



### The XVI International Congress of Acarology: welcome address by the President\*

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Kia ora, Good morning, Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my great pleasure to greet you in the name of the XVI International Congress of Acarology in Auckland. I am delighted to welcome you to join us at this international meeting, especially amid the difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The theme of this congress is “Acarological Frontiers”. This congress wishes to bring colleagues from different parts of the world together to discuss our common challenges, present the most recent findings, and keep abreast of the latest developments in acarological research. I am honoured to have the privilege to introduce you to our distinguished guests, both here in this hall and online, three McMurtry Award winners for their outstanding contributions to acarology, five keynote speakers, over 50 invited symposium speakers and over a hundred delegates who will deliver oral and poster presentations on a wide range of topics on mites and ticks over the next five days.

The International Congress of Acarology was founded about 60 years ago when the first congress was held at Colorado State University, Fort Collins, USA (from 2 to 7 September 1963). It was well before the age of the internet and social media. The congress provided the means for enhancing better understanding and collaboration between acarologists around the world through building personal relationships among participants at the meetings (Woolley 1964). The congress has since been held every four years, with exceptions in the early 1970s (the third ICA in 1971 and the fourth in 1974). Among the past 15 congresses, 13 were held in Northern Hemisphere (Fig. 1). This congress in New Zealand is a small step in addressing the North-South imbalance in the locations of the International Congress of Acarology.

I first attended the VIII International Congress of Acarology in České Budějovice, then Czechoslovakia in 1990 when I was still a young graduate student at Cornell University. I met colleagues whom I knew only by their names in papers and books before and was able to build close personal relationships with some colleagues. It was an inspiring experience and a critical step in my career in acarology. We have over 80 graduate students joining this congress, most of whom will give oral or poster presentations. Our students are the driving force of current research on mites and ticks, and the future of our science. I want you to do your best in your presentations and benefit most from interactions with colleagues during this congress.

I wish to thank my colleagues in the Local Organizing Committee for your support and hard work in preparing this congress, the members of the International Executive Committee and the International Scientific Committee for their help and advice, and the symposium organisers for putting together an expressive list of eight symposia. We are grateful to all individuals and organizations who supported this congress in funds or in kind, especially The University of Auckland, Tātaki Auckland Unlimited, Ministry for Primary Industries, Systematic & Applied Acarology Society, and Magnolia Press. Last but not least, we wish to extend our gratitude to our conference managers Liina Neeme and Ashley Astells (The University of Auckland), for their excellent work in making this congress possible.

May you all have an enjoyable, refreshing and successful congress!



**FIGURE 1.** Geographic distribution of the International Congress of Acarology (ICA) in the past 60 years.

### Reference

Woolley, T.A. (1964) Proceedings of the meetings, In: *C.R. 1st Congrès Int. d'Acarologie, Fort Collins, Col., USA, 1963. Acarologia*, 4(h.s.), 33–34.