

“Making the DIFFerence”

DEER INDUSTRY FOCUS FARMS PROJECT

Region: Northern

Date: Update 8th of August 2011

Hosts: Brian & Jacqui Wellington

Speakers/Facilitator: Mike Woods

The wet year has continued, with 170mm rain in July and about 1000 mm for the year to date.

With ground conditions wet, a run of frosts mid to late July and into early August has dropped pasture growth rates to around 10 kg DM/ha/day.

The yearling heifers grazing on contract have been supplemented with silage since 10 July in order to control their round length with this slower pasture growth. Their growth rates have been in the order of 0.33 - 0.4 kg/day since arriving 1 May.

The hinds wintering in the trees on the poorest self-feed silage stack (high DM and high fibre and low protein) were showing some signs of ill-thrift, and increased aggression. Numbers have been reduced since with culling of the hinds dry at scanning, and subsequently this mob has also had Palm Kernel added every 2nd day at 3 kg/hind. This amount is nearly finished after one day. Hinds seem much more settled now, and are all doing well. It is anticipated the silage will last until the end of August.

The latest round of weaner deer drenching/weighing has been completed over the last week, with results indicating growth rates have slowed to between zero and 100 grams/day depending on the mob. Fawns from the 1st fawners continue to grow steadily at or above the group averages, and so are regaining the weight difference from weaning.

There have been no health issues in the last month, and all fawns are generally looking good. No coughing or scouring noted.

Some faeces samples have been taken to assess the efficacy of the oral combination drench in light of the growth rates.

Fawns are on all grass still, with rotation around 12-14 days depending on weather conditions. There is still a good pick in the paddocks (1850 cover at grazing), and the front area has had urea applied at 60 kg/ha.

“More calves, heavier and earlier... and better”

The current weights are lower than traditionally achieved at this time due to the lower growth rates.

We may be criticized for not supplementing the fawns, but Brian is happy the fawns have been well fed, and it gives us the opportunity to determine the base performance from grass alone before we leap into supplements.

From here we hope to be able to better determine the marginal return for any supplements used to boost weaner growth rates.

The first water runoff tests from the trees and other outflows indicated we have to do more planning for minimizing waterway contamination. To this end John Patterson has a project through EBOP which will integrate with Waikato Regional Council support to develop specific catchment protection plans.

Mike Woods
Facilitator

PS. Just a reminder that the next “official weigh” of weaners will be 1 September to mark the post winter weight. We would appreciate as many updates from other farmers in the region for comparison, with a comment on winter feeding and management.

**Northern Regions: Incorporating
Waipa, Waikato, Rotorua, Bay of Plenty, Tongariro,
Kaipara & Northland Branches NZDFA**

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