FOREWORD

Welcome to Volume 70 of *New Zealand Plant Protection* (and its previous incarnations). As always, your Executive Committee and the Editor have worked hard to produce a volume we hope you will be proud of. We have a new Editor this year, Ruth Falshaw.

But my word, how the world is changing! ‘Alternative facts’ are the hot topic of the year. Internationally and nationally, people (often in positions of great power!) are spouting out ‘facts’ that they would have us believe as being ‘true’. They don’t like, don’t accept and definitely don’t want to hear, the ‘other side of the story’ regardless of whether it is factually accurate or not. Unfortunately, the media are likely to repeat the ‘alternate’ facts verbatim, with no factual assessment, and then look for an ‘extremist’ at the other end of the spectrum to invite a debate that becomes increasingly spiteful with each retort. As a scientist (well I was trained as one and did work as one for a time!), I find this hard to accept. Scientists are trained to look at all the facts with an open mind, to digest them, seek evidence for and against each side, weigh up the evidence and come to a considered opinion that can be defended by the facts. This is the position the Society takes, as we all should, on any pieces of research we publish in *New Zealand Plant Protection*. We will also back this position in any political/scientific debate, and would be proud to do so, as I’m sure you all would too.

Another concern I have is succession. There is a cohort of scientists in New Zealand who have started retiring, and over the next ten years or more we will be losing a substantial knowledge base that these local scientists have built up over their careers. I am not in any way suggesting that young scientists being trained today are less prepared to take over the reins than their predecessors, but I am concerned that few young people coming up through the ranks have an in-depth applied science knowledge, a connection to, or an awareness of the breadth of our primary sector – the farmers and growers out there who grow the plants, crops and food that are the backbone of New Zealand’s food producing economy.

The Ministry for Primary Industry’s Sustainable Farming Fund recently celebrated awarding its 1000th project. The fund has been outstanding in fostering links between scientists and farmers/growers. I have been involved in a number of these projects over the years, and have seen first-hand that the relationships between the scientists and growers involved have been critical to a project’s success. Having worked as a scientist and now as a manager in the horticultural sector, I regularly play the interpreter or translator between the scientists and growers, which serves to highlight some of the disconnect between the two groups. To the scientists out there, make sure you listen to growers when they talk. Their experience, while not hard scientific fact, is based on many seasons of observations, which scientific fact may well subsequently corroborate.

In this vein, communication between people and organisations across biosecurity, to foster collaboration and ultimately to enhance the effectiveness of the system, was the aim of this years’ one-day symposium on border biosecurity. An effective biosecurity system is crucial for protection of our primary industries. While the system is focussed on imports coming into New Zealand and people commonly see this as protecting our production systems, an underlying feature of our primary production systems is also being able to safely export the produce produced. Some of the organisms threatening to cross our borders could potentially cause more issues for us exporting our produce, than producing it. We are clearly under constant attack as we sadly see myrtle rust having

crossed our border via the Tasman on the back of the sub-tropical depressions that have drifted down from the Pacific Ocean and the Coral Sea. Our borders need a biosecurity system functioning at 110% to keep them closed to unwanted organisms, and to respond effectively to them when they do arrive.

The Royal Society of New Zealand is celebrating its 150th anniversary this year. We are a Constituent Organisation of the Royal Society, and we work with them on matters of interest to our Society and to engage with the public as well as politicians and decision makers. We are pleased to be affiliated to a Royal Society that is actively promoting New Zealand's science and technology.

To return to the topic of succession, two members of the executive committee are not standing for re-election this year. Kirstin Wurms has given six years of service to the committee while Toni Withers has been on the executive for 14 years, and has been Treasurer for six of these. Amongst other things, Kirstin has been an instigator of the student mentoring scheme while Toni, as Treasurer, has overseen a period of difficult financial times, but has held the Society's finances in good stead. We thank both for their efforts while on the committee. We also note the contribution of Rory Roten, who we seconded on to the committee for the last two years. Rory and his family have returned to the USA and we wish them well. As such, we look forward to seeing some new faces to join us on the Executive Committee, ideally with some time and energy to dedicate to the Society.

It has been another frenetic year. We are all extremely busy in our own professional jobs and lives, so I would like to acknowledge the indefatigable efforts and support of the Executive Committee this year to prepare another great journal, and run another brilliant annual conference, as well as administering our numerous awards, medals and other activities for members. They have been unwavering in their advocacy of the objectives of our Society and I sincerely thank them for this.

Tim Herman
President, New Zealand Plant Protection Society