

# "Making the DIFFerence"

## DEER INDUSTRY FOCUS FARMS PROJECT

### Central Regions – THE STEYNING

Issue 2  
April 2009

What's been happening on The Steyning and what's coming up? After a successful field day in February, it is time for an update...

It has been a rough ride as far as rainfall is concerned. It was very dry through most of the lactational period and the best rain was mid-February, - too late to make a difference to the weaning weights. Tim made a decision to wean earlier than normal (average 19 February) and began straight after the last field day - all weaned well before the end of the month.

Since then March forgot to rain and the great grass growth that began after 127 mls in February came to a sudden stop! Since June The Steyning has had 628 mls, half of the yearly average. It is going to be a long winter...

135 R2 bulls were sold store in the first week of March as a result, and covers for the end of March/beginning of April are just under 2000 kg.

And what are the weaning weights?

Pre-DIFF the weaning weights averaged about 52 kg across both sexes and with first fawners included. But we've gone backwards (just a little)! We blame the weather for that...

Comparing 2007 with the 2008 weaners...



2007 mixed sex weaners av 51.0 kg	R2 fawns were 45.1 kg
	AI fawns were 57.7 kg
2008 mixed sex weaners av 50.7 kg	R2 fawns were 48.7 kg
	AI fawns were 52.7 kg
	Wapiti cross calves were 53.1 kg

Of note...

- The R2 hinds were scanned early in fawn and the lates were killed - there are no late-born tail end fawns. The weights are well up and these hinds grazed a crop for about a month pre-weaning (see comment below too).

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Upcoming events

**Community Group meeting to be organised soon.**

**Next field day will be held on Wednesday, 12 August 2009 – venues and times to be announced.**

**Oi! Look here...**

**Tim is looking for a deer shed and / or yards to replace his used one - do you know of any around for dismantling and removal?**

**Phone Tim on 0274724587**

*While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of its content, this newsletter alone is not to be substituted for direct advice on any matter addressed.*



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- The weights of the AI fawns show how much the MA hinds suffered in lactation with the dry. Back 5 kg! It is also worth noting that the AI back-up fawns were 45.2 kg, or 7.5 kg lighter than the AI fawns, which is roughly 400 grams per day growth that they missed out on by being born 18 days later.
- The Wapiti-X calves have performed well in the circumstances, and the issue we had with the wild stag that jumped in late in the rut seems to have been minor - Tim reports that there appear to be very few “reds” in that mob!

Some of these results show through in the hinds too. They were also weighed and condition scored at weaning as they were in 2007...

- The R2 hinds weaned about 13 kg heavier and in better nick than 2007. They were on a crop during mid to late lactation. This is a big difference and is reflected at least partly in those fawn weights.
- The hinds that reared Wapiti-X calves did wean in slightly lighter condition – about half a score lighter. Jason Archer from Invermay spoke about this as a “cost” of the cross-breeding programme in his address at the spring field day last year, so that should be no surprise!
- The Johne’s “suspect” hinds weaned a bit lighter than their MA herd mates but they did also have the best paddock percentage! More on this later too.

There will be plenty of good information to show you at the next field day as far as the mating programme goes. The R2 hinds were split into two mobs to be mated by spikers or two year old stags. The terminal sire project is using two B11 stags from Peel Forest Stud in Canterbury and they are working hard!

We have also enlisted three local herds for a more in-depth look at the issues around R2 hind mating and will hopefully get to scan a couple of well-performed herds to make more comparisons on mating dates.



About 150 hinds were AI'd with DIL on 25 March and DIL generously gave Tim and Lucy 25 straws of semen to include in the breeding programme.



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The calves from the “Johne’s-suspect” hinds will be blood tested soon as part of the ongoing Johne’s trial. They will be regularly tested but will not be retained as replacements - they will be killed with the terminal sire lines by fifteen months of age. More on that at the next field day too.

We will also test a range of dairy beef bulls in the next two weeks to see what may or may not be happening there with Johne’s. This will be revealing stuff!

There is a group of weaner deer that are being left undrenched for the time being, in an attempt to get higher parasite levels. We want to do a full Faecal Egg Count Reduction Test to see what drenches work on The Steyning and how well they work. We have good evidence on one local property of significant drench resistance to Abamectin and the drench resistance issue has not been tackled by the deer industry yet. So watch this space too, as we will report the results and delve into the murky world of deer parasitism in August!

The big sediment trap that you saw being built at the last visit has been completed and has begun to fill. Tim and Lucy have planted a heap of natives around the wall but the dry weather and the local hares are making establishment difficult. The whole area will be fenced off shortly.



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The fawns/calves have been drenched once at weaning and are in the process of getting a second drench now. They are getting a 7-in-1 vaccine against blood poisoning and leptospirosis but Tim has decided not to Yersiniavax. This makes the veterinary facilitator very nervous as we confirmed yersinia as the cause of a number of weaner deaths in autumn last year and historically we see the worst issues with this disease in herds that are well-fed (just like the problem with salmonella in ewes, for those of you farming sheep).

Also coming up on the farm is the job of scanning the AI hinds. This will be done in mid May. Then the remainder of the hinds will be scanned in late May and the conception dates recorded for comparisons with the rest of the Hawke’s Bay deer scanning. Still more information for you!

The big stag fawns and the Wapiti-cross stag calves are on the rape and chicory crop that was planted this spring on the west side of the drive. This is the crop that the first fawners grazed with their fawns, behind three temporary electric wires. The young stock have access to the next grass paddock and are spending plenty of time off the crop but graze back in as a mob.

Over all, the young stock look great - lovely winter coats and full bodies make them look like little “bricks” and they are very settled. They will be weighed again but it does look like weaning early has been a good move.



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The last field day finished with some festivity and fundraising after all the serious discussion about Johne's.

The Disease Research Lab (DRL) very generously donated a heap of Paralisa tests to the Central Regions project and we auctioned them in three lots. Vet Services (HB) Ltd also entered in to the spirit by offering to do all the sample collection for free for the winners (including blood tubes and travel) and putting together the comprehensive sale catalogues. And there were also additional free tests offered if the reserves were met, to entice bidders to spend up.

In an effort to ramp up the price even more, there were some free tests offered to underbidders too - push up the price and miss out and you still got a parcel of free tests!

Our auctioneer Vern Wiggins of PGG (who normally sells sheep and cattle), was far from certain what he was selling but did a sterling job, with bids called by Paul Lampp and Keith Burden, also of PGG.

In all, 200 Paralisa tests went under the hammer and our thanks to the purchasers and the underbidders...

- John and Marie Spiers, Maranoa Deer, Takapau bought both the first two lots.

- Mike and Robyn McCormick, Homeplace, Waipukurau got the third lot.

And our underbidders, Quentin Connell (Masterton), Dean Wilkinson (Totara Park, Masterton) and Pete Swinburn (Tourere Station, Waipukurau) took away 15-30 free tests each.

With an overall reserve of \$1,000 we ended up earning \$2,500 towards branch contributions for the DIFF project.

These tests will be used strategically in these herds to check their Johne's status and it is worth noting that DRL had a big surge in North Island Johne's submissions after the last Central Regions field day!

The auction catalogue can be found as an attachment to this email, with a description of all 3 lots for auction.

- Lot 1 was for 40 Paralisa blood tests, by herd sire Frank, our original Irish import.
- Lot 2 was for 30 Paralisa blood tests, by young sire Simon, our go-to man on any job.
- Lot 3 was for 30 Paralisa blood tests, by senior sire Tony, our Industry great.



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We have finally got the Greenhouse Gas Project underway too.

This is a bit more involved than you might realise! All will be explained to you when the project is complete but just how far do you go? It isn't enough to have lots of trees - they need to be fast growing species. And did you know that grass management will impact on the amount of carbon stored in soil - the “long grass” system that David Stevens from Invermay spoke about at the August 2008 field day has the added bonus of storing more carbon in the soil.

Ian Millner from the Hawke's Bay Regional Council will crunch all the numbers but Tim has his hands full getting together all the information that Ian needs in the meantime.

As Tim says, if they cannot get close to carbon neutral with the thousands of trees on their farm, most of the rest of the deer farming population will be in trouble! Hold all bets!

Remember, the next field day will be held on...

# Wednesday, 12 August 2009

This will likely involve a farm visit or two about Takapau and a good technical session in the local hall covering all you will need to know about deer parasites (this won't be boring stuff as we will have good practical advice from top NZ experts - including the unstoppable Simone Hoskin, who knows how to keep a room full of deer farmers listening!) and all the good oil on what went right and what went wrong with sex amongst deer in HB in 2009!

If you cannot get access to the DINZ website to download the past field day information, please contact me and I will see what I can send you. If you want to send a disk or memory stick I can copy the electronic version of the handout material and return it to you - mail to Richard Hilson, Vet Services (HB) Ltd, PO Box 503, Waipukurau 4242.

In the meantime, don't let those autumn drench intervals slip, think about a backup stag to your mixed aged hinds in mid April (especially if single sire mating), and get that scanning booked in. There is money to be made but most of it will come from live weaners and from hinds that have calves!

