

FOREWORD

I welcome you all to this meeting, and hope that those here, and those reading our proceedings, will find the experience interesting, instructive and profitable. As President of the Agronomy Society of New Zealand, I wish to thank the Lincoln College Farmers' Conference for this excellent opportunity for farmers and research workers to discuss lucerne together.

Lucerne was a major topic at the Lincoln College Farmers' Conference in 1965, and the last major lucerne seminar was in 1967, the "The Lucerne Crop" being a notable fruit of that meeting. Since then many things affecting lucerne in New Zealand farming have occurred.

The lucerne area climbed steeply, and then crashed dramatically. The lucerne dehydrating industry has come and gone during this period. Only one major lucerne pest, the stem nematode, was recognised until 1970. Pests and diseases, some known and some as yet undiagnosed, have entered the country, become important, or become recognised as major limitations to lucerne production. Bacterial wilt, Phytophthora root rot, blue-green aphid, pea aphid and Sitona weevil are the more important ones so far named. High rainfall in the late 70's, and probably extension of lucerne growing into districts less suited to it, have all contributed to lucerne's decline.

However, I believe that the message which will come from this meeting will not be of despair, but of hope. To a considerable degree the problems which have beset the crop have been spurs to research into their solution, and good progress has been made. While research workers will not pretend to have all the answers, there is confidence that they are on the road to solving the major problems.

Also, I think a major conclusion will be that old problems are still with us and important. Attention to basics is still essential.

This seminar does not include discussion of all the topics worked on during the period. Time is too short for that, and special interest topics with limited general interest, such as seed production or lucerne juice extraction, do not receive a mention.

I think that before we commence we should recall those protagonists of lucerne who were here in 1967, but are no longer with us. For myself, I remember particularly Chris Iversen and Jack Calder of Lincoln, Eddie Topp of Waipara, and John Whitelaw from Ashburton. Some of you will remember others who served lucerne well. Our best memorial to them will be a flourishing lucerne industry which we have helped to build on the foundation of their work.

T.P. Palmer
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