



Profitability. Sustainability. Competitiveness.

# Research in Agriculture

## Survival tips for beginners

Garry Waghorn

DairyNZ <http://www.dairynz.co.nz>

# Life in research

- Don't pretend to be superior. You aren't
- Successful research requires funding
  - Everyone should share this responsibility
- Working together; imperative for funding and progress
- Are “important” people really important?
- Your boss
- Recipes for failure and success

## My message:

Look around; do not focus on your own little speciality  
Be brave; talk to people in other fields; use language they can understand. No Jargon. Don't be superior

# Successful research requires funding

- Read the instructions! (twice)
- Work with a mentor; don't try to get funds on your own; track record is a criterion!
- Look at research areas the funders want to support
  - Funders look for a return on investment
  - It doesn't matter how much you love your pet project; if it doesn't meet the criteria it won't happen
  - Obey the instructions (All of them)
- Do a spell check!!!
- Give yourself more time than you need

# Working together

- Multi disciplinary projects are the norm.
  - This means you might have to work with people you don't necessarily have morning tea with
  - Be respectful
  - Try not to be too serious
- Try to understand the way your colleagues operate
  - Be real careful about matters concerning religion, family, and to some extent politics, until you get to know people
- Sometimes scientists are like children
  - Throw tantrums
  - Live in their own world
  - Probably a long way from the rest of humanity!

# Working with people you wouldn't normally have much to do with!

In this case a chemist  
(be nice to them - sometimes they are OK)



# Your Boss

- Often promoted from a good scientist
  - Maybe a poor boss!
- Remember, they might not enjoy aspects of their role
  - e.g. performance appraisals
- Don't annoy them if you have a problem
  - Write it down and think about it before you make an appointment
- Most aren't mind readers
- Often they don't want to be in charge of staff
- Help them with crappy jobs
- **Never** ever embarrass your boss in public

# Are “important” people really important?

- Researchers sometimes use methods developed by “important” people (leaders in their field)
  - Often the methods are appropriate to the situation they were developed for; not necessarily yours
- Leaders achieved their status through respect
  - Most are open minded and willing to accept constructive criticism
  - They admit their weaknesses
- Do the same

# Recipes for failure and success

- Mistakes happen; try to avoid big or expensive or too many mistakes!
  - Everybody makes a mistake. None have had a global effect yet
  - Usually it is best to admit you made a mistake
- Talk to your boss when you have a problem
  - Do this sooner rather than later
  - Bosses tend not to be mind readers
- If you have a major issue, or a complicated problem
  - Write it down, think about it before you send it

# Recipes for failure and success

- Remember emails are stored and can be retrieved
  - If you have a sensitive issue, don't put in in writing
- Be aware of company rules
- Work hard, but on your allocated projects
  - Additional work will not count if you haven't completed your milestones
- Research undertaken but unpublished may as well not have been done!
  - A non-significant response **is** important!
- Never promise publication; promise submission

Passion – makes a good scientist!

A photograph of a man with a beard and glasses, wearing a plaid shirt, standing in a green field. He is holding a large bundle of fresh green grass and offering it to a black and white cow. The cow is wearing a white collar with a tag. In the background, there is a fence, a sheep, and some buildings and cars in the distance.

**Thank you for your attention**