

“Making the Difference”

DEER INDUSTRY FOCUS FARMS PROJECT

Canterbury / North Canterbury – MENDIP HILLS STATION

Issue 5
JANUARY 2009

Next Community Field Day

Thursday February 19th 2009

11.00am start with own lunch

- Hind breeding programme on Mendip
- Taking science to the paddock

Genetic Workshop

Key Speakers: Jason Archer, *AgResearch*; Jake Chardon, *Deer Improvement*; Alistair Nichol, *Lincoln University*; Geoff Nicol, *Landcorp*

Hopefully everyone enjoyed themselves over the festive season and managed to get some time off. Simon has had his thinking cap on since our last field day, with things getting drier on a daily basis. Currently, the Lower Flats and Downs have turned golden brown and you could even see a lizard run over it. Stock water has become an issue with springs and creeks that have been fine in the past, drying up on the hill. Very little rain in November and December has mitigated a great spring.

Within the deer unit, hinds are set stocked and Simon has been carting water since early January. This is a month earlier than last year. He is currently looking at options for a stock water scheme for this area, including tapping springs, water dams and other alternatives. Grass for the hinds is disappearing quickly and feed quality is of concern. With the deer units stocked up with hinds, options to ratify this are limited. Simon is currently working through his options of weaning early or feeding supplementary feed – grain and cereal silage. A hind in these conditions requires a minimum of 5 litres of water per day. You can double this amount if the hind is feeding a fawn. Feeding supplements however could compound current problems. If no significant rain is received within the next two weeks, enough to get creeks or springs running again, other decisions will need to be made.



Mendip has purchased a number of new sires this year, replacing some of the older stags and the stags that tested positive to Johne's. This included 3 high breeding value red stags, 7 terminal sires (Eastern Elk) and 1 Wapiti stag. This now gives Mendip 18 red stags, 7 terminal and 8 Wapiti to use over 1,120 MA hinds and 300 R1 hinds.

Simon is currently working through a breeding programme with the Focus Farm committee and Jason Archer from AgResearch. Final adjustments need to be made at our next community field day in February.

Following discussion with Prof. Frank Griffin, it has been decided that more hinds will be Johne's tested. This decision was made due to the high number of R1 hinds that tested positive before leaving the lower deer block in early October. Frank has suggested that this year's R1 hinds are tested now, and the second and third calvers on the hill are tested pre rut at weaning. Depending on the prevalence of Johne's within these animals, a decision will be made as to what testing will be carried out from here. If more hinds are to be tested, options could include retesting R1 hinds again in September or testing the remaining hinds that have not been tested at pregnancy testing. By the time the stag goes out this autumn, Mendip will have tested 380 MA hinds and 300 R1 hinds.

Frank was again very quick to point out that the test would not eradicate Johne's, but is a tool that can be used in conjunction with feeding, stocking rate and possibly genetics. The R1 hinds will be tested this week with the results available at the February community field day.

Lambing of 112% was pleasing for Simon. With the dry conditions, Simon made a decision to wean early. The early lambers pre-Christmas and the rest of the ewes in the New Year. 1,300 lambs were killed off their mothers at an average price of \$75. 3,000 lambs were sent to the finishing farm and 4,000 were retained (including a few smaller ones). The remaining lambs were sold store on lamb plan. Ewes have been sorted, culls sold and remaining MA ewes have been sent up the mountain. They will stay there until the end of February.

All surplus 2-year cattle have been sold and breeding cows have had to be shifted down beside the river for water. Bulls have now been out for two cycles and it seems to be working well.

All winter feed sown is up but looking for a drink. Barley was cut for cereal silage (300 bales) and ewe lambs are on summer rape crops which Simon is pleased to have. We are hoping for some significant rainfalls in the next two weeks...

I look forward to seeing you all on **Thursday, 19 February 2009.**
11:00am start, bring your own lunch.

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