



FARM OF THE FUTURE A STEP CLOSER *Robert*

Over the last month the GMS's attempts to develop integrated technologies for livestock production have taken several months.

Negotiations towards collaboration with USDA scientist Dean Decker have been initiated. Dean and I are considering forming an alliance to introduce Virtual Fencing (VF) to Australia. Last month I received a US federal grant to further his research into what he calls Digital Virtual Fencing (DVF). Pooling our efforts makes a lot of sense as it will dilute the need for international funding programs, avoid costly legal challenges in both Australia (LWA) and Environment Australia (EA) jointly owned by the Commonwealth and New Zealand while the USDA owns the patent for DVF.

Another very significant development was Meat and Livestock Commission administration of a project aimed at developing a selection of technologies. The multimillion dollar project is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and an industry proponent under AFFA's Industry Donor Program. My experience has demonstrated, the development of new technologies for commercialisation is a very lengthy process. The leading research is bringing together a strong multidisciplinary team of WA researchers. This paradigm shift that will underpin management technology several decades is significant. A key activity of the project is to message out to producers across Australia and now with the help of the GMS website, our concepts will be soon broadcast globally.

Another key development is the December 2003 release in Australia of generation tags compliant with the National Livestock Identification System (NLIS). Manufactured in the US, the new NLIS tag will have read-write capabilities offering producers more benefits. This is a welcomed step towards an electronic livestock passport that will eventually serve in cattle identification, keeping and pasture utilisation.

The development process has now entered an exciting new phase. Action taken by MLA will expedite the development of telemetric monitoring for pastoral applications. More R&D work will be undertaken on the functions we have envisaged for cost-effective precision livestock handling and natural resource protection, and the GMS team from DAWA, Curtin, UWA, Murdoch and the Chemistry Centre are advancing the other essential modular components.

It is pleasing to know the hard work of the GMS team is starting to pay off. The market is clearly responding to industry's technology research. Significant and positive changes should begin surfacing over the next few months.