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## Editorial...

David Dowling, Editor

**T**HE news that the Australian Cotton Conference for 2020–21 has again been postponed comes as a real blow. The biennial Gold Coast event has been one of the highlights for the industry over the past 40 years.

From its beginnings as a research conference, it blossomed out to become the centrepiece of the industry – an event to share the successes and failures (mostly successes), the achievements and the challenges. If nothing else, it has been a chance for everyone to get together, renew old acquaintances and relax before the start of another season. Unfortunately, the rise of Covid means we will have gone four years between conferences by the time 2022 rolls around. Assuming we are no longer pandemic bound by then of course.

The organisers had a difficult decision to make. Everyone is hoping that the vaccines will bring us back to normal by August, but there was a lot of money at stake. To continue planning past January this year would have meant that a lot of the costs – especially the cost of the Gold Coast venue – would have become non-refundable, a commitment the organisers were loath to make on behalf of the industry.

Given the amount of cash that has been splashed about in Covid relief over the past year, it is disappointing that governments of all persuasions haven't come up with an insurance scheme to cover disruptions caused by border closures and other government responses to the virus, however necessary they may be. Especially in this case when we are talking about a Queensland government owned facility – a government which should be doing everything in its power to get the economy moving again.

### I smell a rat

Most cotton seasons come up with a new pest or disease, or the return of one that hasn't been seen for a few years. It may have slipped under the radar, but over the past 40 years, I can't recall mice being a pest of cotton crops, which seems to be the case this year. A bumper winter crop after a few years of drought has created an ideal situation for mice to breed in huge numbers and when the population gets that high, they will eat just about anything, including cotton plants.

A quick search of Google (still available at this stage) doesn't shed any light on mouse plagues in cotton, but it does mention the cotton rat as a pest of various crops, including cotton, in Central America and the southern US. Not a nice thought.

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