

How can you help us?

The answer is simple – support our events!

“Harnessing the power of Microbugs”

Look out for the SEMINARS – Clydevale, Outram and other points east, in late April, early May.

From rhizobia with clover & lucerne and silage inoculants to the uses of microbugs for improved animal nutrition.

FREE seminars - come and learn about new developments

REGISTER your interest and we'll keep you informed

Farm Health & Safety Reviews

- There are changes coming for New Zealand health and safety legislation
- Farm health and safety is coming under the spotlight
- Injuries to farmers and staff are a costly liability
- Infringement notices and penalties are being handed out
- Do you need peace of mind around your health & safety efforts and obligations?

We have 10 year's experience with Health & Safety issues and believe we have your confidence to provide realistic and helpful feedback.

We offer a farm visit and report that usually takes less than half a day and a follow-up report of any actions needed. We want to provide simple protection for start-up operations, established farms, large and small. Our costs are very competitive.

REGISTER your interest and we will provide you with more detail.

Land and Environment Plan workshops

Farming businesses are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their environmental credentials and to meet changing local government regulations. Many farmers recognise the need for a plan to manage their particular environment but don't know where to start.

FREE workshops – worth taking while they are going at this price?

As explained inside this newsletter, B+LNZ have joined with facilitators like the AgBoard to run free workshops to get your plan sorted and take some stress from this aspect of your business.

REGISTER your interest and we'll let you know dates and places.

Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 2 April 2014

South Otago Town & Country Club, Balclutha

6.00 pm Annual General Meeting

A review of the 2013 year

Election of the Executive – note two members this year are to retire by rotation and are standing again; there is at least one other available place to fill; nominations for the Executive are to be in the hands of the secretary before the meeting; please contact the Projects Manager for a nomination form.

Changes to the Constitution – as explained in this newsletter.

6.45 pm Guest Speaker

Michael Hurley – Miscanthus: the 25 tonne per annum grass

Michael will talk on:

- the wide opportunities of the plant
- his own plans to develop some of these opportunities
- and the opportunities for local farmers to take advantage of the crop's benefits

Michael Hurley – currently sheep farming in Akatore, Michael has a farming background, but had to retrain at Lincoln University following a serious motorcycle accident. He specialised in plant physiology and conducted postgraduate research at Lincoln, Otago, Massey, and Nan Yang (Singapore) Universities. During this time Michael discovered a novel mechanism of plant dwarfism in bonsai plants and also pioneered research into aeroponics – the growing of plants with their roots suspended in the air. Since returning to farming 5 years ago, Michael has sought to find additional revenue streams for sheep farmers with constrained land use options. Hence, his presentation about the giant grass (*Miscanthus giganteus*), a plant Michael describes as the “25 tonne per annum grass.”



7.45 pm Dinner (optional and own cost)

Please RSVP to all events above to help with our arrangements to:

Malcolm Deverson (Projects Manager)

Ph. 03 418 3188 • Email. cadb@ihug.co.nz

An AgBoard website

With all our information, projects and services
A good idea?
Coming to a desktop near you
Soon



Chairman's Report

2013 has seen your AgBoard battle to make up for the 40% of its income previously covered through a contract for agricultural services to the Clutha District Council. Historically that money enabled us to leverage the rest and provide benefits back to the rural community. We have many 'irons in the fire' through contacts made over many years now and it would be unfortunate for the district to lose those advantages and the activities that the AgBoard has achieved.

We agreed to support the new district development trust in the hope that they could see an advantage in the benefits of our experience, our networks, and our track record. We'd thought that we could maybe facilitate rural or primary production projects, seminars, field days locally to support their agricultural development work. We are keen and ready to discuss the options further.

It has become very evident that, not only has funding become much more difficult and competitive, but that we are standing in line with much larger groups with more national interests for smaller amounts of money. That said, we are confidently but anxiously waiting for the results of a couple of applications due in April.

All in all 2013 has been challenging to say the least, but I am very proud of your executive who have stayed with the ship. We have also introduced a new executive member in Michael Hurley who also gives his time freely and constantly. A reminder that your entire executive 'donates' their time to their members and their community.

I am also very proud of our 'Founders and Life Members' and often reflect on their contributions from years gone by.

I also wish to acknowledge our wonderful staff, Malcolm and Graeme, who are exclusive in their rolls.

Through this report I wish to not only thank those mentioned above, but also all of the members who have continued to contribute with their thoughts, time and their subscriptions. It is my pleasure to chair this extraordinary and unique group.

Kindest Regards

Dave Inder

Constitution changes

Proposed changes to be put to the AGM meeting

The Executive advise that minor changes to our constitution will be put to the Annual General Meeting this year. Two clauses will be adjusted to make it easier for the secretary to assemble a confirmed list of members.

We propose to adjust clause 9.4 adding the words underlined to read:

An Auditor or Reviewer shall be appointed at each Annual General Meeting to undertake an audit or review of the accounts for that year.

We will explain the issues surrounding the current audit process to the AGM and meet the requirements of the new Charities Act due out later this year.

These changes and other adjustments to wording are available to members on request before the meeting – email cadb@ihug.co.nz.

Land and Environment Plans

Most farmers jealously guard the principle that they are of Guardians of the Land. Many have plans in place to support their ideals – and there is pressure on all farmers to comply with ever stricter guidelines.

In some parts of New Zealand, environmental protection plans have become a compulsory part of farming. Some sort of paper trail is often demanded for many farming processes. We cannot afford to ignore this trend if we are selling on the world market and interested in the sustainability of our farms.

Beef + Lamb New Zealand has watched these developments and decided to put together a series of simple modules that farmers can follow and put in place – the Land and Environment Plan. There are requirements and recordings for modules at Levels 1, and 2 (straightforward for the average farmer) and a more technical Level 3. These can be registered with B+LNZ and used as proof of good husbandry of the farm.

ORC demanding clean waters!

The goal at the Otago Regional Council of clean water is the same as other councils although their effects-based approach is different to other NZ councils. In Otago you will not be told what inputs you are allowed. Rather you need to make and have evidence of your own plan to make sure you are able to meet the regional environmental outcomes.

Farmers know their own farms and their specific needs to ensure profitability and sustainability. So it is advantageous for farmers to do their own plans and take ownership of that living document.

B+LNZ are encouraging a co-operating approach with a seminar over lunchtime when farmers can consider and analyse similar issues together. There's more chance of a plan being finalised if this co-operative approach is followed. All you need to start is a reasonable farm map.

CADB Involvement?

We are pleased to have been accepted by B+LNZ as one of Otago's team of facilitators. Continued improvement and developments for our farmers is a key principle behind the Board's work. Feel free to contact us to discuss these seminars. We intend running workshops in Clutha during 2014.

The farmer commitment?

Details are still being finalised. Currently we are suggesting:

A **Level 1 day: 10.30am-approx. 3pm**. We'd hope to inspire you on this day to do the job properly with - a **Level 2 day: 10.30am-approx. 2pm**. They will be practical days for you to put down on paper all those ideas and practices that you already do to take care of your land – and to consider other options too.

This workshop support will be paid for through Beef + Lamb New Zealand levies.

Have you been proactive with grass grub this year?

"Grass grub – I don't worry about that until it appears in April or May."

Wrong answer. The Board's grass grub demonstration project last year (SFF L12-133) showed that there was great value in being proactive with grass grub issues.

Farmers have traditionally been reactive to grass grub damage. The project showed the value of a proactive approach in following a sequence of observations to manage the variable year-to-year grass grub issue.

Pastures at risk can be predicted 2-3 years before damage occurs and the severity of potential damage can be predicted 2-4 months before it occurs. There's probably still time to carry out some digging samples (as we did in February 2013) across paddocks likely to be affected. Then decisions about treatment can be made in time for them to have some effect.

Our science provider for this project, Colin Ferguson, wrote a "Best Practice for the Management of Grass Grubs in New Zealand" short booklet and this is available on request.

The final report for the project is also available along with the FITT fund report (B+LNZ were co-funders). Thanks again to the farmers involved and those who supported this work.



REPORT FROM THE PROJECT MANAGER

Malcolm Deverson

1 January – 31 December 2013

Another difficult year has seen our financial fortunes at the lowest ebb since Graeme and I began work with the Board at the start of 2005. The challenges for farmers and the opportunities for your organisation to add to knowledge and understandings about successful farming practice are as great as ever they were. The limitations are in the funding marketplace where we have to try to stake our claims when a huge proportion of science money now goes to the Big Boys with their Big Ideas.

As encouraged by the AGM last time we have continued 'business as usual' in 2013 and we hope this report and newsletter does not disappoint in terms of our activities and how we can get grassroots farmers involved, thinking and making changes where appropriate. Has any other group been able to do as much on a shoestring budget in this district or anywhere else?

The effects of a probiotic supplement on dairy calves

SFF L13-083 "Effects of a probiotic supplement on growth, feed conversion and general health of dairy calves." The first half of this year saw an extraordinary amount of follow up analysis and review of the data collected from our Spring 2012 trials. Then it took much longer than expected to come to the conclusions discussed elsewhere in this newsletter.

Calf weight data was collected from three farms, over a 12 week period, with 10 initial pen replications and 310 calves. Calf meal inputs were also reliably collected from one of the farms. It was a much larger study on probiotic agricultural use undertaken in pastoral grassland situations than has been attempted anywhere else, certainly in New Zealand and possibly the whole world. We thank everyone involved, especially key co-funder DairyNZ and the trial farmers.

We are proud to have achieved some ground-breaking work in this relatively new field for scientists and agricultural practitioners. This work here in Clutha will be a focus in other scientific investigations for some time to come. A scientific paper outlining the trial has been written and is awaiting publication.

Updated grass grub advice and demonstrations

SFF L13-133 "Updated grass grub advice and demonstrations" has been a project in association with AgResearch scientists and Beef + Lamb New Zealand. There

have been six demonstration farms across the district (Te Houka, Owaka, Hillend, West Otago, Clydevale, Hindon). In February this year we held a second series of neighbourhood farmer meetings at four of our farms and at each property we counted larvae and estimated likely autumn damage at each paddock.

It was not a serious year for grass grub in many parts of the district but each demonstration farmer identified some paddocks where our AgResearch science advisor prepared a management plan and treated areas to mitigate expected damage. The effects of these treatments were shown off to farmers at field days in West Otago (25 attended) and Hindon (35 attended).

The project also produced a bulletin with the latest advice explained. We communicated widely through a large "Interested Persons" email list to help farmers keep abreast of this project's developments and with the latest 'best practice' for grass grubs.

Thistle beetle project by the Californian thistle Action Group continues

SFF L11-172 "Green thistle beetle monitoring to spread the biological attack on Californian thistles."

Our latest Californian thistle work has been a two year project to monitor the 2007-2010 release sites of the green thistle beetle (*Cassida rubiginosa*). We completed the two summers survey work on 31 Californian thistle Action Group sites and liaised with Environment Southland over the 15 Southland sites.

We have been able to confirm that the green thistle beetle appears to have established at 90% of Otago & Southland release sites and this at 2-5 years after

release. We sighted the distinctive 'windows' feeding damage much more than any of the beetles' adults, larvae or eggs. Evidence of the movement of the beetles from their release sites is inconsistent. We have evidence that they have travelled up to 5kms from one release site in three years, and that at another release site, they appear to have largely remained after five years. At over 80% of sites where beetles were observed were on sites with trees (forest, plantation or shelterbelt) nearby – the likelihood that the beetles overwinter in these sites is noted in the literature (although this was unknown to observers at the time).



The famous green thistle beetle itself – Cassida rubiginosa. In real terms it's approx. 7-8mm in length.

Most remarkably, we found that at 87% of the reviewed sites in Otago and Southland there were fewer thistles than at their respective releases. When the release sites were identified and set up, farmers took us to at least one of their most troublesome thistle patches. In almost all cases, in the summer of 2012-13 these patches were no longer as troublesome.



The impact that was seen at many of our thistle beetle release sites is illustrated in these two photos at Grant Bradfield's Owaka property. The site at the release in February 2009 is at left, and the same site (note the dead tree as a reference point) at our summer 2012-13 monitoring.

We hasten to add that there is no science to show that the green thistle beetle has caused this situation. If it is a coincidence, then it is surely still one worth investigating to make the best use of this bio-control agent. We made determined efforts during the year to take these investigations further and this is explained elsewhere in this newsletter.

Search for any of these projects by putting the project number in the search box at: <http://www.mpi.govt.nz/environment-natural-resources/funding-programmes/sustainable-farming-fund/sustainable-farming-fund-search.aspx>



Clutha District Agricultural Statistics

Our fourth version of this report under this contract "Agricultural Statistics for the Clutha District: June 2013 Update" was completed and released in June. The full report is on the Council website at - www.cluthadc.govt.nz/AgriStats2013.pdf

This report identified a trend towards dairying in recent years, but that this move is not a headlong rush as it may be seen in neighbouring districts. We have put researched figures against major agricultural production and have made some comparisons that at times go back ten years.

We appreciate the co-operation from a range of sources this year including the Ministry for Primary Industries, Statistics New Zealand, Shand Thomson Ltd., Livestock Improvement Corporation, Balclutha vehicle retailers, the Clutha District Council, Beef + Lamb New Zealand, individual farmers and the Ag. Board's executive.

It was unfortunate that our Council contract to do this work finished before we could make use of the five-yearly Agricultural Production Census' territorial authority data which was only released very late in the year. There is 2002 and 2007 data in our Agricultural Statistics documents and the 2012 data would have given greater certainty to the sampling and estimations made by all agencies in the intervening years.

This collection of district data and the analysis of trends is a task I believe someone should be doing for the district in the future. We have comprehensive databases to share should circumstances allow.

Facilitation for Beef + Lamb New Zealand

We completed our three year contract with the Beef + Lamb New Zealand

East & North Otago 'Farming for Profit' programme with four events in 2013. We averaged 50 attendees to each.

- "Beating the Dry: a Water Storage story," looking at an on-farm dam in Dunback area.
- "Ensuring top winter brassica crops," the Cleancrop™ system in East Otago.
- "Effective Fertilizer Use," a seminar with both major fertilizer companies and Doug Edmeades in Palmerston.
- "Lucerne on Coastal Otago for profitable bulls & lambs," lucerne advice and also a presentation by John Smart on the management of drench resistance.

This contract has enabled links into wider B+LNZ networks and has been good for the Board. These seminars were advertised in Clutha and there was occasional attendance by local farmers.

Graeme certainly enjoyed his work here bringing all sorts of issues and expert speakers before farmers. Thanks to all our speakers and farmers, especially to Wayne Nichol (PGGWrightson), the Otago Regional Council and Bruce Beckingsale who gave their time freely at more than one event this year.



Wayne Nichol (PGGWrightson) and Graeme Pringle explain the Cleancrop™ brassica system to a field day in May.

Effective and sound fertilizer use

We received a lot of positive feedback from our "Nutrient Nous" seminar in Balclutha in May. Perhaps it was regarded as one of our best ever seminars. The Clutha Sheep Council and sponsors Beef + Lamb New Zealand, Milburn Lime, Andrew Haulage Ltd., Ravensdown and Terry Broad enabled a wide-ranging look at fertilisers, the ORC Water Plan 6A requirements and what that means for on-farm nutrient use. We attracted 70 attendees and speakers included the notable Doug Edmeades.

Later in the year we followed up the interest shown here with an application to the Sustainable Farming Fund in November to enable us to talk more to farmers about optimum fertilising and demonstrate what

the basic inputs of P, K, S, Lime and Mo can achieve. Unfortunately there is a long lead-in time now for SFF, but in association with sponsors AgKnowledge, B+LNZ and Milburn Lime (so far), we hope to achieve project acceptance and begin work in the middle of 2014.



A speakers' panel answer questions at the end of our well-received Nutrient Nous seminar in Balclutha in May.

Milburn Lime Ltd

Food & Fibre Hemp options

Other groups, most notably in Taranaki where hemp processing and hemp housing is taking place have made more progress than our associates, the Catlins Hemp Group (Chair – Grant Bradfield, Owaka), in the last couple of years. Still there is enthusiasm in the potential in the crop and its variety of products.

Our associate group made progress with the harvesting and storage of the 2012-13 crop but we have still not managed to deal with the weed and birds problems to achieve a crop that we believe is possible and commercially viable. Some adjustments have been made for the 2013-14 summer crop planted before Christmas.

Future progress is still linked (as it has been for some time) in the application A1039 to have whole hemp seeds be accepted as a foodstuff in Australia and New Zealand as it is in most other countries in the world. The bureaucrats at Food Standards Australia New Zealand have listened to submissions and run a



The 2013 hemp harvest of the Catlins industrial hemp group in action.

public consultation process (which we submitted to) and have agreed with the case. The politicians were still asking more questions late in 2013 before they will accept the proposal

There is a lot of interesting information about hemp and this application at <http://www.foodstandards.gov.au/code/applications/Pages/applicationa1039lowt4708.aspx>

Council's Agricultural Contact ends

The Council's contract for agricultural services with the Ag. Board which, in various forms, has run from 1999, ended in June 2013. The Council in those early years, after getting the benefits of enormous voluntary support from the Board's founders in the 1990s, understood that they had to put their money where their mouth was in saying that agriculture was the vital backbone of the Clutha community. The Board appreciates Council support over those years and believes that it was able to leverage threefold the money invested in the Board.

The other benefit we have provided has been the 'goodwill' benefit for a group based on volunteers trying for general, community good. No other group in New Zealand has grassroots farmers working for their district in the way that ours do – in a unique organisation. We appreciate all the support of our farmer members, companies and project supporters.

As we have said many times, the Board is keen to maintain a co-operative approach with the many other organisations and agencies that provide services to farmers to get the best from our agricultural enterprise.

Board Surveys

Staff ran two surveys in 2013 to help guide our future direction. The first was around AGM time in February-March. 77% of respondents opted for the "full steam ahead" option and another 16% wanted

the board in a "holding" position. 82% were either 'strongly positive' (59%) or 'slightly positive' (23%) about the Board's work as represented in the 2012 Annual Report. The "full steam ahead" position was confirmed by our AGM in late March.

64% said they were likely to go to an Ag Board event in the year, and 48% would consider holding field trials on their farm. Thanks for the positive potential that this shows that there is in the Clutha district.

In August-September we had to ask for survey support again. One of our potential partners in gathering funding needed a clear idea of the issues and challenges that are worth some work to support your operations. By far the top item on farmers' minds was that of prices, finances and controlling costs in order to make a profit.

Climate/ water/ environmental issues and then pastures/ weeds/ pests were next in line as key challenges.

Media and promotion of the Board

Even in these uncertain times, we have tried to let members and farmers in general know that we are still active. Our Annual Report is always well received, but unfortunately we have been unable to send it too far across the district as we manage costs.

Our AGM drew its usual 30ish attendees and we appreciate this once a year opportunity to meet. Colin Brown gave us an insight into his TracMap™ and other companies. He seemed to me to be a classic example of someone who had spent 30 or so years to become an 'overnight success' with his ideas.

We did buy a whole page in the Leader in April to showcase our projects and our position. There was still some media interest in our green thistle beetles and grass grub work, and we appeared in another episode of CTV's 'Rob's Country' in April.

We continued the monthly "Ag. Board Clips" in the Southern Rural Life which is established as a comment & advocacy

column as well as an advert for our events and issues. An "opinion piece" about the need to confront the poor perception of jobs on dairy farms was in the ODT in April. Then another article in August explained the importance of Invermay to our grassroots farming activity showed our support for the ODT's "Stand Up Otago" campaign.

New office & personnel

We had to move out of Development House in February and found new offices at the back of the Arcade, next to House of Travel in Clyde Street. We appreciated the co-operative working relationship we had with Enterprise Clutha staff and Daniel Maze.

Dick Sharpin left the Executive in February – he had been a strong advocate for the Board and we miss his insights and thank him for his service to the agricultural community with our group.

Staffing hours and arrangements in late 2013 have had to be 'flexible' in order to meet current objectives and I thank Graeme for his dedication and co-operation as the Board searches for that more reliable new direction

Other community involvements

As well as activities explained elsewhere, we tried to balance the need for a tight budget with the need to be out working with community groups as per our mission. It was more difficult later in the year without any large contract to provide core funding.

The Otago Committee of the Primary Industries ITO was forcibly dissolved in April with grander national plans to take over. More volunteer farmers, keeping an eye on ITO training in the region, told they weren't wanted any more. Despite claims of better and broader communications about agricultural training in Otago, we have heard nothing, absolutely nothing, about the new structures and plans for the essential involvement by farmers in this key training.



Farmers at the grass grub field day on Graham White's property at Hindon.



Approx 50 farmers came to our field day on lucerne at the coastal and higher altitude Mt Watkins in east Otago in July.

Graeme continued his work with the Otago Ballance Farm Environment Awards organisation in the 2013 judging round and attended the field day in May (taking a car load of members).

We loaned our laptops to Shand House for their farmer customer support, and are open to ideas from any other groups for their use.

Submissions were submitted for both Clutha District and Otago Regional Councils' Draft Annual Plans 2013-14. This is not a task that has seemed to make much impact over the years, but it is still important to 'keep an eye on them' from an agricultural perspective.

Rural careers and employment

Agricultural career talks have been one of the most satisfying tasks that we achieved for the council in recent years, but these have reduced in numbers lately. These need new thought and impetus. The Board believes it is important to give early advice of agricultural opportunities to our young people and would continue to support any further plans.

We made a concerted effort to encourage DairyNZ and Beef + Lamb New Zealand to attend the Careers' Expo in Balclutha in May but they did not come to the party.

The Board continued to support the Mayor's Taskforce group to get all our

under 25s into work. Unfortunately there is still no plan to get rural employers supporting the great work of this group. A variety of significant issues around rural employment remain unresolved and a test for any agricultural development work in this district and beyond.

Other funding sources

Further funding sources and project development ideas have been explored – there is no shortage of ideas and opportunities to support farmers. As we end 2013 and for the first time since the Board has had full-time staff, we have no significant major funding stream. This will have to be addressed early in the new year and we invite you to take part in the discussion of options for the Board.

Membership of the Board

We did lose 12% of our membership through the uncertainties of 2013 – but that's actually nearly 90% loyalty by members. We now have 153 members (173 in 2012) and dearly need your support again this year.

We are putting together some incentives for membership which we hope may well broaden our base, but need to feel supported by the people of this district who know what we have been doing for some time. Our new website is key to our progress and development.

Conclusion

The Board is still here and active! During 2013 we have seen no reason to stop providing the services to members and the agricultural community that we do. We believe that we continue to add value to the agricultural experience in the Clutha district in a way that no-one else is doing.

Especially though the projects as above and through our regular and developing contacts, we continue to provide a focus for positive comment about agriculture and farmers in the Clutha district. With your support we have been able to involve many farmers in extension and thinking activity. We certainly hope that the momentum that the Board has achieved in many areas is able to be maintained.

Thank you to Chairman Dave and the executive for your considerable service and leadership.

As always, members' feedback would be very welcome.

**Remember to register
for those seminars
and services
to help us forward.
Thanks**



One of our facilitated B+LNZ field days in North Otago showed what could be achieved with a constant water supply. The bottom line we were told was a 14.2% marginal return on marginal investment for the investment in the 7.1Ha on farm dam that irrigates 200Ha.

CADB MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please consider becoming a member if you'd like to support a group that:

- Adds knowledge and innovation to the agricultural community
- Runs world class trials and extension activities in your backyard
- Is a unique, independent voice for grassroots farmers

Please complete and return this form with your payment to Box 149, Balclutha and become a supporter.

Name: Phone:

Address:

Email:

Single/partnership membership **\$30** inclusive of GST
Corporate Membership **\$60** inclusive of GST

AGBOARD IN THE NEWS 2013



Trial shows probiotics can have a significant effect on the weight gain of dairy calves



Calves on grass at one of our supportive farms towards the end of our probiotic supplements trial

No one trial can ever be conclusive about any new technology, but we believe that there is considerable positive indications from our probiotics & dairy calves trial (SFF L12-083) for the industry to consider further work with probiotic supplements.

We have been working to find the appropriate next steps. One of these is to get farmers engaged with this microbiology in their farming through a seminar series. There is lots more science to do but we feel that we know enough now to help many farmers make easy gains in profitability.

- Under what farming circumstances do probiotics work best (is this when the animals are stressed – at feed transition or during harsh weather events?).
- Do calves eat less meal when on a probiotic supplement and does this vary by weight class?
- Can we identify reliable links between calf scouring, other disease and even death rates and probiotic treatment?
- How do probiotics actually work - do they affect rumen development and activity? The mechanisms of how probiotics work are poorly defined in stock animals and what little science is available is derived from rat and mice models (no rumen!).
- Do probiotics change the protein metabolism and ammonia transport in the lower gut by acidifying the gut? This would have important consequences for nitrogen partitioning which in turn effects how much nitrogen ends up in the urine.
- Would probiotics be a useful tool to reduce the damage caused by E-coli, esp. E. coli 0157:H7 and paraTB which causes Johnes disease?

There are production gains to be had if we can show robust answers to any of the above issues. These production gains could be without further intensification and this is important if New Zealand wishes to grow its productivity on its current environmental footprint.

All data is open and available

Our probiotics & dairy calves trial was undertaken between science, a commercial company (BioBrew as the only fresh probiotic available in the marketplace) and farmers in a way that the Ag. Board would like to support further.

All data is available from the trial and is accessible for you to scrutinise if you wish. More so called 'science' and more so-called 'trials' need to have this kind of transparency. Perhaps it would be good if farmers began to ask "Where is the evidence?" when offered product claims.

We are keen to work with any company that wants to demonstrate its product with sound, openly-accessible data.

Graeme presents at National Seminar on microbial inputs in farming

The second annual Workshop on the use of Probiotics in Animal Production was held in November at Lincoln University. A wide variety of speakers covered all known aspects of Probiotics. Prof Margaret Britz from the University of Tasmania explored the way bacteria have an impact in our farming systems and animals. Graeme explored various aspects and the results of our trials in his presentation and a local dairy farmer gave his experience from his farm. The possibilities for the future were also sketched out.

In essence a lot is known about bacterial action and some positive ideas were highlighted, but the biggest and next discoveries are yet to come. The use of probiotics in our farming systems are still in their infancy. Expect to hear more from the Centre for Food Research and Innovation at Lincoln University on this topic in the future.

2014 – it's the International Year of . . .

The United Nations (UN) has declared 2014 as the:
International Year of Crystallography
International Year of Small Island Developing States
International Year of Family Farming

Worldwide, the UN International Year of Family Farming is focused on sustainability, food security, the eradication of hunger and malnutrition, and helping people step up out of poverty.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcH0f1qu25k>

There are an estimated 400 million family farms or small holdings in the world that predominately rely on family members for labour and management. One of New Zealand ambassadors for the year, Doug Avery commented that family farms are responsible for most of the world's food production. The UN says that family farms are crucial for food security and sustainability. The Organisation's NZ counterpart will be promoting family farming through the year, with special activities planned for the National Agricultural Field Days at Mystery Creek this year.

Rural Women New Zealand is running Roadshow events for the Year of Family Farming but the closest is in Oamaru.

Available by email from the AgBoard or pop into the office to request a copy

Readable versions of our 2013 work . . .

"The beetles may be winning" – green thistle beetles monitoring project (2011-13) summary report, M Deverson, August 2013.

"Probiotics & calf trial summary report" – explaining the spring 2012 trial in which a fresh probiotic supplement led to weight gains in neonatal calves, July 2013.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/business/farming/beef/9030205/Probiotic-trial-confirms-calf-weight-gains>

Grass grub trial science report - **"Sustainable Farming Fund Project L12-133: Updated grass grub advice and demonstrations,"** CM Ferguson and SM Zydenbos, AgResearch, June 2013.

Grass grub trial FTT fund report (a good summary) – "B+LNZ FTT Final Report," M Deverson, July 2013.

Still available: "Best Practice for Managing Grass Grub," AgResearch & CADB, May 2013.

"Agricultural Statistics for the Clutha District," Clutha Agricultural Development Board, June 2013 update. <http://www.cluthadc.govt.nz/AgriStats2013.pdf>

The Spring newsletter to members (in case you missed this).

The analysis of the Spring 2013 survey of members: **"2013 CADB membership survey of issues and challenges for the near future,"** G Pringle & M Deverson, January 2014.

Newsletter for B+LNZ - **"Seminar on Safe and Profitable Fertilizer use"** – Palmerston seminar on fertilizing: Doug Edmeades, Peter Wilson, Bruce Beckingsale, Mark Crawford.

Our final report to the Clutha District Council: **"Clutha Agricultural Development Board, Report against Contract with Clutha District Council, Half-yearly report: January – June 2013,"** M Deverson, June 2013.

AgResearch disappoints

The Californian thistle Action Group and the AgBoard have been disappointed to learn we are unlikely to have our experience and knowledge used in the next phase of work with the promising green thistle beetle and Cali thistles.

We met scientists at AgResearch at Lincoln in March and July 2013 and sketched out some ideas to progress the science understandings of the beetles' apparent success here in the South and a Sustainable Farming Fund application was discussed.

Nearer the November SFF deadline we were told by AgResearch that a project was not possible, so it was with no little surprise that we read in the media that, in fact, a SFF application had been submitted. If it gets the go-ahead, they will be working with other funders at Lincoln and in the Canterbury area.

The AgBoard has had nothing but positive relationships with the scientists working on the ground on a number of projects over the years. They have all been a pleasure to work with and keen to pass on their knowledge and ideas. However it appears to us that the managers (some may call them the 'suits') of bigger organisations may have lost sight of the importance of working closely with farmers on the ground. It is our understanding that the Sustainable Farming Fund was set up to support farmers trying to meet challenges and opportunities that they identify in the field, and not to supplement the incomes of large science organisations.

This is all a disappointing aspect of the competitive funding model.

We have received an apology from an AgResearch 'Science Group Leader' for their lack of communication. It is still disappointing that Southern farmers miss out on any opportunity to be involved in this on-going research, when, after all, this is where the beetle is well established and where at least some of the science could have had widespread support and coverage.

Where to now?

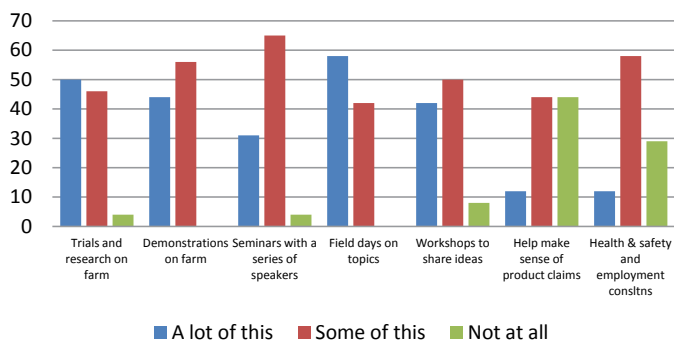
Members were asked in September to have an input into the future work of the Ag Board.

By far the top items on farmers' minds were their stock prices, financial and profit areas.

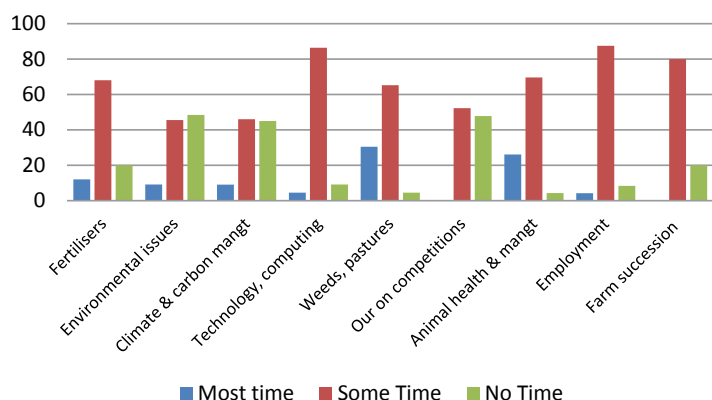
The second area of priority concerns focused on environmental, nutrient and climate issues. The bulk of the concern revolves around well-publicised public concern for the environment in general and water quality in particular, and how this has or will impact on farm sustainability. The Ag Board is gearing up to help address this perceived lack.

The third most important area of concern is that of pastures, weeds and pests. This is one area the Ag Board has been involved with over the last few years.

What types of activities do you think the Ag. Board should concentrate on now?



What work should the Ag. Board be spending most time on in the next 3-5 years?



Noticed any ghostly thistles?

The BHU's Future Farming Centre at Lincoln are asking farmers to look out for dying Calis to see if the fungal infection, white tip disease (*Phoma macrostoma*) is present in NZ. Please keep a look out for any bleached thistle shoots that look like they may be white tip (see photo). The bleaching caused by white tip disease is quite distinct on the newest leaves. Often just the plant tips are white, with leaves below the normal healthy green. If you do see any, please take a photo, note the exact location and email the information to charles.merfield@bhu.org.nz and cc us at cadb@ihug.co.nz

More on this and the opportunities if white tip is already in the New Zealand environment is at: <http://www.bhu.org.nz/future-farming-centre/information/bulletin/2013-v2/white-tipped-californian-thistles-be-on-the-lookout>



40 years ago!

"If you are concerned about our environment it's time you helped to do something about it. You can combat rural pollution by helping to reduce run-off and leaching a major cause of eutrophication in our lakes and waterways. The time to do something about pollution of lakes, like Rotorua, is now."

... from an advert in a "Guide to Water Supply," a supplement to the NZ Farmer – 11 July 1974

And in the same supplement, indications of a different world:

"Farmers are fortunate in having professional advice (to arrange efficient water supply) freely available. The advisory division of the Ministry of Agriculture and fisheries provides this service through a team of well-qualified advisers in agricultural engineering"