

Foreword

The 'Perennial Grasses in Pasture Production Systems' symposium held in May 2013 was the second event staged by the Australian Grasslands Association, the first being a National Scientific Symposium on Legumes held in February 2012. The Perennial Grasses event brought together participants from across the nation, as well as overseas delegates, to review past and current research and discuss future directions for research into perennial grasses in Australia. Participants included researchers, producers, consultants, rural research and development corporation representatives and commercial suppliers.

The Australian Grassland Association is a joint initiative of the Grassland Society of New South Wales and the Grassland Society of Southern Australia and in 2013 also welcomed involvement from the Western Australia group, Evergreen Farming. The purpose of the Association is to facilitate the regular review of the pasture industry, highlight new opportunities, identify deficiencies and stimulate research into issues that will most benefit producers. It does this by adhering to a common set of objectives:

- (i) Provide a forum for researchers to: present and publish their work, interact and exchange ideas with peers and provide direct input into future directions for research
- (ii) Help set the medium term pasture research agenda and inform industry wide priorities
- (iii) Consider longer term, 'blue sky' ideas that push the boundaries and achieve significant change

In addressing these objectives for perennial grasses the association developed a number of theme areas and invited papers from the broader scientific community as well as directly commissioning presentations from researchers working in key areas. The theme areas included:

- Review – where have we come from and where are we now?
- Pasture persistence – at what cost?

- Developments and innovations in;
 - Perennial grass agronomy and management
 - Perennial grass breeding
- Opportunities and roles for perennial grasses in a changing climate
- Quality and feed value in animal production systems
- What is the next quantum leap in perennial grasses?

The Special Issue which follows brings together research findings which address the key issues currently affecting perennial grass science in Australia. Many more papers were submitted than could be included in the program and not all presentations were available to be submitted as a paper in this special edition.

The symposium was chaired by Mr Rob Salmon and put together by a hard working committee of volunteers that included Carol Harris (Editor), Dr Mark Norton, Phillip Barrett-Lennard, Dr Jim Virgona, Stuart Kemp (assistant Editor), Roger Garnsey and Lester McCormick. The event was made possible through both direct support and sponsorship as well as the provision of significant 'in-kind' assistance. We wish to thank the following organisations for their kind and generous support; Meat and Livestock Australia, PGG Wrightson Seeds, Heritage Seeds, Dairy Australia, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Centre for AgriBioSciences, Dairy Futures CRC, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Charles Sturt University, and AgResearch New Zealand.

We would like to sincerely thank the authors for their commitment and patience in contributing their paper to this special edition. Finally we would like to thank all the people who kindly gave their time to the critical process of reviewing papers for the Journal.

Stuart Kemp
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