

The Cicerone Project Inc.

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Cicerone Newsletter
Issue 2, November, 1998

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REPORT ON THE FOOTROT FIELD DAY

In response to producer concerns, *The Cicerone Project* organised a public forum in Armidale to:

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

The forum was held on Thursday 30th July 1998. Invited speakers addressed various aspects of the footrot issue at an open session which 123 interested people attended. The subsequent workshop, only open to Cicerone members, saw 35 attend and many ideas and much lively discussion ensued.

History of footrot In Australia, footrot has been present since the early days of European settlement. For a long time it was thought that it would appear spontaneously whenever conditions such as lush, damp pasture were favourable for its development. However, in 1938 it was shown to be a specific infectious disease causing an inflammation of the hoof tissues beneath the horn.

The infection Footrot is caused by infection of the hooves of sheep with the bacterium *Dichelobacter nodosus* (*D. nodosus*). Footrot can cause severe lameness and a significant and obvious loss of production in affected animals. No producer wants to suffer these losses, so there are benefits in not having virulent footrot found on their property. Eradication has proved to be a viable option but problems seem to arise with the testing system used and identifying which sheep to cull.

The symptoms Virulent footrot causes severe lameness and loss of production in affected animals. The main lesion is an inflammation of the skin between the claws and there is a rapid spread of the disease, with severe underrunning of the wall and sole developing in one to two weeks.

The detection test A gelatin gel test looks at the different enzymes produced by the bacterium and classifies the infection as benign, intermediate or virulent. A positive response to the gel test indicates the disease is classed as 'virulent'. When virulence is indicated

by the gel test, the property is subjected to quarantine measures with trading restrictions. The Footrot Liaison Committee also views a 'gel positive' intermediate strain as having the potential to cause major problems in a more favourable environment, but this has not been conclusively proven. Work by Cheetham and Katz has shown that, in the New England area, some isolates which are classified as virulent by the gel tests do not act as virulent in the field perhaps only one hoof is affected, there are only mild symptoms and infection is not rapidly spread through the flock. Their work with DNA fingerprinting of *D. nodosus* suggest there are a number of differing strains of the bacterium, some which are Field Virulent / Gel Positive and others which are Field Benign / Gel Positive; is this the 'intermediate' infection?

The problem The Footrot Strategic Plan considers only virulent footrot to be an eradicable disease and does not concern itself with the problems posed by 'intermediate virulent' strains. Does this 'intermediate' strain even exist? Local graziers think so, and there are problems with respect to its correct diagnosis, expression of the disease, the regression of lesions and how to eradicate *if eradication is even feasible*.

The main themes to emerge from the day were:

- The need for improved communication and confidence in the systems that determine the footrot status of producers' flocks,
- The need to recognise the existence of 'intermediate' footrot,
- The need for recommendations on control or eradication of 'intermediate' footrot.

Suggestions for the future

We need to move away from some of the confrontations of the past and go forward to do meaningful research and develop an attitude of co-operation. Existing standards and training need to be reviewed in the light of increasing knowledge. The Cicerone

Project Inc. will be pro-active in many of these areas and will endorse researchers in their funding submissions.

- Cicerone will advise the various authorities of producers' concerns about what they call the 'intermediate' strain.
- An objective, accurate method of diagnosis of **all** strains of footrot needs to be developed. Cicerone will examine ways to encourage research in this area.
- Determine whether or not cattle act as reservoir hosts for the benign or 'intermediate' form. this is another area where Cicerone members can be involved.
- Funding of the work on DNA fingerprinting by Cheetham and Katz should be encouraged and their funding application will be endorsed by Cicerone.
- Data needs to be available to see how many properties have the 'intermediate' strains.
- Have any of these properties managed to eradicate the 'intermediate' form ? If so, what management practices have they used?
- Determine the true potential for 'intermediate' footrot to develop into virulent footrot.
- Training to develop a consistent approach to 'intermediate' strains by graziers, contractors, veterinarians and the authorities.
- Eradication programs of varying types be trialled on properties to identify the most successful methods for dealing with 'intermediate' footrot.
- A Code of Practice to be developed for management of 'intermediate' footrot.
- Cicerone will continue the education program with field days etc.
- Encourage a common terminology.
- Cicerone will lobby funding and research organisations to attract funding and personnel for these research projects.

There is much to be done!

WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE INVOLVED IN ANY OF THIS?

PLEASE LET YOUR CICERONE COMMITTEE KNOW.

[STOP PRESS:](#) See page 8

A BEGINNERS GUIDE TO THE WORLD WIDE WEB

A course just for Cicerone Members to be held at TAS on

Sunday 21st February 1999

10.00 am to 4.00 pm

Book early to make sure you get one of those computers!

Phone / Fax your name and contact details to Caroline

02 6772 2988

A great USA site for sustainable agriculture, 35 pages of web sites, organisations and publications

<http://www.attra.org/attra-rl/susagorg.html>

A new website for LANDCARE: www.landcare.org.au

Missed the Country Hour on ABC Radio? Check out <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/>

Letter from the Chairman

Dear Members

It has been some time since you last heard from us and for that we must apologise. Unfortunately every new organisation runs into teething problems – we hope we have just finished some of ours. Many things have happened since our last newsletter. The most notable of these are the formalising of a funding arrangement for The Cicerone Project and the appointment of a part time co-ordinator, Caroline Gaden.

As a new group we have found ourselves in a catch 22 situation. We need members to make us financially viable but, because we are new, knowledge of our activities amongst producers is limited. The only alternative is to seek funding in addition to membership subscriptions, until we find our feet.

I am pleased to announce The Cicerone Project has negotiated funding of \$219,000 from The Woolmark Company to 30 June 2000. **These are your wool tax dollars and now we need to put them to work to help you in areas you think are important.** We are also in the process of attracting funding from other producer-funded / community-funded bodies. A lease arrangement (at no cost to Cicerone) to be able to utilize part of "Chiswick" is also close to being finalised.

The Board interviewed a number of high quality candidates for the position of part time co-ordinator and is pleased that Caroline, with her experience and enthusiasm, accepted the position. Caroline's contact details are included in this newsletter. This means that we now have a permanent mailing address and someone to field your queries should any arise about Cicerone activities or about any opportunities in which you feel we should be involved.

This newsletter will become a regular feature of The Cicerone Project and we look forward to your participation and more importantly **your input** into the future activities of Cicerone.

Have a happy and safe Christmas.

Hugh Sutherland

The Millennium Bug

Most Small-Business people think they will check their computers and other equipment "during a weekend soon."

Well you have less than 60 weekends left .

Read the "Bug Buster" section of the **Year 2k** book sent to Cicerone members and plan your attack NOW.

Tax rebate for landcare

Farmers undertaking landcare projects will gain substantial tax rebates through new provisions made under the National Heritage Trust. a tax rebate of 34 cents in the dollar. The rebate applies to taxpayers with a taxable income of \$20,700 or less after notionally claiming deductions in relation to any expenditures for which the rebate is then claimed. The Ministers (Costello and Anderson) anticipate "the rebate is available to about 70% of Australia's farmers – those in most need of

assistance to invest in the crucial works necessary for sustainable land and water management." The rebate can be claimed for work on fencing, soil erosion work, drainage and tree planting to control salinity and work to eradicate plant and animal pests as well as water storage tanks and dams, wells, irrigation channels, pipes and pumps. For further information contact the Australian Tax Office on 02 6272 3933 or look at their web site on:

http://www.dpie.gov.au/dpie/pr/media_releases/anderson/iondex.html

Note.... Web sites have no spaces, and many computer programs will automatically underline a web address, so be aware there is an underscore _ between 'media' and 'releases' in the above web address.

"Putting Profit into Agriculture" with Dr Stan Parsons at Armidale Bowling Club, 8th Dec 2.30pm, cost \$5

"Strategic land management and regeneration of catchments" with Dr Stan Parsons, 9th Dec at the Smith's Waringa, Guyra in the a.m. and at the McKemey's Willow Park in the p.m. Phone Chris Nadolny 6772 5488 DLWC

Direct seeding wattles

By **Chris Nadolny, DLWC**

Now is a good time to think about direct seeding as a means of revegetation. Many native trees and shrubs can be easily established by direct seeding. Wattles are easier to establish than eucalypts because their seeds are larger and can be placed below the soil surface and their roots grow more quickly. Often 10% or more of directly sown

wattle seeds grow into trees, so this can be a cheaper way of re-establishing a large area.

For wattles to germinate, their seed coat must be broken either by scratching or heat. One method which works for **most** species, is to place the seed in boiling water for about 20 seconds. Some species are more sensitive to heat than others, so test small batches of seed first.

Seeds should be sown into a **weed-free** seed bed and raked in. This technique is also suitable for rough country where it is difficult to use machinery.

Collect your ripe seed from suitable trees and save them for later use, or contact a local nursery or Greening Australia or the Armidale Tree Group who all stock a range of native seeds.

What is The Cicerone Project Inc?

The Cicerone Project 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.

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 in particular 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 (e.g. to receive special mailouts, to attend courses arranged for members and to be involved in our projects).

Your Cicerone committee:

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

Hugh Sutherland - producer rep. (Chairman) Phone 02 6778 4659

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

Join us!

If you wish to join, fill in your contact details on the following form and send it with your cheque for \$80 made out to "The Cicerone Project Inc." to:

The Treasurer, The Cicerone Project Inc, PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350

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Name:

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Phone: **Fax:**

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Address:

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..... **Postcode:**

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STOP PRESS: Members of the Footrot Steering Committee will be coming to the **New England area** on **December 9th, 10th and 11th** to address your concerns about footrot. Watch the local press for details. We will try to advise all **Cicerone members** when we have details of producer meetings.

(Members, please send your fax numbers and e-mail addresses to my fax machine on 02 6772 2988 or e-mail to cgaden@northnet.com.au)

The Cicerone Project Incorporated,

PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350