

NEW ZEALAND SOCIETY OF ANIMAL PRODUCTION LIFE MEMBERSHIP

Dr Maurice F. McDonald

Maurice Frank McDonald was born in Gisborne on 6 March 1933 and attended Mangapapa Primary School before proceeding to Gisborne High School. It was at Gisborne High School, and particularly while doing an agricultural course, that he developed what was to be a career-long association with Massey University when he came under the influence of B G (Bert) Seeley (a Massey BAgrSc graduate) and G H (George) Thorpe (who held a Masterate in Agricultural Science from Massey Agricultural College).

After completing high school, Dr McDonald proceeded to take the Agricultural Intermediate year at Canterbury University College in 1951 and then transferred to the Bachelor of Agricultural Science programme at Massey Agricultural College (1952-1954). This began what would be a long and productive association with Dr George Wickham, Professor Al Rae and Mr R A (Bob) Barton, among others. On completing his Bachelors Degree he was awarded a post-graduate scholarship by the New Zealand Wool Board and undertook a Masters Degree (1955-1957) under the supervision of Dr J I (Jim) Raeside, a recent import to Massey from Canada. His thesis topic was a study of arborization patterns in cervical mucus in relation to the stage of the oestrous cycle in sheep.

On completion of his Masters, Dr McDonald worked for two years in a position supported by the New Zealand Wool Board. This was in the days when, presumably reflecting wool prices at the time, the Wool Board supported top Masters graduates for up to two further years in salaried research positions.

In addition to research in reproductive physiology, Dr McDonald worked with C S W (Cam) Reid, studying the effects of facial eczema on sheep - a topical issue given the major outbreaks experienced in the mid-1950's. He had originally intended undertaking his PhD Degree in the United States and had been awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to assist with funding of the PhD programme. However, he was successful in applying for one of the two Shaw Savill Centenary Scholarships awarded in 1959. As a result, he decided to undertake his PhD in the Unit of Reproductive Physiology and Biochemistry of the Agricultural Research Council at the University of Cambridge, England. His initial inquiries to Dr L E A Rowson resulted in the response that the Cambridge group was "full up". However, it so happened that Cam Reid, who was by then also undertaking a PhD at Cambridge, lived next door to Dr T R R Mann, the Director of the Reproductive Physiology Unit. Cam Reid was able to exert a little gentlemanly persuasion across the fence with the result that Dr Mann persuaded Rowson to reorganise his programme and accept the young scientist from New Zealand. Thus, Dr McDonald spent the years 1959-1962 at Cambridge working on embryo transfer in sheep with Rowson and Dr P D S Pugh (of Colditz fame). The year 1959 was obviously a memorable one for Maurice because he not only was accepted into Cambridge but also married Pat Simson, who was to be his lifelong partner.

In 1962, as he was completing his PhD, Dr McDonald was recruited back to Massey Agricultural College, and the Department of Sheep Husbandry, by its head Professor Al Rae and Sir Alan Stewart, then Principal of the College. Despite tempting offers from FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, he has remained in the Department (and its successors) since that time, rising to the rank of Associate Professor and teaching extensively in the Agricultural and Veterinary Science programmes. His influence on agricultural science in New Zealand can be illustrated by the fact that, for the past thirty years, Dr McDonald has shouldered most of the responsibility for teaching reproductive biology, at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, at Massey University. Indeed, he has the unique distinction of having taught reproduction to every graduate from a New Zealand veterinary school.

Although he has taught vast numbers of undergraduate students, Dr McDonald's singular contribution has undoubtedly been in the supervision of graduate students in reproductive physiology. His graduate student "progeny test" is impressive, comprising over thirty former students including such luminaries as Dr R A S Lawson (General Manager (Operations and Corporate Services), Victorian Department of Agriculture), Dr I A Cumming (Regional Director, Darling Downs Regional Health Authority, Queensland Health), Professor A R Belve (Columbia University, New York), Dr H R Tervit (AgResearch, Ruakura), Mr W A Larsen (Chief Executive Officer, New Zealand Dairy Board), and Dr I J Clarke (Monash University). It also includes the three 'Scotsmen' of the late 1970's - McLeod, McCutcheon and McMillan. In addition his influence has extended internationally through the supervision of students from Australia, the USA, Canada, Vietnam, Iraq, Italy, Korea, Tanzania, Mexico and the Peoples Republic of China.

Throughout his career, Dr McDonald has maintained his early interest in reproductive biology. His commitment to improving reproductive efficiency on the farm has led to research with four major themes - reproductive biology of the young female, artificial insemination, embryo transfer, and the effects of plant oestrogens on reproductive performance. The flock of "McDonald ewes" (Border-Romneys) which he maintained at Massey for many years was notable, not only for the array of graduate student and research projects conducted on it, but also because, no matter how dry the summer, the need to feed high fecundity sheep well was always pointed out, gently but firmly, to farm managers.

Dr McDonald's approach to teaching, research and extension can best be characterised as "practice what you preach". Shortly after his return to Massey, he conducted, together with Professor Al Rae, some of the early surveys into lambing percentage problems in the Hawkes Bay and he has, since that time, maintained a strong interest in the problems which practical farmers face. Thus he was involved with a Manawatu group breeding scheme for seventeen years from 1972, has had a strong association with the embryo transfer programme

at LambXL, and is currently a member of the Meat Research and Development Council (MRDC) Manawatu Monitor Farm Advisory Group. In addition, he has undertaken consultancies in sheep reproduction and management to the Peoples Republic of China and Papua New Guinea, and has been a member of the World Review of Animal Production Editorial Board for many years. He has also maintained a personal interest in farming, and I fondly recall blood sampling sheep with Bernie McLeod and Bill McMillan at 3 a.m. while Maurice cooked sweet corn (or was it maize?) from his own farm in a piece of equipment no doubt purchased with University funds, ostensibly for the purposes of sterilising surgical equipment!

Dr McDonald has also given sterling service to the New Zealand Institute of Agricultural Science and this Society. He has

been active in Institute affairs for many years and was co-editor of two of its major publications, *Sheep Production: Volume 1, Breeding and Reproduction* and *Volume 2, Feeding Growth and Health*. He was a member of the Management Committee of this Society and Editor of its Proceedings from 1966-1973, Vice-President in 1974, President in 1975, and completed his term of office as immediate Past-President in 1976.

Maurice McDonald has made a notable contribution to New Zealand agriculture through his activities as a teacher and scientist, and his commitment to advancing the cause of the animal industries.

Accordingly it is with pleasure that I nominate him for honorary life membership of the New Zealand Society of Animal Production.

S.N. McCutcheon