

SIR ARTHUR WARD

Robin Campbell

The nomination of Robin Campbell for the Society's Sir Arthur Ward Award recognizes his significant contribution to the development and application of technology to genetic improvement in the sheep industry and especially his part in establishing sound structures for the pastoral industry to both create and then capture research benefits as they arise. This contribution has been made over a period of more than 40 years.

Robin's achievements include his commitment and contribution to sheep genetic improvement by performance recording, initially via his participation in the Romney Development Group and subsequently the Southern Romney Development Group in the 1970s and 1980s. Since then Robin, with Russell Welsh, has capitalized on the importation of exotic breeds by the development of a highly productive stabilized composite breed called the TEF_{rom}. This is a cross of 25% Texel, 25% East Friesian and 50% Romney, and is often flippantly called the "non stick" Romney. This composite has recently been accepted as a breed by the New Zealand Sheep Breeder's Association and is now supplied by an increasing number of breeders, and embryo's have already been exported to Australia. Maternal breed composites that capitalize on hybrid vigour and provide a better mix of traits for current production systems including hogget lambing are now widespread in New Zealand and Robin was one of the pioneers of this practice. That TEF_{rom} animals are currently well represented as leading sires in the SIL ACE across breed evaluations is testimony to Robin's skill and commitment as a sheep breeder.

However, perhaps his most important and least recognized role has been as a guiding hand providing farmer and breeder representation in a succession of industry research and development organizations that underpin and support the long term competitiveness of New Zealand's pastoral industry.

Robin was a founding chairman of the Sheep Research Council, an organization created in 1990 by the Meat and Wool boards to replace the vacuum left by the restructuring of MAF in 1989. Its first initiative was to set up a "focus farm" which he described in the opening speech as "not a



competition, but a real farm on which new proven technologies can be seen to work by lifting productivity to improve the bottom line". John Clark (then of Tussock Creek) had the original focus farm. It started in 1990. The MRDC copied this model to become the monitor farm program the following year. Both the Sheep Council and the monitor farms are still thriving fifteen years later and fill a valued place in the

extension of new technologies to commercial farmers.

Robin was then the founding independent farmer chairman of the Foundation for Sheep Production Research (later renamed the Sheep Research Foundation), a joint venture created in 1996 by the then Meat Board and Wool Production Technology of NZ Ltd (*Wool Pro*) with additional representatives from AgResearch and the meat and wool processing industries. The Sheep Research Foundation has the responsibility of prioritizing the industry's research needs from the on-farm level, to processing and the marketplace. Officially, "the organization grew out of the Government's desire to have more industry relevance and input when it comes to allocation of taxpayer research funds". Perhaps more accurately it was created by concerned industry observers to stem the decline in sheep research funding by FRST. Many forget that at this time the sheep industry was commonly called a "sunset industry" and naïve treasury based "experts" were doing their best to cripple its long term future. All that we can say is that these ill-informed zealots have had to eat their words with the sheep industry being one of the best performing sectors over the last decade. Robin and the Sheep Research Foundation helped stem the tide by placing a cogently argued case in front of government, creating a unified industry organization that presaged the current Meat and Wool New Zealand. By obtaining matching funding to the government's investment it also slowed, and in some cases halted, the erosion of research funds from sheep into other areas. However, the Sheep Research Foundation will perhaps be best remembered for its part in setting up Sheep Improvement Limited or SIL as it is commonly known. Prior to this time NZ performance recording in sheep was struggling because it lacked a single unified database, web

interface, and BLUP based genetic engine. It was also suffering from a business model where the primary beneficiaries, commercial farmers, were contributing insufficient funds for its ongoing improvement. The economic benefits of the case were clear and Robin deserves recognition for his part in ensuring the viability of this essential component of the New Zealand sheep industry.

Robin has also been a board member of New Zealand's largest Crown Research Institute, AgResearch, since 1999. This CRI is the one most involved in New Zealand animal production research and development. In this regard, he has been the primary industry's representative to bring his practical wealth of experience of the sheep and beef industries to the board table. He is also one of the few board members to have served two consecutive terms on the board.

Robin is also on the Board of Ovita Limited and is a founding director. The establishment of Ovita is, in part, another outcome from the Sheep Research Foundation with matching funding from industry and the government directed towards increasing New Zealand's sheep production by the application of genomic technologies. This is an exciting and challenging task because AgBiotech is a high risk business venture but also essential to keep New Zealand pastoral industry at the forefront of international competitiveness. Currently he is also chair of the Ovita Industry

Issues Working Group, whose aim is to provide a vision for the sheep industry and provide input into Ovita's research and development priorities.

This impressive list shows that Robin has provided a significant and ongoing contribution to New Zealand's research direction, especially related to the sheep industry and genetic improvement. His involvement has resulted in fundamental changes that have, and will continue to have, long term impact on the industry.

Robin is well known for his outstanding oratory and has the gift of being able to reduce a complex topic to a few well constructed phrases mixed in with an entertaining dash of dry Southland Scot's wit. This plus his ability to quietly influence events with reason, rather than bombast, has meant he has been widely sought after for advice. It was for these reasons amongst others he was awarded Landcorp's Agricultural Communicator of the Year Award in 2004.

It is because of his strong and demonstrated commitment to NZ sheep improvement and associated research and development, not only through his own efforts over the last 40 years, but also selflessly via his input and guidance of several significant industry organizations over the last 15 years that the Society should recognize Robin Campbell's outstanding contribution to animal production in New Zealand.

John C. McEwan and Neville B. Jopson