OBITUARY

Jan Kuiper, Ing.Agr, 1924–1989

Jan Kuiper died of cancer in Calvary Hospital, Wagga Wagga on 29 June 1989, one month before his 65th birthday. He had retired as a Special Plant Pathologist from the Agricultural Research Institute in 1984 and continued to live in Wagga Wagga.

Jan was born in Aalsum, The Netherlands on 21 July 1924. His schooling was interrupted by the German occupation when he had to hide in a small village to escape labour conscription. He completed his tertiary education at the Agricultural University, Wageningen where he wrote a thesis on the nematode *Ditylenchus radiculicola*. After graduating in 1952, he migrated to Australia and worked briefly for the South Australian Department of Agriculture before joining ICI in Melbourne in 1953. His fiancée, Elizabeth Antonia (Bep) de Vos followed Jan to Australia and they were married on 29 March 1953 in Melbourne.

The work with ICI involved the screening of fungicides and development of control methods for diseases of tobacco and horticultural crops. Bunt of wheat, caused by *Tilletia laevis* and *T. tritici*, had been well controlled since the 1920s by a series of fungicides and by the early 1960s most growers relied on hexachlorobenzene for control. Thus an outbreak of bunt in Victorian wheat crops at that time caused great concern. Jan showed that the flare-up was caused by races of *T. laevis* and *T. tritici* that were resistant to hexachlorobenzene. This was the first report of the field occurrence of resistance to a fungicide (Kuiper, J. (1965). *Nature* **206**: 1219–20).

Jan continued his work on bunt and began exhaustive studies on chemical controls of other smuts of the winter cereals after joining the NSW Department of Agriculture in Wagga Wagga in 1965. Here he pioneered the use of Vitavax for the control of loose smut of wheat and barley. The mainstays of control of bunt were hexachlorobenzene and organomercurials. When these were withdrawn from use on wheat in 1972 to prevent their contamination of wheat sold for human consumption, Jan had already found alternatives. His work was responsible

for the present recommendations for cereal seed treatments.

On arrival in Wagga Wagga, Jan was struck by the apparent severity of *Septoria tritici* blotch on wheat, and also by the fact that it was regarded as 'normal' by most farmers and many researchers. With his background in the use of fungicide sprays, he began field experiments that demonstrated beyond doubt the enormous yield losses which were caused by this disease. These studies culminated in the establishment of programs in the southern states of Australia that aimed to breed for resistance to *Septoria tritici* blotch. Many current cultivars have better resistance to the disease and it now causes far less loss.

Jan's experience with the commercial use of fungicides enabled him to develop economic controls for eyespot lodging in wheat after determining the critical time for spraying. At the time of his retirement he was actively working on fungicidal control of stripe rust of wheat. The Department granted him the rare distinction of deferment of his retirement to complete these studies.

He maintained his interest in plant pathology after retirement and acted as a reviewer of manuscripts for *Australasian Plant Pathology*. He was an active member of Rostrum and Rotary and presented Dutch language and classical music programs on Wagga Wagga's community radio station 2AAA-FM. Jan was a keen student of history and human behaviour and I fondly remember the many discussions we had on these subjects.

Jan is survived by his daughter Marijke Tod, son-in-law James Tod, and adopted grand daughters Alicia and Emma-Lee, his son Robert, his brother Henk, and sisters Maart Jansen and Ineke Vecht. His wife Bep died in 1988.

Gordon M. Murray
NSW Agriculture & Fisheries, Agricultural
Research Institute, Wagga Wagga