

September 2000 • No. 3

## BSAS Annual Meeting 9-11 April 2001

September is here and BSAS has already run three conferences, one in Holland on Gas Production, the second in Nottingham on The Weaner Pig, and in Aberdeen the meeting on Early Regulation of Mammalian Development. Presidents, Publications and Council Committees have also met. September, as always, is a very busy BSAS time!

It is also the time we ask you to start thinking about the approaching deadline which is Tuesday 31 October 2000, for the receipt of annual meeting summaries. Whilst we still intend to be strict about the date of receipt, Council deemed that Programme Committee were a little too hard on summaries last year. Consequently they will be adopting a lighter touch for assessment, so if you have a paper presentation in mind then do please send it in for incorporation into the new York Annual Meeting. We would also be interested in whether you are collaborating with other groups who might like to put in an accompanying poster to make 'clusters' of research information. Remember by Tuesday 31 October, we need the final version of your summary in line with the enclosed BSAS guidelines. Summaries should be sent electronically, preferably by email or disc. Please refrain from sending more than one version as this only confuses matters.

Outlined below is our current summary of planned meetings, sessions and workshops to be run at York. You will note that there is a lot more going on than we had at Scarborough last year. We hope you will come and enjoy this very exciting and interesting Annual Meeting.

### Invited sessions include:

- **The ethical basis of livestock production science**, a number of speakers are being approached to cover (i) animal rights and wrongs, (ii) the ethical basis of animal experimentation, (iii) the ethical basis of intensive livestock production.
- **Endocrine disrupting compounds (EDC) and their implications for domestic animal and human health**. This session would review the properties of EDCs and their effects. It

will look at the risk of transmission to domestic animals and the degree of exposure of humans through the consumption of meat. The potential effects of reproductive efficiency of domestic species would also be covered. The implications of the EDCs are very important as they are both carcinogenic and immunosuppressant and are also retained in the environment for very long periods.

The President's session - **Improving the quality of animal products** will involve two technical sessions covering

- Muscle fibres and meat quality;
- Meat tenderisation;
- Meat lipids, health and sensory aspects;
- Meat structure and quality.
- Computered tomography for carcass analysis;
- Gene regulation of muscle, meat and milk;
- Milk composition and nutritional value.

This will be followed by a session with speakers from industry.

### Other Groups

A number of other groups including WPSA are still working on small meetings or workshops. IASE are developing a satellite, led by Jon Day from ADAS Terrington, on **Behaviour and welfare**.

The session, in collaboration with the National Beef Association, **Scientific solutions to practical problems in beef production** will cover the topics Nutrition and production; Genetic improvement of beef cattle, Animal health; Land use and the environment.

We did try very hard to persuade the Teaching Vets to come but in the end they decided that for the time being they would stay at Scarborough.

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# Occasional Meetings

## Gas Production

The Gas Production Meeting: Fermentation Kinetics for feed evaluation and to assess microbial activity was held in Wageningen, Holland on the 18/19 August as a satellite to the EAAP Annual Meeting in the Hague. Over 70 delegates attended a very well organised and friendly meeting, held at the International Conference Centre in Wageningen. This was BSAS's first meeting on mainland Europe and was jointly organised with our friends at Wageningen University and ID TNO Animal Nutrition. An enormous amount of work was put into the organisation by Eddie Deaville (ADAS), Barbara Williams (Wageningen University) and John Cone (ID TNO Animal Nutrition). Professors Seerp Tamminga and Ian Givens also gave valuable support. Delegates came from over 10 countries to join the meeting, but represented many more nationalities as a number were studying in the Netherlands. The key topics of methodology of gas production and modelling, measuring of fermentation as an indication of feed evaluation and other applications for gas production were introduced by Professor Alice Pell with Professor Jim France, Dr Michael Blummel and Dr Barbara Williams respectively. These were reinforced by submitted theatre presentations and 26 posters which generated good discussion periods around coffee breaks. Alice Pell from Cornell University, USA, started off the conference as well as summing up at the end. The Publication for this meeting was distributed at the Workshop which was another first for BSAS. It took a good deal of work by Eddie, Barbara and John to achieve this. If you would like a copy then we have a few available in the office. The proceedings and Powerpoint presentations given should be available on the website shortly for a nominal fee. Only one of the many presenters did not use Powerpoint which now seems to be the modus operandi at all conferences and (fingers crossed) nothing went wrong.

Organising the meeting in Holland was very straightforward and good value for money. A follow-up meeting in 2003 at Cornell University, USA is now being discussed.

## New ideas?

If you have a good idea for a conference then BSAS would be interested in collaborating with other institutes or organisations in Europe to put together a joint meeting or workshop.

## Weaner Pig Meeting

Over 160 delegates attended this meeting in Nottingham. Pig meetings are usually well supported, and this one came at a very timely period when the pig industry in the UK is trying to put itself back on its feet. A number of speakers and many of the delegates were from overseas, which made for a very international meeting. The proceedings will be published as a CABI/BSAS book which should be available in 2001. The summaries will be available for a nominal fee on the BSAS website in due course.

## The Challenge of Genetic Change in Animal Production

The proceedings of the above meeting which was held in Edinburgh last year are now available on our website at [www.bsas.org.uk](http://www.bsas.org.uk)

## Workshop

### Nutritional standards for livestock

BSAS is at last making some progress on addressing nutritional standards for livestock. A small one-day workshop is being organised in London on 18 October to discuss the needs of different industry sectors (farmers, feed industry, regulatory bodies). It will look at examples of best practice from other countries and then decide how these needs might be met and whether BSAS can play a role in facilitating meeting these needs. The workshop is going to be chaired by Dr John Newbold and representatives from all interested sectors are being invited. This is a difficult area to address because it is now quite complex and very much more international than in the past. Representatives from each industry sector will be asked to briefly outline the needs they have and selected delegates will be asked to portray best practice from elsewhere. Workshop numbers will be small so that new ideas on how to proceed will be identified. If you have not been invited and are interested in attending then please contact the BSAS to see if there are any places left. There is no charge for this meeting which is currently being supported by the MDC, MLC and MAFF.

## Early regulation of mammalian development

This landmark meeting attracted 80 participants from around the world. It also brought together both medics and animal scientists to discuss science at the cutting edge! The standard and quality of the papers was extremely high, backed up by 23 good posters, a workshop and much debate.

Our delegates saw Aberdeen at its very best, the weather was glorious for most of the time and the scenery was superb.

### Quantifying Generalised Immunity in Genetically Diverse Pigs

A project headed up by Professor Steve Bishop of the Roslin Institute is currently looking at a more effective way of measuring pigs immunity to a variety of diseases. Animal health issues are becoming increasingly important to all sectors of livestock production but especially in the pig industry. Up to now selecting animals for production (growth rate, carcass characteristic and litter size) has been more important than looking at disease resistance. If we could identify an indicator that measured resistance then we could breed for general disease resistance. This would increase consumer confidence and produce healthier pigs who would need less antibiotics. It would reduce the concern over residues in meat. The project aims to select animals with appropriate immune responses to a variety of disease challenges. This concept is known as generalised immunity. This project is aiming to develop an index of generalised immunity. Comparisons are being made between different breeds, such as the Large White and Meishan and selected lines within the Large White which differ in productivity. If you would like to find out more please contact [steve.bishop@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:steve.bishop@bbsrc.ac.uk)

# Geoffrey Alderman

Animal science has lost one of its 'characters' in the recent death of Geoff Alderman and many animal scientists have lost a valued colleague and a good friend.

Geoff would have been 76 in December and such was his zest for life and science that he was over half way through a PhD at Reading when he died; 'A Critical Evaluation of Energy Rationing Schemes for Ruminants' being a subject close to his heart.

Geoff started his long and distinguished career after graduating from Reading in 1945 and joined the National Agricultural Advisory Service (NAAS) as a Nutrition Chemist. In 1953 he was awarded a Kellogg Fellowship and spent one year at Pennsylvania State College.

Upon his return to UK he was posted to Cardiff before returning to the Thames Valley in 1964 as Regional Nutrition Chemist for the South East region. It was during this time that his interest in the nutritional evaluation of forages and the energy requirements of ruminants developed, spurred on by the numerous research centres in the area at that time – NIRD Shinfield, GRI Hurley and ICI Jealott's Hill in particular – and the frequent and always stimulating contacts with the late Sir Kenneth Blaxter – then at the Hannah Research Institute.

In 1977 Geoff was promoted to Senior Nutrition Chemist within ADAS and so commuted to Great Westminster House, London to advise MAFF Policy Decisions. He played a significant part in the establishment of the new Feed Evaluation Unit at Drayton midst dashing off to Brussels as the UK had now become a member of the 'larger state'.

In 1984 Geoff retired becoming President of BSAP with the rare honour of Honorary life membership just three years later – both befitting for the support he gave so enthusiastically to our Society.

At the same time, Geoff threw his energies into consultancy – he became a member and subsequently chairman of the British Institute of Agricultural Consultants, more recently Geoff retired again but as an Honorary Research Fellow at Reading University we saw a lot of him – in the corridors talking to students or down at CEDAR.

Finally in 1998, Jim France, Professor of Applied Biomathematics, channelled Geoff's energies into a PhD on a subject Geoff loved and for a cause that was long overdue. Sadly he never managed to complete the task.

Geoff will be missed as a real professional, a man with a kind heart but a dogged determination to see good science put into practice. In this new age when we all spend too long chasing 'research bucks' – it is prudent to recall the standards which Geoff believed in and upheld throughout a long and very distinguished career.

**D.E. Beever**  
**10<sup>th</sup> August 2000**

## In memory of Murray Black

You will be very pleased to know that a wooden bench has recently been installed in the Pine Garden at Bush Estate, Edinburgh, in memory of Murray Black. A Sweet Gum tree has been planted, adjacent to the bench, which will give glorious foliage in Autumn. The project was made possible by the donations from his many friends and with assistance from the University of Edinburgh's ground maintenance team. The bench and the tree face the pond in a beautiful corner of one of the walks that Murray used to take on a daily basis, with his dogs, around the estate.

## Production and Disease responses to pigs to aerial pollutants

At the Silsoe Research Institute in Bedfordshire, Professor Chris Wathes is heading a project that is examining whether chronic exposure of weaner pigs to ammonia and dust effects the incidence and severity of respiratory disease and/or compromises growth food intake. Farmers and veterinarians have long suspected that certain respiratory diseases in pigs are made worse by aerial pollutants such as ammonia and dust that arise from manure, feed, bedding and the animals themselves. Enzotic pneumonia, swine influenza and other respiratory diseases have been identified as potential problems. It has long been recognised that respiratory diseases clearly compromise growth through poorer food conversion which cost farmers thousands of pounds each year. Some 1000 weaner pigs will be exposed to six weeks of controlled concentrations of ammonia and dust. Detailed assessments of health and performance will be regularly made throughout including growth rate, food intake and food conversion efficiency. A special unit at MLCs Stotfold site has been commissioned for this study. The British pig industry along with MAFF are funding this project and technology transfer will play an increasingly important part as the results of the research become available. If you would like more information then please contact email: [christopher.wathes@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:christopher.wathes@bbsrc.ac.uk)

# Proposed changes to BSAS Committees

At its September Meeting Council discussed changes to BSAS Committees.

## The aim is to:

Make the committee structure slimmer, more responsive, more interactive, enabling all members of committees to be more actively involved. Having smaller groups should make decision-making and delegation of actions swifter and easier to manage. Some cost savings will also be possible.

## The proposed changes include :

### COUNCIL

- 1) Reducing the intake of ordinary members annually from four to three (all ordinary members of council would sit on one of the standing committees).
- 2) Devolving the representatives for EAAP/IOB and the press officer to T&E committee.
- 3) Dropping the post of Junior Vice-President.

The number of major council meetings could be reduced to two (September/October and late January). The one at the Annual Meeting would become informal.

### STANDING COMMITTEES – Ad Hoc Groups

Committees should aim to have around six members. Where possible meetings would be made by telephone conferencing and email contacts.

The next stage is for committees to discuss these proposals which would require changes to the Constitution to be agreed at the next AGM. We would be grateful for any thoughts you have – send us an email.

## Publications - going electronic

The prospects of 'Animal Science' on-line next year is getting closer. The adhoc electronics group of Publications Committee met in Aberdeen in September to map out the process and time scale. Our current printer has made great strides in computerising the technical editing and formatting. Only the figures and tables require attention.

### Membership

As part of the process of providing an online Animal Science, Council is considering a choice of memberships. Currently all members receive a hard back version of the journal as part of their subscription. This is provided well below the cost of production.

In the future members are likely to be able to choose between a membership with electronic access to the journal and membership with electronic and hard copy. The latter option is likely to be significantly more expensive.

Producing the journal as a web journal will obviously save the society considerable printing and postage costs and thus enable it to continue to be a high class service to members. This will help reduce the annual deficit which is eroding reserves and cannot be sustained. We are aware however that not everyone has easy access to the internet. Send us your thoughts on how you might like to see categories of membership develop.

## Summer Placement Scheme

Three post-graduate students were given the opportunity of taking up a summer placement for 2000 with help from Frank Wright Ltd, Primary Diets Ltd and BSAS.

- Andrew Williams from Harper Adams undertook a project on sample and analysis of grass and monitoring of cow performance.
- Kamara Scott from the University of Newcastle undertook to gain experience of an on-going farm trial with pigs.
- Richard Rawling of University of Leeds undertook a project on piglet growth.

We look forward to seeing a poster of the various projects at the BSAS Annual Meeting.

## DFID, Livestock

### Research Programme

The DFID rural livelihoods department runs two research programmes on animal health and livestock production that may be of interest to BSAS members. Both programmes fund research in their respective fields with projects normally running for three years to a maximum of £75,000 a year. Both programmes are now very much focused on the livelihoods of poor people with emphasis on Africa and some countries in Southern Asia. Both programmes call for the submission of concept notes on a regular basis, outlining proposed research. There is currently one at the moment with a deadline of 27 September which will be too late for you reading this newsletter. The website addresses below will give you full information and you may be interested in submitting research proposals for future calls. The animal health programme can be reached on [www.vet.ed.ac.uk/ctvm](http://www.vet.ed.ac.uk/ctvm). Livestock production programme can be viewed on [www.nrinternational.co.uk](http://www.nrinternational.co.uk) Both programmes set out the areas that they would like to see research proposals, but would welcome innovative ideas and contacts at any time. They can be reached on email at [ahp@vet.ed.ac.uk](mailto:ahp@vet.ed.ac.uk) and [s.h.godfrey@gre.ac.uk](mailto:s.h.godfrey@gre.ac.uk)

# Future meetings - BSAS

- 18 October 2000 **BSAS Workshop on Nutritional Standards for Livestock** Invited workshop to be held in London. See page 2 of this newsletter.
- 9-11 April 2001 **BSAS Annual Meeting** to be held in the new venue at York University. Please see article on page 1 for outline of invited sessions
- 25-26 June 2001 **What price cheap food?** University of Edinburgh, Scotland  
This meeting will challenge the wide spread assumption that cheaper food for consumers is unequivocally desirable – please see enclosed leaflet for more details. The meeting is being organised by Dr Mike Appleby and Dr Colin Morgan. If you have any thoughts or wish to be involved then please contact them on the following emails [mike.appleby@ed.ac.uk](mailto:mike.appleby@ed.ac.uk), [c.morgan@ed.sac.ac.uk](mailto:c.morgan@ed.sac.ac.uk) This meeting will be very participative and delegates will be expected to be involved in the integral workshops. Four topics will be covered including food security and animal welfare, environmental impact and food quality and safety. The meeting will be held at the John McIntyre Centre, Pollock Halls, Edinburgh. This will be a joint BSAS/SCAWS Meeting (see first announcement enclosed).
- 11-12 September 2001 **Integrated management systems for livestock** This joint BSAS meeting with the Institute of Agricultural Engineers meeting will be held in Cambridge, a revised leaflet is enclosed. Further details can be obtained from the BSAS Office or by contacting Professor Christopher Wathes on Telephone 01525 861096, email: [christopher.wathes@bbsrc.ac.uk](mailto:christopher.wathes@bbsrc.ac.uk)
- 4-6 October 2001 **Organic production from ruminants** – please see enclosed leaflet. There has been a lot of interest in this meeting already and we expect to see a very international audience. Eight keynote speakers will cover relevant topics to be supported by submitted theatre posters. There will be ample time for discussion and an integral visit will be included. As well as a very interesting place to visit, Athens is quite cheap to reach by air and very good value for money once you are there. With a Saturday night included delegates from outside Greece should be able to take advantage of good value airfares. Papers will include the future European market for organic produce; Standards and regulations; Animal health issues; Human health issues; The impact of organic agricultural and social structures; Development of suitable farming systems; Marketing; The challenge of organic production from research practice.
- November 2002 **Responding to the increasing demand for animal products**, Merida, Mexico. The University of Yucatan in Mexico have now formerly agreed to jointly run this meeting with the BSAS. The American Society of Animal Science is also involved and the organising team is busy developing the programme. Currently they are looking at a three and a half day meeting with theatre and poster presentations, visits and workshops. Three themes have been identified under which a number of topics would be covered. (1) How do trade agreements effect resource poor livestock producers? (2) what is the social and environmental impact of industrial production systems (3) What is needed for the adoption of animal science research. It is hoped that funding will be available to develop case studies as a research project in the 6 months prior to the conference. The results of the case studies would be taken to the conference for presentation and discussion by the delegates. Professor David Leaver who is leading the UK organising team and Mike Steele will be visiting Merida in October 2000, to develop discussions further with our Mexican colleagues and ASAS, and to look at the facilities and logistics. Getting to Merida from UK is not as expensive as you might think especially if you are prepared to book ahead. The organisers would welcome any help or ideas (see leaflet enclosed).

## Other meetings

- 16-18 November 2000 **Beef Breeders Round Table**, Jarvis International Hotel, Bolton, Lancs. This meeting attracts leading beef breeders, scientists and those active in the beef industry. Delegates are able to discuss the major issues affecting beef production in a closed meeting with the media. Programme and registration form enclosed with this letter, further details can be obtained from Jill Loxton, Telephone 01908 670339, email: [jill\\_loxton@mlc.org.uk](mailto:jill_loxton@mlc.org.uk).

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## Other meetings

- 3-6 June 2001      **6<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Pig Reproduction** to be held at the University of Missouri, Columbia. Symposium sessions include: Development and regulation of the follicle and corpus luteum; Oocyte development in vivo and in vitro; Fertilization in vivo and in vitro; Placental development and function; Fetal development and parturition; & Emerging technologies. Abstracts will be accepted for poster presentation. A pre-symposium workshop is planned on Physiological mechanisms underlying infertility in the breeding herd. Details: Dr. Randall S. Prather, Department of Animal Sciences, 162 Animal Sciences Center, University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO 65211-5300, PratherR@Missouri.Edu.
- 22-24 October 2001      **An international symposium on animal welfare consideration in livestock handling systems**, Poland. Further information can be obtained from Tadbeusz Kuczynski, Email: t.kuczynski@wm.pz.zgora.pl
- 2-5 July 2002      **Nutrition Society meeting of Food, Plants, Animal and Man.** A joint session with BSAS is being organised at this meeting in Leeds. Interested? Contact Mike Forbes, email: mike.forbes@leeds.ac.uk
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## Scholarships

### The Sir Kenneth Blaxter Award

The scholarship is for travel in the UK or overseas or for a specified study tour or to fund a specific short research programme. It may also be used to part-fund projects. The topics for 2000/2001 are:

- Animal science aspects of food safety
- Objective measurement of animal welfare
- Nutrition and immunity in farm animals

Application forms available from the BSAS Office, to be completed and returned by 31 October 2000. The sum of £1500 is available.

### The Alan Robertson Fund

The scholarship is open to anyone who is involved or interested in animal genetics or breeding. Application forms from the BSAS Office, to be completed and returned by 31 October 2000. The sum of £1400 is available.

### The Murray Black Award

This new award aims to provide travel and research opportunities for younger members of BSAS. Up to £2000 is available in the areas that include animal welfare, sheep nutrition and husbandry, farm management, animal science aspects of conservation and the public understanding of animal science. Innovative ideas outside of these areas will also be considered. Applications by 31 October.



