



# GRASSLAND SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

## ANNUAL CONGRESS

### Guidelines for Abstract Submissions

*(Please also see platform and poster guidelines)*

The Scientific Committee's main aim is to ensure a stimulating programme of platform presentations for the Congress. Abstracts submitted earlier will have a greater chance of being included in the platform paper programme, but the final criterion for acceptance of platform papers is quality and relevance to the audience. Posters will be given prominence at the venue and enough time will be allocated so that authors can explain their posters during the relevant sessions.

As a general guideline, platform papers should report findings of original research or novel synthesis and review of existing information. Very preliminary findings and research proposals should be presented as posters. The closer interaction with the audience that the research proposal poster session affords will facilitate discussion and feedback on these proposals, while the short presentations of standard posters during the relevant sessions will bring them to the attention of the delegates and allows time for brief discussion. When selecting papers for platform presentations, priority will be given to new findings and novel synthesis. The Scientific Committee who review abstracts may encourage changes from poster to platform presentations and *vice versa* based on the content of the abstract.

It is, therefore, essential that abstracts are as informative as possible about the aims, methods and key findings of the study. We encourage authors to submit extended abstracts of up to one A4 page which may include a table or figure showing key data. Excessively brief abstracts make it difficult to judge whether a paper is suitable for a platform presentation. When an abstract is too brief to judge the scope of the work to be presented, authors will be requested to expand them or change to a poster presentation.

Please include a list of not more than 10 (ten) keywords with your abstract.

Please use the following format when sending in your abstracts:

- Spacing: single
- Font: 12pt Times New Roman
- Margins: 20mm all round
- Length: Most abstracts are between half and one A4 page, including the title, authors, and their affiliations. To improve the readability of the programme manual, authors are encouraged to keep their abstracts to one A4 page. If necessary, this can be extended to two A4 pages, especially if figures, tables, or illustrations are included. Abstracts longer than two A4 pages will usually be returned to authors to reduce their length to two A4 pages.

### **Structure and Content of Abstracts**

While abstracts, especially those of invited keynote speakers, vary in style, the following is a recommendation on how abstracts should be structured.

Scientific articles are usually written following the Scientific Format, and we recommend that abstracts follow this style. The abstract has a title, followed by authors, their affiliations and contact information, and then the body of the abstract. The body of the abstract does not contain any headings, but reflects several sections, namely Introduction, Aim, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion. These various sections are dealt with separately.

### **Title**

The title is a brief description of the information that the author wishes to present. Titles should be as descriptive as possible, but should remain relatively short. Some examples:

Title	Quality	Comments
Growth of two grasses.	Poor	This title gives very little information to the reader

Effects of nitrogen fertilization on the biomass production of <i>Themeda triandra</i> and <i>Eragrostis curvula</i>	Adequate	The title includes more information on the nature of the work (here, that nitrogen fertilizer was used, and biomass production was recorded), but does not give any information on the nature of the results. (In general, authors should avoid using “The effect(s) of ...” in a title.)
Nitrogen fertilization increases biomass production of the southern African rangeland grasses <i>Themeda triandra</i> and <i>Eragrostis curvula</i> .	Good	The nature of the response is now clear, and the scope of the work is contextualised by noting that the grasses occur in southern African rangelands.

## Authors and institutional affiliations

Provide the names of all authors. The author who will be making the presentation should be annotated with an asterisk (\*). The presenting and corresponding author is usually the same person. If this is not the case, then the corresponding author should be annotated with a crosshatch (#). The names of the institutions with which the authors are affiliated appear under the list of authors, with superscript numbering used if necessary. Some authors may have more than one institutional affiliation. For example:

Andrew B Cow<sup>1,2\*</sup>, Siphon Ndlovu<sup>1#</sup>, and Felicity Jakkals<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Bovine Research Institute, Hereford.

<sup>2</sup> South African Cattle Research Centre, Beesfontein.

<sup>3</sup> Rooikat Research Centre, Tierfontein.

## Introduction

An introduction is usually two or three sentences that provide a background and context to the work that has been done. After reading the introductory part of the abstract, a reader should have a clear idea why the work was necessary, and why it was done. Complex studies may require significantly longer introductions, especially if there are many interactive factors determining various outcomes.

## Aim

This component provides a clear account of the purpose of the research. It is usually phrased as an objective, a question, or a hypothesis. Note that the working hypothesis, not the statistical null hypothesis, should be used if a hypothesis is stated. Some examples:

Type	Example
Objective	The objective of this research was to determine whether fertilization with chelated iron would reduce the incidence of chlorosis in perennial ryegrass following grazing by sheep.
Question	We addressed the question “Can chelated iron fertilizers reduce the incidence of chlorosis in perennial ryegrass that has been grazed by sheep?”
Hypothesis	The hypothesis was that fertilization with chelated iron would reduce the incidence of chlorosis in perennial ryegrass following grazing by sheep.
INCORRECT: Statistical null hypothesis	The null hypothesis is that there would be no difference in the incidence of chlorosis in perennial ryegrass fertilized and not fertilized with chelated iron following grazing by sheep.

Depending on the nature and complexity of the research, an aim, objectives, and hypotheses might be appropriate.

## Methods

The methods section describes how, and usually where, the research was conducted. If the aim of the research was addressed using an experiment, then an outline of the experiment should be given. Alternatively, sampling

procedures or methods of analysis should be described. Some examples:

Type	Example
Experiment	The hypothesis was tested using a pot-experiment in a greenhouse. The experiment had two factors: water availability (low, medium, high) and nutrient availability (low, medium high), giving a total of nine treatments. Treatments were replicated five times giving a total of 45 pots, which were positioned in a fully randomised design. [Then give more details.]
“Natural” experiment	To test whether heavy grazing reduced forb diversity, we measured the density of forbs in each of 50 1x1 m quadrats at ten sites. Five of the sites had experienced heavy grazing by livestock for >70 years, three sites had experienced moderate grazing for >70 years, and livestock had been excluded from two of the sites for >200 years.
Data set	To test for a shift in rainfall patterns in the area, monthly rainfall records for the period 1875 to 2012 were analysed to search for trends (linear and polynomial regression analysis), periodicity (wave regression analysis), and state changes (segmented regression).

## Results

The results section should highlight some of the main results of the study, and should present actual values. It is usually useful to present some measure of variation and whether results were significant (e.g. sheep given a urea supplement weighed  $36.5 \pm 4.6$  kg and control animals weighed  $34.9.5 \pm 4.1$  kg ( $P=0.43$ )). However, full test statistics (F-values, degrees of freedom, etc) should not be reported. While it is appropriate to present some results, the abstract should contain too many results for a reader to assimilate.

Results can be presented in tables or as figures if they help to clarify the content of the abstract. However, authors should avoid including tables and figures just to add content to their abstract.

When describing a difference between two treatments, try to describe the nature of that difference. For example, rather than saying “fertilized and unfertilized plants had significantly different growth rates”, say “fertilized plants grew significantly faster than unfertilized plants”.

Note that abstracts that refer to results but do not actually contain results will not be accepted as either poster or platform presentations (e.g. “Results will be discussed”, etc). If for some reason authors have not analysed their data by the time abstracts have to have been submitted, it would be better to request an extension from the Congress Organiser, note this extension on the submitted abstract and ensure that the full abstract is submitted by date agreed.

## Discussion and conclusion

The discussion is usually one to several sentences linking the results to the aim (and hence introduction). The conclusion is a simple statement that informs the reader what the authors’ final decision on the research was. When providing a conclusion, it is important not to a) confuse a conclusion with a summary of results, or b) overstate the importance of the conclusion. For example:

Section	Example
Introduction	<i>Seriphium plumosum</i> is an unpalatable shrub that invades grasslands in South Africa. However, the shrub is reported to have a relatively high protein content and has not been shown to be toxic. Therefore, it is possible that animals can be forced to graze <i>S. plumosum</i> by reducing the amount of alternative food available by increasing stocking rates. This would be a way of controlling the shrub.
Aim	The aim of this research was to determine the extent to which oxen will graze <i>Seriphium plumosum</i> along a stocking rate gradient.
Results	There was a linear inverse relation between plant height after grazing and stocking rate. Ungrazed and heavily grazed plants were $35 \pm 7.9$ cm and $16 \pm 4.9$ cm in height, respectively. Similar trends were evident for plant volume ( $21.6 \pm 6.69$ dm <sup>3</sup> and $11.1 \pm 3.69$ dm <sup>3</sup> , respectively).
Discussion	As expected, animals did increase their intake of <i>S. plumosum</i> as the availability of alternative forage decreased. The linear relation suggests that this was a direct feed

	substitution, and that animals did not have to overcome an innate aversion to the shrub before starting to consume it.
Good conclusion	We conclude that heavy stocking with oxen may be a useful control measure for <i>S. plumosum</i> .
Poor conclusion (summary of results)	We conclude that the height and volume of <i>S. plumosum</i> plants decreased as stocking rate increased.
Poor conclusion (overstating the importance)	We conclude that all <i>S. plumosum</i> invasions can easily be controlled by increasing the stocking rate of oxen. This will increase veld productivity in South Africa and will lead to increased income for farmers, and a upturn in the agricultural and general economy.

**Updated May 2013**