

Editorial: A year of contrasts

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It hardly seems a year ago that I was busy completing Volume 83 of JDR, but now 84 is also coming to a close. One of my greatest pleasures as Editor is ‘assembling’ each issue, putting the accepted articles into what I hope is reasonable semblance of order based on the dairy foods chain concept. In this November issue we span successfully from rather specialised feed (optimisation of oral drenching with propylene glycol to avoid ketosis: Maurer et al. 2017) to equally specialised food (attenuation of memory impairment in mice as a consequence of consuming fermented cow’s milk: Musa et al. 2017). Along the way we have three papers that deal in one way or another with wellbeing assessment in dairy animals, papers that consider different aspects of metabolism at whole animal and cellular levels and papers that document various genomic influences on production traits in cattle and buffalo. The quality of the raw product features in three papers, commencing logically enough with colostrum (in sheep: Torres-Rovira et al. 2017) and then moving on to practical aspects related first to seasonality and then to milking frequency. We will come to the processed product shortly, but first I want to draw particular attention to this last paper, a Swedish/Welsh collaboration that focuses on changes in milk fatty acid composition (Ferneborg et al. 2017). One of the authors was Kevin Shingfield, one of the most gifted of animal nutritionists working in the area of fatty acid metabolism in the last few decades. Tragically, Kevin’s career was cut short by his untimely death (aged just 48) in 2016. You can read more about his achievements in his Obituary published in another Cambridge University Press Journal, *Animal* (Huhtanen et al. 2017), which includes this statement: ‘A major part of Kevin’s work was training the next generation of students to work in agriculture, whether in science, industry, education or policy fronts’. Kevin’s own education and training involved Nottingham University, the Rowett Institute, Scottish Agricultural College (now SRUC) and University of Reading, and most recently he was Professor of Nutritional Physiology at Aberystwyth University. I am saddened by Kevin’s death, but also by the fact that none of these excellent research organisations have appeared in JDR contents pages in recent years. It is heartwarming to welcome research coming from all corners of the globe, some regions quite new, others very well established. I have to express a hope, however, that the many students

that Kevin has helped will receive the support and encouragement they need to embark on their own successful research careers (should they choose that path) and be able to publish in JDR. Perhaps it is symptomatic of what is happening (or not happening) in UK dairy-related research that Kevin spent most of his research career in Finland. We don’t have any research from Finland in this issue, but we do have processing papers from Mexico and Australia, the second of which will be important in helping the dairy industry to deal with the problem of acid whey waste (Chandrapala et al. 2017). Bringing the current issue together has been an extra challenge, because we now have more papers accepted than we have room for in the issue. This gives me an opportunity to peek into the next volume, which will include a cluster of articles on the milking process (please excuse the pun!) and also a group of related articles focused on water use in dairy processing. This will be a true cluster, a scoping or horizon-scanning prospective review article accompanied by a number of short Communications on the same topic, something that we plan to do from time to time in the future. On the subject of Communications, a year ago I wrote about the benefits of short articles. The highest impact Journals use them extensively, and whilst JDR may not yet be in that league we do have very valid reasons for encouraging authors to be concise. We now receive in excess of 60 submissions every quarter year, and we have publication space for less than one third of that number as Full Papers. Skillfully written, Research Communications accompanied by Supplementary Files can tell the most important stories in the most convincing way, and allow us to publish more of your high quality research articles. Why am I repeating this message? In the final quarter of 2016, 72% of our submissions were as Full Papers. In the last three months, the figure was 86%, so in this respect we are going backwards, not forwards. In other respects I believe that the Journal is making significant progress. Our recent Editorial focus has been on Peer Review speed, and the introduction of Community Peer Review has made a significant and positive impact. Our time to First Decision is now less than our 14 d target, and once the new system is fully implemented we expect to achieve our Final Decision target of 10 weeks in all apart from exceptional cases. You can help: If you have not already joined our Peer Review Pool, please do so now! Next on our ‘improvement agenda’ will be a focus on author and article promotion, which will benefit everyone involved with JDR. Cambridge University Press provide advice for authors wishing to promote their paper,

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which you will find online at <http://www.cambridge.org/dar>
Please, enjoy this issue of JDR, read the 2017 volume and help us to make our next volume even better.

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