



# Deer Industry News

## Next Generation Programme

### Environment

CHALLENGES IN  
SOUTHLAND AND  
PLANNING FOR WINTER  
FEED CROPS

### Markets

SCHEDULE KEEPS  
CLIMBING AND STEADY  
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# Deer Industry News

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF DEER INDUSTRY NEW ZEALAND AND THE NEW ZEALAND DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

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**Cover:** Participants in the fourth annual Next Generation programme in Hanmer spent the first day visiting the Zino family's breeding and finishing operation at Hawarden, North Canterbury (see page 4) Photo: Phil Stewart.

# Benefits all round from AP involvement

Growing from sharing information is what the Advance Parties have set out to do and that is exactly what has been happening in the Southland Breeding/Finishing Advance Party.



Deane Carson.

**WE HAVE COME** a long way since our first meeting in February 2014 but the foundation has not changed. Initially our farm visits focused on establishing projects; we placed a lot of emphasis on projects that had controls, and where possible replication, so strong conclusions could be drawn. This approach had positive and negative implications. Strong results were recorded by some members, but others found the process intimidating and stepped back from involvement. Within the group we have softened our approach, now requiring outcomes and change rather than scientifically robust findings.

What's impressed me the most about the farmers within the group is their ability to hone in on an opportunity for the farm(er). Fresh eyes bring fresh ideas and with each visit, farmers have been left with a lot to contemplate, often getting a clear steer towards a significant opportunity.

Some properties within the group have been heavily stocked for the land class or level of development, and production gains have been apparent. Typically projects on these farms have focused on either increasing supply of feed rather than decreasing demand. On the increasing supply side we have had projects on hill country nitrogen, fodder beet, grain supplements, silage utilisation strategies and increasing land area through development, purchase or lease.

The hill country nitrogen project was a roaring success in that we produced cheap feed at a time that it was very necessary on the farm. At the same time, economic outcomes were not achieved because the feed was not well managed and pasture quality became a problem. As with solving any problem, three others can raise their ugly heads.

Fodder beet has been a curiosity for most of our members, after one farmer trialled it and achieved dry matter yields of between 20–26 tonnes per hectare. Others are now trialling it and there is a long list of questions, particularly around utilisation, nutrition and welfare.

Silage feeding strategies have improved, with lessons revolving around the impact of quality silage and managing feed pads to maximise feed utilisation. One farmer has saved around \$10,000 per year through decreasing feed wastage.

Feed quality has also been raised by members. Projects have focused on plantain, lucerne and grain feeding. Early indications are that plantain and lucerne present a production opportunity for finishing weaners in the Te Anau basin. This may not come as a surprise to some, but the group has been reasonably impressed with the production gains achieved

*continued on page 6*

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# Still scope for improvement at high-performing deer enterprise

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

In a change of format for this year's NZDFA Next Generation programme – the fourth year it's been running – the first day was dedicated to a visit to the Zino family's farms at Hawarden in North Canterbury on 24 August.

**DINZ, NZDFA, SILVER Fern Farms, Mountain River Venison, FMG and PGG Wrightson** sponsored the day.

The cool and misty conditions on the day belied the challenging drought that's beset the region for the past two-and-a-half years, but the prolonged dry spell has made an impact, even on a high-functioning business like the Zinos'.

For brothers Mark and Sam Zino, the day was a return to the spotlight following their successful three-year run as a Deer Industry Focus Farm from 2011–2014. The Next Generation group were given a detailed insight into a mixed enterprise that is still striving to make the best of the local conditions and unrealised opportunities to fine-tune what they do.

But first, a recap on how Zino Holdings operates.

Mark and Sam Zino, who both trained at Lincoln, returned to the farm in 1999 and 2000 respectively, following the death of their father. There are two properties: Flaxmere, a 750-hectare

property on the flats, which has a significant sheep breeding and finishing operation as well as the deer finishing unit (68 ha); and the nearby Kanuka Downs, 313 hectares of hill and downs which runs breeding cows and the breeding hinds and stags. Flaxmere and Kanuka Downs are each in family trusts and leased to the family company, Zino Holdings Ltd. Their mother, Penny Zino, lives in the original family homestead where she runs the widely admired Flaxmere Garden, recognised as a Garden of National Significance.

Flaxmere (660mm average rainfall) was purchased in 1992 and includes 93 hectares of irrigation with the 68-hectare deer finishing unit that started with just 10 hectares when they first started getting into deer in 2005. (There is the prospect of more irrigation becoming available through the Hurunui water scheme, in which case they'll consider putting up more deer fencing. The full cost of this is likely to be about \$16,000/ha.)

*continued on page 6*

## Next Generation Conference

Sixty-seven attendees enjoyed a well-packed NZDFA Next Generation programme based in Hanmer, North Canterbury on 24–25 August.

**FOLLOWING AN ENJOYABLE** if chilly visit to the Zino family's Flaxmere and Kanuka Downs properties at Hawarden (see main article), the group gathered for dinner at Hanmer's Hot Springs Motor Lodge. A highlight of the evening was Hamish Clarke's presentation on his participation in the Fit4Farming national cycle tour, under the umbrella of the Farmstrong "Live well, farm well" programme.

The second day featured presentations and workshops. After reviewing what they had seen and learnt on the previous day's farm field day, led by Wayne Allan, there were three sessions, focusing on venison finishing, environmental challenges and the future of deer farming.

As was the case in the previous three years of the programme, the group soon began to bond and exchange insights and ideas during the interactive sessions.

Many of those who have taken part in the Next Generation programme over the past four years now keep in regular touch

through the Next Generation Facebook page – a great ongoing discussion and networking forum.



DINZ Producer Manager, Tony Pearce, (right) captures some of the ideas being put forward during a Next Generation workshop.



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Zinos: continued



Sam Zino (holding microphone) talks to guests at Kanuka Downs.

Nearby Kanuka Downs (880mm rainfall) was bought when the brothers returned from overseas and includes a 170-hectare deer breeding unit. The current deer unit is on the downlands; none of the hill country at Kanuka Downs is deer fenced yet, but it's open to consideration as they look to plant more fodder crops on some of the run-out pastures.

The overall operation is a well-integrated mixed enterprise featuring Longdown sheep (50% of stock units), deer (25%) and beef cattle plus some dairy grazing (25%). Mark, who farms with wife Rachael, looks after the sheep while Sam and Keri Zino focus on the deer. Managing the cattle is shared.

The drought conditions have been partly responsible for a drop in hind numbers this year (Table 1) and they have also stepped back somewhat from dairy grazing, but overall the enterprise's stocking rate has been steady for the past two seasons (9,566 wintered in 2015 and 9,549 this year). As part of a rebalancing they are also establishing a small velvetting herd, something that's going to require upgrading the deer shed at Kanuka Downs.

Table 1: Deer numbers at Zino Holdings Ltd

Deer (red)	Winter 2015	Winter 2016
Hinds	726	559
Weaners	630	867
Stags	30	103

Editorial: continued

from plantain. In the first year from April to the end of June, weaners grew at 109g/day on grass compared with 159g/day on plantain. We still need to review the economics of each regime, but 50g/day is likely to pay for the additional cost of establishment and re-sowing associated with plantain.

Management adjustments have also been identified on two farms, including condensing fawning and increasing pasture covers at fawning for first calvers. These projects are progressing despite a year without concrete evidence. Sometimes project findings are blurred by weather and other management factors.

Putting the large projects aside, there are many small things that individuals will pick up as part of the Advance Party programme. The benefits are hard to identify as they are specific to the individual and often not seen as connected to the programme.

All hinds are kept at the breeding block on Kanuka Downs and most are usually wintered on self-feed silage. This usually gives them 100 days, but they only managed 70 this year – a good 18-tonne/ha crop of direct drilled fodder beet helped make up the shortfall.

Interestingly, the Zinos breed no replacement hinds and prefer to buy in Peel Forest Estate hinds as three or four-year-olds, with just a few R2s. They use only terminal sires, either Clachanburn elk or Peel Forest Estate B11s. The hinds are mated by sire line so they can monitor the performance of the various terminal sires used.

Sam Zino told visitors the Focus Farm programme was partly to show how deer could be ramped up as a profitable part of the enterprise. On a cents per kg dry matter basis, the combined deer breeding and finishing enterprise has emerged as the most profitable recently, outdoing sheep, beef and dairy grazing – the latter has slipped badly over the past couple of years (Figure 1). The deer are holding their own as part of this business, accounting for nearly 31% of the profit (EBIT). On a profit per hectare basis, sheep are the best performers at about \$406/ha, but deer (combined) are not far behind at \$380/ha. Both are well ahead of dairy grazing (\$297/ha) and beef (\$70/ha).

This year the balance between profitability of the deer breeding and finishing operations changed in favour of breeding, with weaner purchase prices up by 50–70c/kg though deer finishing remains the most profitable enterprise on the farm.

Overall, and despite the drought, the combined enterprises achieve a solid return on investment of between 2.2–3.6 percent.

## Pasture covers and quality

Farm consultant, Wayne Allan, who also facilitated the Focus Farm programme, said the current drought has put the spotlight on pasture covers and feed quality on the farms.

He said reasonable intake for stock can't be achieved if residual covers are less than the 1,400–1,800 kg/ha range. On the quality side, he said metabolisable energy of less than 9 megajoules/kg dry matter (MJME/kgDM) was insufficient to support growth. "At 9, you are only achieving maintenance."

He said every unit of increase in MJME/kgDM over than figure would deliver another 100g/day in potential liveweight gain, while also supporting better lactation and good condition in late

My own lessons from the group have been immense. I still consider myself a rookie when it comes to deer systems, but much of what I know from other systems translates directly to the deer industry. The Advance Party has therefore not only gifted me further knowledge but also confidence in the knowledge that I already have.

The greatest challenge I face as a facilitator is facilitating rather than consulting. It is a difficult and challenging balance to maintain and I know there is some personal growth involved there.

Recently we have gained three new members to our group and we are in the process of visiting these farms. I can confidently forecast that the outcome from these visits will be "farmers learning from farmers" – an exciting prospect for me and the group. ■

– Deane Carson, Facilitator, Southland Advance Party



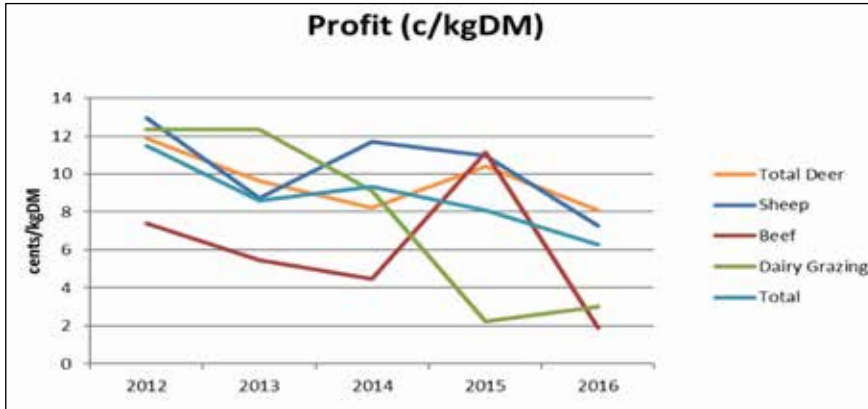


Figure 1: Enterprise comparisons for Zino Holdings, 2012–2016.

pregnancy.

## Reproductive performance

While irrigation can be used to manipulate feed supply on the finishing block, it's driven by climate on the breeding unit and it is hoped that a bigger supply of lucerne will help get hinds in good condition sooner, while also facilitating the earlier target weaning date of 20 February. Grain is also used at key times to reduce any feed deficits, particularly from January to March.

Scanning percentages have been consistently in the 90s for the past five years and this year they achieved 96.3%.

Fawning percentages – hinds to stag – are generally in the mid

80s. In the years of the Focus Farm programme they made great strides, especially among R2 hinds. During that time, fawning percentages for R2s improved from 70 to 85 percent. The past couple of years of drought have accounted for higher than usual fawn death rates, however.

Fawning date can be an issue and the Zinos are looking at ways to get tighter, earlier fawning. Mating ratios are no higher than 1:35, but they are nonetheless wondering whether there are enough stags on the job when a large number of hinds are cycling at once. In discussion, the Next Generation group looked at the pros and cons of multisire mating. They noted that you can be left “in no-man’s land”

if, say two out of four stags in a mating mob aren't working and the others can't keep up. Sam Zino said he used the grain trailer as cover to go around and see what was happening in the mating mobs.

Body condition scores for mating have been a good 3.2 but getting it up to about 3.5 may help squeeze out a few more pregnancies to get closer to the perfect 100 percent conception.

While there is no definitive proof that getting stags to run with the hinds early will stimulate early oestrus (the “ram effect”), there are no disadvantages and there are secondary positive effects such as getting groups well socialised and settled before the rut starts.

*continued on page 8*



## FEEDING LITTLE AND OFTEN THE KEY TO RUMEN PERFORMANCE

Supplementing hinds a small amount through calving increases fawn growth and imprints feeding so the fawns grow quickly after weaning

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*Zinos: continued*

The Zinos said losses in utero were very rare and the discrepancy between scanning percentage and survival to weaning was mainly accounted for by misadventure.

## Winter weights a crucial milestone

Wayne Allan said knowing weaner weights on 1 June was vitally important to reaching growth targets for early finishing, and he said the Zinos monitored growth rates closely through this period. This year they had achieved average liveweights of 70.6kg for their 574 home-bred weaners and 63.3kg for the 290 bought-in animals.

Sam was confident that from 1 June he could add at least 24kg to weaners before the end of October, so could book contract space with confidence (100 g/d in winter and at least 200 g/d in September and 280 g/d through October). All weaners are individually weighed around 1 June and analysed for numbers in various weight ranges. From here he can calculate a kill flow – essential information leading into spring contracts.

In the system at Flaxmere, animals over 70kg at 1 June will easily make it to killable weights and weaners over 65kg should make it; those between 60 and 65kg may make it if fed well. The lighter weaners have a smaller chance of reaching target weights but the key thing is that the monitoring gives a very accurate picture of what's coming through – valuable information for their processor (Silver Fern Farms) and also for farm management.

While he could hold finishers longer to heavier weights, the additional feed needed to achieve those can be put to more profitable use going into the mouths of sheep in this system. Killing deer in the chilled season frees up grazing for lambing hoggets and finishing lambs through until early February.

## Weaning and winter feeding

The Zinos have been pre-rut weaning in recent years and have found this was an improvement on post-rut weaning. Sam Zino said they had weaned early this year (22 February), thanks to the welcome 60mm of January rains, which were like a “second spring”. This helped take the pressure off hinds in the leadup to mating.

Weaning weights this year averaged 52.6kg – an improvement on 2015 but still shy of their 58kg target for 20 February. “More lucerne and quality feed through the December–February period is the key,” Sam said.

The weaners are kept in their mobs through autumn to help settle them and reduce stress. As drafts are taken off in spring, they are kept in their original groups until the mobs get small enough to box together. About 150 was a good mob size, Sam said. “This year we divided the weaners into four mobs of about 215 each and that worked out pretty well with the weights. You can probably get away with bigger mobs on the lucerne.”

In retrospect he said they'd mined the autumn covers down a little too far, which had left them with a hole to fill in spring and a flat patch with growth. “If you don't look after your grass in autumn you'll pay for it in spring,” Sam said. (In later discussion it was suggested a strategic application of nitrogen after hard grazing in autumn could help get covers back to desired levels by spring.)

The weaners go onto fodder beet plus baleage for 70 days, from 20 May through to 1 August, then Sovereign kale plus grain

for another 30 days. The grain is fed to the animals on kale via Advantage Feeders, at 215 animals per feeder. Weaner growth rates are a bit variable with this system, implying that some may be missing out on their fair share at the feeder. There is no noticeable growth check when they swap crops, either “cold turkey” or a more gradual transition.

They aren't pushing for spectacular weight gains in this period,



Weaners at Flaxmere were making good progress towards their target weights when the Next Generation group visited in August.

but feed is budgeted carefully and the lighter finishers targeted. Anything that wasn't going to reach spring weights (based on the 1 June liveweights) was left on the crop a bit longer as a “sacrifice mob”. Keeping the young stock on a small area helped alleviate pressure on spring pasture and let it recover properly. (When they first started using fodder beet during the Focus Farm programme the weaners stayed on more than 100 days which was probably too long, Sam said.)

The Zinos are looking to fine tune the winter kale and fodder beet system, looking at how long to leave stock on each crop, size and duration of breaks and whether they should go onto the fodder beet first or vice versa. Another consideration is the amount of space taken up by each crop. Kale, for example, takes up a fair bit of room.

One possibility to fill the feed “holes” in autumn and spring is a short-rotation ryegrass. Lucerne is another crucial part of the system and the Zinos have embraced the crop with enthusiasm since Lincoln's Professor Derrick Moot introduced them to it during the Focus Farm programme. It worked well on the finishing unit because it made much more efficient use of water than ryegrass. “I've doubled the area of lucerne and halved the water I use. And the hotter it gets the more it grows.” Lucerne had “saved our bacon” during the drought, Sam said, especially for the sheep.

At Kanuka Downs the lucerne area has been increased to 25–30 hectares and they are looking to add another 6 hectares so they can get a 35–40 day return time for grazing a rotation. A five-year-old stand was still going strong, with grass drilled into patches where the crop had died out due to excess moisture on the clay soils. They have also grown a good kale crop at Kanuka Downs for the velvetting mob and sires.

The lucerne on the finishing block could be grazed by weaners right through to June, giving them a great start before they transferred to kale or fodder beet. It had been slow out of the ground this spring, so grain was being used as a stopgap at 500g/day – while not desirable long term, it was relatively cheap.



Once they're off the crop the weaners are fed ad lib as fast as they'll go, through to slaughter, with residual covers of around 1400 kgDM/ha targeted on the grass (lower on the lucerne).



Lucerne is an important part of the system at Kanuka Downs and there are plans to expand the acreage.

## Animal health

The main issues on the Zino farms have been Johne's disease (JD) and internal parasites. JD was confronted a few years ago with a testing and culling programme among the breeding hinds that saw weaner losses reduced from 12% to about 2.5% over time. There have been one or two spikes in weaner losses since then, so they can't take their eye off the ball with this disease.

Internal parasites are managed with a pre-weaning drench with Cydectin Injection plus an oral Oxfen and copper/selenium injection, followed by another drench 20 days post weaning and another at the start of winter. A spring drench is given only if needed and usually it is just Oxfen High-mineral. Adult hinds are occasionally drenched if it's deemed necessary.

The area is copper deficient and adult hinds get copper bullets. No vaccines are used.

## Environment planning

The Zinos did a Level 2 Land and Environment Plan during their Focus Farm programme, working with James Hoban when he was at Environment Canterbury.

Some waterways at Kanuka Downs were fenced where it didn't sacrifice too much grazing and where there was a clear environmental benefit. Sam Zino said they will revisit the plan and consider retiring other sensitive areas as they extend the deer fenced area on the breeding block.

Sam said environmental issues at the finishing block (Flaxmere) were more challenging because irrigation was involved. Nonetheless, their nutrient losses are relatively low, at 7kg N/ha. A creek at the bottom of the finishing unit has been fenced, and another low spot in a lucerne paddock is still to be fenced.

A plan to build a stock water dam on Kanuka Downs was abandoned after compliance issues made the process unviable, and it was relocated to a more acceptable area.

Farms are encouraged to join Irrigators' Groups as these are the main point of contact with Environment Canterbury.

## Monitoring

Sam Zino modestly described their systems for measuring and monitoring as "pretty basic", but they nonetheless have a pretty good handle on what's happening throughout the deer enterprise.

They use TruTest weigh scales and use a Heenan three-way drafting crate. EID tags are an important tool and each weaner has its sire group identified as it is tagged. ■

# The next Next Generation

Greer Baldwin, a Year 13 Student at Saint Paul's Collegiate, Hamilton, was invited along to the Next Generation Programme to learn more about the deer industry. She was the standout winner of a DINZ Scholarship awarding \$500 towards her university fees plus participation in the Next Generation conference.

**GREER IS ONE** of 30 students taking part in Rabobank's Waikato Agri-Leadership Programme, which is designed to showcase to young people the career opportunities available within the agriculture sector. DINZ Producer Manager, Tony Pearse, was among those presenting to the students in January this year. (Waikato University agribusiness student, Alanah Vinson, spoke at the Deer Industry Conference in Napier last year and has been involved in running the programme.)

The deer industry has not had a lot of exposure in New Zealand primary and secondary schools and that's something Greer hopes will change. "I believe that to grow the industry we need to encourage new people to join, who can bring enthusiasm and new ideas to complement the depth of experience of Passion2Profit."

She said the new Level 2 and 3 NCEA agribusiness courses provide an opportunity for the industry to gain exposure to senior secondary school students.

Greer is planning to study for a Bachelor of Agribusiness and Food Marketing at Lincoln next year. She said that what she's been learning about the deer industry will be valuable as she goes into the course and she's looking forward to helping promote its products.

"I hope to be able to make more people aware of the deer industry and the opportunities it brings," she said, "and I look forward to the opportunity of working alongside some of you in the not-too-distant future." ■



Greer Baldwin, who participated in the 2016 Rabobank Waikato Agri-Leadership Programme.

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# Breeding and genetics 101

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Genetics is one of the three pillars of the Passion2Profit programme, and the 67 attendees at the Hanmer event in August got plenty of food for thought when it comes to selecting the right genetics for their herds.



Dave Lawrence (Elk and Wapiti Society), Jamie Ward (AgResearch Invermay), Rachel Worth (AgResearch Invermay) and John Falconer (Elk and Wapiti Society) at the Hanmer Springs Next Generation event.

## Big potential in selecting for yield traits

**DAVE LAWRENCE**, OF the Elk and Wapiti Society said that in the case of terminal sires there is plenty of scope for improvement within the elk/wapiti breed because growth traits are widely variable. He noted that at Landcorp's Stuart block, 80 percent of the yearling stags from a terminal sire made the cut for the chilled season, compared with 38 percent of the red stags.

He also reminded the group about breed definitions and encouraged the use of GenomNZ's Genometer™ if you want to see if your perception of breed matches the reality. He said anything that showed 50–90 percent elk genes is classified as wapiti; more than 90 percent and it's considered pure elk. Those with around 50 percent elk genes are referred to as F1 (first cross pure elk/wapiti x pure red) or B11 (see also separate article on this, page 26); and anything with less than 50 percent elk genes is generally referred to as a hybrid (technically the correct term is crossbred, although "hybrid" is in common use).

While it was useful to know the content of elk/wapiti genes in a terminal sire, Lawrence said its estimated breeding values (eBVs) were also very important.

He said the Deer Progeny Test (DPT) had shown that perceptions of a relatively poor meat yield for elk/wapiti progeny

were a myth. "Saleable meat yields from red and terminal sires are very similar."

Just expressing yields as a the percentage of carcass weight to liveweight was a "nonsense". Lawrence said the important measure was the amount of meat yielded from a carcass and he praised Firstlight Venison for being ahead of the pack by giving their suppliers good feedback on yields.

The positive relationship between eye muscle area (EMA) and yield as well as eating quality was an important outcome of the DPT. It was fairly heritable at 0.35 (on a scale of 0–1). Lawrence said the current supply shortage and strong demand for venison was masking the benefits from this trait, but this would change as supply picks up and companies start rewarding finishers who select on EMA.

John Falconer added that "it is not a question of if this will happen, but when".

The trait is now included in DEERSelect summaries. There are no breed differences in EMA, but with a range of -2cm<sup>2</sup> to +3cm<sup>2</sup> EMA (total area is about 30cm<sup>2</sup>), there is good scope for selection.

Looking at sexual dimorphism – the carcass differences between males and females – Lawrence pointed out the differences in progeny of terminal sires are less than in pure reds.



## Design your deer

AgResearch's **Jamie Ward** explained that the DPT and DEERLink were closely related, with DEERLink designed to help maintain the connectedness between herds – critical for DEERSelect and providing “apples with apples” assurance that a particular sire will perform the same across different environments.

He said there were good DEERSelect eBV rankings available within red sires and elk/wapiti sires, but it was not possible at this stage for a buyer to make a meaningful comparison between the two breeds when deciding what would be best for their property.

DEERSelect started in 2005, evolving out of the earlier Sire Reference Scheme, Ward explained. “It’s a ‘black box’ that involves a lot of computation. We try to ensure high quality data is fed in.”

The DPT was revitalising interest in DEERSelect and getting breeders better connected and upskilled.

Ward echoed Dave Lawrence's comments about the positive relationship between meat yield and quality traits, saying it was a great opportunity for the industry. Other traits such as CARLA (resistance/resilience to parasite burdens) and temperament offered potential further out.

He noted that it is difficult to select for higher fertility, but it is possible to inadvertently select for lower fertility by concentrating too much on another single trait. Conception date was only moderately heritable, but the best DEERSelect stags on that trait had a -9 day eBV, which could confer quite an advantage for catching the chilled season. Ward believed that the conception date eBV could be a proxy for other positive fertility traits, so may be more valuable than it first appears.

With the large number of heritable traits now being recorded, it was becoming possible to “design your deer” by picking a diversified range that suited your own environment. Ward said this might involve growth rates or maternal traits, for example. On the maternal side this included a wider range of traits. He said it's unlikely that true “dual-purpose” sires really exist.

He encouraged the Next Generation guests to feed back their breeding goals to the breeders who supplied their genetics. “Remember you are buying genetics, not just a set of antlers. Your breeder needs to measure for the traits you want. It's not there to look pretty – it's there to get hinds in fawn and pass on the traits you want.”

There was a delay of about 600 days from purchasing a venison sire to receiving the benefits from their first crop of progeny. In

the case of maternal sires (breeding replacements), it took another generation before you could assess the progeny of their daughters – up to 1,100 days. “The results of your buying decisions will stay in your herd a long time,” he said.

When you choose genetics based on known eBVs, “you've still got to give those genetics the opportunity to perform,” he said. It wasn't enough to go only by breed type. For terminal sires, the worst elk/wapiti will perform well below the best red stags.

Looking at different production models, Ward said measures such as kg meat produced per hectare don't always give the full picture when it comes to profitability. He said it was also important to factor in measures such as conception date and kg of dry matter consumed per kg product.

## DEERLink at Invermay

**Rachel Worth**, who manages the Invermay deer herd, said the DEERLink programme yielded 224 progeny last year, using two red and four elk/wapiti sires. The red females are to be kept for maternal trait recording, while the red stag and terminal sire progeny were all to be killed in October for carcass trait recording. This programme will help maintain between-herd sire linkages following the DPT.

The male weaning weights at 95–100 days averaged 70.2kg and the females 65.7kg, but post-weaning growth rates had been a bit flat. Worth said the hybrid weaners take a little longer than the reds to settle after weaning and there had also been a parasite challenge. Giving the recommended Oxfen + Oxfen C + Cydectin Injection drench seemed to get the weaners back on track, however. (The drench programme had changed this year to Matrix, which given at the label dose rate did not perform as hoped.) By late August the males were a whisker under 100kg and the females 85.3kg.

Worth said a lot of attention was paid to monitoring pasture quality and covers and they were using the DEERFeed app to calculate feed requirements to reach target weights and achieve their genetic potential. When the red progeny and wapiti crossbreeds are run together, feed requirements are calibrated to the wapiti crossbreeds' requirements, but if the mobs are run separately, more tweaking is available, Worth said.

“Last year we achieved growth rates of 350–500 g/day in the post winter period, but 250g/day would be enough for us to reach our target carcass weights of 60kg.” ■



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# Environment: Get planning, get involved

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Farm environment consultant, James Hoban, told the Next Generation gathering that they need to get involved in environmental issues – by helping manage public expectations about farm environmental performance, and by setting up Farm Environment Plans on their own properties.

**HE SAID REGIONAL** councils wanted to engage with communities when setting limits governing nutrient losses and water quality, but getting farmers involved in this process could be challenging. The industry needed to advocate on its own behalf about limit setting, but disagreements between the dairy and drystock sectors over the merits of “grandparenting” weren’t helping matters. (Grandparenting is where farms with high nutrient losses were allowed to initially maintain those levels, bringing them down only slowly over time. Drystock farms with much lower losses could find themselves locked into those levels, limiting future options for productivity increases.)

A straw poll around the room showed that only about 15 percent of attendees had been involved in doing a Farm Environment Plan. Hoban said the process wasn’t difficult and Beef+Lamb NZ were running free workshops on how to go through the process. Essentially it comprises:

1. Documenting the farm’s features
2. Breaking the farm down into Land Management Units (land types with similar environmental characteristics and risks – there are usually less than 10 on any farm)
3. Outlining current environment mitigation actions
4. Identifying new actions
5. Reviewing and monitoring progress.

“Farm Environment Plans are simple and free; 80 percent of it is outlining commonsense farm management,” he said.

Hoban added that the new actions identified didn’t have to be expensive and some were easy to carry out. As part of the process, it was necessary to be able to show that actions had been carried out. This could be as simple as recording fertiliser application dates and rates with a note of temperature and rainfall at the time.

Common examples of actions to improve environmental performance included:

- proof of placement maps
- changing winter break feed fences
- stream fencing
- native bush plantings and protection
- nutrient budgets
- soil tests
- photos to document changes
- involving family and staff in the Farm Environment Plan.

Brainstorming the greatest environmental risks on a deer farm, the Next Generation group identified the following as the big three:

- winter feed crops
- deer behaviour (fence pacing, wallowing and so on)



James Hoban.

- stock in waterways.
- Regulator understanding of the deer industry (or lack of it) was seen as the biggest off-farm environmental risk.
- See also articles on pages 15 and 16.

## Good environmental practice

These are just some of the good practices discussed. Some of these also have other benefits for productivity and welfare.

- Use buffer strips when cultivating to impede runoff.
- Identify waterways that could be fenced off or look for opportunities to build sediment traps.
- Drain wallows and prevent further use.
- Smaller mob sizes.
- Installing electric outriggers and minimising stress to discourage fence pacing.
- Wean back into fawning paddocks to minimise stress.
- Choose suitable paddocks for crops, making sure to graze down the slope.
- Favour minimum tillage
- Nutrient budgeting to minimise fertiliser use.
- Use crops and grazing techniques that suit the land class.
- For fodder beet consider lifting and carrying.
- Backfence more vulnerable paddocks as animals get through a crop. ■



# Environmental challenges for Southland

by Deane Carson, Farm Consultant

In June 2016 the Southland Regional Council released its proposed Water and Land Plan for consultation. Key features for deer farmers included cultivation or development restrictions on slopes over 20°, the requirement for every farm to have a Farm Environment Plan, variable winter crop cultivation buffers from waterways based on slope and, importantly, the requirement to have deer fenced out of waterways on slopes less than 16° by 2020.

**WHEN THE PROPOSED** plan was released, significant activity within farming communities was activated. New catchment groups were formed while existing communities began to be stimulated into action. The list of catchment groups for the region is now Pourakino, Aparima (three groups), Hedgehope/Dunsdale, mid Oreti, Three Rivers, Wendonside and Balfour. A significant role of these groups was to inform farmers and support submissions to the regional council.

A lot of other community activity was apparent with small clusters of farmers sharing views and ideas with regard to the plan.

Our phone rang hot with clients and other farmers asking about the implications of rules for them. Additionally, a number of catchment groups and businesses sought our services to deliver informative presentations.

As a result of all of the activity, the regional council is currently wading through around 1,000 submissions, many of those from farmers. (Included among these is a submission from the Southland Branch of NZDFA. This will be available on Environment Southland's website in due course.)

It was evident from our many communications with farmers, that some didn't understand why some of the rules were needed, or why in particular their business was being implicated into a rule framework. In our experience, change is hard to come by without a very good understanding of why it's needed.

To suddenly have a significant and costly fencing rule applied has been challenging for many deer farmers.

Under the Resource Management Act, regulation requires anticipated benefits of introducing regulation versus costs, contained within what is known as the Section 32 report. For this new rule the Section 32 report pointed to a study implicating

ruminants as a source of *E. coli*. Presumably this is pointing to a 2012/13 study that included an investigation into the sources of *E. coli* at five freshwater bathing sites in Southland.<sup>1</sup>

The study found:

- water fowl bacteria present in 15 of the 18 samples
- plant decay bacteria present in 14 of the 18 samples
- ruminant bacteria present in 6 of the 18 samples.
- no human bacteria present at any site.

No data specifically implicates deer in the *E. coli* levels in this report. (Sheep were the only ruminants specifically identified in the report, although deer have been linked with *E. coli* contamination in other research.<sup>2,3</sup>)

If the deer industry is to be challenged with fencing regulation, strong research to support the understanding of benefits and costs makes it far easier for farmers to understand why rules are needed.

In some areas it would seem that environmental regulation is moving faster than the research. But is never too late to ensure that regulation is effective and efficient and that will only happen if the research to understand the issues is improved. The deer industry can hope and wait for others to fill in the gaps, or it can seek to find the solutions itself. ■

<sup>1</sup> The study can be downloaded from <http://bit.ly/2ejcdvY>

<sup>2</sup> McDowell R (2009) The use of safe wallows to improve water quality in deer farmed catchments. *New Zealand Journal of Agricultural Research* 52: 81–90.

<sup>3</sup> Ritchie H and Donnison A (2010) Faecal Contamination of Rural Waikato Waterways: Sources, Survival, Transport and Mitigation Opportunities. *Environment Waikato Technical Report 2010/38*



# Environmental issues around deer on winter crops

Although winter 2016 is well and truly past, it isn't too early to think about requirements for establishing next year's winter crops, says **Jane Chrystal**, Research Associate with AgResearch's Farm Systems and Environment team.

**AS REPORTED IN** in the June 2016 issue of DINZ eNews, the Invermay Environmental Focus Farm had planned its winter crops well in advance in terms of siting and identification of at-risk areas.<sup>1</sup> This article presents factors and considerations from the Pastoral 21 research programme that apply equally to winter cropping for deer as they do for sheep and cattle.

Winter is a high-risk time of the year from an environmental perspective. Wet, bare soils combined with high stocking densities and the behavioural patterns of deer (wallowing, fence pacing) result in high risks of losses of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), *E. coli* and sediment to waterways. Winter crops are a particularly significant source of contaminant losses to waterways. Practical steps must be taken to minimise these losses and the impact of crop wintering on the environment.

## Paddock selection – plan early!

Considering environmental issues related to deer wintering on crops begins long before they graze the paddock.

If possible, select paddocks without waterways. This includes those with ephemeral (temporary) streams created by winter rainfall. If there is a waterway, it should be fenced with a temporary fence (e.g. electric tape) to keep deer out. A temporary fence is all that is required if it is not a permanent waterway, as winter grazing occurs for a limited period. As these can be “hot spots” for losses of phosphorus, sediment and faecal microorganisms a grassed buffer strip should be left in addition to fencing off waterways. Most regional councils with water quality policies in place require buffer strips of 2–5m alongside streams.

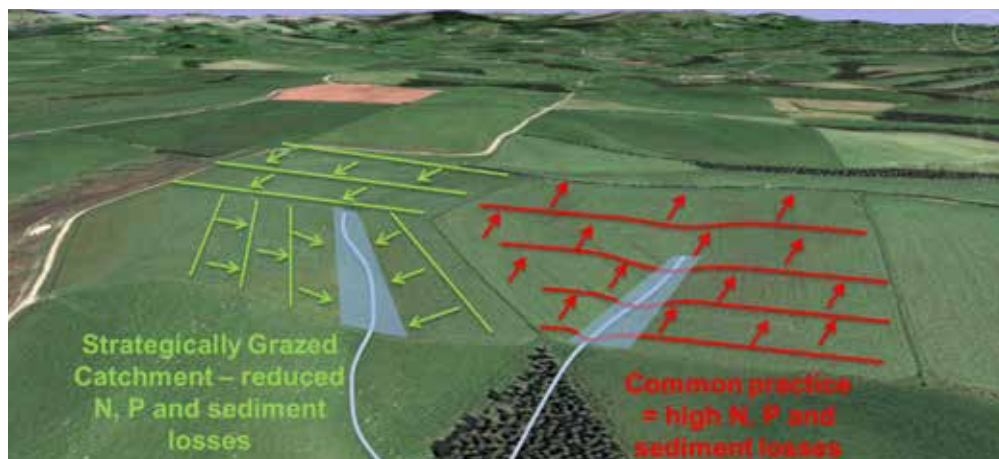


Figure 1: Recommended grazing pattern (in green) to reduce nutrient and sediment losses. Source: AgResearch

<sup>1</sup><http://bit.ly/2ej011i>

## Crop establishment

The window of opportunity for crop establishment will be dictated by weather and availability of machinery.

- To minimise N losses to water consider direct drilling or using minimal tillage options rather than full cultivation to establish crops.
- Sow crops across, rather than up and down, slopes to reduce runoff.
- Place supplementary feed bales in the paddock before winter. This reduces the impact of heavy machinery having to drive over wet soil thus increasing compaction and run off.

## Grazing the paddock

Valuable topsoil is one of your key resources. The way crops on hill paddocks are grazed will affect losses of this topsoil and with it, P and sediment.

- Strip graze across the hill starting at the top and working your way down the hill as winter progresses (Figure 1). Dairy grazing research shows that this reduces P and sediment losses. This is an accepted good management practice, involving minimal extra cost and labour, but can have a significant effect.
- Any high-risk areas such as gullies and swales (marshy hollows) should ideally be left un-planted, un-grazed and fenced off. If they are cropped, grazing should be left until the end of winter. These areas can then be grazed in a “last bite” when conditions are more likely to be better (no rainfall, drier soil). This last bite should be an “in and out” graze, giving the animals just enough

time to eat the crop before removing them (Figure 2).

- Dairy grazing research shows that most P and sediment losses come from these critical source areas so managing them carefully can make a big difference.
- Following these suggestions, the pasture or ungrazed crop in the critical source areas or hill below where the deer are grazing act as filter strips. This reduces sediment losses by up to 80% and P losses by between 60–70%. N losses are also reduced.





Figure 2: Deer being given a quick “last bite” before the animals are removed, thus minimising the risk of nutrient and sediment loss.

## Paddock management – post grazing

Nitrogen losses to water occur as a result of the establishment and management of the winter brassica crop as well as from urine patches. N loss from urine patches occurs due to the relatively high N concentration in urine combined with high stocking densities and urine deposition on bare ground when there is no plant available to take up the N. Minimising the time that the soil is bare following winter grazing will help minimise the risk of N loss.

## Cut and carry

An alternative to grazing the brassica crop *in situ* is to cut and carry, feeding crops to the animals either on a feeding pad or in another paddock. This is an option if the crop paddock is a high risk for losses from grazing (e.g. contains waterways, is on a hill).

There are still risks to be managed from cut and carry, however. Care must be taken as paddocks that are high risk for grazing are also at high risk for P and sediment losses from heavy machinery driving on wet soils combined with slope and winter rainfall. This means waterways will still need a grass buffer strip. The recommendations above about post-grazing paddock management also apply to a paddock post-harvest if used for cut and carry.

In addition, the area that is used to feed out the brassica crop will become a hot spot for nutrient leaching losses. A feeding pad may require effluent storage. If cut and carry is fed on a paddock, it will potentially cause pugging and soil damage.

## Summary

- **Paddock selection:** If possible, avoid paddocks with waterways (either permanent or temporary).
- **Crop establishment:** Nil or minimal tillage cultivation will reduce N losses; sow along the contour if possible.
- **Paddock set up:** Fence off waterways. Place supplement in the paddock before winter to minimise the need to drive heavy machinery over wet soil.
- **Grazing:** Graze in strips across a hill paddock from the top down.
- **Last bite:** Leave grazing any “critical source areas” until the end. Graze these when weather conditions are favourable – a last bite!
- **Bare soil:** Minimise the time that paddocks are left bare after grazing. New plants will take up nitrogen from the soil that could otherwise be leached.

## Further information

This critical source area research was funded by the Pastoral 21 programme, a collaborative venture between DairyNZ, Fonterra, Dairy Companies Association of New Zealand, Beef + Lamb NZ and the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment. Further information on critical source area research can be found on the Fertilizer and Lime Research Centre website:

<http://flrc.massey.ac.nz/publications.html>

Orchiston, T; Monaghan, R; Laurenson, S (2013) Reducing overland flow and sediment losses from winter forage crop paddocks grazed by dairy cows. In: *Accurate and efficient use of nutrients on farms*. Eds. Currie, LD and Christensen, CL. Occasional report No. 26: Palmerston North.

Downloadable from: <http://bit.ly/2ejrLzO> ■

# Videos highlight sustainable farming

**NZ LANDCARE TRUST** has been working with deer farmers to capture examples of excellent sustainable land and water management from around the country. This information has been distilled into 15 short videos that are now available to view online. The final five videos from Waikato and Southland join the



In one of the 15 short videos, father and son Steve and Chris Borland talk about environmental management and farm succession on their Shabor velvet breeding operation at Oparau, Waikato.

10 previously released (Hawke’s Bay and Canterbury) to create an informative video-based resource. “I’d like to thank the deer farmers who

welcomed us onto their properties,” says NZ Landcare Trust Regional Coordinator, Janet Gregory. “They have taken the time to share some of the good management practices they have put in place on their respective properties, demonstrating a proactive approach to addressing issues around the environment and water quality.

“Agriculture in New Zealand is going through a transition, moving towards more sustainable production methods. The good news is many farmers are ahead of the game, already embracing change, and are in a position to share their experiences with others. That’s what these movie clips are all about, providing practical information that other deer farmers can apply to their operations.”

The movie clips were created as part of NZ Landcare Trust’s three year Sustainable Farming Fund project to promote greater adoption of environmental best practice on deer farms. All 15 videos can be found at:

[www.landcare.org.nz/SustainableDeer](http://www.landcare.org.nz/SustainableDeer) ■

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# Venison update

## Production and exports

**THE NATIONAL KILL** for the 12 months ending August 2016 was 325,346 down 16% (Table 1).

Production for the 12 months ending August 2016 was 18,035 tonnes (carcass weight equivalent), down 15% year on year.

The kill in August was down 26% versus the same period in 2015, with production also down 26% (Table 2).

The total number of hinds killed in the 12 months to August 2016 was 167,500, equating to 51% of the total herd, down 21% year on year.

**Table 1: Slaughter statistics by month (deer numbers) – 12 months to August**

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% change
October	37,379	41,564	52,207	48,909	44,118	38,312	-13%
November	51,820	54,064	51,337	47,356	46,693	44,966	-4%
December	46,516	39,047	36,972	37,589	37,251	36,655	-2%
January	40,473	44,881	45,021	42,406	43,369	35,202	-19%
February	38,958	50,860	41,258	42,767	41,517	30,951	-25%
March	49,730	41,711	46,683	47,515	44,509	36,889	-17%
April	31,019	24,066	33,830	33,246	27,255	19,779	-27%
May	25,751	24,052	27,345	23,820	18,722	11,971	-36%
June	22,085	19,981	20,582	24,568	21,403	15,859	-26%
July	19,377	20,566	26,193	25,576	19,129	12,000	-37%
August	20,743	23,454	21,125	19,576	17,822	13,277	-26%
September	30,661	22,535	28,436	27,064	29,485		9%
<b>Year to Sept.</b>	<b>414,512</b>	<b>406,781</b>	<b>430,989</b>	<b>420,392</b>	<b>391,273</b>		<b>-7%</b>
<b>12 months to August</b>	<b>383,851</b>	<b>414,907</b>	<b>425,088</b>	<b>421,764</b>	<b>388,852</b>	<b>325,346</b>	<b>-16%</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>20,743</b>	<b>23,454</b>	<b>21,125</b>	<b>19,576</b>	<b>17,822</b>	<b>13,277</b>	<b>-26%</b>

**Table 2: Production statistics by month (tonnes) – 12 months to August**

	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	% change
October	2,043	2,324	2,925	2,666	2,413	2,075	-14%
November	3,011	3,127	2,994	2,738	2,651	2,552	-4%
December	2,634	2,274	2,128	2,124	2,117	2,112	-0%
January	2,341	2,616	2,639	2,639	2,479	2,057	-17%
February	2,223	2,943	2,364	2,449	2,346	1,820	-22%
March	2,729	2,297	2,547	2,574	2,382	2,015	-15%
April	1,632	1,290	1,770	1,780	1,415	1,036	-27%
May	1,334	1,256	1,412	1,244	975	629	-35%
June	1,153	1,045	1,049	1,291	1,101	853	-23%
July	1,027	1,103	1,346	1,316	993	629	-37%
August	1,114	1,265	1,091	1,012	936	691	-26%
September	1,680	1,273	1,508	1,434	1,565		9%
<b>Year to Sept.</b>	<b>22,920</b>	<b>22,812</b>	<b>23,773</b>	<b>23,266</b>	<b>21,374</b>		<b>-8%</b>
<b>12 months to August</b>	<b>22,529</b>	<b>23,219</b>	<b>23,538</b>	<b>23,340</b>	<b>21,243</b>	<b>18,035</b>	<b>-15%</b>
<b>August</b>	<b>1,027</b>	<b>1,103</b>	<b>1,346</b>	<b>1,316</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>-26%</b>



## Exports

Total volume of venison exports for the 12 months ending August 2016, was down 11% with value down 2% (Table 3). Volume of chilled venison increased year on year into the United States, Germany and Belgium (Table 4). The total volume of chilled

exports grew 7%, while value increased by 16% making up 19% of total venison exports. Venison export volumes into Germany fell by 32%, reflecting the tight supply conditions the industry is experiencing. On a positive note, venison export volumes into the US increased by 14% with chilled volumes up 21%.

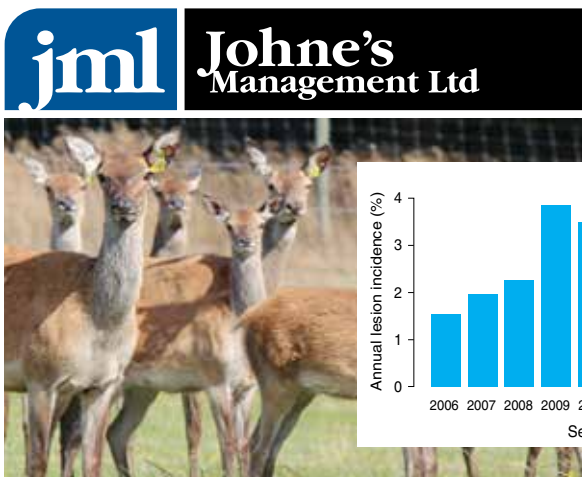
Table 3: Top 10 New Zealand venison export markets by volume and value – 12 months to August 2016

Market	Volume (mt)			Value (NZ\$FOB, millions)			Ave \$/kg		
	2015	2016	change	2015	2016 (p)	change	2015	2016 (p)	change
Germany	4,638	3,151	-32%	\$52	\$42	-19%	\$11.21	\$13.33	18.89%
United States	2,326	2,660	14%	\$24	\$29	21%	\$10.32	\$10.90	5.66%
UK	1,228	1,179	-4%	\$12	\$12	0%	\$9.77	\$10.18	4.16%
Belgium	1,319	1,159	-12%	\$20	\$19	-5%	\$15.16	\$16.39	8.11%
Finland	1,172	925	-21%	\$8	\$7	-13%	\$6.83	\$7.57	10.86%
Netherlands	1,075	736	-32%	\$19	\$16	-16%	\$17.67	\$21.74	23.00%
Canada	332	392	18%	\$3	\$4	33%	\$9.04	\$10.20	12.93%
Switzerland	926	657	-29%	\$15	\$12	-20%	\$16.20	\$18.26	12.75%
Sweden	469	468	0%	\$4	\$5	25%	\$8.53	\$10.68	25.27%
Others	1,474	1,984	35%	\$16	\$23	44%	\$10.85	\$11.59	6.80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,959</b>	<b>13,311</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>\$173</b>	<b>\$169</b>	<b>-2%</b>	<b>\$11.56</b>	<b>\$12.70</b>	<b>9.78%</b>

Table 4: Top 10 New Zealand chilled venison export markets by volume and value – 12 months to August 2016

Market	Volume (mt)			Value (NZ\$FOB, millions)			Ave \$/kg		
	2015	2016	change	2015	2016 (p)	change	2015	2016 (p)	change
United States	553	671	21%	\$11	\$14	27%	\$19.9	\$20.9	5%
Germany	463	559	21%	\$9	\$12	33%	\$19.4	\$21.5	10%
Belgium	424	464	9%	\$8	\$10	25%	\$18.9	\$21.6	14%
Netherlands	441	389	-12%	\$9	\$9	0%	\$20.4	\$23.1	13%
Switzerland	151	127	-16%	\$4	\$3	-25%	\$26.5	\$23.6	-11%
France	105	125	19%	\$1	\$2	100%	\$9.5	\$16.0	68%
UK	150	125	-17%	\$1	\$1	0%	\$6.7	\$8.0	20%
Canada	63	62	-2%	\$1	\$1	0%	\$15.9	\$16.1	2%
Australia	14	13	-7%	\$0	\$0	-25%	\$28.6	\$23.1	-19%
Other	29	21	-28%	\$5	\$5	-6%	\$172.4	\$223.8	30%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,393</b>	<b>2,556</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>\$49</b>	<b>\$57</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>\$20.5</b>	<b>\$22.3</b>	<b>9%</b>

continued on page 22



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Venison report: continued

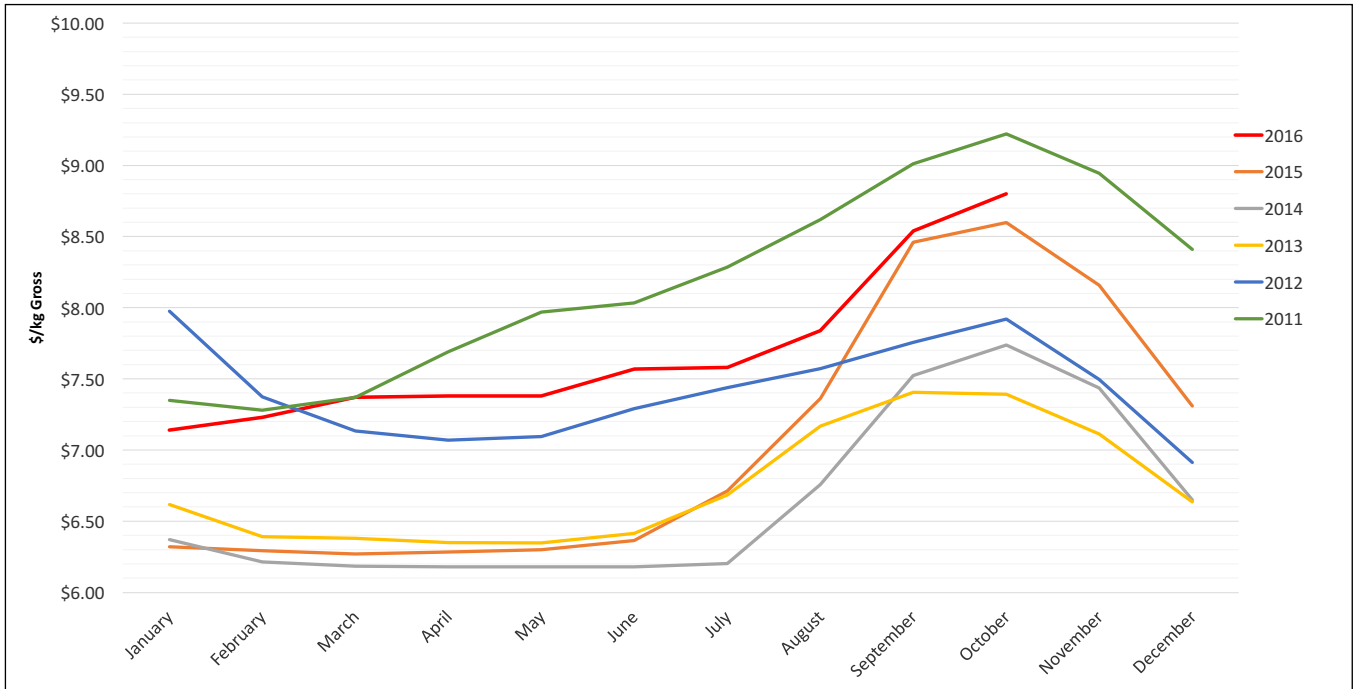


Figure 1: National published schedule: 2011-2016 AP Stag

Schedule

The national published schedule reached a 5-year high in September. In mid-September the published schedule reached \$8.83 (\$/kg gross) and it remained at this level for a subsequent 6 weeks. For the week commencing the 24 October, the schedule dipped to \$8.70, which is 2% higher than the same period in 2015.

The spring venison prices we are seeing now are driven by strong demand and low stocks in Europe, along with successful market diversification, which is partially offsetting the impact of the strengthening New Zealand dollar on farmer returns.

Some importers are nervous about how the market will react to current prices, while others are confident – buoyed by the knowledge that New Zealand venison production is down around 25% on last year.

With supply down, some exporters have remarked we are somewhat lucky that autumn temperatures in Europe are unseasonably warm. It often takes a good cold snap to get everyone in the mood to start eating traditional hearty game dishes.

Some exporters have indicated we could see a return to the usual throughput levels in October and November, as yearling stags reach target slaughter weights and the European game season gets into full swing.

At \$NZ65c to the euro, the Kiwi dollar has firmed by about 15% on the same time last year. The Kiwi is almost 30% stronger than it was in 2008, when the venison schedule reached a 10-year September high of \$9.45/kg. ■



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# Velvet update

An observation by New Zealand velvet exporters that quality could be more important this year; promotion hits full swing in key markets as the main consumption season nears; and a whole-of-industry audit by Chinese regulators gives us a chance to showcase our wonderful industry.

**BY THE TIME** this edition goes to print, velvetting will be in full swing in some parts of New Zealand and exporters will be securing contracts for the peak consumption season ahead. DINZ estimates that velvet production for the new season (2016/17) will be around 620 tonnes.

While demand is growing in the sophisticated healthy food market, there is reported to be declining consumption in the traditional markets. In China, demand for the valuable “jelly tip” continues to come under pressure with a crack-down on high-end gift giving. Korea, too, has implemented an anti-graft law

that affects gifts worth more than \$50. Reports from competing markets suggest that overgrown velvet was further penalised this season, with prices in some cases 30 percent back on the better grades. A close relationship with, and guidance by, your velvet buyer is essential to understand the early market dynamics this year. Early indicators suggest some uncertainty in the markets (decreasing Traditional Oriental Medicine consumption offset by increasing healthy food consumption?). Factors are putting pressure on prices this season, with exchange rates the most obvious one.

*continued on page 24*

## US market growing steadily

by Nigel Morris

Export volume into the United States continues to grow at a healthy pace. Total export volume is up 14% and value increased by around 18% over the same period last year.

**THIS STEADY GROWTH** can be attributed to several factors. Some importers are likely to be stockpiling product in anticipation of tightening availability. Increasing demand is also fuelling growth, however. The popularity, and consequential short supply and increased price, of bison is creating good opportunities with customers choosing venison as a less expensive alternative. Most consumers are familiar with bison and chefs are betting consumers will happily make the switch rather than pay more for bison. The lesson of course, is that even popular alternative proteins reach a price tipping point – plate price sensitivity is very acute in the United States.

Specialist manufacturers are also buying more trim for the value-added snack food and specialist sausage markets. In the past, product going to manufacturing has been viewed as a low-return activity. However, the high-end snack food market in the United States is exploding and manufacturers are constantly looking for a value-added advantage. The demand for high protein high quality energy bars is helping sales of venison trim. More importantly, it's introducing new customers to farm-raised, grass-fed venison.

A good example is the venison Epic bar (see photos). Epic is at the vanguard of the protein bar movement and was recently sold to General Mills (GM) after achieving turnover of some 20 million [units] just two years after the company was established. One of the major drivers for the husband and wife owners of Epic to sell to GM was that it would help achieve the company goal of making high-quality grass-fed animal protein available to a broader market.

A unit cost of US\$2–3 for a 1.5-ounce bar also reinforces the

premium price point for quality proteins like farm-raised venison.

Another emerging trend is the growth in offal sales. While absolute quantities are still small, volume has doubled from last year. Young chefs eager to differentiate their menus are increasingly looking for alternative cuts from which to create new dishes.

• *Nigel Morris is DINZ's North American representative, based in Los Angeles. ■*



The Epic bar is creating a value-added market for venison trim in the US.

Velvet report: continued

### Velvet promotion in full swing

DINZ has been working with companies in Korea as they gear up to run their promotions that are typical for this time of year. Korean thanksgiving (known as Chuseok) is one of the biggest gift giving celebrations in the Korean calendar, particularly for health products. Korean food companies use this time for targeted promotions and DINZ has again been involved with companies promoting velvet-based products.



Promotional material for high-end velvet-based product produced by KGC.

Promotional activity in the traditional velvet sector, which markets to Oriental Medicine Doctors, is also gearing up. A focus this year is on the country of origin pilot programme to provide increased assurance that the velvet doctors are buying is actually from New Zealand.

### Ambassador helps celebrate FTA success

On 29 September, New Zealand’s Ambassador to South Korea, Clare Fearnley, hosted a reception dinner at her residence with DINZ CEO, Dan Coup, to celebrate the success of the FTA to date. Exports of dried velvet for the first six months of this year to South Korea were more than double compared with previous years.

While much of this can be attributed to the Free Trade Agreement, the removal of the excise tax from velvet, along with the new Country of Origin trial has also assisted in this positive trade data. About 45 attendees represented New Zealand



Figure 1: Dried velvet exports (NZ\$ FOB) to Korea 1 January – 30 June. Source: Statistics NZ

processors, Korean importers, marketers, Oriental Medicine Doctors and the Association of Korean Oriental Medicine.

New Zealand velvet exporters have also been active in visiting the market. At this stage, the key concern is around the potential



New Zealand’s Ambassador to Korea, Clare Fearnley, (right) talks with leading Oriental Medicine Doctors at the reception.

impact of the high New Zealand dollar when compared with last year (at the time of writing, this was a 10–20 percent increase in value). By the time this edition of *Deer Industry News* goes to print, tensions will no doubt be high. With the new Chinese Regulatory changes (see below) and fluid market dynamics, DINZ once again stresses of the importance of the close relationship you should have with the established velvet buyers/exporters.

### An evolving regulatory environment

The New Zealand velvet industry is undergoing its first full-scale audit of the velvet supply chain. At the time of writing, MPI was conducting a pre-audit of farms and pack-houses in preparation for an audit from Chinese regulators (AQSIQ), scheduled for late October–early November. A change in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) regulations will mean that new measures will be implemented by AQSIQ to deal with imported TCM material. AQSIQ has met with New Zealand Officials in Beijing to discuss these new measures and has stressed that AQSIQ does not want to disrupt velvet trade.

MPI reports that the new measures will likely result in the registration of pack-houses and could extend to individual farm listings. Although these new measures are being driven through a change in TCM regulations, DINZ understands that there have been new measures discussed that may result in similar listings in the viticulture, horticulture and apiculture industries. There is a general drive by Chinese regulators to improve food safety and crack down on corruption.

On initial investigation, MPI was complimentary about the NVSB system and sees this as a key asset for the velvet industry. Prior to the audit being announced, the NVSB had continued with improvements (such as the increased focus on hygiene around velvetting sheds). The Velvet Status Declaration will become more important and it is good that the industry implemented the initiative a couple of seasons ago. The New Zealand velvet industry is better placed than other velvet-producing countries to meet the changing regulatory environment.

DINZ thanks the farmers, pack-houses and veterinarians who have volunteered their premises and time for the audit process. ■



# Celebrating 30 Years of Wapiti

The Elk & Wapiti Society of New Zealand has reached a milestone year. The society was formed 30 years ago in 1986. The occasion is to be celebrated on 28 January 2017 in Wanaka, which is the home of founding President Sir Tim Wallis.

Along with Sir Tim, many industry identities have contributed to the Elk & Wapiti Society over those years. These colourful individuals have all had input into our success – Dr Ken Drew, Neville Cunningham, John Barber, Brian Kenton, Winston Day, David Tipple, Mike Bringans, Tony Pearce and Tommy May to name but a few.

The celebration promises to be a great social occasion with many past identities and members attending. The event is to be tied in with the 20th year of the society's annual velvet and hard antler competition. This special evening will be marked with society and competition awards over dinner. Catering is in the hands of the highly acclaimed Flying Trestles, on whom we can count for extraordinary fare. Entertainment will include tastings of craft beer and whiskey. A true industry icon, our after dinner speaker will provide many laughs and amusing tales.

While membership has always been modest, a passion for the breed has been the overriding driver. This has resulted in what has become a cliché over the years: the Elk & Wapiti Society punches above its weight. The activities and achievements are many and varied and while they have been breed focused, there has been a

healthy spillover into industry good.

Jack Pullar is a life member of the society and it was on his farm in 1986 that its first field day was held. It was a huge success, with more than 200 deer farmers attending. Part of that day 30 years ago included a carcass cutting display. Ken Drew had data supporting the high meat yield achieved from a Wapiti cross yearling – a finding supported by the Deer Progeny Test three decades later.

This is a ticketed event and great value for a modest \$80. Ticket holders are also invited to a farm tour. The Ewing family have kindly agreed to host us on their Cattle Flat Station. The mix of deer, sheep and cattle, as well as Aspiring helicopters, are all set in the breath-taking scenery of the Matukituki Valley, making for a great excursion on the Saturday. We have engaged the services of celebrity chef Angelo Georgalli of *The Game Chef* fame to create some BBQ magic. The venison will be sponsored by Mountain River Venison.

For more information, contact our secretary Lynda at [ewsanz@ihug.co.nz](mailto:ewsanz@ihug.co.nz) ■

• Article supplied



“ For the last six years we've killed our R1 hybrid stags in September, this year at 61kgCW. The top line of our R1 hybrid hinds were in excess of 100 kg at the end of September so they're also a definite advantage for us in a high country environment. ”

Ross and Sally  
Stevens  
Whiterock Station,  
Rangitata Gorge

[www.elkwapitisociety.co.nz](http://www.elkwapitisociety.co.nz)

# What are B11s?

by Graham Carr, Peel Forest Estate

As the Elk and Wapiti Society is keen on defining wapiti, B11s and F1s, it is important to clarify what a B11 is, so one can fully understand the difference. (See "When is a 'wapiti' a wapiti?" on page 19, *Deer Industry News*, August/September 2016.)

**A B11 IS** a line of terminal sires developed by Peel Forest Estate over many years. The concept was born in 2000 when Peel Forest Estate was running 4,000 breeding hinds at the Lincoln Hills block near Mt Somers.

Peel Forest had been dissatisfied by the performance of the elk/wapiti sires, which they found unreliable, lazy breeders and only able to cover few hinds, thus making them very costly to use. They also felt the sires were difficult to maintain during winter.

Peel Forest decided to develop its own terminal sire. In those days they had surplus Croatian and Croatian cross German hinds with high DBV for growth (Peel Forest Estate had its own in house breeding values programme before DEERSelect). These were early breeders and very active in the roar. Peel Forest then wanted to use a high-growth-rate elk/wapiti bull.

The rather unusual name B11 originated with our tagging system in those days, when elk/wapiti got a blue (B) tag and Croatian a 1, German a 2, Warnham a 3, and so on. A B11 was simply the tag used to denote an elk/wapiti over a purebred Croatian hind.

Since then, the B11s have been developed using B11s over B11s and adding in other important genetics to enhance their performance as a terminal sire. There is very little Croatian blood in them now.

One of the greatest advantages of the B11 is that there are no limitations on what superior genetics can be added to its makeup to continually improve them. The elk/wapiti, on the other hand, has a small pool of genetics from which to make gains, with no new genetics having been introduced since 1998.

Ultimately it is up to the farmer. They want a sire that covers plenty of hinds, is active in the roar, bringing in high scanning percentages, produces fast-growth-rate weaners, is easy to maintain and has a high survivability. Extensive trials on well-run substantial properties have confirmed B11-sired weaners produce similar growth rates to those sired by elk/wapiti. However the B11 sires cover almost twice as many hinds, with average pregnancy scanning rates of 97 percent; they are easy to muster off hill blocks and pick up condition quickly post-rut, facilitating easy wintering.

For final clarification, in Figure 1 in the aforementioned *Deer Industry News* article, a B11 was included in the DPT programme and classified as a terminal sire. The 12-month weight traits for its progeny put it in the middle of the range for terminal sires (dark blue on the graph), placing it higher than some of the elk/wapiti bulls.

• **Article supplied** ■

## FORRESTER SIRE SALE

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## CALLING ALL NORTH ISLAND VELVET AND HARD ANTLER GROWERS!

**NORTH ISLAND VELVET AND HARD ANTLER COMPETITION (NIVC) 26 NOVEMBER 2016 – PALMERSTON NTH, DISTINCTION HOTEL, 175 CUBA ST.**

### Principal sponsor: CK Import

As you begin to cut this season's velvet, please consider keeping back your best heads to support and enter them in this year's NIVC competition. The 2016 North Island Velvet & Hard Antler Competition awards dinner is Saturday 26 November at the Distinction Hotel, Palmerston North.

The 2016 North Island Velvet and Hard Antler Competition is being hosted by the NZDFA Central Regions and Taihape Branches. The viewing and dinner will be held at the Distinction Hotel. Viewing is from 5.45pm – 6.15pm and the awards dinner starts at 6.45pm. Accommodation options are onsite.

Velvet and hard antler needs to be in your local collector's hands for delivery to the competition by Wednesday 23 November 2016. See local collection contacts below.

This year the National Velvet Competition is being held in Invercargill 12–13 December 2016.

PGG Wrightson has offered once again to transport velvet from Palmerston North to Invercargill for the National competition. We thank PGG Wrightson for their ongoing logistical support of this competition.

### Contacts

Entry forms will be posted out to all previous entrants. If you haven't entered before and would like an entry form or other competition details, please contact Cenwynn Philip, Deer Industry

New Zealand, Phone 04 471 6110; or look on the Deer Industry NZ webpage and download a pdf for printing or a word document for emailing to enter.

Or Email [cenwynn.philip@deernz.org](mailto:cenwynn.philip@deernz.org) or call Craig Hocken: 06 328 7702 or email [c.hocken@farmside.co.nz](mailto:c.hocken@farmside.co.nz)

### Local collection coordinators

**Central Regions (Wellington, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape and Taranaki)**

Craig Hocken – 06 328 7702, 0274 576 388 email: [c.hocken@farmside.co.nz](mailto:c.hocken@farmside.co.nz)

**Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, Wairarapa**

Grant Charteris – 06 856 5747, 027 230 8531 email: [grantcharteris@gmail.com](mailto:grantcharteris@gmail.com)

**Te Awamutu/Waikato–King Country**

Steve Borland – 07 872 4679, 027 666 4269 email: [Southerndeer@xtra.co.nz](mailto:Southerndeer@xtra.co.nz)

The 2015 National Velvet Competition is being held in Invercargill from 7–9 December.

Thank you to **CK Imports and Colin Stevenson** for being our principal sponsor this year. Good luck to all entrants and we hope you can make the awards dinner for a great entertaining night out. Dinner tickets only can be booked via an entry form or direct with Craig Hocken email: [c.hocken@farmside.co.nz](mailto:c.hocken@farmside.co.nz)

## Third annual “Top of the South” Velvet and Hard Antler competition

The Canterbury West Coast Branch of NZDFA thanks velvet growers from within our catchment for supporting our Top of the South Velvet and Hard Antler competition says **Grant Hasse**.

**THE 2016 COMPETITION** awards and presentation dinner will be on Tuesday 6 December, from 4pm at the Darfield Rugby Clubrooms, Darfield.

This year the branch will run two half-hour sessions on velvet processing and nutrition for growing velvet, in conjunction with the awards event. FMG will be providing a prize, to be won by an attendee at the awards event.

The Top of the South Velvet and Hard Antler competition boundaries include the Nelson, Marlborough and Canterbury West Coast branches of NZDFA, north of the Rangitata River to Cook Strait including the East and West Coasts.

The 2016 competition will trial a split Mature Red velvet class based on industry-agreed grading for traditional and non-traditional grades. Other classes being judged will, be 3yr and 4yr Red Deer, 3yr and 4yr Elk/Wapiti, Open Elk/Wapiti Supreme, along with Mature Hard Antler Red Deer and Elk/Wapiti.

The commercial classes are, 3 Red Deer heads under 5kg, 3 Red Deer heads under 7kg each, and 3 Elk/Wapiti heads under 8kg each

and open to the genuine velvet growers and terminal sire users of the industry.

Hawker Velvet and Provelco are very keen to keep these classes going. Once again the sponsors have agreed to purchase each commercial classes winning entry with a 20 percent premium over and above market value on competition day.

Entry forms can be downloaded from the DINZ website or obtained through your velvet agent or committee chair, Grant Hasse. Entries must be received at PGG Wrightson Prebbleton coolstore by noon, 5 Dec 2016.

We would like to thank our 2016 sponsors Farmlands Nutrition, Zee Tags, PGG Wrightson, Provelco, Hawker Velvet, Fogarty Deer, FMG, Xcell Breeding Services, Elk Wapiti Society NZ, Ballance, Tasman Velvet, Central Deer Freighters, Mountain River Processors, Rural Livestock Ltd and Central Canterbury Elk Breeders

• Contact Grant Hasse: 03 347 2234, Mob 027 224 5542, email [gandshasse@xtra.co.nz](mailto:gandshasse@xtra.co.nz) ■

# Neil Brazier's kitchen hero

DINZ has recently collaborated with Neil Brazier, the award-winning Executive Chef of the Sugar Club at Skycity in Auckland, to promote a Thai-inspired venison dish as the star of the show on the restaurant's spring menu. The dish is bursting with fresh, aromatic Thai flavours, and Neil has also created a similar recipe for domestic cooks to whip up at home.

**NEIL'S FLAVOURSOME DISH** features venison steaks that are seared in for 1 minute on each side.

He believes Kiwis don't make the most of venison – a tendency he's out to change with his Thai-inspired recipe. "Venison has endless best friends: red wine, spices, anchovies – which I especially love – mushrooms, rice and even chocolate. I actually think it's easier to list the things venison *doesn't* go with.



Neil Brazier: Loves versatility of venison.

"The great thing about venison is that it's incredibly versatile, while also being lean and healthy," Neil says. "I have cooked it so many different ways: shank rendang, shoulder curry, smoked leg, slow-cooked, loin salads, stewed, as part of a pie and many other delicious ways.

"By using New Zealand farmed venison you can be confident in knowing the venison will consistently be tender and delicious and the deer have been farmed sustainably. Plus, you know exactly

where it comes from."

In this mouth-watering Thai meal, the meltingly tender meat is given a tangy, spicy twist with a fresh and vibrant chilli lime dressing as well as sweet pineapple and crisp peanuts.

Neil says the mild flavour of farm-raised venison pairs beautifully with the aromatic, complex elements of this delicious salad.

## NEIL BRAZIER'S THAI-STYLE SEARED VENISON SALAD

**With pineapple, peanuts and chilli lime dressing**

*Serves four people as a starter or light lunch, or multiply the ingredients by a half for a main course*

### VENISON SALAD

440g	Farm-raised venison steaks, room temperature
1 tbs	neutral oil e.g. rice bran
100g	pineapple, peeled, cored and diced
25g	roasted peanuts, chopped
2	spring onions, sliced thinly
1	handful of coriander, roughly chopped with stalks
1 tbs	mint leaves, roughly chopped
20g	Thai jasmine rice

### CHILLI LIME DRESSING

25g	palm sugar, grated or finely chopped
50ml	lemon juice
15ml	lime juice
25ml	fish sauce
½	red chilli chopped, including seeds

Garnish with a handful of extra herbs. Coriander, basil or mint work well.

## Method

Dry toast the rice in a pan until golden; leave to cool and then grind in a spice grinder or pestle and mortar. Make sure it is really fine, nearly a powder. Set aside.

Preheat a frying pan to a high heat. Lightly brush the venison with oil. Sear the venison over a high heat until just warm in the middle, allow 1–2 minutes each side (for rare). Remove from the pan, cover well and leave to rest in a warm spot for 5 minutes.

While the venison is resting, make the dressing. Combine all the dressing ingredients in a small bowl and mix well. The palm sugar will dissolve after a couple of minutes.

To serve, slice the venison thinly across the grain. Transfer to a medium-sized mixing bowl and combine with the dressing and all the other ingredients except the rice and extra herbs. Mix gently to combine. Place on to individual plates or serving platter and sprinkle with the toasted rice and herbs. ■





# Tracking replacement hinds

Enclosed with this issue of *Deer Industry News* is a wall planner to help you track the growth of your replacement hinds to about 15 months of age – the point when they are ready for their first mating. Three different curves are plotted on the chart, depending on the mature weights of your breeding hinds, as **Jason Archer** explains.

**BODYWEIGHT HAS A** huge impact on pregnancy rates for R2 hinds. They have to reach target liveweights to enter puberty and start cycling. Well-grown R2 hinds are able to raise a fawn, but low reproduction rate in poorly-grown R2 hinds is a lost opportunity for some deer farmers.

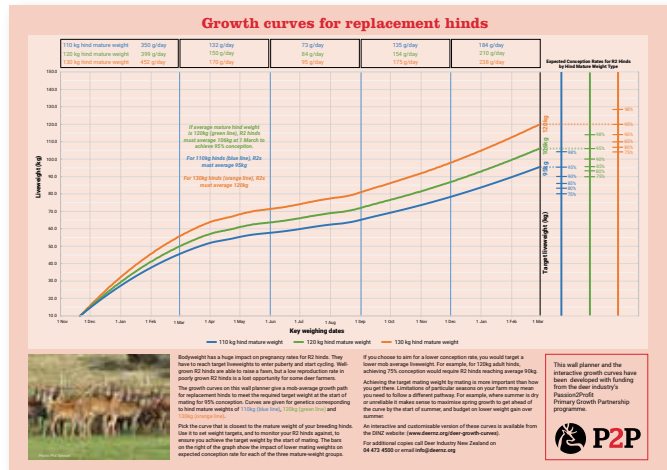
The response in conception rate to body weight has been quantified for three genotypes (identified on the Replacement Hinds wall planner based on approximate hind mature size of 110kg, 120kg and 130kg). These curves have been generated using more than 20,000 records (with acknowledgement to Geoff Asher, AgResearch).

The curves predict the chance of conception for an individual R2 hind, based on its liveweight at 1 March. To predict performance for a mob we take into account the distribution of liveweights within the mob. Those above average have a slightly higher chance of conceiving while those below the average have a significantly lower chance of conceiving.

In the case of a 120kg MA hind genotype, an individual R2 hind needs to be 100kg to have a 95% chance of conceiving. But when we look across the whole mob, we can work out what the mob average is required to achieve an overall 95% conception rate – for example, for the 120kg mature weight genotype, the R2 mob needs to average 106kg at the start of mating to meet a 95% conception target.

The curves on this wall-planner represent an “industry average” replacement hind growth curve shape (based on extensive data on many mobs of deer) which has been scaled to meet the target mob average weight required at the start of mating to achieve a 95% conception rate.

Plot the progress of your own R2 hinds against the curve that is closest to your herd’s average mature hind weight. This will help you determine whether they are likely to achieve the target weight by 1 March.



## It's the destination, not the journey

Achieving the final target is what is most important, rather than the exact pathway to getting there. Limitations of particular seasons on your farm may mean that you need to follow a different pathway. For example, where summer is dry or unreliable it makes sense to maximise spring growth to get ahead of the curve and close to target weights by the start of summer, and budget on lower weight gain over summer.


While the curves are based on mob average liveweight targets to achieve 95% conception, the bars on the right of the graph show the impact of lower weights on expected conception rate.

An interactive and customisable version of these curves is available from <http://deernz.co.nz/deer-growth-curves> (click on the appropriate link under “2. Replacement Hind Growth Target”).


- This wall planner and the interactive curves have been developed with funding from the deer industry’s Passion2Profit Primary Growth Partnership programme. ■

### Introducing The Woodtown Stud Crown Range Queenstown

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**BLOOMSBURY**  
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General enquiries contact: Lindsay Irwin | 027 484 6516 OR Henrietta Bedford | [tiarksy@gmail.com](mailto:tiarksy@gmail.com)

# Regional workshops and animal health reviews

The P2P programme aims to provide all farmers with information they can use to increase their profit from farming deer. Different topics require different means of delivery, and everybody has their own way of learning says P2P Manager, **Innes Moffat**.

## Getting information in the right form

**I LIKE TO** listen to a speaker, taking a few notes, and then discuss how to implement something afterwards. Some prefer getting the science put in front of them to read and taking time to form their own conclusions; others learn best talking a problem through in a small group. P2P is about putting good information into a variety of forms so that all learning types can benefit.

For those who like web-based information, we are improving the content and display of the Deer Hub on [www.deernz.co.nz/deerhub](http://www.deernz.co.nz/deerhub), adding new tools and information, and making sure the information it contains is relevant, up to date and consistent. We have made the site mobile friendly, so looking up information on the go will be much easier.

*Deer Facts* provide recommendations in print form.

In addition, short videos on specific topics will be sent out via email, with links that can be viewed on your computer or phone.

Another new service from P2P this coming year will be

individual production reports. Through the information that John's Management holds on deer slaughter, venison production summaries can be provided to individual farmers who don't already receive this type of information electronically from their venison processor. JML will be contacting farmers on progressive basis offering this free service.

## Regional workshops: The new P2P activity

Advance Parties (APs) have certainly received the most support from DINZ as a way to encourage uptake of new information and are making the biggest impact to date. At the time of writing we have 23 groups working together. That's more than 200 properties now involved in deer-focused groups, with members collaborating to improve their deer farming performance using outside assistance as needed. We recently surveyed AP members on attitudes toward APs and some of the changes they had made since joining the programme.

These are just a few of the comments from AP members in a recent independent survey taken to measure the effectiveness of the programme on deer farming practices:

*"[I have] put in crops to handle dry times better. Will do this more, having seen other deer farmers feeding better than we are. Not just summer but winter crops too."*

*"Being a member has been stimulating, especially at the start, comparing notes. There is always a little something to get from meeting with other farmers and experts."*

*"We have begun a fertiliser programme, pasture replacement, stag replacement, soil testing [and] hired a soil and grass adviser."*

*"The P2P group is very good for farmer mental health. A problem shared is a problem halved."*

Advance Parties have two aims:

- help members increase their profit from deer farming
- members share their experiences to motivate other farmers.


While individual groups have been happy to share their experiences to date in almost 50 newspaper and magazine articles, a few field days and at the deer conference, AP members will be helped to share with their local communities.

### Rolling out Regional Workshops

In the coming year, DFA branches, with assistance from DINZ, will be rolling out Regional Workshops to get farmers together to discuss what Advance Party members have been working on. A Regional Workshop won't be a field day with an in-depth examination of one property's production and finances – it's not a

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new name for a Focus Farm. Regional workshops will focus on one or two topics and what farmers are doing about them. They are open to interested farmers and members of the press.

A Regional Workshop will follow this sort of format:

- A discussion led by members of an AP about why they chose the topic, what they've been working on and what they've found out so far.
- A presentation on the topic by an invited expert.
- A workshop for all participants to discuss how the issue affects their own property and some measures they might take to address it.

A workshop on autumn feeding for weaners, for example, might follow this format:

1. Two AP members talk about why they focused on autumn feeding, what they have done and what they have found out so far.
2. A nutritionist speaks about the energy requirements of young deer and options for crops in the area.
3. Attendees break up into small groups and talk about options for changes on their own properties to improve their weaner growth rates, using a list of questions to guide discussion.
4. Attendees review the recommendations made by the small groups made and offer to tell people about what they learn the following year.

DINZ is not prescriptive on the format, however. The important thing is that the workshops meet the needs of the AP and the DFA branch. Amy Wills is helping DFA branches organise the Regional Workshops.

We are not expecting Regional Workshops to be bigger than Ben Hur, A woolshed meeting over a cup of coffee with farmers from the local district is ok if that's what people want. The P2P programme will fund facilitation, expert attendance and advertising. All we need is the continued enthusiasm to share and learn – and that seems in good supply at present.

The P2P programme is aiming for up to 20 Regional Workshops across the country each year. Keep an eye out on the DINZ calendar of events for Regional Workshops in your area that might be coming up:

[www.ap.org.nz/regional-workshops](http://www.ap.org.nz/regional-workshops)

Tony Pearce and the DFA will continue to offer assistance to DFA Branches that wish to run more in-depth Focus Farms.

## Animal health project

Throughout the extensive development of the productivity programme and the P2P business case, all parties agreed that improving deer health is a central component of the industry's drive to improve profitability.

The earlier Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP) set the priorities of encouraging proactive deer health management, improving understanding of production-limiting diseases and improving consistency of health advice. These objectives were prominent in the P2P business case.

Since being employed on a part-time basis in January as the Deer Health Project Manager, Lorna Humm has been busy getting to grips with the challenges set for her to bring alignment to issues affecting deer health and productivity. As we know, there are plenty of opinions on effective animal health strategies. While the deer health project has contributed to the production of *Deer Facts* on eight health-related topics (and two more are in production) a lot of the P2P deer health project has not been visible to date. The activities have included deer specific advice for Wormwise, JML, Advance Parties, Cervetec, *Deer Industry News*, DINZ E-News, The DFA Technology Expo, and liaison with Massey Veterinary School on deer-specific training for students.

Upcoming tasks include the review and update of information on the Deer Hub ([www.deernz.org/deerhub](http://www.deernz.org/deerhub)), and helping with the content and format of veterinarian professional training.

The priority for the deer health role has been talking and listening to farmers and vets about production-limiting diseases and approaches to farmer-led animal health reviews.

The critical task for the P2P project this year is to **describe, produce and promote an agreed process for farmer-led animal health reviews, done in consultation with animal health advisers, by December 2016.**

A health review will be a forward-looking analysis of stock management needs for an individual farm, considering the risks, costs and impact of animal health issues and their mitigation. The P2P aspires to having 50 percent of deer farmers taking part in such an annual review within five years.

Achieving consensus on this point is not easy, and no industry has tried to introduce such a process as recommended practice before.

From surveys, clinical experience and discussions with vets and

*continued on page 32*



**RAROA STAG SALE**  
**Monday 19<sup>th</sup> December at 12 midday 3yr stags and 1yr hinds**  
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# Perception is everything

by Andrew Conway, National Velveting Standards Body

Most deer farmers are inherently environmentalists and animal welfare advocates. We try and do the best with the knowledge we have to be good custodians of the land we farm and we are mindful of the welfare needs of our animals within our farming operations.

**BUT IS THAT** what the general public sees or believes? Are we always honest with what we know is right and do we practise to “best standards” as often as we should?

As deer farmers, with a special reference to velvet harvesting, we have to be increasingly mindful of how quickly things can change. With the rampant effect of media, particularly social media, a negative event, no matter how small a part of our industry it represents, can quickly become what the public perceive as normal for what we do.

Take for example, the rodeo. It would be fair to say that 95 percent of people involved with rodeo are passionate about animals, and the events have some very good systems and checks in place for animal welfare. But all this meant nothing once the media focused on it.

As velveters and deer farmers, we have a vibrant and sustainable industry, but one that is banned in many countries based on animal welfare concerns. This has challenged the industry from its onset, but we have emerged with an industry of very high standards, both on a national and global basis. We pride ourselves in trying to be inventive and ahead of emerging expectations around animal welfare, production systems and environment care, and we have great systems set up to provide best practice guidance.

However, all this can only be as good as the participants, vets and farmers, and how well they uphold the standards. An isolated incident, big or small, if picked up by the media and sensationalised, can have a significant effect on our industry at home and potentially overseas. Public perceptions, right or wrong, can be crippling.

Keep the following in mind:

- Keep a programme of “constant on-farm improvement” of all farming aspects relating to the environment, animal welfare, food safety and hygiene, and production systems.
- Be consistent with standards every day. Make that special performance for the supervisory vet or audit an everyday standard.
- Challenge yourself that you could eat your food off the floor of your deer yards!
- Challenge yourself: would you be comfortable with an SPCA inspector at your side every day you velvet and yard deer? If not, consider some changes.
- Avoid potential media scoops. For example, don’t put your freshly velveted stags in your front paddock and be careful who you invite to the deer shed.

*Information and links are readily available on the DINZ website where you will find a vast amount of material on all aspects of production, welfare, food safety and environment care. ■*

## *P2P update: continued*

farmers the P2P Advisory Group believes that while deer farmers have a good knowledge of deer diseases, most would benefit from a review process to either improve profit from better health status, or reduce the costs of unnecessary treatments.

### **Health review process on track**

A process for a health review has been produced and is being trialled with a small number of farmers and their vets. Feedback after the initial trial is very positive and, subject to further refinement, this documented process will become DINZ recommended practice for deer farmers who wish to undertake an annual health review.

Once the documentation is agreed and completed, the job of encouraging adoption will start and a communication strategy for this is being developed. Deer vets will be strongly encouraged to offer a health review to farmers in 2017. They are likely to

be supported in this through a proposed new professional development module on animal health planning that will be offered to members by the New Zealand Veterinary Association (subject to approval by the NZVA Board later this year).

In addition to the veterinary education material and workshops, other projects will include presentations at national conferences and introduction to farmer-focused workshops, field days and Advance Parties.

No one person has all the answers on farm-level health management. DINZ is attempting to provide consistent, accepted advice, where it is available. Respected health advocates across the country will be called upon to support the proactive approach that the deer industry desires. But the assessment of health status will be done on an individual basis, by individual farmers, based on an informed view of the risks and rewards of health interventions. ■



# New vets with new “i-deers”

An enthusiastic group of 13 Massey University veterinary students recently attended the deer special topic as part of their final year training. Vet student **Jonathan Christian** reports.

**THE WEEK STARTED** with interesting and informative talks from New Zealand deer industry leaders and lecturers on important topics such as parasite management and other animal health issues in deer. These talks and case studies were well received by the students. The afternoons consisted of practical deer handling sessions, where procedures such as clinical examination, blood and faecal sampling, intravenous catheter placement and injection, velvet antler removal, sedation and anaesthesia, and liver biopsies were performed on the Massey deer. This was a fantastic learning opportunity.

The field trip began with a visit to Vet Services Hawke’s Bay in Waipukurau, where Richard Hilson welcomed us with a talk about his experiences with deer throughout his career. We learnt a lot from his wealth of knowledge and experiences. The afternoon was spent looking around Te Maire, the farm of George Williams and Laura Billings, where farm management strategies and planning were thoroughly discussed.

Everyone appreciated the chance to get up close and personal with the deer in the shed, with skills such as TB testing and ultrasound pregnancy diagnosis being practised by all involved. It was really good to see such a beautifully run farm, especially one on such a large scale. George was very passionate about deer, inspiring the new aspiring deer vets. The late afternoon farm

tour and kale crop measurement was enlightening.

The following day we headed up to Landcorp’s extensive Rangitaiki Station. It was fantastic to see such a large-scale farm with so many people involved in the management and day-to-day running. Most of the group had never seen such a large-scale enterprise before, and thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity. It was educational going over the farming systems and strategies used to handle such a big operation.



Carrying out a liver biopsy during the deer special topic week for final year vet students. From left, Kate Griffiths (Lecturer in Pastoral Livestock, Massey University) and students Jonathan Christian, Rebecca Barnett and Georgia Roberts.

The afternoon was spent in Taupo learning more about the trophy industry and TBfree NZ with Andrew Scurr followed by a fantastic dinner put on by Vetplus Taupo.

The continued support for this deer special topic by Deer Industry New Zealand and the Deer Branch of the New Zealand Veterinary Association was much appreciated by all involved. We learnt a lot about deer farming in New Zealand, especially the animal health side, with a lot of excitement and interest generated about prospects for working in this dynamic industry.

We would also like to thank Kim Kelly (MSD Animal Health) for accompanying us for the entire week – her enthusiasm and practical experience made for a great experience. Also thanks to Kate Griffiths (Massey University) for organising the deer special topic week – it was thoroughly enjoyed by all! ■



The 13 vet students and their hosts at Te Maire, the farm of George Williams and Laura Billings, during their deer special topic week.



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# First new Hungarian genetics in 30 years

by Clive Jermy, Deer and Game Services

In the early to mid 1980s, a unique activity for deer in Europe was underway in the Somogy region of Hungary, the legendary hunting ground where all the modern wild world records for red, fallow and roe deer in Europe originate.



Fossilised million-year-old antler in the Hungarian National Hunting Museum.

**A SUBSTANTIVE LIVE** capture activity was underway to stock what is today Hungary's only large-scale deer farm for Kaposvár University, an agricultural university about three hours' drive from Budapest.

It was from this activity and this herd that the very first Hungarian deer came to New Zealand.

First recipients were Bernard Pinney at Dunrobin Station, The Fletcher family, Tasman Forestry and Clive Jermy at Stanfield Stud. Later the Dunrobin and Tasman deer all ended up with the Hood family at Mt Hutt Station, where a significant herd of Hungarian deer resides today.

Many deer farmers will remember Mt Hutt's legendary Kapos



From left, Bruce Hood, Kaposvár manager János Nagy, Mike Wilkins and Clive Jermy going for a tour around the Kaposvár safari park by horse-drawn carriage.

and Stanfield's Heinrich.

Why Easterns? They are big deer – the biggest examples of red deer – they mate 15–20 days earlier than English deer, their antlers are very big in structure, they cross well with English deer for safari and they can cut big velvet.

Other strains of Eastern deer followed from the former Yugoslavia and lastly from Romania. Over the years, however, the number of herds in New Zealand fell away and the genetic pool started to get very tight for outcross bloodlines.

In 2008 I investigated on behalf of Mike Wilkins and myself the

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The Hungarian red deer have a very large antler structure and quiet temperament.

potential of bloodlines from Bulgaria, Romania and the former Yugoslavia (now Croatia) but failed to secure the bloodlines we needed, so we decided to visit Kaposvár. After all, they had been farming for as long as we have, so were definitely worth investigating. Andrew Fraser came along as well.

To our great surprise, here was a New Zealand-style deer farm with 1,000 Hungarian deer that, for the past 30 years, were being bred for safari. Just what we wanted!

Sadly, the global financial crisis put paid to buying at that



Some of the Hungarian stags that were picked by Mike Wilkins and Bruce Hood.

time, but by 2016, circumstances had changed. Mike Wilkins had purchased the Stanfield Eastern herd and the Hood family from Mount Hutt Station joined the team. Bruce Hood and Mike Wilkins travelled with me in early July to Hungary and to Kaposvár.

Kaposvár is ably managed by János Nagy and his family and staff, and is much larger than just deer. It is an agricultural training establishment with multiple species.

Stags are retained in their age groups and farmed in antler until nine years of age, when they are turned out into the safari park, joining wild boar and fallow.

We chose five stags, seven and eight years of age, from a pool of 250 stags.

It was fascinating to see the results of 30 years of selection in Hungary and how they have evolved, just the same as the Hungarians at Mt Hutt and our Easterns at Mike Wilkins' but with subtle differences from different criteria.

The stags have to travel to England and stay there for six months before we can collect semen (live animal imports have been banned since 1995 because of BSE). Once enough semen has been collected, the stags will be sold.

Four of the five stags arrived in England in September (one was lame and left behind) and are now in quarantine awaiting tests and collection at Hornby Castle in Yorkshire.

The exciting potential of these stags is their very big and correct antler structure, excellent tyne placement and amazing temperament. The stags had numerous tests for TB, bluetongue and other diseases. Amazingly these were done at the start of the rut, simply standing with the stags in the pens – no drugs, no crush – the early testing in Hungary was done when the stags still had full racks on as well!

On the way home we spent a day in Budapest and visited the Agricultural Museum which also houses their national hunting museum. Here one can see all the current world record wild trophies for red, fallow and roe deer. In addition there is a wonderful history including a one million-year-old fossilised antler locked in a block of sandstone which has been cleverly cut through the stone and the antler right down the length of the antler.

Finally the industry is on the cusp of some exciting new bloodlines from Hungary, the first since the 1980s and a milestone achievement for the owners.

• Article supplied. ■



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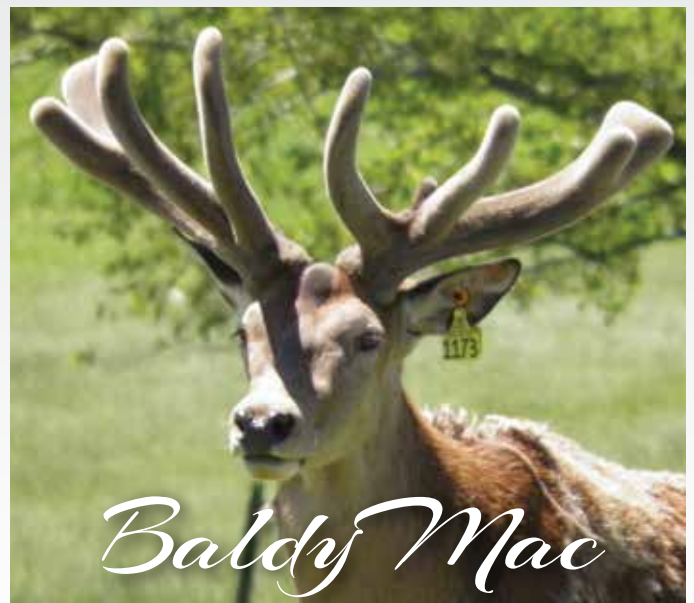
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*Baldy Mac*

**Warnham**

**Baldy Mac** may become the best sire stag bred at the stud.

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