

Deer Industry News

Deer Sale Reports

Deer Industry Conference

CONFERENCE RETURNS TO DUNEDIN FOR FIRST TIME IN TWO DECADES

Growth curves

TOOL AVAILABLE TO SET VENISON GROWTH TARGETS AND MONITOR PROGRESS

Advance Parties

CENTRAL REGIONS GROUP APPLIES FRESH THINKING TO PRODUCTIVITY CHALLENGES

Deer Industry News

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Cover: Buyers at the Netherdale Red Deer Stud stag sale check out the velvet from some of the stags on offer and their sires. See page 24. Photo: Phil Stewart

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Velvet going well but let's not be complacent

WELL IT SEEMS to have been another positive velvet season in general. I know some struggled with a cold spring and it has been a tough couple of years in North Canterbury, but hopefully most velvet producers are pretty happy with where things are at today.

There's feed on the ground in most areas, and we've had another year of good, stable prices, thanks to some pretty determined work done by our main exporters in traditional markets and the continued growth of velvet in the healthy food sector.

We've also had some pretty significant breakthroughs on trade barriers, with the elimination of Korea's "Special Excise Tax" on velvet and the first tariff reductions from the New Zealand-Korea Free Trade Agreement coming on stream. These changes can only strengthen the position of New Zealand velvet in the Korean market.

It's important that we don't get complacent when things are going reasonably well. At DINZ we're aware that firm, stable prices are going to result in growing volumes. Even with falling production from other parts of the world, we're going to need to take another step up in our market development work to help demand grow to match that supply. We will increase the investment in velvet marketing and also research to support velvet's market positioning. We believe there remains good potential in the Korean and Chinese healthy food segments and we'll be working hard to help marketers realise these opportunities.

On farm, I would urge you to double check that the basics are still being taken care of. We simply can't afford for anyone to drop the ball on things like animal welfare or food safety.

Now seems like a good time to look back over the busy velvetting period and to consider if there are any improvements that could be made for next year.

On the commercial front, we're certainly aware that there was some tension in the velvet industry this year. DINZ doesn't get involved in commercial matters, but we will provide assistance to any company – local or in-market – where we think they are working in the best interests of the New Zealand velvet industry. We have many partners who are working hard to add value to your product.

I would like to thank everyone in the industry who has worked hard to make another successful season, and wish you all the best for the year ahead. ■

—Dan Coup, CEO, DINZ



Dan Coup

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TUESDAY 10TH – THURSDAY 12TH MAY 2016 | DUNEDIN CENTRE, THE OCTAGON, DUNEDIN

It's been 21 years since the last deer industry conference in Dunedin, so the Otago Branch NZDFA, Executive Committee and Deer Industry New Zealand are especially pleased to invite you to attend this 41st Annual New Zealand Deer Industry Conference.

THE EVENT WILL be hosted in the recently revamped Dunedin Town Hall just off the centrally located Octagon City Centre. The Conference runs on Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 May 2016 and is followed by a branch-hosted field day at Invermay in association with AgResearch to be held from 8.30 am–2.30pm on Thursday 12 May. This year the New Zealand Veterinary Association Deer Branch will be hosting its 2016 Cervetec Conference at the same time, with the opportunity to share social sessions with some overlap in technical updates at Invermay on 12 May.

The conference theme of “Proud Partnerships” focuses firmly on the industry’s present and future, as well as the Passion2Profit programme. Associated with this are the feeding, genetics and animal health themes and the increasing momentum being generated in profitability and production increases arising from the Advance Parties. We hope to build on the success of last year’s anniversary conference in Napier, which saw an increase in numbers of active deer farmers and families attending the conference and field day.

The field day at Invermay will complement the formal conference activities, which highlight keynote speakers and will encourage free and wide-ranging discussion.

The branches and the DFA/DINZ New Faces programme are also working hard to attract the next generation of young deer farmers who have made recent conferences so stimulating. Associated with the central themes (to be finalised later this month), highlights

will include:

- overview of the New Zealand rural economy
- venison market development with the Primary Growth Partnership and Passion2Profit
- Advance Parties
- leading players in agribusiness and farming
- building on a successful velvet antler season
- keynote addresses – speakers to be confirmed

Individual session or day registrations are also available. Delegates are invited to bring partners, farm staff or friends interested in the deer industry to the evening social events and to enjoy the attractions and down-to-earth approach of this conference in its central Dunedin setting.

Programme

The “Proud Partnerships” theme emphasises the extensive partnerships that exist across all facets of the industry and serve us so well. Highlights will include the latest from the markets and both the P2P Cervena initiatives based on new test markets in the Netherlands and Belgium, with some of the front-line relationships in US and traditional markets and emerging in China.

Partnerships in science are featured within DEEResearch and increasingly between DINZ and DFA branches. They feature a commitment to better, cost-effective environmental management,



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Conference preview: continued

with involvement from regional councils, NZ Landcare Trust and Beef+Lamb NZ's programmes.

In the velvet sector, rapid growth in heathy food use of New Zealand product relies on partnerships with new companies that seek our traceability and quality assurance, extending existing relationships with the traditional medicine market.

The programme will also feature partnerships in the Advance Parties between participants, facilitators and the wider regional deer farming community. Similar partnerships also exist with the DFA and DINZ leadership development programme and the Next Generation participants whose numbers continue to grow.

Keynote speakers are still being finalised, but as always they will have strong credentials and will reflect the partnership theme. They are a little outside the range of typical industry representatives and continue the recent line-up of outstanding New Zealanders with a rich diversity of experience and views. As details are confirmed, these will be posted on www.deernz.org, in *Stagline-Online* and in April's *Deer Industry News*.

Sponsorship

We have circulated a 2016 sponsorship prospectus for this event based on the formula that seeks to increase company profile and involvement in the event. The partnership theme supports the relationship between the deer industry service sectors and our processor exporters.

Sponsors are responding enthusiastically, with support steadily approaching the record interest of 2015. These companies are a huge part of the event and bring colour, delegates and commitment, allowing a realistic registration fee and adding value to your own deer farming businesses from your participation.

NZDFA AGM and DINZ sessions

The NZDFA's 41st AGM will open the conference with a session on Tuesday 10 May from 11.00am – 1.00pm.

Industry issues will be debated on the conference floor at the AGM and generous time is available during the DINZ and agribusiness sessions, following each set of presentations and then again at the conclusion with a Board Q&A session.

The emphasis is on an informative, inexpensive and effective conference with healthy debate, interaction with industry leaders and a balance of innovative social events and entertainment.

Social and entertainment

Welcome function: A gastronomic experience will be created by the resident chef at the Dunedin Town Hall – he will be privileged to have the best venison that we produce and, as in the past, a variety of cuts will be matched with Central Otago ales and wines.

Awards dinner: Otago is known for the gold found in the hills and this evening will be golden themed with the awards and a three-course dinner in the glittering setting of the Town Hall. Break out the bling and bow ties! Entertainment will be from Timaru-based Cam Scott, a country rock star and the 2015 New Zealand Country Music male artist of the year.

Accommodation

Accommodation has been reserved nearby in central Dunedin based around the Scenic Circle hotels, although there are many

options available, all within a short walk from the Octagon. Requirements for accommodation must be coordinated through the conference organiser by completing the registration form. Full details will be available with the online registration in early March.

Registration

Experienced conference organiser, Pat Johnston of Dunedin-based Destination Conference Management Services is again leading the planning and aims to help the committee and DFA to attract locals as well as those who haven't been to a conference for years.

Conference registration form and the full programme will be available electronically from www.deernz.org and circulated to NZDFA members through *Stagline-Online* from March. Registration is online, and there is no downloadable hard copy. If you are having problems or can't access electronic registration just call DCMS and they will work with you over the phone to register.

Contacts

Destination Conference Managers, Pat Johnston: 03 477 1377, 027 215 9807, pat@dcms.co.nz

Producer Manager, Tony Pearse: 021 719 038, 04 471 6118, tony.pearse@deernz.org

Acting Producer Coordinator, Cenwynn Philip, 04 471 6110, cenwynn.philip@deernz.org

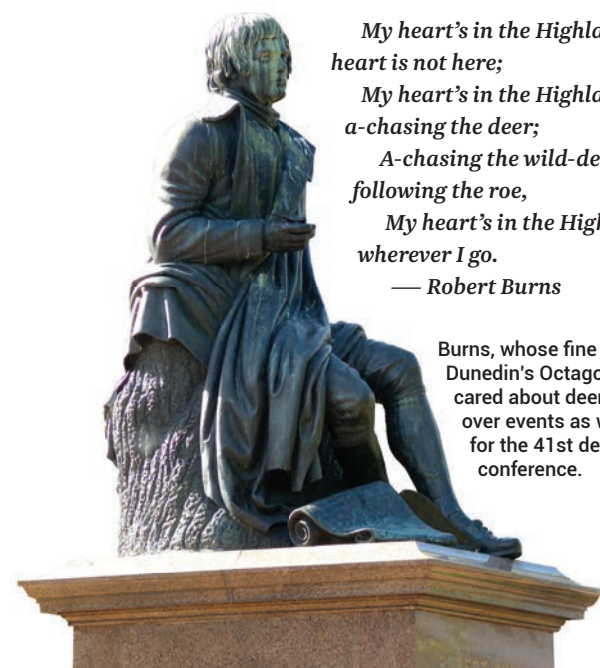
Deer conference live on the web

This year's deer industry conference will again broadcast live on the internet, with viewers able to question speakers in real time, using a comment thread, email or tweet. This opens up conference participation to deer farmers who can't make the event in person.

The increasing popularity of this feature live streamed on internet-based Rural TV also allows a permanent video record on the DINZ website. Keynote speakers last year attracted an on-line audience of 1000-plus, five times the number of attendees at the main conference sessions. Rural TV will again offer extended exposure for key sponsors as part of their support package.

The conference Twitter account is @DeerNZ16 and hashtag #dinzconf16 for people to follow the live updates.

All the live streamed video content will be posted on the Deer Industry New Zealand YouTube channel within a week. ■



My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here;

My heart's in the Highlands a-chasing the deer;

A-chasing the wild-deer, and following the roe,

My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go.

— Robert Burns

Burns, whose fine statue is in Dunedin's Octagon, and who cared about deer, will preside over events as we gather for the 41st deer industry conference.

AGM constitutional matters

NZDFA and DINZ nominations: 2016/17 year

A) Executive Committee nominations

Call for nominations for NZDFA positions

Members of the NZDFA Executive Committee are elected for a two-year term. Members retire by rotation.

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

- Executive Committee member, North Island, one vacancy. (Current member, **Grant Charteris** retires by rotation)
- Executive Committee member, **Member at Large**, 1 vacancy. (Current member, **John Somerville** retires by rotation)

Nominations are invited for both positions. A nominee need not be resident in the Island of nomination but the following conditions are required:

These two Executive Committee vacancies are open to wider nomination from all NZDFA members.

For the **Island based** Executive Committee position each nomination must:

- be in writing and specify the Island that the nominee seeks to represent
- be moved and seconded by two other full, life or elected members of the Association resident in the same Island as the vacancy
- be signed by the nominee
- be delivered to the Association's office by **5.00pm on Friday, 1 April 2016**.

Note: The nominee must be a current financial member of the Association.

For the Executive Committee **Member at Large** positions each nomination must:

- be in writing
- be moved and seconded by two other full, life or elected members of the Association
- be signed by the nominee
- be delivered to the Association's office by **5.00pm on Friday, 1 April 2016**.

Note: The nominee must be a current financial member of the Association.

All nominees are entitled to submit a statement of about 150 words in support of their election. This statement must be sent to members at the same time as the ballot papers.

Should an election be necessary, details of postal voting and procedures, candidate profiles and confirmation of timelines will be posted with by separate post to meet deadlines but also circulated via *Stagline-Online* and be posted on the DINZ website www.deernz.org

Postal voting runs for 21 days and must close 7 clear days prior to the AGM on Tuesday 10 May 2016 (i.e. **voting opens on Tuesday 12 April 2016, closing on Monday 2 May 2016**).

B) Selection and Appointment Panel (SAP)

The role of the SAP is to make producer representative appointments to the Deer Industry New Zealand Board and

to meet with those appointees at least twice a year to discuss industry matters and their roles as Deer Industry New Zealand representatives.

The 8-member SAP is made up from:

- Four Executive Committee members
- Four elected non-Executive Committee members: a farmer member from each of the North and South Islands and two elected Members At Large

The elected non-Executive Committee members whose term expires at the forthcoming AGM are at large **Andy Jarden, Whanganui**, and **Paddy Boyd, South Canterbury** (both Retirement by Rotation).

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

- SAP member, South Island, one vacancy.
- SAP member, Member at Large, one vacancy.

Each nomination must be in writing and moved and seconded by two full, life or elected members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association offices by **5.00pm on Friday, 1 April 2016**.

The nominees must be full, life or elected members of the NZDFA. Further, nominees:

- may **not** be a member of the Deer Industry Association,
- **can not** hold more than a 20% interest in any organisation that is a member of the Deer Industry Association,
- **can not** be a candidate for membership of the Deer Industry New Zealand Board, or a current member of the Deer Industry New Zealand Board.

[The voting procedure and timing of the process is the same as that for the positions on the Executive Committee.]

C) NZDFA Appointment to Deer Industry New Zealand Board

The Ministerial approval of the Regulations to allow a 50:50 levy share from producers and the processor/exporter sector was formalised in October 2004 in the Deer Industry New Zealand Regulations 2004.

The Deer Industry New Zealand Board comprises four producer-appointed representatives and four representatives appointed by the processing/exporting sector. The producer representatives are selected by the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association through an Electoral College process, and have been appointed for a three-year term on recommendation by the NZDFA's Selection and Appointment Panel according to its detailed Operating Code of Practice and then advised to the Minister. Successful appointments who retire by rotation are eligible for further terms.

Nominations are now called for the following NZDFA-appointed positions on the DINZ Board:

- Two vacancies: Deer Industry New Zealand Board members retiring by rotation, **Andy Macfarlane, Canterbury**, and **Collier Isaacs, Wellington**

The nomination must be moved and seconded by full, life or

continued on page 6

AGM constitutional matters: continued

elected members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association's offices before **5.00pm on Friday 1 April 2016**.

The NZDFA Constitution (2008) refers:

37.9 Nominations for DINZ: The Returning Officer shall publicly announce, in writing, the names of the retiring Association representatives of DINZ and call for nominations for their replacement, prior to the end of March each year.

Nominations shall be:

- (a) made by any two Full Members, Elected Members or Life members of the NZDFA
- (b) in writing; and
- (c) in the hands of the Returning Officer at a date to be specified which will be before the Annual General Meeting of the Association each year.

37.10 Eligibility for Selection as DINZ Representative: All persons interested or engaged in the deer farming industry shall be eligible for nomination, with the exception of employees of DINZ or of the Association. Each nominee for selection shall be required to make a written declaration of any office held or managerial position or financial interest that either the nominee or any of the nominee's immediate family or any partner or fellow shareholder in any deer farming project has in any organisation which deals directly in the products of or materials for the deer farming industry.

37.11 Right to Address AGM: Each nominee for selection as a DINZ representative may address the Annual General Meeting of the Association at a time and date to be specified by the Executive Committee.

37.12 Selection Process: As soon as possible after the closing date for nominations the Returning Officer shall publish to all Branches and in *Deer Industry News* a full list of the persons nominated, together with any declarations of interests received from them. On the date determined for the selection (but not later than the end of **June** each year), the Selection and Appointment Panel shall convene, interview and select from the nominees as many Association representatives as are required to fill available vacancies on DINZ.

Nominations for the positions will be considered by the Selection and Appointment Panel following the 2016 AGM within 21 days of that meeting, with recommendations and appointments to the Board being advised to the Minister for Primary Industries at that time subject to the Operating Code of Practice procedures.

Nomination forms

Nomination forms for the Executive Committee, SAP and Deer Industry New Zealand vacancies can be obtained from the Association's office: Phone: 04 473 4500; Fax: 04 472 5549; email: tony.pearse@deernz.org

Nomination forms are also available through your local Branch Chair, Secretary or the Producer Manager and will be posted on the website: www.deernz.org at time of publication of *Deer Industry News*, Issue 76, February, 2016.

For further information please contact the Returning Officer, Tony Pearse at the Deer Industry New Zealand office or 021 719 038 or tony.pearse@deernz.org

Awards and competitions

Matuschka Award 2016

Nominations are called for a farmer or farming entity who or which has made a significant ongoing or lifetime of contribution to deer farming and the NZDFA in particular at Branch level.

The award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and the core spirit of deer farming. It will be announced at the *Proud Partnerships* Deer Industry Conference awards function on the evening of Tuesday 10 May 2016 at the conference welcome function at the **Dunedin Town Hall**

As recognition of the unsung heroes at Branch level, it is appropriate that the award itself be presented to the 2016 winner at a special mid-winter function in the recipient's Branch.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate Branch. It is not a requirement of the award that the nominee be aware of the fact that a nomination has gone forward. Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA no later than **5.00pm on Friday, 5 May 2016**.

For further information contact:

- Acting Producer Coordinator, Cenwynn Philip 04 471 6110, cenwynn.philip@deernz.org
- Producer Manager, Tony Pearse, 021 719 038, tony.pearse@deernz.org

2016 MSD Animal Health photographic competition

Following the ongoing success of the large number of high quality entries last year, the annual deer industry photographic competition will again be a feature of the 2016 annual conference. The competition will be judged through the *Deer Industry News* editorial group with prizes presented at the conference and include both a Judges' and People's Choice award.

Rules and entry form are available from:

Cenwynn Philip, Deer Industry New Zealand, phone 04 471 6110, email cenwynn.philip@deernz.org or download the form from

deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition

In general, all photos must be of subjects that are suitable for wider publication, taking into account the public's perception of the deer industry. The judges retain the right to disqualify any photo they deem to be unsuitable in this regard.

Judging criteria

- technical aspects (focus, composition, balance, quality of print etc).
- conveying core values including best practice for animal welfare, environmental stewardship and animal husbandry
- ability to show the industry in a positive light
- that special "wow" factor that makes the shot stand out.

Eligibility to enter

The competition is open to all participants in the deer industry – farmers, farm employees or those employed in a subsidiary industry (transport, vets, research, fertiliser, seed etc).

Preferred subject material

- Deer in the field: This shows farmed deer in their "natural" setting – in crop or pasture or tussock hill country for example. It could be individual animals or groups: stags, hinds, fawns, weaners.
- People working with deer: Positive images of animal husbandry

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Hitting growth targets: Monitor and act early

by Jason Archer, AbacusBio Ltd

“If you don’t know where you are going, then how do you know if you get there?”

Running a professional farm business in 2016 requires a step up from hoping your business will reach year end in good shape, to documenting a well-defined plan that includes targets to achieve budget and how to make it happen.

Young deer growth rates

Growing young deer is a critical driver of business performance. Growth rates affect slaughter dates, prices achieved (for both weaner sales and slaughter), number of days of feed required and the future performance of replacement hinds. Hitting financial targets within a venison operation is highly dependent on achieving growth rates. It’s important to have a plan for achieving

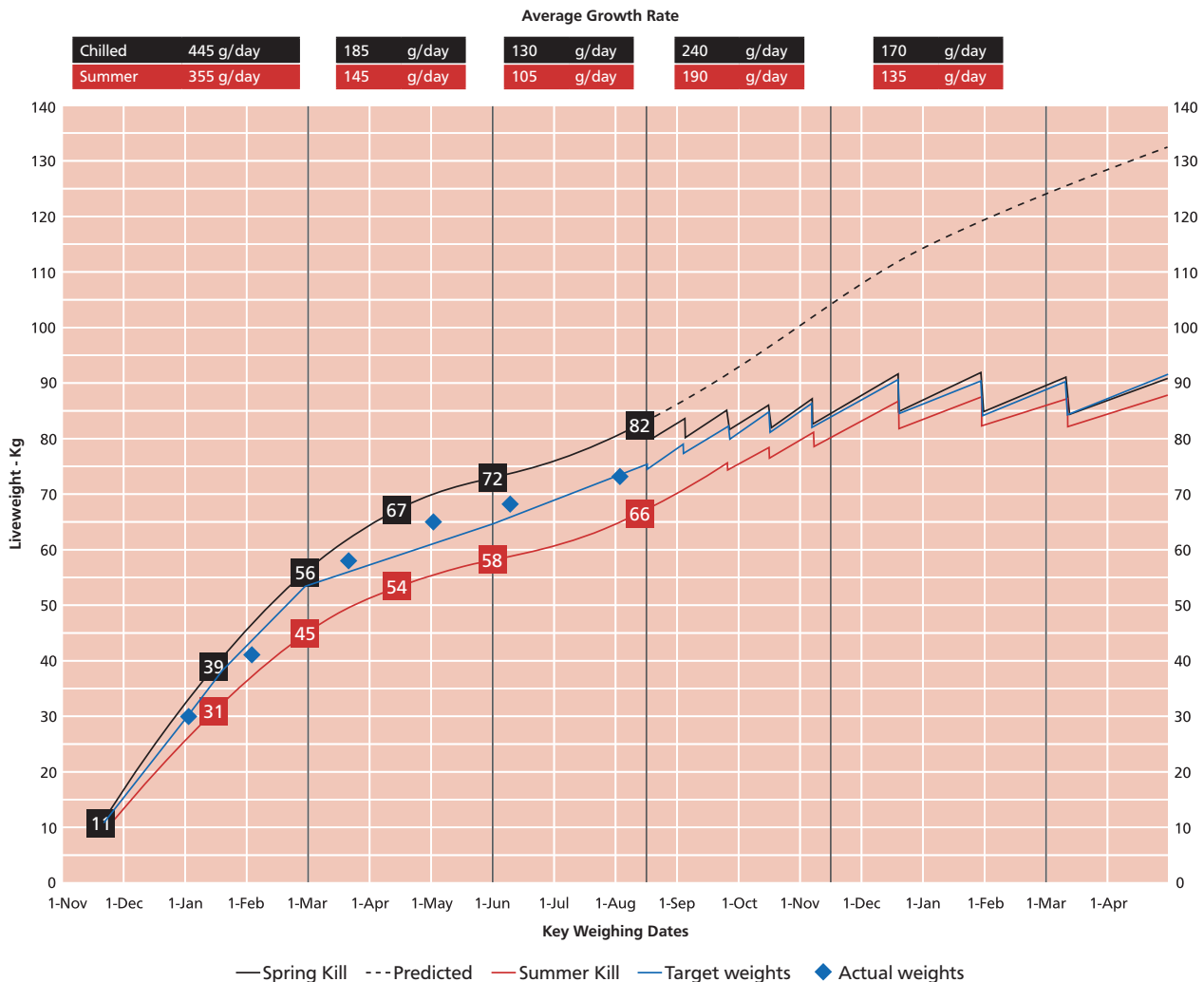
these targets.

And yes, a plan may need tweaking, due to circumstances out of your control, but having a plan and budget gives you something to work to. Being able to make adjustments to minimise the impact on the end result is a key reason to have a plan in the first place.

If you are growing deer, what are your growth targets? How do you plan to achieve them? If you are growing weaner deer, do you have an end goal for when (and at what weight) your deer will be killed? What weight points need to be achieved along the way to hit this end goal?

By working to a plan, we can monitor performance along the way and make corrections, while the opportunity to make adjustments still exists. This ability to tinker significantly enhances the likelihood of reaching your targets.

Figure 1. Growth curves for chilled season and summer kill systems, and a customised target growth curve.



continued on page 8

Growth targets: continued

Planning, monitoring, responding

Through its Passion to Profit (P2P) Primary Growth Partnership programme, the deer industry is helping farmers take a more planned approach to growing young deer. This is as simple as setting performance and growth targets, then defining the steps to achieving them. Your own targets will take account of your operation's strengths and weaknesses and be customised to your business.

How often do you weigh your stock and monitor their performance against your targets?

The seasonal growth patterns of deer mean that it's not always possible to catch up lost ground later on. This makes monitoring particularly valuable. If you identify any slippage against targets early, that's powerful information. It allows you to react and adjust accordingly, increasing your chance of achieving optimal growth rates. Being this proactive will directly affect your business performance.

Introducing the deer growth planner

The P2P programme has developed a deer growth planner, based on data from a large number of mobs. The result is a deer growth curve, plotted using real farm situations (see Figure 1 on previous page). The curve can be scaled back (or up) to reflect different farm performance targets. Using the curve as a starting point, you customise the targets and milestones to suit your own property's seasonal performance.

Figure 1 shows two standard curves: the black line targets a spring chilled season kill (based on growth rates from red stags); the red line targets a summer kill pattern (based on 80% of potential growth rates).

The blue line is an example of a customised curve. In this case, it represents a farm that has strengths during lactation and winter, but constraints that limit autumn growth rates.

Once drafting for slaughter starts, the curves take on a zig-zag shape. This is the consequence of removing the heaviest animals from the mob at each drafting,

Chilled season	Draft	Draft date	Draft weight	Percent drafted	Liveweight of animals drafted	Average price	Schedule assumed
	1	15/Aug/16	95	12%	100.0	\$448	\$8.00
	2	5/Sep/16	95	14%	100.1	\$462	\$8.25
	3	26/Sep/16	95	15%	100.5	\$478	\$8.50
	4	17/Oct/16	95	14%	100.7	\$479	\$8.50
	5	7/Nov/16	95	12%	100.9	\$466	\$8.25
	6	19/Dec/16	95	14%	102.2	\$429	\$7.50
	7	30/Jan/17	95	8%	102.2	\$401	\$7.00
	8	12/Mar/17	95	4%	101.9	\$399	\$7.00
	9	30/Apr/17	59	7%	91.0	\$357	\$7.00
Season weighted average		7/Nov/16		100%	101.2	\$448	\$7.91

Summer season	Draft	Draft date	Draft weight	Percent drafted	Liveweight of animals drafted	Average price	Schedule assumed
	1	15/Aug/16					\$8.00
	2	5/Sep/16					\$8.25
	3	26/Sep/16	95	4%	98.9	\$471	\$8.50
	4	17/Oct/16	95	6%	99.3	\$473	\$8.50
	5	7/Nov/16	95	10%	99.8	\$461	\$8.25
	6	19/Dec/16	95	18%	100.7	\$423	\$7.50
	7	30/Jan/17	95	15%	100.9	\$396	\$7.00
	8	12/Mar/17	95	12%	100.9	\$396	\$7.00
	9	30/Apr/17	95	35%	87.9	\$345	\$7.00
Season weighted average		15/Feb/17		100%	96.0	\$397	\$7.38

My system	Draft	Draft date	Draft weight	Percent drafted	Liveweight of animals drafted	Average Price	Schedule assumed
	1	15/Aug/16	95	3%	99.7	\$447	\$8.25
	2	5/Sep/16	95	7%	100.2	\$463	\$8.50
	3	26/Sep/16	95	12%	100.6	\$479	\$8.50
	4	17/Oct/16	95	15%	101.1	\$481	\$8.25
	5	7/Nov/16	95	15%	101.5	\$469	\$7.50
	6	19/Dec/16	95	17%	102.4	\$430	\$7.00
	7	30/Jan/17	95	11%	102.5	\$402	\$7.00
	8	12/Mar/17	95	7%	102.4	\$401	\$7.00
	9	30/Apr/17	59	13%	91.6	\$353	\$ -
Season weighted average		9/Dec/16		100%	100.2	\$437	\$7.79

while still-growing animals remain in the mob between drafts. The blue diamonds are the actual weights achieved by deer on this farm during regular monitoring.

Financial outcomes

Because you ultimately farm to make a profit, a financial analysis tool has also been developed as part of the deer growth planner.

The tool uses a drafting strategy, with customisable dates and cut-off liveweights. It then calculates the expected kill pattern and financial return, based on an assumed schedule and growth rates. (NB: At this point, the impact of feed saved from earlier slaughter dates is not factored in, but this can be significant, depending on your operation's ability to profitably utilise saved feed.)

The tables on page 8 show how the different curves in Figure 1 translate into financial performance. The difference between the spring chilled curve and the summer kill is substantial – a difference in average price of \$51 per head (nearly \$1 per kg carcass weight!). As an aside, this highlights the importance of growth rates in finishing deer – a 20% reduction in growth rates has a significant impact on financial performance.

The financial analysis tool lets you calculate the consequences of faster or slower growth rates. This is not easy to do on the back of an envelope and you need to know the dollar implications – both when setting targets and also when making short-term tactical adjustments to your plan during the season.

For example, if weaner deer start falling behind the target growth rate during autumn, is it better to supplement with grain (at a cost) or to lower targets and accept the impact on financial return? Using the growth curves and financial analysis tool lets you quickly determine the financial returns from both strategies and compare these with the cost of purchasing extra feed.

Setting targets, monitoring performance and looking at financial impacts also have longer-term benefits. By understanding the weaknesses in your farm system and when deer consistently under-perform, you can make longer-term strategic adjustments. For example, if autumn growth rates are a consistent weakness, is there a forage that can strategically fill the gap and improve growth rates over this period? Take it a step further: If you

could add another 5kg to weaner weights by adjusting your forage system, what is the financial impact?

Using the tools on farm

The tools will come in different formats to suit different people.

1: Deer shed wall planner

First cab off the rank is a deer shed wall planner with curves for a spring and summer kill system, and a financial analysis based on a schedule similar to the current season. You can draw your own growth targets onto the planner and pin it up somewhere prominent in the deer shed. Then regularly weigh a group of deer (tip: tag 30 deer within a mob and weigh these individuals, whenever the mob is in the shed) and plot their weights on the planner. This way, you have a frequent reminder of how your deer are performing against your target plan. The wall planners are enclosed for deer farmers in this issue of *Deer Industry News*.

2. Excel spreadsheet

The wall planner may be all that some farmers want. However, its use for planning scenarios and looking at different financial returns is limited. Consequently, the P2P programme has developed an Excel spreadsheet version, which allows users to modify the standard curves up or down by a percentage. You can enter your own targets, specify a set of draft dates and the cut-off weight used for drafting. This will produce a financial analysis for the specified curves and allow you to compare different strategies. You can also enter mob average weights and plot these against the target curves. Download the spreadsheet from www.deernz.org.nz/deer-growth-curves

3: Integration in management tool

The P2P group is working with farm management software providers to incorporate the key intervention dates and growth curve model into their own systems, so users can monitor performance against a standardised model with real data. This may also allow comparison between years and between properties, where permissions are granted, in the future.

The deer industry P2P feeding theme group welcomes feedback and suggestions for future improvements for these tools. Email Jason Archer (AbacusBio) jarcher@abacusbio.co.nz ■

AGM constitutional matters: continued

work, e.g., shifting animals, drafting, tagging, Tb testing, vaccinating etc).

- Our deer farming environment: An opportunity to show off the environmental enhancement that goes hand in hand with best practice. In these photos the farm environment is the star. The deer are present but play a bit part. Shots will be aesthetically pleasing but also have a practical side, e.g. retired areas, protected waterways, nicely landscaped and fenced areas, good shelter plantings, well-constructed deer sheds with runoff taken care of and so on.

Format of entries

Photos will need to be submitted as 8" x 10" prints for mounting and display. Either landscape (wide) or portrait (tall) format are acceptable. The electronic file used to make the print must also be submitted.

Make sure your digital camera is set to take pictures in high resolution format. The electronic file, which should be a **minimum** of about 2600 x 3875 pixels (printable to A4 size at 300 dpi).

It should be a jpeg file of about 2.5Mb to meet these criteria but .tif file format is also acceptable. The digital file must be in its original state and not altered in any way.

For further information contact:

- Acting Producer Coordinator, Cenwynn Philip 04 471 6110, cenwynn.philip@deernz.org
- Producer Manager, Tony Pearce, 021 719 038, tony.pearce@deernz.org
- *Deer Industry News* Editor, Phil Stewart, 04 384 4688, phil@wordpict.co.nz ■

Fresh thinking in Central Regions group

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Margaret and Bruce Niven are relatively new arrivals in the deer industry, but the enthusiastic members of the Central Regions Advance Party are showing the value of a fresh set of eyes when it comes to problem solving. Margaret was a senior public servant and Bruce worked in the real estate industry and they've been quick to apply the management and analytical skills they've acquired over their careers to their deer operation at the base of the hills 7km southeast of Otaki.



Margaret and Bruce Niven: Enjoying both the velvet and venison sides of the business.

THE ADVANCE PARTY group met at the Nivens' Waipanapa farm on 10 December to talk over issues identified by Margaret and Bruce and also to review progress on the farm of Tony and Lynda Gray at Utuwai, near Apiti in Manawatu (more on this below).

Waipanapa farm profile

Size:	79.5 hectares (76 effective)
Deer fenced:	76 hectares
Country:	Flat to steep
Altitude:	160 metres
Rainfall:	1400mm
Deer:	832 stock units, 75% velvet stags, 25% breeding hinds
Sheep:	24 stock units

The Nivens had a good buffer of baleage stored from the previous season and were later able to harvest about 105 bales off 8.3 hectares, giving them twice as much as they might need. They were happy to have this safety margin as they were expecting a tough summer ahead (by early February El Niño had yet to do its worst,

but that can always change).

Margaret and Bruce are planning a pasture renewal programme to help boost productivity. Once the baleage was taken, the paddocks were to be sprayed out and planted. The Nivens were also going to see what their dairy farming neighbours were doing by way of pasture renewal to gather intelligence on what worked well in the district.

They did soil samples from all paddocks last year and put on 18 tonnes of fertiliser on the flats. While pasture quantity was okay, they were disappointed to be told that the quality wasn't so flash. The closed-up paddocks had a high proportion of ryegrass seed head and while there was plantain and clover in the mix, there were also weeds.

The group focused on the pasture quality and quantity, as well as several other key issues, providing a useful steer for Margaret and Bruce.

Pasture quality and quantity

Pastures are run down and were overgrazed during the last drought. Ragwort has been a problem on the hills and has been sprayed several times. This was effective but has delayed fertiliser applications and regrassing due to the chemical residue. Lack of clover on the hill may have caused lower scanning percentages and weaning weights.

There is an opportunity to increase productivity through investing in fertility and pasture species and the Nivens brought in fertiliser and seed company advice.

It was decided to keep things simple by sticking to an all-grass system.

The following fertiliser mix was applied on the flats (about 18 tonnes in all): Phosphalink 338kg/ha, Sulphur Gain 20kg/ha, Selcote Ultra 1kg/ha, cobalt 0.7kg/ha and coated urea 65kg/ha.

Bruce said there was a bewildering array of seed mix options available, although they tended to be variations around the same core species. Specific advice on pasture species and management included the following:

- When spraying out a paddock use something in addition to glyphosate to control docks, dandelion and buttercup.
- Insect pests may be a problem and an insecticide such as Sparta will be considered to go with the second spray.



The group discusses pasture quality in one of the baleage paddocks.

- Discuss available biological controls with the regional council
- Early-flowering grasses and clovers might suit the feed demands of stags for velvet growth.
- Breeding hinds need good quality pasture for lactation from December through to April.
- Cutting excess grass in spring has the dual benefit of helping maintain pasture quality while building up feed reserves for winter or drought conditions.
- With new pasture there is a balance between grazing too early and letting the grass get too long so that it suppresses the clover.
- Use young stock to nip the new grass down to between 4–10cm – it's better to use a bigger mob for a short period (one or two days) than leaving a smaller mob on the new grass for too long.
- To test if new grass is ready for grazing, pull the leaf over between thumb and forefinger to break it. If the plant pulls out, it's not ready.

Best stocking policy

Waipanapa is a small farm with a mixed velvet and venison production system. This was seen as complex for a small scale farm but the Nivens decided to stick with the mix because they



Velvet stags grazing the flats at Waipanapa.

continued on page 12

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Central Regions: continued

enjoy both aspects of the industry and wanted to diversify the risk. The proportion of velvet animals has increased, however. The number of breeding hinds has been cut back from 350 to 140. Most of those retained include genetics from the Deer Improvement sire “Bavaria”.

Getting the best velvet genetics

When they moved to Waipanapa, the Nivens brought with them 23 velvetting stags from their former farm in Wellington’s Ohariu Valley. Now they have a culling programme (the cutoff for three-year-olds is currently 2.4kg), they suspect the Ohariu stags may end up among the culls as the genetic base improves.

They bought 18 two-year-old velvetting stags last year from a local source and they’re doing well – they should be able to keep buying from this supplier. The stags are descended from Tarquin (Tower Farms) and York (Raroa). They have also bought replacements with Austin (Windermere) genetics. The Nivens recently bought a stag and five yearling hinds from Grant Charteris (the stag cut 5kg in his second year and a very pleasing 8.7kg including regrowth in his third year). They have purchased another 15 breeding hinds from Grant, and Bruce is hoping to be able to start breeding their own velvet stags. Overall their policy is to source velvetting genetics from good commercial producers rather than studs.



The Nivens are getting a nice clean style of velvet.

Bruce said the velvet they are getting looks very clean with very little in the “non-traditional” category. Velvet production this season was over 540kg, well up on the previous year and very pleasing for the Nivens.

Venison enterprise

The Nivens, who supply Firstlight, were impressed with what their neighbour Jock Richmond is achieving using Deer Improvement lines, and are following his lead by injecting good genetics into the venison enterprise.

Like the pasture grasses, the venison hinds at Waipanapa became a bit worn out after suffering overstocking and a drought. They currently have 35 breeding hinds and yearlings and a Deer Improvement stag with “huge” genetics – a BV of 28.4kg for 12 month weight.

Animal health

Unavoidable overstocking during the drought caused some problems but now the pressure is relieved there are no serious animal health issues at Waipanapa. An animal health plan is nonetheless in place. Weaners are given Yersiniavax® (two shots) and drenched three or four times with Cydectin® and Oxfen, with a treatment for lungworm given if the summer is wet. Adult hinds are no longer drenched with pour-on, but breeding stags may be given parasite treatment following the breeding season depending on their condition. Copper testing of hinds revealed very low levels and a supplementation programme is in place. The Nivens have a list of things to look out for to alert them of other diseases.

Grays’ farm update: Retaining weaners

Tony and Lynda Gray farm 265 effective hectares up against the Ruahine Ranges at between 387 and 550 metres above sea level. It’s a mixed operation that’s about 50 percent sheep (1580 stock units wintered in 2014), 25 percent cattle (774 stock units) and 25 percent deer (775 stock units).

The Grays, who supply Firstlight, achieve good weaning weights and sell all their weaners as stores. Selling stores is the least profitable deer enterprise (compared with finishing and velvetting) but in their system it still compares favourably with the sheep and cattle in terms of income per kg dry matter consumed.

Finishing deer is a challenge on their farm with its long, wet winters, but now they have got to know the property better they have a good fix on what pasture and crops they can grow and when. They are keen to improve the profitability of the deer by finishing some of their own weaners and also breeding replacement hinds. A dry summer and autumn over 2014/15 stymied their plans to keep their top 50 stag weaners, but they are still looking to try retaining weaners. This time they are turning their attention to retaining weaner hinds and keeping some as replacements with the option of finishing some. The stag weaners will still be sold store for now.

Tony Gray said the Firstlight system provides the security of year-round stable prices under secure contracts and hinds can fit well as they do not have to be up to weight for the peak spring schedule. Hinds can also be killed over the summer months when stags are in velvet and unable to be transported.

The couple are also keen to improve their venison genetics. Until recently they have been buying in-fawn hind replacements from various sources, but these were of variable genetic merit. Last year they retained 50 of the heaviest weaner hinds and looked after them well through the winter. They came into the summer at good weights and the group suggested to Tony that they mate all 50 to a couple of R2 Firstlight stags which were already running with the mob so will be well acquainted by mating.

Tony was unsure whether it was better to keep his retained weaner hinds on the property or graze them somewhere else to be grown and mated, but for now he is keeping them on the farm. One factor in that decision was the biosecurity risk of introducing disease or parasites.

He said breeding their own replacements was “a lot more fun” than buying them in. His priority was to get the first fawners pregnant and then they would start to look harder at better breeding values. He commented that older hinds often raise great

fawns but that they are also the first ones to drop condition in a drought, so need to be watched.

Bodyweight of the breeding hind is an important factor to consider. The group discussed whether retaining the heaviest hind fawns was the best option. While these animals have the highest potential to produce heavy weaners, they also need to be at a greater liveweight at first mating (80 percent of mature liveweight) and may be more challenging to fully feed on harder hill country.

Another issue for the Grays is a number of hinds that fawn late and produce small weaners, or “fluffies”. It was thought that these fawns may be late born. The hinds were fetal aged in 2014 and run as a separate group so that the weaning weight of the late fawns could be compared with the earlier fawns. Circumstances meant that these hinds and fawns were on better pasture and no noticeable difference was observed. The trial is being repeated this year with a slightly larger group of late-fawning hinds on similar feed to the main mob.

This issue led to a good discussion by the Advance Party group, including the following points:

- A small fawn isn't necessarily a late one – the size might be to do with genetics or mothering ability.
- Mothering up can be done using collars and a spotting scope. DNA matches can be done, but it's expensive.
- Scanning and fetal ageing can help single out the late fawners.
- By culling the late fawners and retaining replacements from early-fawning hinds, the overall conception dates for the breeding herd should be brought forward.

Trying new stuff

Advance Party members are keen to learn and try new things, and the Central Regions group is no exception. A quick roundup of the group revealed the following.

Let's roll

Mike Holdaway has been doing some pasture renewal and has used these mixes at his farm in Apiti:

- 22kg Rohan ryegrass + 4kg Apex white clover + 2kg plantain
- 22kg Alto AR1 ryegrass + 4kg Apex white clover + 4kg Safin cocksfoot
- 18kg Bealey ryegrass + 14kg Trojan ryegrass + 4kg Apex white clover

Mike used a Cambridge roller where he could after the harrow and air seeder, and really noticed a big difference with the germination success where the roller had reached. He said the rolling achieves better contact between soil and seed, and also better moisture retention.

Or do feet help?

Steve and Matt Dalley found the got a much better grass seed strike in an oversown paddock where the deer had compacted the soil.

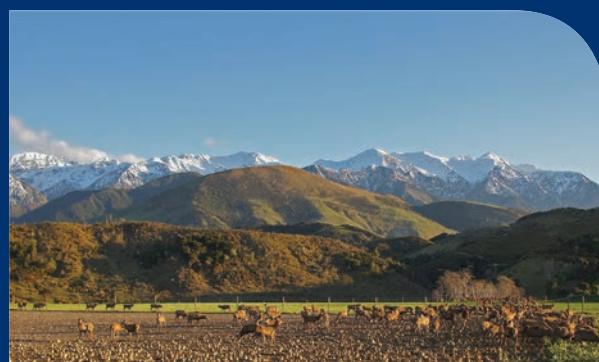
How much fert?

Andrew Clifton's farm borders the Ruahine Forest Park and is difficult terrain to fence out wild deer. The group discussed whether it would be better to invest in deer fencing the boundary to increase the area of marginal land available, subdivide the

continued on page 14

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Central Regions: continued

medium hill country or improve pasture production through fertiliser and new pastures on the easier country. The high P retention and CEC (cation exchange capacity, or ability to retain nutrients) of the soils meant lifting fertility with fertiliser was also an expensive option.

With the group's input, Andrew has decided to experiment with different fertiliser options on the flats and easy hills. Soil tests were done and a mixed fertiliser was spread with the helicopter on the hills. Tarping out some areas and double applications on other areas were done with the aim of comparing pasture production with different fertiliser application rates. He's also applied 3 tonnes of lime/hectare in one block and, again is testing the comparative responses with and without.

Pasture persistence is another issue and Andrew is trialling short-term grass mixes with high yield potential. While the cost of resowing is higher on a 3-4 year cycle, the potential increase in production and increased palatability of the pastures should result in a marked increase in animal production, particularly weaner growth rates.

Earlage

The Dalleys used earlage (made from maize cut just below the cob) for their weaners and said the young animals seemed to respond pretty well to the feed. A neighbour had used it for velvetting stags and had noticed a lift in velvet weights.

Realising dual-purpose genetic potential

The Dalleys have been breeding Warnham genetics for many years with a vision of breeding a dual-purpose animal with good body size for venison and heavy velvet. Circumstances have meant that all the weaners have been sold store. The group suggested that this might be a missed opportunity as the velvet genetics could be potentially more valuable than what they are getting for store weaners. It has been difficult getting feedback from the buyers on the velvet weights of the stags and it was suggested that the Dalleys retain stag weaners through to two years old to assess their velvet potential. A lease block was secured and 40 weaner stags selected. These have now been velvetted as spikers; some showed excellent potential with good thick velvet and most have multiple tynes. The animals are also of good body size.

Fodder beet: Lift or leave

Fraser Laird wanted to increase total velvet weight per hectare and also preserve soil structure on a heavy winter-wet Fordel property. Last year fodder beet was lifted and fed to the stags; however floods washed out fences so no data could be collected. This year, 4 hectares of their planned 9 hectares of fodder beet will be lifted in April and fed from May, with the rest grazed later in situ by two other mobs of velvet stags from July until button drop. Some discussion was had over whether to graze the tops off the fodder beet before lifting, as stags and lambs tend to eat some of the bulb before the leaf is fully grazed. The Lairds recognise that fodder beet is not a fully balanced feed and will be supplementing the crop with baleage and possibly some soy hulls for protein. The next Central Regions Advance Party meeting will be on the Lairds' place with the aim of discussing this in further detail.

Fawn losses

Craig Hocken reported he'd lost a few week-old fawns from the first and second fawners. There was "a fair bit going on" in the paddock concerned, including a rogue older hind that may have been bullying the younger ones. (This was a good reminder not to mix first fawners with older hinds.) He said one of the hinds that lost a fawn was from a John's-susceptible sire, which may have been a factor, although it is difficult to be sure. He advised autopsying young fawns that have died to see whether they've been feeding. "Some of these might have been starving."

Does heat help? Apparently not

Measurements of ambient temperature and velvet weights at the time of velvetting on **Ken and Steph Norman's** farm showed there is no basis to the theory that you'll get better velvet weights if you cut it on hotter days. It would be interesting to know what environmental factors affect velvet growth but these cannot be controlled. The most important factor for velvet growth is genetics and the Normans have been trialling different feeding options to maximise genetic potential. Last year one mob was fed a higher pasture allowance during winter by using autumn urea applications on a section of the farm. Unfortunately, this made minimal difference to stag bodyweight or velvet weight compared with stags on lower winter pasture covers this year.

Copper for R1 hinds?

It had been suggested at an earlier Firstlight field day that R1 hinds could benefit from a copper capsule before the stag goes out. However the group was told this is unlikely to give a reproductive benefit in yearlings unless levels are very low to start with. If any testing is done, the best time is for adult hinds in mid-to-late winter, when levels are declining.

Increasing scope boosts production

Jacquetta and Jane Ward were struggling to meet slaughter weight and date targets despite good reproduction and weaning weights. The Advance Party immediately recognised that overstocking the finishing block during winter was the limiting factor. Several options were discussed and the Wards decided to go with deer fencing two adjoining paddocks. This had an immediate effect with benefits including new grass immediately available, more time for pastures to recover in rotation, scope to plant a winter crop (rape and plantain) and subsequently higher pasture covers in early spring. There was also greater flexibility to graze cattle on the deer fenced area to help maintain pasture quality. An earlier kill profile and greater total carcass weight was achieved within one year. ■



Velvet market report

Well into this season, New Zealand velvet exporters and producers report prices to be steady, achieving levels similar to last year. And, although there was an early indication that Chinese buyers were holding off placing orders, velvet exports to China for December were ahead of December 2014 and significantly higher than the five-year average.



Her Excellency Ambassador Clare Fearnley (fourth from right) meeting with KGC's President of R&D Dr Chang (third from right).

THERE WERE REPORTS of some Korean buyers delaying their purchases until the benefits of the recently concluded New Zealand–Korea Free Trade Agreement, and the removal of velvet excise tax, took further effect (1 January 2016).

December and January were significant months in improving market access for velvet in its most important market of South Korea:

- On 4 December, Korea's National Assembly voted in favour for the complete removal of the excise tax (known as SET) applicable to velvet
- On 20 December, the New Zealand–Korea Free Trade Agreement kicked off, enabling a second round of tariff cuts just days later on 1 January 2016. For processed velvet, this meant

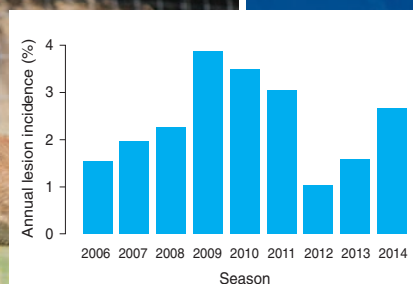
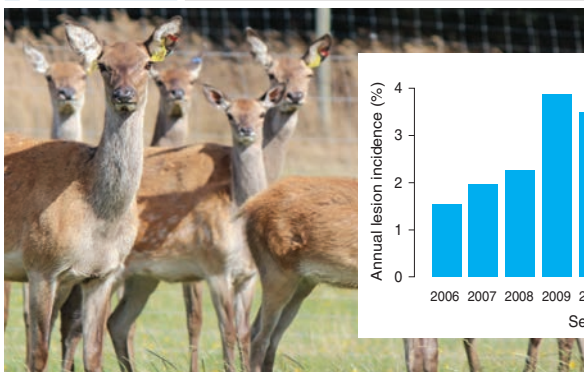
an almost 2.7 percent drop in tariffs (differentiating New Zealand from competing countries). Combined with the excise tax removal it removed nearly 13 percent of unproductive costs compared with last season.

This double whammy of benefits has helped to entrench the stable position the velvet industry has enjoyed for the past seven years. Meanwhile, the industry continues to grow. This can provide its own set of challenges, ensuring appropriate placement of product to continue supporting the industry's relatively stable platform.

A continued drive for improving trading conditions is important for economies like New Zealand's. Again, DINZ commends the New Zealand Government for achieving agreement on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP). It is a proud position to be a part of with New Zealand taking a lead role in its initiation. While the TPP does not provide any direct benefits to the New Zealand deer industry (there are no current trade impediments

for deer products to the 12 partner countries), DINZ recognises the benefits to the New Zealand agriculture sector and wider economy. Further, it will provide a process should non-tariff (regulatory type) barriers become an issue in the future. It will also provide opportunities as other countries join, as intimated by China and Korea.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade continues its strong support for the New Zealand deer industry, with the New Zealand Ambassador to Korea, Clare Fearnley, visiting KGC (Korea Ginseng Corporation) in Daejeon on 29 January. Such a high-ranking visit is testament to the strength of New Zealand's relationship with this important customer. ■



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Venison market report

Production and exports in 2015

THE NATIONAL KILL for 2015 was 383,646 deer, down 7.5% year on year. Production for the year was 21,357 tonnes (carcass-weight equivalent), down 6.8% on 2014. The kill in the month of December 2015 was down 1.6% on 2014.

Total venison exports for 2015 are recorded as 15,035 tonnes, down 5.8% year on year (Table 1).

The value of these exports was \$181 million. This was up 2.1% on 2014, with the average 2015 FOB price per kg 7.4% higher than in 2014.

The 2015 increase in value in reflects a currency situation that favours exports and also coincides with a period of relatively steady market conditions.

The total value of chilled exports increased by 11% while volume dropped slightly by 1% (Table 2).

Overall chilled exports made up 17% by volume and 30% by value of total venison exports in 2015.

The United States continues to lead export sales in chilled venison with the value of exports in 2015 increasing by 18%. Volume wise there has been a small decrease. Exports into the

Table 1: Total New Zealand venison exports by volume and value

Market	Volume (tonnes)			Value (NZ\$FOB, millions)			Average \$/kg		
	2014	2015*	% change	2014	2015*	% change	2014	2015*	% change
Germany	5,061	4,611	-9.8%	\$53.50	\$53.61	0.2%	\$10.57	\$11.63	9.1%
United States	2,087	2,293	9.0%	\$21.65	\$25.42	14.8%	\$10.37	\$11.09	6.4%
Netherlands	1,432	1,120	-27.9%	\$22.55	\$21.66	-4.1%	\$15.74	\$19.35	18.6%
Belgium	1,471	1,325	-11.0%	\$20.85	\$19.98	-4.3%	\$14.17	\$15.08	6.0%
Switzerland	1,037	930	-11.5%	\$16.33	\$14.96	-9.1%	\$15.75	\$16.10	2.2%
United Kingdom	1,389	1,164	-19.4%	\$11.90	\$11.28	-5.5%	\$8.57	\$9.69	11.6%
Finland	1,071	1,031	-4.0%	\$6.45	\$7.07	8.7%	\$6.02	\$6.86	12.2%
Sweden	397	527	24.7%	\$3.87	\$4.82	19.6%	\$9.76	\$9.13	-6.8%
France	230	277	17.1%	\$3.29	\$4.26	22.8%	\$14.30	\$15.37	6.9%
Canada	271	345	21.5%	\$2.81	\$3.54	20.6%	\$10.35	\$10.25	-1.0%
Sub total	14,447	13,623	-6.0%	\$163.20	\$166.61	2.0%	\$11.30	\$12.23	7.6%
Others	1,457	1,412	-3.2%	\$14.00	\$14.00	0.0%	\$9.61	\$9.92	3.1%
Total	15,904	15,035	-5.8%	\$177.20	\$181.00	2.1%	\$11.14	\$12.04	7.4%

*Provisional

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Table 2: Total New Zealand chilled venison exports by volume and value

Market	Volume (tonnes)			Value (NZ\$FOB, millions)			Average \$/kg		
	2014	2015*	% change	2014	2015*	% change	2014	2015*	% change
United States	590	583	-1%	\$11	\$13	18%	\$18.64	\$22.30	20%
Netherlands	398	459	15%	\$9	\$12	33%	\$22.61	\$26.14	16%
Germany	464	541	17%	\$9	\$11	18%	\$19.40	\$19.66	1%
Belgium	464	419	-10%	\$10	\$9	-11%	\$21.55	\$21.28	-1%
Switzerland	166	162	-2%	\$4	\$5	18%	\$24.10	\$29.05	21%
France	104	118	13%	\$2	\$2	25%	\$19.23	\$21.14	10%
United Kingdom	242	131	-46%	\$3	\$2	-37%	\$12.40	\$14.47	17%
Canada	58	58	0%	\$1	\$1	25%	\$17.30	\$21.58	25%
Australia	16	15	-7%	\$0	\$0	-4%	\$26.13	\$26.79	3%
Singapore	4	10	179%	\$0	\$0	163%	\$29.88	\$28.19	-6%
Others	30	11	-63%	1	0	-64%	\$30.65	\$30.40	-1%
Total	2,535	2,507	-1%	\$50	\$56	11%	\$19.90	\$22.31	12%

*Provisional

Source: Statistics New Zealand

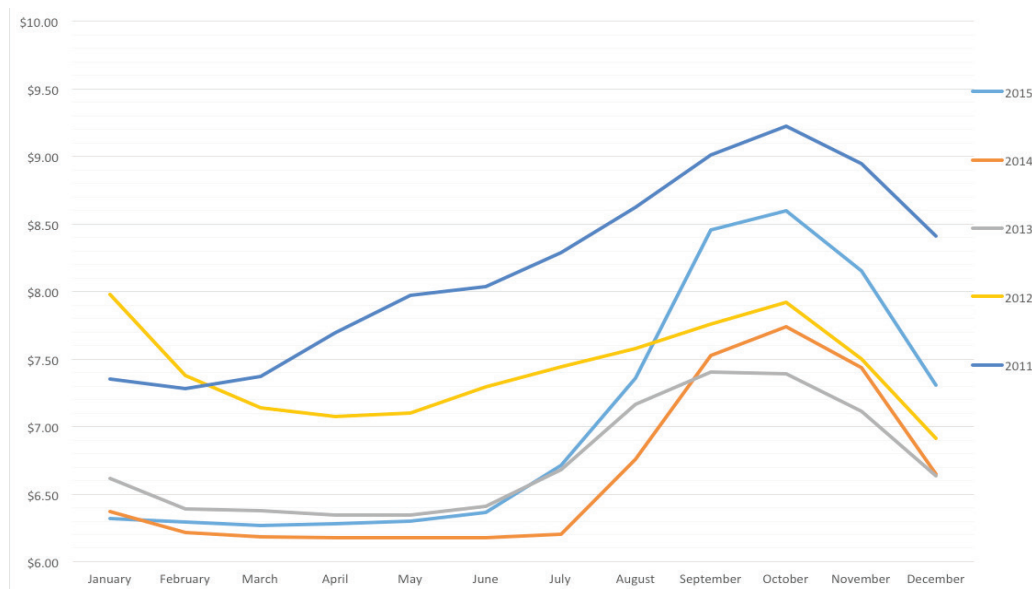
Netherlands increased in 2015 by 33%; this could be largely based on it being favoured as a point of entry rather than market driven. Exports into Germany were worth 18% more than in 2014, with chilled exports increasing by 17%.

Schedule

In the last week of January the average stag venison schedule stood at \$7.18/kg, compared with \$6.28/kg at the same time last year – an increase of 14% (Figure 1). In the last week it had increased by up to 15c/kg. The increase in the venison schedule in the past year reflects an 11% currency gain and a 3% market gain. The market price gain has come from a 12% increase in the per-kilogram value of chilled venison.

Currency movement has been relatively steady over the past 2 months, with small increases seen in the euro. The USD rose in December to 0.67 but has eased back in the past few weeks. The NZD was trading at 0.648 USD and 0.591 EUR at time of writing (end of January).

Figure 1: AP stag schedule: 2011–2015



Market conditions

Exporters have observed a steady uptake of chilled product in the European game season with air freights continuing until Christmas.

The schedule is holding steady as frozen negotiations continue to progress with the European importers – the message that supply is tight in New Zealand has filtered through and in some cases the market is acting proactively to secure volume. At the same time, the higher than usual pricing for this period is causing some buyers to hold off committing to orders as they wait to see how the supply situation plays out.

Demand at present for middles remains strong from most European customers, while the market for legs and shoulders is moderate.

Prices have dropped in some protein segments (pork and chicken particularly in Europe), which will mean there is a gap forming between competing menu alternatives and venison. Should the gap continue to widen, we may see restaurateurs

relooking at their margins and contemplating lower-priced protein alternatives.

Frozen demand in the United States has started to ease back following the end of the northern autumn and the holiday season. Chilled demand remains relatively steady. Several of the top ten broad-line distributors are increasing their emphasis on venison as a result of greater consumer demand for alternative proteins, which bodes well for future sales. Increased use of social media is proving effective in building direct consumer support.

Deer skin demand is observed to be low with the luxury goods markets, due to a decrease in demand (see also comment from New Zealand Light Leathers on page 28 of this issue).

Promotional activity highlights: Europe

Young chefs' exchange: February 2016

The four winning chefs have now been selected and began their exchange on Waitangi Day.

As in previous years, we have received strong support from

leading restaurants, again offering work experience.

In Auckland, the German chefs will work alongside Michael Meredith of Meredith's, Depot's Kyle Street, The Grill's Sean Connelly and Neil Brazier at The Sugar Club

They then travel to Queenstown where they'll work with Rata's Kei Suzaki, Amisfield's Vaughan Mabee, Frederic Monnier at The Hilton, and Ben Batterbury at True South.

The last week of work experience is in Wellington, where they will join Logan Brown's Shaun Clouston, Rex Morgan at Boulcott

Street Bistro, Laurent Loudeac at Hippopotamus and Jacob Brown at The Larder.

Following this the chefs will spend a day with Graham Brown for a venison master class, followed by a visit to Mountain River Processors and a deer farm.

Chefs Trophy Junior: January

Chefs Trophy Junior is the junior version of Chefs Trophy, which is organised by the German trade magazine *Chefs!*. We have been collaborating with this magazine for a number of years, but this year was their first foray into hosting an event exclusively aimed at young chefs.

Chefs Trophy Junior supports young chefs and offers a platform for them to show their skills. New Zealand venison was part of the basket of goods the chefs worked with, familiarising them with cooking and serving the product. This was an ideal event to showcase New Zealand venison, as we are able to raise awareness and trial the product with young chefs who are working at a range of establishments covering traditional hotels through to the catering arms of large corporations. ■

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Reputation reinforced with NAIT

New Zealand's reputation for world-leading farm practices and animal management will be reinforced when the national animal identification and tracing programme, NAIT, becomes fully adopted by the deer farming industry this March after its three-year transitional and voluntary implementation phase.

NAIT ENSURES THAT in the event of a disease outbreak, New Zealand's primary industries can move swiftly to contain any impact and protect farmers' businesses and the country's reputation in export markets.

From 1 March this year, all deer – including deer born before the programme became mandatory three years ago – must be NAIT tagged and registered.

That's a logical final step for herd owners and deer farmers, says Bill Robinson, stud manager at Raroa Red Deer at Karapiro in Waikato. Bill has been part of the NAIT programme from its beginnings and was already using electronic tags for the trophy, velvet and venison animals bred at the property. Raroa is well-

known for sire stags such as Monarch, Spencif and Summor.

Raroa Red Deer Stud's rolling hill country runs about 1200 animals including 450 velvet stags and about 340 hinds. "Quality fully recorded hinds are a key component of a stud's performance," says Bill. Raroa hosts a popular on-farm auction each December.

"We're running a stud and selling live animals, so we need to know each animal and have records for everything," says Bill. "You have to know every animal visually and electronically, so I have ear tags for visual ID and the NAIT tags for electronic radio frequency ID.

Raroa Red Deer is refining its trophy and velvet genetics. The stud's bloodlines are principally English with some composite

continued on page 20

TAG AND REGISTER BY MARCH 1. THE REASONS WHY GO WAY BEYOND THE RULES.

Yes, you have to, but spare a moment to think about why. When your stock is traceable, NAIT can help swiftly contain a disease that's moved on to your farm and find the source. It's a big reassurance for your farm and business. It also helps keep our exports competitive. Tag and register deer by 1 March and you'll do more than just play by the rules.

TO LEARN MORE, VISIT NAIT.CO.NZ



An OSPRI programme

One of the “originals” retires

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Deer industry “original” Barry Vowell retired on 9 January after 15 years as North Island procurement manager for venison specialist processor, Duncan (NZ) Ltd.

THE TENURE WAS part of “a long and stellar career in the deer industry,” according to Duncan NZ chief executive, Andy Duncan.

That career started in 1978 when Barry caught his first deer in the Tararua range bordering his first farm, a dairy operation, near Eketahuna. That gave him the bug and he set off on the path working with the “lovely animals” over the past 37 years.

From 1981, he worked as a stock agent for Allied Farmers, which became Elders, and later on Wrightson before moving to Mair Venison as a specialist deer agent in the 1990s. He joined Duncan in 2001, coinciding with the opening of the company’s plant in Mamaku.

Most of his time was spent in the Rotorua region, but he is well known by deer farmers all over the North Island. Knowing everybody and everyone knowing him – the best part of his job he says – also made his job easier. His hard-earned good reputation led people to ring him whenever they needed stock sold.

The retirement prompt for the 70-year-old came initially after an illness last year, which made him realise it was time to step back.

Although he’s keeping his hand in with handling a few smaller sales, Barry says he intends to “practise being retired” for the next six months and is enjoying his daily sorties down to the surf at Mount Maunganui and holding the fort while wife, Sue, travels.

According to Andy Duncan, being a good stock agent is walking a fine line between maintaining good relationships with the farmers and interfacing effectively with the plant and management

to achieve the company’s goals.

“It is quite a skill getting the balance right and Barry did it really well. He was well regarded by the farmer suppliers and the people he worked with for his integrity and trustworthiness. He played an important role and will be missed,” he says.

After some deliberation about how to replace him, Duncan NZ’s South Island procurement manager Ray Coombes has stepped up into the role of national procurement manager for the company. With a reducing kill, as existing deer farmers concentrate on herd rebuilding, it was the right time to make the structural change, says Duncan. ■



Barry Vowell: knowing everyone in the industry was the best part of his job.

NAIT: continued



Bill Robinson: NAIT is finding wider support in the deer industry.

bloodlines including Eastern.

The stud breeds hinds and stags to improve antler and venison production with breed lines that produce top level antler performance through both male and female progeny.

With more than 27 years of performance selection in the hind herd, Raroa introduces 80 yearling hinds each year, about 20 percent of the herd,

which creates high selection pressure.

Raroa deer have their data recorded on an electronic panel reader as they pass through a weighing box. The data is automatically uploaded, collated and matched with NAIT information.

“If I send an animal away, the NAIT information for the sale is sent automatically so it’s only one entry, which saves us all time,” Bill says. “I need one less guy in the yard; he can go off and do something else.”

Bill says NAIT is finding more support in the deer farming industry, even among herd owners who were initially sceptical. “We’ve got to have NAIT,” he says, “and people are warming to it – not only because it’s compulsory, but because it’s useful and efficient.”

OSPRI manages the NAIT programme and staff are available to help with any NAIT questions on 0800 482 463. You can also visit nait.co.nz for more information.

• Article supplied. ■

Sire sale report

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

A \$128,000 son of Nixon bought by Malcolm and Kathy Cane at Crowley Deer's sale in December was the standout feature of this season's round of deer sales. The three-year-old was described by Todd Crowley as a good dual-purpose sire with a large beam and good tops. The Canes themselves enjoyed a good sale, with their top two lots fetching \$80,000 and \$90,000. There was also strong demand for the Canes' 12 yearling hinds, These averaged \$5,400, with one hind realising an outstanding \$22,000.

THE TOP PRICE realised at Todd Crowley's sale was the first time a sire has reached six figures for 14 years. The last time was when Raroa Red Deer stud sold a sire for \$145,000 in 2001/02.

While the top prices were being paid up north, velvet and trophy producers in the North Island were also very busy shoppers in the deep south. At the Netherdale sale, for example, the first three lots were snapped up by Hawke's Bay velvet producers for a total of \$33,500. A number of other sires are now making their way to the central North Island from the Southland sales.

Southland stud Altrive Red Deer had an excellent sale with a 100 percent clearance, an average of \$12,423 and a top price of \$67,000 paid by John Somerville and David Morgan for an Everest son.

The overall size of the offering and clearance rates were similar to last year. Of the sales we are aware of, the overall offering was 829 stags or bulls (832 last year). Eighty-two percent of the sires on offer went under the hammer, with elk/wapiti sires (86 percent sold) once again doing a little better than the reds (80.6 percent).

As in recent years, velvet and trophy sires dominated the sales and the rapid progress in antler genetics was once again apparent. Sires cutting more than 6kg at two years of age are now becoming more commonplace. Those who prefer to sell sires at three years of age have seen their stags almost doubling their velvet weights from two to three years of age, showing that the genetics can express themselves much more clearly given the extra 12 months. Buyers were also keeping an eye on body weights, with heavier red sires in the 250kg range attracting a premium. This, and the very good demand for elk/wapiti terminal sires, was a reminder that venison is still the industry's mainstay.

Deer Industry News thanks those vendors who sent in sale reports.

We invited all vendors we were aware of to send in reports. If you missed out, please get in touch and give us your updated contact details so you can be included next season. ■

ALTRIVE RED DEER 14 January, Waipounamu, Southland

Stags sold	26 of 26 on offer (25 3yr sire stags and one 2yr trophy sire stag)
Top price	\$67,000
Average	\$12,423

Other animals sold

70 2yr old velvetting stags and 50 yearling hinds (average \$1,292). These were all our surplus (cull) animals except for eight 2yr old stags with light or untidy velvet and two yearling hinds with lighter body weight.

Comment

Complete clearance again. Large crowd with very strong interest in our velvet genetics, especially Everest progeny. Top prices:
 Lot 1: Everest son, 8.2kg SA, \$67,000, bought by John Somerville (Arawata Stud) and David Morgan (Raincliff Station) with Altrive retaining its semen collection right
 Lot 6: sired by Foveran 191-09, an Amadeus son, 7.4kg SA, 244kg LW, \$31,000
 Lot 4: Everest son, 7.05kg SA, 245kg LW \$27,000 (this stag had three 3 ET brothers in the catalogue)
 Lot 7: Everest son, 7.2kg SA, 255kg LW, \$19,000
 Lot 2: Zama son, 7.35kg SA, 243kg LW \$15,000
 Lot 13: Zama son, \$17,000.

ARAWATA DEER FARM 14 January, Pine Bush, Southland

Stags sold 18 of 19 two-year-olds on offer

Top price \$10,500

Average \$5,026

Other animals sold 27 of 27 hinds on offer; average \$622.
26 velvetting stags, \$1000 each

Comment

Sale average was back on last year so a little disappointing. A lot of our stags go to Canterbury and further north and it's good to see so many people making the effort to come to Southland to find the antler genetics they want. In the past the market was mainly local. Using the website to show velvet from sire stags as it is cut gives buyers much more information. We were pleased with the good tidy style of velvet our stags grew, but the tight, cold season meant it was a little back on last year.

BLACK FOREST 15 January, Outram

Stags sold 15 of 32 on offer

Top price \$18,000

Average \$4,373

Comment

Good demand for venison animals. Top antler animals sold well with softer demand for mid range from a smaller gallery reflective of the sale's position later in the sale circuit.

continued on page 22

Stag sale report: continued

BROCK DEER
13 January, Merino Downs, Gore

Stags sold 20 of 26 2yr stags on offer
Top price \$26,000
Average \$7,710
Other animals sold 25 of 37 hinds on offer; average \$983, top \$2,300
Comment Although prices were down on last year's excellent average of \$10,000, this was still a pleasing sale with a strong gallery of at least 60. Lot 6, a Zama son with good beam and tyne length, was bought for \$26,000 on behalf of Greg Oliver, Palmerston. Lot 3, which cut an impressive 6.5kg at 2 years, was bought for \$20,000 on behalf of Dave and Jill MacGibbon, Te Anau.



Stags on offer at the Brock Deer sale.

CANES DEER
18 December, Reporoa

Stags sold 15 of 18 3yr stags on offer
Top price \$90,000 and another at \$80,000
Average \$19,000
Other animals sold 12 yearling hinds, average \$5,400
 Top priced hind \$22,000
Comment A very strong and well supported sale with animals purchased from all parts of New Zealand; stags and yearling hinds sold well. Pleased with Rural Livestock, who conducted the sale this year.

CONNEMARA
17 January, Manapouri

Bulls sold 32 of 32 on offer
Top price \$6,800
Average \$3,815
Comment Sale average up slightly on last year. All bulls sold through the ring to a good crowd of clients both new and those who have been purchasing for years. Bulls were looking good on sale day, ranging in weight from 295–347kg. A good day was had by all.

CROWLEY DEER
16 December, Holland Road, Hamilton

Stags sold 12 of 12 on offer
Top price \$128,000
Average \$21,083
Other animals sold 12 of 12 hinds on offer; average \$5150, top \$22,000
Comment Excellent sale; we are most grateful for the support and would like to thank all purchasers, underbidders and everyone who attended.

DEER GENETICS+
11 January: 3 year stags
12 January: 2 year stags and 1 yr elite hinds

Stags sold 3 year stags: 12 of 12 on offer
 2 year stags: 22 of 23 on offer
Top price 3 year stags: \$41,000
 2 year stags: \$25,000
Average 3 year stags: \$12,700
 2 year stags: \$8,274
Other animals sold 1yr hinds: 18 of 19 on offer; average \$2033, top \$6,000

FOVERAN DEER PARK
11 January at Foveran

Stags sold 61 or 80 on offer
Top price \$45,000
Average \$4,500
Other animals sold 6 yearling hinds.
Comment Full gallery of buyers. Over 200 people attended the sale. Average price almost the same as last year. Very happy with the result.

LITTLEBOURNE
19 January, Winton

Bulls sold 12 of 16 on offer
Top price \$8,500
Average \$4,445
Comment This year's stags better than previous years; velvet quality and weights continuing to improve.

NETHERDALE RED DEER
13 January, Balfour, Southland

Stags sold 23 of 25 on offer
Top price \$21,000
Average \$9,149
Other animals sold 40 of 40 hinds on offer; average \$1,179, top \$2,200.
 79 2yr velvet stags: average \$1,331 ea; range \$1,000 (ave. 3.08kg) to \$1,800 (ave. 4.2kg)
Comment See separate article on page 24.

PAMPAS HEIGHTS
8 January, Rotorua

Stags sold 18 of 26 on offer sold on the day.
Top price \$10,800
Average \$4,997
Other animals sold 24 of 34 hinds on offer sold on the day (average \$743, top \$1,200)
Comment Being the only January sale in the North Island, buyer numbers were down on normal levels of attendance.

PEEL FOREST ESTATE
4 December: Forrester sires (venison)
12 January: Velvet and trophy

Stags sold Forresters: 25 of 30 on offer
Velvet and trophy: 18 of 26 on offer
Top price Forresters: \$9,000
Velvet and trophy: \$17,000
Average Forresters: \$6,200
Velvet and trophy: \$6,338
Comment Velvet/trophy is transitioning from selling 2yr to 3yr stags. Bigger selection of stags will be available next year.

RAINCLIFF STATION
22 January, Pleasant Point

Bulls sold 24 of 30 on offer
Top price \$5,500
Average \$3,225
Comment We were told the stock we had on offer was better than last year and we felt that too, but prices were back. Buyers got good value this year. Being the very last of the sales probably disadvantaged us.

RAROA RED DEER
17 December, Cambridge

Stags sold 20 of 20 on offer
Top price \$8,000
Average \$4,300
Other animals sold 22 of 22 hinds on offer; average \$630, top \$725

TIKANA WAPITI
19 January, on farm at Browns, Winton

Bulls sold 14 of 16 on offer
Top price \$28,000
Average \$9,196
Other animals sold 2 of 4 yearling cows sold, \$3,000 each.
3 of 6 MA cows offered; average \$3,300.
Comment A good sale with average for bulls up \$500 on last year. Ray and Chris Jennings paid \$28,000 for the top bull. He cut a NZ record 14.2kg EWSupreme velvet at 3 years. Buyers can expect an excellent return on their investment. Based on what was paid at auction the ROI is 20%. This is from next year's velvet and any benefit from using them for mating is on top of that!

TOP ROCKY DEER
15 December, Hawke's Bay

Stags sold 12 of 18 on offer
Top price \$6,500
Average \$4,280
Comment A first sale for us and first up for velvet stags this year meant a cautious wait-and-see approach from buyers which left me a little disappointed, but as the selling season unfolded our values were on a par with the rest of the country. Two passings which did not meet expectations were retained for our own use in our commercial herd. We will move to sale by private treaty next season.

TOWER FARMS DEER
16 December at Tower Farms

Stags sold 28 of 32 on offer
Top price \$30,000
Average \$9,160
Other animals sold 21 of 24 hinds on offer; average \$1,280, top \$3,800
Comment Happy with the sale, with prices achieved up on last year. Congratulations to all our buyers.

WILKINS FARMING
12 December, North Island: Te Maire, Hawke's Bay
18 January, South Island: Wilkins Farming, Athol

Stags sold North Island: 22 of 28 on offer (sale day and private treaty following sale)
South Island: 53 of 58 on offer
Top price North Island: \$3,600
South Island: \$16,000
Average North Island: \$2,900
South Island: \$4,900
Comment North Island: It was good to see some new faces and purchasers. We appreciate the support we get at this sale.
South Island: A good crowd present with buyers coming from all parts of the South Island and as far as Hawke's Bay. The sale result was better than last year, as were the stock and the buyers were prepared bid and pay improved prices reflecting this.



Part of the offering at the Wilkins Farming South Island sale.

*Source: PGG Wrightson Deer, <http://deer.agonline.co.nz>

Buyers from far and wide at Netherdale

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Netherdale Red Deer Stud enjoyed a solid result for its 29th annual sale on 13 January, despite a 2012 foot injury to top master sire Harlem having minimised his contribution to this year's offering of 25 three-year-old sire stags.



The ubiquitous Neville Clarke (second from left) stirs up the bidders.

THE GALLERY OF more than 100 was a little down on last year, but there was widespread support for the sire stags, hinds and velvetting stags. The top-priced stag, a 256kg son of the popular 403, was bought by Mike Wilkins for \$21,000. It had just cut an impressive 6.2kg of SA2, well up on the 3.84kg it cut as a two-year-old.

Apart from this sale to a relatively close neighbour, most of the sire stags went to Canterbury and North Island buyers, the first three lots going to Hawke's Bay purchasers for \$12,500, \$7,500 and \$13,500 respectively. Owner David Stevens said his stags were known for thriving in other regions and the buyers seemed to agree. He noted that the velvet from Lot 19 in last year's sale won buyers John and Marie Spiers first place in the four-year-old section of the North Island Velvet Competition.

The average for the sale was \$9149, back a bit from last year, but Stevens was very happy with the day given the almost total clearance (only two stags were passed in and one of those was sold shortly after the sale).

Stevens has sold three-year-old sire stags for some years now, based on the logic that an additional year gives more time for the antler genetics to express themselves – the big velvet weight gain made by the top-priced stag as a three-year-old was a case in point. Netherdale was also one of the first studs to sell elite hinds and velvetting stags at their sire sales. "We attracted some criticism for doing this at the time, but a lot of other breeders have since followed suit," he says.

The recorded 13-month hinds were also well supported, with all 40 lots sold at an average of \$1179. Daughters of master sire, No. 1, attracted strong interest.

Twelve straws of semen didn't attract a buyer on the day, but



There was a good gallery with many North Island buyers present.

Stevens said he's sold 24 straws at \$400 since the sale.

Prices for the 79 two-year-old velvet stags were also a bit back on last year, but they all went out the door with good support, ranging in price from \$1,000 up to \$1,800 each.

Several years ago Stevens stopped bringing live stags before the bidders at the Netherdale auctions and instead uses a large screen to bring up good photographs and data on each stag, including up-to-date liveweights and comparative figures for their velvet weights at two and three years. Velvet from the master sires and sale stags is also available for inspection before the sale starts.

He said several of the sale stags had impressive three-year-old liveweights well over 200kg, emphasising the utility of the bloodlines for venison as well as velvet production. ■



Velvet from Lot 1, a Gatling son bought by Ponty von Dadelszen for \$12,500.

Petersens prevail

Following on from their success at last year's Rising Stars National Hard Antler and Velvet competition, Chris and Debra Petersen enjoyed more of the same at the South Canterbury/North Otago NZDFA velvet competition held on 27 November.

THEY PLACED FIRST in the sire of three event (Sovereign II) and picked up first and second places in the Red 2 year old hard antler event. To cap it off they received the supreme hard antler crown.

The Morgan family (Raincliff), Rooney Farms (Coutts) and Rupert family also featured prominently on the leader board.

A summary of results follows. ■

Place/Entrant	Stag	Weight (kg)/score
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Open Elk/Wapiti Supreme

David & Jan Morgan	Green 841	17.31
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Open Elk/Wapiti

1 David & Jan Morgan	Green 163	8.39
2 Rooney Farms	405	8.21
3 David & Jan Morgan	Green 27	7.01

Local Elk/Wapiti

1 Rooney Farms	405	8.21
2 David & Jan Morgan	Green 27	7.01

Open Red

1 Donald & Kathy Hudson	McCaw	11.94
2 Rooney Farms	Denfield Don	12.39
3 Craig & Shayne Cockburn	832	10.61

Local Red

1 Rooney Farms	Denfield Don	12.39
2 Rata Peaks	White 163	8.58
3 Peel Forest Estate	John Boy	9.04

3 Year Old Red

1 MJ & HM & K Rupert	Maple	7.22
2 Swann Family	Purple 13	5.77
3 Donald & Kathy Hudson	Damascus	7.35

4 Year Old Red

1 MJ & HM & K Rupert	1190	9.22
2 MJ & HM & K Rupert	Axel	10.45
3 MJ & HM & K Rupert	Zeus	10.80

Sire of Three

1 Chris & Debra Petersen	Sovereign II
2 Peel Forest Estate	Blandswood
3 Peel Forest Estate	General Peel

Hard Antler Red

1 Foveran Deer Farm	Gregor (5yo)	549¾
2 The Hudsons	Sulla (5yo)	548½
3 Gary & Robyn Borland	Redmac (7yo)	544¼

Hard Antler Red 2 Year Old

1 Chris & Debra Petersen	Kallis II	387⅞
2 Chris & Debra Petersen	Pink 115	353¾
3 Peel Forest Estate	12-1090	351¾

Hard Antler Fallow Open

1 Pinewood Deer	Gr 144 (4yo)	251⅞
2 Alister & Jessica Midgley	Attimorloch (6yo)	233¾
3 Alister & Jessica Midgley	Dominator (5yo)	222⅞

Farmers Head Elk: David & Jan Morgan

Farmers Head Red under 4.5kg	Farmers Head Red over 4.5kg
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1 G&S Peck	Les & Heather Dellow
2 Rata Peaks	MJ & HM & K Rupert
3 Lyall Cullen & Marion Neal	Craig & Shayne Cockburn

Supreme Champion Velvet: MJ & HM & K Rupert

Supreme Champion Hard Antler: Chris & Debra Petersen



Brychan Morgan and Emma Coutts judging the velvet. (Photo: Jan Coutts)



Murray Coutts (left) and Kevin Edge look over one of the hard antler entries. (Photo: Emma Coutts)

Elk & Wapiti Society 2016 Velvet Awards

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

The Elk & Wapiti Society moved north to Timaru for its 2016 velvet competition awards and dinner on 30 January at the charming Caroline Bay tearooms, Sopheze. The Society kindly invited *Deer Industry News* along for the event.

ONCE AGAIN ANTLER from Tikana dominated the awards, with Dave Lawrence and Donna Day winning the two, three, five and six year categories plus the open class and the Champion of Champions title.

Dave said he was delighted to see the progeny of his champion sire, Nepia, starting to show through in the younger age categories, with his son Thor winning the two year class. "I think this two-year-old will also prove to be a good sire," he said.

Dave added that he liked the transparent scoring system used for the Elk & Wapiti Society velvet awards, with the marks for all attributes being included in the full results sheet.

The awards this year were judged by Nathan Hawker, Glen Whyte and Tony Pearce with the assistance of Brychan Morgan as a junior judge.

Nathan Hawker said he was pleased to see the heads getting bigger each year and despite the odd sticky patch the velvet market was overall still very positive.

Principal sponsor was **Hawker Velvet** and gold sponsors were **Xcell** and **PGG Wrightson**.

What goes into scoring

Before the prizegiving began, DINZ Producer Manager and velvet judge, Tony Pearce, gave guests a refresher on the scoring system and how it encourages a balance of both quality and quantity required by markets and breeders.

He said the top end of the antler is worth five or six times the base and the judges need to look at the antler as a whole – weight is just one aspect.



Tony Pearce explains the intricacies of velvet judging.

The antler is judged according to the DINZ grading guidelines – for example the minimum weight for Elk Supreme is 4kg per side, with the main beam at least 20cm over the entire antler. Tony said the scoring system is based on US standards and expresses scores as a positive for various aspects.

The first of these is presentation and quality, which reflects how well the bull and the farmer have looked after the velvet. Cuts, nicks and scratches are penalised, as is anything that has pierced the skin.

When heads are entered in several competitions it can affect the look of the antler after transport and refreezing and this is accounted for. Tony said the winner of the 6 year category (Tikana's Nepia) incurred no deductions at all for presentation.

The judges also assess the sides as a pair: balance, symmetry, uniformity and degree of tyne pointing all come into it. Tony said



David Morgan, Raincliff Station, (left) is presented the Reserve Champion of Champions sash by Mark Covill of sponsor FMG.

Highden Deer Park

Pleasant Point

Semen for sale from Sovereign II and Kallis

Both stags have one broken coronet so can't grow full heads but getting amazing sons from each – up to 41 points from 2yo sons, scoring up to 457³/₈ inches.

Winner of last year's Rising Stars Hard Antler Competition.

This year sons up to 50 points.

Semen \$300 + GST

Contact: Chris and Debra Petersen

Ph 03 614 8373 or chrispetersen@farmside.co.nz

that when elk velvet antler is harvested at 75–80 days, the tips are still growing strongly while the base is starting to rapidly calcify. The degree of tyne pointing is a strong indication of whether you have the timing right, he said, later adding that a certain amount of pointing in the lower-value lower tynes is inevitable if you are going to get good well-developed tops.

Development of ribbing and calcification also reflected how well you've timed the harvest. Heads that have gone too far also start to "pinch in" above the trez tyne he said. "Some heads used to be a bit weak in the beam and length of trez tynes, but that's not seen so much now." Placement of the tynes was also important.

Tony said indentation up to 10 centimetres was allowable for elk Supreme, but this could be more if the strength of the beam was judged as more valuable and the antler retained its balance. He said the long established Wapiti 1 grade allowed only very small indentation on the top and lighter weights. It was still a respected grade, he said.

The amount of differentiation awarded to weight had been reduced when it was realised that the heavier heads had been getting a disproportionate advantage.

Results summary: Velvet

Place	Name	Owner	Sire	Total weight (kg)
2 Year				
1	Thor	Tikana	Nepia	9.73

2	G11	Raincliff	Prada	6.02
3	Jono	Tikana	Nepia	6.76

3 Year

1	Dictator	Tikana	Declan	14.08
2	Isobar	Tikana	Storm	10.19
3	Dijon	Tikana	Declan	9.7

4 Year

1	Tartan	Raincliff	Trilogy	16.94
2	Beckham	Tikana	WB333	11.69
3	Arizona	Clachanburn	Phoenix	11.34

5 Year

1	Moseby	Tikana	G607	17.41
2	Zeus	Tikana	Yu Wonder	15.69
3	Luther	Connemara	Trilogy	17.83

6 Year

1	Nepia	Tikana	WB333	22.32
2	Storm	Clachanburn	Trilogy	16.7
3	N10	NPG Elk	Fonteroy	16.57

Wapiti 1

1	Hefner	Chris Hughes	Playboy	12.52
2	Green 32	Raincliff	Red 272	8.34
3	Y115	Bartholomew		7.86

continued on page 28

MSD Animal Health Photographic Awards

Time to get snapping!

We have the technology and we have the deer. It's time to get out there and capture images of the animals, the land, the people and the industry we love.

MSD Animal Health has kindly agreed to continue its support for the deer industry's annual photographic awards, so let's show them and the world how deer farming ticks.

Entry deadline is 2 May.

See page 6 for further details.

For an entry form contact:

Cenwynn Philip, Deer Industry New Zealand

Phone: 04 471 6110

Email: cenwynn.philip@deernz.org

or download the form from

www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition

Photo: "NZ farmed deer brothers" by Nick Aubrey, winner, 2015 MSD Animal Health Photographic Awards.



MSD

Animal Health

Elk & Wapiti Society: continued

Open				
1	Nepia	Tikana	WB333	22.32
2	Mojo	Mayfield	4 Play	22.46
3	Moseby	Tikana	G607	17.41

Results summary: Hard Antler

Place	Name	Owner	Sire	Score
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Open Non-typical Hard Antler				
1	Yukon	Whyte Farming	Y801	458 $\frac{7}{8}$
2	Phoenix	Clachanburn		436 $\frac{5}{8}$

Open Typical Hard Antler				
1	Seattle	Whyte Farming	Y801	448 $\frac{1}{2}$

2 year Non-typical				
1	WG859	NZ Bison	Yukon	335 $\frac{7}{8}$
2	WG850	NZ Bison	Tomohawk	301 $\frac{3}{4}$
3	WG832	Whyte Farming	Tomohawk	269 $\frac{1}{8}$

2 year Typical				
1	WG866	NZ Bison	Seattle	307 $\frac{5}{8}$
2	WG858	Whyte Farming	Seattle	285 $\frac{3}{8}$
3	WG891	Whyte Farming	Leroy	282 $\frac{1}{4}$



Raincliff Station's Tartan won the four-year class.

NZ Light Leathers

Those who arrived earlier in the day were lucky enough to be given a guided tour of the NZ Light Leathers (NZLL) plant in Timaru and true to the glamour traditions of the Elk and Wapiti Society's annual event, deer leather featured in a mini fashion show.

NZLL director, David Cassidy, brought along some samples to remind farmers that the often-forgotten pelt is the basis for top-quality luxury products. He said international markets were difficult right now. NZLL further processes about 200,000 New Zealand deer skins each year and the company was working hard to get more designers to use deer leather in their products.



Champion of Champions winner, Dave Lawrence, (right) with principal sponsor Nathan Hawker of Hawker Velvet.

Reserve Champion of Champions was awarded to Raincliff Station's Tartan a son of Trilogity that the Morgans purchased from Tikana. David Morgan said Tartan had cut 10kg as a three-year-old and an impressive 16.94kg as a four-year-old.

Champion of Champions was Tikana's 6-year class winner, Nepia, whose head was 22.32kg. Dave Lawrence said Nepia had cut 7kg as a two-year-old but just kept getting better and better with age. "I'm confident he'll just keep on going from here," Dave said, noting how good it was to see two of Nepia's sons among the top three in the two-year class.



From left: Mary McQueen, Kylie Crafts and Rachel Pope show just how nice deer leather products can look as fashion materials.

Currently cow leather fetched \$US2.50 per square foot on international markets, whereas deer leather cost \$US7-8 and ostrich leather an incredible \$US20 per square foot.

He said the meat processing industry didn't allow NZLL to reward farmers for presenting fault-free, high-quality skins – farmers were paid the same for all skins. He urged farmers to think about quality when handling their deer, and “don't forget to buy your wives and daughters a nice deer leather Prada bag”.

Raising money for research

The elk and wapiti industry punches well above its weight when it comes to supporting deer research and this is due in no small part to the generosity of members at their annual research auction. This year was no exception and guests dug deep for items ranging from luxury socks to Fiordland flights to a flyfishing trip in Wales (get yourself to Wales first!). Urged on by enthusiastic amateur auctioneers, Rhys Griffiths and Tony Pearce, guests raised an impressive \$6,450 on the night. ■



Say cheese: Rhys Griffiths of DINZ (right) squeezes out a few more bids on a cheese hamper.

Obituary: Owen Charles Grooby 1939–2015

It is with sadness that the deer industry acknowledges the passing on 24 December of Owen Charles Grooby, affectionately known as Groob.

FROM THE TIME he was still a lad at school, Groob had a passion for hunting and gathering, a passion he held until his passing.

Groob had a lifetime involvement in the deer industry from the early beginnings with Consolidated Traders dealing in feral deer – live and dead – and organising hunting blocks throughout the Nelson and Golden Bay regions for venison hunters, choppers and possum hunters.

He was a very good bulldogger in those early days, capturing deer from helicopters and bringing them back to his small holding on the Motueka town boundary, much to the excitement of locals.

He went on to work as a procurement agent for Mair Venison, supplying deer to the processing plant in Hokitika for many years as well as buying velvet across the South Island for National Deer Horn based in Christchurch.

In later years he joined a company of independent deer agents known as Origin National, who organised deer sales around the country as well as buying velvet for CK Import Export Co (NZ) Ltd.

He is credited with mentoring a great many deer farmers throughout his time, many of whom had lifelong friendships with him.

Groob was a foundation member of the Nelson Branch of the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association. He held office as a committee member for 18 years, being very active in organising sponsorships, speakers for field days and arranging livestock competitions.

He was a dedicated man who adored and was immensely proud of his family and their achievements over the years. To him,

family came first. He and his late wife Awhina brought up their family teaching strong work ethics, respect, understanding and tolerance.

Owen is survived by four sons, Arthur, Darcy, Harley and Floyd along with their families.

There is a simple saying: “We are known for the footprints we leave behind”. Owen (Groob) left some fine footprints on firm ground for all to follow.

RIP, Owen.

• Contributed by John Tacon ■



Summary of P2P activities over the last quarter

by Innes Moffat, P2P Manager

Marketing premium venison

- The five venison marketing companies agreed to continue with year two of the trial to develop non-seasonal sales in the Benelux region.
- Silver Fern Farms, Alliance and First Light Foods are working with importing and distribution companies in the Netherlands and Belgium who are willing to take part in the continued trial to develop sales in the northern spring and summer.
- The marketing companies agreed to use an appellation approach, where Cervena® will be used to support individual companies' brands. A substantial review of the style of Cervena is being undertaken to make it relevant to a modern European summer market.
- Research started in mainland China to identify the approaches that can be used to position venison from New Zealand as desirable protein for affluent consumers.
- Focus groups were conducted with chefs and consumers in the three main Chinese cities to get a better understanding of what might motivate them to buy venison.
- New Zealand Trade and Enterprise agreed to co-fund this research.

Market-led production

- The Deer Facts folder and two sets of new Deer Facts have been sent to all known deer farmers.
- Agreement has been reached on standardised deer key performance indicators for measuring deer productivity.
- The Deer Health Project Manager role has been agreed and an appointment made (see Lorna Humm profile on page 32).
- Work has started on a process to boost deer health planning.
- Discussions with NZVA have been held on collaboration to improve delivery of proactive deer health management.
- The deer growth curves wall chart sent to all deer farmers (see enclosed with this issue), and spreadsheet version made available on www.deernz.org.nz/deer-growth-curves
- Advance Parties performed strongly in 2015. By the end of January 2016, Deer Industry New Zealand had formed 15 Advance Parties, with another scheduled to begin soon. Advance Parties are now running in:
 - Waikato
 - Manawatu
 - Hawkes Bay (three groups)
 - Wairarapa
 - Canterbury/West Coast
 - South Canterbury/North Otago (three groups)
 - Mackenzie country
 - Data group
 - Otago
 - Southern elk group
 - Southland.

The meetings and projects that have been written up can be viewed on www.ap.co.nz

2015 Advance Party projects

- Improving fawn survival
- Weaner growth performance
- Feeding deer nuts
- Increase velvet harvest
- Feeding palm kernel to hinds and fawns
- Accelerating velvet gain
- Winter cropping trial.

Collaboration with other PGP programmes

- Discussions with Farm¹⁰ on the possibility of incorporating deer industry performance KPIs into farm management software system.
- Discussions with the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP) over deer industry involvement with the "Data-linker" project
- Deer standards for farm quality assurance aligned to and incorporated into the RMPP Farm Quality Assurance Project.

Upcoming

- DINZ is now working out the details of the promotion agreements with the European importing companies and expects to launch in March/April 2016.
- Finish design of positioning material and statements for use by all marketing companies.
- Agreement on and development of key positioning criteria for the Cervena appellation.
- A system to describe farm systems that will provide a guide for forage systems to support appropriate feeding strategies.
- Deployment of on-line versions of deer growth curves to help guide genetic selection.
- Training for Advance Party facilitators. ■

Stop Press

Southland 2-year-old velvet competition

1st	Altrive Deer – Geoff Elder	5.96kg
2nd	B&J Paterson	5.28kg
3rd	B&J Paterson	4.92kg

Many of the heads were also entered in the Rising Stars national 2-year-old competition (see Rising Stars results booklet enclosed with this issue).

2016 National Velvet Competition dates announced

Sunday 11 December	Velvet and hard antler to arrive by noon
Monday 12 December	Judging
Tuesday 13 December	Awards dinner, Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill

Michael Edward Rice: 1940–2016

Michael Rice, a major figure in the development of New Zealand's venison industry in the 1980s and 1990s, passed away in Christchurch on 23 January.

BORN IN LONDON in 1940 during the Blitz, Michael had a hard early life. His home for eight years during the late 1940s and early 1950s was a 22-foot caravan, shared with his parents and three brothers in the small Somerset village of Swainswick.

He won a scholarship to attend the City of Bath Grammar School and on completing his GCEs at 17, began a career in the merchant marine with the Shaw Savill Line. Starting out as a cadet, he progressed to Senior chief officer and then captain.

Back on land and now in New Zealand, Michael joined the meat industry in 1970, when he was employed by Wilson Meats of Auckland, latterly as export sales manager.

In 1973 he moved to the then Mair & Company in Christchurch, where he stayed until his retirement in 2001. In 1983 he became General Manager of the Mair Group's venison business and from 1988 until the acquisition of Mair Venison by PPCS (now Silver Fern Farms), he was Chief Executive Officer of Mair Venison Ltd.

Michael continued to strive and learn in his meat industry career, attending an advanced management programme at a US university when in his 50s.

He held numerous leadership positions in the deer industry throughout his two decades in the venison business and was highly respected in these roles. Michael became the longest-serving member of the former Game Industry Board, from 1988–2002, including a period as Deputy Chair. He was Chairman of National Deerhorn Ltd and in 1992 became a director of The Cervena Company Limited.

Michael was also a Trustee of the NZ Game Industry Board Trust and in 2001 became a director of the newly formed DEEResearch Ltd. He was also Chairman of the New Zealand Deer Industry Association from 1993–2002.

He is perhaps best remembered in the deer industry for his exceptional contribution as Chief Executive of Mair Venison. Former colleague Alan Lee (previously Chief Executive of Mair Astley Holdings) recalls how Michael once decided that all

suppliers should be given a bonus ex gratia payment “because the outcomes for the company, from marketing their animals, had exceeded expectation”.

He is also remembered for his unfailing support of Mair Venison's executives, managers and staff – support that was repaid with strong loyalty.

“Without a doubt he was the most competent executive I ever worked with,” says Alan Lee. “As the Chief Executive of Mair Venison he delivered outstanding outcomes to his shareholders, he ensured his suppliers received fair payment and cared passionately for his staff. His commitment to excellence was impressive. He always delivered on his promises.”

The deer industry extends its condolences to Michael's wife Colleen, their six adult children and their families.

Acknowledgement: Alan Lee ■



Michael Rice with Terry Shagin of the former Game Industry Board with a plaque presented to Mair Venison in 1992 by Prime Minister Jim Bolger, recognising the company's vision for the New Zealand venison industry as a founding Cervena® franchisee.



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Deer health: Introducing Lorna Humm

Veterinarian Lorna Humm BVSc BSc (Hons) started with DINZ on a part-time basis in early January as the P2P Deer Health Project Manager.

LORNA BEGAN WORKING as a large animal vet in Mid Canterbury in 2010 after graduating from Massey University Veterinary School. “I completed a year of agricultural science papers at Massey before vet school and one of these was deer production,” Lorna explains. “This introduction to the New Zealand deer industry sparked a passion for deer that continued throughout my degree and into my veterinary career. I have been extremely lucky to work with, and learn from, some of New Zealand’s best deer vets.”

Lorna and her husband Duncan have been breeding and finishing deer for more than 10 years – initially managing Duncan’s family deer unit in the Canterbury foothills near Mount Somers. They now have their own red deer breeding and finishing enterprise and are active members of the Canterbury Advance Party. Lorna credits Duncan with fuelling her interest in deer: “Duncan’s enthusiasm and drive is infectious – he is an active member of the Next Generation group of deer farmers and is really forward thinking.”

Originally from south west Scotland, Lorna’s academic background also includes an animal science degree from University of Newcastle, England, completed before her move to New Zealand in 2001.

Improving deer health has been identified within the Passion2Profit programme as one of the main ways to increase deer farm productivity and profitability. As Deer Health Project Manager, Lorna will be the link between farmers, researchers, vets and farm advisers. Her practical farming ability coupled with her veterinary experience will allow her to package technologies

into solutions that are easy for farmers to apply. Increasing the profitability of deer farming businesses is the P2P goal, and the potential for improvement within the animal health space is huge, Lorna says.

Following on from the P2P’s “Clean bill of health” campaign, Lorna will be investigating options around minimising disease and optimising deer health status. “In keeping with innovative projects like the Advance Parties, we aim to provide practical options for farmers when working through their herd health planning.”

Lorna will become a familiar face, engaging with farmers regularly to get an industry perspective on how DINZ can provide tangible, practical assistance to the deer industry in all things related to deer health. The role will include working closely with the other P2P groups, particularly relating to feeding and genetics. Lorna welcomes comments and suggestions from the wider industry membership.

Contact: phone 021 150 1658 or email: lorna.humm@deernz.org ■



P2P: Introducing Rob Aloe

ROB ALOE HAS joined DINZ as Project Coordinator, working alongside Innes Moffat and the Passion 2 Profit (P2P) programme in Wellington.

A couple of projects that he is currently working on include:

- Helping QA Manager John Tacon align deer standards for farm quality assurance to the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP) farm quality assurance programme.
- Helping the P2P deer feeding group in the publication of the deer growth curves chart for chilled season and summer kill systems (see article on page 7).

With previous work experience in project management, Rob has worked in oil and gas in the United Kingdom and more recently in the transport industry with the New Zealand Transport Agency. A born and bred Wellingtonian, he’s a keen sportsman, enjoying rugby and road cycling in particular.

His last challenge was an event in Napier in December last year. Rob was part of a three-man team, each completing a different section of a half Ironman course (2km swim, 21km run and a 90km cycle). He managed to complete the cycle section in 3 hours 1 minute, with his team coming 29 out of 329 entries.

Well done, Rob, and welcome to the DINZ team! ■

