

THE SIR ARTHUR WARD AWARD

THE CONSULTING OFFICER SERVICE OF THE NEW ZEALAND DAIRY BOARD

The inaugural presentation of an award is the occasion when the reason for creating the award is highlighted as well as the way in which the award recipient exemplifies the award's objectives. Two types of contribution are commonly recognised by awards, fellowships or life memberships in many scientific or professional societies. These contributions are either for scientific excellence and dedication or for services rendered to the societies. This Society has the C.P. McMeekan Memorial Award and confers honorary life membership. But the diverse nature of the Society's membership, and its broad primary objective of bringing about active collaboration of all workers in the field of animal production, may not be suitably recognised with honorary life membership or a McMeekan Award. As an example, the Society's Lincoln College Centennial Award, first presented in 1978, recognises the contribution made by individual persons or organisations to the training of the College's students in the principles of animal production.

The Society's constitution refers to "the field of animal production". This is because animal production has an important 'field' component whereas animal science is more often associated with laboratory and research station situations. This field component sometimes involves obtaining and analysing records derived from animals in commercial flocks and herds. These analyses may define the extent of a problem limiting production or indicate the effectiveness of a particular husbandry practice. This field research requires a data collection system, an analysing procedure and most importantly, a form of reporting back results so that the final outcome of the study is 'an improvement in animal production'.

The preceding paragraph succinctly defines the fundamental tenet of the research interests of the foundation secretary of this Society. I refer to the field survey work undertaken and promoted by A. H. Ward. Although he has not been involved in this type of work for almost 20 years, his interest has remained. When the Society congratulated him on receiving a knighthood in 1979, Sir Arthur responded by generously offering to sponsor an award which recognised the significance of field research and the communication of this type of research to the improvement of animal production.

The management committee of the Society agreed that the type of contributions referred to by Sir Arthur did deserve recognition. In accepting his funding of an award, the committee felt it most appropriate that it should be called the Sir Arthur Ward Award. This was firstly because of his involvement with the Society in its formative years. This association has included being:

- (i) a member of the ad hoc committee formed to draw up a constitution and to organise the first conference;
- (ii) inaugural secretary-treasurer;
- (iii) editor of the proceedings for six years;
- (iv) vice-president in 1947 and president in 1948; and
- (v) an honorary life member from 1965.

The second consideration in naming this award was that Sir Arthur's early work in the New Zealand dairy industry as secretary of the NZ Co-operative Herd Testing Association and then as Technical Officer with the New Zealand Dairy Board demonstrated the potential value from analyses of field records in identifying the relative importance of a wide range of factors in animal production.

With this background to the creation of this award, it is appropriate that the inaugural presentation should be made to the Consulting Officer Service which is part

of the Farm Production Division of the New Zealand Dairy Board. This service was created as part of the Herd Improvement Plan, which had four basic objectives:

- (i) to establish a system for collecting and collating cow production information the effective use of which would facilitate herd improvement;
- (ii) to undertake surveys and investigative research to identify the nature and significance of factors influencing production;
- (iii) to develop livestock improvement services such as sire surveys and artificial breeding; and
- (iv) to establish a consulting officer service, members of which would 'advise farmers on herd improvement methods and other farm practices, and collect information in the field on aspects of increased production and increased efficiency'.

The term 'consulting officer' was chosen because the envisaged role was in some ways similar to Danish 'consultants' — men who will *consult* advisers, other farmers, scientists, etc, about a particular problem and then refer the information back to the original questioner as well as to others who may be able to usefully employ the information in the decision-making process. Right from the outset this philosophy of consultation rather than direction has been maintained.

In 1940 there were 6 C.O.'s — one connected with each Herd Improvement Association. In the 1950's numbers were increased to 10 and in the late 1960's, potential establishment increased to 19 or one per 900 herd owners. Most recently, approval has been given for a progressive expansion to 26. These progressive increases have been requested by herd owners and must surely be the most conclusive evidence of the merits of the C.O.'s contribution from the producers' point of view.

During 1977-8 the C.O.'s made over 4500 individual farm visits as well as over 4000 farm visits associated with the activities of their 275 discussion groups. These groups allowed C.O.'s to regularly meet 3436 herd owners or approximately 20% of all herd owners. While an accurate measure of the increased production resulting from discussion group membership is difficult to obtain, a Waikato study involving 10 groups found that those farmers with more than 4 years membership produced 36% more milkfat per hectare than herd owners with only one year's membership. This greater productivity was associated with higher stocking rates. That is, research results were being conveyed to herd owners and being adopted.

This discussion group function of the C.O.'s was specifically recognised recently when the Service received an award from the Grassland Memorial Trust. However, their duties extend beyond group activities and a conventional adviser's functions. Seasonal production trends are monitored and the opinion of C.O.'s is regularly sought by many factories when plant capacity is being planned. Most are in some way involved with obtaining information of use in the Board's sire proving scheme. It may be discussions with a herd owner in the scheme, cow inspection in relation to contract mating, or daughter inspection as part of the conformation survey.

Management related surveys have also been undertaken including labour utilisation, milking practices, milking times, etc. Many C.O.'s co-operate with scientists in conducting field surveys or field trials. This co-operation may range from suggesting herd owners most likely to be suitable trial participants to specific involvement in obtaining samples or data. The C.O.'s hold regular meetings amongst themselves as well as an annual conference at which recent developments are discussed with scientists and field experiences are presented for group discussion. During all these activities mutual assistance and advice is offered to thereby maintain the service's reputation and foster the widely recognised *esprit de corps*.

It is an appropriate conclusion to state the objects of this Society as they appear in the constitution:

- (a) to provide an organisation to bring about active collaboration of all workers in the field of animal production;
- (b) to provide an annual meeting of members at which papers will be read and discussed; and
- (c) to take such action as may be deemed necessary to foster improvement in animal production.

If these objects are specifically related to the dairy industry they could be applicable to most of the aims of the Consulting Officer Service. This apparent coincidence is not surprising since the first secretary of the Society and the person responsible with establishing the Service are one in the same. It is especially appropriate that the inaugural presentation of the Sir Arthur Ward Award should be made to the Consulting Officer Service in recognition of its contribution to the improvement of animal production.

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