



# EXTENSIONNET

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Extending Horizons

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## Setting up the PEN: APEN assists with the establishment of an extension network in the Philippines.



Participants at the initial establishing workshop for the Philippines Extension Network (PEN)

Recently APEN was awarded a grant from AusAID to help establish a sister organisation called the Philippines Extension Network (PEN). While there is an extensive network of extension officers and NRM facilitators throughout the Philippines, many of them operate in fairly remote situations with limited opportunities for contact with fellow practitioners. The extension activities of the Department of Agriculture were devolved some years ago to local municipalities, making it even more difficult for practitioners to get together much and swap ideas and information.

Past Treasurer, **Horrie Poussard** was in the Philippines last year looking at the development of Landcare in Southern Philippines, supported mainly by a multinational organisation ICRAF. While there, the issue of improving contact between Philippine extension practitioners was widely discussed, with the APEN project being the outcome.

Part of the project was the funding of an

initial "establishing workshop" which was held at University of the Philippines, Los Banos on March 1-2. Horrie along with APEN President **Jane Fisher**, was there to assist the process of establishing PEN, and to develop the basis for an on-going close relationship between PEN and APEN.

This is the first step for APEN to foster other extension networks but is in line with a continuing appreciation at national and international levels of the need for such mechanisms to share ideas and information and thus improve the skills and knowledge of extension practitioners.

The PEN project is currently funded by AusAID for this year only, although there are good hopes for a further extension of funding following a successful establishment of PEN. There may well be other opportunities for funding similar network development in other developing countries in future years.

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## FROM THE CHAIR

Jane Fisher

APEN President

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## Great news - APEN has a sibling! PEN (Philippines Extension Network).

I am writing this from a meeting room at the University of Los Banos, Laguna. Around me, the interim committee of PEN are energetically discussing the structure of the new organization. Well done **Horrie Poussard**, who initiated this venture following discussions with **Dennis Garrety** of ICRAF (International Centre for Research in Agroforestry) when Horrie visited the Philippines as a guest of ICRAF to look at Landcare in August last year. From small things, big things grow. An interesting snippet from a report about extension in the Philippines "Some extension workers are forced to spend several hours a day hitching to meetings" - *next time you are feeling under resourced, reflect on that!*

**Amabel Fulton** has resigned from the Committee of Management (CoM). Amabel has been a driving force within APEN, initiating the Tasmanian Chapter, and serving with distinction on the last National Conference Committee. Personal commitments and new professional directions have led to this decision. I hope that in the future Amabel can return to the CoM, and perhaps lead the organization.

The CoM met in Sydney in early February for strategic planning and policy development. This was the first time that the CoM has met in person other than at an annual general

meeting, and followed on from the decision to start developing policy that was made at the Melbourne Forum. It was wonderful to put faces to names, and to start to move from a group to a team with a common understanding of issues - like a definition of extension.

The meeting was ably facilitated by **Stuart McMahon** following exhaustive planning with **Greg Cock**, **Mark Paine** and me. As well as attempting to define extension, we worked on a new mission statement for the organization. More on this in the next issue. We addressed succession planning, funding for APEN, and developed a timetable for future Forums. The meeting was very productive, and much more enjoyable than teleconferencing where silence means assent. Thanks to **Rosemary Currie**, **John James**, **John McKenzie**, **Amanda Miller**, **Mark Paine**, **Terry Reid**, **John Warren**, and to **Sally Marsh**, **Greg Leach** and **Roger Johnson** who generously contributed their time and intelligence to the planning for the organization.

It is rewarding to report that two sectors - horticulture and aquaculture - are encouraging industry members to join APEN. **Les Baxter** of Horticulture Australia was particularly enthusiastic, promising support for ExtensionNet and for the Conference.

## FROM THE EDITOR

Mark Paine

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## What strange times we live in!

I doubt there has ever been a period when the function of extension in society was more important than it is today. Together with this demand for service has come an equally strong call for the discipline to present itself as a relevant and vibrant player in areas where the management of change is a vital aspect of work. This issue addresses these dual challenges: responding to an increasing demand for service while expressing a contemporary image.

**Ian Tarbotton** discusses how extension played a role in a project that was using a combination of farmer and researcher knowledge to develop a decision tool for managing the perennial problem of internal parasites in sheep. The project team used multiple methods to ensure coverage of diverse farming situations and also probing for a depth of analysis into a range of farmer decisions.

**Jeff Coutts** refers to a number of projects to construct his argument that extension needs to be more specific about the various roles it is playing in society. This article by Jeff is based on a presentation he gave at the APEN 2000 Forum which was considered by many

to be a highly relevant response to current issues facing extension. We therefore are publishing his article with a view to making his framework more widely available and for extending discussion about the relevance of extension in policy and practice.

**Peter van Beek** challenges extension to take a practice led approach to defining a place for the discipline. Peter identifies several critical actions performed by extension as a way to ensure we are relevant to the needs of stakeholders while contributing to the development of our discipline.

We are starting to receive more news from the chapters with particularly interesting information from the Philippines (**Horrie Poussard**) and South Australia (**Ray Farrelly**). Excitement is building as **APEN 2001** draws near - be sure to keep abreast of developments as the conference is only six months away. Finally, following a suggestion by **John Petheram**, **ExtensionNet now has an ISSN number**. This means your articles are formally recognised by institutions and they therefore have more credibility within your CV or as references within project reports.

The Editorial Committee is seeking feedback and suggestions for improvement, so please send me any comments, no matter how brief, and indicate whether you want your comments published. If you have any articles for publishing please contact me.

# How can farmers help us to help them?

Endoparasite (internal parasite) management is a very complex area of pastoral livestock farming. In New Zealand, farmers have no obvious "neutral information provider" following the privatisation of public extension services and with veterinarians retailing anthelmintic products. This creates difficulties for farmers when they make decisions about endoparasite management. These difficulties include the development of parasite resistance to some proprietary anthelmintic drenches and concern about anthelmintic residues in animal products and environmental contamination.

A meat industry (Meat NZ) funded research study was set up to develop a decision tool to aid in the management of endoparasites. This paper discusses the approaches used to work with farmers in the development of an appropriate decision tool.

## Multiple insights enrich

The development team included a combination of people with expertise in parasitology and social research who worked with farmers to come to an understanding of their decision making related to endoparasites. This understanding guided the decision tool development process.

The approach involved focus group meetings with sheep and cattle farmers in nine regions of New Zealand. Existing networks and farmer groups, (such as the Sheep Council) assisted in the setting up of these voluntary meetings. Farmer interest in participating in the small groups to share their understanding and contribute to the decision support tool development was high. The regions were selected on the basis of differences in the type of livestock farming, climatic differences and geographic spread across the country.

The three hour focus group meetings were designed to rapidly investigate farmers' understanding of endoparasite management. A cognitive mapping software package called Decision Explorer (Brightman 1997) enables a qualitative map of decision making and strategies to be made. By projecting it onto a large screen a group can focus and form a shared decision

## Combining forces to develop decision tools for complex problems

process view by starting with a *clean sheet*. The responses to questions asked of the group were added as items that were later linked to form a cognitive map of activities that formed a logical sequence. The initial question asked was "what are the activities you associate with the management of endoparasites on your farm?". A group view was constructed by ensuring no item was added to the diagram until the group universally agreed on the significance and relation of the item to others in the diagram. This approach was used to create three separate diagrams one each on general management, regional issues and information gaps. The topic category "general management" identified the management activities typical of the farmers in the focus group. "Regional issues" recorded management factors which were unique to a region and may require consideration when making recommendations for providing endoparasite information to a region. "Information gaps" were those topics where farmers were seeking solutions to problems but where they perceived considerable ambiguity in advice from service providers. The cognitive map in Figure 1 identifies *best liveweight gains* as the overall goal for the group. Three key activities were selected by the group as strategies to achieve this goal, these included monitoring faecal egg counts, minimising drenching and developing a programme with the vet. A large number of activities are required to realise these strategies in practice. Activities are often interdependent or related in some way. The arrows indicate the linkage and sequencing of activities.

Comparative analysis of information gaps identified that "the impact of boluses on drench family resistance" was a question common to all regions. Many groups were also concerned about 1) the ambiguity in advice provided on the appropriateness of dosing ewes with anthelmintics, and 2) how effective the rotation of drench families is on delaying the development of resistant strains.

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Other forms of data collection used during the focus group meetings were audio recordings and written questionnaires. The transcriptions of audio recordings gave insights into farmer reasoning and the basis of debates thereby aiding with interpretation of the output from Decision Explorer.

Focus group participants completed a written questionnaire to describe the demographics and farming systems represented in the groups. This questionnaire also asked about information sources and key people who had informed the farmer about endoparasite management. Veterinarians were the most important informant to the farmer on this topic.

Another questionnaire was completed by participants looking at paired comparisons of six management aspects compared with the farmers' own management. A map of farmer beliefs was then generated to identify which aspects of farm management were closely related to the management of endoparasites. Profitability and animal health were the two aspects most closely associated with improving the management of endoparasites.