

## ***The Cicerone Project Inc.***

PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE NSW 2350

Phone 02 6778 3871 Fax 02 6778 3872

cicerone@northnet.com.au

**NEWSLETTER**

**Number 8**

**June 2000**

# **TOWARDS TWENTY TWENTY**

## *Future directions*

**DATE** Wednesday July 19<sup>th</sup> 2000

**TIME** 1.15pm to 5.00pm

**PLACE** Liaison Centre, Chiswick

### **Speakers will include:**

**Anthony Sherlock**, Chairman, The Woolmark Company and Director of the Interim Advisory Board *“Towards Twenty Twenty”*

**Rob Woolaston**, Manager, Livestock Improvement and New Industries, CSIRO  
*“Current research in CSIRO”*

**Andrew Grace**, On Farm Program Manager, The Woolmark Company  
*“Wool Producing in 2020 ... a technical perspective”*

**Plus the AGM of The Cicerone Project Inc.**

### **More dates for your diary**

11-13th July Grassland Society of NSW Conference “Identifying Profit Drivers”  
UNE Contact 02 6730 1900

8th August (Tuesday) **Sheep boots workshop** 1.30pm, Liaison Centre, CSIRO

16th or 23rd October (Monday) **Lamb Marketing Seminar** Come and meet with the SA Meat sheep breeders who are coming over from South Africa, date to be finalised.

27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> October Fine Wool Symposium, CSIRO

## The South African Meat Sheep are coming

The Cicerone Project is a producer led group formed two years ago to look at ways of improving the profitability and sustainability of agriculture in the New England area.

In the current rural climate our members may have to seriously consider diversifying their farm business for both financial and environmental reasons. There are many alternatives, for example growing olives and grapes for table and wine have taken off in this area in the past few years. But both require a huge input of capital and a long wait before there is any financial return. In addition they require a whole new knowledge base. To diversify into another grazing animal will still remain within the grazier's area of expertise and so the enterprise is more likely to succeed.

Our group wanted something giving quicker returns for cash-strapped graziers, without the extra pressure of a really steep learning curve. After interest triggered by an brief article in our newsletter, we decided to look more closely at the new sheep breeds being imported from South Africa.

Currently these sheep are mainly to be found in Western Australia (and thanks to Matt Young of WA Agriculture for all his help). ..... but from October you'll be able to see first cross lambs on the Cicerone Farm

We have put 250 merino ewes into an AI Program and in early May, 240 of them were inseminated with semen from one of the following breeds - Afrikaner, Damara, Dohne Merino, South African Meat Merino, White Dorper.

We used two sires per breed except for the Afrikaner as there is only one ram in Australia! A Border Leicester will be used as the follow up sire after the AI.

**Afrikaner**, an extremely hardy, fertile, fat tailed meat sheep suitable for the Middle East market. No shearing is needed. And flystrike is not a problem. Potential niche markets for ethnic populations who enjoy this type of meat.

**Damara**, another extremely hardy, fertile, fat tailed meat sheep, also suitable for the Middle East market. This breed is coloured, with hair which sheds. The skins are of high value. Another breed with potential niche markets for ethnic populations who enjoy this type of meat.

**Dohne Merino**, a dual purpose sheep (wool and meat) developed from Peppin type Merino ewes crossed with German Mutton Merino sires. They produce wool at 19-22 micron.

**South African Mutton Merino (SAMM)**, another dual purpose animal, both meat and wool (22-23 micron). It is a large animal with an excellent carcass.

**White Dorper**, a prime lamb producing breed which is excellent for arid and extensive grazing conditions. It is another hair sheep with highly sort after skins.

If you want to keep up with the results of this exciting initiative you need to join The Cicerone Project ... remember our motto is to **Measure, Compare, Learn and Adopt** ..... this project will be a perfect example of that!

## The Cicerone Farm

One block of 200 hectares of land has been divided into three separate farmlets each of 50 hectares with the extra area for other projects. We have utilised several farm consultants to ensure that soil types, drainage and topography are known and the farmlets will be as equal as possible when we start the measurements. The

paddocks linked together to make up one Farmlet, for example Farm A, are not adjacent but this inconvenience is necessary to ensure an equitable sub-division. Laneways have been set up so it will be easy to move stock from one paddock to the next.

The map below gives you some idea of the total division. The area without shading will be used for other projects such as the wether trial.

As the farmlets are on one block of land, all will be subject to the same rainfall, same temperatures, same wind, same bloodlines of grazing sheep and so on. All parts now have a reasonably good 'sown' grass population in most paddocks but legumes are lacking. The differences from now on will be in the seed and

fertilizer inputs and the frequency of animal movement. We will be able to compare the higher and lower adoption on Farms A and B. We will also be able to compare the effects of stock movements on farms with the same inputs by comparing Farms B and C.

- **Farm A** : high adoption and flexible rotational grazing with eight paddocks. This year our aim is to see 100% of pastures upgraded with three paddocks to be replanted.
- **Farm B** : medium adoption, flexible rotational grazing with eight paddocks. This year, 30% is to have some fertilizer and white clover
- **Farm C** : medium adoption with more frequent rotational grazing using sixteen paddocks. This year, 30% is to have some fertilizer and white clover

**If you are interested in following this project, or any of the others, then please join us ... the more members we have the more likely we are to gain research funding.**

## **PIRD funding secured for TWO FOOTROT PROJECTS**

**COME TO THE WORKSHOP as we need your help and ideas!!**

This year we applied for PIRDS funding to continue the current footrot trial by taking the sheep to another location where there is a different climate. This has been approved by the PIRDS committee. We are looking at a location close to Tamworth and John Seaman, the NSW Ag Flock health specialist, is also searching for another location in a different area.

We also applied for funding to look at developing boots for sheep! .... Have you ever bought a new ram and worried that he may be bringing footrot onto your property... well if we can develop a set of boots for him to wear during the six weeks he's running with the ewes, it would ease the worry a bit wouldn't it?

And what about those foot baths..... how long do the sheep really stand in the chemical? How about a boot which contains the chemical in gel or paste form to ensure it stays in place for 24 to 48 hours and really does get at those bacteria? It may be that you can boot a few hundred sheep at a time, leave them for a day or so and then pull the boots off knowing the chemical really has had time to penetrate.

**So we need your ideas and expertise to design two types of sheep boots ..... please come along and bring any ideas and materials with you and we'll have a brainstorming session .... a new cottage industry for the New England!!**

**WORKSHOP Tuesday 8th August 2000 at 1.30pm at the Liaison Centre,  
Chiswick. RSVP to Caroline on 02 6778 3871**

**Remember PIRD stands for  
PRODUCER INITIATED RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT  
YOUR INPUT is ESSENTIAL**

**RESULTS of the CICERONE PROJECT'S FOOTROT TRIAL**

## **Funded by PIRD and WoolMark**

### **To study some strains of footrot which are giving stable gel test results but which act as benign in the field**

#### **SUMMARY**

The Cicerone Project developed a trial to compare field expression of various gel stable strains of footrot under similar conditions during the period when footrot expression was likely to occur under New England conditions. The same strains were compared using DNA analysis by Dr Brian Cheetham of the Department of Molecular and Cellular Biology at the University of New England (UNE). The trial was conducted for 20 weeks at the Cicerone Farm near Uralla on the NSW Northern Tablelands.

#### **Field results indicate:**

- Sheep in a paddock with a higher clover content are more susceptible to footrot than those in a lower clover paddock. This occurred across all the strains under test.
- Over the time sheep with field high- grade virulent, gel test stable (ie virulent) [white ear tags] became progressively worse to score 5 and infected clean sheep in the plot.
- Sheep with field low- grade virulence: gel test stable (ie virulent) [green ear tags] became worse but not as bad as the above group, indicating that there is a graduated scale of virulence
- Sheep with field benign; gel test unstable (benign) [red ear tags] did not develop worse symptoms of the disease, they improved and did not infect clean sheep.
- Sheep with a type of field benign: gel test stable (ie virulent)[blue eartags] did not show any indication of virulence in the field, they did not affect clean sheep and the foot scores remained on average below 3a. This indicates the field behaviour is not acting in the same way as we'd expect from the gel test result.
- The sheep [purple ear tags] which were field low grade virulence at home and gel test stable also behaved in the same way as the field benign sheep when brought to the Cicerone plots
- Sheep which had been field benign; gel test stable up to the trial [pink eartags] tested gel test unstable for the first time and behaved in the same way as the benign in the trial. Stable strains were indicated at the end of the trial.

Thus we have shown that in this area, some gel stable strains act in a benign manner in the field.

**DNA fingerprinting** The bacterial strains which acted as virulent in the field showed 'bands' in the DNA test and those strains which acted as benign in the field were 'non-banded' in the DNA test. This suggests that in the future it may be possible to develop a test based on DNA which is more accurate than the current elastase and gelatin gel tests, both of which look at just proteases. There are additional factors at work, not just the protease, which influence virulence or non- virulence being expressed.

# *The Cicerone Project Inc.*

invites you to take part in a

## **MERINO WETHER TRIAL**

to be held on the

Cicerone Farm, Big Ridge

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 MN1 status  
(MN2 when area becomes 'protected')*

*Before delivery must be inspected for footrot by RLPB*

*If you regularly foot bathe sheep we ask that **you do not** enter a team*

*Wethers **must not** be cryptorchids or treated with any hormones*

**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**

*Measure Compare Learn Adopt*

*Nemesis update*

The Nemesis team is currently focussing on technology transfer, to promote the adoption of breeding for worm resistance.

Emma Doyle has been appointed as the Technology Transfer Officer, as part of the Woolmark funded SCIPS (Sustainable Control of Internal Parasites) project. The SCIPS project is addressing one of the major problems of the Australian Sheep Industry – control of internal parasites with almost complete reliance on anthelmintics and the growing problem of anthelmintic resistance. The project will provide a package for integrated control management, with breeding for resistance an important component.

The first role Emma will take on, as Technology Transfer Officer, is to improve communication between breeders, woolgrowers and consultants, to allow a better understanding of the benefits of including worm resistance in a breeding objective.

Emma will be available at public field days and is planning a number of on-farm field days with producers in different regions. She will be encouraging exchange of information between those that have been involved with Nemesis and those producers wanting to begin a breeding program.

Emma will be working closely with regional partners in each state, to develop strategies that will work best for each environment/production system. She will be providing information and workshops to consultants to allow them to better inform their clients

Nemesis will also be working closely with the University of Sydney to set up a web page for the SCIPS project, which will allow access to up-to-date information.

The Nemesis goal is to provide a resource of information and practical assistance to accelerate the adoption of breeding for resistance. Anyone who requires further information should contact Emma Doyle at CSIRO-Animal Production by phone on 02) 6776 1454 or fax on 02) 6776 1371 email [e.doyle@chiswick.anprod.csiro.au](mailto:e.doyle@chiswick.anprod.csiro.au)

TAX INVOICE
-------------

# ***The Cicerone Project Inc.***

reminds you that

## **ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS**

**are now due**

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

For those who joined after 31 March  
membership renewal is \$66 (includes \$6 GST)

Receipts to be issued at AGM

**Get inside information on our Footrot trial and boot development**

**Learn more about the grazing management systems  
on the Cicerone Farm**

**Compare the South African Meat breeds**

**Watch the wether trial progress**

**Have your say in research.**

**Please join us!**

***Measure Compare Learn Adopt***

Return to The Cicerone Project Inc., PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350, receipts issued at AGM

✂.....

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 Inc.***

PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350

Newsletter Editor: Caroline Gaden, Executive Officer of The Cicerone Project Inc.  
This newsletter is copyright and no part may be reproduced without due acknowledgement

# *The Cicerone Project Inc.*

## NOMINATION FORM

Election of the Board of The Cicerone Project

*PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN TO PO Box 1593 ARMIDALE NSW 2350 by 10 July 2000*

Name of Nominee (EXTENSION POSITION).....

Address ..... Phone

.....

Signature of Nominee

.....

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

Name of Nominee (PRODUCER POSITION) .....

Address ..... Phone

.....

Signature of Nominee

.....

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

Name of Nominee (PRODUCER POSITION) .....

Address ..... Phone

.....

Signature of Nominee

.....

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

Name of Nominee (PRODUCER POSITION) .....

Address ..... Phone

.....

Signature of Nominee

.....

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

## *The Cicerone Project Inc.*

PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE NSW 2350

Phone 02 6778 3871 Fax 02 6778 3872

### **Nominations for election to the Board of the cicerone project INC.**

**FOUR POSITIONS** are available for election at the 2000 AGM,

**(three producer positions and one extension position)**

At the 1999 AGM, the following people were elected to the Board of The Cicerone Project Inc

- 6 producer members
  - **Hugh Sutherland**, Chairman, **Terry Coventry**, **Rob Taylor**, who all roll over, and **Janne Portas**, **Kim Barnet** and **Tim Wright** whose positions are available for election
- 2 members representing extension services
  - **Pauline Smith**, TAFE, who rolls over, and **Clare Edwards**, NSW Ag, whose position is available for election
- 1 member nominated by and representing CSIRO
  - **David Paull**
- 1 member nominated by and representing UNE
  - **Jim Scott**

So half the Board roll over, the other members stand down but may seek re-election if they wish.

**Three producer positions and one extension position are open to election at the 2000 AGM.**

**Nominations are to be in writing (see enclosed form). Nominees, proposers and seconders must all be current financial members of The Cicerone Project Inc.** Nominations are to be sent to The Cicerone Project, PO Box 1593, ARMIDALE 2350 or faxed to 02 6772 2988  
**Closing date is 10 July 2000.**