



Recognising **excellence**
and **innovation**
on sustainable,
environmentally responsible
deer farms.



This year's awards continued to showcase the passion and enthusiasm that we deer farmers feel for the good health of our environment. Deer farmers have for years taken positive steps in the stewardship of our properties, doing what is best for the land and for our deer.

This year our judges from a Regional Council, Department of Conservation, Landcare Trust and Fish and Game were treated to eight farms which exemplified this stewardship. In opening our doors we are able to share with the wider community the excellence that has, until these awards, gone unheralded. What is now becoming clearer is that our industry is yet again pioneering and providing best practice case studies to the pastoral farming industry.

This year saw the publication of the Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual. Its provision of proven remedies and techniques learnt from our best practitioners provides all of us with the guidance required to continue to improve our sustainable management practices going forward. Unless we continue to make a concerted effort, regional councils and the like will make sweeping changes that will affect the way our nation farms. Environment Bay of Plenty, Environment Waikato and the Canterbury regions are in the consultation phases of implementing wide ranging control frameworks. While we continue to lead the way, deer farmers cannot become complacent and will continue to encourage active participation in and promotion of sustainable land management practices. We warmly congratulate this year's winners for their achievements and look forward to more farms coming forward in 2005.

Andy Mitchell, Executive Committee Chairman, NZDFA

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Integrated approach to sustainable farming

George and Mary Scott, Strathmore

Winners of the Premier Sir Peter and Fiona Lady Elworthy Environmental Award

Southland deer farmer, George Scott has very clear memories of catching freshwater crays, eel and other small fish in streams on the family farm as a young child. He is determined that future generations should have the same youthful enjoyment in the same creeks and streams – a motivation that has led to some positive developments in his farming practices.



The farm

Strathmore is at Pukerau, near Gore.

The original 160 hectare family farm has been built up to 360 hectares of rolling hills (320 effective). It has predominantly Waikoikoi soils which are prone to pugging. There are a number of small spring-fed streams.

The business

Until 1990, Strathmore ran mainly sheep with a few beef cattle. The Scotts started with deer 15 years ago. Today just over 120 hectares are deer fenced. Because of a major Johnes outbreak, the deer farm is now run as a finishing unit only. For the past two years they have bought in 1400 weaners between March and July. The first are killed by September, half are gone by Christmas and the last have usually gone before the next year's intake arrive.

Earthworm numbers have increased dramatically and the fertility levels maintained. The root depth of plants have been greatly improved and animal mineral levels are very good.

Stock handling and welfare

Laneways have been graveled for all-weather access and almost all gateways have been graveled, to minimise damage by vehicles and deer. The laneways also aid the movement of stock and reduce stress. Minimising stock stress is a high priority through all phases.

Future plans

- All waterways including large pond fenced off within 5 years
- Create pond water-features to increase wild-life, ducks and aquatic life
- Continue drainage work.

Triple bottom line: business, social and environment

The Scotts are very active in their local community, and have been welcoming students from local schools onto the farm for over 10 years. They have a policy of employing young people on the farm, who learn from helping with the conservation work. Succession planning is well developed. A son, currently working as an operations manager for Landcorp, is expected to take over the farm in five to 10 years.

Environmental programme

The Scotts have approached their environmental programme from many angles – waterways, tree plantings, soil improvement, changes to pasture species and all-weather laneways.

Water

The Scotts aim for the water quality to be as good, if not better, leaving the property than when it enters. The small waterways are being progressively fenced off and planted with trees. So far around 3000 metres of fencing has been put in, with a further 900 metres planned. Where possible, the numerous small springs and dams areas are drained to prevent damage from deer wallowing.

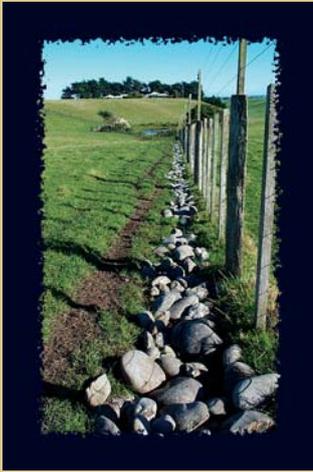
Trees

Plantings are for shelter, shade and aesthetics. Some species have also been selected for their value as a cash-crop. Riparian plantings have largely been willows, poplars and alders. Use of deciduous trees allows light penetration and growth of ground cover to filter runoff. Other plantings include eucalyptus, douglas fir, larch and macrocarpa. Many native trees were lost in 1996 through snow and frosts. A new native plantings area near the entrance to the farm has been started.

Soil

Soil heath has been improved using liquid fertiliser.





Ken and Kathy Swainson, Wheogo Downs, Sanson

Velpool Environment Award for innovative, holistic approach to sustainable management

Wheogo Downs is 114 hectares with 8 ha in dams and woodlots. The Swainsons have had deer here since 1985 and now focus on Fallow deer farming. The property has already won several environmental awards for riparian management and habitat restoration which have

transformed the farm from a relatively bare landscape to one with diversity and colour.

The judges were particularly impressed with innovative techniques to reduce or remove environmental problems, such as laying large river stones:

- in fence-side deer runs
- in shallow gully areas where the deer play

- in exit points for the tile drains, to stop erosion by dissipating the energy of the water.

Other systems to catch the judges' attention were:

- the use of dams as filtering systems
- protecting fenceline trees using triangular galvanized mesh about two metres high
- filtering domestic waste-water by running off to the middle of a paddock through a long-run gravel-filled tunnel, away from the house and any natural watercourse
- an animal health regime determined by need rather than a constant approach.

A particularly strong ethic on returning biodiversity to the farm is helping to transform the landscape significantly. Bellbird, kereru and many other birds have returned using the revived bush and the many woodlots and water features that the Swainsons have created.

Eweburn Farm, Landcorp, Te Anau

Rabobank Environment Award for sustainable growth



Extensive fencing and pasture renewal have been a focus on Landcorp's Eweburn property, managed by Ray

Tibbles. The location near Te Anau demands a high level of environmental management and integration of community aspirations. It is rolling country with extensive wetlands, low lying depressions and terraces along the Upukuroa River.

As well as complying with Landcorp's own 'Farmpride' quality assurance manual, Ray follows the Code of Practice for Fertiliser Use; Worksafe and Growsafe Chemical users' guide.

These and other workplace guidelines provide staff with a safe and well-managed environment. Ray also regularly seeks advice from pasture specialists and fertiliser representatives.

The judges were impressed with the farm's productivity, especially given the physical challenges – landscape, shallow soils, and difficulties with fencing in the area. An animal pest eradicator concentrates on possums, ferrets, rats, feral pigs, deer and rabbits.

The 3800 hectare Eweburn Station has 1650 ha fenced for deer. It runs 4000 hinds, 6500 Perendale ewes and 450 cows. Fifteen percent of the land is now retired, with the Upukuroa River terraces especially being progressively taken out of deer use. Protection of biodiversity through the QEII Trust, working with NZ Fish and Game, Department of Conservation and Environment Southland has been very beneficial for the environment at Eweburn.

Brian and Jackie Wellington, Owairaka Valley, Te Awamutu

Duncan & Co Environment Award for excellence in sustainable pasture management



Strong emphasis on animal, pasture and soil management are features of the farming style of long-term deer farmers, Brian and Jackie Wellington.

The Wellingtons move their animals before any soil damage occurs, and lay silage down on ungrazed pasture prior to the break being shifted. This ensures animals get their supplements on good ground and don't damage grazed ground.

Two wire electric fences keep deer away from riparian areas and four wire electric fences protect recently planted trees. Their highly subdividable system takes into account the limitations of sensitive sites, which are removed from the grazing system.

Four hundred of the farm's 600 ha of rolling to steep country are deer fenced. The Wellingtons run a breeding and finishing business with 1000 hinds and 450 velveted stags plus sheep and dairy grazers. Nearly all the indigenous bush stands are fenced and retired and the Wellingtons are working through a stream retirement programme. Several pine woodlots have been planted on steeper country and in gully areas where erosion has been a problem.

The Wellingtons have a firm commitment to staff development, taking on coaching and mentoring roles, and encouraging staff involvement in the daily running of the enterprise.



**Trevor Kenny,
Manager for Bob & Jen Robertson
Foveran Deer Park, Kurow**

Fish and Game New Zealand Environment Award for excellence in riparian management.

Understanding the landscape and matching land use to land type is a feature of Foveran Deer Park in the Hakataramea Valley. The park is made up of three properties (Foveran, Winterburg and Haka Downs) with extensive deer farm systems on 1673 hectares from a total of 3469 ha. The landscape varies from flat to rolling hills.

Foveran runs 1500 stud hinds, 5500 super fine merinos, some fattening cattle and an internationally-renowned game estate. They are self-sufficient in pasture and crop feed. Riparian management on Foveran's difficult countryside includes fencing off flowing streams from the farming system, and fencing and rehabilitation of wetlands. The terrace rises are being planted out in Douglas Fir and retired from deer use to curb erosion. Foveran's irrigation efficiency has two important benefits: water consumption has been reduced, and because water is applied at a rate it can be utilised there is no surface run-off. This also means less leaching of nutrients into ground water. Most of the farm has reticulated water from the Hakataramea River but Trevor Kenny is considering building a reservoir to become self-sufficient in water. Despite dry conditions, shallow and difficult soils for trees, large plantings are underway to increase shelter and shade. Douglas Fir is the main species being used, but oaks, ash and elms are also planted for summer shade. A special netting system protects the trees at different levels from rabbits and deer.



Sensitive coastal areas have been protected at Stanfield's Bushey Park.

**Clive and Elsie Jermy,
Stanfield's Bushey Park, Palmerston**

Summit Quinphos Environment Award for excellence and commitment to sustainable deer farming.

Extensive landscape assessment and planning before any work started has been a major factor in the transformation of the historic Stanfield's Bushey Park near Palmerston.

When Clive and Elsie Jermy bought the 950 ha coastal Otago property in 1998, it was run down. In the six years since, they have rebuilt it into an impressive enterprise with a strong environmental ethic. Their strategies incorporate fertiliser application, estuary and archaeological protection, pasture management and extensive tree plantings.

Fencelines and laneways were designed to lessen the deer's environmental impact but also take account of welfare. Watercourse fencing was an original key priority and sensitive areas – including areas of salt marsh – are retired. Less sensitive areas are electric fenced and regularly re-grassed.

Integrating an entire farm development and fencing plan meant fencing was only done once, reducing costs and effort, and has taken into account all sensitive areas – such as the ponds, wet gullies and native bush – at the same time.

The Jermys have implemented a formal QEII covenant with two more being considered, and are planning a coastal walkway through to the estuarine area.

Over the past five years they have planted thousands of trees including many natives as well as 100ha of pines and shade trees such as oak and plane. The property now has a diversified business future and the ongoing development will ensure sustainable management for future generations.

Environmental protection: practical winners' tips

The use of fencing to protect waterways and wetlands and biodiversity, and the matching of land use to land type to enable improved farm sustainability has been a feature of this year's awards.

All the farmers have recognised the need to isolate stock from the natural waterways, protecting them from both pollution and erosion. But the key thing is that they have done this by looking at their productive asset, where it is located, how it can be best utilised while at the same time addressing environmental issues.

Other features of the awards have been:

- retirement of river terraces, by fencing or forestry, due to their extreme sensitivity to damage from deer
- the use of boulders to break up water flow, reducing erosion and lessening damage from fenceline pacing
- development of woodlots and water features provides diversity on the farm and is rebuilding bird populations
- pasture renewal and rotation is essential to good management.

2004 Judging Team

These annual deer industry environmental awards are judged by teams of independent environmental professionals, lead this year by Simon Stokes from Hawke's Bay Regional Council. Other judges were: Simon Smale (DoC), Andrew Stewart and Gretchen Robertson (NZ Landcare Trust), Mark Webb (NZ Fish and Game) and deer farmers Victor Clark and John Paterson.

Further information

©Deer Industry New Zealand, PO Box 10-702, Wellington, October 2004. The Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards are part of the deer industry's environmental awareness programme to support the release of The Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual, which was published in July 2004 and sent to all deer farmers. For further information on the Awards, or the Landcare Manual, contact the project convener, John Paterson, ph 07 332 2093, email john-p@wave.co.nz

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