

FORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY OF ANIMAL PRODUCTION

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THE BASE - DEVELOPING SYSTEMATIC STUDIES OF ANIMAL PRODUCTION

Although studies of animal disease began before or about the time of World War I, systematic studies in the disciplines related to other biological aspects of animal production such as nutrition, reproduction and genetics, as well as studies of husbandry and management, did not begin until the late 1920s and the early 1930s. At about that time:

- (i) the Divisions of Animal Nutrition and Animal Health of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) were formed and they initiated studies of nutritional deficiencies of sheep and cattle, of energy requirements and of supplements for sheep, of trace elements in pasture production and, through the efforts of R.B. Kelly, of the performance of crosses between British breed and Zebu cattle in the tropics;
- (ii) E.J. Underwood and his colleagues in the Western Australian (WA) Department of Agriculture initiated studies of the nutrition of sheep;
- (iii) R.M.C. Gunn at the University of Sydney began his extensive studies of the fertility of rams; and
- (iv) H.G. Belschner in the New South Wales (NSW) Department of Agriculture began his studies of wrinkliness and susceptibility to fly-strike in sheep.

By the beginning of World War II, there were significant groups working on the nutrition of sheep in the WA Department of Agriculture and in CSIR (both in Sydney and Adelaide), on reproduction of sheep in CSIR and at the University of Sydney, and on wool biology and the genetics of sheep and cattle in CSIR in Sydney.

Following World War II, there was a great increase in activity. By the early 1950s systematic work had begun on various aspects of the biology of animal production, including pastures. Work on husbandry and management was in progress in the laboratories and field stations of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO) in most States and in all State Departments of Agriculture. Underwood and his group were well established in the University of Western Australia. There was a Department of Animal Husbandry in The University of Queensland and a Reader in Animal Production had been appointed in the University of Melbourne. A good deal of work had been initiated in co-operation with producers, a consequence of which was the appreciation of the complex of economic, sociological and technical influences on animal production. Tertiary education had also begun to enhance its contribution to research into animal production with the introduction of PhD degrees by the universities.

THE CONCEPT

The concept of an Australian Society of Animal Production was first mooted when P.R. **McMahon** arrived to head the Sheep and Wool Department of the East Sydney Technical College in 1947 (CF 7 12.1). He thought that there was a need for such a society to provide a forum for members having an interest in animal production. Membership would include producers, interested people, and extension and research workers. Such a forum did not exist and it was thought that the lack of effective communication between these groups of people was inhibiting improvement in animal production in this country. McMahon's experience in New Zealand, where a similar society had already been established, led him to believe that there was room for such a body in Australia.

INITIAL DISCUSSIONS

McMahon discussed these ideas with like-minded colleagues, notably R.H. Hayman and Helen N. Turner, on a number of occasions in Miss Turner's room in the McMaster Laboratory, situated in the grounds of Sydney University. G. Edgar, A.A. Dunlop and M.C. Franklin were also participants in these discussions. It is interesting to note that these three people were also New Zealanders and were all impressed by the absence of and need for a forum for the general discussion of matters relating to animal husbandry, management and economics, as well as to the more basic physiological aspects of production by farm animals. They were also firmly of the opinion that membership should not be restricted to

scientists but should include extension workers and farmers. New Zealand experience (the New Zealand Society of Animal Production had been formed in 1941) was that farmers had much to contribute to, as well as much to receive from, such a forum.

Discussion continued at intermittent levels between 1947 and 1950 and, late in 1950, a circular was sent to 50 people in New South Wales inviting them to a meeting to be held in the Conference Room of the NSW Department of Agriculture on 14th December at 7.30 pm, to discuss the formation of an Australian Society of Animal Production (CF 712.2, Doc. 1). Conveners of the meeting were P.R. McMahon, R.H. Hayman and H.N. Turner.

There was considerable interest in the meeting. Of the 50 people who received invitations, 17 attended and there were 12 apologies for non-attendance, all of whom stated that they supported the idea of the Society and wished the meeting luck. Five other people not on the original list were also there, having heard of the meeting indirectly (CF 712.2, Doc 2).

The three conveners outlined their thoughts on the possible scope and activities of the Society and McMahon also gave a brief description of the form and function of the New Zealand Society. Discussion was animated; however, the decision to form an Australian Society of Animal Production was carried unanimously. A Steering Committee of six, with power to co-opt, was appointed to approach other States and to draft a constitution. The thinking of the Sydney group at that stage is indicated clearly by the other resolutions passed at the meeting, namely:

- That the Society should be an independent body and hold annual meetings.
- That there should be one grade of membership but, in fixing subscription rates, consideration should be given to a concession to students.
- That for the present, the Society should be conducted as a whole. (The original motion included provision for grouping into sections. This provision was deleted by amendment.)
- That the Australian Society of Animal Production should adopt aims similar to those of the New Zealand Society.

There was further discussion about State meetings and the frequency-with which they should be held. The general feeling of the meeting was that they should not be held too frequently.

THE STEERING COMMITTEE AND ITS ROLE

The six people appointed to the Steering Committee were:

A.A. Dunlop	G.L. McClymont
J.A. Elliott	P.R. McMahon
R.H. Hayman	Helen N. Turner

It approached its first task through a letter dated 20th February, 1951 over Miss Turner's signature (CF 712.2, Doc.6), which was sent to the following: (CF 712.2, Doc.4).

Aust. Capital Territory: W.D. Andrew	Tasmania: D.T. Thompson
Queensland: G.R. Moule	Victoria: F. Skaller
South Australia: R. Muirhead	Western Australia: L.R. Snook

The letter enclosed copies of the minutes of the meeting held in Sydney on 14th December 1950 (CF 712.2, Doc.3), and it asked the contacts in their respective States to canvass opinion on the proposal of the NSW group. In pursuit of its second task, the Steering Committee prepared a draft of a constitution and sent it to the State contacts under cover of a second circular dated 5th April, 1951 (over Miss Turner's signature) (CP 301, Vic. Part 1). By this time, G. Edgar and F.C. McCleary had apparently been co-opted to the Steering Committee and, together with Helen Turner and R.H. Hayman, they completed the work of the Committee, the other members having had to retire from it because of other commitments.

Further thoughts on the form of the Society

Two further views on the form of the Society seem to have been adopted by the Steering Committee in early 1951. The first was that the Australia-wide Society, envisaged at the first meeting of the group, would be best achieved by initiating the Society on a Federal basis with State or regional branches. The second was that the Society should be formed as a corporate body.

The thinking in regard for the first view and to the Society's membership was summarised in the second circular mentioned above (CP 301, Vic. Part 1):

"All interested people are to be encouraged to join, and there is scope for differentiation in the type of meeting in different Branches We think that Branches should be given freedom to develop in

whatever way they think they can best achieve the objects of the Society. General Meetings will always try to cater for the different lines of approach”.

The desirability of initiating the Society on an Australia-wide basis with State or regional branches was supported during the ensuing months by members who had had experience in the formation of the Australian Institute of Agricultural Science (AIAS) and the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA). In particular, A.J. Vasey wrote to the Convener of the Steering Committee on 12th June, 1951, saying:

“There is one major point to be watched in using the AIAS as a guide. Whether we were consciously aware of it or not, that document (AJV was referring to the AIAS Constitution) was influenced by the Commonwealth Constitution; ie an instrument for federating a number of previously independent bodies. Even now, there is some discussion on the point. Some take the view that they are primarily members of the Australian Institute and are merely grouped for purposes of administration into branches; others give their first loyalty to the State branch to whom they look for most of the services for which they pay their subscriptions. The first point of view will be the one for you to follow I think” (CP 301, Vic. Part 1).

At the meeting of the Sydney group on 20th April, 1951, Edgar expressed the view that the Society should be formed as a corporate body in the State of NSW (CF 712.2, Doc.24). The later drafts of the constitution were apparently prepared by the Steering Committee with incorporation in mind (CP 301, Vic. Part 1). However, the other State groups did not share the same enthusiasm for incorporation at this early stage and it does not appear to have been mentioned in the eventual agreement on the constitution.

Both Edgar and Vasey had had first-hand experience in the development of the AVA and the AIAS. The Steering Committee made full use of their advice in drafting the constitution, the later drafts of which were based very largely on the constitution of the AIAS with some excerpts from the AVA (CF 712.1).

INITIAL MEETING IN OTHER STATES

Victoria

The first meeting was held in the Veterinary Research Institute, Parkville on 6th April, 1951. Twelve people attended and there were 10 apologies. The apologies all supported the idea of an Australian Society of Animal Production. Included in the apologies was a letter from Sir Ian Clunies Ross, then Chairman of CSIRO, who stated *inter alia* that “I would like you to know that the proposed Society has my blessing and support. I imagine that we have now reached the stage of development in the application of science to the problems of animal production to justify the formation of such a body (CP 301, Vic. Part 1).

During the meeting, on the motion of N.M. Tulloh and seconded by H.G. Turner, it was decided (CP 301, Vic. Part 1) “That this meeting is of the opinion that an Australian Society of Animal Production should be formed”. The motion was carried unanimously. Some comments which were made on the initial draft of the constitution were forwarded to the Steering Committee in Sydney.

Queensland

The Queensland group had their first meeting on 4th May, 1951 (301, Vic. Part 1). There were 23 people at the meeting and 26 apologies. Considerable debate took place over the question of branches of the Society, whether there should be a number of branches or a Queensland Branch. The meeting finally decided “to form a Queensland Branch with power to and desire to form sub-branches”. A motion to this effect was carried on voices. Some discussion occurred on the draft of a constitution and one or two amendments were suggested. A motion was then carried, accepting the draft of the constitution with the incorporation of the suggestions made. In a letter dated 11th May 1951 (CP 301, Vic. Part 1), G.R. Moule, in forwarding the minutes to H.N. Turner, pointed out that further consideration was being given to the draft of the constitution by a Steering Committee from the Queensland Branch.

South Australia

While enthusiastic about the concept of the Society (CF 712.2, Doc.20), it was not considered desirable to attempt to hold a meeting to discuss the matter before the first interstate meeting (see below). A meeting to that end did not take place until 19/29th June, 1952 (CF 712.2, Doc. 23 and 29).

Australian Capital Territory (24th April, 1951), *Western Australia* (17th May, 1951) and *Tasmania* (18th May, 1951) (CF 712.2, Doc. 21, 25 and 27), indicated to the Steering Committee in Sydney that they could not form Branches. Although there were interested people in each of these States, they felt that the numbers were too small to support Branch formation. Both Tasmania and Western Australia

suggested that individuals in those States might be attached to a Branch in another State.

FIRST INTERSTATE MEETING

At the meeting of the Sydney group held on 20th April, 1951 (CF 712.2, Doc. 24), "The Steering Committee was empowered to write to other States regarding the calling of a meeting in Brisbane during the Australian and New Zealand Association for the Advancement of Science (**ANZAAS**) Conference to discuss the form of the Society and the draft of the constitution". At the request of the Secretary of the Steering Committee, the Queensland group arranged the proposed meeting and it was held on 24th May, 1951. H.N. Turner, G.L. McClymont and C.W. Emmens were present from NSW, J.A. Morris and R.H. Watson from Victoria, K.J. Hutchinson from South Australia, and 14 members from the Queensland group, with T.K. Ewer in the Chair.

After lengthy discussion, during which it became clear that differences in view-point, not only between States but also between individuals within States, could not be resolved at the meeting, H.N. Turner moved and N.T.M. Yeates seconded the following motion:

"That at a meeting held in Brisbane on the afternoon of May 24, it was considered that it would be advisable to reconsider the constitution and that the nominations already received for Federal Officers (G. Edgar, R.H. Hayman and F.C. McCleery) should, with their concurrence, constitute a Steering Committee to collate suggestions from State Branches and to circulate these amendments for consideration (CF 712.2, Doc. 23).

ACTIVITIES AFTER FIRST INTERSTATE MEETING

As noted in Section 6, the Queensland group appeared to decide to form a Queensland Branch of the Society at its meeting on 4th May, 1951 (CP 401, Vic. Part 1). However, in a letter dated 11th May, 1951, covering dispatch of the unconfirmed minutes of that meeting to Miss Turner (CP 301, Vic. Part 1), G.R. Moule noted one omission; namely, that it was stressed that the Committee which was appointed at the meeting should act in a temporary capacity and he added "You can rest assured that there is a strong desire to form a Branch of the Society in this State". Nevertheless, it must be taken that the decision of the meeting was the definitive decision to form a Branch and that the group in Queensland was the first to make that decision. The Committee referred to was apparently five people (T.K. Ewer, G.R. Moule, R.D. Chester, R.G. Watson* and N.T.M. Yeates) appointed to consider the draft of a constitution further, and possibly to arrange other meetings for the group. Eight meetings were held over the next 16 months to 16th October, 1952 and at least seven in 1953 (CP 301, Vic. Part 1).

With the pre-occupation of the more active members of the NSW group in creating discussion federally, it was not until 12th February, 1952 that they decided to form a NSW Branch. Nevertheless, it was the second State to make that decision and they elected a Branch Committee consisting of P.R. McMahon, G.L. McClymont, R.L. Reid, H.N. Turner, J.M. Rendel, A.A. Dunlop and I.W. Scott. Twenty-seven people were present at that meeting. A further four meetings were held in 1952 and five in 1953 (CP 301, NSW, 1951-33, Doc. 3).

Following the initial meeting in Victoria on 6th April, 1951 when the concept of an Australian Society of Animal Production was supported, some doubt was expressed as to whether there were indeed sufficient interested people in Victoria to form a viable branch. A meeting was eventually convened on 14th March, 1952 by J.A. Morris and D.S. Wishart to crystallise feeling. That meeting resolved to form a Victorian Branch along the general lines laid down in the draft constitution (CP 301, Vic. Part 1). It also elected a provisional Committee of six consisting of H.G. Turner, N.M. Tulloh, G.R. Pearce, J.A. Morris, D.S. Wishart and W.A. Beattie. Nine general meetings had been held by 23rd October, 1953 (CP 301, Vic., Part 3).

A meeting of people likely to be interested in the formation of a branch in South Australia (SA) was held on 19/20th June, 1952. In a letter dated 4th May, 1952 (CP 301, Vic. Part 1), P.G. Schinckel informed the Secretary of the Steering Committee that support was good. Twenty-four people attended and there were numerous apologies for absence. A Committee of four - C.T. McKenna, W.G. Allden, A. Packham and P.G. Schinckel - was appointed to consider the draft constitution and report back. Schinckel went on to state, *inter alia*, "that it may be difficult to form a branch if the subscriptions

* R.G. Watson was R. Watson's brother - Ed.

should be raised to more than 30/-". It was not clear that there was a definite motion to form a branch at that meeting and Federal records do not indicate when it was resolved to do so, but in a further letter dated 17th December, 1952 (CP 301, Vic. Part 1), Schinckel stated "We are now fully operational in the sense that the proposed constitution has been adopted as it stands . . . on the basis of a 7/- subscription for Branch activities and 13/- or 14/- for Federal". He stated further that "We have tackled ourselves onto a couple of meetings and sponsored one on our own account. Additionally, we plan to hold an afternoon and evening symposium in the autumn".

Thus, by mid-1952, four State groups had indicated their intentions to become Branches of the Society when it was formed and, pending agreement on the details of the eventual constitution, they had started to hold regular "Branch" meetings.

REACHING AGREEMENT ON THE CONSTITUTION

The discussions between the various State Branches and the Steering Committee (in reaching agreement on the constitution) will be documented in a later paper. They were certainly time-consuming although apparently not any more so than those in reaching agreement on the constitution of the AIAS (Edwards 1984), despite a better infra-structure for consultation in the latter instance. However, by the end of 1953, the Steering Committee was able to prepare a draft of the constitution (CP 301, Vic. Part 1) which met the wishes of all State groups in all but a few minor points. These were left for resolution at the 2nd Interstate Meeting.

THE SECOND INTERSTATE MEETING - THE INAUGURAL MEETING

In anticipation of agreement on the constitution, the Steering Committee proceeded with plans to hold the 2nd Interstate Meeting with a view to formally resolving to form the Society, agreeing on a constitution and electing a Federal Committee (CP 301, Vic. Part 1). Some States expressed a desire to hold a conference at which there would be a principal speaker, while others considered that the first meeting should be devoted solely to getting the Australian body under way. It was finally decided that the meeting should be a business one only.

The Steering Committee proposed that, in view of the genesis of the Society, the first Council should come from NSW. In agreeing, Victoria asked that the President-Elect be from that State, a view also expressed by the NSW Committee (CP 301, Vic. Part 1).

Hayman (CF 712.1) remarked on considerable correspondence having been devoted to the circumstances of the Inaugural Meeting. It was suggested that the "Society" attach itself to ANZAAS (CP 301, Vic. Part 1) or to the AIAS but the view prevailed that it should be independent from the beginning, and that the meeting should be timed to take place after the AIAS Conference to be held in Canberra in association with ANZAAS Conference in January, 1954 (rather than during it). In the event, it was held at 4.00 pm on 12th January, 1954, when the ANZAAS Conference was virtually over. It took place in the main Zoology Lecture Theatre at Duntroon.

The minutes of the Meeting (CP 301) Vic. Part 1) state that D.F. Stewart (Chairman) and 22 members were present but there was no record of the names or States that they came from, except for the names of those responsible for motions. These included T.K. Ewer from Queensland and F. Skaller from Victoria, as well as people from NSW. A hand-written list on the back of a letter from C.H.S. Dolling includes also P.G. Schinckel from SA and A.M. Stewart from WA.

The meeting formally resolved "That an Australian Society of Animal Production be formed in confirmation of action already taken by individual States".

It then considered the proposed constitution, decided on changes in a few clauses, and resolved "That the constitution be adopted as amended, with the provision that (two) clauses . . . the wording of which has been left to Council to arrange, shall be ratified at the next general meeting". The following were then elected as office-bearers of the First Council:

President	M.C. Franklin
Vice-President	D.S. Wishart
Vice-President	P.R. McMahon
Secretary	A.A. Dunlop
Treasurer	R.L. Reid

The meeting then closed after a "hearty" vote of thanks to R.H. Hayman.

Thus, the Australian Society of Animal Production was inaugurated on 12th January, 1954. At the time of its inauguration, it had four branches, namely New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia

and Victoria, all of which had begun to hold regular meetings.

The inauguration of the Society finally brought to realisation the concept that had been born in Miss Turner's room at the McMaster Laboratory between 1947 and 1950. There may have been others - indeed there almost certainly were - who, at the same time as the Sydney group, thought and talked about the need for a forum for discussion for workers in the field of animal production. However, it was the Sydney group that proceeded to develop their ideas and it is to them that the credit must go for initiating the formation of the Society.

REFERENCES

- CF 712.1. Initial, hand-written account of the formation of the Society by R.H. Hayman, 1982. Unless otherwise documented, all information in Sections 2-10 of this paper has been derived from this document.
- CF 712.2. Collected papers (1950-1951) arising from initial correspondence on the formation of the Society to dispatch of the minutes of the first interstate meeting held in Brisbane on 24th May, 1951. Thirty-nine documents, each 1-5 pages.
- CP 301. New South Wales Branch File, 1950-1953. New South Wales Branch files forwarded to R.H. Watson under cover of letter dated 2nd December, 1982. Seven documents.
- CP 301. Victoria, Part 3, 1953. Records of meetings.
- EDWARDS, E.T. (1984). The Founding of the Institute. *J. Aust. Inst. Agric. Sc.* 50: 3-5.

Abbreviations

ASAP: Australian Society of Animal Production

CP: Collected Papers

CF: Continuing Files