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BSAS Annual Meeting 24-26 March 2003, York

This newsletter comes to you along with the 2003 BSAS Annual Meeting programme to be held at the University of York. Please note the dates are in March this year, a little earlier than normal. We have a lot of invited sessions and two dedicated satellite meetings. The President's *Globalisation* satellite will start at 10:30 on Monday morning until mid-afternoon. This will enable delegates to partake in what will be a very interactive and maybe controversial programme (GM discussion included) without missing too much of the main meeting.

On the last day of the meeting we have combined our session on *What the Public want from Agriculture* with one organised by the British Grassland Society on *How Meat and Milk Producers can meet Consumer Needs*, to produce a satellite called *Reconnecting the Food Chain (linking farmers, scientists and consumers)*. This will run on Wednesday.

In between we have some very interesting invited sessions on *Functional Foods, Companion Animals, Aquaculture, Nutrition and Environmental Impact, PMWS/PDS, Nutrition for Pro-Active Health and An Integrated Approach to Functional Traits* as well as our traditional farmer session which this time is on *Organic Livestock*. Professor Maggie Gill, from the Macaulay Institute will be giving the Hammond lecture.

Submitted sessions include *Physiology, Companion Animal Welfare, Ruminant Growth, Pig Housing and Growth, Cattle Lactation, Genetics, Animal Health, Applied Pig Ethology, Feed Characteristics, more Genetics, and Sheep Nutrition*. There are a host of poster sessions as normal including one this time on poultry. WPSA also have a full programme running on the Tuesday and Wednesday whilst this year IASE have put their papers into the sessions on *Companion Animal Welfare* and will be attending the companion animal programme. David Fraser is giving the 2003 RSPCA/BSAS lecture. So as usual it's a very busy, interesting and interactive programme!

We are especially pleased to see that BGS has come this time and we welcome them and their members as part of the continuing collaboration between the two societies.

We have also had lots of papers from Iran this year and hope to see more of our overseas colleagues attending the meeting at York.

York Campus

The Secretary, Mike Steele, and his assistant, Bridget Hilton, visited York in early December. Building work continues on the new restaurant for Goodricke College, therefore the BSAS Conference Dinner will once again be held in the grandstand at York Racecourse where we had a very good meal last year. No other major building works have been undertaken since our last visit so we hope that delegates will now feel comfortable on the campus. To help delegates keep up-to-date with events during the conference we will be using a monitor information system (rather like looking up your flight details at the airport).

We have once again negotiated a very good package for students as we are well aware that the young people involved in animal science are the future of BSAS. There will be a reception for them on Tuesday lunchtime where we hope to get some feedback on what they would like from BSAS.

If you are travelling to York by car please remember to buy your parking ticket in advance to avoid getting clamped!

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NEW for 2003 - Workshop on presentation skills 23/24 March 2003

New for 2003 we have a short workshop on presentation skills for students and new presenters, to be run by Dr Phil Garnsworthy of Nottingham University. This workshop will start at 15: 00 on Sunday 23 March and run in three modules (Sunday afternoon, Sunday evening and Monday morning).

The workshop will cover all aspects of oral presentation including the opportunity to give a practice presentation in a lecture theatre with constructive feedback. The book *Writing and Presenting Scientific Papers* will form part of the package and be given to all students at the end of the workshop, along with a certificate of attendance.

The workshop will be limited to a maximum of 15 participants and will cost £50 (includes B&B and book).

Phil has been running workshops like this at EAAP for several years and we hope that participants will gain both valuable experience and confidence in giving presentations. The workshop is an ideal start for young scientists who will be giving presentations to both colleagues and a wider audience. It would also be very useful for those giving their first presentations at BSAS this year. As places are limited we will accept applications on a first come first served basis - see BSAS Application Form for Annual Meeting.

Committee Members wanted!!

BSAS is always looking for new recruits for its committees. If you are interested in becoming involved in either Publications or Programme committee we would be very pleased to hear from you. Programme committee is responsible for running the meetings of the society and in particular the Annual Meeting at York. Publications Committee is primarily responsible for the journal *Animal Science*. Both committees meet twice yearly. We will also need new Council members in March.

BSAS website - Newly redecorated - have you noticed??

Have you seen the new Web site? It is brighter and easier to get around but how would you like to see it further improved? We would be very grateful for any constructive comments. The Web site is to undergo a major development in 2003; therefore we need to know what sort of facilities you would like to see available.

Geoff Simm retires from BSAS T&E Committee

Professor Geoff Simm of SAC Edinburgh will be stepping down as chair of the Technical and Ethical committee of BSAS at the AGM on 25 March 2003. The role that Geoff has undertaken is both an interesting and occasionally a very busy one. The BSAS Technical and Ethical committee is very much the ideas forum of BSAS. It is involved in industry and government consultation, developing new policies and initiatives for BSAS, and also administers the awards and scholarships of the Society. We are very grateful for Geoff's three-year tenure and even more grateful to his secretary Gillian. We are now actively looking for a new Chairperson.

Nutritional Standards - making a real difference

The BSAS Nutritional Standards initiative continues with a small team, led by Professor Colin Whittemore, which is looking at developing a series of nutrient tables for pigs. These will cover requirements for amino acids, energy, and vitamins and minerals.

A draft document is currently being circulated for consultation among stakeholders. If you would like to be involved in this process and are able to respond by mid-February then please contact the BSAS office so that we can send you a set of papers.

The final document should be ready by spring 2003. Colin Whittemore will also discuss the document at the BSAS Annual Meeting.

New member of the BSAS Office

We welcome Fiona Ferguson who has recently joined the team in the BSAS Office. Fiona will take on financial and administrative responsibilities, when Joyce, who has been with the society for 22 years, steps down at the end of April.

Merida - The Olympics of Animal Science

The conference, **Responding to the increasing demand for animal products**, held in Merida, Mexico, was a great success and described by one DFID person as the 'Olympics of Animal Science'. It will once again raise the profile of BSAS in the eyes of the international animal science community.

Some 140 delegates from all over the world (40 different countries) enjoyed four days of presentations, discussions, workshops and very interesting tours, which they managed to fit around a very active social programme. Over 70 University students also watched through a video link to an adjoining theatre with the speakers presentations being translated into Spanish where appropriate.

The range of nationalities amongst delegates and speakers was truly memorable, especially for those from southern and central Africa and south-east Asia on their first visit to Central America.

The hosts, the University of Yucatan (UADY) could not have been more efficient, hard working and friendly. The atmosphere was stimulating and refreshing and thoroughly enjoyed by everyone.

Merida is a very safe, bustling and interesting place. The conference venue at the Cultural Centre of the University was just metres from the centre of the Old City. In most cases it meant that delegates had less than 100 metres to negotiate to their hotel. The venue itself, around a typical Mexican plaza, meant that it was very easy for delegates to communicate individually or in small groups. The main theatre and break out rooms were all air-conditioned which gave everyone some relief from the humid atmosphere.

The conference started with a formal opening ceremony with officials, including our own President Emyr Owen wearing the formal Yucatan dress (very posh white shirt and no tie). Emyr addressed the delegates in Spanish, English and Welsh! The latter had the translators reaching for their dictionaries!

In the first part of the meeting a series of case studies were presented that were subsequently discussed in the workshops. These case studies were commissioned specifically by DFID so that they could be presented at the conference and the comments of delegates incorporated into the finished documents. There was a series of provocative and well-constructed presentations in the introductory session, followed by others dealing with the three themes of the conference. The presentations were a mixture of invited and submitted papers. Almost all used Powerpoint presentations which were admirably handled by relaxed UADY staff from the vet faculty. Rarely did we have problems and always did we have good humour and a positive approach. Everyone was called Jose (seven of the student helpers) except the girls of course!

On the third day of the conference we had three parallel sessions covering most aspects of animal science, nutrition and livelihoods. The small biotechnology session attracted a very vigorous and healthy debate. The tours took delegates out to the Vet Faculty and small farms close to Merida to show them examples of the production units. The flora of Yucatan is very poor quality scrubby jungle as the soils are thin on a limestone pavement and there is little surface water. The 'jungle' houses some spectacular Mayan Ruins.

The City and the Vet Faculty had been very badly hit by Hurricane Isidore just a month before the conference. This was a category 5 hurricane, the highest there is. Despite lack of telephones, e-mails and faxes it was a credit to everyone involved that the conference went ahead as scheduled.

The International Foundation for Science (IFS) held a satellite meeting on the 2 days before the conference and then all 22 of them involved themselves into the main event.

On the social side there was an amazing display of Mexican Dancing (in the rain) and a select conference dinner under the stars. The organisers were invited to a final BBQ at the home of the real star of the show Juan Ku Vera (leader of the UADY team) who got through more e-mails, press interviews, and breakfast meetings than you can imagine. Now UADY has the taste of networking and organising conferences it is moving forward and organising the World Herbivore Conference in 2003 and BSAS will organise a small satellite meeting attached (see below). BSAS will start planning the next Animal Science Olympics in 2006 in Asia.

Please note that the book of summaries is available on the BSAS, ASAS and UADY websites should you be interested. The presentations are held in the BSAS office if you require any.

Edinburgh - Farm Animal Genetic Resources, 26/27 November 2002

Not to be out done by Sunny Mexico, Pollock Halls at Edinburgh University gave 69 delegates a very warm welcome to the BSAS/RBST/DEFRA/Sheep Trust sponsored meeting on *Farm Animal Genetic Resources*.

The diversity of delegates at this meeting was almost as wide as the topic they were discussing with policymakers, academics (both animal & crops orientated), students, keepers of rare breeds and societies with vested interests, all mixing in together. The programme was well received with some interesting and thought provoking papers on policy, conservation, opportunities and challenges, techniques to support conservation and some examples of conservation in action. The meeting almost ran to time except when the BSAS computer went silly on us and one speaker's French ran away with him. A little mix and matching was required to accommodate the knock on effect of the French air traffic controllers strike. Nottingham University Press will be producing the Proceedings in 2003.

Our thanks to Geoff Simm who led the organising team, in his normal devolved style, which included Libby Henson (*Longhorn Cattle*), Dianna Bowles (*Sheep Trust*), Rosemary Mansbridge and Saffron Townsend (*Rare Breeds Survival Trust*) and Mike Roper (*DEFRA*). The entire organisation for this meeting was conducted by telephone conferences with the team only meeting up at the event. This proved a very cost effective and time efficient method. BSAS will be doing more in the future.

We were well looked after by the University staff and as usual in Edinburgh very well fed (against the cold weather you'll understand). The Conference Dinner featured a cheese course of rare breed cheeses (Double Gloucester from Gloucester cows!) donated by RBST, which was very much appreciated.

Our thanks again to DEFRA for the substantial support to the conference for which we conveyed our thanks.

BSAS Conferences in 2003

24-26 March 2003 **BSAS Annual Meeting, University of York**

See front page of newsletter, and Programme and Application form enclosed or on the website.

9-10 Sept 2003 **Pigs - The Appliance of Science, Sutton Bonington, University of Nottingham**

This conference comes at a time when the UK pig industry is struggling to find its place in an increasingly global and competitive market place. The meeting will examine the problems facing the industry and how it might cut through the difficulties facing it to become more competitive. Knowledge transfer will form an integral part of this process. The organisers are led by Dr Jayne Thompson of Nottingham who has consulted widely to fine tune the programme to make it attractive to both producers, advisers and scientists. Sutton Bonnington is the ideal pig conference venue being easy to reach and having excellent conference facilities. Please see separate leaflet and website for full details.

15-16 Sept 2003 **Emerging Equine Science, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester**

John Alliston is leading the posse for this conference which is BSAS's first on Equine Science and will be aimed at academics, their students and the professional equine people and their advisors. The programme, in the separate leaflet, is designed to fit both invited and submitted papers. As it is still in its early stages there is room for any innovative ideas that you have so contact us now if you wish to be involved. Currently it contains sessions on *Exercise Physiology, Health Welfare and Behaviour, Breeding and Genetics, Nutrition and, Grassland and Equine Business Management*. There will be a tour arranged on the last half day of this two-day meeting to visit professional equine enterprises.

We have already had a great deal of interest from sponsors and are looking to develop some new ideas for the meeting, which for example might include special prizes for student presentations.

The RAC is an excellent venue for the meeting and very easy to reach by road to rail.

18-19 Oct 2003 **Merida Satellite Workshop - part of the international Herbivore Conference**

Caroline Rymer, ADAS, now based at the University of Reading, is the BSAS UK organiser for a satellite workshop to be held in Merida, Mexico, October 18/19 2003, as part of the international Herbivore Conference. Caroline has been much involved in previous meetings covering *in vitro* techniques and will be working with Carlos Sandoval from the University of Yucatan. The workshop is likely to cover *in vitro* gas production, *in sacco* degradation measurements and alkanes. Bob Mayes will be involved with Alkanes. One idea is that the workshop produces a small handbook, which would describe the three techniques. Watch the BSAS website for future details.