

DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 26 • October 2007 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA

New era for velvet



Also in this issue:

- Velvet grading guidelines
- Tracing origins of velvet
- 1080 reassessment decision
- Profile: Stanfield's Bushey Park
- NAIT update
- New focus farms
- Research programme secured



**DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND**

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association





Turning challenges into opportunities

While there is a raft of challenges in front of the deer industry, better returns for our products certainly make them easier to view as opportunities. Better venison returns over the last six months and a generally optimistic view on velvet prices are the key elements required to return sustainability into most of our businesses.

It is at times like the present that we should be looking at ways to grow and manage our industry with the view of preventing such serious downturns as we have experienced over the last four years. The NZDFA supports any initiatives that will see an end to the peaks and troughs (especially the troughs) that have plagued our industry. As Chairman, I respectfully ask farmers who are not currently NZDFA members to consider paying your subscription. If you have continued to farm deer through the last five years, you are obviously committed to the industry and I would encourage you to show that same commitment to your industry organisation. (Visit www.deernz.org/n163.html for a list of your local Branch contacts.)

For the last eighteen months, a group of velvet producers have been working with the support of DINZ to try to change the way we sell velvet. Concerned with two years of uneconomical returns, the group's focus was to create a structure that was more of a marketing platform than what we have. More importantly, the aim is to reverse the current situation of many sellers and few buyers. The working group believes the resultant concept vehicle, Velconz, if supported by farmers, will achieve both those aims.

The working group has moved concept to reality and is to be applauded on negotiating a 50/50 joint venture with PGG Wrightson, and managing to have it up and running for this season. The next challenge – or opportunity – for producers is to support what is essentially a PGG Wrightson pool operation this first season, demonstrating that velvet producers are able to take a medium-to-long-term view of their industry and are capable of working collectively. I believe it is a bonus that velvet producers will have the opportunity to be come actively involved as shareholders at no initial entry cost other than support with product through the JV arrangement.

Supporting a farmer-owned supply channel, which will probably at best only match other selling alternatives in its formative year, may not appear that there is a tremendous opportunity. However to see the opportunity we must understand Velconz will be the price setter. Essentially that means all other options will have to match it. Velconz will, just as the pools have done historically, set the price. Farmers will effectively own the supply channel that dictates the price. The question we will eventually find ourselves asking will not be how much more will I get if I supply Velconz, but rather how much less will I receive if Velconz does not exist.

This season, producers will be offered various velvet selling options. Most will be a continuation of the past, which has seen producers' income fluctuate while others in the supply channel, without the investment of producers, continued to profit through commissions and margins. The opportunity is in front of you. By now you will have read the promotional information and possibly attended one of the road shows. Velconz offers farmers the opportunity of becoming more than price-takers, and has the support of the NZDFA as it offers a real opportunity to deer farmers.

Finally, there are two further challenges on the horizon that I am not yet sure how to turn into opportunities.

Firstly, I question whether the situation we are trying to move away from (many sellers) in the velvet industry is just what we are allowing to happen in the venison export sector. As venison producers, I feel it is important that we are confident that the exporters of our product share our long-term vision.

Secondly, the Government's climate change policy and emissions trading scheme will have considerable implications

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Cover: Velvet is the big focus for this issue of *Deer Industry News*, as the industry enters a new era with the launch of Velconz Ltd (see page 5). Photo: Vanessa Crowley.

Velvet handling: hygiene and safety reminders

Each year the National Velvet Standards Body (NVSBS) de-velveting programme is required to be audited and benchmarked against previous seasons. These audit findings are then presented to the constituent bodies that make up the NVSB. This includes the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC).

Generally in the past four seasons these audit findings have been consistent and showing that in most areas there is a high level of compliance.

However there are two areas where the audits have been showing cause for concern. These involve:

- hygiene – in the facilities where velvet is removed and with the velvet once it is removed
- operator safety.

Please remember we are dealing with a food product. Make no mistake, the hygiene of this product needs to be ensured at all times and we are trying to avoid bacterial contamination during removal and storage.

Audits have recorded some facilities where velvet is removed and stored as totally unacceptable. Some facilities are heavily coated in bird droppings, dust, dirt or cobwebs, etc. The down-turn in prices in recent seasons is no excuse when it comes to food products and food safety.

Reports from the velvet pools last season highlighted a disturbing amount of velvet (mainly spiker velvet) presented for sale in bags with large amounts of frozen dirt from the shed floors or of large frozen blocks of blood and hair mixed with the velvet. This would indicate that the cut spikes are left to fall at removal, gathered up from the shed floor, put in to bags and then frozen down.

Some product is received in the store where large volumes are frozen in a storage bag in inadequate freezing conditions. The outside product freezes but in the centre of the bag decay has already occurred and the whole bag is contaminated and must be discarded.

We need to be more aware and to take particular care in the handling and storage of the product.

- When removed, velvet sticks should be placed on a rack, preferably at 15-20° slope, cut end uppermost, or hung on a rail or wire in a clean environment before going into the freezer.
- Velvet sticks should be placed individually in a freezer as soon as possible after removal.

Editorial continued from page 1

for all livestock industries. The fact that livestock emissions will not be included until 2013 is not cause for complacency but rather may be a demonstration that Government recognises agriculture and its contribution to the economy.

As we move through new areas that will affect deer farmers, such as NAIT, the AHB review of the NPMS, productivity advances and the focus farms projects, not to mention the above challenges, a strong independent voice for NZDFA is more important than ever, and the Executive Committee appreciates your support. 

Bill Taylor
Chairman, NZDFA Executive Committee

- Storage freezers should be thoroughly cleaned before the season and used for velvet only.
- The NVSB Velvet ID tags should be attached to each velvet stick. For spikers, one tag per bag is all that is required.
- Most home freezers are not capable of freezing down large quantities of product efficiently or effectively, so alternatives should be considered.
- Once frozen, velvet should be placed in a plastic bag and kept frozen.
- Freshly cut spiker velvet should be treated the same way. Once frozen, it can be placed in large quantities in a plastic bag.
- When transporting frozen velvet to point of sale, bags should out of a freezer for no longer than two hours.


Operator safety

The practice of handling uncapped syringes during velvet removal is a safety concern. Auditors had noted this and had spoken to both operators and supervising veterinarians where this practice was observed. There is a real danger of an accidental injection or eye damage that could leave the operator severely incapacitated.

We all get into habits in our own environments and may probably think it will never happen to us. However this is not so, and accidents do happen. Be aware and think safety whenever handling syringes and moving among your animals.

Reminder: you must have NVSB certification

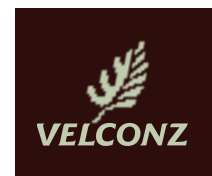
To legally be able to remove velvet from any of your deer yourself, whether it is spikers or mixed age animals, you must be a certificated member of the NVSB programme. If you are not a certified member and you remove even one stick of spiker velvet and get found out, you are then deemed to have performed an illegal surgical operation. Under the Animal Welfare Act you could be liable to a criminal conviction, a fine or even a jail sentence. It is treated as a very serious offence under the Act.

For spiker velvet removal, we have the cable tie system which enables all spikes to be removed humanely. Please talk to your veterinarian and discuss how to become certified in for this method. It's simple and it protects not only you as an individual velvetor but it also helps to protect the integrity of the velvet industry. 

- **For further information: John Tacon, Deer Industry New Zealand, 04-471 6117 or 021-242 2873, john.tacon@deernz.org**

VELCONZ HITS THE ROAD

As Deer Industry News went to press, a series of farmer meetings was being held throughout New Zealand to bring stakeholders up to date with the decision to form Velconz Limited, a joint venture between the new producer shareholder entity Velconz Holdings Limited (VHL) and PGG Wrightson (PGW).



Velconz Ltd will be operating by the beginning of the 2007/08 velvet selling season starting at the end of this month. In this article we review the broad principles. Details and company constitutions, shareholder agreements and other formalities are still being established, with producer reaction and concerns being taken into consideration following the series of road show meetings. Velconz is a 50/50 joint venture between PGW and velvet suppliers.

Producer support for Velconz is vital. For initial success, Velconz has targeted at least 280 tonnes of velvet (last year's pool volume) to be supplied to the Velconz joint venture through the PGW pools service network. Suppliers will notice no difference in the operation of the pools this year, but the support of the JV will be an indicator of producer appetite for change and have direct involvement in developing a marketing platform in which they will have a say, based on their individual volume-based participation. Longer term, the success and aim of this venture relies on more than 70 percent of New Zealand's velvet being sold through Velconz.

Marketing

Velconz is the first step towards creating a true marketing platform with critical mass for New Zealand velvet. The owners of the velvet, many of whom have the most invested in the velvet supply chain, will have input into the governance and responsibility over how their velvet is sold and how their industry develops.

There will initially be co-branding of PGW and Velconz. PGW and the Velconz working group anticipate that the velvet business will move to Velconz branding and the marketing and sale of velvet through the channel will be the responsibility of Velconz.

Capital structure – how it works

- For the first year, each velvet supplier will receive a share allocation based on a per kg participation 1:1 formula in Velconz Holdings Ltd (VHL) at no additional cost at the end of the season. VHL in turn owns 50% of Velconz. Velvet suppliers will essentially be receiving a share of Velconz.
- The purposes of VHL are to:
 - appoint directors to Velconz
 - monitor the performance of Velconz (similar to Fonterra's Shareholder Council)
 - keep the Velconz share registry simple so that the 50/50 split is maintained.
- The inaugural Directors of VHL appointed from the working group are Ian Scott (Waikato), Bill Taylor (Southland) and Grant Cochrane (Otago). Chairman is Ian Scott.
- Directors will retire by rotation and appointments in future will be made by the shareholders based on their participating shareholder vote.
- Fees paid by producers for using the channel for this season will remain as they are now – no extra cost. The PGW pools operations are retained though a service agreement and in future, fees and costs will be subject to negotiation with PGW through the Velconz Directors.
- In recognition of the ability of Velconz to increase the volume of velvet handled under the service agreement through the existing PGW pools operation, Velconz will receive a share of the revenue earned by PGW on volumes supplied more than 280 tonnes of velvet based on the 2006/07 season. That revenue share is on a per kg basis. Initial estimates are that this will be about \$5.60 per kg based on last year's prices and will be the initial capitalisation process for the company.
- The challenge for producers is to sell 70 percent of New

Zealand's velvet production through this channel. This is a dominant realistic market figure and typical historically of what the various pools have handled.

Logistics and allocation of shares

- Velvet logistics and the supply chain will remain as they are now. That is, velvet suppliers and buyers will receive the same high levels of service including the special services (VSM™, sell or hold options) that PGW pools have offered last season. In turn, PGW has confirmed to producers that it is 100 percent committed to the Velconz initiative.
- Velconz's focus is on the velvet and velvet volume supply rather than the velvet producer. Anyone who supplies Velconz with velvet will receive shares. (PGW staff and agents, in their capacity as agents and representatives of PGW, will not be eligible for shares, unless they are suppliers of velvet through interests unconnected to PGW.)

Messages for producers: To make Velconz work

1. Producers must take a medium- to long-term view of their industry and seek some sense of off-farm investment in it.
2. Producers must accept that no matter what their individual arrangements are, all velvet prices are influenced predominantly by the pool price.
3. Selling velvet this season through PGW, although difficult for some producers to accept, is the only means of achieving the above attainment of a critical mass and influencing position.
4. The long-term success of this venture relies on more than 70 percent of New Zealand's velvet being sold through Velconz.
5. The initial success relies on producers supplying more than 280 tonnes through the existing PGW supply chain.
6. Producers must recognise PGW as equal and committed partners in Velconz rather than 'ticket clippers'. The reality is that PGW's network of 70 velvet depots, bulk freight forwarding contracts, agents and pool staff result in an efficient supply chain which is operated by experienced staff.
7. Producer/suppliers must see the value in having a shareholding proportional to the velvet they supply, as a means of exercising some governance through the election of directors and the ability to vote on issues relating to production and supply.
8. Without collective behaviour by velvet suppliers:
 - New Zealand's velvet processing capacity is likely to be lost, with velvet producers reduced to complete reliance on the frozen trade, and on offshore interests.
 - There will be no way to act when there is an over-supply of New Zealand velvet. But if there is a large proportion of New Zealand velvet being sold through a single system, initiatives such as supply diversion can be implemented.
9. Unless they support this opportunity, producers will continue to be price-takers, while others profit by collecting commissions and margins without significant investment in comparison to our on-farm investment; and the price fluctuations of recent years will continue.

For further information contact:

- Ian Scott, Chairman, Velconz Holdings Ltd, ph 027 473 2657
- Tony Cochrane, National Velvet Manager, PGG Wrightson, ph 03 344 3660

Changes to grading guidelines

The Velvet Grading Guidelines Review Committee met in August to consider possible changes to the current Grading Guidelines. The Committee has agreed on four changes which reflect acknowledgement of the opportunity to add value by refining style grading that is a result of the continued genetic advancement of New Zealand velvet and the influence on velvet from trophy stags.

The Committee reaffirmed commitment to the core principle of *grouping like with like based on market requirements*. The purpose of the principle is to ensure that producers who remove velvet according to market requirements are rewarded for meeting those requirements.

Issue: Regrowth

There is concern that RG2 maximum length is too long and calcified reducing the quality of the grade.

Suggest reducing maximum length to 35 cm to maintain quality RG2. Some RG2 has been downgraded to HV3 due to the length and level of calcification. RG4 should retain its maximum length of 40 cm and will act as an “all other” grade.



A good SAT stick.



Good Spiker 1 grade.



Spiker velvet that MAY now be graded as SPT.

Committee decision 1: to reduce the maximum length of RG2 from 40 cm to 35 cm.

Issue: Spiker

Better velvet genetics and the integration of trophy genetics are influencing the structure of spiker velvet. Single-spiked velvet is becoming less common and is being replaced by branching spikes or those that include small brow tynes. This type of velvet is indenting (prior to branching) at around 10 cm (from the cutting point) which based on the current guidelines would demote it to SP3. However there is concern that this short, fat velvet is being unfairly penalised and devalued and the question was asked: Could it be included in SP2? Buyers report that SP1 and SP2 are specific grades with specific customers and markets who do not value branching or indenting velvet. Inclusion of this type of velvet would lower the value of these grades.

Committee decision 2: to create a new grade called SPT to cater for SP which has small brow tynes or is indicating a split into two tynes.

Issue: SAP

There is concern that SA premium has not delivered the expected increase in returns.

It was noted that the Taiwanese market has been adversely affected since the inception of the grade with the poor economic situation and limited import volumes. Taiwan buyers reported that customers interested in the SAP grade

have been requesting sticks with a minimum weight of 2.3kg. An increase in the minimum weight is expected to give the product a greater point of difference and hence an increase in value over other SA grades. The SAP grade gives the industry a good benchmark to aim for. When the Taiwan market improves, returns for the grade are also expected to follow.

Committee decision 3: to increase the minimum weight of SAP from 2.0 kg to 2.3 kg.

Issue: Amalgamation of 1- and 2-tyned velvet

The price differential between 1- and 2-tyned velvet within grades is small and the committee suggested some grades (e.g. SA1 and SA2) are amalgamated. Concern was also raised that non-traditional (unorthodox) type velvet (including sticks with accessory tynes, snags, bifurcations and palmations etc) is reducing the value of traditional (orthodox) sticks within the grade. The suggestion was made that traditional sticks with both one and two tynes be grouped together into one grade (SAT: Super A Traditional) and all other velvet to be graded as SA – an “all other” grade.

Processors reported that velvet with two tynes contains more blood and subsequently produces a product with better colour and quality.

Committee decision 4: to combine SA1 and SA2 into EITHER SA Traditional (SAT) or SA.

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Partnership approach to biosecurity response planning

The on-again, off-again foot and mouth disease outbreak in the UK in recent weeks, and the discovery of bluetongue in that country, are timely reminders that devastating animal pests and diseases from anywhere in the world are only a short plane ride away. If climate change continues as predicted, New Zealand's environment will become suitable for a far wider range of unwanted bugs than we have at present. Biosecurity threats never sleep.

In days gone by, if there was a biosecurity alert affecting agriculture, we could pretty much sit back and wait for the Government to tell us what to do. There were armies of white-overalled officials to get on with manning road blocks, disinfecting tyres and so on.

Those response mechanisms are still in place, but resources for dealing with an incursion aren't infinite. There has to be some prioritisation, and this is where there is going to be an important change. The Government – MAF – wants stakeholders like the deer industry to have a say in how New Zealand should respond to the biosecurity threats that affect them.

MAF has prepared a discussion paper that outlines plans for MAF and industry groups like DINZ to have plans for a specific biosecurity incursion – say chronic wasting disease – in place before it ever occurs. (Incidentally, the deer industry already contributes towards the annual cost of surveillance for CWD.)

The new policy framework MAF is putting together means Government and industry organisations like DINZ will jointly decide which pests and diseases are of interest, what would be needed to be ready for an incursion, how costs might be shared (based on relative public and private benefits), and how to make fast joint decisions if and when the pest or disease does turn up in New Zealand.

The basic principle is that an industry that benefits from the government response to an incursion should have a say in decisions about the response – but there needs to be agreement on cost-sharing. That cost balance would depend on where the benefits from the incursion response would be felt. For example, if a pest arrived that affected nothing but deer and had little or no effect outside the industry, then under the framework, the deer sector would be expected to shoulder a fair portion of the costs involved in preparedness and response. But in the case of a pest or disease that affected many people or sectors, the costs would be shared more widely.

DINZ executive staff were part of the group which has been working on the issue which resulted in the publication of the framework – although that does not imply that DINZ supports the proposal. A number of consultation meetings were held earlier this month to discuss the new policy. The meeting was held after our press deadline, but we hope to bring you an update and DINZ's reaction to the discussion paper in our December issue.

You can download the draft *Policy for responding to pests and diseases (risk organisms)* from:

www.biosecurity.govt.nz/strategy-and-consultation/consultation/policy/pest-and-disease-response

Closing date for submissions to MAF is 14 December 2007.

Changes to grading guidelines continued from page 6

Reduced categories within lower grades

Last season PGG Wrightson reduced the categories within the C, D and E grades from 8 to 2 (e.g. now C and CS) and report that the change caused no major problems with buyers.

Buyers report that, while the reduction was acceptable within the lower grades, the difference in quality between short, medium and long sticks in the A and B grades is significant and is more customer specific.


Grading consistency

The meeting discussed a concern that was raised regarding inconsistencies between graders. The committee felt that the consistency of grading was self auditing and that incorrectly graded velvet would affect only the buyer's reputation and business. DINZ will expand its current auditing procedure to include assessing velvet on farm, at pools and with road buyers. DINZ will also investigate the feasibility of developing a grader accreditation programme.



These heads will now be graded as SA.

Reminders: General hygiene and good practice

- Please do not use one NVSB tag to tie two sticks together.
- Hung velvet results in poor quality final product and is avoided by processors.
- Poor presentation such as the existence of blood, dirt or ticks on velvet is not on bad from a food safety point of view but is a something processors avoid also.
- Due to the enforcement of Korean Customs regulations the DINZ/NVSB tags must remain on the velvet sticks for export. As such it is vitally important that the tags are not applied too tightly as this can damage the velvet during processing in a variety of ways.
- Do not freeze velvet sticks (especially spiker) together in large bags. This nearly always causes significant indentation and consequently problems with quality and processing. 

Photos courtesy of Tony Cochrane, PGG Wrightson.

Powering through China on velvet

New Zealand adventure racing team, Powered by velvet.org.nz, has been making its presence felt in the Chinese round of the rapidly growing world-wide extreme sport arena.

The team, which uses deer velvet sports supplements, came home sixth in a top field of 24 teams tackling the Wulong Mountain Quest, then backed up two days later with a second place in the Zunji Outdoor Challenge in Guizhou.

The team was surprised at how well they recovered between the two events. With their experience in using the natural deer velvet sports supplement that has enhanced stamina, increased strength and improved recovery, the team is looking forward to successful future races.

The Wulong Mountain Quest is a three-day staged race covering 220km, and attracts many of the world's top adventure racers, including world champions Team Nike. Each day required between 6 – 9 hours of racing and included trail running, mountain biking, rope skills, kayaking, rafting, caving, canyoning and team skill challenges.

In 37°C heat, the New Zealand team (Rhys Burns, Sonya Clark, Chris Morrissey and Ross Rotherham) managed to run, bike and paddle their way into fourth place at the completion of Day zero – a light prologue to the main three days of racing. Day one's biggest challenge was a 56 km mountain ride including a 2,800 metre ascent! The later part of the day's race consisted of a 19 km mountain bike and a muddy 7 km biathlon stage where teams were only allowed two bikes between them.

“The bikes became un-rideable, as mud glued wheels to frames and pushing turned to carrying,” says Ross Rotherham. After 8.5 hours, the team crossed the finish line in sixth place.

Day two began with a 20 km run over terrain much like the South Island's infamous Coast-to-Coast event and saw them climb to third place. After kayaking, the team then raced on horse-back, mountain-biked and completed target shooting challenges before the final leg which featured a 5 km biathlon. The team suffered two punctures but managed to secure a sixth placing.

The third and final day included stages of biathlon, rafting, kayaking, mountain-biking and mastering a flying fox. The weather conditions were extreme.

“Heading out of the rest stop, I had lumps of ice wedged under my helmet and in my jersey pockets,” recalls Ross Rotherham. The team dug deep and passed two other teams giving them a sixth place overall.

Organisers who arranged for teams to be transported by bus to the Zunji Outdoor Challenge in Guizhou for the next race failed to tell most of the teams that it was a nine hour trip!

On arrival, athletes were escorted to a huge banquet of seafood – very tasty but very unsettling for their stomachs – and lots of loud Chinese singing. “We were a bit tired after the previous race and epic bus ride, and had to forgo the (alcoholic) drinks and festivities that had been laid on for us pre-race,” says Sonya Clark.

“Ross and I went back to assemble our bikes and Chris and Rhys went to the briefing. Unfortunately this was given only in Chinese so we had no idea what was supposed to go in what



Powered by velvet.org.nz get into their work during the Chinese event.

gear box, so we decided just to take everything with us.”

The last section of the race was a 7 km run up some steep stairs and a road, and was split by a puzzle half way. “We got to the puzzle and Team Lafuma was still there. Both teams solved this at the same time, but unfortunately we were called back as we had made a mistake. This was quickly resolved and by then we were trailing by about 100 metres,” she says.

“Slowly and painfully we pulled them in – both of us were pushing really hard but we seemed to have just a little bit more left in the tank. We turned around to see them on their hands and knees on the stairs, and as they said afterwards, they were using everything that they had left.

“To see the finish line after five days and two races was indescribable!” The New Zealanders finished strongly, a mere 10 minutes behind current world champions, Nike.

The team is sponsored by Deer Industry New Zealand and is supplemented by 100% pure New Zealand deer velvet. 🇳🇿

New Zealand food focus inspires Cervena™ competition

Nationwide hotel group Scenic Circle Hotels is partnering with Deer Industry New Zealand during October to promote Cervena on its menus, with a Cervena recipe competition.

Scenic Circle Hotels' chefs will be competing to win the top prize by demonstrating the best modern use of Cervena on their menus. Each entry will be judged on the submitted recipe as well as by an in-restaurant assessment to determine who will ultimately win a prize package of travel and accommodation, spending money, chef gear and an awards plate.

Earlier this year, food and beverage managers and chefs from this wholly New Zealand-owned hotel group participated in a workshop to explore ways of using more New Zealand and regional ingredients. During the workshop, the group visited Cervena chef Graham Brown's cooking school in Rangiora, for a hands-on venison cutting and cooking experience.

Diners can experience competition-quality Cervena dishes by making reservations at Scenic Circle Hotels around the country any time in October.

Identifying New Zealand velvet's unique signature

Deer velvet samples are being collected from around New Zealand and (hopefully) from six overseas countries in an effort to establish a unique signature for New Zealand velvet that can be used to promote the New Zealand brand and values and enable it to be differentiated from velvet from other countries.

This is a Deer Industry New Zealand initiative with Dunedin-based company Iso-trace New Zealand, and is using existing technology to help prove country-of-origin through the commercial use of stable isotopes.

Vanessa Crowley, Deer Industry New Zealand's Velvet Services Marketing Manager, says traditionally, some of New Zealand's export velvet is not sold under a New Zealand brand. "Given the quality assurance systems and efforts that New Zealanders make to produce a great product, we want a system which will be able to prove whether a piece of velvet is from New Zealand or not," she says.

New Zealand is recognised internationally for its high food safety standards, animal welfare processes (including being the only country with registered velvet removal programmes) and hygiene standards, for its pasture-fed stock and for the free-range, open-air farming systems that produce healthy, disease-free animals. Being able to guarantee that velvet is from New Zealand with those important brand values could be a strong marketing tool.

Identifying the unique signature of New Zealand velvet will have the dual benefit of providing a guarantee that velvet does indeed come from New Zealand and testing to confirm if velvet labelled New Zealand actually is from New Zealand.

Samples have been requested from six other major velvet-producing countries to enable Iso-trace to do a thorough analysis of the stable isotopes which will, hopefully, provide detailed information on country of origin. In addition, samples are being collected from around New Zealand, to see if country differences can be further narrowed down to identify regional differences.

Ken Neal, Acting GM at Iso-trace, has been working on the project with DINZ. He says the technology has been around for nearly 50 years and it should be possible to identify exactly where the animal was raised and what it ate at varying stages of its life. DNA testing can go some way with this, but can provide incorrect point of origin information by tracing back to the origins of the breed. For example, New Zealand deer could be identified as Canadian, if that is where the foundation stock came from.

Isotopic analysis of bone collagen is used in archaeological testing to identify what part of the world skeletons or bone fragments are originally from. Neal had done some of this sort of work while at Oxford University.

Iso-trace has used isotopic analysis to help the Ministry of Fisheries to prove the origin of hake, which resulted in the \$4 million prosecution of trawlers fishing outside their quota areas. Internationally, isotopes have provided vital court evidence in cases of illicit drugs, food adulteration, establishing country of origin of food produce and many other cases.

Sourcing of New Zealand samples is underway, and Crowley is working with other countries to obtain samples. There is international interest in the project as it could provide other velvet producing countries with the same benefits. 📄

Cervena™ centre stage in NY

Cervena took centre stage at the International Chefs' Congress in New York recently. It featured on the menu at the opening night cocktail party and was later served as a main at a prize giving dinner recognising the rising stars of the New York culinary scene.

Cervena also had its own booth at the products fair where over 700 chefs sampled a dish prepared by award-winning chef Steven Maninno.

The congress run by www.star chefs.com, the online magazine for culinary insiders, is a three-day culinary symposium which drew around 1,000 chefs from around the world. It is considered by many to be the most important professional culinary event in the United States.

Cervena was one of the sponsors at this gathering of independent chefs from across the globe. The event was held at the new 7 World Trade Center building in New York City, where some of the world's most influential and innovative chefs presented their latest techniques and culinary concepts.

DINZ CEO Mark O'Connor said Cervena was one of New Zealand's premium food exports. "The ICC is a top gathering of influential chefs from across the United States and around the world so it is important for the New Zealand deer industry to present our products to this audience. We have been very pleased with the response to Cervena among the visiting chefs."

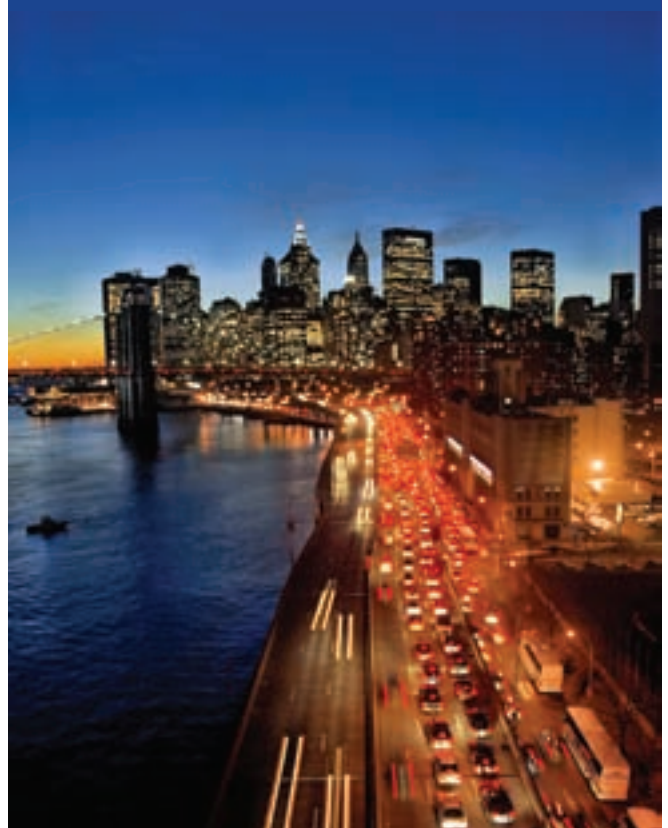


Photo: © iStockphoto.com

Deer industry in the news

New Zealand's deer industry has been getting some high profile publicity lately in a diverse range of New Zealand magazines.

Essentially Food published three pages on “Versatile Venison”, backgrounding how venison lends itself to various dishes, the cuts it comes from, and how venison is raised on farms. It then presents several simple recipes for the home table.

New Zealand Investor Monthly splashed out with four pages on the industry’s current “up cycle” and the workings of Deer Industry New Zealand, prompted by an interest in where investors might see the industry today from long-time industry watcher and reporter, Hugh de Lacy.

So how does it all happen? Very seldom will a magazine suddenly have the bright idea to go and do a “beat up” on a sector like the deer industry, unless it happens to take off like dairying.

The good old days of media fascination with the live capture of deer and “hot dogging” are long gone. What Deer Industry New Zealand is constantly on the lookout for is an angle – something that piques the interest of a publication.

Quite often these articles can be built around personalities – someone who is different, farms differently, or does something unique in connection to the industry. Development of new products or markets tend to look after themselves – that is News!

As part of his role, Deer Industry New Zealand’s Venison Services Marketing Manager Innes Moffat helps find those angles and get exposure in the media.

Innes says the *Essentially Food* piece is a good example of the work that goes into securing column inches.

The three-page “Versatile Venison” feature was the result of Deer Industry New Zealand hosting writer David Woodley to a day with Peter Chamberlain on Grey Brook farm near Cust.

Venison features at Anuga

New Zealand venison was on display to the world in Germany earlier this month when meat companies made the biennial pilgrimage to Anuga, widely regarded as the world’s most important food fair.

The Cologne-based fair is the key event for existing and new exporters from the food and food service sector to gauge response to their products in Europe and the rest of the world, and to find new distribution partners.

PPCS had a large stand with chef Graham Brown exclusively cooking venison. Alliance, Taylor Preston and AFFCO will be there too.

New Zealand venison will be on display on several European importers’ stands, including HPK, VION, Prime, Luiten, Jeffrey Davis and Davies.

About 6,200 exhibitors from 100 countries will be vying for the attention of about 160,000 trade visitors from all around the world. Convenience, innovation, wellness, regional specialities and organic products will be strongly featured on the Anuga meat floors, as well as quality assurance systems in use in each country.

Innes said among many New Zealand food writers there is still a perception that venison is not available at retail, so they tend not to write recipes for consumer magazines. *Essentially Food* is the in-house magazine for the New World chain of supermarkets. It is only available through New World and has a readership of 180,000, making it one of the most widely read food magazines in New Zealand.

Two companies have been supplying venison to an increasing number of New World supermarkets, and it was decided to focus on generating attention among this readership with access to venison at their local supermarket.

Innes discussed the idea of a feature on farm-raised venison with the magazine editor. They agreed to include recipes by Graham Brown from the Cookhouse Cooking School. They identified the types of meat cuts readily available through New World stores, and the best recipes to show off the versatility and quality of venison.

The idea clicked and Woodley was shown the industry from pasture to plate.

DINZ has also worked to place articles and provide information to *Vetscript*, *Adventure Magazine*, *Pet Magazine*, *Kia Ora* (Air New Zealand in-flight magazine) and a major feature in the *Southland Times* on farm-raised venison. 📺

Welcome Natalie!

Natalie Fraser was welcomed to the DINZ team in September as Marketing and Communications Assistant, and will be providing Tony Pearse with support in his liaison role with NZDFA and producers as a significant part of her varied duties, which also include the executive’s marketing staff and office function.



While new to the deer industry, Natalie last year spent a year immersed in the language and culture of our biggest export market when she spent a year in Germany on a Rotary Youth Exchange programme. After a spell working as an administrator in a Wellington bank headquarters earlier this year, Natalie got the travel bug again, and spent about 10 weeks touring the United States visiting friends and family and travelling with her German host family.

Now she’s part of the DINZ team, Natalie is focused on her new role and is hoping to visit some deer farms to learn more about the industry.

When not absorbed in the details of the deer industry, Natalie enjoys speaking, reading and watching German, music, travelling, art and design.

Market Talk: Importer positive about season's prospects

Eddy Lannoo and Bimpex are important components in the machinery delivering New Zealand venison to the European market.

Lannoo is the principal of food importing and distributing firm, Bimpex, based near Belgian port Zeebrugge. He started importing sheepmeat in 1986, then began with venison three years later. Since then his venison business has grown and he now supplies customers throughout Europe.

Bimpex operates a cash and carry outlet, a fleet of delivery trucks and distribution throughout Europe. The company is currently seeing an increase in demand for New Zealand venison, but Lannoo reports that attempts to provide their long-term clients with their requirements are being hampered by a shortage of venison from New Zealand at the moment.

The large increase in production in the past few years caused some difficulty, but they worked through it and introduced new clients to New Zealand venison. After initial scepticism, many are now convinced that New Zealand venison is the best in the world, but now they haven't got the supply to meet this new demand.

Lannoo is philosophical. "As importers we all yearn for stability. You can't budget when you don't know how much is going to be imported in the year ahead, and it's difficult to position a product at an


appropriate level when other companies might come in and offer it at a different price.

"Our business has benefited from the consolidation of importing arrangements in Europe over the last few years, and this has helped improve prices for New Zealand venison on the market too."

Lannoo can't fault the quality of New Zealand venison and thinks the packaging and presentation is always great. "We have some issues with shelf-life, but this is often a matter of educating people in the supply chain to take better care of chilled venison."

He is confident that the season ahead will bring good things for New Zealand venison. He is cautious about pushing New Zealand venison into Belgium year-round as it is still a seasonal item.

"You get the best premium when you sell it as a special item. Our retail customers make a big feature of the start of the game season and so don't sell it outside of that period just yet."

"I believe that one day we will see differentiated New Zealand farm-raised venison as a summer item, but not yet." 

Eddy Lannoo: time not right for year-round selling in Belgium.





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"Tyson"
- Lot 1 January 2005.
Sold at auction to Mac Bryant for \$44,000
- top price in NZ for 2005 Stag Auctions



"Chiron"
- Lot 1 January 2006.
A new 3 yr all comers record at 11.08 kg correctly cut velvet last summer. Sold at auction to Bob Atkinson for \$33,000
- top price in the North Island for 2006.



"Mr Cool"
- Lot 1 January 2007.
Sold at auction to Kelly Hudson for \$54,000.
The perfect all round antler
- trophy and velvet.

STAGWALK
Saturday 15 December 2007
2.30pm at Pampas Heights
240 Te Waerenga Rd, Rotorua

STAG SALE
Tuesday 8 January 2008
11.00am at Pampas Heights
240 Te Waerenga Rd, Rotorua

Contact owner, Bryce Heard
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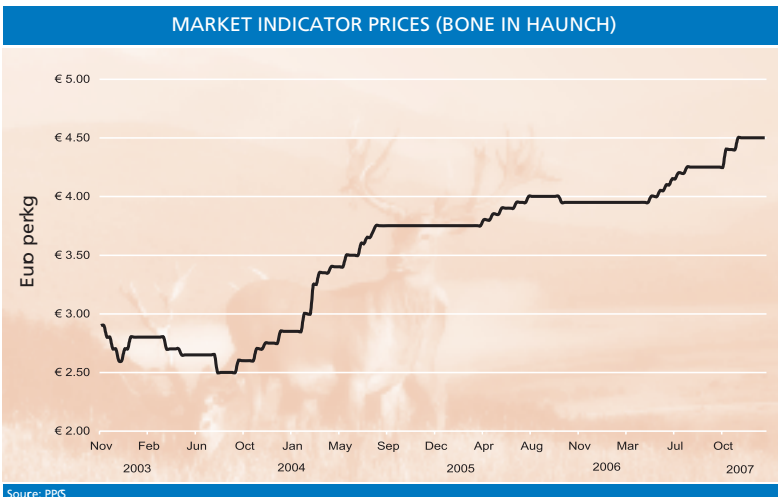
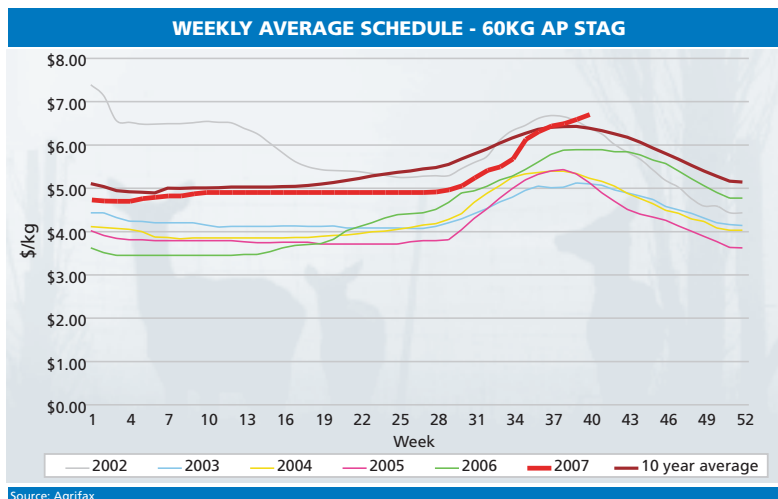
In the week beginning 1 October, the national average published schedule for 55-60kg AP stags (Agrifax) had reached \$6.66. This is the highest price received since October 2002, is 13% higher than this time last year, and 4% higher than the average from 1997 to 2006. At time of writing (early October) the schedule has been above \$5.00 for 11 weeks. Also at this time, the NZD has reversed its sharp downward movement, and returned to mid 70s and mid 50s against the USD and euro respectively.

Production

- In the 12 months to the end of June 2007, New Zealand had produced 36,000 tonnes of venison (carcass weight equivalent) from 674,471 deer. This is down from 40,458 tonnes (from 737,010 deer) in the previous 12 months.

Exports

- In the 12 months to the end of June 2007, New Zealand exported 24,235 tonnes of venison, down from 26,784 tonnes in the same period the year before. During the 12 months, Europe imported 89% of New Zealand's total venison exports, up from 82% in the previous year. This proportional swing back to Europe was expected, as secondary markets that had absorbed venison at lower prices during the period of over-supply have not been matching the higher prices being offered in Europe.
- The proportion of chilled venison exported from New Zealand continues to increase. Up to 21% of total exports in the year ending June went out as chilled product, worth \$87 million (NZD FOB). This is up from 12% of total exports, worth \$49.6 million, in the 12 months ended June 2006.
- Belgium is the largest point of entry into Europe for chilled venison from New Zealand. As well as being an important market for middles, with a strong heritage of eating game items in the autumn, the Belgian port of Zeebrugge is convenient for importers based in the Benelux, Southern Germany and France (see page 13 for interview with Eddy Lannoo on importer and food distributor, Bimpex).
- Venison sales at the beginning of the northern hemisphere autumn are reported to be good, with good demand from the restaurant sector so far. Importers comment that they might like some more product, but what all hope for is some stability in pricing and avoiding any kind of speculative bubble building which could turn off the end consumer.



One importer has observed that if wholesale prices are maintained, then they are hopeful of clearing their stocks, leaving the market looking for more venison at good prices in the post-Christmas period.

We'll always have Cardiff...

Back when the world was a brighter and happier place – that is, any time before the fulltime whistle in Cardiff on 6 October 2007 – the All Blacks were still busily doing their bit to promote New Zealand and its products.

The Rugby World Cup provided opportunities for many different promotional activities and French media and dignitaries were delighted to find Anton Oliver and Isia Toeava taking time out of training before their first match to join personality chef Peta Mathias in the kitchen.



Kitchen front row: All Blacks Isia Toeava (left) and Anton Oliver (right) with chef Peta Mathias.

Velvet

While the Asian markets gear up for the start of the high consumption period for velvet, reports to date have indicated that there are variable volumes of last year's product still being held in New Zealand, Korea and Canada. Despite this, Korean importers and New Zealand exporters expect demand and prices to remain steady and to begin at levels similar to last season.

Pre-season update

- China's economy continues to steam ahead with a growth rate of around 10 percent. By 2010, China is expected to have 250 million consumers who can afford luxury products, a huge 17 times the present number. The Korean economy is maintaining its target of 4.6% growth and is seeing improved consumer confidence strengthen household consumption. The Korean Government expects economic growth to increase to 5% in 2008, partially attributable to China's demand for Korean exports.
- Newly cut deer velvet from China began to arrive in Korea from mid September and Russian product from early October. While the market is not yet in full swing, Korean importers are reportedly concerned about a sudden increase in volume of smuggled velvet in the market.

Australia

- Following the Government's rejection of the proposed Trans-Tasman harmonisation project (Australian New Zealand Therapeutics Goods Act), Deer Industry New Zealand will apply to have deer velvet 'listed' in Australia. DINZ is compiling a case with an Australian consultant. A successful 'new substance application' would enable velvet to be included in listed therapeutic products.

Korea

- The 'velvet as a healthy food' promotion continues in Korea with the Seoul Millennium Hilton Hotel promoting a velvet-based marinade, available to the public, for the first time. The sauce, which is being sold as an accompaniment to Korean and Australian beef, is included in hampers traditionally sold during Chusok (Thanksgiving).
- The Hilton has been selling the product for three weeks from early September and expected to sell over 5,000 kg of beef and 1,250 bottles of New Zealand-labelled velvet-based sauce.
- A new, comprehensive and interactive New Zealand velvet website is currently being developed. The site will feature sections on traditional oriental medicine, athletic performance, dietary supplementation, research, pets and

links to our Korean language websites. The site aims to be interactive, with access to photo galleries, videos and an opportunity to communicate with some sponsored athletes. Several pages will be available in Korean, Chinese and Taiwanese.

Taiwan

- A visit from members of the Taiwan Deer Farmers' Association to New Zealand planned for September was postponed to December and is now tentatively planned to coincide with the National Velvet Competition. This will be an opportunity to not only discuss the respective industries but also to engage in discussions about gaining support for the increase or removal of the current 5 tonne frozen quota.
- The Taiwanese home shopping company currently selling a New Zealand deer velvet-based supplement will be sending a film crew to New Zealand in October to capture further images of the deer industry. The company is also investigating additional deer velvet products to market to customers through both television and internet channels.

China

- Deer Industry New Zealand's joint promotional partner in China continues to attend expos and has recently returned from Guiyang (the capital of Guizhou province) in the west of China where they showcased New Zealand deer products at the Third Medical Expo of Guiyang. While the company currently has products in five provinces, the west has not previously been targeted.

United States

- The company that gained access into the multi-million dollar GNC health supplement chain is now working on an advertisement that will be screened on cable television. The company is also assessing the potential to include additional deer products in the promotion.


The New Zealand Trade and Enterprise event was an opportunity for journalists to cook and taste New Zealand venison, lamb and other premium foods, and hear about their nutritional qualities.

DINZ CEO Mark O'Connor says the event provided an opportunity for New Zealand to demonstrate to the French culinary scene the quality of New Zealand products. "We were delighted to be able to showcase our venison in France in the lead-up to the Rugby World Cup. This event provided an opportunity for New Zealand to demonstrate to the French culinary scene the quality of our products."

Influential French food, lifestyle and trade writers attended the event and cooked their own lamb, venison and other New Zealand foods, using recipes created by Peta Mathias.

The journalists were paired off and assigned their own cooking stations and each pair was helped by a trainee chef from the cooking school. During this time, they were able to chat with the All Blacks and Peta; at the end of the course, there was a buffet lunch with the New Zealand Ambassador to France and the Mayor of Marseille.

Later, members of the French trade and chefs were involved in a second cooking class conducted by Peta Mathias, again featuring the New Zealand foods.

Now if only the French rugby team had shown the same respect for our lads' culinary sophistication, perhaps they would have treated the ABs with a little more deference on the rugby pitch that fateful day in Wales... 

recipe

Meat balls: just the way kids love it!

Venison is very low in fat and an excellent source of essential nutrients such as iron, zinc and vitamin B12. These venison meatballs make a quick and easy-to-prepare meal, are moist and popular with the whole family. Serves 4



Ingredients

- 500 gram pack of venison mince
- 1 small onion very finely diced
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 4 heaped tablespoons instant mashed potato
- Handful chopped parsley
- ¼ cup cold meat stock or iced water

Sauce

- A tin of your favourite flavoured chopped tomatoes
- ½ red and yellow pepper diced
- 1 zucchini diced
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 2 tablespoons tomato paste
- ¼ cup stock

Method

Mix salt with mince and let stand for a few minutes. Add all the other meatball ingredients and mix thoroughly, add enough liquid to make it manageable, not too soft. Using wet hands, roll into 20 x 25 gm balls. Keep chilled until ready to use. Heat a large pan, add oil and brown the balls carefully all over. Remove and keep warm.

In the same pan, add the olive oil and sauté the vegetables; add the tinned tomatoes, stock and tomato paste. Reduce by ¼, add the meatballs and heat through. Serve on your favourite pasta.

(Chef's hint: when handling mince, rinse your hands in cold water before and during to stop the meat sticking to your hands.)

Axe murder shock: Wrong victim!

In our June 2007 issue we carried a report on presentations from the William Davidson 125 conference held earlier this year. Included (page 29) was a photograph of a poorly presented pack of "reindeer" cuts which, according to Professor David Hughes of London's Imperial College, can "look like the aftermath of an axe murder".

Our thanks to sharp-eyed reader and AgResearch scientist, Eva Wiklund, who has pointed out to us that the label "Krondyr" on the offending package actually means "Red Deer" in Danish – not reindeer as suggested. Well spotted, Eva and thanks for putting us right.

It was a fair cop – but we still agree with professor Hughes. Regardless of the victim's species, the packaged meat still indicates it met an untidy end.



Correction: Consultation panel budget figure

On page 22 of the June issue of *Deer Industry News* we reported that \$20,000 had been allocated in the 2007 Budget for a consultation panel to look at the future management of wild deer, chamois, tahr and pigs. The correct budget figure was \$200,000. (See article on page 17 of this issue.)

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Farming, Food and Health. **First**

Te Ahuwhenua, Te Kai me te Whai Ora. Tuatahi

Managing numbers of deer, chamois, tahr and pigs

Deer industry supports management of wild deer (and other wild game) as a resource

It's not too late to make a submission to the independent panel of enquiry looking into resource and environmental issues around wild deer, chamois, tahr and pigs.

Submissions to the panel, set up by the Minister of Conservation under a deal brokered by United Future after the 2005 election, close on 6 November. The discussion paper, released in September, can be downloaded from: www.gameanimalpanel.org.nz

There is a simple format and a questionnaire submission option which can be supported in turn by any other commentary.

The paper backgrounds the history of the four species in the New Zealand environment. It also considers the environmental and biosecurity impacts and their value as resources, and looks into the legislative framework surrounding their control and management.

The panel of enquiry is chaired by former Science Minister, Margaret Austin and comprises Sue Maturin of Forest and Bird, Graeme Nugent of Landcare Research, Hugh Barr of the NZ Deerstalkers' Association, and Garry Ottmann of the Game and Forest Foundation.

In its discussion paper, the panel identified the two basic and conflicting points of view: one regards the environmental impacts of the animals as unacceptable while the other sees them as a resource for hunting and/or farming. The paper sets out three broad options:

1. Manage them to limit their harmful effects on conservation and production, i.e., as pests (this is the status quo)
2. Manage for their recreational and commercial benefits, i.e., as resources.
3. Manage for both their resource benefits and to limit their harmful effects.

NZDFA and DINZ made a joint submission to the panel (the deer industry submission), which supports option 2. In it, they recognise wild deer as source animals and a valuable resource as founding stock and they support their formal recognition as a game resource. The industry voices its support for the Game and Forest Foundation and the principles of game management to promote balance in numbers and sustainable harvest.

The deer industry submission notes its support for the use of deer repellent in aerial 1080 drops and says wild deer are generally not a significant Tb risk. It does point to industry concerns raised during the ERMA reclassification of 1080 that the industry notes the overall potential risk to both the feral and farmed trade in the (unlikely) event of another 1080-related scare or threat to any exported venison.


The industry's further submission will be a topic of hot conversation at the upcoming Branch Chairmen's meeting scheduled for 24 and 25 October.

The deer industry submission also takes the opportunity to attack the "ancient and outmoded Wild Animal Control Act (1977)", which it says has had little relevance or value for 20 years or more. Referring to the current DOC review of Gazette Notice No. 4 under the Wild Animal Control Act, the deer industry submission argues that this legislative responsibility should be transferred to MAF Biosecurity New Zealand, MAF Policy and NZ Food Safety Authority.

The submission also makes it clear the deer industry has strong awareness of conservation values, supports preservation of existing natural ranges and takes a dim view of illegal liberations of deer and pigs.

The feral venison industry is acknowledged for its niche role in venison exports and its role in managing game numbers.

In conclusion the submission calls for the legislation underpinning the deer industry to be made relevant, and says words such as "pests" and "noxious" have no place in laws governing deer farming. (During presentation of the submission the Game panel chair advised that the current legislation had in fact dropped the word "noxious" and the submission was not correct on that point.) The submission also says that, given the right incentives, game numbers can be kept in balance

through the skills of commercial operators and recreational hunters. 

The full NZDFA/DINZ submission can be seen at:

www.deernz.org/n37.html#contentsection2287



*Deer and wild animals like this tahr (*Hemitragus jemlicus*) should be managed as a resource, according to DINZ and NZDFA. Photo@iStockphoto.com*

1080 reassessment decision: Business (almost) as usual

Farmers and conservationists breathed a collective sigh of relief on 13 August when the long-awaited decision on the future use of 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) in New Zealand was released by the Environmental Risk Management Authority (ERMA New Zealand).

The announcement marked the end of an intense five-year process following an application by the Animal Health Board (AHB) and Department of Conservation (DOC) to ERMA for reassessment of 1080 for use in pest control. DINZ and NZDFA submitted in favour of the continued use of 1080. (See www.deernz.org under downloadables for submissions.)

While ERMA has allowed the continued use of 1080, including aerial applications, it has tightened up conditions of usage and recommended some additional research to fill some of the current gaps in knowledge about 1080 and its effects. In its guide to the decision, ERMA says, “[the decision] does not give the aerial application of 1080 a green light so much as a flashing amber light – proceed, but with caution.”

The new controls for aerial drops are:

- establishing a watch list and requiring reports on aerial 1080 drops to be provided to ERMA so operations can be monitored
- strengthening existing controls for aerial drops
- promoting best practice for pre-operation planning, consultation and notification as well as the management of aerial operations
- recommending further research into alternatives to 1080, and into the effects of 1080.

The tighter controls on all operations cover:

- licensing for all people who possess 1080
- requirement to notify neighbours about 1080 operations and better warning signs to the public, to stay in place for longer in case poisoned baits or carcasses still remain (DOC is involved in trials on the degradation of carcasses and the persistence of 1080 residues in the carcasses. This will enable more accurate ‘reopening’ of areas for hunters and others after a poisoning operation.)
- public notification about aerial drops
- restrictions or changes to 1080 formulations which could affect risks
- better consultation with iwi about planned operations
- reporting to ERMA required on all aerial operations covering consultation, any incidents and post-operation monitoring.

Penny Fairbrother, research coordinator for the AHB, says the reassessment outcomes have been very constructive.

“There were no big surprises in there for us. The new controls are around consistency and best practice, with more clarity around information for the public. Restrictions on things like removal of chaff from carrot baits [a risk to birds] are commonsense and are in line with what some operators already do.”

She says the tightened conditions will involve some additional costs, but these won’t be significant. The AHB has already done a lot of the development work needed to set up a register of all aerial 1080 drops, through a system called

VectorNet, which will feed the information required directly to ERMA. DOC has a similar system, PestLink, which will do the same job for its operations. The public register of 1080 operations will be in place by 1 January 2008.

Penny says there will be a moderate cost for AHB in setting up the system, but very little in the way of ongoing costs once it’s running.

Work to follow the recommendations for additional research is also well under way. Another toxin, zinc phosphide, is hoped to be registered in 2008. This paste-based toxin will be able to be used in ground operations and is less of a danger to dogs than 1080, but has a similar effect on its targets.

Recommendations for more research into the breakdown of 1080 in water – largely in response to public concerns, rather than on the basis of scientific evidence – could present more challenges. Penny Fairbrother says the AHB would question the value of recommended research into the biodegradation of 1080 in water, and is concerned that this could soak up valuable research dollars for little benefit. She says AHB would instead favour research based on modelling the dilution of the small amount of 1080 that gets into waterways and relating that to Ministry of Health guidelines on tolerable daily intakes for humans.

A soil transformation test has also been recommended, looking into how long 1080 takes to break down into harmless compounds in the soil. AHB and DOC are planning to undertake the recommended OECD tests for this research, taking into account temperature and presence of water – both of which affect breakdown.

Maori values are also catered for in the ERMA requirements, and AHB have already commissioned Lincoln University to investigate the risks from uptake of the 1080 toxin in watercress and puha, two important food plants for Maori.

A previous AHB research project undertaken by Lincoln University also looked into the effects of 1080 on two (one food and one medicinal) plants of significance to Maori: pikopiko and karamuramu. Even when 1080 bait was placed directly at the base of the plants, it was undetectable in the pikopiko foliage after the baits had leached out the toxin,



Following ERMA's reassessment of the toxin, there will be no respite from 1080 for this chap.

and only detected at fiveparts per billion in the karamuramu – a negligible risk, and similar to the level of 1080 that may naturally be found in packaged tea leaves.

The AHB had anticipated the reassessment would require some additional research, and has allocated about \$250,000 of its \$2 million research budget for the purpose.

Herb Christophers, senior adviser with DOC, says the reassessment delivered an important independent judgement on the use of 1080.

“It has raised issues about DOC’s consultation with the public in a whole range of areas, and the changes that are required of us for our 1080 operations will be part of a much wider strategy we’re developing on consultation.

“We intend to be involved in further research where necessary. The important thing is that we now have a

mandate to continue our pest management operations.”

He says that although there are cost issues to be resolved, DOC will review the use of deer repellent in 1080 baits depending on the outcome of a Ministerial panel that is currently looking at a number of issues around the status of wild animals. “This could ultimately affect the Department of Conservation’s pest control operations but protecting biodiversity values will always take precedence over hunting opportunities. We are looking for a better fit between our pest control priorities and the needs of those who want to see wild deer managed as a resource.”

The full ERMA report can be downloaded from:

www.ermanz.govt.nz/news-events/1080/index.html

Coming events

Date	Branch/event	Location
25 October	Final Monitor Farm Day	Coates property, Haupuri West Coast
26 October	Northern Region Focus Farm Rotorua: Inaugural community day	David Dewar’s, property Ngakuru, Rotorua From 12.30pm
16 November Note date change from 15th	Rotorua Branch: Riparian Management Field Day	Rodway Park Andrew Mitchell From 12.30pm
1 December	In association with NIVC, Napier Introduction to Central Regions Focus Farm	War Memorial Centre, Napier
12 December	Executive Committee meeting	Ascot Park Invercargill

NZDFA Branch and National Velvet antler competitions 2007/2008

Group/Branch	Dates	Venue, Details, Contact
Waikato	Saturday 24 November	Blueberry Country, Ohaupo
Wairoa	Saturday 24 November	Contact Ian Pickering
Central Regions	Sunday 25 November	Makoura Lodge, Apiti Contact Andy Jarden, Wilton Turner
Rotorua	Monday 26 November	Kelly Oaks Stud 5.00pm Contact Rachael Mitchell
Taranaki	Thursday 29 November	Quality Hotel International New Plymouth; Contact Mary Cusdin
Hawke’s Bay and North Island: PGG Wrightson and Veleco	Friday 30 November and Saturday 1 December	Keith Burden/Philip Irwin War Memorial & Conference Center Napier. For entry forms: Keith Burden ph. 027 597 5801
South Canterbury/North Otago	Friday 30 November	The Poplars, Levels Mark Hawkins
Gore and Northern Southland	Monday 3 December	Riversdale Tavern Contact Lloyd Thayer/Eddie Brock
Marlborough	Tuesday 4 December	Woodbourne Tavern Contact Kevin Hayes
Otago	Thursday 6 December	Alexandra TBC Contact Grant Cochrane
Oxford A&P Show Canterbury	Friday 7 December	Oxford Working Men’s Club 7.30pm Ed Noonan
Kaipara	Sunday 9 December	Astra Contact Ian Bristow
26th National Velvet and Hard Antler Competition and Southland Elk and Wapiti Society of NZ	Monday 10 – Wednesday 12 December	Ascot Hotel Invercargill Contact Peter Allan
	Saturday 19 January	Red Café, Winton, Contact Tom May
Fiordland	Sunday 27 January	Lochinvar, Contact Chris Petersen
Southland 2yo Competition	Sunday 3 February	Cranbrook Park, Harry and Norma Robinson Contact Janet Horrell
National 1,2,3 yo Hard Antler and 2yo Velvet “Rising stars show”	Friday 15 and Saturday 16 February	The Oaks, Cambridge Contact Sharon Love, Joe Crowley

Stag sales and stag walks*

Stud	Date/time	Location	Contact
Raroa Red Deer: stag preview	Friday 14 December 2 pm	Fergusson Gully Road, RD2, Cambridge	John Carter, 07-827 8785
Tower Farms: stag preview	Friday 14 December 12 noon	Tower Farms, 188a Discombe Road, Hamilton	Joe Crowley: 0274 727 436
Pampas Heights: stag walk	Saturday 15 December 2007, 2.30 pm	Pampas Heights 240 Te Waerenga Rd, Rotorua	Bryce Heard: 07-332 2271 021-926 812
Stanfield’s Bushey Park Ltd stag walk	Tuesday 18 December 2007, 1.30 pm	Stanfield’s Bushey Park, Palmerston, Otago	Clive Jermy, 03 465 1022
Deer Genetics NZ stag walk	Wednesday 19 December 2007, 10.30 am	On property (Geraldine)	Don Bennett 0274 955 007, Kelly Bennett 0274 324 215
Peel Forest Estate stag walk	Wednesday 19 December 2007, 1.30 pm	Peel Forest Estate, Geraldine, South Canterbury	Steve Blanchard 027 439 3418
Taihape Red Deer Stud sire stag sale	Wednesday 19 December 2007, 1.30 pm	Waiouru Deer Selling Complex	Robbie Bruce, 06-388 7815
Canterbury Imported Red Deer Stud stag walk	Thursday 20 December, 10 am	On property	Peter Crowle, Elders 03 415 7060
Gloriavale Deer Park stag walk	Thursday 20 December 2007	Andrew Taylor’s Property West Melton, noon; Littledale Deer Park, 5 pm	Mark or Jonathan Christian, 03 738 0224; Mike Dempsey 03 318 6560
Unfehlbar English Red Deer: stag walk	Thursday 20 December 2007, 3 pm	On property	Guy Brady and Lynette Terry-Brady, 03-347 8158
Raroa Red Deer stag sale	Monday 7 January 2008	Fergusson Gully Road, RD2, Cambridge	John Carter, 07-827 8785
Tower Farms: stag sale	Monday 7 January 2008 3 pm	Tower Farms, 188a Discombe Road, Hamilton	Joe Crowley: 0274 727 436
Pampas Heights sale	Tuesday 8 January 2008, 11.00 am	Pampas Heights 240 Te Waerenga Rd, Rotorua	Bryce Heard 07-332 2271; 021-926 812
Peel Forest Estate sire stag sale	Wednesday 9 January 2008	Peel Forest Estate, Geraldine, South Canterbury	Steve Blanchard 027 439 3418
Unfehlbar English Red Deer	Wednesday 9 January 2008, 10 am	Insignis Park, Christchurch	Guy Brady and Lynette Terry-Brady, 03-347 8158
Pelorus Deer Stud stag and yearling hind sale	Wednesday 9 January 2008, time TBC	Fraser Road, Ashburton	Mac Bryant, 03 574 2249; David Bryant 03 302 5989
Deer Genetics NZ stag sale	Thursday 10 January 2008, 9.30 am	On property (Geraldine)	Don Bennett 0274 955 007, Kelly Bennett 0274 324 215
Foveran Deer Park stag sale	Thursday 10 January 2008, 2 pm	On Property	Trevor Kenny 021 791 643
Stanfield’s Bushey Park Ltd 23rd annual sire sale	Friday 11 January 2008, 1.30 pm	Stanfield’s Bushey Park, Palmerston, Otago	Clive Jermy, 03 465 1022
Black Forest sire sale	Saturday 12 January 2008, noon	McDonald Road, Outram	Trevor Currie, 03 486 1148
Canterbury Red Imported Deer Stud stag sale	Sunday 13 January 2008, 3 pm	On property	Peter Crowle, Elders 03 415 7060
Gloriavale Deer Park sire stag sale	Thursday 17 January 2008	Insignis Park, Christchurch	Mark or Jonathan Christian, 03 738 0224; Mike Dempsey 03 318 6560

*From information provided by advertisers. This does not purport to be a complete list.

SOEs merge – provisions for competition watered down


AgriQuality Limited and ASURE New Zealand Limited merged on 1 October to become AsureQuality.

The two SOEs were separated out from MAF in 1998. At the time of the merger, each employed about 850 staff. Asure's core business has always been meat inspection services, the cost of which have been something of a sore point for deer farmers. It has also provided some laboratory analysis and exotic disease response capability.

AgriQuality has provided a much wider range of services, and has been far more gung-ho about promoting itself than Asure. Listed among its commercial activities are audit, inspection and certification; biosecurity surveillance and response; animal diagnostic products (mainly tuberculin for Tb testing – the price of which has been another sore point for deer farmers); environmental testing; food testing; IT systems such as farm mapping and animal ID. The company acquired a number of laboratories in New Zealand and Australia, and set up an Australian subsidiary in 2003.

While DINZ had not formed a view on whether it supported the legislation that allowed the merger earlier this year, Chief Executive Mark O'Connor wrote to the Minister for State-owned Enterprises in April, expressing concern about the lack of public consultation and the speed of the process.

Concerns about the merger were allayed somewhat after a promised amendment to the legislation, brokered by United Future, left the door open for competition. The amendments provided for a Commerce Commission review of the market for meat inspection services in three years' time, and re-affirmed the negotiating mandate of the NZFSA to secure approval from New Zealand's trading partners for recognition of alternate providers of meat inspection services.

But satisfaction was soured when the amendments were seen in their final form. The legislation requires two-thirds of New Zealand's trading partners to approve of private provision of red meat inspection services and the Commerce Commission review will have to be funded by the export meat industry. 

Telford taking enrolments for 2008

Telford Rural Polytechnic is New Zealand's only specialist rural polytechnic, offering hands-on rural, full time courses and over 20 part-time, distance learning courses.

A typical full time year is the Certificate in Agriculture. There is a strong practical emphasis, including field trips, workshops in carpentry, welding, fencing or mechanics, working alongside farm managers on Telford's 800 hectare farm, or work experience on external farms. Full time students are exposed to sheep and beef, dairy and deer but can further specialise.

The deer on Telford's 155 ha deer unit are predominantly Wapiti-type animals with 610 breeding hinds and 230 rising 1 year old hinds, 30 stags and 230 rising stags. The farm focuses on supplying the spring venison market, with a high level of year-round management skills. Deer numbers are stabilising following the purchase of more land in 2001. Telford breeds, using AI, a small herd of Red hinds with top velvet genetics, and has bought in 100 Black Forest weaner hinds to improve hind efficiency.

Telford is taking enrolments now for 28 January 2008 intake, and the next bulk of scholarships close in November. Students must be 16 years and over. Telford offers a 'Taster Week' every September school holidays, and campus tours are available any time of the year. 

For more information:

**ph 0800 835 367 or visit:
www.telford.ac.nz**



A Telford Certificate in Agriculture student helps out with velveting during a one-week work experience stint at Telford's deer unit.

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Profile: Stanfield's Bushey Park

Aiming to lead NZ deer genetics to internationally unassailable position

South Canterbury is likely to be the next home for the Stanfield's Bushey Park deer stud as owners Clive and Elsie Jermy look to refocus on the core stud business and take a step back from the commercial side of their operation.

The 960-hectare Palmerston (Otago) property is on the market. A sale had not been completed at the time of writing, although interest had been expressed from several parties.

"The stud stock gives us the greatest pleasure we get out of farming, which is one reason why Bushey is for sale," Clive says. "We've enjoyed the large-scale farming at Bushey, and now have a super elite commercial herd, but we do miss the hands-on aspect of running a stud alone. You lose that intimacy with a large-scale operation, and we'd like to get that back.

"Our plan of attack is to let the commercial herd go, take the stud, the velvet herd and the stud cattle herd with us to maybe half the acreage, half the overheads and input, and to focus on our core stud business."

At present, Stanfield runs 800 commercial breeding hinds with following stock and a commercial velvet herd of 400. Seventy-five percent of the commercial herd is bred for venison and 25 percent for velvet and trophy replacements.

The stud has 600 hinds and following stock as well as 12 sire stags. Stanfield also runs a leading polled Hereford stud, which makes up about 15 percent of their business and will be moving with the Jermys when they make their planned move north.

South Canterbury would be their preferred new home, as many of their clients are based there and the area is suited to their goals.

Clive expects to use the next five years as a transition time, allowing son Darron to take a more prominent role in the operation.

This, too, follows a long period in leadership roles for the industry – first as President of the NZDFA and then more than a decade of service on the Game Industry Board and DINZ, in the role of Chairman from 1999-2005. In both organisations Clive spearheaded significant reforms and his services to the industry were recognised last year when he was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in the 2006 New Year's Honours.

Decision not taken lightly

The move to Bushey Park from Cambridge in 2000 – at a time when Clive was still very involved in the industry's structural reforms – was a major one for the Jermys and one they thought would be permanent. Leaving the magnificent property is not a decision taken lightly. It has been the focus of intensive development work, which has taken not only commercial goals but also environmental values into account. The property has four kilometres of beaches, sun-bathing territory for the endangered Hookers sea lion.

Clive Jermy: Looking forward to refocusing on the stud operation and a planned move north.



There is a historic Maori village on the peninsula, sea trout and whitebait in the Shag River.

Their stewardship of the land in this unique coastal environment earned recognition in the Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards in 2001, when they received a merit award for planning an environmentally sustainable deer farm, and again in 2004, when they received an award for excellence in commitment to sustainable deer farming, as well as the Ballance Supreme Environmental Award for Otago.

He began importing English deer from Warnham Park and Woburn Abbey in 1982 and gained the franchises for both in 1983. Both parks also have their own herds at Stanfield.

Clive says these are the two of the most important bloodlines to influence antler development in New Zealand, a claim borne out by the stud's world records for trophy antlers. Eastern European bloodlines from Yugoslavia, Romania and Hungary provide another important platform for the stud.

For many years now, the top prices attracted at the sire and hind sales for English and Easterns have set a benchmark for the rest of the industry. Things were no different in January 2007, when a Woburn Herbrand son achieved the country's top price at \$82,000.

This year's hind sales were also good for Stanfield, with prices averaging more than \$5,000 and top prices of \$20,000 and \$17,500 for two Herbrand weaners. Three Stanfield stags recorded breeding values of 20+ in the latest DEERSelect statistics, and the number one English sire for BV is also theirs.

Greatest heads seen in 600 years

"It has always been our ambition to produce the biggest heads that have ever been seen," Clive says. "We have

achieved our objectives beyond our wildest dreams and managed to produce within 25 years or less, the greatest antlers that have ever been seen in the past 600 years or more for the species. In the past 12 months we have got the world record weight, world record points and world record Safari Club International (SCI) score and CIC score for a trophy. Even 10 years ago we would never have believed it possible.”

Those achievements, Clive says, are owed to Hotspur, Woburn Herbrand and Woburn Endsleigh. Hotspur has the world record weight of 23.4kg and the world record CIC score with 309.5 points. Woburn Endsleigh produced 60 points, a world record. Woburn Herbrand is the current world record holder SCI for a trophy head with 645 points at 19.15kg.

“We will continue to select and breed for improvement and hopefully continue to break those records.”

Best of both worlds

Spreading superior genetics across the entire national herd, lifting everyone’s on-farm production, should be a goal for the entire industry, Clive says.

“As an industry we have made a fantastic gain in lifting velvet production but we can and will keep improving.

“We have not done the same for venison production, which is in part a management issue. I would like to see the industry developing an unassailable position in the world’s quality genetics, and the Easterns will play a big role in this. For example, Maximilian weighed in at 392kg and his sons are recording extremely high breeding values.”

Clive predicts that over the next 40 to 50 years there will be a fusion of the best that the English (heads) and Easterns (body size) have to offer.

“The improvement of English deer in size and Eastern in antler is supporting that view. In the end they are the same animals, but modified over many centuries by environmental conditions.

“Breed values now provide us with the scientific tools to aid our selection processes to help take us to that next new level of genetic advancement – a very exciting prospect for our industry.”

AI vs. sire stags

Just how best to deliver that genetic progress has stirred up some vigorous debate in the industry since the arrival on the scene of Livestock Improvement’s commercial deer AI business, Deer Improvement. Clive argues strongly that, while there is a place for strategic use of AI, the use of quality sire stags will continue to play a key role in genetic improvement in the years to come.

“AI gives people access to advanced genetic material that may otherwise not be available to them, but it is not as efficient as owning a sire stag. The deer industry will never be like the dairy industry, where the cows are in the shed every day and AI is very simple.

“My concern is that Deer Improvement might hype the industry into believing they can create wonderful trophy and velvet stags through a single AI programme – and if one believes that you can, then undue pressure may be brought



Clive with Woburn Herbrand’s world record 19.15 kg, 645 SCI head.

to bear on the velvet and trophy sectors, which are very volume sensitive.”

Praise for DINZ and companies

Regardless of the debate about the best tools for rapid genetic progress, Clive is confident the deer industry will keep climbing out of the recent economic trough.

“The combination of recession, overseas influences and the poor return to farmers drove many producers from the industry. The kill, including capital stock, up to last year was blown out to unprecedented proportions.

“The DINZ-brokered five year strategic plan featured ground-breaking reforms, which saw all the companies working together to develop new strategies including re-branding and repositioning New Zealand product. Those moves encouraged the price slowly up on the back of unsustainable volume increases.

“The DINZ Board and the companies deserve enormous credit for rebuilding the market through such a difficult time. Although the prices are improving, the capital stock is not there to satisfy demand. If we read the board figures correctly it will be five to seven years before we get back to the kill we had in 2006.

“The falling volumes became inevitable so we must turn this to an opportunity to stabilise and grow again in an orderly manner and to sustain value as we grow. This must be doable taking into account lower volumes, and the market diversification that’s going on. However, to avoid further erosion of volumes, the venison schedule has to improve on current levels which are not viable, and capital stock is still being killed; notwithstanding this, the signals are very positive indeed.

“It is valuable to look back from time to time at the unique circumstances that led to the recession we had to endure, so history might not repeat itself. We have a very good strategy and direction, and a unique situation in terms of collective behaviour between exporters and the board. This positions us well to manage growth and value.” 📄

2007 North Island Velvet Competition: 30/11/2007 – 1/12/2007

North Island velveters: as you are cutting this season's velvet, please have a think about keeping back your best head or two and entering them in this year's competition. Velvet from this competition can be forwarded to the South Island in plenty of time for the National Competition.

The 2007 North Island Velvet Competition is being hosted by the Hawke's Bay Branch and will be held at the War Memorial Centre on Marine Parade in Napier – the same venue that was used for the 1999 Deer Industry Conference. The Branch will also be holding its own velvet competition in conjunction with this event. Even if you have no velvet to enter, consider coming along to the awards dinner. It is a very social occasion, and with a popular choice for Champion of Champions there is an opportunity for you to have your say on which head you think is best.

The War Memorial Centre is close to central Napier and there are numerous accommodation options close by:

- Scenic Circle Te Pania Hotel 06 833 7733 – currently there are some \$240 rooms available at \$160 – opposite War Memorial Centre
- Quality Inn Napier 06 835 3237 – Single \$99, share twin \$110 for NIVC
- Masonic Hotel 06 835 8689 – Double \$110 Single \$95
- Edgewater Motor Lodge 06 835 148 – Studios \$99 up

- Pebble Beach Motor Inn 06 835 7496 – Studio Suites \$185

This year all classes are again sponsored and we have even added an additional Wapiti Class – 4yr Elk/Wapiti velvet. **PGG Wrightson** is again kindly sponsoring the competition and including the shipment of all velvet to and from the event.

This year we also have a new co-sponsor, TradeDeer. **Tradedeer.co.nz** is an easy-to-use website designed especially for the deer farming industry. Initially the site will provide profiles of studs, stud animals, service providers, associated links and upcoming sales and events. The site was due to go live on 23 October 2007.

Entry forms will be posted to all previous entrants but if you haven't entered before and would like a form there are a couple of options. All North Island Branch Chairmen have a copy, your local PGG Wrightson store should have a supply, or you can contact Rachael Mitchell on 07 333 2151 or Rodway@xtra.co.nz

National Red Deer 1, 2 and 3 year Hard Antler & 2 Year Velvet & Super Heavy Weight Velvet Competition: 16/2/2008

- The nursery of the industry's future champions
- Saturday 16 February 2008 Tower Farms – Cambridge – Hamilton.
- Hosted by Waikato Branch NZDFA
- Sponsors: Deer Reproduction Services and Xcell Breeding Services

Following a hugely successful event last year, we are excited to be planning this year's competition for February, and would like you to start thinking about who you'd like to enter. Our classes again are Hard Antler 1, 2 and 3 year olds and velvet 2 year old and super heavy weight 10 kg plus.

Note: the super heavy weight class needs to be cut to the correct cutting stage (not overgrown) but accessory tynes are permitted.

This year we would like to offer a 2-year-old Wapiti velvet class and 2-year Wapiti Hard Antler class. We have the trophy for velvet and the keen sponsors – we just need your entries. Please register your interest by 10 December 2007 for these classes and if we get the minimum five entries we will look forward to adding exciting 2-year Wapiti heads to our stunning antler and velvet display.

We will be moving out the machinery to make room for more tables so we can offer our fantastic gourmet BBQ dinner to an expected capacity crowd. Places will be limited so booking will be essential.

Will our 1- and 2-year-old champions take out the 2- and 3-year classes this year, or will one of the non-placegetters smoke them at the post? 🍀

- Please contact Sharon@tradedeer.co.nz for entry forms and any further detail: Ph (07) 332 5892



National 1 Year old Red Hard Antler: 1st place Insane 312 6/8 SCI Twin Springs Red Deer Stud



National 2 Year old Red Hard Antler: 1st place Amadeus 415 6/8 Foveran Deer Park

26th National Velvet and Trophy Antler competition

Invercargill, 11-12 December 2007

Sponsored by

PGG Wrightson

This competition is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the country's very best velvet and hard antler, arranged in 12 individual sections.

Competition chairman and convenor Peter Allan says the Red hard antler category has really taken off, with over 17 entries in 2006. The best four heads topped the 500 SCI mark, excluding width measurement. The best Red hard antler score last year would have easily eclipsed 600 SCI if taken as a trophy, he says.

"Once again we expect the Red hard antler section to be of huge interest. The three hard antler judges and scribes will no doubt be anticipating a big day's scoring work again this year."

Two of the feature velvet sections are the 3-year-old Red section and the Elk supreme. Last season's 3-year-old Red section attracted 22 entries, with 7 heads weighing more than 6 kg.

"To put this in perspective, 12 years ago the winning head was only 3.9 kg," Peter says. "The 3-year-old Red section is of most interest as it is a good guide to the latest genetics coming through."

The 2006 Elk Supreme section was notable for one particular local breeder with an exceptional head weighing in excess of 21 kg which is right up there with the North American heavyweights.

The Elk Supreme and Open Red sections were shown in front of a delegation of more than 20 visiting Korean deer Breeders Association farmers last year, who met the display with great enthusiasm.

The competition requires eight judges in the velvet sections and three hard antler judges. Combined with a 12-strong committee, this requires a considerable amount of organisation, with planning starting around May. "Once again we have a strong and dedicated committee, with two newcomers this year," Peter says.

The Awards dinner has a tradition of attracting entertaining and top-line guest speakers. This year will be no exception – the organisers are thrilled to have secured Chris Russell, Australian correspondent (Hokonui Gold Farming Show). Chris is an agricultural scientist and former university lecturer, currently has been contracted by Discovery Channel to take part in a series of documentaries in Australia.

"Chris has an incredible range of interests and is a very popular correspondent on Hokonui Gold's farming show," Peter says. "This is the first time we have ever flown in a speaker especially for our awards evening, and our first from Australia. Chris is sure to be entertaining, and we are looking forward to a good turnout."

Peter urges farmers to enter their top heads, and says entries are particularly welcome from newcomers who may never have entered the Nationals before. 📧

• **Any enquires to: Peter Allan, Chairman and Convenor, phone 03 201 6313**

26th National Velvet & Trophy Antler Competition

Awards Dinner
Wednesday 12
December
Venue:
Ascot Hotel,
Invercargil

Guest Speaker: Hokonui
Radio's Australian
Correspondent Chris Russell

Awards Dinner tickets \$65pp
available from Mrs Judy
Gerrard, RD3, Winton

All other enquiries to Peter
Allan (Competition Chairman)
ph/fax 03-201 6313

Velvet entries are invited from deer farmers nationally in the following classes:

1. Open Red
2. Elk/Supreme
3. 3-Year Red
4. 4-Year Red
5. 5-Year Red
6. 3-Year Elk/Wapiti
7. Elk/Wapiti One
8. Elk/Wapiti Maiden

Trophy Antler Section:

- Red
- Elk/Wapiti Typical & Non-Typical
- Fallow

National Certification • Excellent prizes in most sections with 1st, 2nd, & 3rd placings receiving up to \$500 in cash or vouchers, plus nationwide advertising

Host: Southland Branch
NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association

Sponsored by
PGG Wrightson

Deadline for Entries: Sunday 9 December
Entries to: Brian Russell, RD3, Winton,
ph/fax 03-236 7848,
email: deerpark@woosh.co.nz

Thinking outside the wire...



Backroom work on NAIT continues

Plans for a National Animal Identification and Tracing (NAIT) system are still advancing, and many of the details should be filled in over the coming months. NAIT Chair and spokesman Ian Corney referred Deer Industry News to MAF Principal Adviser Susan Keenan, who is part of the 'backroom' teamwork required to build a regulatory framework and standards for a NAIT system.

She reports that at present MAF and industry members of NAIT are finalising the business case for funding the building of the NAIT system to be presented to the Minister and Government. Details of a cost-sharing mix between the Crown and industry haven't been confirmed, but Keenan says it is likely the Crown will continue to fund a share of ongoing running costs once the system has been built.

"The concept of information sharing is understood and we know what information we all want. What we need now is to ensure that all the other elements of NAIT, such as the governance arrangements, how parties will contribute information to NAIT, and how we will manage the performance of the system, have been adequately scoped out and understood.

"We also need mechanisms to ensure wide compliance with a NAIT system. It's likely to be a universal system – once you start creating categories for exemptions it gets very complicated. We saw this happen in 1999 when compulsory AHB tagging was introduced but older animals were exempt – as a result many animals were arriving a slaughter without tags," she says.

Ian Corney emphasises that protection of market access and the need to manage the incursion of one of the major exotic animal diseases remain the key drivers for NAIT. Reflecting on the success and recent history of cattle and deer farmers' commitment to rid their herds of Tb he says the tagging system developed to support the National Pest Management Strategy for bovine Tb has done an excellent job in helping the Animal Health Board manage and reduce the number of infected herds.

Complacency danger

"It works well at herd level, but there is a real danger of complacency as the number of infected herds falls.

"It's not many years ago that a lot of deer and cattle farmers were having a dreadful time with Tb. One of the effects of winning the battle against the disease is the loss of collective memory about just how bad things were. Having electronic lifetime traceability of animals will be a useful tool in the fight to protect the gains made, while also enabling other risks associated with animals to be better managed."

He says that while the current identification system works for New Zealand now, that may not be the case in three or four years. “There’s a real danger we could get left behind. Looking overseas, RFID (radio frequency identification) technology is becoming the ‘gold standard’ for animal identification. It’s a tool that will not only protect what we already have – but also something that can be leveraged for other benefits, such as the means for recording attributes of your animals on an individual basis to support on-farm management decisions.”

Mandatory or voluntary

There is no decision yet on whether NAIT will be mandatory from the word go, or voluntary at first, becoming mandatory later. Keenan points out that from the MAF perspective, “if it is mandatory from the start, that will require a lot more work up front on regulations and standards so everything is in place. A voluntary period allows those who want the benefits from individual animal identification to do so sooner, while giving time to make sure that the integrated system works, but means a longer transition for saleyards and processing premises that would have to maintain both systems.”

As discussed by remit at the deer industry conference this year, developing regulations to move NAIT to a mandated system will also require further consultation with stakeholders. A voluntary window should allow understanding to grow so that acceptance and implementation is easier when the time comes

While setting up a national database to record all animals and their movements is not difficult in principle, Keenan says, there are many decisions to be made about the detail. There are also a lot of parties who are involved and at different stages of preparedness for NAIT. The dairy, beef and deer sectors will likely have different start-up costs associated with a NAIT system.

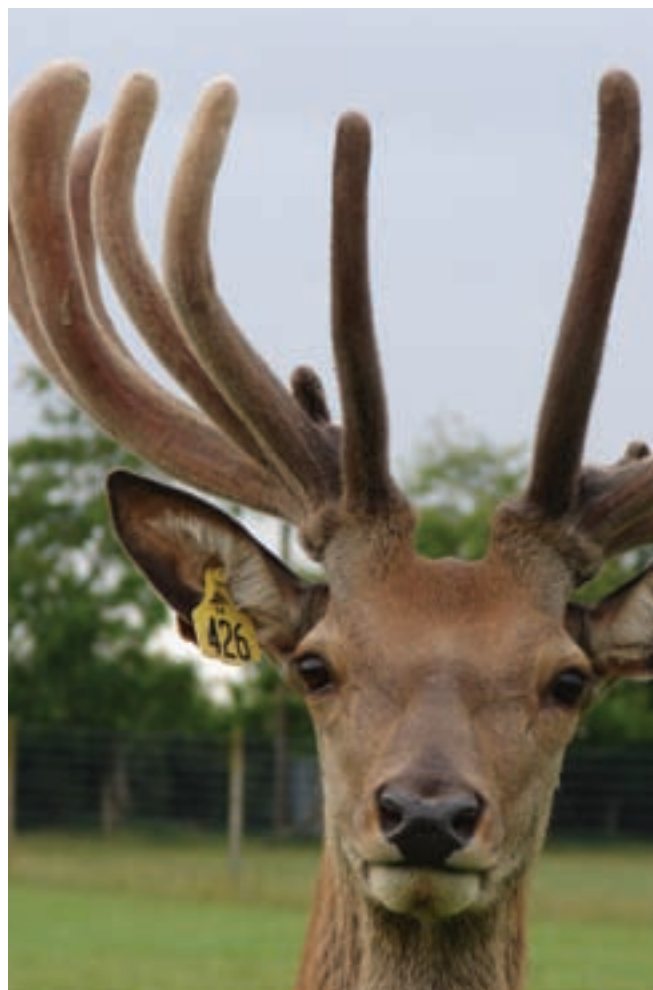
Simplicity the aim

“We are aiming for a very accurate system with automated uptake of information and minimal scope for human recording error,” she says. “At the same time we want to avoid a plethora of different identification devices and technologies. It should be a simple system.”

There have still been no final decisions on the RFID technology to be used. Half duplex and full duplex devices each have their pros and cons in terms of cost and performance. Tag readers that can handle both technologies, however, offer the most flexible solution. While use of low frequency RFID technology in cattle is well tested, there is still work to be done to develop technical standards that will suit deer.

Trials planned

Landcorp has been doing its own trials with electronic tags on deer, cattle and sheep and has been sharing its experience about on-the-ground performance, costs and benefits with the NAIT Technical Advisory Group (TAG). Tony Pearse, the deer




AHB tag system has done a good job at herd level. Photo: Vanessa Crowley.

representative on NAIT’s TAG says the group accepts that the deer industry needs to be confident that the technology will work in today’s deer farming systems

“The industry will complete more trials and hopes to feature RFID tags within some of the herds leading the Focus Farm initiative. This will put the systems into the deer farming spotlight in terms of management use and technical workability. The learning from other countries, such as Australia with their National Livestock Identification System (NLIS), is also valuable to identify best practice.”

There has also been a lot of consultation with parties with an interest in NAIT, including discussion with farmer groups and other parties, and a stand at the Mystery Creek field days. Once the NAIT system as a whole is finalised in principle, the NAIT Governance Group will be outlining the requirements and options to all parties. This is likely to be in early 2008.

“Ultimately the compulsory requirements of NAIT may not make much difference to the way people farm their animals,” Ian Corney concludes. “A new tag to replace an existing tag and some additional recording requirements may be all that some farmers will initially see of NAIT. Probably one of the biggest changes we’ll see is a shift in thinking away from seeing electronic identification as an added cost, but more as an opportunity to be embraced.” 

“The compulsory requirements of NAIT may not make much difference to the way people farm their animals.”

"One-stop shop" deer trading website launched

Sharon Love of Love Red Deer is bringing deer farming transactions into the IT era with the launch of Tradedeer.co.nz. The website is scheduled to be live this week.

The idea for website was developed from discussions between Sharon and her father Don Love on finding a better way to market animals and improve options for selling.

Close friend and now business partner, Bob Atkinson has been Sharon's sounding board to develop the concept from a buyer's perspective, and in February this year she decided to "go for it" and develop Tradedeer.co.nz

"The site's aim is to be dynamic and evolve with the needs of the industry," Sharon says. "We will provide a product that is easy, interesting, informative and useful, thus creating an exciting platform to promote and advertise products and services relevant to deer farming. This will give all deer farmers – not only the studs, but individuals also – the opportunity to market what they produce."

Tradedeer.co.nz was launched to a selection of the industry's advertisers to gauge reaction to the concept.

"I was encouraged by their support and enthusiasm. Some have chosen to take the wait and see option, but I think they will be pleased with the site online today.


"Tradedeer.co.nz is a tool that the industry can use as a directory for deer-related products and services, not only to provide a comprehensive database of studs and stud animals with a total breeding history, but to enable the industry and deer farmers to access this information. The site will enable

breeders and individuals to advertise themselves, their stock and services to the rest of the industry and the world."

Sharon says service providers to the industry can also advertise on the website and add to this powerful hub of resources that will become the "one-stop information shop" for deer farmers.

Plans include an online, real-time auction facility that will give sellers lower cost options for selling directly to their target markets, expanding the opportunities for breeders and individuals to not only promote, but to also sell their livestock, she says. Semen listings and the auction site launch are planned for February 2008.

Sharon plans to keep promoting the site through advertising and sponsorship. She says all advertisers on the site will be able to load their own advertising data on easy-to-follow templates. Stud and animal profiles will include five photos per profile which can be updated as many times as the advertiser wants. "Tradedeer staff will be available to have advertisers' information online or query answered within 24 hours of receipt," she adds.

The site will also feature a comprehensive events listing for stag walks, stag sales and competitions. 

For more information contact:

info@tradedeer.co.nz or phone Sharon or Rebecca on 07 332 5892

...and you Fallows thought
this was just for Red Deer...

well Wapiti do.....
..find out how to list Elk too.



tradedeer.co.nz
TAKING DEER ONLINE



“Making the DIFFerence”

DEER INDUSTRY FOCUS FARMS

The development of the four new Focus Farm areas as promoted by DINZ and NZDFA has taken many hours of meetings, appointment of facilitators and planning since the announcement in July that DINZ would give full budget support to the projects.

The *Making the DIFFerence* initiative is driven by the enhancing venison production programme, as laid out in the successful DEEResearch application to FRST. Each of the four regions is taking a slightly different tack, reflecting regional issues and interests. All support the interplay of defining a key Focus Farm, with associated special interest satellite farms set to add greater depth and regional interest.

Northern region

The Northern Region Focus Farm project (Chair Andrew Mitchell) will be jointly facilitated by Mark Macintosh (AgFirst) with support from deer specialist veterinarian Robin Hopkirk, (Rotorua). The region will centre on the breeding and finishing property of **David Dewar at Ngakuru, Rotorua**. The region is holding its inaugural community open day on Friday 26 October from 12.30 pm. This 165 hectare farm is on rolling hill country and breeds (300 hinds) and purchases weaners (400) for finishing. Objectives include clearing debt in five years, balanced production and erosion control, cropping/pasture renewal and fencing renovation programmes. Typically for the area, deer farming allows David Dewar's off-farm interests to contribute to the farming effort and lifestyle balance.

The Northern region will also be supported through the intensive (20su/ha) high-performance Simmonds property with its integrated stocking policy, cropping for strategic feeding and strong environmental enrichment programme. (See *Deer Industry News* June 2007, page 36 for more on this property.)

The region covers five NZDFA Branches and has also been offered support through the Landcorp's Central Plateau deer farming and benchmarking operations. The steering group has recruited a further large property in the Te Awamutu area for future involvement with high performance venison and velvet production enterprises.

Southern North Island

The Southern North Island region (Chair Mike Holdaway) has appointed Waipukurau-based veterinarian and active deer farmer, Richard Hilson, to facilitate the Tikokino property *The Steyning* of **Tim Aitken** and **Lucy Robertshaw**. This large-scale breeding property finishes all stock and features self-feeding silage pads, strong environmental and sustainability awareness and programmes, and a good balance of land contour and soil types in a relatively reliable climate.

Tim and Lucy have a strong background in recording and collaboration in deer health and productivity research programmes with Massey University. A technical group meeting, with input from AgResearch and Massey, was held on 10 October to establish priorities and link them to the business plans and environmental elements of a large sustainability programme. The property and Focus Farm programme will be featured as part of the Hawke's Bay and North Island velvet competition supporting seminar on 1 December.

The steering group is also committed to identifying a specialist finishing and integrated stock operation in the Central Regions for 2008, and will also seek satellite support from a deer operation battling the effects of the typical East Coast dry conditions.



Canterbury and South Canterbury

Progress in the Canterbury and South Canterbury regions has reached the interview and short list phase following good expressions of interest in response to advertising and through contact via steering committees.

The areas are quite distinct but will each feature a combined breeding and finishing operation, with some integrated stock management. Andy MacFarlane's consultancy company MacFarlane Rural Business will facilitate both Focus Farm groups through Nicky Hyslop in South Canterbury and Peter Bradley in North Canterbury, allowing some synergy between the farms and regions.

The key Focus Farms will have been identified by mid October. There are a number of linked satellite operations that feature intensive breeding and finishing, an aggressive programme to combat John's disease, and management through typically dry and climatically unpredictable periods – especially in early spring and over lactation.

Regional council support for all programmes

The four projects have attracted enthusiastic support from regional councils which all see a role for themselves in assisting with farm plans, environmental risk assessment and developing sustainable land management and deer farming systems. This type of expertise is welcomed and will add a new dimension to the projects and associated field days. ECAN has written in support for this project into the Annual Plan for both Canterbury and South Canterbury projects, with Hawke's Bay Regional Council strongly supporting the farm plan approach and integrating the production aims with land use capability, wind erosion and soil losses, and water quality involvement. *The Steyning* features self-feeding silage pads and associated challenges with runoff and utilisation that will be a key feature of this programme. Both Environment BOP and Environment Waikato (EW) have strongly supported the initiative. EW Dry Stock Liaison group will involve a DINZ and research and Focus Farms perspective at its next meeting on in November, and a major Riparian management field day is to be held at Rodway park on 16 November to review an extensive waterways and planting project undertaken by the Mitchells.

As each Focus Farm project becomes established they will hold a familiarisation field day before summer. Facilitators and steering committees have continued to emphasise that these farms, while they will seek to improve productivity, have an immediate value in critically assessing cost of production inputs and costs associated into the various on-farm enterprises, both deer and other livestock based. This will help measure and benchmark the efficiency of the operation based on production, productivity and timeliness in relation to the climate and farming calendar and to openly record profitability by enterprise.

At the end of day, achieving more calves on the ground, growing heavier, earlier – within the restrictions of climate and farming objectives – remains the key goal of the Focus Farm initiative, balanced by financial sense and profitability. The skills and commitment of the people who have become involved will help “make the difference”. All those involved in the Focus Farms look forward to deer farmer support as the projects unfold.

Tony Pearce, Producer Manager, DINZ



Obituary

Bert Smith

In July, the Elk and Wapiti Society farewelled one of its founders, and life member, Bert Smith of Winton.

Like many of the early deer farmers, Bert was a hunter and spent many a happy time hunting deer in the Hollyford Valley where, during one hunt, he shot what at the time was a massive head.

In an article in the *Southland Times* in March 2000, Bert recalled: "I thought he was massive then but we've got them a lot bigger in the paddock now."

Bert began the switch from sheep, cattle and grain back in 1974 when he purchased seven Red hinds and three fawns from deer capture era identity John Dennis from the Port Craig area of southern Fiordland. They were soon joined by three hinds from Walter Peak Station, and hybrid hinds from Invermay.

The first Wapiti, a fawn, arrived soon afterwards and so began a long career of crossbreeding. Bert chose to follow the Wapiti path because the progeny were bigger and better suited for venison production.

Later acquisitions came from deer captured in the Pourakino Valley where the deer were tranquilised by dart gun, feet tied and transported back to the home farm at Oreti in Central Southland on the back of the farm truck.

In those early years, deer to Bert were just a hobby. In later life he said he regretted not getting into deer in a big way right from the start. Nonetheless, Bert was quick to recognise the economic potential of deer, and set about replacing his sheep and cattle with deer until the whole farm was deer fenced running more than 1000 head of Wapiti-type animals.

Bert Smith was unique. He was born on Ryan Road near Winton, grew up on Ryan Road, worked on Ryan Road made his life on Ryan Road and died on Ryan Road aged 88.

His schooling was in Winton and during the summer on his way to school, Bert would drive the horse and cart and take milk to the local factory and his mother's home-made butter to folk in the town. His father died when Bert was just 17 and Bert took over the responsibility of running the family farm.

During WWII he grew linen flax which was used to make parachutes and aircraft covering. At one time he bred Hereford and Shorthorn Cattle, Dorset Horn and Southdown sheep and was a member of a grain harvesting syndicate for many years.

Bert Smith was a founding member of both the Southland Deer Farmers Association and the Elk and Wapiti Society and when he was accorded life membership of the Society he had had 20 years' experience behind him. That experience was much sought after by newer breeders and by the vets at Central Southland Vets, many of whom had their first experience of velvetting at his property.

Bert married Nan Saunders in 1944 and had six children, one of whom, Colin, continues to run the deer operation.

Bert always said he had been fortunate his first stag had excellent temperament and good velvet which gave a good base to work on. His priority was always good temperament,

good body weight and good velvet, with a view to producing a big, meaty, pure hybrid. The herd was closed in 1981 with all hinds bred on the farm and single sire mated.

Inside wintering became a feature of the operation from 1976. By bringing the weaned fawns inside from mid-June, Bert developed animals which became used to human contact from a young age and remained quiet throughout their life.

We remember Bert Smith with respect and for the huge contribution he made to deer farming and to the Elk and Wapiti Society in particular. 🇳🇿

Contributed by John Cutt, NZ Elk and Wapiti Society




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Branch Chairman profile: **Richard Denley**

Tongariro

Ever since a young Richard Denley started spending every available school holiday on an uncle's Canterbury farm, he knew he would also end up on the land, but it didn't happen straight away.

He started his working life about as far from farming as you can get – as a shipbroker. He spent his first four years in Montreal and then another 14 years in Auckland, the latter 8 years in partnership running his own shipbroking business.

By the 1990s he was ready to fulfil his ambitions, starting with a share in a dairy farm at Galatea, southeast of Rotorua. Deer became part of the plan when they realised they weren't that interested in milking cows. He also owns a second deer farm in partnership with Ken Sirl at Pukawa, near the southern end of Lake Taupo.

With a respectable 150 cm of rainfall on the pumice soils, it is a breeding and finishing operation; Richard runs 600 mainly Red hinds at around 18 stock units per hectare. He uses some Elk cross stags as terminal sires and Eastern Reds to breed replacements. Like many farmers wanting to explore new options he is also dipping his toes in the waters of AI for genetic improvement, and so far has been happy with the results.

"I have just done my second year of 50 hinds, achieving an 82 percent conception rate which was pleasing," he says.

Richard gets about 500 head off for slaughter each year with the first away by late September and around two-thirds gone by Christmas. At this stage he's content to focus on venison.

The property was C10 when he purchased it in 1995, but almost straight away he had a reactor. The C10 status has been restored but false positives occur fairly frequently when the routine skin tests are done, something that Richard puts down to the Johne's disease which is present on the property.

"Johne's costs us six to 10 animals a year," Richard says.

The Tongariro Branch of NZDFA, which Richard chairs, is relatively small with around 45-50 members. Of these, a core of around 15 members are regularly involved in Branch activities. Richard admits he hadn't been among the most active members, but was happy to put his hand up when previous Chairman, John Derbidge, stood down.

The Resource Management Act and Environment Waikato's plans to restrict nitrogen discharges in the Taupo catchment loom as local issues for members. "Most of our active members are outside the Taupo catchment, with the most affected being some of the big corporate farmers – Landcorp and a number of Maori Trusts. Having to get a resource consent to farm will be a shock to some," Richard says.

Of the 100 or so farms in the Taupo catchment, four or five have so far had their nitrogen discharge allowance confirmed. Richard says his Pukawa farm is among the 14 or 15 farms




that have started the consent process voluntarily. "At present we are waiting for the Overseer® program to be updated with the more recent MAF stock unit rates for deer before we can proceed. A couple of farms that have already gone through the process will have to be re-evaluated due to this."

Richard says the changes are already affecting the property market. "People looking to buy farms in the area want to know what the nitrogen discharge allowance will be before they make an offer."

He says challenges like this are not unique to the central North Island. "Canterbury farmers are facing their own battles over access to water."

The role played by DFA Branches will keep changing, Richard says. "One of the most important functions of our particular Branch is now a social one, but it is still a useful contact point to keep up with the latest news and

information within the industry, both locally and nationally. Most deer farmers who have survived the downturn now just want to put their heads down and keep farming their way back to profitability. We're very reliant on the way our products are marketed, and that is only as strong as the weakest link in the chain. But in the end we've all got to take some responsibility for our industry's future." 

Hawke's Bay Branch says thanks

On behalf of the members of the Hawke's Bay Branch NZDFA who benefited from their help during the recent drought, I'd like to thank the following:

- **Andy Mitchell**, Chairman of the Rotorua Branch, for his initial offer of help
- **Brian Wellington**, Chairman of the Waipa Branch, for his help coordinating the offers of baleage made available by his members
- the individual members of the **Waipa Branch** who made available baleage for sale to fellow deer farmers (I'm sorry I can't remember all your names, so I won't name individuals)
- and particularly **John Carter** and **Bill Robinson** of Raroa Deer Stud for the baleage donated to their clients in the Bay.

All the help was greatly appreciated by all concerned in difficult times and hopefully we can return the favour if ever needed – not that I would wish similar circumstances on anyone.

Mike McCormick
Chairman Hawke's Bay Branch NZDFA



Branch Chairman profile: Mark Bowen

Wairoa

While his neighbours down in Hawke's Bay went straight from a crippling drought into a cold, wet winter, Mark Bowen could be thankful the relatively mild climate around the Mahia Peninsula was enough to give his pasture a late autumn boost and some valuable winter feed.

Mark runs 600 hinds and 100 velveters as part of a mixed sheep, beef and deer operation on a 400 hectare family property at Mahia that was broken in by his grandfather.

"The drought was hard for some of our Wairoa members, but we were luckier than most. We had to cut back on trading stock, but not capital stock, and we had adequate baleage and a rape crop that hung on through the dry. That helped.

"Being close to the sea it was a bit warmer here, so we got some winter growth. We're also fortunate to have a good water system from a reservoir on the property."

Mark grew up on the farm, and as a youngster in the early 1980s helped out as his father deer fenced the first 8 hectares. At a time when hinds cost \$2,000 each and the deer industry was still finding its feet, Mark struck out on his own, studying computing at Massey University. After working for Databank in the early 1990s he spent eight and a half years in Australia, working for Telstra and then contracting with banks and insurance companies.

But the lure of the home farm was always there, and when the opportunity presented itself, Mark returned four years ago with wife Katie and their three young daughters.

The deer side of the business had kept growing while Mark was away, and sheep, cattle and deer now make up roughly one-third each of the 4,500 stock units. With good grass growth throughout the winter, Mark breeds and finishes all livestock classes.

Looking ahead, Mark is keen to develop the velvet side of the deer business, and he is a strong supporter of the Velconz concept. At the time of writing he was looking forward to attending one of the shed meetings to hear more about the proposal.

"We've always been price takers. It's about time producers had a say in how their product is sold." Mark says he doesn't see why the development should shut Veleco out.

"In fact there is a real opportunity for the two to work together to market velvet. Any initiative that helps create a New Zealand brand and allows us to develop/market our


velvet must be a good thing for the industry. We need to take a long-term view and support the Velconz concept."

The local Branch – Wairoa – is small by national standards with only around 25 members, Mark says. But what they lack in size they make up in enthusiasm, and members are adamant they want to keep Wairoa as a separate entity, rather than go down the Branch merger path. "Travelling down to Hawke's Bay for meetings wouldn't be practicable for us," he says. "But with the reduction in member numbers we may need to keep an open mind on this in the future."

Tb testing is a big issue for members, with many on annual testing and some concerned about the ongoing costs of this. Being relatively isolated out on the peninsula, Mark is out of the vector risk area and only needs to do three-yearly testing.

Issues involving DOC also emerge occasionally. A recent case involved the Bayly Trust, a private farming trust which runs some deer. The Trust had originally applied for resource consent to clear 550 hectares of scrub and kanuka on the 3500 hectare Waikatea Station, after about 600 hectares had been cleared earlier. The Wairoa District Council consented to 350 hectares being cleared, a decision appealed by DOC.

Mark says DOC's stance put the department well out of step with the farming community, and created much anger amongst locals. In the end, the consent was reduced to 280 hectares, but only on the basis that about 800 hectares, including restored indigenous vegetation linkages, is to be legally protected by covenant together with pest control, fencing and no further grazing.

Another general concern for those in the Branch is the dwindling number of deer farmers. Mark says a number have exited the industry all together, but this loss has been offset to some extent by stayers increasing their deer numbers as market prospects improve. 



AFFCO back in the venison business

AFFCO has begun processing venison at Rangiuuru and is back in the market. CEO Stuart Weston says the development is entirely market led and client driven, and he is promising to be aggressive on venison procurement.

"There has been immense pressure from some of our European customers for venison supply, as well as strong prompting from our base of farmer suppliers. In every sense, getting back into venison is win-win."

He says there are also advantages for deer farmers and producers farming a mix of stock, as it allows them to have their processing needs met through a single, well-established company.

Rangiuuru is fully licensed for venison and will produce a full range of venison products and associated products like offal. Weston says this initiative has benefits for the Rangiuuru workforce and surrounding community through an extended processing season at the plant, as well as flow-on advantages for local contractors and suppliers.

AFFCO has previous experience of venison, but sold its stand-alone processing plant about 12 years ago.



Canterbury getting close to Tb targets

They may not ever kill the last ferret in Canterbury, but the members of the 22 vector control groups in the region are giving it a damned good go.

Turning up the heat on Canterbury's ferret population, particularly in North Canterbury, is just one strategy that's really starting to pay dividends in terms of Tb control.

At last count in August there were just 15 infected herds in the region – two of them deer herds. This is down from 27 deer herds five years ago, and just 10 percent of the level in 1996, when the number of herds on movement control peaked at 168.


Hurunui deer farmer Malcolm Gilbert chairs the Canterbury Regional Animal Health Committee (RAHC) and received the 2006 Matuschka Award in recognition of his work on Tb control. He says vector control work in Canterbury has been "wall to wall", especially in the more difficult northern areas.

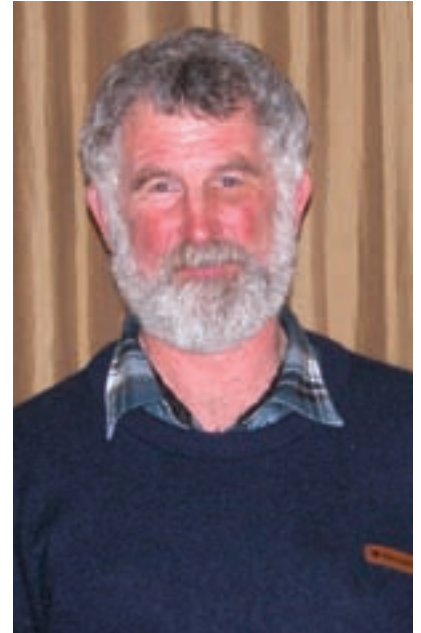
"Possums have been relatively easy to control, but with ferrets it's more hit and miss. You get them down to a certain level and then it just seems like you're cropping them.

"The AHB ferret control contractors are only on a property from four to seven days at a time, but the vector control groups are also targeting the ferrets. Persistence finally seems to be paying off."

Malcolm says leghold traps are currently the only effective method for ferrets. "They are very smart animals! They'll take the clean baits, but as soon as you add a toxin they seem to be able to sense it."

With the total number of infected herds down so low – the ultimate target is seven by 2013 – Malcolm says the Canterbury RAHC can now focus some intensive management on these herds and try to find out why they are staying infected. One small cattle herd near the coast has been proving a very tough nut to crack, with no obvious reasons why. "It's important to sort out Tb in herds like these because it's a summer dry area and we need to be able to shift herds around if there's a drought."

Malcolm says that once the infection levels are down to target levels, the big challenge will be to keep farmers motivated to do what's needed to stay on top of Tb. At this rate he expects the target will be easily reached before the 2013 deadline. 



Malcolm Gilbert: Optimistic targets will be reached by 2013.

DEERSelect to progress antler measurements for EBV

The months of January and February following the annual sales season this summer promise to be an extremely busy time for DEERSelect as it gathers data to progress the development of Estimated breeding Values, (EBVs) for velvet and hard antler traits.

To this point, sixteen of the leading antler studs have committed to providing information and having velvet EBVs calculated gained from the measurement of weights, volume and modified SCI scores for 2-year-old antler that is typically grown out for the sale season. This will also allow previous velvet data, where collected, to be included.

In the past, some of these antler measurements has been collected under two different systems for evaluation. These data did not give the required confidence over the collective results to apply the single beam measurement as an indicator reliably to produce accurate EBVs for estimated velvet weights.

This season, an evaluation of estimated velvet weight will be taken from the removed hard or full antler development seen at sale time and will be measured under the CIC water displacement measurement. This has been an approved world-wide formula for 70 years for measuring antler weight of small deer species like Roe deer where the weight of skull has to be taken out of the equation and only the antler itself weighed through displacement.

The 2-year-old post sale frozen antler will be immersed base first up to an estimated ideal velvet antler harvest point, and displaced water collected and weighed, creating both a volume displacement and consistent estimated weight data. A single operator will take the measurements across what is an estimated 400 stags this season and an estimated 2 year-old velvet weight EBV calculated.

Similarly, DEERSelect will contract SCI-accredited master measurers to record the modified SCI score (less span and coronet circumference as is used in hard antler competitions) for the 2007/08 crop of 2-year-old sires and use that data from a similar number of stags of English, Eastern and Composite origin to develop an EBV basis for hard antler score potential.

Breeders who have an interest in velvet antler alone are also encouraged to join the five herds already involved in calculating velvet antler EBVs so that DEERSelect can gain the critical mass needed to present sire ranking lists for antler based on cross herd referencing as in the 200 plus sires now contributing to the growth trait work in Red deer herds.

continued on page 37

Animal Health Board research programme

The Animal Health Board (AHB) is continuing with a busy research programme. The following summarises work from the 2006/07 programme and looks ahead to the next year's schedule.


2006/07 research

- **Tb vaccine for possums:** While the only good possum is a dead one, the next best thing is a possum that's Tb free. Good progress has been made developing an oral bait vaccine for possums that protects them against *Mycobacterium bovis* (bovine Tb).
- **Formulation of tuberculin:** Adding bovine-specific antigens and reducing the concentration of a tuberculin can improve specificity without affecting sensitivity of the skin test, an AgResearch project has shown. (See sidebars)
- **Maori concerns:** Lincoln University has compiled a database for literature on Maori concerns about 1080.
- **New toxins:** Landcare Research has been researching the formulations for a toxin based on cholecalciferol, to increase effectiveness and humaneness. Pest-Tech Ltd has been evaluating a new bait containing a chronic poison. One project showed it is suitable for ferret control.
- **Pre-feeding:** A Landcare Research trial showed that pre-feeding for a poisoning programme produces higher and more sustainable possum kills than when it isn't used.
- **Cyanide:** AHB is to test a new cyanide bait system for pigs, successfully trialled in Australia where pigs are a major pest.
- **Sticky beaks:** Cyanide bait delivery systems have been developed which exclude livestock and weka, while still allowing possums access. Possums' messy eating habits still cause problems (bait spillage), but more work is planned in consultation with DOC using various "sticky" paste formulations. This could open the way for cyanide baiting on Crown land where weka are present.
- **Possums and pigs:** A Landcare Research study shows

controlling possums quickly eliminates Tb in pigs, but the control is needed over a wide area. The study also showed that possums and ferrets can pick up Tb by scavenging pig carcasses.

- **Aerial operations:** Landcare research has shown that where there are high numbers of rats competing with them, possums are less likely to go to the ground for food. It also showed that pre-feeding helps "teach" possums where to find bait.
- **Biological controls:** AHB has co-funded two projects, one looking into possum-specific toxins and the other looking into the potential of a naturally occurring virus as a vector for biological control.

Priorities for 2007/08

- New diagnostic tests for bovine Tb.
- Better bait formulations/presentation for ferrets (see also article "Canterbury getting close to Tb targets" in this issue of *Deer Industry News*).
- Non-1080 toxins for aerial application in impenetrable scrub.
- Managing risk from animal remains (especially pigs) left by hunters.
- Low-cost techniques for managing infected possum populations in isolated areas. 

Improving Tb testing and diagnosis

Dr Colin Mackintosh of AgResearch Invermay has carried out two studies for the AHB with the aim of improving the specificity of the mid-cervical (MCT) Tb skin test. The first trial was conducted in deer naturally infected with Tb and the second trial was in deer not infected with Tb, but which were infected with *M. paratuberculosis* (Johne's disease), one of the main causes of false cross-reactions to the Tb test. Some of these deer had also been treated with a vaccine for Johne's disease.

The trials looked at varying concentrations of bovine tuberculin, with and without augmentation with *M. bovis*-specific antigens.

The results showed that reducing the concentrations of bovine tuberculin improved the specificity of the MCT in deer known to be Tb-free, but sensitised by *M. paratuberculosis*

While reducing the concentration of bovine tuberculin improved specificity (distinguishing between bovine Tb and Johne's disease) it also reduced sensitivity. However, sensitivity was restored by adding bovine-specific antigens.

The findings need to be confirmed by field trials.

Tb diagnosis in deer vaccinated for Johne's disease

One of the biggest barriers to introducing vaccination for deer against Johne's disease has always been the cross-reactivity that can turn Tb-free animals into reactors. Trials are being carried out at AgResearch Invermay to measure the accuracy of the MCT, CCT and other ancillary Tb tests in deer that have been treated with a new vaccine, Pfizer's Silirum®.


Controlled trials will also be carried out to test new augmented bovine tuberculins (see sidebar at right), and to test new bovine-specific and Johne's-specific antigens to improve the specificity and sensitivity of ancillary blood tests for Tb.

from page 36

With that impetus and the commitment of the next group of studs who have a primary focus on antler, the next development phase and expansion of the DEERSelect programme for the industry will advance.

DEERSelect will be looking to publish the December sire stag growth rate summary again and make that available with its sortable function on the www.deernz.org website and also on the DEERResearch website pre sale season. Antler values should be available in mid 2008.

AgResearch scientist Dr Jason Archer also reports that the preliminary EBV calculations for the Elk/Wapiti project have

been completed for growth traits and are being assessed by the contributing Elk herd owners at present. The current tools for the generic ranking of growth rates of Red deer offered by DEERSelect are working well and gaining steady acceptance by the industry. A DEERResearch-funded project that extends the EBV concept to calculating a breeding worth (BW) for traits based on a dollar value of genetic superiority is in the final stages of completion. 

For further information please contact:

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021 719 038 tony.pearse@deernz.org
or **DEERSelect: Dr Jason Archer AgResearch,**
03 489 9138 jason.archer@agresearch.co.nz

Research programme secure

Ongoing research to support the deer industry has been secured following the funding announcement by the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) covering the next six years.

AgResearch will receive \$1.5 million a year (including GST) of the \$1.9 million funding that was bid for. Annual funding for the 2002-2007 period just completed was also \$1.5 million. The bid, led by AgResearch's Geoff Asher, was underpinned by a \$400,000 commitment from DEEResearch. Landcorp has also committed \$100,000 research funding. The revised total annual funding for this industry-led research programme is as follows:

Funding source	Funds (excl. GST)	%
DEEResearch	\$408,000	22
Landcorp Farming	\$100,000	6
FRST	\$1,333,333	72
Total	\$1,841,333	100

The bid was aligned to four research themes:

1. Venison market supply systems
2. Livestock systems
3. Water quality and biodiversity in deer systems.
4. Venison processing

The funding bid under themes 1 and 2 was completely successful, and partially successful for theme 3. Theme 4 (venison processing) will receive no FRST funding. The unsuccessful part of the application for FRST funding under theme 3 was for research into water-borne contaminants such as nitrogen or disease organisms.

DINZ Science Manager Lindsay Fung says all on-farm research bid for has received funding (with the exception of one environmental project) and the research programme links closely to the deer industry's venison and productivity strategies.

Mike North, a team leader in the AgResearch/MIRINZ group at Ruakura, says that although the failure to attract FRST funding for venison processing was disappointing, it does not mean the venison processing capability will be lost. Venison processing specialist Eva Wiklund will remain in the group.

The original \$400,000 DEEResearch commitment in support of the FRST funding bid included a \$52,000 allocation to complete the work being carried out by AgResearch Ruakura's venison processing team into effects of clostridial organisms in packaged venison ('blown pack' research). Although the FRST funding to match this commitment did not come through, Lindsay Fung says the door has not been closed on continuing this work.

"DINZ and AgResearch are continuing discussions on how this allocation could be best used. Options include a continuation of the clostridial research using just this money, seeking to leverage this money into larger funded red meat research programmes that might incorporate clostridial research, or using it as a basis to leverage additional

industry funding to support this or other venison processing research."

The original DEEResearch commitment of \$400,000 was reduced to \$348,000 when the funding for venison processing research was 'parked' to one side pending these discussions. However a subsequent decision by DINZ to fully fund the focus farm programme (the original commitment was for 50:50 funding with DFA branches pitching in half) has seen the total industry-funded pool increased by \$60,000 to \$408,000. The money for the focus farms will be channelled through DEEResearch. This is how DEEResearch's commitment breaks down over the research areas:

Research area	DEEResearch \$	%
1. Early breeding, optimised feed	152,000	37
2. Focus farms, parasitology	196,000	48
3. Extensification benefits and N distribution	60,000	15
Total	408,000	100

Geoff Asher says that the results of the funding bid bring an end to the uncertainty for AgResearch's deer team, and give very clear direction for the work ahead.


"With scientific research there will always be unknowns, and we have to accept that some of the programmes may change course during the six-year funding period. There's a contract variation process in place with FRST to cover situations where new research opportunities appear."

He says the research programme includes a mix of applied science aimed at addressing specific production issues, and the riskier but potentially more valuable basic science.

"The DEEResearch Board and DINZ Executive have shown a good depth of science understanding and appreciate the need for a mix of basic and applied research."

Geoff says farmers were strongly in favour of practical solutions in areas like parasitology when consulted about priorities. There was less support for work on mixed species systems and there had been some resistance among velvet producers to venison-focused research which aims to reduce or delay stags' velvet production in the leadup to slaughter.

Landcorp's commitment of \$100,000 to the research pool was an important contribution, he added. One of several projects receiving Landcorp support will seek a melatonin receptor marker gene, something that could help identify Eastern types with a propensity for early calving.

He says changes in land use will see greater use of extensive systems for deer breeding, complemented by very specialised deer finishing units. "This will raise a new set of productivity issues. It will also raise issues about the inherent values of the high country land classes that might be in greater demand for extensive systems." 

"The DEEResearch Board and DINZ Executive have shown a good depth of science understanding and appreciate the need for a mix of basic and applied research."