

BOOK REVIEW

Better Pastures for the Tropics by M. V. O'Reilly, First Edition 1975, 58 pp. Published by Arthur Yates & Co. Pty. Ltd., Revesby, N.S.W.

Despite the increasing interest in tropical pastures and the rapidly widening areas in which they are being successfully used, there is still no detailed text book on the subject. Those interested in the use of tropical pastures, the species involved and their characteristics, and the establishment and management of such pastures have had to delve into the scientific and extension literature on the subject.

In 1965 Wright Stephenson and Co. Ltd. published a booklet on the subject under the authorship of Dr. L. R. Humphreys. This has been updated periodically (reviewed in *Tropical Grasslands* 4: 165 and 8: 216). It is now joined by a second publication written by Mr. M. V. O'Reilly and published by Arthur Yates and Co. Pty. Ltd. These companies are to be congratulated as their booklets fill a long felt want. It is to be hoped however that it will not be too much longer before we see a much more comprehensive and detailed interpretation of all the information on this subject now finding its way into the scientific literature.

The technology for use of tropical pastures is now becoming quite refined. Whilst it draws heavily on temperate pasture technology it also has many distinctive features, and extrapolations cannot readily and reliably be carried out. It also cannot easily be condensed into the relatively brief booklet which is the subject of this review.

The author has, within his limitation of space, made a valiant and reasonably accurate attempt to define the climatic requirements of tropical pastures; the importance of legumes; the needs for improvement in the forage available to animals in the tropics; fertilizer requirements; establishment requirements; the points to be borne in mind in selecting species and mixtures and in meeting management requirements. Much greater detail is then devoted to the species and cultivars of both grasses and legumes available. This is done under common names but reasonable cross-indexing is provided and most entries can be fairly readily located, at least by those familiar with Australian common names. Another index also allows access by way of specific names.

A range of, on the whole, effective and natural colour plates is published on glossy paper. One or two, on p. 35 and p. 46 in my copy, may be a little out in colour reproduction but these are minor points. There is also a fairly extensive range of line drawings of a number of species.

The booklet is concluded by a 'quick reference' sowing guide for both legume and grass species which tabulates their major features and requirements.

It can be readily recommended to those engaged in pasture improvement in the tropics and sub tropics, especially for details of the features of the majority of species being planted.

D. G. CAMERON