

Pastures for prosperity

Proceedings of the Fifth Australian Tropical Pastures Conference held at Atherton, Queensland, in June 1995

This issue of *Tropical Grasslands* publishes the theme reviews, industry papers and abstracts for posters presented plus a statement of the strategic issues identified, at the 1995 Australian Tropical Pastures Conference. The fifth in this series of Conferences, which have been held five-yearly since 1975, was organised and underwritten by the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc. The Society also convened a Training Course — Integrated Management for Sustainable Forage-based Livestock Systems in the Tropics — in conjunction with the Conference, and the Manual for that Course has been published separately.

The theme “Pastures for prosperity” was chosen from the Society’s conviction that sown and native pastures are the foundation of current and future prosperity of pasture-based beef, sheep and dairy industries in the Australian tropics in the present environment.

The program, which occupied a full week, was formulated to provide something for everyone involved directly or indirectly in the production and utilisation of pastures. The Training Course was the professional development thrust for the program. It dealt with the main processes and key relationships in the continuum of climate — soil — forage — animal production — product markets — profits. It was directed at scientists, extension and agribusiness personnel, and producers involved in strategic management of R&D.

The Conference was directed at analysing the main challenges to sustained and enhanced pasture productivity and at identifying strategic issues and action initiatives for professionals, industry practitioners and their organisations. There were 4 segments, viz.:

- Theme reviews — to characterise the policy and market environment impacting on pastures and their management, and to crystallise the major technical issues confronting sustained animal production on sown and natural pastures;

- Industry forums — to focus on industry-specific issues, utilising industry speakers and field visits;
- Action workshop — to collate issues perceived and develop appropriate actions; and
- Poster displays — to provide for the presentation and discussion of recent innovative activities by research and extension personnel.

The Harry Stobbs Memorial Lecture was featured in conjunction with the Conference. Professor J.L. Stuth, Texas A&M University, USA, presented this address on critical information infrastructures and knowledge requirements for future management of grazing lands.

The Training Course had a total attendance of 64 and the Conference 210, both having a strong mix of producers, researchers, educators and agribusiness persons. They achieved valuable exchanges of views and knowledge.

Now, through the publication of the proceedings, a wider audience can share in the knowledge and some of the stimulation generated at the Conference.

This issue of *Tropical Grasslands* should attract the interest of those dealing with pastures and animal production over a wide span of tropical environments. It captures the smorgasbord of Conference activities most comprehensively.

Sponsorship of the Conference and Course by the Dairy Research and Development Corporation, the Meat Research Corporation, SBS-IAMA, Queensland and Northern Territory Pastoral Co., Dairy Processors and QANTAS are gratefully acknowledged. The Meat Research Corporation has directly funded the publication of this issue of *Tropical Grasslands*.

The Society was pleased to convene these activities jointly with the North Australian Beef Research Council and the Northern Dairy Group.

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Conference Secretary