

## SIR ARTHUR WARD AWARD

### Gerard Hall

For over 30 years Gerard Hall has had a remarkable involvement in New Zealand's animal production industry through roles in agricultural consultancy, marketing, extension, education and communication. His understanding of the agricultural and agribusiness sectors, an empathy with farmers plus strong communication skills in both the spoken and written word have allowed Gerard to contribute at many different levels, especially in his specialist area of animal breeding, marketing and lamb production and management systems.

Gerard's early career was spent as a Farm Advisor and Technical Consultant with MAF and MAFTech in Dunedin, Invercargill and Marton. During this time he actively participated in field days, training courses and other industry related initiatives. He was responsible for promoting and maintaining MAF's performance recording package "Animal Plan". Gerard also initiated the formation of several successful breeding groups, including the Apex Coopworth Group. He established and managed MAF's Artificial Insemination and Sire Referencing Scheme as part of its nationally based Sheep Improvement Programme, and later played a significant role in the first release of exotic sheep into New Zealand as head of Sheepac's lower North Island operations.

In 1993, Gerard moved to the Wairarapa to join the training organisation AgITO. In just 12 months he

- increased cadet numbers by more than 30%;
- developed an assessment system to identify career development opportunities for farm cadets;
- initiated and set up Advanced Farm Business Management Courses;
- organised two-day leadership courses that focused on effective communication skills, public speaking and chairmanship;
- initiated and established discussion groups for cadets to develop and improve their technical knowledge and personal skills;
- revamped the annual short course and seminar programme for cadets.

In 1994 Gerard returned to Otago with AgITO. In three years the number of cadets, employers and farmers involved in AgITO in Otago increased from 38 to 420.



During this time Gerard initiated and co-established the national Merino Production Management Programme. By 1997 there were 80 participants and the programme was recognised with a KPMG-Merino Innovation Award.

In his education role Gerard developed and established secondary school agriculture programmes in eight South Island schools. He also provided counselling, guidance and support to AgITO cadets helping them manage personal issues, define career

objectives and pursue development options.

In 2000 Gerard instigated, developed and managed a training and professional development programme for one of New Zealand's leading farming Corporates.

At around this time, Gerard moved into an agricultural journalism career with Country-Wide Publications, the position he still holds. He is an insightful writer, with a talent for compiling features that educate as well as inform. The passion that he has for agriculture, and in particular for the application of research results on-farm to improve livestock performance, is clearly displayed in his articles. He is also perhaps somewhat of a rarity among his profession. Journalists are constantly under the pressure of publication deadlines, and need to be able to work quickly to meet them. However, Gerard will always find the time to run an article on research results and their application past the scientists involved prior to publication, to ensure accuracy. Equally importantly, he accepts corrections graciously on the rare occasions that they are needed. It is a compliment to his communication skills that many scientists consider Gerard their first point of call when they have research results they want published in the popular press. His journalistic skills have been acknowledged by the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand's Excellence in Property Journalism Award in 2003 and the Bank of New Zealand's Agribusiness Journalism Award in 2004.

By recognising the effective application of his outstanding skills in consultancy, rural education, and technology transfer we believe that Gerard Hall is exactly the type of person Sir Arthur Ward would have wished to see honoured by this Society as a recipient of the Award that he was instrumental in sponsoring.

*Grant Shackell and Neville Jopson*