

(Galbreath, 2009b)

Story: Agricultural and horticultural research

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Plant Research Station

In 1928 the DSIR joined with the Department of Agriculture in establishing a Plant Research Station. It soon produced some important research results, especially on pasture plants. Some vigorous and persistent strains were selected, and seed of certified purity produced. Along with superphosphate fertiliser, this work provided the basis for the 'grasslands revolution' in New Zealand.

Tensions between the two departments led to a reorganisation in 1936, and the Plant Research Station was transferred entirely to the DSIR. The DSIR became a scientific research department, doing its own research rather than simply coordinating work in other institutions.

Research divisions

Five separate research divisions were created:

- Grasslands in Palmerston North
- Plant Diseases in Auckland
- Entomology, attached to the Cawthron Institute in Nelson
- Soil Survey (later Soil Bureau) in Taita
- Agronomy (later Crop Research Division) in Lincoln.

They had successes in many areas, including breeding plants, classifying soils, identifying trace-element deficiencies, and biological control of some insect pests.

Other new research groups were also established, including the Fruit Research Station in 1948, and a Horticulture and Processing Division, formed in 1980, which found ways to combat orchard pests and diseases, and bred new varieties of apples and other fruit.

In 1962 the Plant Physiology Division was created at Palmerston North, and a number of special 'climate control' rooms set up where temperature, day length and humidity could be varied to study the effects on plant growth. In 1963 the Applied Biochemistry Division was set up. It investigated the biochemistry of plant material, in relation to bloat in cattle; plant growth, digestibility and ripening; and milk and meat characteristics.

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White clover research



Ryegrass selecti
(1st of 2)

1926
Department of Scientific and Industrial
Research established