

## LINCOLN COLLEGE CENTENNIAL AWARD 1991

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### J.R. and J. McKenzie

Rod McKenzie's association with Lincoln College (now Lincoln University) began as a student. He graduated in 1969 with a BAgrSc and, since 1975 has been a farmer host to a sequence of diploma and degree classes.

Following graduation, Rod became a regional manager for Gemco, a commercial cattle company. In this job he enhanced his skills in beef cattle management. This experience was put into good stead when in 1975 he returned to the family farm, Gorrie Downs, a 380 ha property alongside the Motunau river in North Canterbury, to take over joint management with his father.

Lincoln's visits to Gorrie Downs are two fold in purpose; to view and discuss the large scale bull beef enterprise run on the property, and to investigate some of the entrepreneurial schemes that Rod and his wife Jannette have developed.

The bull beef system run on the property has gone through a series of developments. To investigate for himself the farm factors influencing growth rate of bulls, Rod set up an experimental area where under different pasture species and grazing patterns cattle LWG performances were monitored. This on-farm trial, run and monitored over a 10 year period allowed the development of a system which now produces more than 600 kg beef carcass weight/ha.

Alongside the grazing system developments have been a number of other investigations. Behaviour of bulls particularly after puberty has been a source of lost production. To reduce behavioural problems Rod became interested in the use of anabolic steroids, notably Ralgro, to reduce the incidence of bad behaviour and promote LWG. Since 1977 he has conducted trials on his property on the effects of Ralgro and presented the findings at conferences, (including this conference on two occasions), at seminars and field days both in NZ and overseas. Rod has also experimented with different types of bull resistant

fencing, water supply systems and different mob sizes of cattle to improve the performance of his livestock.

The search for improved animal output/ha led Rod to initiate a contract rearing system for autumn born bull calves. This program allowed a further increase in the intensity of the system. It is the thinking behind the choice of enterprise as well as the way the systems operate which provide the reasons for field study visits by Lincoln students.

In recent years visits to Gorrie Downs have not solely looked at beef production but have included discussion on other diversifications introduced to the farm business. In 1981 Jannette developed a business exporting woollen fleeces to buyers world wide and, in 1985 a home-stay program for overseas visitors. Additionally in 1987 Rod and a neighbour developed Agrifax, the well known weekly outline of meat schedule prices. This service ensures ready public access to meat prices and is widely used by students as an information source.

Rod and Jannette's achievements have been recognised in many ways. In 1977 Rod was awarded a Coopers study award to investigate animal behaviour in sheep and cattle. In 1978 he became a consultant to several international companies interested in his growth promotant work. In 1983 he received a Lincoln College Foundation award to study in the USA and Europe and this year he is the Tasman regional finalist for the A C Cameron award.

These entrepreneurial and diversification activities, in addition to the soundly based beef production system developed are the reasons why Lincoln students over the last 10-12 years have visited Gorrie Downs where they always have their thinking stimulated by Rod and Jannette. It is for these reasons also that Rod and Jannette McKenzie have been awarded the New Zealand Society of Animal Production Lincoln College Centennial Award for 1991.