

## Obituary

LEENDERT 'T MANNETJE (1933–2008)



The world has recently lost one of its most outstanding pasture scientists. Professor Leendert 't Mannetje (Len) died in the Netherlands in February 2008 attended by his second wife Marieke, his children Carole, Helen and Amanda and all the grandchildren. Len was a devoted family man and a fully committed pasture scientist. His contributions to know-

ledge on pastures spanned the world of both tropical and temperate pasture science in a range of roles, including as: a practical research worker conducting long-term grazing trials both on commercial properties with graziers and on research stations; a laboratory scientist developing theories on grazing effects; a taxonomist; an academic, training and inspiring students and scientists in pasture research; and a consultant in many developing countries.

Born in the Netherlands, he graduated from the Agricultural University in Wageningen and commenced a pasture research career with the CSIRO in Brisbane in 1958. With his first wife Corrie, and their three daughters, Len took up Australian citizenship in 1971. He worked on grazer properties near Esk and on research stations, especially the CSIRO Narayen beef cattle research station in south-east Queensland, where many a co-worker will remember sharing a traditional Happy hour "Bols" with Len. During this time, he developed expertise in species evaluation and management of legume-based pastures under cattle grazing.

In addition, as a theoretical scientist, Len contributed to the taxonomy of various legumes and rhizobial associations, making several visits to the Kew Herbarium in the UK. He was recognised as a world expert on the taxonomy of the important tropical legume genus *Stylosanthes*, being awarded a Ph.D. from the University of Queensland for his work in this area. He contributed significantly in the area of research techniques, developing the Dry-Weight-Rank technique for measuring botanical composition of pastures that later led to the "Botanal" program widely used around the world to non-destructively estimate pasture yield and composition.

His expertise in pasture science and his ability to communicate and organise were recognised by a 2-year secondment to the Malaysian Government

agency, MARDI, to develop and manage a pasture research program for that country. After 24 years of research on tropical pastures with CSIRO in Australia, Len returned to his alma mater in Wageningen. He was appointed Professor in the highly prestigious Grassland Science Department of the Agricultural University replacing two former professors and combining the departments of tropical and temperate pastures. He continued his pasture research, training Dutch and other European students, initiating important studies on efficient nutrient utilisation in temperate pastures, and teaching tropical pasture science to foreign students from many developing countries in the tropics. He was a frequent visitor to countries as diverse as Mexico, China, Patagonia, Costa Rica, Mali and Colombia, operating as a teacher and pasture consultant, right up to his last years.

Len was a familiar and well known face at the International Grassland Congresses, the International Rangelands Conferences and the annual European Grassland Federation meetings. He was always prominent in the discussions that ensued and was never backward in coming forward in expressing his own definite views on pasture matters, developed through years of experience.

Len contributed strongly to the Tropical Grassland Society of Australia Inc., being President in 1977 and serving as editor of the international journal *Tropical Grasslands* in 1970 and 1971. He served on the Journal's Editorial Advisory Board from 1978 until his death and was a member of the Society's Management Committee for six years.

In a scientific career spanning 50 years, Len 't Mannetje made a very significant contribution to knowledge on the production, management and utilisation of pastures. As well as planning and conducting research, he communicated the findings through the various channels, trained scientists, especially in developing countries of the tropics, and taught and encouraged many students. He published numerous research papers, edited books and delivered addresses at forums throughout the world. Only a month before his death, Len made his last major contribution to pasture science visiting FAO in Rome to present his co-edited book *Carbon Sequestration in Tropical Grasslands*.

Len will be sorely missed by his family, his friends and his many colleagues, as will his contributions at forums on pastures throughout the world.

*Vale Len*