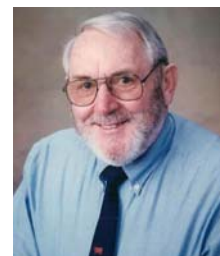


**JOHN EDWARD VERCOE AM FSTE FAIAST
1936 – 2005**

Dr John Vercoe was a former president of AAABG who, over five decades, made an outstanding contribution to the northern cattle industry in Australia and livestock production internationally.

John graduated in Agricultural Science from the University of Melbourne, worked with the Victorian Department of Agriculture at Werribee and was awarded a MAgrSc (Hons) for his research on feed intake of grazing sheep, before returning to University of Melbourne to complete his PhD studies with Professor Derek Tribe. He completed his post-doctoral research at the Hannah Research Institute in the UK under the guidance of Sir Kenneth Blaxter, FRS.



On joining CSIRO Rockhampton in 1964, John studied the genetic and non-genetic factors that influence beef production in stressful tropical environments, examining the effect of a range of environmental stresses on nitrogen and energy metabolism of different cattle breeds. With research colleague, Dr John Frisch, he developed a concept that greatly influenced the understanding of the origins of genotype x environment interactions and consequently the breeding and management strategies necessary to increase cattle production in tropical and other stressful environments.

As Assistant Chief of CSIRO Tropical Animal Production (1982-1993) and Officer-in-Charge of the Tropical Cattle Research Centre for more than a decade, John had a profound influence on the direction of beef research in northern Australia. His own research demonstrated the need and the value of interdisciplinary research, and highlighted the limitations of a single-discipline approach to solving industry problems. He was a long-time advocate of cooperative research efforts and initiated moves to implement them. As a member of the Cooperative Research Centre's Life Sciences Assessment Panel and the Official Visitor to several agriculturally and environmentally related CRCs, John provided great insights into the value and benefits of collaborative R&D activities and structures.

Of unflinching good humour, John's cup was always half full. His ability to relate to people and work with them was one of John's most outstanding qualities. He was also a great mentor of junior scientists in CSIRO and elsewhere, nationally and internationally. Many young, and more not-so-young, scientists have John to thank for their initial scientific profiles.

John retired from CSIRO in 1996 but continued to pursue his passion for improving livestock production in Australia and abroad. He was a consultant with the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) and the World Bank in Sudan. He served two 3-year terms as Head, Animal Production & Health, Joint FAO/IAEA in Vienna (1972-1974 and 1978-1980), establishing a wide network of contacts that were extremely valuable later in his career. For varying periods, he was Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the International Livestock Research Institute (Nairobi), Chairman of the Committee of Board Chairs of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR, Washington) and Queensland Coordinator of the Crawford Fund, which supports international agricultural research.

In 1997, John was conferred a Member of the Order of Australia (AM). The citation read: *For service to the cattle industry through research into genetic factors affecting the efficiency of beef production in tropical environments.* He was also a recipient of a Centenary Medal in 2001 - *for service to primary industries and science and technology*; a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering; a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science; a Fellow of the Australian Society of Animal Production; an Honorary Professor at the University of Central Queensland; and an Honorary CSIRO Research Fellow. Above all, John was a real gentleman and a true industry politician.