



PARASITOLOGY

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New Zealand Society for Parasitology July 2022 Newsletter

President's Post

After an unseasonably warm June, the 'winter switch' has certainly flicked on for July! It's been very wet, windy and wild here in the Wellington region. As I write this, one of the only two access routes out of our valley is blocked by 2 separate slips, and from the dining room window a generous dusting of snow is visible on the Tararua Ranges.

Along with the colder temperatures has come a veritable tsunami of winter illnesses. Nearly every person I speak to at the moment has some sort of viral infection within their household. We're seeing the impact of this across our own workplaces, and also the other businesses we interact with.

However, we're optimistic that once the weather starts warming up again, we'll be able to fling open the windows and get outside – leaving the winter ills behind us!

The NZSP committee has continued to meet regularly, online, and we're very excited to confirm we are 'full steam ahead' on organising the annual conference for 26-27 October this year. We had to skip our conference last year, so this one holds all the promise of a great reunion! There's more about the conference further down in the newsletter.

With international travel back on the cards, Augusto managed to pop over to Australia last month to attend the Australian Society for Parasitology (ASP) Conference in Cairns. Our ASP colleagues have put in a bid to host ICOPA 2026 in Sydney – and we've got right in behind to support them! We're also in the early stages of exploring a joint ASP-NZSP conference here in New Zealand in 2024 – we'll keep you up to date with any progress.

That's all for now. I look forward to catching up with lots of you at conference in just a few months!

Conference 2022

The NZSP Committee is thrilled to confirm that the Society Conference is going ahead on 26-27 October 2022, at the Massey University Sport and Rugby Institute in Palmerston North. Now is a great time to book flights and accommodation!

It looks likely that the Parasite Advisory Day will be held the day before (25 October) – so those keen to attend both can tie it all into one trip. We are now calling for abstract submissions, so if you've got some new research or an interesting perspective to share, please submit! Submission forms can be downloaded from [the NZSP website](#), and a copy is attached to this email.

Registration forms for conference attendance will be sent out soon – keep an eye on your inbox!

Student conference grant

Applications for financial assistance to attend the upcoming conference in Palmerston North are now welcomed from any students with an interest in parasitology who is a member of the NZSP. Applications will be considered by the NZSP Committee and must include:

- ◇ a detailed budget of conference attendance (e.g. travel, accommodation, registration etc.)
- ◇ a covering letter supporting the application which includes a statement as to what assistance has been sought and what is available
- ◇ a supporting statement from the applicant's chief supervisor or Head of Programme.

Please send applications to saleh.umair@agresearch.co.nz

Conference Volunteers

We're still on the lookout for enthusiastic members to assist with organising the conference. Because everyone is busy, we're attempting to break down the organisation into smaller roles. We've already got the proceedings, venue, catering, and abstract submissions sorted...but would love some extra hands to assist with

scheduling the programme, liaising with sponsors, and filling delegate packs. If you're prepared to help out, please [get in touch with Saleh](#) to express your interest.

New Website now Live

As you may recall from the discussion at the AGM late last year, the former host for our NZSP website was discontinuing their service and we needed to relocate our site. Tania has done a stellar job of finding a new web host and arranging the site set-up – and we are happy to say the site is now live! When you've got some spare time, check it out here: <https://nzs4p.org.nz/home>

Our Members in Action

On the airwaves

Those of you who listen to Radio New Zealand may have heard a few soundbites from Ginny Dodunski the other week – great to see parasitology getting some media attention! If you missed it, there's a print article available online: <https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/country/471164/farmers-advised-to-seek-help-on-combating-impact-of-higher-worm-numbers>

Parasitology podcast

Another of our members has also been hitting the airwaves – via podcast! Anusha Beer has created a 5-part podcast series about parasites, titled *Wild Hitchhikers*. Although the podcast is intended for the general public, Anusha thought some of our members may find it interesting or wish to share with their students. The podcast ran on [OAR FM Dunedin](#), but can also be found wherever you normally get your podcasts – just search for 'Wild Hitchhikers'.

Article spotlight

We thought it would be enjoyable to dedicate part of each NZSP newsletter to highlighting new research from some of our members. This month we've got four items to share: Anusha Beer (refer to her podcast above) is the primary author of an article in the *New Zealand Journal of Zoology* titled 'Natural history collections: collaborative opportunities and important sources of information about helminth biodiversity in New Zealand'. The article highlights case studies from the Otago Museum as examples of successful collaborations between government organisations, museums, and parasitologists which have bridged knowledge gaps in parasite diversity. To read the full ab-

stract, head to: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03014223.2022.2067190>

The AgResearch team have been busy (as always!), with a new paper in the *New Zealand Journal of Agricultural Research* titled 'Production responses in adult ewes to long-acting anthelmintic treatment pre-mating: relationship with body condition score'. The trial did demonstrate a temporary benefit to treatment of low BCS ewes, however these benefits did not persist, and the data supports the general view that many factors contribute to low BCS in ewes. To read the full abstract, head to: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00288233.2020.1801770>

The AgResearch team also have a new paper in *Veterinary Parasitology*, titled 'A model for the development of the free-living stages of *Ostertagia leptospicularis*, used in conjunction with on-farm egg count data, to estimate sources of pasture contamination on New Zealand red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) farms'. The team developed a temperature-driven model for the free-living stages of a representative deer-specific Ostertagiinae species, then validated the model using development data generated from seasonal plot trials. To read the full abstract, head to: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vetpar.2022.109721>

Robert Poulin and Bronwen Presswell have an article in June's *International Journal for Parasitology*, which is titled 'Is parasite taxonomy really in trouble? A quantitative analysis'. The paper describes the findings of a quantitative analysis aimed at investigating claims that the number of trained experts in parasite taxonomy and systematics is declining rapidly, and that the whole field is at risk. Helminths parasitic in fish are used as an example, and the findings indicate that the research output in parasite discovery is concentrated in the hands of a small number of individuals. Does that mean we really are in trouble? Find out here: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijpara.2022.03.001>

News and events

Gut bacteria may help combat nematode infestations in sheep

This eye-catching title belongs to an article which first appeared in [The Economist](#) – but unfortunately is mostly hidden behind a pay-wall! Fortunately for us, the paper on which the article is based IS available to read via *Animal Microbiome*.

Dr Erwin Paz is the primary author of the paper which is titled '**Bacterial communities in the gastrointestinal tract segments of helminth-resistant and helminth-susceptible sheep**'.

The authors came to the following conclusions, "the gastro-intestinal microbial profile varies widely between helminth-resistant and helminth-susceptible sheep. Each GIT section appears to support a particular bacterial composition leading to inter-sectoral differences among the various microbial communities. The microbial populations were most rich and diverse in the duodenum of helminth-resistant sheep, comprising bacterial genera that generally ferment carbohydrates. This observation suggests that helminth-resistant sheep can reorganize the duodenal microbiome taxa which may restrict the development of parasites.

If you're interested in the full paper, check it out here:

<https://animalmicrobiome.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s42523-022-00172-1>

Cronyism and nepotism rife in naming rights

Another eye-catching title – this time from an article in the Christchurch Press on Monday 23 May. The article by Will Harvie argues a need to review the way new organisms are scientifically named – to avoid repeatedly naming them after friends and colleagues! One of our members, Robert Poulin, is quoted several times in the article (perhaps related to the paper in our article spotlight section!). Helminths also feature heavily. If you're interested in the full article, it can be read online (refer page 15, Catalyst):

<https://www.pressreader.com/new-zealand/the-press/20220523/textview>

ANZCCART Communication Competition

This competition from the New Zealand Board of the Australian and New Zealand Council for the Care of Animals in Research and Teaching (ANZCCART NZ) seeks to inspire entrants to think critically about the role that animal research and teaching plays in society and to engage with the various aspects of animal use in these contexts.

Entries can take any form, provided enough evidence is able to be submitted for judging by the expert panel. Judging criteria are 'the four C's' – Coherent, Constructive, Compelling, Creative.

The competition is open to organisations and individuals, as well as tertiary and secondary education students. First prize \$100; Second prize \$75; Third prize \$50. **Entries must be submitted by 29 August 2022.**

Read more about the competition here:

<https://anzccart.org.nz/awards/>