

Liverpool, August 2007, International Conference Dairy Cattle Fertility - bridging the gaps

It has been fabulous to hear all the positive feedback from the Fertility Conference in Liverpool from so many directions, especially given all the hard work from those involved in its organization over the last three years and participation on the day.

A previous meeting of this kind was organized 8 years ago in 1999, Galway, by Dr Michael Diskin of Teagasc and his team. During the summary of that meeting, Dr John Robinson said "Reversing this relentless decline in fertility, whilst maintaining high yields, is not going to be an easy task, in fact, it will be a challenge that will require great interchange of information and ideas in science, practice, research and development". "This", he continued "has been initiated here in Galway BUT it is essential that we keep it sustained".

So, eight years on, we reconvened in Liverpool to sustain the interchange of information, as recommended by John Robinson, by providing an opportunity to discuss updates and new research and technology, and to provide an on-going forum to "Bridge the Gaps" between the many different disciplines involved.



The attendance at the conference was well above our expectations with approx 210 delegates including scientists, veterinarians, farm advisors, technical representatives, students and farmers. In terms of the presentations the event covered a lot of ground in the three invited sessions which including presentations from both vets in practice and scientists such as: *new research on foetal programming of adult fertility; factors influencing heifer survival and inseminations; oocytes and embryo quality; genetics; in-line hormone recording; juvenile predictors of fertility and nutritional influences*. These sessions really encouraged fruitful exchange of new and novel information and ideas in the science and practice of dairy cow reproduction.

Delegates came away from the meeting extremely well informed scientifically and much more aware of the multi-disciplinary approach being used to investigate fertility and, more importantly, with some hope for reversing the fertility decline towards future improvement.

The social side of the conference culminated in a Dinner followed by a Ceilidh led by the Liverpool band 'Two Left Feet'. The students and colleagues from the Nordic countries featured strongly in the dancing which was great fun if not Olympic standard. The meat for the roast dinner was sourced from Cheshire and delicious. The venue at Liverpool Hope University, in the leafy suburbs, was excellent and must be one of the city's best kept secrets.



Time to relax and chill.....

The local organising committee of Mel Royal, Rob Smith and Nic Friggens worked their socks off to produce an excellent meeting. It is hoped that the key papers from the meeting will appear in our journal ANIMAL and a book of all papers and summaries will be published thereafter.

BSAS is grateful for the tremendous support received from the following organisations: BASF, Genesis Faraday, Genus ABS, Holstein UK and CIS, Merial, Pfizer, Reproduction Specialities Inc, The Stapledon Trust and World Wide Sires Ltd.

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Annual Conference 2008 Scarborough

Submit your summary on-line via BSAS website.
 Deadline 26 October 07



BSAS Student Day

The day before the Fertility Conference in Liverpool featured another BSAS student training day called 'Entrepreneurship – Get Hired'. This was once again organised by the BSAS Student Council and focused on careers and business opportunities. It attracted over 20 participants with a good mixture of PhD students and veterinary undergraduates. The day included a trip to the Liverpool University dairy unit to meet specialists from Genus MOET. This was followed by talks on 'How to get into academia' by Jamie Newbold, University of Wales; 'The Biotechnology Entrepreneur's scheme' by Prof Peberdy Nottingham University; 'How to start your own business' by Mr Denis Leonard, Veterinary Surgeon; 'How to build an attractive large animal CV' by Dr James Allcock, Veterinary Surgeon and 'Advice about being an Expert Witness' from David Pepper, Veterinary Defence League. The day was free to all BSAS student members and included supper, an overnight stay and is all part of BSAS's policy of supporting its younger members. There will be another event at Scarborough in April.

Spa Complex, Scarborough, 2008 31 March - 2 April

Planning of the Annual Meeting, to be held in the Spa complex, Scarborough, 31 March – 2 April 2008, is proceeding well. For the nostalgic you will be pleased to know Scarborough hasn't changed a great deal, except that the bay has become a haven for surfers.

The 2008 Hammond Lecture

The lecture will be given by Prof Mike Goddard of the University of Melbourne on: '*Molecular genetics for livestock improvement - brave new world or false dawn?*'

We also have strategic sessions on:

Livestock and Global Climate Change

Speakers include:

- Pierre Gerber, FAO – co-author of '*Livestock's Long Shadow*'
- Prof Maggie Gill, Scottish Executive/University of Aberdeen and Prof Pete Smith, University of Aberdeen/IPCC - *Mitigating climate change - the role of livestock and agriculture*

The value of animal science

- *The value of research on animal welfare*
David G Pritchard, Senior Veterinary Consultant Animal Welfare, Food and Farming Group Defra
- *The value of animal/environmental research*
Prof Mike Theodorou, Head of Science Development, IGER, UK
- *The value of research on genetic improvement*
Dr Peter Amer, NZSAP

Challenges of biofuels for livestock production (Joint with WPSA)

- *Biofuels vs intensive livestock production: can they both survive?* Prof John Comeford
- *View from the meat and poultry sector*
- *View from the dairy sector*

Opportunities for livestock production

- *Biofuels an opportunity for forage based livestock production* Dr Sinclair Mayne
- *Availability and nutritive value of co-products*
- *New technologies for overcoming the constraints of novel feeds from biofuel production*

Qualitative assessment of animal welfare: from theory to practice

Speakers include:

- Kathy Peebles, Livestock Development Manager, Quality Meat Scotland
- Dr Françoise Wemelsfelder, SAC, Edinburgh

Equine Nutrition

NRC equine nutrition recommendations

Dr Brian Nielsen Michigan State University, USA .

Extension and Education

- *Knowledge transfer – is it working?*
Dr Mathew Reed, University of Exeter and Prof Chris Garforth, University of Reading will give presentations and facilitate sessions in a half-day workshop.
- *Results of a Defra KT Project and a number of short presentations from organisations that are involved in agricultural extension to farmers will also be included*

Submitted papers for Scarborough

Friday 26 October 2007 is the deadline for submitting summaries for the 2008 BSAS Annual Conference.

Please download the guidelines from the on-line submission system on the BSAS website or email bsas@sac.ac.uk for a copy. Please ensure that you have followed all the instructions by going through the checklist on the last page.

We welcome all papers that relate to animal science and especially ones that fit with any of the 2008 themes set out in the invited sessions. In 2007 a number of presenters gave excellent five minute papers which will feature again in 2008.

Creche

We are actively investigating providing a creche at the Annual Conference. If you are interested in this facility please let BSAS know.

The BSAS Five Year Plan

The BSAS Five Year Plan which is essentially our comprehensive Business Plan is now available on the BSAS website www.bsas.org.uk/Members_Area/. It was drawn up in response to the 'Customers Matter' review of BSAS members last year. Please go and have a look and let us know what you think! Are there any important omissions?

We will also be adding to the website the key reasons why animal science is an important area of activity. Please use these, summarised below, whenever the opportunity arises. We also need your help to develop them further.

Why the UK needs Animal Science...

1. We need high quality animal science to help meet rising demand for livestock products in an environmentally and socially responsible way.
2. Animal science is essential for delivering much of government policy on livestock and for resolving conflicts among stakeholder priorities.
3. Animal science underpins much of the food and drink sector which makes a major economic contribution in the UK
4. Animal science is essential for integrating information from the so-called 'biological revolution'
5. Government departments are placing increasing emphasis on translation of scientific discovery into economic, environment or social benefit.
6. We do not know all of the challenges that face the human race in the years ahead. However, for as long as we depend on livestock as a major source of food (or other goods and services) we must maintain capacity in the key scientific disciplines represented by animal science to meet these future challenges.

Restructuring the BSAS Committees structure

One of the issues that arose from review was that the current committee structure hindered rather than assisted BSAS's ability to act and respond quickly in an increasingly fast moving scientific environment. Some of the committee structure is dictated by the constitution. Council is thus debating a network of smaller groups, rather than the larger committees, in line with the model below. They also wish to modify the constitution next April at the AGM to take away named committees that constrain the society's ability to form new and ad hoc groups. We are keen to hear views and anyone interested in getting involved in the new groups. It is likely that more use will be made of teleconferencing to facilitate group business.

■ Council

■ Presidents/Strategy

includes chair of all other groups

Strategy

Finance

Lobbying & influencing

Stakeholders

5 year Plan

Co-ordination

■ Programme & publications

Annual Meeting

International

EAAP

Occasional

Proceedings

Animal

■ Technical & Ethical

Consultations

Scholarships

Biosciences Federation

Welfare & Ethics

■ Marketing

Sponsorship

PR & Public profile

Recruitment

■ Education & Communications

Education

Animal Bytes

Newsletters

Website

■ Student Council

Student professional development & social activities
(With Marketing)

Student recruitment and retention

Any other student issues

Scholarships

Money, Money, Money

Applications for the Kenneth Blaxter or The Alan Robertson Awards are now open.

Don't miss out on this opportunity for money towards travel or study grants or small research projects!!

Please see the website for full details

Deadline 31 October 2007

http://www.bsas.org.uk/Funds,_awards_&_Jobs/

Conferences

Conferences 2007

11 October

Sheep farm walk and Conference

Ardboyne Hotel , Dublin Road Navan ,Ireland

This is the sheep meeting postponed from May this year. It follows the highly successful 2006 meeting at Greenmount College, Antrim. It will be very production and market orientated. The morning is spent on a visit at Paul Maguire's farm, Collon, Co. Meath where he keeps 1100 ewes.

Presentations and plenty of discussion time start in the afternoon with Tim Keady, Teagasc Research Centre, Athenry talking about *Extended Grazing: Its Potential and Limitations*. A group of farmers will then talk on *Labour Efficiencies* followed by a series of papers covering *The Reality of the Marketplace*. The full details of the programme are on the BSAS website. If you have an interest in sheep production this will be an ideal opportunity to see *science into practice* as well as enjoy Irish hospitality. Don't miss it! Further details contact grainne@irishgrassland.com or

http://www.bsas.org.uk/Meetings_&_Workshops/Event_Calendar/

Conferences 2008

31 Mar-2 Apr

BSAS Annual Conference (see page 2)

Spa Complex, Scarborough, UK - **Deadline for summary submission: 26 October 2007**

14 - 17 May

Livestock and Global Climate Change

Hammamet, Tunisia

This conference organized jointly by BSAS, ICARDA, IRESA, OEP, EAAP, INRA, ILRI The meeting will consider the background to global climate change, including the contribution from livestock. It will examine the actual and potential impact of climate change on livestock and livestock production systems including possible strategies to reduce or mitigate negative aspects. A series of case studies will be presented as examples of possible solutions for different climatic zones and production systems. Technical papers will cover all aspects in which livestock may be affected including breeding, nutrition and health. Management of water and the impact on livelihoods will feature as increasingly important issues.

Programme (see website for more details)

Setting the scene

- Climate change: the evidence
- A review of the latest scientific evidence of climate change, and predictions of future changes
- Livestock's long shadow – livestock's role in global climate change
- Climate change: an overview of the consequences for global agriculture, global food production and global food security

Food for thought

- Climate change: the consequences for cropping, livestock feed production and global livestock demographics
- Whither the livestock revolution?
- Impacts of competition for land use – biofuels etc
- Water – the new oil?
- Impacts on livelihoods –poverty/social economics

Mitigation

- Agriculture's role in mitigating global climate change
- Developing livestock management and systems to assist mitigation
- Nutritional routes to mitigation
- Developing breeding schemes to assist mitigation

Adaption

- Adapting livestock production systems to climate change – tropical zones & temperate zones
- New challenges to animal health plus case studies on Blue Tongue, Rift Valley Fever & Tick Borne Diseases
- The role of FAnGR: global issues & European issues

Case studies

- Examples of 'futuristic' tropical & temperate systems:
- Adapting livestock production to the changing climate
- Altering rumen function to reduce methane emissions

The Animal Science we need

Workshops to help identify R&D priorities in mitigation and adaptation

There will be visits to production systems in Tunisia as well as cultural trips. As well as the invited speakers there will be ample time for short submitted papers and posters. Presentations are welcome from anyone interested in livestock and global climate change.

3-4 Sept 2008

The British Pig Industry: Creating a brighter future

To follow on from the Nottingham Feed Conference 2/3 Sept. This meeting will be for nutritionists, vets, pig unit managers, researchers and those involved in commerce or industry support. It will include sessions on:

- Strategies, policies & priorities
- Meat quality & consumer marketing
- Knowledge transfer
- Health, welfare & systems

Nov 2008

Nepal

Discussions are going on with the Institute of Agriculture & Animal Sciences in Rampur, Nepal to run a workshop to follow up the Ethno-veterinary conference run at Writtle College, Essex in Sept 2006. This next one is likely to have a wider remit to cover Ethno-botanical and knowledge transfer aspects of indigenous information. The proposed date is November 2008.

Conferences 2009

February

Guadeloupe

Intensive Tropical Livestock systems. BSAS is working with INRA, France, to run a conference on the Caribbean Island of Guadeloupe in early 2009.

Conference ideas

We welcome any ideas for new conferences. Currently Care of the new born, Uplands and Beef are three being discussed - please contact BSAS Office if you have an idea.

Education

A small group, headed by Bevis Miller, Bristol University Veterinary School, is undertaking a feasibility study to deliver educational resources on animal science. Last year's membership consultations identified this as a priority area for members wishes. Bevis' group will look at identifying partners to fund "an educational officer" to promote and provide resources at school level. BSAS is concerned that youngsters in UK education have little knowledge on the role of animals in either food production or the environment.

Obituary

IAN MASON, livestock geneticist, author and honorary member of BSAS died in May in Edinburgh, aged 93

Ian Mason was internationally renowned among livestock geneticists, animal breeders and enlightened farmers. Few others had visited more countries in the world than Ian on his mission to disseminate knowledge of breeds and breeding and the scientific methods for systematic livestock improvement. At meetings and conferences he was instantly recognized - tall with distinctive beard, a commanding presence and somewhat patriarchal appearance. His message was always up-to-date and grounded in scientific fact.

He graduated with first-class honours in zoology. In 1942 Ian joined the Commonwealth Bureau of Animal Breeding and Genetics in Edinburgh, where he rose to assistant director. In 1949 he was appointed as a scientist to what became the Agricultural Research Council's Unit of Animal Genetics co-located with the University Department of Animal Genetics. Ian worked in the 'Unit' until 1972 under the late Alan Robertson, and among a galaxy of other eminent geneticists and biologists. Along with their scientific 'cousins' in the Animal Breeding Research Organisation (now part of the Roslin Institute) they helped to make Edinburgh the world's 'mecca' for animal genetics and breeding for several decades.

Ian's early research interests focused on performance recording, progeny testing and selection procedures, primarily in beef and dual purpose cattle using data from industry and testing stations in the UK and abroad. He travelled widely for research, lecturing, conferences, short-term consultancies on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO). Not surprisingly, in 1972, he was appointed FAO Animal Breeding Officer at their headquarters in Rome. The post gave Ian further opportunity to participate in projects on animal breeding particularly in developing countries. It also allowed him to pursue his vision, developed early in his professional career, for the conservation of indigenous breeds threatened, as they are, by the growing dominance of more productive 'western' breeds. This laid the foundation for the launch by FAO, after Ian's retirement, of a programme for the sustainable use and conservation of livestock breeds.

Perhaps his most lasting memorial will be his 'World dictionary of breeds, types and varieties of livestock' first published in 1951 and going to four enlarged and revised editions under his authorship. Today the Dictionary continues under a new guardian. Ian can however, also be proud of several other books as author, co-author or scientific editor and many articles and papers in scientific and popular journals. He got special satisfaction from 'Evolution of domesticated animals' which he compiled and to which he also contributed three chapters.

Gerald Wiener

Raising the Profile of Animal Science

BSAS is planning a series of events to lobby both politicians and policymakers around the different UK parliaments and assemblies. It is hoped that Westminster and Edinburgh Parliaments will be covered in the next six months, with Wales and Northern Ireland to follow. BSAS is becoming increasingly concerned that those in power need to better understand the importance of animal science and the need to fund associated research and development.

Animal

Recent figures for Animal show that our journal is being read worldwide by over 2000 subscribing libraries as well as our own membership. This is good news for improving the impact factor and gaining more authors. The editorial team are continuing to work hard to reduce the submission to publication time.