

NEW MODE OF OPERATION OF THE
AUSTRALIAN FEEDS INFORMATION CENTRE (AFIC)

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In April, 1984, AFIC prepared a new source form for the collection of data on feeds. This form, together with an outline of a suggested new system for acquiring data from individual data providers, was circulated for comments within State Departments of Agriculture or Primary Industries and amongst some other laboratories involved in analyses of feedstuffs. As a result of consultations with State Departments, through officially appointed State Liaison Officers, AFIC has established a new system for collecting data on feeds. Individual States adopted the system which will be adjusted to the practical circumstances existing in every laboratory willing to contribute to the AFIC feed database. Data generated from within each State will appear as a joint publication representing the annual collection of feed data entries, all of them having been confirmed as correct by their suppliers.

Each institution or laboratory will receive from AFIC appropriate subunits of the source form which may be completed by using an interactive computer program prepared and supplied by AFIC to suit whatever microcomputer is available locally. Once the annual edition of the State Feed Composition Tables is completed, the State editions of AFIC databases will be automatically merged, forming the national AFIC feed database where State editions of tables will be used as references.

The AFIC database will be maintained on NOS (CSIRONET) in two alternative versions: Version I, annual collection of AFIC data on feeds, and Version II, all AFIC records. Initially, access to the retrieving facilities on NOS with the use of software, known as SIR/DMBS, (a relational database management system), will be restricted to people who contribute data to the database, but a general public AFIC file will be established on NOS as from 1986.

Although the system of data collection may vary, AFIC will ensure uniformity in terms of coding of analytical entries and descriptive characteristics of individual feeds. Data providers will be encouraged to make their own arrangements regarding the transfer of data from files and analytical books on to diskettes or magnetic tapes with the use of their own facilities and technical support. Data will first be inserted into AFIC Buffer I and verified prior to transfer to Buffer II, which will contain the annual collection of entries. The system of data transfer will depend on the computer facilities available to data providers. The interactive program designed by AFIC for data collection is "user friendly", therefore simple to use in practice.

AFIC FEED COMPOSITION TABLES intend to provide State Liaison Officers and others with easy and "instant" answers to enquiries about feeds. In addition, there will be an AFIC INFORMATION SERVICE established to (i) generate data on feeds and feeding problems, based on the recommendation of the A.P.C. Working Party on Feeding Standards, (ii) computerize the information, and (iii) make it accessible. Both the database and the Information Service will be available as a centrally-located public file on CSIRONET (NOS) and an abbreviated version being distributed as printed editions, or as videotext on diskettes or tapes, as microfiche, or as computer (laser) printouts, via State Liaison Officers to users.

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