

STAGLINE ONLINE

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Stagline Online is a monthly newsletter for members of the NZ Deer Farmers' Association

SPECIAL COVID-19 EDITION 1

Stagline Online is the monthly e-letter published for NZDFA members. During the Covid-19 crisis, we will be publishing *Stagline Online* more frequently and sending it to all known deer farmers and industry contacts.

These are extremely challenging times. Now, more than ever, it is vital that we stay connected with each other, keep informed and do our best to support each other.

Your industry organisations are here to help. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate get in contact with one of us, or a member of the NZDFA executive committee.

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WHAT DOES COVID L3 LOOK LIKE FOR FARMERS?



When we move into Covid Level 3 on Tuesday 28 April, a wide range of primary sector businesses and support services will be able to operate, as long as they can do so safely. These include:

Building: Construction of farm sheds, barns and herd homes.

Pest management: Including vector control.

Pregnancy scanning: Reproductive services have been on the Level 4 essential services list, and pregnancy scanning, where it can be done safely, should continue.

Fencing: Fencers can go back to work and timber supplies are on the list of permissible business activities.

Tree planting: Nursery operations, plant sales (click and collect) and tree planting can resume.

Water: Water is essential for animal and human health, so repairs, maintenance and upgrades to stock and household water systems can go ahead, as can the purchase of plumbing supplies.

In short, more tradies and contractors will be able to come to our farms to do work. In addition, if we have children in our bubble who are going to school, or adults leaving the farm to work or pick up supplies, the risk of someone bringing infection onto the farm becomes greater.

So please don't relax your precautions and vigilance. We want to crush this disease and get back to as normal, as soon as possible.

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SAFE WORK PRACTICES

The MPI website explains things well, but in summary, here's how to manage the risk with staff and those visiting your farm for work:

- Treat everyone (including yourself) as infected. Stay in your bubble

- Follow cough and sneeze hygiene rules
- Keep to physical distancing rules: 1 metre apart in workplaces (2 metres in public)
- Regularly disinfect surfaces that others may touch
- Wash or sanitise your hands regularly if you are using a vehicle that others may drive, or working in facilities where others may work or visit
- Don't allow sick people to work on your farm
- Keep a record of all farm visitors, their names, contact details and the date of their visit

If someone becomes ill

If you, a farm worker or family member develops Covid-like symptoms, they should not work. Ring Healthline or your local GP for advice. Do not take them to the GP or hospital. Until their health status is clarified it's critical they self-isolate at home.

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WHAT DOES COVID LEVEL 3 MEAN FOR DINZ?

All DINZ staff will be continuing to work from home and meeting regularly by video-conference. If you need to contact them, don't hesitate to contact them on their mobiles or by email.

Unfortunately, they will not be available for face-to-face meetings until the Covid alert status drops to Level 2... on 11 May at the earliest. At that point some DINZ-sponsored events like Advance Party and Environmental Group meetings may resume and staff and contractors will once again be able to travel.

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NEW VELVET PRODUCTS KEEP COMING



Covid-19 has done little to slow the roll-out in South Korea of new branded consumer products containing deer velvet. DINZ marketing manager Rhys Griffiths says so far this year 11 velvet-based products have been launched, seven containing NZ velvet, three Russian and one Korean velvet.

The companies marketing the products typically promote the velvet content and the fact that it comes from New Zealand from suppliers approved by the NZ Government. Other ingredients vary from product to product, including Korean red ginseng, various herbs, colostrum and royal jelly. Formulations include drinks, sachets and chewable balls.

Several are sold on-line or through home-shopping television channels, both of which have enjoyed booming sales during the Covid-19 epidemic. Others are sold through supermarkets and pharmacies.

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NZ EXPORTERS TO KOREA WEATHERING THE STORM

A new report from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) says many NZ exporters to Korea have found that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on their businesses “has not been as bad as expected”.

“Several prominent New Zealand companies have increased retail sales off the back of growing demand for health food products despite declining sales through food service to restaurants. In particular, organic and health-enhancing products appear to be experiencing strong sales growth,” says the report.

Looking ahead, the report says “The trend points to growing demand for immune system-related products off the back of strong demand for health food products and is unlikely to diminish anytime soon.”

Rhys Griffiths says the report does not refer to demand for velvet-based products, but its references to strong demand for immune system-related products will be reassuring for velvet producers. It is also fortunate that ongoing Covid-related disruptions to shipping services have happened outside the main velvet season in New Zealand.

“Hopefully shipping and related services will be back to near-normal by the end of the year, when we start our next velvet export season.”

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TURNING THEIR BUSINESSES ON A DIME

Covid-19 lockdowns around the world have forced cafes and restaurants to shut their doors for weeks on end. This in turn has created a crisis for their food service suppliers, let alone the folk who grow the food.



[Buy it here >>
https://www.marxfoods.com/ms/Venison](https://www.marxfoods.com/ms/Venison)



MARXFOODS.COM

Meat Species: Venison, Origin: New-Zealand

SHOP NOW

For Ariane Daguin, CEO of D'Artagnan, New York City's renowned gourmet food supplier, it meant turning her business on a dime. “I built this business for 35 years and, all of a sudden, what was here three or four weeks ago was no more,” she told the *New York Post*.

With sales down by 80% and her livelihood and that of her 260 employees at risk, she kicked their much smaller retail and e-commerce businesses, Dartagnan.com, into action. In the last month it has enjoyed a 700% increase in demand from customers ordering directly from its website. The company president Andy Wertheim says the change has been “energising, stressful and challenging beyond belief.”

D'Artagnan has stocked and promoted NZ venison for most of its 35 years and threw its weight behind the launch of Cervena in New York in 1992. Their current offering includes 11 Mountain River cuts, plus a tempting sounding venison, pork and cherry sausage.

With the food service sector facing some significant challenges, our venison marketers and their market partners are putting a lot of energy into building retail and on-line sales. Alliance, Duncan, First Light and Silver Fern Farms have ramped up their marketing of venison to NZ consumers. Duncan promoted a “container door” sale in March. First Light has launched an on-line order and delivery service for its wagyu cuts and processed venison at www.meatclub.firstlight.farm

In the United States, Silver Fern Farms partner Marx Foods have recently been promoting Cervena through their social media channels. Marx is an ethical food distributor that strongly supports NZ grass-fed meats.

We'll keep you posted about marketing initiatives by NZ venison companies and their market partners as we learn of them.

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RISK-SHARE WEANER CONTRACTS



These weaners have been lucky: chowing down on irrigated plantain in the Hawkes Bay
Photo: Richard Hilson

There's no two ways about it. This is a very difficult time if you normally sell weaners for finishing or have cull animals for processing.

The effect of Covid-19 on venison demand and prices is one thing. The lack of feed because of drought (or cold and wet in the south) is another.

Deer agents in the southern North Island say they have been moving large numbers of weaners from breeders to finishers, but at much reduced prices on previous seasons.

Farmers who usually buy weaners are still buying, but because they have little feed available, they are taking smaller numbers. The prices on offer also reflect the current uncertainty about overseas demand for venison and a processing backlog at Deer Slaughter Plants.

In Canterbury, despite the cancellation of the Arrowsmith and High Peak weaner sales because of Covid-19 restrictions, most well-grown weaner stags in the region are reported to have found buyers, but there are still quite a few female weaners looking for a new home.

In Southland, the weaner selling season traditionally doesn't get underway until late April, and sales are now taking place.

The current uncertainty about future market conditions means no one can predict what the spring venison schedule will be. Breeders and finishers might want to examine revenue/risk sharing options. Here is a link to a revenue sharing calculator that could help weaner transactions >> <https://www.deernz.org/deerhub/tools/breeder-finisher-weaner-contracts#.XqITGMgzY2x>
(<https://www.deernz.org/deerhub/tools/breeder-finisher-weaner-contracts#.XqITGMgzY2x>)

It's been a slow-growth autumn in the south which, together with a processing backlog at DSPs, means that many farmers have too little feed and too many mouths eating it.

Processors spoken to understand the stress this is causing, and may be willing to discuss options for farmers in situations of need where animal welfare might be compromised.

In the words of one agent, “If ever there was a time to buy in females of good genetic merit at reasonable prices, this is it.”

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HOW'S YOUR DEER SHED LOOKING?



During Covid Level 3 our industry QA auditors will be back at work on farms (subject to each of them being confident that they can do this without putting themselves or others at risk from infection). They'll be checking that deer sheds comply with MPI's Regulated Control Scheme (RCS).

DINZ QA manager John Tacon says 850 sheds have been audited. Of these, 681 have passed and 169 have corrective actions to be completed within the agreed timelines. 180 sheds remain to be audited.

"It's really important that all our deer sheds comply with the RCS, because MPI will be doing random audits starting this coming velvet season. If the MPI auditors find a shed that doesn't comply, the consequences are potentially serious. Major non-compliance would make any velvet coming out of the shed unsaleable," he warns.

The main focus of the RCS is on ensuring that velvet is harvested and handled in a clean area, and goes into a velvet-only freezer that is capable of reaching -15 deg C. These regulations give NZ velvet exclusive access to the Chinese market and make NZ the preferred supplier of velvet for health food products in South Korea.

Southland deer farmers John & Liz Watkinson in their fully compliant shed – a clean and safe place to harvest velvet

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AN AWFUL REMINDER ABOUT HANDLING STAGS IN THE ROAR

John Somerville says the death of Invercargill fire fighter Ben McLean after being attacked by a stag on his Makarewa small holding is extremely sad news. He extends the sympathies of all deer farmers to Ben's family and friends.

"We don't know the circumstances of Ben's death, but I do know it will be no consolation to those who mourn his loss that stag attacks are very rare on deer farms. If any of us need a reminder about the risks associated with handling stags in the roar and to ensure new staff and visitors to the farm understand those risks, this is it."

John says pet stags are a particular threat, because they have no fear of humans. Hard antler adds to the threat but, even with their antlers removed, stags can still inflict severe injuries at this time of the year.

CHECK IN ON NEIGHBOURS

There has thankfully been rain in many drought-affected districts, but in many cases too late for significant autumn growth. This, combined with the flow-on effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, makes it a particularly stressful time for farmers.

Communication with other people is vital for good mental health. The NZDFA strongly encourages farmers to regularly check in with friends, family, neighbours and colleagues by phone and online. Having a yak over the cattle stop is even better ... it's probably close to 2-metres wide!

NZDFA chair John Somerville suggests making a special effort to communicate with the neighbour who has "gone quiet". It may not be a matter of them not wanting to communicate. If they are depressed, they may be unable to communicate.



There is an excellent editorial in the latest edition of [Deer Industry News](https://www.deernz.org/sites/dinz/files/DIN101-FINAL.pdf) (<https://www.deernz.org/sites/dinz/files/DIN101-FINAL.pdf>), by Hugh Norris of [FarmStrong](https://farmstrong.co.nz/) (<https://farmstrong.co.nz/>), about ways to promote good farmer mental health. It's worth a read. Don't forget that this Deer Industry News could not be printed because of the Covid-19 lockdown, so is only available on-line.

Finally, if you have serious concerns about a neighbour, particularly if they have shut down communication and are not keeping up with things on the farm, don't hesitate to contact the Rural Support Trust. A nation-wide network of farmers who understand the stresses other farmers face, they will know what to do next.

Rural Support Trust 0800 787 254 • Need to talk? Freephone or text 1737 • Depression helpline 0800 111 757 • Drug and Alcohol Helpline 0800 787 797 • Lifeline 0800 543 354

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Now for something a bit lighter

There has been a rush to beauty salons and hairdressers in China as it comes out of lockdown. But some salons and barber shops are going to extreme lengths to keep everyone safe.

[Watch the video >> \(https://www.newsflare.com/video/342235/hairdressers-in-china-attach-tools-to-sticks-to-keep-safe-distance-from-customers-amid-covid-19-outbreak\)](https://www.newsflare.com/video/342235/hairdressers-in-china-attach-tools-to-sticks-to-keep-safe-distance-from-customers-amid-covid-19-outbreak)

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Event	Date	Details
All events postponed until further notice	Various	For updates on DINZ events, please click here >> (https://www.deernz.org/events) .