time.

In addition there was time delay in valuation of animals (this had to be done before slaughter) and there were not enough slaughter men available. So rather than reaching the 24 hour target, it was taking three to five days and in the worst case 400 cattle were still alive after the first phone call eight days previously.

As Peter pointed out, if it had been a major rail disaster or other such accident the authorities would have had a temporary phone exchange with 100 lines coming out of a caravan. Instead it was taking over 24 hours for the farmers to get through to the Animal Health HQ's to call for help.

At first the policy in the UK was to bury or burn. Because of BSE there were concerns with burying the cattle. Animals had to be slaughtered on the farm as the virus quickly dies within a dead animal and carcasses could be more safely transported than live animals. But how do you easily and quickly slaughter all the cattle when the cattle crush does not have a ready way of removing a dead beast!

Burning is not a simple alternative... the average site burn took a week to build, materials were hard to source and each cost an average of £450,000. There were also issues with maintaining the temperatures at a high enough level.

It was a full month from the initial outbreak before the Chief Veterinary Officer of the UK visited Cumbria, the hardest hit of the counties. The government was advocating Phase 2, a 3 km cull, but as Peter pointed out Phase 1 was not being achieved, disposal was already taking from 1 to 3 weeks, how could anyone advocate Phase 2.

The army was finally called in to help with the logistics of organising at least three times the resources than were already in place... resources such as vets, staff, telephones, sealed, leak-proof wagons and disposal facilities.

Brig. Alex Birtwistle determined he had to analyse how the disease was spreading, assess the number of carcasses to dispose of (at that point 50k) and establish a headquarters to bring all groups together. The team decided on a "dead loop" to deal with the already slaughtered stock and a "live loop" to establish live pickup.

The Brigadier organised daily briefings so all parties knew exactly what had to be done and where each phase was up to and he briefed the press and gained their co-operation.

He established three watchwords as a simple guide:

- Infectivity... not to exacerbate the problem
- Humanity ... do things as humanely as possible
- Legacy ... look beyond the immediate problem so unnecessary problems didn't arise in future

He organised the purchase of a World War 2 airfield as the mass burial site. In the end close to a million sheep were buried here. In addition to the carcasses, they collected domestic waste from a large part of Northern England to provide burial material to activate the site ... at one point they were stopped by a murder investigation!!

The "Live loop" had a separate team of people to provide a three km 'firebreak' and the key to success here was local knowledge... local hauliers who knew where the farms were, and local valuers who knew the farmers and how much were the animals worth.

When those animals were slaughtered, they became part of the 'dead loop'.

A major 'choke point' was lack of slaughter capacity, both the men and machines to perform the task.

There was much learned from the 1967 outbreak that was forgotten or ignored. But there were also changes with loss of local abattoirs and therefore increased transport and livestock movement that exacerbated the problem this time.

As well as the obvious loss and pain felt by the farmers, the FMD outbreak had a devastating effect on the whole community:-

- tourism stopped completely (both international and domestic) so any business relying on the tourist dollar had no cash flow - this included the obvious pubs, café's and B and Bs but also the local book store, the clothes shops and so on
- farm income dried up so there was no spending on furniture, cars, anything other than basic food
- there was loss of opportunity to use farm assets for non-farm businesses
- local contractors were unable to work e.g. fertiliser spreading
- many jobs were lost so experience was lost to the industry
- all the local shows were cancelled
- all animal movement was stopped
- many sporting events were cancelled
- all 'bushwalking' activity ceased
- social life stopped as people were not prepared to visit each other for fear of transporting the virus
- people were accused of 'bringing in' the disease so friendships were shattered and some communities divided
- the stench of rotting carcasses, the stench of burning carcasses affected the morale of everyone
- cost to the British taxpayer £3.5 billion and still rising

So what can we learn for Australia? Rural consultant **David Hall** addressed the issue of the disease in Australia. He suggested that our lower stocking rates of beef cattle and sheep and harsher physical conditions than the UK could act in our favour. However in drought conditions the watering points would become areas of high risk as animals congregate there.

Our dairy herds would be more at risk as geographically they are found in more fertile areas and at greater stocking densities. They also have constant access by stock feed carriers and milk transporters who go from property to property.

Intensive piggeries and feedlots are a risk for disease transmission as large numbers of animals are concentrated together, but most of these facilities already have quite high standards of biosecurity in place and the animals tend to go direct to an abattoir, not back into circulation.

We need to ask many questions of our authorities:-

- Are we doing enough to keep the disease out of Australia?
- Does AQIS have the necessary resources?
- Have we the decision making structure to deal with such a national crisis?
- Have we the infrastructure to swing into action IMMEDIATELY a vet has an initial suspicion of FMD?
- Have we enough vets?
- Have we a field testing system for the disease?
- Have we a laboratory capable of confirming the diagnosis?
- How accurate, in reality, is our animal trace-back system?
- Have we enough phone lines?
- Have we enough labour to gain control of an outbreak?
- Have we enough bulldozers and other equipment, can we burn carcasses?
- Will wild pigs be a problem?
- Have we identified possible burial sites?
- Where does the EPA fit in?
- Who calls in the police, the army?
- What Animal welfare issues need to be addressed
- Have we enough slaughtermen?
- Have we enough guns for the job?
- The issue of compensation for the animals
- Who foots all the bills for slaughter, disposal and disinfection?

Copies of all the talks will be available on the AWI website at [www.wool.com](http://www.wool.com) You are urged to read them and contact the authorities to make sure they are prepared for IMMEDIATE ACTION

**Written by Caroline Gaden**

### **CROSS WEANING TRIAL**

**Do you have a couple of mobs of ewes and lambs that you would be willing to cross wean? Do you test your fleeces? We'd like to see if cross weaning helps lamb growth rate and wool strength in the hogget fleece. We'd help with weighing and ear tags. We'd need lambs ear-tagged for easy identification and then divided into 4 groups for a week:**

- Mob A lambs cross weaned to run with B ewes**
- Mob A lambs conventional weaned to run with other lambs**
- Mob B lambs cross weaned to run with A ewes**
- Mob B lambs conventional weaned to run with other lambs**

**After a week they can all run together as one mob away from the ewes. We can also weigh the ewes and see if there is a weight difference over time which could indicate stress reduction. Please contact Caroline if you are interested 6778 3871**

## Meet Your Board

The Cicerone Board is made up of 6 producer members (Kim Barnet, Terry Coventry, Phillip Dutton, Murray Fenwicke, Ross King and Hugh Sutherland) and one representative each from Agribusiness (Betty Hall), CSIRO (David Paull), NSW Agriculture (Bob Marchant), TAFE (Pauline Smith) and UNE (Jim Scott). Following is a brief introduction to some of the Board members.

### **Terry Coventry**

For forty years Terry has been a wool producer east of Armidale at several addresses. Wool has always been his prime source of income, but he has been involved in large-scale prime lamb production, beef breeding, local trade steer fattening, winter cereals for grain and feed production, and summer tableland production of feed and grain crops. His interest lies in sustainable pasture production delivering evenly grown, high quality 18 micron wool in quantities suitable for mill lots. He is also interested in following this wool through the pipeline to its consumable stage and ensuring latest technology is used in this process. By his involvement in Cicerone, where he can assess some of the production methods, Terry hopes to have some bearing on increasing this efficiency.

### **Phillip Dutton**

Phillip is a producer member with over 30 years in agriculture. His property Goomallee is 20 km SE of Uralla, is 1350 ha in size and runs 8000 superfine sheep with emphasis on elite wool production, including a stud with 600 stud ewes. Also they run a cattle growing and fattening enterprise. Phillip is a member of Harnham Landcare, the Challenge Wool Committee and was a member of Armidale Show involved with the fleece and junior fleece judging competitions. Winner of The Land Farm Inventor of the Year in 1993 with the Dutlevel, Phillip also invented and developed the DUTJET jetting wand. He is married to Pam with 4 children aged 17-22 years

### **Murray Fenwicke**

Murray is a property owner and manager with over 17 years experience He has a Dip Farm Man (Hons) from Marcus Oldham Farm Management College, Geelong Currently President of the Walcha Rural Advisory Service (WRAS) having been a member of WRAS from 1991.

### **Betty Hall**

Veterinary consultant specialising in internal parasite control in sheep and cattle and supplementary feeding at pasture. She is particularly interested in the non-chemical control of parasites. Her role in Elders is to educate staff so that they give the best possible, independent advice to clients.

Next to sheep [and those aggravating worms] her passions are her sons, her garden, theatre and the performing arts which keep her sane! Betty says that farmer led projects such as Cicerone are critical if relevant research is to be conducted responding to the actual needs of grazing enterprises. Cicerone allows for sound interaction between researchers, advisors and producers.

**Ross King**

Ross is Manager of Waterloo Station, 12 km east of Uralla where he runs fine wool merino breeders and merino wethers, has a prime lamb enterprise and a beef cattle enterprise. Ross studied at UNE from 1972-76, graduating with a B.Ag.Ec. He was a member of Uralla Council from 1990-9. Ross and his wife Penny have four children

**David Paull**

David has been a Cicerone board member for the last two years, representing CSIRO Livestock Industries during that time. He has over 20 years experience working at Chiswick in both research projects and as a liaison officer for part of that period of employment. The variety of research projects that David has been involved include: Trace element supplementation of livestock, Fecundin® and Vaxstrate® vaccine development, the impact of chronic stress on prime lamb production, topical vaccination of livestock and more recently experiments studying the impact of stress in cattle on immune function.

**Jim Scott**

Jim has a great interest in the measurement of long-term pasture sustainability. When he is not arguing against dairy deregulation, he gets involved in teaching pasture adaptation and management at UNE especially for the 'high' rainfall zone of temperate Australia. This lately includes using decision support systems of grazing systems in teaching. His research includes quantifying 'sustainability'; management needed to ensure persistence of pastures through drought and grazing stress; and the long-term economics of pasture fertiliser decisions under constraints of family expenditure. He is currently involved in constructing a national relational database of experiments on soil, water and pasture sustainability within MLA's Sustainable Grazing Systems Key Program. Jim also has an interest in interactions between grazed pastures and agroforestry in sustainable systems thus preventing land degradation and diversifying income. Since the creation of the Cicerone Project, he has been actively involved in trying to enhance the adoption of more profitable and sustainable grazing enterprises through his participation on the Board of Cicerone.

**Pauline Smith**

Pauline grew up on a property near Inverell and completed her B.Rur.Sc at UNE in 1978 and a Master of Rural Science at UNE in 1984 focusing on Blowfly strike of sheep while working as an Associate lecturer at UNE. In 1987 she started work with TAFE in Tenterfield and returned to Armidale in 1988 to lecture in Sheep Wool and Alpaca production. Her main areas of teaching are wool classing and sheep production. In 1988 she returned to commercial wool and livestock production on a 3000 ha property at Inverell, currently running 5000 superfine sheep and 300 cattle.

**Hugh Sutherland**

Hugh studied Agricultural Economics at UNE and also spent a lot of time on the rugby field! He then moved to Sydney as a Stockbroker where he continued to play rugby! He became an Agribusiness consultant with Hassall and Associates before returning home to run the family property, Deeargee Uralla, in 1989. He is a past NSW Farmers Wool Committee and Wool Council of Australia representative for 3 years and completed the Australian Rural Leadership Program Course in 1997. Hugh was also involved for 3 years with the Woolmark Company as the High Rainfall Zone Representative (Research and Development priorities). Hugh has been Chairman of the Cicerone Board from our beginnings. He is married to Cathie and they have three children with another due in December 2001.

### **'Nature's Fibre': Wool Producers' R & D Dollars Coming Back to the Tablelands!**

'Nature's Fibre' is a major new marketing and R&D program underwritten by the Australian Wool Initiative, being undertaken in conjunction with Land and Water Australia, two of Australia's leading research and development corporations involved in broad-acre agriculture and natural resource management. The 5-year program will run from 2002 to 2006.

LWA is keen to invest some of the R&D funds from 'Nature's Fibre' in a Northern Tablelands project through its Native Vegetation Subprogram. The aim of the R&D investment is to better define the nexus between indigenous biodiversity and profitable wool production to enable producers to move towards more sustainable ('clean, green') wool production. Dr Nick Reid at UNE is the principal investigator heading up the research component of the project.

Precise outputs need to be defined in conjunction with producers, but could include best practice management guidelines for managing native pastures and bushland, development of accreditation schemes for 'environmentally friendly' wool production, incentive mechanisms to encourage public and private investment in biodiversity conservation on sheep-grazing properties, and authoritative data to help the industry advance its environmental credentials.

A requirement of the R&D funding is that it adopts a 'learning by doing' approach involving producers and scientists (building on similar successful programs, such as SGS). Thus, it is hoped that a significant proportion of the \$270K earmarked for the Northern Tablelands project will go directly and indirectly to producers to facilitate their involvement in the research.

If you are a wool producer and keen to be involved in this exciting new initiative (and support one of SNELCC's primary Nature's objectives in making the connection between biodiversity and agricultural production!), please ring Karen or Mandy on 6772 9123

By Nick Reid

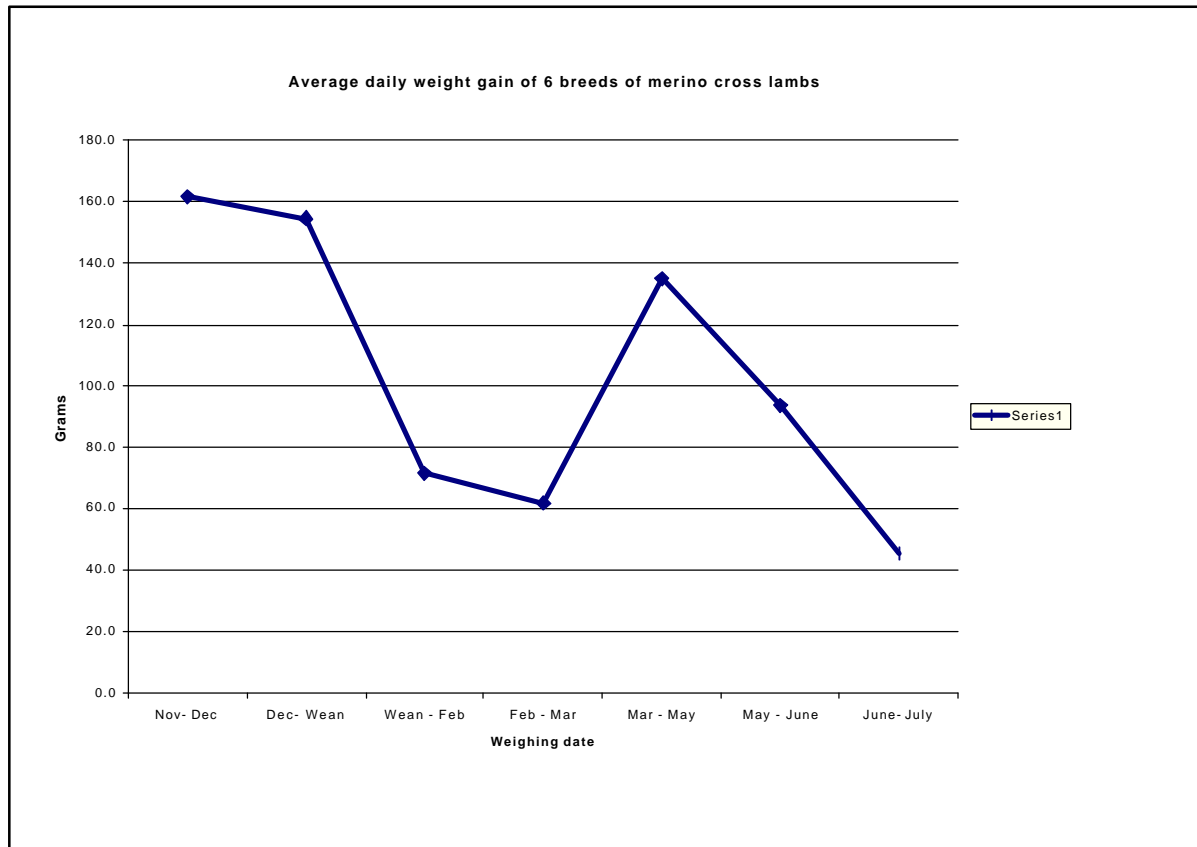
## **WEANING**

### **Look what happened to our lamb weight gains after weaning in early January 2001**

The following graph shows the average daily weight gains of the combined lot of crossbred and merino lambs. The daily weight gains were close to 160 grams per day prior to weaning, but weaning was a real set back to the lambs with daily weight gains dropping to half that figure and it took several weeks before their growth rate started to improve again.

The set back in growth rate at weaning was evident over all the breeds. This suggests that producers should pay particular attention to the pasture onto which lambs are to be weaned. Running out feed such as lupins to the ewes and lambs prior to weaning will imprint lambs with the idea of supplementary feeding and this can be vital knowledge to get them onto feed in a future drought.

Producers may also need to consider supplementary feeding at weaning time to help lambs maintain good growth rates.



Work by Roger Hegarty shows that young, light lambs of less than 30kg have a high demand for protein and for energy but they have only a small intake of feed. As a consequence they receive little microbial protein from the rumen and will require a high dietary protein content. These lambs will respond well to supplements rich in fermentable carbohydrates as well as bypass proteins.

Lambs above 35 kg are depositing tissue which is mainly fat. They have a higher feed intake so a large quantity of microbial protein will be provided by the rumen. Their body protein requirements have declined with maturity and will be met by their microbial protein from the rumen. They will not respond so much to bypass protein but will respond to cereal grains which are higher in energy.

Thus bypass protein works best in light lambs which have not yet begun to fatten.

If you don't weigh your lambs, how will you know which lambs need to be fed???

Reference: Hegarty, R.S. A biological basis for understanding the responsiveness of lambs to dietary protein and energy supply *Proceedings of the 1998 Wool and Sheepmeat Services Annual Conference October 20-22 1998, Yanco*. NSW Agriculture.

**The Cicerone Project is a member of the Harnham Landcare group and has been awarded over \$10,000 for tree planting in 2002**

**CONGRATULATIONS to our Farm Manager JUSTIN HOAD on winning the Frank Mansell Award for Agriculture under the Big Brother Scheme. This will enable Justin to travel to the UK next year to study their sheep and wool industry for a few weeks.**

## **Glamorous causes such as saving the rainforests and Kakadu are hiding the real environmental challenges.**

*(Taken from an article by James Woodford in the Sydney Morning Herald of Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2001, Spectrum, pages 4 – 5.)*

Talking about improving the environment, journalist James Woodford suggested that there are three national issues requiring urgent attention:-

- 1 Our economic system is geared towards destroying the environment rather than protecting it. Virtually no economic incentives encourage people (particularly farmers and coastal developers) to protect the natural values of privately owned land.
- 2 The way we manage our farming and rural landscapes. Under this umbrella comes the most malignant of Australia's environmental problems –salinity. The biggest loggers on the continent, and hence the nation's biggest salt producers, are farmers.
- 3 Action has to be taken against feral pests, both plant and animal, of which the worst offender is none other than sheep. They are an enormous threat to bio-diversity and have been blamed for the extinction of 24 mammal species in the Western Division of NSW .

Having started with such a bleak outlook, Woodford went on to discuss the ideas of Bjorn Lomborg published in the book *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, (Cambridge, \$49.95) in which Lomborg argues that the world's environment is not in decline and is in fact in far better shape than much of society gives it credit for.

Although we are a species capable of damaging our planet we are also capable of fixing it and the repair job is already well under way. We need to look at where the problems really are, unencumbered by the shroud of subjectivity and emotion.

He concludes that farmers are becoming increasingly aware that they cannot run their properties the way their fathers and grandfathers did. We all have the goal to leave the world a better place for our children than it was when we inherited it.

**Mulesing Field day** ... what a great day this was, with close to 60 people in attendance all keen to follow the techniques of Gordon Godson, learn about the accreditation scheme and see the results of our survey. Steve Coleman, Chief Inspector of the RSPCA, was impressed with the numbers and the fact that you all recognized the procedure does cause some pain but you wanted to keep pain to a minimum. He is looking to take videos for training the RSPCA inspectors so they know what to look for.

The trial was set up so our lambs were kept in their Farmlet groups of A, B and C. They were then subdivided into male and female and then into 'mulesed now' and those 'to be mulesed later'. We will monitor their growth rates over the next year. We'll advertise the second mulesing day so those of you who were unable to make the first day will have a chance to come next time. If you want to see how the lambs are progressing, come along to our **Weaning and Weighing Day on 19<sup>th</sup> December**.

## CHRISTMAS

It's been a hard year, of that there's no doubt,  
 for much of the country is suffering drought  
 Wool prices have risen but not yet enough,  
 and life for the wool grower's still pretty tough.  
 The wheat cockie's struggling; without any rain  
 there isn't a chance he'll be harvesting grain.  
 The cotton crop's weaker, our beef herds are down,  
 the downturn in farming's hurt many a town.  
 Lamb prices are lower than this time last year,  
 and water restrictions are spreading I fear.  
 Just when you are wondering how you will cope,  
 Christmas approaches and Christmas brings hope.  
 When friends and when families gather each year,  
 the season of giving, the season of cheer.  
 The time to be thankful our land is at peace  
 in a world where wars only seem to increase.  
 Be thankful for food we have on our table,  
 be thankful if one is both healthy and able.  
 The season when all can look forward and know  
 the rains will return and the pasture will grow,  
 The time to remember the manger and stall  
 and a time to say Merry Christmas to all.

From "Australian Poems that would stun a sheep" by Philip R Rush.

**The Board and Staff of The Cicerone Project  
 wish you all a safe, happy and healthy Christmas  
 and a Prosperous New Year.**

**The Cicerone Project gratefully acknowledges the funding support given to them by  
 Australian Wool Innovation**

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

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#### **WEBSITES**

**Australian Wool Innovation** is located at [www.wool.com](http://www.wool.com)

**The Cicerone Project** is at [www.northnet.com.au/~cicerone/](http://www.northnet.com.au/~cicerone/)

**New England Merino Field Days** (January 12 and 13, 2002, Walcha)

[www.newenglandmerino.com.au](http://www.newenglandmerino.com.au)

**Zone Alarm** for free hacker protection [www.zonealarm.com](http://www.zonealarm.com)