

Forage and Grazinglands

Instructions and Suggestions for Associate Editors

General instructions. It is the editorial policy of *FG* to contact potential Associate Editors in advance of assigning manuscripts for review. However, if an Associate Editor (A.E.) receives a manuscript that cannot be judged impartially, contains subject matter outside the A.E.'s area of interest, or cannot be reviewed within **3 weeks**, the manuscript should be returned and the Technical Editor informed immediately.

An A.E. must not discuss a manuscript with its author. Although it may seem useful to discuss points of difficulty, disagreement, or mutual interest, this practice is prohibited to avoid misleading the author regarding the judgment and recommendations that will be conveyed later by the Technical Editor.

An A.E. should read the paper and form a preliminary opinion of its acceptability before marking on it. **Electronic review of manuscripts is strongly encouraged**; however, it is permissible to print the manuscript and mark on the text in pencil. Associate Editors may add comments electronically to manuscripts by using all capital letters, colored fonts in parentheses immediately after the section being corrected, or using the "track changes" feature of a word processor such as Microsoft Word. Such comments should correct deficiencies of style, mistakes in grammar and spelling, or to suggest alternative organization and wording. The A.E. should look for errors that copy editors (who are not scientists) might miss, such as misspellings of chemical names, improper or outmoded terminology, misspelled scientific names, inappropriate jargon, and redundancies.

Associate Editors should be impartial toward a manuscript and adopt an attitude of helping the author(s) communicate effectively. Comments to the author should be presented dispassionately and abrasive remarks avoided. The comment "Remove discussion from methodology" is more helpful than "Rewrite" "Reorganize" or "This section is confusing."

Effective reviews consist of: i) a summary evaluation (on the review form or a separate page) in which the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript and the most basic recommendations for improvement are set forth; ii) a list (on the review form or on the manuscript) of comments, recommendations, and suggestions keyed to specific lines or sections; and iii) a specific recommendation about the acceptability of the manuscript. Specific suggestions or criticism made in the review should refer to the manuscript by page and line number. Minor corrections in diction, style, etc., can be made directly on the manuscript in pencil.

Specific recommendations for a manuscript are: "**Accept**" for a manuscript that is acceptable without revision; "**Accept after minor revision**" for a manuscript that contains information suitable for publication, but where minor revision in presentation or treatment of data is necessary before acceptance; "**Accept after major revision**" for a manuscript that contains information suitable for publication, but where extensive revision is necessary before acceptance, possibly requiring further review; and "**Release**" for a manuscript that is not suitable for publication and the data are such that an acceptable manuscript cannot be prepared without additional research, or the manuscript is so poorly written that one cannot judge the scientific merit. An A.E. recommends that the Technical Editor accepts, accepts after minor revision, accepts after major revision and possibly further review, or releases a manuscript.

Associate Editors should return their reviews and the edited manuscript to the Technical Editor as attachments to an e-mail message. For A.E.s using hard copy, 3 copies of the review should be sent to the Technical Editor; one signed copy for the Technical Editor's file and two unsigned copies, one of which will be sent to the author and one to the other A.E.

Subject matter. The A.E.'s primary responsibility is to evaluate the scientific merit of the report, which should present significant

new information relevant to practitioners. Associate Editors unsure that a report is significant, or that its content is sufficiently new, or that it is relevant to practitioners, should convey these reservations to the Technical Editor.

Associate Editors should answer the following questions for each manuscript: Does the report contribute significant and sufficient new information about the subject of study? Is it appropriate for practitioners? Is the approach or experimental design appropriate and the technique adequate? Are all parts of the manuscript germane and necessary? Are the interpretations and conclusions logical, and have alternative ones been considered? Can the organization be improved? Is the style consistent with the journal guidelines? Does the author relate his or her findings to previous reports on the same subject? Associate Editors reading introductions and discussions must be alert for significant omissions and inaccurate or imprecise accounts of the findings or conclusions from previous work and for improperly attributed statements or findings.

Clarity and conciseness. Any part of the article not clear to the A.E. should be brought to the author's attention. Opinions should be distinct from facts. Nonessential or wordy passages should be identified and suggestions made for condensation. In multiple experiments with similar results, means with appropriate statistical analyses should be presented rather than presenting all data. If a manuscript suffers from wordiness, provide examples of condensed passages, and suggest that the author obtain help with this aspect when preparing the revision.

Tables and illustrations. Tables and figures should be evaluated for clarity, optimum format and arrangement of information, consistency with text statements, and no duplication of information in the text. If the information in a small table or simple figure could be presented more economically in the text, or if tabular data could more appropriately be presented in a figure, such changes should be suggested. Tables should only contain data that is discussed in the text and not superfluous or redundant data. Computations should be checked if possible. Graphs should be designed and scaled appropriately to show intended results. Photographs should be informative and scaled appropriately for the data presented.

Literature citations. Has the author cited only the most pertinent publications? Are all cited references listed? Are all listed references cited? Does the reference list adhere to PMN style? Associate Editors are not asked to check the accuracy of the list, but any errors noticed should be brought to the author's attention.

Confidentiality. Associate Editors must protect manuscripts from exploitation and must not cite or use the work in any way before it has been published. Associate Editors may consult other authorities as necessary to assess the merit of all or part of a manuscript, with due consideration for confidentiality.

Records. Reviews, A.E. assignments and review dispositions may be subject to legal subpoena, although it is the policy of the PMN journals not to reveal A.E. assignments. Therefore, PMN recommends that records of reviews should be maintained for 12 months following the completion of the review, after which the review and the record of the review should be deleted or otherwise destroyed.

Biosecurity issues. PMN asks A.E.s to screen potential articles for research that constitutes a misuse of plant pathological, agronomic, or other methods or a potential danger to society from the improper application of knowledge in our fields. Advise the Technical Editor and check the appropriate check-off box on the review form if, in your opinion, the manuscript under review describes misuses of plant pathological, agronomic, or of information derived from scientific research.