

# Deer Industry News

Sire Sale  
Season a  
Boomer



**Conference Preview**  
CONFERENCE RETURNS  
TO SOUTH CANTERBURY  
HEARTLAND; RANGITATA  
FIELD DAY PLANNED

**Advance Parties**  
ENVIRONMENT ADVANCE  
PARTY IN SOUTHLAND;  
NORTHBANK STATION  
REGIONAL WORKSHOP

**Velvet Research**  
STEM CELL PROTEINS  
INVESTIGATED;  
TESTING FOR MEMORY  
BENEFITS OF VELVET

# Deer Industry News

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

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**Cover:** The sire sale season was the best for years, with averages and clearance rates well up. See pages 28–32. Photo: Pauline Pattullo

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# Learning from other farmers the key

In 2011, Mark O'Connor, then DINZ CEO, asked me to join the deer industry's Productivity Leadership Group. I agreed, but felt a bit of a fraud as I had little specific deer experience. My background was with sheep and beef, particularly in the North Island hill country. On reflection though, some of my "dumb" questions helped shape the Productivity Improvement Programme (PIP).



Gavin Sheath.

**PIP WAS EVENTUALLY** given a sexier name – Passion 2 Profit (P2P). The proposed work was able to be expanded and accelerated by gaining additional Crown funding through the Primary Growth Partnership programme in 2015. From the outset, it seemed the challenge was to make deer farming a more competitive and sustainable land use. The national deer herd was in steady decline. This had price and productivity drivers, both of which are central to the P2P programme. I want to focus on the latter.

In 2011, DINZ commissioned survey company CINTA to describe the demographics, attitudes and practices of deer farmers. It was an excellent piece of work and indicated that deer farmers were no more innovative than other New Zealand farmers. There was low adoption of what appeared to be useful management practices and tools. This situation was not necessarily the fault of farmers or the technologies. Rather, it was how we approach practice change in New Zealand agriculture.

Attending conferences and field days, or reading technical articles will provide awareness of opportunities, but these activities do not generate commitment to change. For the large majority of farmers (60–70 percent) learning from other farmers is the most influential driver of change. Have the benefits of the change outweighed the costs? Are these benefits repeatable over several years. What are the risks? Questions like these need to be answered in a commercial setting in order to generate the confidence to change.

Farmer-to-farmer learning and the sharing of experiences is at the heart of the Advance Party (AP) concept. It is so pleasing to see that we are close to achieving our target of 30 APs and there is always opportunity for new participants to be involved. The development of trust and confidence between participants and the emergence of a pool of trained facilitators will provide a strong foundation for the future. However, like any group activity, APs will stagnate if they are not prepared to evolve. Identifying new areas of common interest and sharing of data will be important to maintain members' interest and commitment.

Another pleasing aspect of P2P has been the development of the Industry Agreed Standards and their integration into the wider livestock industry's NZ Farm Assurance Programme. This integration is sensible given that most deer farming occurs within mixed livestock enterprises. Let us hope that the same will occur with the Environmental Code of Practice.

With all this planning and compliance being asked of farmers, it seems there is an urgent need to prioritise and integrate them in the form of an annual business plan. No longer is the annual financial budget sufficient. In addition, we need to consider biosecurity, animal welfare, environmental and most importantly people targets. Setting and hitting these targets is at the heart of future farming and successful food industries.

Remember that we own and run multi-million dollar businesses which need direction and measurement of performance. ■

– Gavin Sheath – P2P Advisory Group

*Deer Industry News* is published by Deer Industry New Zealand in February, April, June, August, October and December. It is circulated to all known deer farmers, processors, exporters and others with an interest in the deer industry. The opinions expressed in *Deer Industry News* do not necessarily reflect the views of Deer Industry New Zealand or the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association.



TUESDAY 15th - THURSDAY 17th **MAY 2018**| CAROLINE BAY HALL, **TIMARU**

Planning for the 2018 Deer Industry Conference in Timaru during May is as easy as 1, 2, 3.

**YOU CAN COME** just for the **one** Agribusiness day on Wednesday 16 May, or enjoy the full **two** days of business plus welcome function and awards dinner during the evenings. And for those who like to stretch their legs after a day or two indoors, there will be a field day on day **three**.

DAY ONE: 15 May	DAY TWO: 16 May	DAY THREE: 17 May
Morning: NZVA Deer Branch Cervetec session	• Keynote speakers • High-profile guests	South Canterbury/ North Otago DFA Branch field day to Rangitata Gorge area
Noon: NZDFA AGM	• P2P updates • Venison/velvet markets	
Afternoon: Technical session and Advance Party Presentations	• Environment initiatives	
Welcome Function	Awards Dinner	

### Day one – get in early

Come on **Tuesday 15 May** if you want to catch:

- Join the NZ Veterinary Association Deer Branch for their Cervetec conference sessions (morning)
- NZDFA 43rd Annual General Meeting (commencing at noon)
- Quick-fire short presentations on a series of technical/research topics from DEERsearch
- Advance Party and Next Generation programme success stories
- A welcome dinner at the Landing Services function centre (sponsored by conference partner **Silver Fern Farms**). This low-key and relaxed get together will include a quiz with prizes.

... and then stay on for day two, the Agribusiness day on Wednesday 16 May (details below).

### Day two – conference essentials

If time is tight and you want to catch all the conference essentials you can do that in just one day! The agribusiness day on

**Wednesday 16 May** features:

- Internationally renowned futurist and business innovation expert Craig Rispin ([www.futuretrendsgroup.com](http://www.futuretrendsgroup.com))
- Other high-profile speakers to be confirmed (government Ministers have also been invited)
- P2P update
- Venison and velvet marketing sessions
- Keynote speakers from venison and velvet markets

- Environment initiatives
- The annual awards dinner at Caroline Bay Hall (sponsored by conference partner **Alliance**) includes a return of the sensational “Bitches’ Box”.

### Day three – the full package

If you have the time and want to see iconic deer farming stations through the Rangitata Gorge region, then stay for **Thursday 17 May** and join the South Canterbury/North Otago DFA Branch's field day. The day will conclude in the early afternoon to give visitors time to catch flights.

### Venue

- The event will be hosted at the Caroline Bay Hall near central Timaru, with a variety of hotels and motels providing reasonable accommodation rates and facilities.

### Details, registration and accommodation

- Registrations and conference management will again be supplied by Pat Johnston of Destination Conference Management with organisation via the NZDFA Executive Committee and DINZ staff. Details will be available through the website as they are finalised. We are already experiencing solid inquiry and commitment from our traditional sponsors.
- While a wide range of accommodation options is available, the South Canterbury/North Otago DFA Branch is also keen to help and will be offering billet accommodation with local deer farmers in the vicinity for those wanting to meet new friends and experience the district's hospitality first hand.
- A **discount of about 35%** will be offered on full registration for each additional registered delegate from the same farming entity. For farming couples with young children, we will provide a **daytime crèche** on the Tuesday and Wednesday.
- Registration fees and support from new and well-established conference sponsors are being finalised and will be publicised in March's *Stagline-online* and on the conference website: <https://deernz.org/2018-deer-industry-conference>

For further information please contact:

- Tony Pearce at [tony.pearce@deernz.org](mailto:tony.pearce@deernz.org), 021 719 038 or
- Pat Johnson [pat@dcms.co.nz](mailto:pat@dcms.co.nz), 027 215 9807 ■

# AGM constitutional matters: NZDFA and DINZ nominations: 2018/19 year

The Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association will be held in Timaru on 15 May 2018, starting at noon.

## A) Executive Committee nominations

### Call for nominations for NZDFA positions

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

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

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

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

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

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

- be in writing and specify the Island that the nominee seeks to represent
- **be moved and seconded by two other Full, Life or Elected members of the Association resident in the same Island as the vacancy**
- be signed by the nominee
- be delivered to the Association's office by **5.00pm on Friday, 30 March 2018**.

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

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

- be in writing
- **be moved and seconded by two other Full, Life or Elected members of the Association**
- be signed by the nominee
- be delivered to the Association's office by **5.00pm on Friday, 30 March 2018**.

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

Should an election be necessary, details of postal voting and procedures, candidate profiles and confirmation of timelines will be sent with the April 2018 edition of *Deer Industry News* or by separate post to meet deadlines. Postal voting runs for 21 days and must close 7 clear days prior to the AGM on Tuesday 15 May 2018 (i.e. **voting opens on Tuesday 17 April 2018, closing on Tuesday 8 May 2018**).

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

## B) Selection and Appointment Panel (SAP)

The role of the SAP is to make producer representative appointments to the Deer Industry New Zealand Board and to meet with those appointees at least twice a year to discuss industry matters and their roles as Deer Industry New Zealand representatives.

The 8-member SAP is made up from:

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

The elected non-Executive Committee members whose term expires at the forthcoming AGM are (South Island) **Paddy Boyd, South Canterbury**, (retirement by rotation) and **Leith Chick, Waipa, Member at Large**

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

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

Each nomination must be in writing and moved and seconded by two Full, Life or Elected members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association offices by **5.00pm on Friday 30 March 2018**.

The nominees must be Full, Life or Elected members of the NZDFA. Further, nominees:

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

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

## C) NZDFA Appointment to Deer Industry New Zealand Board

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

The Deer Industry New Zealand Board comprises four producer-appointed representatives and four representatives appointed by the processing/exporting sector. The producer representatives are selected by the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association through an Electoral College process, and have been appointed for a **three-year term** on recommendation by the NZDFA's Selection and Appointment Panel according to its detailed



Operating Code of Practice and then advised to the Minister. Successful appointments who retire by rotation are eligible for further terms.

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

**1 vacancy:** Deer Industry New Zealand Board member retiring by rotation, **William Oliver, Waikato**

The nomination must be moved and seconded by Full, Life or Elected members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association's offices before **5.00pm on Friday 30 March 2018**.

The NZDFA Constitution (2013) refers:

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

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

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

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

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

Nominations for the positions will be considered by the Selection and Appointment Panel following the 2018 AGM within 21 days of that meeting, with recommendations and appointment to the Board being advised to the Minister of Agriculture at that time subject to the Operating Code of Practice procedures.

## Nomination forms

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

Nomination forms are also available through your local Branch Chairman, Secretary or the Producer Manager and will be posted on the website: [www.deernz.org](http://www.deernz.org)

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

*continued on page 6*

MSD Animal Health has kindly agreed to continue its support for the deer industry's annual photographic awards, so let's show them and the world what makes our animals and our industry so special.

We've made important changes this year to make it much easier and cheaper to enter! The competition is now completely electronic so you'll no longer need to send us prints of your entries. All you need to do is submit your entry form, fee and digital photos – all possible on line. And we've reduced the entry fee to a flat \$5 per photo entered!

Entry deadline is 9 May. See following page for further details.

For an entry form contact:

Cenwynn Philip, Deer Industry New Zealand

Phone 04 471 6110, email [cenwynn.philip@deernz.org](mailto:cenwynn.philip@deernz.org)

or download the form from [www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition](http://www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition)

Photo: "Were you talking to me?" by Denise Pawsey. Winner 2017.

# MSD Animal Health Photographic Awards

## *We're back!*



**MSD**  
Animal Health

AGM: continued

## Matuschka Award 2018

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

The award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and core spirit of deer farming. It will be announced at the Deer Industry Conference Awards Dinner held at the **Caroline Bay Events Center, Timaru on Wednesday 16 May**.

As recognition of the unsung heroes at Branch level, it is appropriate that the award itself be presented to the 2018 winner at a special mid-winter function in the recipient's Branch.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate Branch. It is not a requirement of the award that the nominee be aware of the fact that a nomination has gone forward. Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA no later than **5.00pm on Tuesday, 8 May 2018**.

For further information contact:

- Producer Communications and Administration. Cenwynn Philip 04 471 6110, [cenwynn.philip@deernz.org](mailto:cenwynn.philip@deernz.org)
- Producer Manager, Tony Pearce, 021 719 038, [tony.pearce@deernz.org](mailto:tony.pearce@deernz.org)

## 2018 MSD Photographic competition

The competition format is being updated from 2018 so that entrants will no longer need to submit a print/s of their entry/entries. Only the digital photos and entry form/fee are required. In addition, the entry fee has been reduced to a flat \$5 per photo. This will make entering the competition simpler!

The competition will be judged through the *Deer Industry News* editorial group with prizes presented at the conference and include both a Judges' and People's Choice award.

Rules and entry form are available from via the DINZ website at [www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition](http://www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition). Alternatively, contact Cenwynn Philip, Tony Pearce or Phil Stewart (details below).

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

### Judging criteria

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

### Eligibility

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

### Preferred subject material

- **Deer in the field:** This shows farmed deer in their "natural" setting – in crop or pasture or tussock hill country for example. It could be individual animals or groups; stags, hinds, fawns, weaners).
- **People working with deer:** Positive images of animal husbandry work, e.g., shifting animals, drafting, tagging, Tb testing, vaccinating etc).
- **Our deer farming environment:** An opportunity to show off the environmental enhancement that goes hand in hand with best practice. In these photos the farm environment is the star. The deer are present but play a bit part. Shots will be aesthetically pleasing but also have a practical side, e.g. retired areas, protected waterways, nicely landscaped and fenced areas, good shelter plantings, well-constructed deer sheds with runoff taken care of and so on.

### Format of entries

Please submit your photo in digital format. **Photo prints are no longer required!**

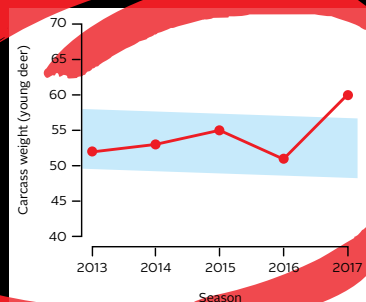
Make sure your camera is set to take pictures in high resolution format (and ensure your lens is clean!). The electronic file, which should be a **minimum** of about 2600 x 3875 pixels (printable to A4 size at 300 dpi).

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

For further information contact:

- Producer Communications and Administration, Cenwynn Philip: 04 471 6110, [cenwynn.philip@deernz.org](mailto:cenwynn.philip@deernz.org)
- Producer Manager, Tony Pearce: 021 719 038, [tony.pearce@deernz.org](mailto:tony.pearce@deernz.org)
- *Deer Industry News*, Editor Phil Stewart: 04 384 4688, [phil@wordpict.co.nz](mailto:phil@wordpict.co.nz) ■

## Benchmarked production and Johne's disease info on your deer



# Deer PRO

To help make and assess your deer management decisions contact **DeerPRO** for your report – **0800 456 453** or [info@deerpro.org.nz](mailto:info@deerpro.org.nz)

DP0717



# Wintering and water management keep Nelsons on their toes

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

The Nelsons' water trough has tossed up a predicament: raise a shared trough high for deer and you stump the sheep; keep it low and deer are liable to splash and wallow nearby. It sums up the practical challenges of managing a deer environment. A possible fix must be considered as part of the whole.

**AS LONG-TIME DEER** farmers at Winton, Wally and Cam Nelson are members of the Southland Environment Advance Party (AP) looking at ways to farm sustainably under regional rules and industry expectations. Cam says the Environment AP has been good value in its first year.

"It gets you out of your own wee circle of farm management." Wally adds that everything they try to do as farmers – and it's probably the same for other AP members – "has to land back in production".

The family run 250 mixed age velvetting stags and 400 hinds,

*continued on page 8*

## 7th World Deer Congress August 2018: Altai Region, Russia

**GOVERNOR KARLIN OF** the Altai Krai Territory and the Altai Ministry of Agriculture invite deer farmers to the 7th World Deer Congress to be held on 20–25 August 2018 at the spa resort city of Belokurikha. The city is in the mountains of southeast Altai, 250km from the territory capital of Barnaul and not far from the Mongolia and Kazakhstan borders.

Farming maral, sika, and reindeer for velvet antler and other products is important in this region, which is becoming increasingly popular as a health spa destination. More than 360 types of medicine, dietary supplements and medical cosmetics based on deer velvet are produced in the Altai Territory. Significant investment is being made to expand markets and the range of deer products.

New Zealand's CR McPhail Tours is interested in coordinating

a tour to the congress, which features international plenary sessions and presentations with 3-day tours to large deer farms and associated spas with their velvet

and deer product health treatments.

Coinciding with this congress will be the 4th Antler Science and Product Technology conference, co-hosted by DINZ and Dr Chunyi Li, Executive Director, State Key Lab for Molecular Biology of Special Economic Animals, Changchun City, Jilin, China. Dates for this conference are to be confirmed shortly.

An executive from the Russian Deer Breeders' Association and representatives from the Altai Deer Herders plan to attend the New Zealand Deer Industry Conference in May to promote the congress.

To express interest contact: [tony.pearse@deernz.org](mailto:tony.pearse@deernz.org), 021 719 038 or Cenwynn Philip 04 471 6110.

For further information: [www.deercongress.com](http://www.deercongress.com) (right click for passable translation, although all deer are "reindeer"!)

*Photos: Tony Pearse*





Nelsons: continued



Winton deer farmers Wally (left) and Cam Nelson are members of the Southland Environment Advance Party. Photo: Tim Fulton

200 spikers and the same number of R2 stags. There are also 170 yearling hinds and about 60 sheep to keep grass down around home and down lanes.

“Our biggest issue is wintering,” Wally says, adding that sometimes they had few options for moving stock off a small feed area. Last year they converted covered yards to a small standoff pad and are taking advice from their AP group on how best to feed, shelter and grow stock without damaging the farm or catchment.

“In winter everything is on crop so that all the damage is confined to one spot.”

Wally sees investment in the environmental side as well spent – not so different from any other business investing in assets.

“If you had a truck driver who was wrecking a particular bit of road, you’d do something about it.”

And just as importantly, “it’s not just to make the place look pretty”. In mid-January, the Nelsons’ big “to-do” jobs included moving 120 stags, cutting the last of a re-growth crop and then tagging, drenching and weighing fawns. Weaning is done mid-winter.

Their system is designed for easy handling of small mobs, particularly to follow mating. To that end they make good use

of DNA parentage techniques. One of their other touchpoints is animal temperament – they cull very hard on bad attitude. Cam says it’s an emphasis on socialising, for stock health and personal safety.

He finds if deer are doing well it’s because they’re being allowed to express social instincts. “You notice it weighing, where groups will come through in almost consecutive tag numbers.”

Seeing this, the Nelsons keep the deer in regular mobs to reduce bullying. Stressed animals are more likely to start fence-pacing, leading to “environmental things” like scoured paddocks and excess runoff.

Encouragingly, an *E. coli* reading in a voluntary waterway sample turned up a good rating in the one test so far.

Wally and Cam grow swedes as a first crop, followed by fodder beet. They also feed out 600–700 units of baleage on grass in autumn and through winter on crop. This can be tricky in the messy part of winter and due to the unusual dry lately they have been supplementary feeding baleage.

Baleage is fed in autumn until grass depletes, usually about the end of May when the stock are introduced to crop with ad lib baleage feeders. The family mates 170 maiden hinds to their best retained two-year-old stags. The farmers (Cam has an off-farm job with a machinery contracting firm) take out 10 percent of their replacements – about 45 head. The spikers are all velvetted and retained until two years old before being culled on velvet weight. “Anything under 2.5kg goes for an OE,” Cam says.

They usually sell a velvet line upward of 2.7kg and anything 2.5–2.7kg is sold as seconds. Next year these cut off points will be 2.7–3.0kg and the first line will be 3–4kg with those above 4kg retained in the velvetting herd.

Priorities change over the year. In spring, for example, the focus is velvetting stags and growing stock. Then at Christmas it changes to hinds feeding fawns.

The Nelsons don’t consider themselves big-time breeders but have four regular clients buying about 20 velvetting stags annually.

It means a lot to have venison prices hold for 3–4 months instead of peaking for a fortnight, Cam says. “The last five years it’s probably stabilised a bit. We had a hiccup [with velvet in 2016/17], but it wasn’t a huge swing,” Wally says. ■



Positioning of troughs like these is one conundrum when it comes to environmental planning to suit both sheep and deer. Photo: Tim Fulton



Shade and shelter are important considerations. Photo: Tim Fulton



# “Plan B” worked out well for Korevaars

Creativity, willingness to try new things and great powers of observation have helped Henny and Maria Korevaar achieve exceptionally good results in just a few short years as deer farmers. The P2P Advance Party couple spoke to *Deer Industry News* Editor, **Phil Stewart**, about their pathway into the industry and their progress since joining.



Maria and Henny Korevaar have made excellent progress since they started deer farming in 2011.  
Photo: Phil Stewart

**THE KOREVAARS HAVE** other useful skills too – Henny is a fitter welder by trade and Maria was an occupational therapist. This background has equipped them well to tackle practical tasks but they also exude a warmth and strong empathy for their livestock, an important attribute when handling deer. This has translated into very creditable performance in their 350-hind breeding and finishing business 12km southwest of Balclutha.

Having started to breed their own replacement hinds two years ago, they regularly achieve 100 percent conception rates in their red hinds mated to red maternal sires – even amongst first fawners. They use a Peel Forest B11 and elk/wapiti as terminal sires, and even with their slightly lower conception rates their entire herd regularly scans about 95 percent.

Fawn survival is also steadily improving. Fawns weaned to hinds mated improved from 88 percent in 2014/15 to 91 percent in 2016/17. Having scanned 96.5 percent pregnant in 2017 they are hoping for this figure to improve even further this year.

Other measures have shown improvements too. Average weaning weight for red fawns jumped from 50kg in 2015 to 59.3kg in 2017, something the Korevaars put down to sires with

good breeding values for growth rate and conception date. They use Doncaster and Wilkins Farming red sires for breeding replacements and noted the body shape of the progeny showed the Wilkins stag had sired quite a number of the progeny. Wapiti terminal sires are sourced from Clachanburn.

They weigh weaners regularly and their 1 June weights leapt from 68.8kg (red sire) and 70kg (terminal sire) in 2016 to 78.2kg and 78.6kg respectively in 2017. Maria said the red and terminal sire progeny are very close in weight at 1 June, but that the wapiti-sired weaners “take off” as winter turns to spring.

This has also been reflected in average carcass weights, which grew from 51.1kg in 2015 to 57.5kg in 2016. In the current season, average weights dropped back a little to 56.0kg – still a very respectable figure. All of this was being achieved with earlier kill dates as well. In 2015, half of the venison animals had been processed by 15 December. Last year that milestone was

reached by 1 December with 85 percent gone by Christmas and the final draft gone by the last week of January.

Deer farmers with decades in the business would be happy with figures like these, but the Korevaars have been farming deer for just six years.

## Leaned closer to farming

They emigrated to New Zealand from The Netherlands with their two-year-old daughter in 1990, settling on a 12-hectare lifestyle block at Oxford in Canterbury. A second daughter was born in New Zealand and they spent the first 15 years here running a small woodworking business making decorative plates, racks, trays and the like. They also ran a few beef cattle and gradually leaned closer to farming. “The woodworking business was always cyclical and a bit of a niche,” Henny says. “We needed a Plan B.”

Plan B swung into action when they packed up and headed to the Balclutha district, buying a farm not far from their current property. They leased this out while Henny worked fitting out new dairy sheds as that sector was starting to boom. It wasn’t a great experience. “I turned from Scandinavian blond to grey in three

*continued on page 10*

*Korevaars: continued*



The Korevaars have terminal sires as well as sires for breeding replacement hinds. Photo: Maria Korevaar

years,” Henny laughs.

Then, in 2007, they found their current property, Willowpark – initially 86 hectares and with an adjoining 25 hectare block bought soon after. It’s a mix of flat-to-rolling with some steep sections and is reasonably summer safe with a permanent stream and good reticulated water. The farm was partly deer fenced but had no deer. There were beef cattle, which Maria managed. Henny continued doing the dairy shed work for eight seasons but in 2011, they decided to introduce some deer, starting with bought-in pregnant red hinds from North Canterbury and Southland. PGG Wrightson agent John Williams helped them procure their breeding hinds and the Korevaars have developed a strong working relationship with him. “He is always willing to give valuable advice,” Maria says.

## A few hiccups

“We had a few hiccups when we started our farming journey with deer, but we have always been able to learn from those.”

One such lesson came when they got started with no deer shed on the property, something that made stock handling a challenge. Henny built their deer shed and he’s pleased with it – the shed has also drawn compliments from members of the South Otago Advance Party (AP) they belong to. It was nine months after they brought in the first deer that they had a shed in place, and the first crop of fawns were already getting quite big. “They just about hit the roof the first time we brought them into the new shed,” Henny says, adding that they soon settled. “Visitors are impressed with how calm our

deer are now.”

The shed design makes it easy and safe to handle the more truculent elk/wapiti sires when they need to be brought through.

They also did much of the deer fencing themselves, with 85 hectares of the total 110 hectares now fenced.

Maria says a big priority for them and others in their AP is to get better winter growth in deer on crops. They are currently growing swedes and kale and regrassing after the crops, an idea encouraged by other AP members. Henny says the choice of pasture species is mind boggling but for now they are including plantain, chicory and red clover with new ryegrass. “The weaners



Conception rates and fawn survival are both very good. Photo: Maria Korevaar



do very well on the improved pastures.”

Two feed pads are used to feed silage in winter from June through to mid-late September. Maria says the animals are generally “as happy as” on the feed pads, especially the larger of the two, which is connected to a hill block where they can spread out.

The farm is relatively long and narrow and this can cause some challenges for mating and weaning. They use a combination of multiple and single-sire mating, depending on availability and location of paddocks.

## Good conception rates

Weaning was stressful for humans and animals in the first few seasons, but the fast-learning couple have adapted quickly to the behaviour of their deer and the farm layout. They prefer to pre-rut wean, space permitting, and put the stags in early – in fact the spikers were running with the first-fawns by December, perhaps another reason why the Korevaars get such good conception rates in their R2 hinds.

Like many, they start feeding grain to the fawns before weaning (usually done on 1 March) and continue with the grain into the autumn as a distraction for the weaners missing mum. (They had tried feeding grain through winter but found no benefit.)

Fence pacing and stressed hinds were a feature in their first few seasons at weaning, but they have successfully applied the “Aitken technique” where fawns are returned to their familiar paddocks and hinds are moved well out of sight and earshot. “We read about it in the industry magazine,” Maria notes.

The Korevaars also make good use of older nanny hinds to settle and lead the weaners, especially when going into the shed for weighing or drenching. “They know the system,” Maria says. Weaners are initially kept in their mating mobs for a few weeks before being put into two or three mobs for the winter. At least two nannies accompany each mob.

There are few animal health problems – probably a natural outcome of having well-fed and unstressed animals. Minerals are used in fertiliser and in a pre-fawning drench for the hinds. The area is low in selenium and high in iron, which can block uptake of other trace elements, so mineral status is watched. All animals get additional copper. Fawns are routinely vaccinated for yersiniosis and receive at least three drenches. A handful were lost to lungworm last year but following a drench, no more died.

It’s clear from talking to Maria and Henny Korevaar that, with deer farming, they have found their happy place. “We love it!” Maria says.

As relative newcomers to farming and complete newcomers to deer, they see things from a different perspective than others with a longer history in the industry. And what would they advise other newcomers to deer?

“Look after your animals 365 days a year,” Henny says. “And be patient,” Maria advises. “Stay calm, don’t push your deer too hard. Let them find that gateway – they’ll get there.”

“And have plenty of gates,” adds Henny.

- For an interview with Maria and Henny Korevaar see: <http://bit.ly/2DpygKw> or search YouTube under “Maria and Henny Korevaar” ■



## FEEDING LITTLE AND OFTEN

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# Still potential for genetic gains

Don't get too hung up on a single breeding trait or you might come unstuck, says stud breeder Mike Wilkins, a member of the Deer Select programme and steering group. *Deer Industry News* Editor, **Phil Stewart**, spoke to Wilkins about the role of breeders and purchasers in the quest for genetic improvement in the industry.



Mike Wilkins: Chasing venison and velvet traits in one animal is possible but always involves some compromise.

**WHILE THE 12-MONTH** weight breeding value (BV) attracts most attention, people buying new sires should look at all the traits that are listed and research the opportunities these provide for their own operation, Wilkins says.

“Buyers should understand all the factors that make up a complete package. It's more than just the 12-month BV – it's also the type of animal, the meat yield and even the velvet potential too if you want spiker velvet.”

He says it's possible to wrap up good velvet and meat production genetics in one animal, “but you are always compromising when you multitask”. That said, Wilkins believes there are good genetics available that can offer multiple traits and something that you can build on as you increase the genetic merit of your herd.

The 12-month weight BV has seen big gains over the past five years. “We've probably nailed it, although there is still room for tweaking [that trait].” He believes the greatest gains to come next will feature traits like weaning percentage, breeding efficiency, conception date, meat yields and the weight of a fawn grown as a percentage of the hind's weight.

Wilkins agrees that the shrinkage of the national breeding herd over the past decade has been a constraint for the industry, but he also sees it as an opportunity for growing more from less using high-yielding animals. He says the current flattening of the schedule at a high level – including the unprecedented continuation of \$10+ prices into the new year – presents an opportunity for farmers to grow some animals longer and maximise the yield of meat to bone.

He says it takes a lot of commitment to identify potential for genetic gains and then breed for them.

“We used the Deer Progeny Test to help pinpoint a number of traits. Our own sire Tui – he's number one on Deer Select for the conception date BV – is a good example. We're also looking for stags that might have strong eye muscle area traits or scanned well through the CT scanner among other things.

“We're making great use of AI as part of this process. We're using not only Deer Select, but the work the wider industry has done to pick out traits that will help enhance the deer we're breeding.”

Wilkins says that for breeders like him to respond properly to the wider industry's needs, it's important to stay engaged with stag buyers.

“We want to hear from them and find out what they are expecting from us – and with this information continue to build a beneficial partnership.”

• To watch an interview with Mike Wilkins: <http://bit.ly/2ncHhCZ> or search YouTube under The Power of Genetics ■



Wilkins Farming's sire, Tui, currently number one on Deer Select for the conception date eBV.



R1 stags at Wilkins Farms – the shaved area is from scanning to assess eye muscle area.



# Finishing property pushing the envelope

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Six thousand or so weaner deer in the heart of Canterbury's intensive dairy land? It may sound unlikely, but visitors to a Passion2Profit Regional Workshop at Northbank Station near Dunsandel in late November saw first hand how deer finishing can thrive in cow country. The workshop was supported by Mountain River Venison and Canterbury West Coast DFA and facilitated by Wayne Allan, of Allan Agricultural Consulting.



In clover: Red clover has been giving exceptional growth rates and carcass quality at Northbank Station.

**THE 669-HECTARE NORTHBANK** Station supplies Mountain River and both are owned by Doug Hood Limited – an interesting example of integration in the deer industry.

The property is managed by Adam and Sharon Waite, who have been there two years. About six months after they arrived, the company started a major redevelopment programme that is seeing pastures renewed and the relatively inefficient border dyke irrigation system being gradually replaced with centre pivots.

Adam Waite said the first stage of development presented challenges, with over 5,000 deer jammed onto the rest of the property while the pivots were set up on 160 hectares. One large pivot covers 108 hectares of this, with smaller pivots covering the rest. Lucerne will be planted in the small gaps not covered by the pivots, as well as under some of the pivot area.

He said it was sad to see some of the old shelter belts go, but removed them on the advice of others in the Canterbury Advance Party. He added that these will eventually be replaced with pivot-friendly shelter lines planted in lower-growing natives rather than exotics. Most of the existing wire and posts could be re-used in the development, but with post spacings closed from 12 to 5 metres to give a better visual barrier.

During the redevelopment, all internal fences, tracks, tree lanes and head races have been removed, which has allowed the fencing to be optimised. By the end of last year, about 311 hectares of irrigation under seven pivots had replaced 299 hectares of borderdyke irrigation. A further 280 hectares on the western block was yet to be converted to centre pivot irrigation.

Reclaiming the old borderdyke head races will mean an eventual net gain of 40–50 hectares, Waite explained.

The pivots can push either way through special double gates made by local deer farmer and engineer, Ian Trott. The gates are strongly sprung and thus far no deer seem to be inclined to nip through as the pivot pushes the gates open.

The commercial cost of the first stage was estimated around \$7000–\$7500/ha; however the costs in this instance were higher as the system also needs to apply effluent from the adjacent deer and lamb plants. Waite said having a mix of pivots and borderdyke irrigation at present can be tricky and the borders are shut off when the water supply from the river is unavailable. The 9-hectare storage pond can be sucked dry fairly quickly but so far they are managing well.

Coverage under the pivots is up to 60 percent better than with

*continued on page 14*

*Northbank: continued*



About 6,000 deer are finished each year for processing at Mountain River Venison.

borderdykes, and water wastage is cut by 80 percent. Overall, the improved irrigation has increased summer production significantly. This, combined with improved pasture species, is creating a good summer surplus and one challenge on the property will be to utilise this to the best advantage – either sold as a cash crop or used on the farm through the right livestock integration.

Waite said weight gain was a strong priority at the station, with particular emphasis on the periods of greatest opportunity for growth, in autumn and spring.

All weaners are weighed and drenched when they come off the truck. Drenching continues monthly until winter; it is then spread out to six-weekly and then stopped in time for the appropriate withholding periods.

Some of the weaners have “never seen a human” before being mustered by helicopter from their high country breeding farms and brought to be finished at Northbank. However, they seem to take the change in their stride. Getting enough weaners to finish at economic prices is one of the challenges for Northbank Station. Purchasing some in spring is another option they are exploring.

All animals are weighed on arrival, at the start of winter and as they are drafted for slaughter.

Looking at the dollars and cents of feeding, Northbank Station makes a clear distinction between the feed required for maintenance (a zero cents/kg dry matter return) and the feed that fuels growth (90–126c/kgDM for finishing stags, 60c/kgDM for breeding hinds).

Finishers are kept on crop as long as possible over winter to give the grass covers a good chance to build up for spring. Two mobs of 500 are grazed towards each other behind a hot wire on crops of either kale or fodder beet for 90–100 days, with

breaks moved every three or four days.

Waite said the target growth rates on crop in winter are a realistic 80–100g/day. “It is possible to get up to 120g/day, but the cost of the extra feed means it’s not worth it,” he said. Fodder beet is supplemented with lucerne baleage or grass silage, plus pea straw if it’s available.

Mob sizes are reduced to 100–300 once the animals come off crop and the growth rates are ramped up. Keeping the Mountain River plant supplied with a steady stream of animals can mean some complicated juggling, with 200–300 animals per week going off during the peak demand period. The farm doesn’t strongly target the traditional spring chilled peak, and in fact some lighter mobs are purchased, which can be finished over a longer period and killed later in the season.

The current season was going well, with average carcass weights at 55kg, up 2kg on the previous year and nearly 1300 deer slaughtered by the end of November. Waite hopes that weight advantage can be maintained. The high-powered feed they are starting to put in the system is certainly helping. They are getting good results on Shogun ryegrass (about 400–500g/day before it reaches seeding stage), but red clover is the real rocket fuel. Average weight gains in the lead-up to slaughter are 500g/day on the clover.



Centre pivot irrigator at Northbank: These cut waste by 80 percent compared with borderdyke irrigation.

Lucerne gives a good but more modest 400 g/day and is mainly there as a backup and for supplement. Waite said a fescue/clover mix is also doing well.

He said finishers are split into three weight bands in the lead up to slaughter. The top group get a couple of days on the red clover, the middle group get a week and the bottom group are given lucerne or a ryegrass/clover mix.

Waite said the effect of the red clover really hit home when a mob in the same weight band was split between red clover and ryegrass/clover. “They were only there for four or five days, but the red clover group’s carcasses were 1kg heavier. The people at the plant also commented that the mob that had been on the red clover had better carcass composition.”

Up until 2016, the station had carried a relatively large number of cattle and some sheep. Neither Waite nor the owners are fond of sheep so they are unlikely to be reintroduced. Rather than grazing dairy heifers, they might fatten bulls, which would fit the system better. Older deer could also play a bigger role (in 2017 they wintered 450 mixed age hinds and ran 260 R2s). ■



Northbank Station manager, Adam Waite.



# Feeding priorities discussed

**IT'S NOT ALL** standing around staring at your boots or thinking about the refreshments at workshops: the 35 or so visitors to the P2P Regional Workshop at Northbank Station in November put together some useful ideas in a session to identify the feeding and health priorities for various deer stock classes. Facilitator Wayne Allan put the “work” back in workshops as visitors broke into groups to pick over the options. The following table (special thanks to scribe, Lorna Humm) summarises the priorities they discussed.

Who	When	Priorities	How	Health checklist
Hinds	Jan–Feb	Quality grass (90% green) Growing top weaners, 500-600g/day on mum	Lucerne or fodder crops (rape, turnips etc); other supplements if required (barley, baleage, etc). Strategic fertiliser	Clostridial disease, trace elements, leptospirosis, John's, MCF. (In elk, parasites and copper can need attention in addition to the above)
	March–April	Hind conception		
Fawns	Autumn (March–May)	>300g/day, targeting 1 June weight; feed conversion efficiency	Strategic N (Feb) Quality feed (e.g. red clover, lucerne) plus supplement (grain or crops like rape)	Parasites, yersiniosis, clostridial disease, fusobacteriosis (feet), leptospirosis
	Winter	~100g/day (can be more with hybrids)	Winter crops + supplements for protein and trace elements.	
	Close up pastures to build spring covers	>300g/day	Quality feed; regular growth rate monitoring	
Stags (velvet)	Post rut (May)	Gain weight	Quality feed; supplement; plan winter crops	Trace elements; injury prevention; leptospirosis.
	20 days pre button-drop (late July–August) through to first cut	Velvet growth	Strategic fertiliser; supplements; choice of appropriate pasture species	(In elk, parasites and copper can need attention in addition to the above)
Replacement hinds	Whole first year from weaning to first mating	Weights up to growth curve for 1 June, 1 Sept, 1 January	Strategic use of supplement from Dec/Jan onwards: grain, silage, crop, strategic N for pasture	Clostridial disease (5 in 1), leptospirosis, parasites, John's, trace elements

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# Landcorp fine-tuning deer production at Mararoa

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Like other high-country operations, Landcorp's 5,500-hectare Mararoa Station has found that giving deer some more attention, rather than leaving them to fend for themselves, pays big dividends.

**MATT CANTON** TOOK over as Mararoa Manager four years ago but has worked in the Te Anau basin for 16 years. He told visitors at the Northbank Station P2P Regional Workshop in November that the overall aim at Mararoa is to get as many young stock onto the ground as possible and then finish as many as conditions allow.

Deer account for about one-third of the stock units at Mararoa, with 4,150 breeding hinds, 900 replacements and about 2,000 weaners finished on the property each year. The station also has about 13,500 ewes and 920 Angus cows. Trading cattle are carried at times.

Canton said that in his first season at Mararoa he'd found they were not giving as much attention to the deer as to the sheep, meaning hind body condition scores could be lower than desirable, with poor conception rates and only 30 percent of the finishing animals making it to the September/October chilled

market. They knew they could do better and took a whole-farm systems approach to get the deer working in properly with the other livestock classes.

They started by paying more attention to what the hinds were feeding on when wintering on the hills, so they would be better set up for lactation in summer. Also important was the way the sheep system – where lambs are weaned after 100 days at 33–35kg – flowed into the deer system, leaving good feed available for hinds and fawns. About half of the hinds and fawns are brought down onto the better country in summer, which frees up hill country for the ewes.

Mararoa does no summer crops and no “fancy” pasture species. Improved pastures are mainly ryegrass but there is also 100 hectares of lucerne for the deer to use over summer. Weaning is done over three weeks from mid-February, with fawns weaned back onto lucerne and kept in their social groups – maintained right through to June – thus decreasing stress.

Canton said they can get fawns growing up to 600g/day in the lead-up to weaning and are wanting to maintain this momentum through autumn. Grain is fed with the lucerne to help get weight gains up – and with finishing deer averaging just over 80kg liveweight by 1 June, they are clearly getting there. They keep some grain in the system as insurance against lack of rain, and are considering increasing the number of Advantage feeders (currently there are two).

Things can start tightening up by January at Mararoa, and Canton said that by then, “it’s all about next season”. If necessary, they have the flexibility to shed some trading cattle, or get lambs away earlier, to take off the pressure. “The important thing is to act early,” he said.

By better understanding the feed requirements of the deer to meet targets – for example making sure store weaners are no less than 50kg – performance has lifted markedly.

In the past couple of years average carcass weights from deer finished at Mararoa have lifted by 4kg and the proportion of finishing animals going into the chilled market has risen from 30 to 80 percent. Canton said it has taken some work to get there, but the support of the staff and stock manager with clear targets and trigger points and a whole-farm approach has helped make it happen. ■



Matt Canton (photographed at Northbank Station): Giving deer feed requirements more attention at Mararoa Station has paid dividends.



# Information-sharing puts farmer on new feed path

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

Gentle arm-twisting from a regional Advance Party is leading South Otago's Tony Chittock toward swedes and possibly lucerne as a bog and drought-buster.

**FOR THE PAST** year, the South Otago Advance Party (AP) has been meeting to share ideas for profitable farming, as part of the national Passion2Profit programme.

Tony is an agricultural contractor near Balclutha and chairs the group. At an AP farm visit he hosted in February 2017 he shared his struggle with grazing in winter, and high-energy feed in hard summers like the current one.

Tony and his wife Debbie run a 152-hectare farm (of which 60ha is currently leased out) on the downlands of Waitepeka.

He runs a deer finishing and breeding operation with some velvet and a small number of sheep.

The farm is totally deer fenced except for about 8ha but he's looking forward to taking back the lease block next year, allowing him to grow more supplement.

The property runs 275 mixed age hinds, 50 R2 hinds and kills about 220 weaners. There are also a handful of mixed-age red and wapiti sires. He runs a grass-based system, spraying and direct drilling to conserve moisture in spring because it's too dry in autumn.

Crucially, it allows two grazings before winter.

A quarter of the farm is shut up for baleage/silage in spring so it's a challenge to grow enough grass to finish the weaners. Until now, his go-to option in tight feed conditions has been buying in feed and reducing the stocking rate.

The AP's suggestion of swedes and lucerne may help.

## Arm twisted

"They twisted my arm to start growing swedes and talked me out of feeding hinds hay in winter (mixed aged hinds are all wintered on self-feed silage). They thought filling up on lower ME feed using hay would result in some of the hinds losing condition and having to be taken out."

Kale will follow the swede crop and then paddocks will go into new grass.

Tony admits he's not totally sure how he will manage the lucerne. Subterranean clover or other grass species may also be summer feed options.

Time will tell, but it's set to be an improvement on the old pastures and not having to grow hay should save money and another two paddocks for grazing.

This summer, as in many parts of Otago and Southland, it has been exceptionally dry. "We started feeding out baleage on 2 January whereas previously it's mid-January. We won't stop."

He has sold most of his lambs and dumped what's left of the yearlings to reduce the load. It's the continuation of a productivity headache.



South Otago Advance Party chairman and Waitepeka, Balclutha, deer farmer Tony Chittock. Photo: Tim Fulton

## Production declined

Animal production declined in 2008 after a very dry season and fluctuates with seasonal changes: last year Tony ran 14.3 stock units per hectare compared with 16 the year before.

To lift performance, he wants to make silage/baleage on the lease block once it comes up in March, and is considering sub-soiling to improve fertility and extend seasonal growth.

He's also weighing up the value of inoculant to improve silage quality and utilisation. For stock management he'd like to lift the calving percentage, lift killing weights and bring forward the average kill date. He has compared the Passion2Profit key performance indicators with his own performance (Table 1).

Table 1: P2P key performance indicators versus Chittock performance

Key performance indicator	P2P	Chittock
Fawning rate (births to hinds mated)	95%	~85%
Average kill date	11 November	Late December
Average daily growth rate (over the life of the animal)	256g	240–250g

Tony is a longtime fencing contractor and former Telford tutor, but deer mean more to him than a bit on the side. Right from when he first farmed alongside his father and brother, he's liked deer's low-fuss style. For one thing, unlike sheep, he didn't have to spend endless days crutching, drenching and yarding. ■

# Slope and fencing policy vital for Environment AP

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

The environment is top of mind around here, says Southlander Bruce Allan. His third-generation 79 hectare family farm near Gore is part of a Passion2Profit Environment Advance Party (AP) helping the industry work with incoming land and water regulations.

**SOUTHLAND DEER FARMERS** like Bruce and his farming-minded son Andrew are trying to be proactive about regional planning rules.

The environment must be right for everyone, stock included. “Happy deer create a lot less environmental damage than unhappy ones,” Bruce says.

His exception to that maxim is that deer can’t be given total free rein on a farm. Wallowing, for example, must be carefully managed to keep silt and nutrients out of waterways. “Happy deer are wallowing deer so sometimes you’ve got to make them unhappy.”

In some ways, Bruce is the right man for this: in his day job as a Fonterra Sustainable Dairying Adviser, he’s helping Fonterra suppliers prepare environment plans themselves.

He has previously had rural sales and technical roles, most recently as FarmIQ southern business manager. He used the FarmIQ software to create his own farm environment plan for the regional council.

He highly recommends FarmIQ for deer farmers but understands other options are available, like the regional council’s Focused Activity Plans.

The council’s approach involves a council-led walk of the farm, precision mapping, checks against the good management practice standards and agreement on practical solutions to environmental issues. Farmers may soon also be able to create a farm environment plan through the upcoming Environment Code of Practice being developed by DINZ, he understood.

Meanwhile the Southland environment AP is ticking over. It’s less than a year since the group was initiated but it is already giving farmers clarity and confidence, Bruce says. “Deer do have, in some cases, significant environmental impacts and we’ve got to find ways of dealing with those.”

On their own initiative, Bruce, his wife Robyn and other Southland Environment AP members are taking water samples from their properties, testing for *E. coli*, nitrogen, phosphate and sediment.

The results are rolling in and Bruce had good early news from his first returned sample: *E. coli* was “pleasingly low”.

The Environment AP’s goals included creating a conduit for science into the deer farming community, providing feedback to researchers from farms and helping regional councils to understand the impact of farm regulation.

The programme was also aimed at helping individual farmers and raising the profile of positive on-farm changes.



Bruce Allan (right) and son Andrew on Grandview farm near Gore. Photo: Tim Fulton

Bruce says members of his AP are aware the regional council wanted more fencing around creeks. In some situations that is the best option to minimise damage, but it is not practical everywhere. Alternative management options may be more appropriate in other circumstances.

Bruce has learnt a lot in the 21 years he has been farming deer at his Grandview property. “A lot of the soil damage was in the first five years while we were working it out. If they were in the wrong paddock on the wrong day and started to play they’d possibly do a racetrack around the outside.”

Bruce understood the fencing rationale but was looking for a compromise, knowing that more post and wire may increase the pollution risk by encouraging fence pacing. “If you put it in the wrong way you’re going to create problems.” AP members have been looking at ways to manage slope and runoff.

Bruce’s property is gentle, rolling country, and extensively drained – it was a dairy farm under his father and grandfather. The big challenge is its heavy winter soil. “On crop you can go from firm to porridge in 12 hours,” he says.

Bruce and Andrew, a Year 13 student and New Zealand junior triple jumper, are tweaking their grazing system to protect wetter paddocks during winter. Bruce has wintered deer on a standoff pad and is expanding that area this season, including a basic roof to keep the stock dry.



In recent years they've mostly been fed on baleage and fodder beet but will have less of the latter on the modified pad. The approach will make the winter feed regime less intensive and free up more grass in spring.

The farm runs a straight red herd, produces 1.7 tonnes of velvet and kills 300 deer annually. The weaners average 55kg carcass weight and stock are killed quite late in the season to allow maximum velvet production from the spikers. It's a high-fertility farm with a pH of 6 and Olsen P averaging about 30.

Bruce recently introduced sub clover to provide more legume in pasture for colder parts of the year.

The farm is divided into just 21 paddocks so smart feeding is important for optimum production, animal welfare and environmental control. The deer are rotated as much as possible, but it is a challenge to juggle several mobs of stags, hinds and weaners while keeping them separated. Shelter belts help in that respect, forming a physical barrier that reduces fence pacing by neighbouring mobs, as well as providing shade and protection from wind.

The farm carries 270 mixed age stags, 50 R2s, 135 mixed age hinds and up to 300 weaners depending on how many they buy in. Last year, for example, they bought in about 200 weaners. The family also keeps a handful of bulls and heifers.

Andrew helps when he can between school and athletics. He's eyeing a university course next year – probably Lincoln – and in the meantime helps Bruce with tractor work, stock handling and fencing. ■



This rock buffer repairs the damage from fence pacing and helps prevent further sediment loss. Photo: Tim Fulton

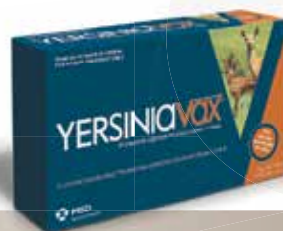
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# A “chess opponent” worthy of respect

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

Handling deer is like a game of chess for Landcorp farm manager Lindsay Cunningham. You can encourage the stock to make a certain move but they’re smart and shouldn’t be pushed.

**HE SEEMS COMFORTABLE** with the game on Thornicroft Station, a deer, sheep and beef finishing unit south-west of Dunedin on the upland “Eldorado Plateau”.

The windswept 3,000 hectare property overlooks Lake Mahinerangi and one-third of it is deer fenced.

Part of the rationale for increasing deer is that they return \$150/ha more than the sheep and beef unit.

It’s formidable country, climbing to 750m at the site of the TrustPower wind turbines on the property. But the deer, by most measures, are doing well.

Lindsay says the deer must be respected and treated smartly. “The biggest killer for deer is stress; it’s fight or flight.”

He urges staff to take a breath around the deer, have a clear plan and let them think they are in control. In his experience, the calmer they are, the better they grow.

Lindsay wants to get all of the R1s to the chilled market, up from the current average of 90 percent. This year, 98 percent made it there and Lindsay’s stretch target is finishing all deer in the market at 55kg.

Ninety percent of the deer – and sheep and cattle – are forward-contracted so Lindsay knows three months in advance what he is owed.

The top priority for the deer finishing is getting weaners up to 90kg by 1 June, recognising that the three months until early spring is a pinch feed period.

At that time of year there are 26,000 stock units on the farm, so to give the weaners maximum opportunity Lindsay and his deer manager Caleb shut up 600ha in spring (crop, young grass and silage/baleage).

The first draft of 600 weaners is sent in early August while they are still on crop. With lambing starting on 3 October, this frees up grass in the deer unit for ewes and lambs, as well as for cows and calves.

Fawns are weaned on 1 June and put onto swedes with plenty of “gully roughage”, while the hinds are used to clean up residual grass after weaning. The hinds are body-condition-scored and light hinds are drafted off, staying on grass all winter. Weaners eat one-third of the swedes and are moved into the next swede paddock. Hinds are used to clean up the remaining swedes, without any use of break fences. The silage goes to the hinds over winter.

As a breeding and finishing farm, replacement hinds are mainly sourced from other Landcorp properties as mixed age wet/dry hinds younger than eight years.

The property runs 2,500 hinds, all mated to the wapiti stag. Thornicroft, is a member of the Passion2Profit South Otago



Landcorp Thornicroft farm manager Lindsay Cunningham. Photo: Tim Fulton

Advance Party (AP). Lindsay hosted the group last year and one of the issues raised was winter feeding options in snow conditions. Thornicroft leases an adjacent tussock block for cattle grazing over three months in winter, relieving pressure on the main farm.

At that meeting there was discussion on fencing of waterways and Lake Mahinerangi under regional council rules. Under council requirements, Thornicroft will need reticulated water in the deer block. Lindsay says to reduce stress on stock and staff, Caleb opens the gate the night before a shift, giving deer time to find their own way out. The following day, stock can be easily moved by driving around the paddock. No dogs are used.

The AP noted the stock are fully fed but there’s potential for growth-rate improvement from weaning to slaughter. Members suggested high protein/high ME supplementary feed would be an option but the additional cost would need to be weighed against any premium for early slaughter.

For better productivity, Lindsay wants to reduce the 5–7 percent losses between scanning and first yarding.

The group felt the losses were more likely due to mismothering than disease, especially as the stock were mixed age hinds rather than R2s.

As a result of the AP discussion, Lindsay was intent on a second scan of a group at 180 days’ gestation to see if losses were occurring pre or post calving. He raised the possibility of entering into relationships with other farms to ensure continuity of supply, including purchase of scanned, in-calf R2s.

For its part, the AP admitted to a dose of “feed envy” on seeing Thornicroft and were impressed by the whole-paddock grazing.

*continued on page 21*



# Velvet tested for memory benefit

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

Otago University researchers are exploring the role of velvet antler in maintaining healthy brain ageing, with a focus on the effects of velvet consumption on memory. The former NZ Warnham & Woburn Deer Society donated residual assets of about \$50,000 to VARNZ for this research when it wound up.

**THE RODENT-BASED COGNITIVE** study is partly an attempt to show how velvet acts on the brain, and whether velvet supplementation could help slow down age-related mental and cerebral blood flow deterioration.

There is growing demand for natural products to support brain function in the middle-aged.

University of Otago Associate Professor Ping Liu became interested in the effects of ageing on cognitive function while working in a large hospital in China.

Ping was a medical doctor in the Department of Geriatrics and worked with dementia patients for many years in China. She became a researcher after moving to New Zealand. Her research interests have been the mechanisms and intervention of cognitive decline during ageing and Alzheimer's disease. A focus of her work is arginine (an amino acid) metabolism.

Brain endothelial cells become dysfunctional in older people, which contributes to cognitive decline during normal ageing and neurodegeneration in Alzheimer's disease. Velvet antlers grow very fast, up to 2cm a day. "There must be some mechanisms to support this," Ping says.

In a pilot study using New Zealand freeze-dried velvet antler powder, Ping's group found arginine and other compounds that are essential for cell growth and the maintenance of normal endothelial function. These preliminary findings have led Ping to postulate the anti-ageing and cognitive enhancing properties of New Zealand freeze dried velvet antler powder.

Recently her team started a five-year Health Research Council programme to focus on Alzheimer's. There are many theories for the cause of the disease, but none could explain everything. Drug trials repeatedly failed to treat the disease. Ping and her colleagues are also working on blood and cerebrospinal fluid markers for the diagnosis and prognosis of Alzheimer's.

Since ageing is the major risk factor for more than 95 percent of late-onset Alzheimer's cases, healthy ageing is a critical turning point for the prevention of the disease, Ping says.

The work funded by DINZ is a side project of Ping's main research on Alzheimer's disease. "My research group has been

working on age-related memory deficit, and whether we have any way to slow down ageing. We have trialled a number of drugs, some naturally occurring in the brain, which can enhance learning and memory ability in aged rats, and even some young ones."

They are planning to assess the effects of velvet supplementation on memory and cerebral blood flow in rats as a pilot study. "There is one enzyme involved in converting arginine to nitric oxide. This enzyme, presents in the endothelial cells and plays an important role in maintaining normal cerebral blood flow." Ping's previous work has demonstrated that the enzyme levels in the brain are reduced in aged rats and in patients with Alzheimer's. Therefore, they will also look at how velvet supplementation affects this enzyme.

In April, the University of Otago researchers will start the velvet project and carry out a rat memory test to make more sense of the arginine link.

The university will provide staged reporting to DINZ under the terms of its funding contract. ■



Ping Liu outside University of Otago School of Medicine building. Photo: Tim Fulton

## *Chess opponent: continued*

They saw the value of better feed for sending animals to the chilled market and recognised that Thornicroft's scope and terrain suited deer.

Lindsay's five-year goal for Thornicroft is to stock-proof the farm and provide good access to water, control weeds and

maintain health and safety. "Nice-to-haves" would include laneway and subdivision fencing and crossings and drainage in bog areas.

The station has five staff including Lindsay, plus casual staff. Lindsay has been on the farm six years after holding various positions with Landcorp and in Australia. ■

# Velvet-healing project targets stem cell proteins

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

Associate Professor Dawn Coates at the University of Otago Dental School is investigating the role of antler stem cells in post-velvet healing and antler growth.

**IT'S A GOOD** fit for the former Invermay-based deer researcher, who specialises in the cellular and molecular mechanisms involved in tissue growth and repair.

Dr Coates and PhD student Zhen Dong are leading a study to examine the proteins that regulate antler growth and the well-controlled “wounding inflammatory response” in antler. This allows identification of the healing properties of antler and why antlers don’t typically get infected when they cast.

“We’ve done a lot of research on different types of human stem cells so it wasn’t a big leap to be working on antler,” Coates says.

The zone of most interest in the velvet growth and healing study is 4cm below the cut antler, where deer have an unusually high concentration of stem cells. “They’re really quite a special type of cell. We’re focused on what proteins these cells are producing.” The team is also looking at extracts of velvet, with an overall aim of trying to work out what factors control antler growth.

“The reason we’re doing this is because stem cells drive antler growth at about 2cm a day. That’s remarkable. Their doubling time when we grow antler stem cells in the laboratory is less than 24 hours, which is very fast.”

The dental faculty lab team has recently acquired new equipment, allowing the detection of proteins in deer antler tissue with pressurised heat retrieval. By studying where families of proteins are in the tissue and how they interact with each other, the team aims to better understand how antler grows.

The work can also pinpoint where in the antler a particular protein is produced by growing antler stem cells and antler skin cells in culture dishes. “In the dishes we can control the cells; we



Associate professor Dawn Coates (right) and PhD student Zhen Dong with powdered velvet extract for examination with new lab equipment. Photo: Tim Fulton

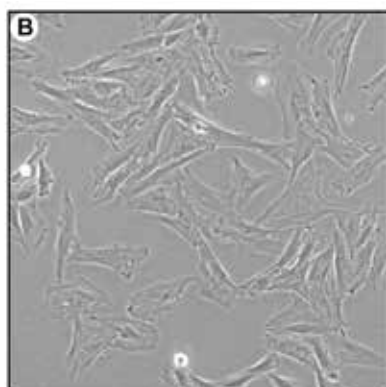
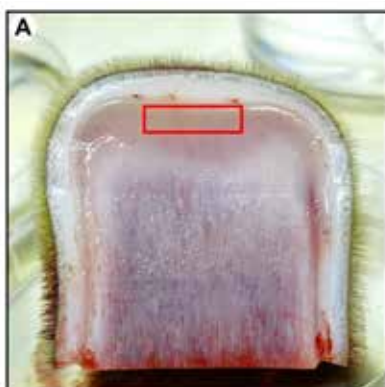
can make the stem cells become bone, cartilage or even fat.”

They will be adding key proteins and fractions made from velvet to the cells, as well as stopping the cells from producing certain proteins. They will then look at the behaviour of the antler cells, particularly in relation to cartilage and bone formation.

Applied commercially, the research could lead to the development of specialised velvet extracts. It’s just one of numerous stem cell research projects worldwide and stem cell-based therapies are just starting to offer new treatment approaches in medicine, Coates says. “We will see a medical revolution in the next 20 years around stem cells. It’s about using your stem cells as a therapy on you.”

The stem cell study started last April and is funded jointly by the University of Otago and Deer Industry New Zealand. Another key member of the team is Dr Stephen Haines, from AgResearch in Lincoln, who will be doing large-scale protein identification on antler samples. The research is limited to New Zealand red deer. The team also has a very good collaboration with former Invermay biologist and deer researcher, Dr Chunyi Li, who now works in China.

The New Zealand and Chinese researchers are working together on various projects, though any intellectual property generated from the University of Otago research will remain in this country. ■



Antler cells are collected from the stem cell region (A, boxed area). Growing the cells in the laboratory (B) allows us to understand the proteins being produced by antler and thus its potential health benefits. Photo: University of Otago



# Group brings coordination and focus to parasites research

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

A new advisory group will help ensure the limited resources available for research into internal parasites of deer are properly coordinated and deployed in the most effective way possible.

**THE DEER INDUSTRY** Parasite Group had its inaugural meeting during the NZDFA Branch Chairs' Meeting in Wellington last October. The group is chaired by Geoff Asher (AgResearch) and brings together representatives from research, the veterinary profession and deer farmers, with the aim of providing guidance for current and future deer research involving parasites. Its mandate extends beyond work funded by DEEResearch. The group will next meet at the Deer Industry Conference in May.

DINZ Science and Policy Manager, Catharine Sayer, says DINZ is confident the new group will have a positive impact. "A similar group that also included representatives from the various animal health companies a few years ago agreed on priorities for a research programme and all of their recommendations have since been picked up."

## New research initiatives

Geoff Asher says several important new research initiatives are underway, including the development of a mini bolus, a deer-specific oral drench formulation and a study into the life cycle of internal parasites of deer. "It was logical to have an industry-good group that could provide some advice and coordination between these and various other projects."

Veterinarians in the group are Dave Lawrence, Dave Seifert and Pania Flint. Researchers (in addition to Geoff Asher) are Jamie Ward (AgResearch Invermay), Dave Leathwick (AgResearch, Hopkirk Institute) and Andy Greer (Lecturer in animal science, Lincoln, and DEEResearch Board). Farmer representatives are Steve Borland, Paddy Boyd and William Oliver. Lorna Humm and Catharine Sayer are the DINZ representatives on the group.

"The group contains a lot of expertise and the first meeting was an enlightening one," Asher says.

He says internal parasites are part of a very complex biological system and surprisingly little is known about the host-parasite interactions in deer. A two-year study to establish the seasonal biology of lungworm and *Ostertagia* infection in young and adult red deer would provide extremely valuable context for efforts to find effective and sustainable solutions (we will look at this project in detail in the next issue of *Deer Industry News*).

## Deer-specific treatment sought

The two projects underway to develop a deer-specific anthelmintic treatment with an acceptably short withholding period – one for a triple oral drench and the other for a mini bolus – will continue in the meantime. Asher says the oral drench option appears to have the edge at this stage and if the various hurdles associated

with the oral are negotiated satisfactorily (e.g., meeting regulatory requirements, commercial arrangements and satisfactory efficacy), the mini bolus option could be "parked" for the time being.

"But things can change," he noted. One possible advantage for a mini bolus could be effectiveness against liver fluke, as well as gastrointestinal parasites and lungworm, thanks to its sustained action.

"Because the host-parasite system is so complex, it would have been surprising if the mini bolus had worked 100 percent first time. The same goes for the oral drench. With each iteration of research we learn more. The bolus, for example, probably needs just a minor adjustment to its formulation to achieve better results those reported last October." (See *Deer Industry News* December 2017, page 9.)

In the meantime, the two research streams will be evaluated at the end of the current financial year before any firm recommendations are made about pursuing one or the other.

## CARLA on the radar

The role of CARLA in deer is also very much on the radar, Asher says. (CARLA is the antigen that interferes with the stage three larval development of gut parasites.) While it's still unclear whether CARLA confers a productivity advantage in deer, Asher says some hinds at Invermay are being inseminated from high-CARLA sires to give researchers a head start (these stags are already recorded for CARLA on Deer Select and have demonstrated exceptionally high CARLA breeding values).

"This type of research is frustratingly slow. It can't be replicated in the lab – you have to see how animals perform in the real world – and that can take years. That's why we are getting the right sort of animals on the ground as soon as we can."

The development of anthelmintic resistance in deer parasites is not well understood and the parasite group was keen to see knowledge in this area expanded, Asher said.

"We are still struggling to understand whether this is happening and to what extent, or whether it's a case of under dosing. That is why the parasite life cycle work will be so important – it should have been started 20 years ago!"

With so many unknowns about deer parasites and their control, Asher says the industry will need to invest in this work for many years to come. "It's possible to eliminate or control some bacterial and viral diseases quite easily with vaccines, but the relationship between parasites and their hosts is extraordinarily complex and has evolved over millions of years. Those parasites will always exist and that's why we need to understand them better." ■

# Velvet update

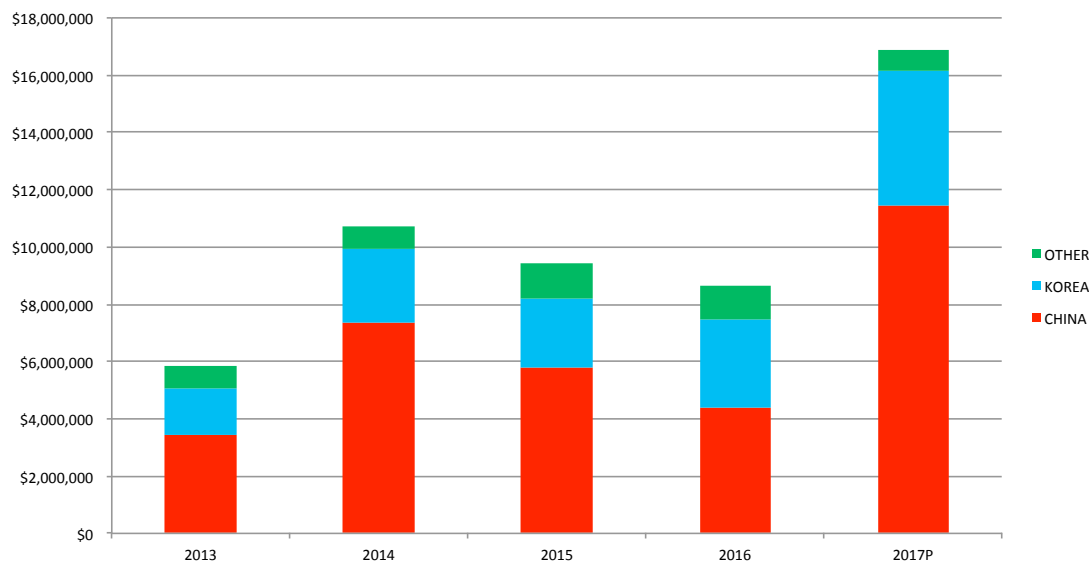
## Strong start to 2017/18 season creates new velvet export record

The latest export figures published by Statistics New Zealand demonstrate a strong start to this velvet season. For the year ending December 2017, velvet exports hit NZ\$67m, a new record for the industry and well up from the NZ\$42m earned in 2016.

Some of the increase for the 2017 calendar year will be due to a phasing spike – a result of strong early-season demand.

For the first three months of this season (October – December 2017) velvet exports were up significantly in both of New Zealand's

Figure 1: New Zealand velvet exports (NZ\$ FOB) for the three months ending December



Source: Statistics New Zealand

core markets in Korea and China (Figure 1). The early-season demand was created by some importers wanting to ensure velvet supply for the new season, following last year's uncertainty. ■

## Peel Forest buys Pampas Heights Warnhams

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

Peel Forest Estate in South Canterbury has expanded its Warnham line with the purchase of the Pampas Heights herd.

**FOR PAMPAS HEIGHTS** owner, Bryce Heard, the dispersal of his herd ends 30 years in the industry.

Heard has been a forthright advocate for a combination of good velvet and venison genetics, arguing that trophy animals are a separate, specialised sector.

He said he wanted an orderly exit of his venison and velvet bloodlines over two years but his signal to prospective buyers in a quarterly newsletter sparked a sale within 48 hours.

"We had offers left right and centre," he said. Peel Forest offered the top price and wanted everything including unborn fawns, so it was a done deal.

Heard will now put his energy into building a Hereford stud, noting he is a "pretty bloody fit 72".

He has been farming hill country at Kaharoa on the northern

side of Lake Rotorua for nearly 20 years. He originally ran deer in 1988 from two farms at Ngakuru south of Rotorua and launched a stud in 1996.

"The idea is now to run Herefords to keep in the farming game."

Peel Forest's purchase included 120 hinds, 50 yearling hinds, 40 stags and 25 unsold stags from the recent sire sale.

The sale continues Peel Forest's buying streak from big studs in the past five years, including Warnham and Woburn deer through the purchase of bloodlines from Windermere, Stanfield's and Pampas Heights.

Owner Graham Carr said he incorporated the Windermere line into Peel Forest's Deer Select programme and into its main Forrester line "with a good deal of success" and expected the same from the Pampas Heights Warnhams.

*continued on page 25*



# Venison update

## Production

- The national kill for the 12 months ending November 2017 was 287,319, down just over 2% compared with 2016.
- Heavier weights have again been recorded, with the average carcass weight for the 12 months ending November 2017 sitting at 57.59kg, 2.4% higher than the same time last year.
- Hinds made up 48% of the kill for the 12 months to November 2017, down 2% when compared with the year before.

## Exports

- The United States overtook Germany as our leading export market in 2017, both in terms of value and volume. Sales to the United States totalled over \$45.9 million, while sales to Germany were \$41.6 million. Increased sales of trim products have been a key driver of this increase.
- Sales to the Netherlands in 2017 increased by \$4 million, taking the total exports for that market in 2017 to \$16.8 million.
- Exports to the United Kingdom eased back from \$12.5 million in 2016 to \$9.2 million for 2017.

## Schedule and market observations

- The national average published venison schedule remains high. The average for January 2018 was \$10.28, 31% higher than in January 2017.
- This is the first time that the national average published venison schedule has gone up during January.
- A number of European importers have been visiting New Zealand in recent weeks to confirm their orders

of venison for the coming year.

- Some importers have noted an increase in the overall quality of exports with few instances of wastage due to poor quality carcasses or packaging issues.
- European importers have noted the success of the most recent chilled season with the majority reporting all product sold. They do note that the high prices are starting to put some of their customers under pressure.
- Exporters have noted that prices for lower-value carcass components such as bones have increased significantly due to demand from the petfood industry and this is having a marked impact on schedules. *Deer Industry News* will explore this in more detail in a future issue. ■

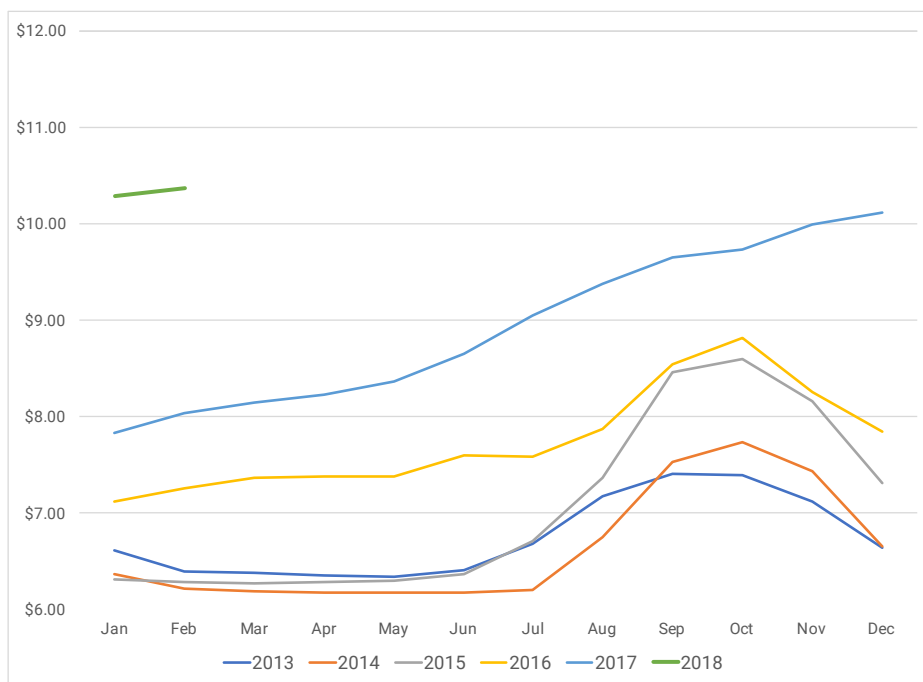


Figure 1: National published schedule: 2013–2018 AP Stag (\$/kg gross)

## Peel Forest and Pampas: continued

“There are some different genetics that we needed to integrate into the Windermere herd,” he said.

Peel Forest was established near Rangitata River about 25 years ago, during which time Carr has invested in genetics from around the world.

The 10,000 head Peel Forest “undoubtedly” had the world’s largest Warnham herd and Carr wanted to keep building it through breeding and acquisition.

“We will continue to look for Warnhams.”

Peel Forest recently moved 2,000 hinds from the home farm near Geraldine to a block at Mt Somers in Mid Canterbury. The property was previously a dairy support unit although it was originally in deer, Carr said. ■



Bryce Heard (left) and Graham Carr.

# Venison industry pioneer passes away

Robert Wilson, who worked alongside Sir Tim Wallis to found the venison export industry, has passed away at his Wanaka home, aged 78.

**HE WAS ALWAYS** a keen outdoorsman and spent his weekends hunting, fishing and going on jetboating adventures in Central Otago and Fiordland with his best friend Tim.

In 1961, when Wallis asked Wilson if he could market venison overseas, his response was “if you can get enough, Tim”.

A simple handshake and a gentlemen’s agreement was instrumental in the beginnings of the deer industry, when the pair successfully exported the venison from six ground-shot deer to George Bokouris in New York.

The first commercial helicopter shoot in New Zealand took place in McGill’s Creek in April 1963. (A plaque is to be erected at this historic site in the Matukituki Valley.)

Wilson cut up the carcasses on his family dining table for export to Ferdinand L. Friedrich in Hamburg, Germany under Wilson’s offshoot company, the Independent Venison Co.

As well as helping shape the venison industry, Wilson was pivotal in the seafood industry and in the sheep and possum skin trade. He was also heavily involved in leading New Zealand exports of timber, dried flowers, honey, berryfruit, ice cream and frozen vegetables.

Showing a strong entrepreneurial streak from an early age,



Robert Wilson: Helped pioneer the venison export industry in the early 1960s. Photo: Annabel Wilson.

he travelled to eastern Asia as a young man, the first of 50 years of trips to the region, where he established lifelong business relationships and connections.

Wilson led New Zealand’s first trade missions to Japan and was a founding member of the New Zealand Japan Business Council. He accepted the Government Award for Exporting on behalf of Wilson Neill in 1971, and was awarded the Governor General’s Export Award in 1978. In 1984, he was made a Fellow of the NZ Institute of Management.

In the 1990s, Robert Wilson Ltd helped establish a sheepskin tannery in Xuanhua, China with an associate company, Auskin Group.

The most recent enterprise he was involved in was Infinite Energy, a disruptor in the solar power sector.

Robert Wilson is survived by his wife Prue, his children Ben, Angus and Annabel, and five grandchildren.

• Source: Annabel Wilson ■



First venison recovery shoot, McGill’s Creek, Matukituki Valley. Photo courtesy of the Wilson family.

## Celebrating 50 years

NZDFA (principal sponsor) PGG Wrightson and Provelco have thrown their support behind a project to celebrate the first 50 years of deer farming in New Zealand with the publication of a book: *Deer Farming in New Zealand and the people who made it happen*.

**AGRICULTURAL JOURNALIST, LYNDA** Gray, a regular contributor to the “Deer Farmer” supplement in *Countrywide*, is leading the project and starting to make good headway tracking down and capturing the stories of the industry’s pioneers.

One such person was the late Robert Wilson (see obituary above). Lynda was lucky enough to interview Robert in August last year and hear his stories of the first commercial venture

recovering and marketing wild venison. Wilson went into business with Tim Wallis and the pair eventually switched from venison to live recovery.

Lynda has also interviewed Mike Giles, New Zealand’s first licensed deer farmer. Giles farmed deer at Rahana Station near Taupō from 1959 to 1979. She is keen to hear from other early deer farmers and those involved in the pioneering days of the industry.



# On target at Raincliff

There were big shots, hot shots and long shots at this year's Elk & Wapiti Society velvet and hard antler competition held at Raincliff station on 27 January.



Judges Grant Hasse (left) and Geoff Pullar with some of the velvet entries.

**THE CHAMPION OF** Champions big shots were Dave Lawrence and Donna Day of Tikana with a 17.35kg head from Thor (4 years).

Raincliff station was a perfect venue and the Morgan family first-class hosts. Dave Morgan led an informal pre-lunch farm tour overlooking the huge developments of recent years. The 750 hectare rolling-to-steep downland country was holding on surprisingly well in the dry conditions although Dave said a shower of rain would be welcome. The farming focus was now very much on the 2,000 stags and 1,000 hinds, which generated income from velvet, venison and trophy heads. Of particular note were the

fenced off gullies, wetland areas and plantings established as part of Raincliff's farm environment plan to mitigate run-off from the steep country.

Spectators and participants alike enjoyed the sharp shots and long shots trying their skills claybird and target shooting with shotguns, bows and arrows.

A video auction of a handful of elite elk and wapiti was a new initiative and the top price of \$16,000 went to Littlebourne Wapiti. The PGG Wrightson-run auction was a promising addition, president Paul Waller said. A spit roast dinner was followed by an auction of deer-related products and assorted goodies from members and raised \$3,500 for relevant research and projects. ■

## Category winners

### Velvet

Category*	Owner	Bull	Weight (kg)
2yr	NZ Bison	Y30	7.56
3yr	Tikana	Forcaster	12.11
4yr	Tikana	Thor	17.35
6yr	Raincliff	Gr634	13.3
Open Supreme	Tikana	Nepia	24.02
Wapiti 1**	J&S Bartholomew	Henry	14.4

### Hard Antler

Category	Owner	Bull	IOA
2yr Typical	Whyte Farming	Danali	337 <sup>6</sup> / <sub>8</sub>
2yr Non-Typical	Whyte Farming	Traverse	393 <sup>0</sup> / <sub>8</sub>
Open Non-Typical	Brad Travers	Big Micky	389 <sup>6</sup> / <sub>8</sub>

### Champion

of Champions	Tikana	Thor	17.35kg @ 4yrs
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### Reserve

Champion	Whyte Farming	Traverse	2yr Non-Typical
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\*5yr velvet not included due to insufficient entries

\*\*Wapiti 1: More than 19cm beam and over 3kg per side



One challenge has been finding the names of the first six holders of the deer farming licences granted by the then NZ Forest Service. Lynda has a couple of names including Mike Giles, but would appreciate any information about other early licensees.

Her first interview subject for the book was Len Ross, whose interest in deer farming was sparked in 1957, when he hand reared a captured fallow fawn on

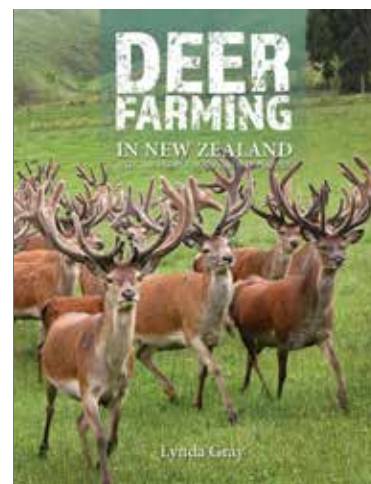
his Waimumu farm. Sixty years on, the family is still farming deer, with Len's son and grandson running 850 red hinds.

*Deer Farming in New Zealand and the people who made it happen* will be about 300 pages long with publication planned for

May 2019.

If you have any stories, documents, photos or other information about the development of the New Zealand deer industry, Lynda would love to hear from you.

You can follow progress on a special Facebook page: Deer Farming in NZ – the Book, or contact Lynda directly on 027 465 3726, [lyndagray@xtra.co.nz](mailto:lyndagray@xtra.co.nz) ■



# A boomer of a sale season

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Deer farmers around New Zealand have given an emphatic vote of confidence in their industry this sale season, spending about \$7 million on sires as well as velvetting stags, hinds and semen.

**WHILE THERE WERE** no six-figure stags sold this year – the top price of \$95,000 was paid by Canes Deer for a Deer Genetics three-year-old – clearance rates and average prices were well up on last season. A handful of sales would have disappointed owners, but the great majority saw a strong lift in prices. Arawata and Deer Genetics (3-year stags) enjoyed a lift of more than 100% in their average prices and several more saw prices surge by well over 50%.

Clearance rates have been exceptionally good, with an overall rate of nearly 94%, well up on last year's 85% and indicating a better supply/demand balance is being achieved. (The overall offering of about 789 sires was down around 3% on last year.) As usual, the elk/wapiti sales did better, with an impressive 97.7% clearance rate this season. Red sire sales cleared at 92.3%, well up on last year's 83%.

This season saw two new entrants in the market and both were well supported. Forest Road Farm in central Hawke's Bay breeds for antler and had a good inaugural sale, averaging \$4,900 and having just one stag passed in of the 18 mainly 3-year-olds on offer. Rupert Red Deer, riding their success at the 2017 National Velvet Competition, had a terrific first sale, averaging just over \$11,000 and selling 17 of the 19 stags on offer. The Ruperts also sold all 60 R2 velvetting stags on offer at a good average of \$1,654.

Buyers have been paying increasing attention to breeding values and rewarded sellers who offered high-BV sires. Connemara Wapiti provided buyers with a table showing the BVs for growth, eye muscle area, terminal economic index and 2-year velvet for the sires on offer and had a good sale with 100% clearance and prices up 46% on last year. Other studs featuring BVs in their marketing included Wilkins Farming, Netherdale Red Deer, Arawata and Ruapehu Red Deer and all had strong sales.



Sires at the successful Wilkins Farming South Island sale. Photo: Pauline Pattullo.

Many studs now routinely promote their catalogues and featured sires through social media and Netherdale also livestreamed its auction on Facebook for the first time this year, a great innovation.

Our thanks to those who responded to our survey and submitted sale reports and photographs.

## ALTRIVE RED DEER 12 January, Waipounamu, Southland

<b>Stags sold</b>	24 of 25 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$40,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$9,754	-3.5%

**Other animals sold** 49/50 yearling hinds sold with a top price of \$6,700 and an average of \$2,557  
64/64 two year old velvet stags sold with an average price of \$1,673

**Comment** One passed-in stag sold later in the day. Large crowd again with 76 registered buyers. We have retained our two best 3yr olds (1st & 5th place at Velvet Nationals) so we were happy with a top price of \$40,000 for lot one. All the 25 lots offered cut 7kg of velvet or better. With so many stags purchased at high prices at the auctions before ours, the sting may have gone out of the stag market a little bit by our sale. This was certainly not the case with the offering of our surplus yearling hinds, with their strong velvet pedigrees and the documented performance of their dam lines making them really sought after. Top price was \$6,700 and a very high average of \$2,557. Lot 71, the only hind offered out of our ET programme, didn't reach our reserve.

## ARAWATA DEER FARM 12 January, Pine Bush, Southland

<b>Stags sold</b>	19 of 19 2yo on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$46,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$11,305.26	+128%

**Other animals sold** 31 of 32 hinds on offer; top \$2,350, average \$887.10 (-6% on last year).  
26 of 26 velvetting stags, \$1,675 each (+15% on last year)



**Comment** Very successful sale with a good crowd. Top-priced stag went to Peel Forest. Buyers were looking for clean, stylish velvet rather than just mass, and prefer to see the cut velvet rather than animals with heads grown out. Strong interest in the sons of "Half-share", available for the first time this year. Sires with potential for breeding venison replacement hinds are also in the mix. EBVs for 12-month weight and 2-year velvet are published, as well as stags' 2-year weight.

#### BLACK FOREST\* 13 January, Outram

**Stags sold** 20 of 26 on offer  
**Top price** \$14,000  
**Average** \$5,415 **% change from last year** +42.5%

**Other animals sold** 6 of 6 hinds on offer; top \$2,000, average \$1,533.33 (+35% on last year).

#### BROCK DEER 11 January, Merino Downs, Gore

**Stags sold** 20 of 20 on offer  
**Top price** \$38,000  
**Average** \$12,900 **% change from last year** +87%

**Other animals sold** 20 of 20 yearling hinds on offer; average \$1,570 (up 45% on last year), top \$4,700  
 90 of 90 2yr velvetting stags on offer; average \$1,636 (up 57% on last year); top \$1,950

**Comment** Total clearance with huge gallery and high demand. Top prices and averages all up considerably from last year.

#### CANES DEER 17 December, Reporoa

**Stags sold** 15 of 18 3yr stags on offer  
**Top price** \$80,000  
**Average** \$16,000 **% change from last year** +23%

**Other animals sold** 24 hinds, average \$2,720 (-17.5% on last year); 23 velvet stags, average \$1,400

**Comment** Very happy with turnout and result. Rural Livestock did a great job.

#### CLACHANBURN ELK\* 18 January

**Bulls sold** 62 of 62 on offer  
**Top price** \$7,500

**Average** \$3,850 **% change from last year** +12.5%

#### CONNEMARA 14 January, Manapouri

**Bulls sold** 30 of 30 on offer  
**Top price** \$10,000  
**Average** \$5,560 **% change from last year** +46%

**Comment** A very positive sale with total clearance and a top price of \$10,000 for a bull purchased by Wilkins Farming. The colour coding of BVs proved very successful for clients adding in their selection.



Wapiti bulls on sale at Connemara, which enjoyed a total clearance and good prices. Photo: Connemara.

#### CROWLEY DEER\* 18 December, Holland Road, Hamilton

**Stags sold** 13 of 13 on offer  
**Top price** \$50,000  
**Average** \$12,591 **% change from last year** -8.5%

**Other animals sold** 9 of 9 hinds on offer; average \$6,900 (-17% on last year), top \$15,000

#### DEER GENETICS 14 December: 3 year stags

**Stags sold** 11 of 11 on offer  
**Top price** \$95,000  
**Average** \$22,045 **% change from last year** +133%

**Comment** Excellent sale. Top priced stag sold to Canes Deer.

#### DEER GENETICS 8 January: 2 year stags

**Stags sold** 15 of 15 on offer

*continued on page 30*

## Sale season: continued

<b>Top price</b>	\$33,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$7,667	+16%
<b>Other animals sold</b>	Mixed age hinds: 66 of 66 on offer; average \$986.36, top \$2,600 1yr hinds: 24 of 24 on offer; average \$1318.75; 24 of 24 velvet stags on offer, average \$1,050		

**EDENDALE DEER – WHYTE FARMING\***  
 18 January

<b>Bulls sold</b>	26 of 28 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$6,700		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$4,335	+11%

**FAIRLIGHT STATION\***  
 13 December

<b>Stags sold</b>	15 of 20 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$5,100		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$3,086	+62%

**FOREST ROAD FARM**  
 15 December on farm, Gwavas Road

<b>Stags sold</b>	17 of 18 on offer (2 x 2yo stags and 16 x 3yo)		
<b>Top price</b>	\$7,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$4,900	Inaugural sale
<b>Comment</b>	Great result for our first sale. Good to have full clearance of 3yr stags and get our stags out there to perform! Lots to build on for the future. Great local support.		

**FOVERAN DEER PARK**  
 8 January at Foveran

<b>Stags sold</b>	40 of 48 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$50,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$7,600	+76%
<b>Other animals sold</b>	10 yearling hinds		
<b>Comment</b>	Average price was well up on last year. A full gallery of buyers.		

**KELLY OAKS DEER\***  
 17 January at Foveran

<b>Stags sold</b>	10 of 11 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$10,500		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$4,810	Not recorded

**LITTLEBOURNE\***  
 16 January, Winton

<b>Bulls sold</b>	16 of 17 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$5,200		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$3,925	+40%

**LOCHINVAR WAPITI\***  
 15 January, Te Anau

<b>Bulls sold</b>	25 of 25 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$8,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$5,436	+10%

**NETHERDALE RED DEER**  
 11 January, Balfour, Southland

<b>Stags sold</b>	26 of 27 3yo sires on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$40,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$13,250	+2%
<b>Other animals sold</b>	40 of 40 hinds on offer; average \$1,600 (+36% on last year). 68 of 68 2yo red velvet stags sold, average \$1,740 (+24% on last year); top pen \$2,150 per animal. Bronx semen sold for \$1,050/ straw (all sold).		
<b>Comment</b>	Strong sale, with a very good attendance from throughout New Zealand; 3 year old sire stag average price slightly up on last year, velvet stags and hinds on par with last year.		

**PAMPAS HEIGHTS\***  
 17 December, on farm, Rotorua

<b>Stags sold</b>	26 of 30 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$11,500		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$4,227	+13.5%

**PEEL FOREST ESTATE\***  
 8 December: Forrester sires (venison)

<b>Stags sold</b>	49 of 50 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$18,200		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$7,565.31	+20%

**PEEL FOREST ESTATE\***  
 9 January: Velvet sires

<b>Stags sold</b>	29 of 30 on offer		
<b>Top price</b>	\$46,000		
<b>Average</b>	<b>% change from last year</b>	\$11,603	+29%



**RAINCLIFF STATION\***  
20 January, Pleasant Point

<b>Bulls sold</b>	32 of 32 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$9,500
<b>Average</b>	\$5,006.25
<b>% change from last year</b>	-2%

**RAROA RED DEER**  
16 December, Cambridge

<b>Stags sold</b>	18 of 20 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$6,000
<b>Average</b>	\$3,700
<b>% change from last year</b>	+19%

**ROTHESAY RED DEER\***  
10 January, Darts Road, Methven

<b>Stags sold</b>	8 of 13 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$15,000
<b>Average</b>	\$6,212
<b>% change from last year</b>	-36%
<b>Other animals sold</b>	27 of 27 velvet stags on offer, average \$1,050 (+31% on last year).

**RUAPEHU RED DEER**  
13 December, Pukenua Road, Taihape

<b>Stags sold</b>	29 of 29 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$17,000
<b>Average</b>	\$6,900
<b>% change from last year</b>	+32%
<b>Comment</b>	Great sale; average up from last year; venison industry in a justifiably positive mindset.

**RUPERT RED DEER**  
9 January, Scotland Farm, 147 North Boundary Road

<b>Stags sold</b>	17 of 19 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$28,000
<b>Average</b>	\$11,117
<b>% change from last year</b>	Inaugural sale
<b>Other animals sold</b>	60 R2 velvetting stags, average \$1,654
<b>Comment</b>	We felt that we had a very successful inaugural sale and were especially pleased with the large turnout of about 200 people.

**SARNIA DEER\***  
19 December

<b>Stags sold</b>	8 of 9 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$8,500
<b>Average</b>	\$4,125
<b>% change from last year</b>	-23%
<b>Other animals sold</b>	10/10 hinds on offer; ave. \$1,310 (+94% on last year), top \$3,600.

**TIKANA WAPITI\***  
16 January, on farm at Browns, Winton

<b>Bulls sold</b>	18 of 20 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$38,000
<b>Average</b>	\$9,527.78
<b>% change from last year</b>	+28%

**Other animals sold** Two of 10 cows on offer, top price \$3,500, average \$3,000

**TOWER FARMS DEER**  
18 December at 188 Discombe Road, Hautapu

<b>Stags sold</b>	23 of 25 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$57,000
<b>Average</b>	\$13,500
<b>% change from last year</b>	-12%

**Other animals sold** 33 hinds of 33 on offer sold; average \$1,830 (-0.5% on last year), top \$4,500.

**Comment** Very pleased with sale results; our velvet stags did exceptionally well, reflecting our velvet breeding focus of weight with length and style.

**WILKINS FARMING**  
15 December, North Island: Te Maire, Hawke's Bay

<b>Stags sold</b>	24 of 24 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$9,000
<b>Average</b>	\$5,300
<b>% change from last year</b>	+13%

**Comment** An excellent crowd with plenty of new faces as well as regular clients. The Tui, 334/11 and 144/05 sons were keenly sought after. We acknowledge the support of George and Laura Williams for hosting the North Island for the 6th time. Many thanks to our bidders and under bidders. We look forward to presenting an excellent line up of animals for the 2018 sale later in the year.

**WILKINS FARMING**  
15 January, South Island: Wilkins Farming, Athol

<b>Stags sold</b>	55 of 55 on offer
<b>Top price</b>	\$16,000
<b>Average</b>	\$6,514.44
<b>% change from last year</b>	+35%

**Comment** Excellent crowd with purchasers from all over the South and North Islands. Good number of Churchill sons on offer with his top lot (204) sold to Busch Farming for \$16,000. Many thanks to our bidders and under bidders for their continued support and effort made to be present. Again, we look forward to presenting an excellent line up at our 2019 sale.

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

# Retirement high for Deer Genetics owners

by Tim Fulton, *Deer Industry News* writer

The founders of Deer Genetics NZ are bowing out in style with a \$95,000 stag topping nationwide sire sales.

## DON AND ANNE

Bennett have several trophy-focused farms including home base at Woodbury, near Geraldine. Now they're handing on a legacy to their son, Kelly, satisfied they've done all they can.

"We've been in it a long time and thrown a lot of money at it and it's finally profitable," Don Bennett said.

The 15 three-year-olds sold in December reaped that top price of \$95,000 and an average of \$22,000. The January sale of 15 two-year-old stags went as high as \$33,000 and averaged just over \$7,500.

The Bennetts bucked industry convention by splitting the sale of their two and three year olds, partly because the older stags were too big for a single showing.

The three-year olds went in December simply because they were ready, Bennett said. He didn't expect to know the score of the \$95k stag until early February but it was part of a line of "massive" animals. "The three-year olds, we had a couple of monsters in there and the rest were very good."

Deer Genetics wasn't an especially fancy set-up. "We've stuck to



Don and Anne Bennett photographed at the 2015 Rising Stars competition.

the knitting and we haven't chased rainbows," Bennett said.

With that, he felt like a good time to hand on to Kelly, who has been involved with deer for about 30 years takes ownership in February.

The Bennetts weren't alone in the glow of a successful sale season. Others, like Peel Forest Estate in South Canterbury, also excelled (see full sire sale report on page 28).

Owner Graham Carr sold 49 out of 50 Forresters (maternal sires) in December for a top price of \$18,000 and average of about \$7,500. The velvet/trophy stags sold in January made up to \$46,000, averaging \$11,603.

Other results also satisfied, even if prices didn't hit previous heights. A traditional big name, Black Forest Park, garnered a top stag price of \$14,000 and an average of \$5,415 for 20 animals, plus six hinds averaging just over \$1,500.

Dry weather made it hard bringing sires into peak condition but averages

were up on last year and owner Richard Currie was pretty happy, all things considered. Results across the industry showed farmers were feeling optimistic, Currie said. ■



Deer Genetics' three-year-old sire Prometheus sold for \$95,000, the top price for a stag during the 2017/18 sale season.



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