Preface

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This publication comprises the Proceedings of the Third International Symposium on Bluetongue, attended by 366 participants from 47 countries, which was held from 26 to 29 October 2003 in Taormina, Sicily. There has been significant progress in bluetongue molecular virology and genetics, diagnosis, epidemiology and studies of the vector since the last symposium that was held in 1991 at the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) in Paris. However, the driving force for holding the conference at this time and in Italy was the recent introduction and spread of bluetongue into southern Europe. The resulting outbreaks have had a devastating impact on the animal industry in the affected regions. As a result of these disease incursions, there have been intensive studies conducted in an attempt to minimise the losses from the disease and to find ways to resolve the trade restrictions that have resulted. Many of these studies were presented at the symposium and are included in the Proceedings.

The OIE, the World Organisation for Animal Health, was the driving force in the organisation of this symposium in order to provide a forum to address bluetongue control and trade issues. The organisation of the symposium was co-ordinated by the OIE, the Istituto Zootecnico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise ‘Giuseppe Caporale’ in Teramo, Italy and the Italian Ministry of Health. In addition, the encouragement of the European Union was instrumental in the decision to hold the symposium and in its success.

The scientific direction and development of the programme for the symposium were under the capable leadership of the Executive and Steering Committees which were coordinated by Drs Caporale, MacLachlan and Pearson. In order to focus on recent scientific advancements and the epidemiology of the ongoing European incursion, the symposium was limited to only bluetongue; previous symposia in 1991 and 1984 addressed not only bluetongue but also African horse sickness and related orbiviruses. The objective of the symposium was to ‘Provide a forum for the exchange of the latest information on bluetongue disease and virus including advances in research, diagnosis and control’. To accomplish these goals, the format of the conference and the resulting Proceedings were modified significantly from the previous symposia. Platform presentations by selected experts provided a summary overview of the most significant topics. The main topics addressed were: global situation; epidemiology and vectors; bluetongue virus and bluetongue disease; diagnostics; bluetongue control using vaccines; and control and trade issues. Oral presentations on these topics were supplemented by a large number of excellent posters that provided the majority of specific information on each topic. The Proceedings contain a total of 123 papers: 44 contributions by the invited speakers and 79 manuscripts from the poster presenters. Working Groups were identified to address significant questions and to provide specific recommendations that also are included in the Conference Proceedings. Dr Bennie Osburn served as the Symposium Moderator. He opened the conference by providing an overview of the previous symposia, coordinated the activities of the Working Groups, and provided a conference summary, which is published in the Proceedings.

The editors would like to thank the participants of the conference for making it a success. The invited speakers and the poster presenters have provided scientifically significant information which will be provided to the scientific community through these Proceedings. The manuscripts that were submitted were not sent to reviewers; consequently, this is not a refereed publication. However, the editors have reviewed the manuscripts to ensure that the format and style were uniform and that the main points of the meeting were presented effectively.
Special thanks go to Vincenzo Caporale, Director of the Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell’Abruzzo e del Molise ‘Giuseppe Caporale’, Teramo, Italy and to the very capable staff of the Institute who were led by Barbara Alessandrini. Their able organisation and co-ordination were instrumental in the success of the conference. In addition, the excellent editorial support and co-ordination that was provided by the Institute made the publishing of these Proceedings possible. The final co-ordination of the publication reflects the dedication of Gill Dilmitis with able assistance from Rudy Meiswinkel.