

LINCOLN COLLEGE CENTENNIAL AWARD 1985

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## D.J. HURFORD

David and Allison Hurford are the second generation of Hurfords to farm 'Clovernook', a seasonal supply dairy farm at Doyleston. The College's association with this farm started in 1946 when Murray Hollard took his dairying students to the property, then farmed by David's father, Harold. Since that time the Hurfords have been visited each year by at least one group of students. College courses to visit the property have included B.Ag.Sc., Dip. V.F.M., the 1 year intensive course of the 1950's and the Diploma in Agriculture.

David started his career in farming straight from high school and like all good farmers learned that his education had only just started. His enthusiasm, keen enquiring mind, ability to see through a problem and an adaptability to change have seen him make a success of two animal systems (pigs and dairy cows) on his property — a rare achievement indeed. An uncle gave David a crossbred sow when he first came home from school. From that one sow he built up a thriving pig system which more than competes, in profit terms, with the well run dairy enterprise. Pedigree lines of Landrace and Large White were quickly purchased to produce crossbred, and purebred sows and boars, to improve productivity and profitability. The husbandry skills that he developed and the attention to detail shown by David and the staff he has trained, have ensured a sound future for this pig enterprise. These husbandry skills and experiences have been passed on over many years to College staff and students.

David's involvement with the pig industry did not end at the piggery. He has only recently resigned, after 23 years, from the Canterbury District Pig Producers Committee; he has represented the Canterbury region at ward conferences of the Pork Board for 20 years, and he has been a senior judge and an exhibitor of pigs in the A & P shows where he has won numerous prizes over many years.

The dairy enterprise when David took over the management of Clovernook was typical of traditional Canterbury seasonal supply farms. At that time up to twenty percent of the farm area could be in cash crop, fodder crops were grown for wintering and up to 90 bales of hay were kept per cow wintered. In the mid 1960's a challenge was issued to David from a farm discussion group, comprising a large number of North Island farm consultants, who visited the property. When asked to comment on the potential of the property, they unashamedly stated it

was at least 500 kg of milkfat/ha, an unheard of figure for a Canterbury dairy farm at that time. For many farmers this would have been too much of a challenge, but not for David. Over the next five years he set out to achieve this potential.

He converted to an all-grass system, which involved placing faith and confidence in the ability of Canterbury pastures to grow right through the winter. He placed emphasis on the maintenance of pasture quality and to aid this installed irrigation. Further, he markedly increased stocking rates on soils considered too wet for such action by most local pundits.

The ability with which David put these radical steps into practice was shown when he became the first dairy farmer in the region to exceed 500 kg of milkfat/hectare. He has now all but exceeded 600 kg/ha.

No consideration of David's success as a farmer is complete without mentioning his involvement with pedigree Jerseys. He has successfully shown cattle for many years and because of his ability in this area, was made a breed society judge. Because of the successes achieved in the farming enterprise and the show ring, the farm initiated 4 years ago, an annual sale for pedigree stock. This has proved to be very successful.

As with the pig enterprise David's interest in dairying does not stop at the farm gate. He is currently a director of the Tai Tapu Dairy Company, the immediate past President of the Leeston A & P Society and is currently a member of the Canterbury A & P show committee.

The ability that David, and latterly his son-in-law Geoff Stevenson, have to communicate their ideas and show how they put these into effective practice is the major reason for the College's association with the Hurfords.

As we know, communication is a two way process; it involves telling and listening. David over the years has shown that he is a very good communicator indeed.

David, his family and staff have always been most obliging. They have welcomed visits by College staff and students often at quite short notice. The importance the College placed on these visits was because up to 5-6 years ago, Clovernook was one of only a handful of farms in the South Island on which the well proven principles of high production, so common in the North Island dairy farm, could be viewed and discussed.