

THE McMEEKAN MEMORIAL AWARD

A. L. RAE

M.AGR.SC., PH.D., F.N.Z.I.A.S., F.R.S.N.Z.

The McMeekan Memorial Award for 1977 is made to one of the most eminent and widely respected members of the agricultural science profession, Professor A. L. Rae of Massey University, in recognition of his continuing contribution to animal production, both directly through his own research and indirectly through his students and colleagues.



The award has special significance in this, Massey's 50th Jubilee Year, in that few have contributed more to the development and reputation of Massey as an institution of agricultural learning than Professor Rae. Rae.

Al Rae was born and educated in Taranaki and after a year at Auckland University he went to Massey and completed his B.Agr.Sc. degree in 1944. He was a Junior Lecturer in Sheep Husbandry while continuing postgraduate work for which he was awarded the degree of Master of Agricultural Science with First Class Honours in 1947.

Winning scholarships was a feature of Al Rae's scholastic career, starting with the New Plymouth Savings Bank's Scholarship competed for by pupils of all rural primary schools of the North Island. Later he won the Taranaki Scholarship, and at Massey he was Senior Scholar in Agriculture and was awarded the Sir James G. Wilson prize. In 1947 the Macmillan Brown Research Scholarship in Agriculture was added to the list and with a New Zealand Wool Board Bursary this enabled him to work at Iowa State College, Ames, U.S.A., where he completed his Doctor of Philosophy degree in 1950.

His masterate work at Massey, on the progeny testing of Romneys, was the start of his career interest in animal breeding. At

Ames his research into genetic variation and co-variation in productive traits of the Romney required the development of new techniques of analysis and was regarded by his supervisors, Dr Jay L. Lush and Dr Lenoy L. Hazel, as an outstanding contribution. After his work in America he spent some months at the Institute of Animal Genetics at Edinburgh prior to his appointment to the foundation chair in Sheep Husbandry at Massey in 1951. This in itself was unusual as it was not then fashionable to appoint 27-year-old professors.

For Massey students at that time the study of genetics and animal breeding was quite a unique and certainly a stimulating experience. From the tutorial room of Dr F. W. Dry where the intricacies of Mendelian inheritance were explained they might go to a lecture on the mysteries of population genetics by Professor Rae who himself was playing an important part in the development of this relatively new area.

Al Rae's contribution to animal production has been through teaching, research, extension, consultation and even commerce, and it would be impossible to determine the relative importance of each.

He has given courses in animal breeding, genetics, biometrics and sheep production to science, agriculture and veterinary science students and has been the supervisor of 10 doctorate and 25 masterate students, many of whom are now leading practitioners in their own fields. In addition, his advice and leadership were of inestimable value in the establishment and rapid development of his own and other faculties at Massey.

His research output and its quality are internationally recognized and have led to a much better understanding of many problems in animal breeding, animal production, and of population genetics, including work with *Drosophila* and *Tribolium*. His scientific and professional papers number more than 65.

Professor Rae has remained close to farming and farmers. As controller of the sheep farms at Massey University, he had to deal with all the problems of labour, land, stock and crops, together with the allocation of resources for research purposes. He has worked closely with farmers and breeders on various committees and as chairman of the annual Sheepfarmers' Meetings conducted by Massey. He is also a frequent speaker at farmers' conferences throughout New Zealand and his addresses have been renowned for their clarity and authority.

Professor Rae has also originated and led many developments of profound importance to agriculture. His advocacy played a

major part in the establishment of the National Flock Recording Scheme and to its successor — Sheeplan. He has contributed substantially to the technical background of Sheeplan and to the in-service training of Sheep and Beef Cattle officers of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries who are involved with Sheeplan at the field level. His guidance and leadership have resulted in the establishment of the Drysdale breed in New Zealand, together with an orderly marketing arrangement for Drysdale wool. Perhaps not so well known is his work in herd improvement in the dairy industry which has been favourably recognized by those concerned as has his considerable contribution to the poultry industry of New Zealand.

His list of consultative positions reads like a Who's Who in technical and even commercial agriculture. He is or has been a member of the Livestock Improvement Technical Advisory Committee, the Dryden Committee on Livestock Improvement, the Committee to advise the Western Australian Department of Agriculture on Beef Cattle Breeding Research, the Dairy Board's Herd Improvement Council, and others. As chairman or director he has guided a number of Drysdale wool committees, societies and commercial companies.

He has played a full role with professional societies, having been President of this Society, the New Zealand Genetical Society, and the New Zealand Branch, World Poultry Science Association, and with university groups for which he has been a member of the University Grants Committee Research Committee, the Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences Faculty Board, and the Professorial Board of Massey University.

It is not surprising, then, in view of these contributions, that Professor Rae has been honoured with Fellowships of the Royal Society of New Zealand and the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural Science.

The management committee of the New Zealand Society of Animal Production likewise recognize these contributions, as did Dr McMeekan himself, and are pleased to present to him the McMeekan Memorial Award.

J. D. J SCOTT
President