

## Citation for Professor Kevin G Whithear

Professor Kevin Whithear has made an outstanding contribution to Veterinary Science throughout his career. This contribution has had a considerable impact in education in veterinary science, in veterinary research and in the poultry industry.

In addition to the obvious contributions he has made to veterinary science he has played an important role as an unselfish mentor to colleagues, contributing significantly to the development of their careers.

He was the first person to introduce computer based multimedia into veterinary education, in a pioneering effort to transform teaching and learning in veterinary science undergraduate courses. The methods he developed have continued to be used in the teaching of veterinary microbiology right up until the present day. These methods encourage the learning of veterinary microbiology in the context relevant to the practising veterinarian and have consistently been appreciated by students in the veterinary science course at The University of Melbourne. The methods used attracted interest from veterinary schools throughout the world.

Professor Whithear was the key scientist responsible for the production, development, successful registration and commercial release of two vaccines, ts-I I and MS.H, to control major diseases of poultry. Both vaccines have been international commercial successes. Throughout the period of the development and commercial release of these vaccines, he continued to provide the scientific support necessary for registration of the vaccines in national and international markets, at a level well beyond that normally expected of a research scientist. Indeed he was the key source of expertise for these products from conception to release, and continued to provide scientific support for the products after their release.

The ts-I I vaccine for control of *Mycoplasma* gamsepticum infections was the first live vaccine of overseas origin to be registered for use in livestock in either the USA or Japan. In a further unique achievement in the sphere of live veterinary biologicals, product for Japan is manufactured in, and exported from, Australia. Professor Whithear has provided ongoing support for this exported product by performing efficacy testing necessary for export. He subsequently developed a vaccine to control a second disease of poultry, caused by *Mycoplasma* synoviae. This vaccine is also now registered in several countries, and is also a commercial success as a result of his considerable input.

While international commercial success of these two vaccines is one measure of achievement, it should also be recognised that Professor Whithear's work has had other impacts on Australian industry. These vaccines have controlled a Significant cause of disease in Australian poultry flocks, and thus made considerable contributions to the profitability of this industry. In addition, the successful control of these diseases had a dramatic effect on use of antibiotics that were previously administered to poultry to control the disease. There has been a 90% decline in use of macrolide antibiotics in poultry, which will reduce the likelihood of development of antibiotic resistance, and thus have public health benefits.

There are few scientists who had such a major role in work of such comprehensive benefit within such a short period of time. The rapid progression of these vaccines from invention to market was primarily due to Professor Whithear's commitment to all stages of the development.

In addition to his commitment to the commercial success of these two discoveries, he led a research team committed to further improvements in diagnosis of infectious disease and was active in promoting the development of closer ties between university researchers and industry, a role that saw him play a leading role in the development of the Australian Poultry Cooperative Research Centre, which commenced in 2003.

His work in the development of mycoplasma vaccines for poultry was recognised in 1998 by the award of a Clunies Ross Award by the Clunies Ross Foundation and his contributions to veterinary research and education by the award of the Gilruth Prize by the Australian Veterinary Association in 2007.

He has published over 50 research papers on a variety of aspects of veterinary microbiology, contributed chapters to significant texts on veterinary microbiology, and has trained over 16 research students, who have progressed to positions in veterinary and medical research, management of research funds, and provision of specialist services to agricultural industries.

Professor Whithear is possibly the only Australian veterinarian who has had such a Significant effect on an animal industry, the veterinary biologicals industry, public health and veterinary education and the development of a major grouping of veterinary researchers.