

## Foreword

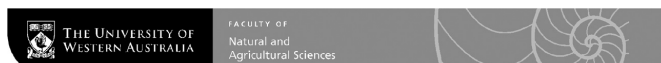
Ratites (ostriches, rheas and emus) are farmed worldwide for the commercial production of leather, meat, oil and feathers. Since the mid-1980s, ratite farming has increased globally and is an industry drawing greater attention due to the quality of its products. In addition, ratites are well adapted to arid and semi-arid environments, which gives ratite farming an advantage in the context of global warming. Recent scientific advances in breeding and genetics, nutrition and product technologies have resulted in substantial improvements in ratite production. This has resulted in a paradigm shift from traditional methods in ratite farming to new approaches in production. Ratite science is a relatively new area of research, but has grown steadily due to the support of the ratite industries, federal and state government agencies, and academic institutions. Following the success of the Ratite Science symposia in Manchester (1996), Oudtshoorn (1998) and Madrid (2005), Working Group 13 'Ratites' of the World's Poultry Science Association held the 4th International Ratite Science Symposium (4th IRSS) in conjunction with the XXIII World's Poultry Congress in Brisbane, Australia, from 30 June to 4 July 2008.

The 4th IRSS theme was 'Ratite Science for Industry and Conservation', which attracted leading international scientists. It opened with a plenary session titled 'Critical issues in ratite farming', followed by specialist sessions. The Symposium highlighted the complexity of ratite farming, and knowledge was shared on the contribution of ratite science to improving reproduction and breeding, chick rearing, growth, conservation and high quality products. Other sessions in the Symposium highlighted key issues associated with ratite anatomy, physiology, nutrition, genetics, welfare, husbandry and health. The Symposium concluded with a series of industry workshops. This Special Issue of the *Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture (Animal Production Science)* provides review papers and research articles presented at the 4th IRSS.

Irek Malecki (Chair) and Phil Glatz (Vice Chair)  
For the Organising Committee



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