

Deer Industry News

Sale season echoes industry confidence



First-hand view

LAWSONS AND FIRSTLIGHT VISIT UK MARKET TO FIND OUT WHAT MAKES CUSTOMERS TICK

Conference Preview

TRIP TO SUPER RUGBY MATCH WILL CAP OFF 2019 INDUSTRY CONFERENCE IN CAPITAL

'New' Kid on the Block

NEWCOMER AT ANTLER COMPETITION IS A MAJOR VENISON AND VELVET PRODUCER

LUXURY REAL ESTATE

N E W Z E A L A N D

NEW ZEALAND'S FINEST LUXURY PROPERTIES

WILLOWBROOK TROPHY DEER FARM SOUTH CANTERBURY



Willowbrook Deer Park is a high performing deer farming enterprise producing some of New Zealand's top trophy stags, and is a significant contributor to the trophy and velvet industry.

Located in the heart of South Canterbury, approximately 18km from Timaru, the property consists of 82.4 hectares of predominantly flat to gently rolling irrigated land. Panoramic rural vistas towards the Southern Alps in the west and the South Pacific Ocean in the east add to the overall appeal of this stunning property. The Architect designed home, with its voluminous ceilings, large timber beams and hunting décor

could be mistaken for a luxury lodge rather than a sustainable home. It reaches out from the hill, growing from single storey to a double-height main living area. The house is further complemented by an established tree lined driveway.

The property has been owned by the Midgley family since the early 1900s with Fallow and Red deer having been farmed on the property for the last 60 years.

The property is being offered as a going concern.

Deadline Private Treaty Closing 3rd April 2019

luxuryrealestate.co.nz/CT02

82.4 hectares

George Orchiston
+64 27 57 20 547
george@luxuryrealestate.co.nz

Luxury Real Estate
3 Arrow Lane,
Arrowtown 9351

luxuryrealestate.co.nz

Deer Industry News

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

ISSUE 94 | FEBRUARY/MARCH 2019

ISSN 1176-0753

Contents

Editorial	3
Markets	
First-hand view of British market	4
Venison sausage in First Light's new range	5
Focused activity showing results in Germany	6
Venison market update	25
Deer Industry Conference	
Preview: 2019 conference in the capital	8
NZDFA and DINZ nominations: 2019/20 year	9
Animal Health	
Clostridial disease strikes velvetting stags	12
Johne's disease spikes up	14
Update details following NAIT upgrade	19
People	
Wapiti antler champion is no more	13
Three generations of velvetters	15
New kids on block	16
Obituary: Don Johnston	18
Nelson fires update	18
Canterbury trophy-breeding operation for sale	25
Sire Sales	
Good times continue	20
Research	
Venison feeds into collaborative study	26
Velvet Competitions	
Elk & Wapiti Society	28

Cover: A lush bed of red clover and ryegrass at Clayton Station forms a fitting backdrop for images from this season's buoyant sire sales. Images clockwise from top: Neville Clarke stokes bidding at Wilkins Farming's South Island sale; after-sale analysis at Tikana; buyers check the offering before the Wilkins sale; this five-year-old son of Nixon was sold by Crowley Deer for an auction record of \$155,000.

Health review offers great opportunity

Summer has arrived bringing with it warmth, sun, wind and rain! Those of us in the South don't have to worry – not yet, at least – about facial eczema or ticks. But there is always the challenge of worm burdens and the debate about when to drench and what with.



Amy Watts.

AS A LARGE animal vet working in Central Otago, I am lucky to be involved in the deer industry on a variety of deer farms including large extensive breeding properties, finishing farms, velvetting and trophy farms. I was a member the Southland Advance Party and am now involved in the deer industry as President of the New Zealand Veterinary Association's Deer Branch.

Being in a deer shed often adds spice and variety to my day – some places more than others! Regrowth season is well behind most of us now, weaning is rapidly approaching and before long the stags will be roaring.

Clostridial vaccination programmes for young deer are becoming more common with an increasing number of deaths in weaners likely caused by the clostridial infections we already see in sheep and cattle. These infections go hand in hand with increasing young stock performance and high-energy pastures. (See article on page 12 about an outbreak in young velvetting stags.)

The industry aim is for all deer properties to have an annually reviewed animal health plan, starting with a Deer Health Review. These provide a good opportunity to discuss whole farming systems, providing a guide to help manage workload around animal health. They form the basis that makes my job enjoyable – proactive farming, helping to increase productivity and profitability, and building good working relationships with deer farmers.

It is great to be able to work with deer and the people who farm them, to be part of an industry that is always looking forward. I'm more than happy to share its knowledge with anyone interested. You can get hold of me through amy.watts@vetent.co.nz ■

– Amy Watts, President, NZVA Deer Branch



Hinds and fawns enjoy a summer crop at The Kowhais, South Canterbury.

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.

EDITOR Phil Stewart, Words & Pictures

EDITORIAL AND ADVERTISING ENQUIRIES
Words & Pictures, 11/94 Dixon Street, Wellington
Ph 04 384 4688, 021 620 399
email phil@wordpict.co.nz

CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES

Deer Industry New Zealand, PO Box 10-702
Wellington, Ph 04 471 6114,
email info@deernz.org

First-hand view of market helps Lawsons tailor production

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Most of the venison grown by award-winning Hawke's Bay deer farmers Richard and Emma Lawson goes to England, and a first-hand view of this market is helping the couple to better tailor production for their customers First Light Foods and Waitrose & Partners.

THE LAWSONS MANAGE

the day-to-day operations of the family's Riverslea Trust deer farm in the Ruahine ranges, where they run 750-800 breeding hinds, finish fawns, cattle and breeding ewes over three blocks, totalling 814 hectares. They supply venison for the up-market British retailer through First Light Foods, with annual farm assurance programme checks from the meat company and a three-yearly AsureQuality audit.

In 2017, the couple won the First Light Foods Producer Group of the Year award. Part of the prize package was the opportunity to travel to the meat company's markets which, as First Light Venison's General Manager Toni Frost explains, "is so valuable and important for us. Our customers want to meet our suppliers and vice versa. It is all part of our integrated supply chain."

Richard Lawson says they were proud to be one of the farmer suppliers selected.

"We were also keen to see what we could learn while there," he says.

Waitrose agricultural manager Duncan Sinclair's annual visit to New Zealand early last year led to an invitation to the Lawsons and Toni to the annual Waitrose Farmer Conference in Telford, Shropshire. The programme included a slot for Richard to speak to the 350 or so producer attendees, representing all sectors, from seafood to horticulture.

Admitting to a "little bit of nerves" before he spoke in October, Richard's presentation about the Lawson family farming operation and how they managed going from extreme wet to dry conditions went down well.

"Talking later to other British Waitrose suppliers during a visit to Hornby Castle deer farm, I learned they actually get less rainfall than we do; it's just more consistently spread throughout the year."

An eye-opener for both Richard and Toni was the number of speakers talking about Brexit.

"While they didn't know exactly what was going to happen, they did know change is coming," says Toni. "There was also a lot of theoretical discussion about scenarios, including the feeling that subsidies will disappear."



Richard Lawson speaking at the Waitrose Farmer Conference.

The conference fell mid-way through a week-long packed itinerary for the Lawsons and Toni. She describes the programme as, "privileged access as part of the partnership First Light Foods has with Waitrose and British deer farmers."

The week started with visits to Waitrose supermarkets for a better feel for how the venison was displayed at retail.

"It was pretty good to see how our product was displayed on the shelves," Richard comments. "But, with such a lean and healthy product, it would be great to have packaging that has the same environmental health benefits."

For Richard, Hornby Castle Estate's deer farm production set up, including deer sheds for weaners, was a highlight.

"The deer are run there much as we do," he remarks.

Another highlight was seeing the level of investment at venison, beef and veal processor Dovecote Park, near Pontefract in West Yorkshire, which processes First Light Venison into retail packs for Waitrose. New Zealand venison has an important role providing a complementary seasonal supply of venison to keep the product on Waitrose shelves year round, they observed.

"Seeing the robots and big chillers almost ready to process tonnes, not kilos, of dry-aged beef, shows the potential in that area," he says.

As Wagyu producers, the Lawsons were also interested to experience the Hereford Cattle Show in the English/Welsh border country, followed by a live auction.

As a result of the visit, Richard says he will "probably be doing a few little things differently".

These include learning more about nutritional value of supplements: "To make sure we have the right nutrients from



During private sightseeing, the Lawsons photographed this red stag at Woburn Abbey.

crops we can grow ourselves rather than buy in," he says, adding they saw, for example, some interesting clover silage.

Looking after the farm environment, reducing dependence on drenches and the genetics of animal hardiness are other areas Richard will look at.

"Hornby Castle was running large mobs, but the hinds were looking good as they were bred to handle the conditions," he says.

UK market challenging but demand still good

The UK market has been challenging for venison, with the uncertainties of Brexit, says Toni, “but demand is still good”.

New Zealand exported 440 tonnes of venison directly to the United Kingdom in the year to September 2018, accounting for 3.6 percent of total production. However, the average return per kg FOB from the market rose by 36 percent to \$13.92 over the course of the year.

Toni notes venison is becoming more popular in the United Kingdom and it is unlikely British producers will be able to lift their production significantly. “But, there is a lot of talk about the Scottish bid to significantly increase deer numbers.”

She and Richard were hearing the same sort of messages about venison everywhere.

“Venison is a lean and healthy protein and we need to be supplying lean, healthy product, for which consumers will pay more, but buy less,” she says. UK and New Zealand consumers share the same macro-trends of flexitarianism, growing awareness of plastics and millennials eating less meat, she adds.



The deer sheds at Hornby Castle, used for raising the weaners.



Emma and Richard Lawson (second and third from right) with British deer farmers during the Hornby Castle visit.

While average returns from the United Kingdom are up, Richard wryly notes his myriad compliance costs are also higher. ■

Animal ID company director passes away

As *Deer Industry News* was going to press we were saddened to hear of the death on 11 February of **John Dumbrell**, Director of Leader Products and a long-term supporter of the New Zealand deer industry. John was well known to many in the industry and a frequent visitor to New Zealand from his Melbourne base. (The company sells NAIT tags and other animal ID devices as well as veterinary products.) The deer industry extends its condolences to John's family, friends and colleagues.

Venison sausage in First Light's new range

A venison sausage is included in First Light Foods' pilot of a new preservative-free sausage range in New Zealand supermarkets, which has been getting a lot of positive media coverage recently.

THE RANGE INCLUDES a smoked manuka honey venison sausage in conjunction with the True Honey Company, a Wagyu beef Kransky with Whitestone Cheese and a Wagyu and Barker's Chipotle bratwurst sausage. All are pre-cooked briefly in the European style and available at selected supermarkets (RRP \$12.99 per pack). They are perfect for the barbecue in a bun, but equally as delicious in paella, risotto, on pizza or with pasta.

First Light co-founder Jason Ross says that with an increasingly health-conscious community of consumers calling for high-quality food, produced authentically and transparently, it made sense to launch the range – and to collaborate with others who share First Light's ethos.

First Light Venison's General Manager Toni Frost says the pilot has been going “very, very well”.

Expect to see more in this First Light space. ■



Focused marketing activity showing results in Germany

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Targeted marketing is starting to show results. German chefs and media have been busy in the Northern Hemisphere game season learning about New Zealand venison, creating new dishes and writing about them.

THIS FOLLOWS A decision last year by DINZ to do more during the game season than had been done in the past couple of years, explains DINZ Venison Marketing Manager Nick Taylor.

“While we continue to work to diversify our markets, promotional activities during game season are still important. New Zealand venison continues to compete with other proteins. Reminding chefs of our product helps it to remain top of mind for chefs and on their menus,” he says.

New Zealand venison was visible at the pre-eminent event for Germany’s chefs and hoteliers held in Berlin in November, the Busche Gala. At the reception, attendees witnessed a dish prepared at a live cooking station by renowned Michelin-star chef Matthias Gleiß, a long-time fan of New Zealand venison.

“Chefs not only had the chance to try New Zealand venison, but they could also see how easy it was to cook and take the opportunity to chat with Gleiß about the various preparation methods,” he says.

In addition, private press dinners were held in November at chef Alexander Dinter’s *Restaurant 5* in Stuttgart, Volker Drkosch’s *Dr Kosch* in Düsseldorf and Matthias Gleiß’s *Volt* restaurant in Berlin. The chefs got creative, using an array of interesting flavours with the New Zealand venison, including wood sorrel, amaranth, venison praline, chestnuts and juniper quince, among others, reports Taylor.

The purpose of the dinners was to introduce journalists and selected social media influencers to New Zealand venison. Journalists were able to spend time with the chefs and discuss their preference for using New Zealand venison.

This resulted in more than 100 social media posts and articles on New Zealand venison. These included rave reviews, including one from blogger Rebecca Behrendt: “We had a fantastic evening, an outstanding set menu, a great wine pairing and really nice ambience,” she wrote. “Everything was perfect; the venison was a dream. We would have loved to lick our plates clean, it was that good!”

The blog *babyrockmyday.com* talked about the dishes and the way the animals are reared in New Zealand, with daily posts of the dishes and New Zealand deer farming systems appearing on *@babyrockmyday*’s Instagram and Facebook feeds over a two-week period.

Another of the attendees, German blogger Monica Albrecht whose focus is sustainability and a green lifestyle was intrigued that venison from New Zealand may have a lower carbon footprint than from a field two villages over. She wrote a credible and positive post about her experience, looking at the meat dilemma:



The *@babyrockmyday* Instagram feed ran daily posts about New Zealand venison over a two-week period to its 1,400 followers.

“Why meat from abroad does not always have to be bad”.

She concluded New Zealand venison is an option for German consumers. “The attitude of the animals is really great compared to many factory farms in Germany and the climate balance is less serious than expected, despite the transport by sea,” she wrote, adding: “Incidentally, the quality of the meat is also an absolute



German blogger Monica Albrecht raved about the event on her blog Mini.Me.

dream and tastes great.”

The hard work in the market is starting to pay off, notes Taylor. He points to exports for the year ending November 2018 showing sales to Germany increased from 2,449 tonnes in 2017 to 2,727 tonnes in 2018, equating to total sales of \$50 million, up \$9 million (about 22 percent) on the previous year.

“The value of the exports to Germany is approaching levels seen in 2014 and 2015, even though the volume is significantly smaller. This shows exporters are getting greater value, which is fantastic to see.

“We will continue to work with our partners in Germany to support both their game season promotion as well as the new Summer Cervena® work,” says Taylor.

Summer Cervena programme ongoing

Meanwhile, preparation for the P2P Summer Cervena programme is in full swing. New videos have been prepared to run between April and August featuring Michelin-Star chefs Carmelo Greco and Matthias Gleiß. ■



Preparing Cervena during filming for the 2019 Summer Cervena programme.



SUPPLIERS OF NON-GMO FEEDS

Including: • Pelletised Wheat DDG-S • Canola Meal
• PKE • New Zealand Produced Grains • Product mixes
• Minerals and Trace Elements • Bulk / Bulk Bags

CONTACTS:

North Waikato / BOP
Central / South Waikato
Taranki / Manawatu / Wairarapa
Otago / Southland
Southland

Mark Ahlers 021 192 9569
Andrew Mirams 021 192 8055
Peter Steele 021 192 6100
Simon McPhee 027 213 0011
Nick Tomsett 027 488 5122

OSP STOCKFEEDS LTD

0800 677 3333 | www.ospstockfeeds.co.nz | orders@ospstockfeeds.co.nz



DEER INDUSTRY CONFERENCE 2019

Reflections and Directions

The 2019 Annual Deer Industry Conference, “**Reflections and directions**”, will be held in Wellington starting Thursday 16 May. The NZDFA’s 44th AGM will be held at 8.30 am the same day, followed by the full conference programme commencing at 10.30 am. More details follow in the March and April *Stagline-Online* and in the April/May *Deer Industry News*.

Environment focus

Environmental stewardship will be a strong theme, with an invited keynote presentation from Environment Minister David Parker and featuring the 2019 Deer Industry Environmental Awards.

Venue and accommodation

The event will return to the Wellington waterfront and Te Wharewaka o Pōneke, the excellent venue used for the 2017 conference and near the large range of Wellington hotels chosen for their convenient access, good facilities and reasonable rates.

Delegates will directly book accommodation with their hotel of choice. For the hotels listed below, we have negotiated a 2019 Deer Industry Conference rate. Secure this by quoting the Reference number for your chosen hotel where needed (see below).

There is no accommodation commission: savings go direct to you. We are holding rooms at the following hotels:

Copthorne at Oriental Bay: <https://bit.ly/2teqgf7>, ph 04 385 0279. Reference for conference rate: **6423640**

West Plaza (Wakefield Street) westplaza.co.nz, 04 473 1440, 0800 731 444. Reference for conference rate: **445 298**

Park Hotel (Lambton Quay) parkhotel.nz, 04 260 5000, reservations@parkhotel.nz, Phone 04 260 5000 (select option 1). Reference for conference rate: **Deer Industry Conference 2019**

Apollo Motor Lodge (49 Majoribanks Street, Mt Victoria) apollo lodge.nz, 04 385 1849, 0800 361 645. Reference for conference rate: **Deer Industry Conference 2019**

Brentwood Hotel, Kilbirnie with free airport shuttle, brentwoodhotel.co.nz, 04 920 0400, 0800 273 689, Reference for conference rate: **80530**

Programme

We are planning a well-structured two days with an Agribusiness focus. The conference programme will be finalised by end of March. Details will be available via deernz.org/2019-conference

The DFA also will hold pre-conference Branch chairs, Executive Committee and SAP meetings on Wednesday 15 May before the official programme starts. They will host an informal dinner at the Copthorne on Oriental Bay with the DINZ Board and DFA national and Branch leaders on the evening of 15 May.

The Business session will feature P2P reporting, venison

and velvet marketing sessions with keynote speakers from the venison and velvet markets. They will also focus on environmental initiatives and updates with the Board and Executive.

Social – get to the Super Rugby!

Conference goers always enjoy time together to catch up and this year we are planning something a little different. The Annual Awards dinner will be on Thursday 16 May at Wharewaka with a farewell event at the conclusion of the Friday session from 5.00 pm followed by bus transfer to Wellington Stadium where the Hurricanes are hosting the Argentinian Jaguares in a late season Super Rugby clash. We have secured a block booking for seating.

Live streaming

Rural Exchange’s Sarah Perriam via Rural TV will live stream the event. This will allow interactive commentary and provide a permanent record hosted on the DINZ website (for last year’s proceedings see: deernz.org/2018-conference-proceedings)

Management, registration and sponsorship

Conference management will be supplied by Melissa Bahler, via Positive Events Plus, aided by the DFA Executive Committee and DINZ staff. Melissa is also the events manager for the NZ Institute of Primary Industries Management and well versed in Wellington’s conference and meeting infrastructure.

As in 2018, a 35% discount will be offered on full registration for the second (or more) registered delegate from the same farming entity.

Registration fee and details of the sponsor support are being finalised and will be publicised soon. See also March’s *Stagline Online*, the conference website and April’s *Deer Industry News*.

Further information

- **DINZ:** deernz.org/2019-conference or contact Tony Pearse at tony.pearse@deernz.org, 021 719 038
- **Conference organiser:** Melissa Bahler, 027 664 3080, positiveeventsplus@xtra.co.nz
- **Conference venue:** wharewakaoponeke.co.nz (2 Taranaki Street Wellington), 04 901 3333 ■

AGM constitutional matters: NZDFA and DINZ nominations: 2019/20 year

A) Executive Committee nominations

Call for nominations for NZDFA positions

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

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

- Executive Committee member, **South Island**, one vacancy. (Current member, **David Morgan** retires by rotation and is not seeking a further term.)
- Executive Committee member, **Member at Large**, 1 vacancy. (Current member, **Justin Stevens** retires by rotation.)

Nominations are invited for both positions. These two Executive Committee vacancies are open to wider nomination from all NZDFA members.

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, 29 March 2019**.

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

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

- be in writing
- be moved and seconded by two other full, life or elected members of the Association
- be signed by the nominee
- be delivered to the Association's office by **5.00pm on Friday, 29 March 2019**.

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

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

Should an election be necessary, details of postal voting and procedures, candidate profiles and confirmation of timelines will be sent with the April/May 2019 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 Thursday 16 May 2019 (i.e. **voting opens on Tuesday 16 April 2019, closing on Tuesday 7 May 2019**).

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 **Brian Russell, Southland, Member at large** (retirement by rotation, not seeking reappointment) and Donald Whyte, **Mid Canterbury, North Island representative**.

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

- SAP member, North 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 29 March 2019**.

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, **Ian Walker**.

continued on page 10

AGM constitutional: continued

1 special vacancy:

Deer industry New Zealand Board member, **Mark Harris** who was appointed in 2017 for a 2-year term, created with the early retirement of past DINZ chair, Andy Macfarlane, in 2017.

The nominations 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 29 March 2019**.

The NZDFA Constitution (2008) refers:

- 37.9 **Nominations for DINZ:** The Returning Officer shall publicly announce, in writing, the names of the retiring Association representatives of DINZ and call for nominations for their replacement, prior to the end of March each year. Nominations shall be:
- (a) made by any two Full Members, Elected Members or Life members of the NZDFA
 - (b) in writing; and
 - (c) in the hands of the Returning Officer at a date to be specified which will be before the Annual General Meeting of the Association each year.
- 37.10 **Eligibility for Selection as DINZ Representative:** All persons interested or engaged in the deer farming industry shall be eligible for nomination, with the exception of employees of DINZ or of the Association. Each nominee for selection shall be required to make a written declaration of any office held or managerial position or financial interest that either the nominee or any of the nominee's immediate family or any partner or fellow shareholder in any deer farming project has in any organisation which deals directly in the products of or materials for the deer farming industry.
- 37.11 **Right to Address AGM:** Each nominee for selection as a DINZ representative may address the Annual General Meeting of the Association at a time and date to be specified by the Executive Committee.
- 37.12 **Selection Process:** As soon as possible after the closing date for nominations the Returning Officer shall publish to all Branches and in *Deer Industry News* a full list of the persons nominated, together with any declarations of interests received from them. On the date determined for the selection (but not later than the end of **June** each year), the Selection and Appointment Panel shall convene, interview and select from the nominees as many Association representatives as are required to fill available vacancies on DINZ.

Nominations for the positions will be considered by the Selection and Appointment Panel following the 2019 AGM within 21 days of that meeting, with recommendations and appointment to the Board being advised to the Minister for Primary Industries at that time subject to the Operating Code of Practice procedures.

Nomination forms

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

Nomination forms are also available through your local Branch Chair, Secretary or the Producer Manager and will be posted on the website: deernz.org/nzdfa-constitutional-information

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

Awards and competitions

Matuschka Award 2019

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 function on the evening of Thursday 16 May 2019 at the conference Awards Dinner held at Te Wharewaka o Pōneke, Aotea Quay, Wellington.

As recognition of the unsung heroes at Branch level, it is appropriate that the award itself be presented to the 2019 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 that a nomination has gone forward. Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA no later than **5.00pm on Tuesday, 7 May 2019**.

For further information contact:

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

2019 MSD Photographic competition

MSD Animal Health has kindly agreed to continue its sponsorship of the annual deer industry photographic awards, with some great prizes on offer:

- \$500 cash prize for the overall winner
- Category winner cash prizes
- Premium wine gift pack for "People's choice" award
- Framed photos of winning entries

Following the success of the updated digital-only competition format last year, the awards will again be a feature of the 2019 annual conference with entries viewable on a large monitor in the trade display area. Judging will be coordinated by the *Deer Industry News* editorial group with results including Judges' and People's Choice awards announced at the conference.

Entrants no longer need to submit a print of their entry/entries. Only the digital photos and entry form/fee are required. In addition, the entry fee is now a flat \$5 per photo, which makes entering simpler.

Rules and entry form are available from the DINZ website at www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition. Alternatively, contact Cenwynn Philip, Tony Pearse 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 and interactions with deer.
- **Our deer farming environment:** An opportunity to show off the beautiful landscapes and environmental enhancement that goes hand in hand with best practice. The deer are still present but play a bit part – the farm environment is the star.

Format of entries

Please submit your entry or entries as digital files. Photo prints are no longer required!

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

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

Cellphone photographs are acceptable but please be aware of their limitations, e.g. zoom function is best avoided.

For further information contact:

- Producer Communications and Administration, Cenwynn Philip. 04 471 6110, cenwynn.philip@deernz.org
- Producer Manager, Tony Pearse, 021 719 038, tony.pearse@deernz.org
- *Deer Industry News*, Editor Phil Stewart, 04 384 4688, 021 620 399, phil@wordpict.co.nz

NZ Deer Industry Award 2019

The Award is to be presented each year to the person, persons jointly, or organisation who, in the opinion of the judges, has made the most outstanding contribution to the New Zealand deer industry, either in the previous year, or over a period of years.

The selection panel is made up of three judges who are the nominees of:

- NZ Farm Life Media (Countrywide)
- The NZ Deer Farmers’ Association (Inc)
- Porter Holdings Ltd

Presentation of the Award is made annually at the NZDFA Annual Conference dinner or, if this is not possible, at another function as determined by the NZDFA, after consulting with NZ Farm Life Media.

Nomination forms are available from:

deernz.org/nz-deer-industry-award ■

It’s that time again! The MSD Animal Health Photographic Awards are on again this year, so let’s show them and the world what makes our animals and industry so special.

Following the success of our upgraded format in 2018, the competition will continue as completely electronic, so you no longer need to send us prints of your entries. Your photos will now be proudly displayed on a large monitor at the 2019 Deer Industry Conference, with the best chosen for publication. Submit your entry form, fee and digital photos online. Entry fee is now a flat \$5 per photo entered.

Entry deadline is 8 May. See article on this page for further details.

For an entry form contact:

Cenwynn Philip, Deer Industry New Zealand

Phone 04 471 6110, email cenwynn.philip@deernz.org

or download the form from

www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition

Photo: “Misty stags” by Mark Tapley. Winner 2018.

MSD Animal Health Photographic Awards

Heads up!



MSD

Animal Health

Clostridial disease strikes velvetting stags

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Blood poisoning (a.k.a. pulpy kidney or enterotoxaemia) is rarely if ever found in deer, but five young stags in Cam and Wally Nelson's Southland velvetting herd were lost to the disease in late October last year.

GRIBBLES PATHOLOGIST JOHN Gill said he had not diagnosed clostridial disease as a cause of death in deer in four decades as a pathologist.

One possible reason the disease is so rarely seen is that it's difficult to diagnose. Often deaths of livestock from clostridial disease are isolated and accepted as "one of those things", but even when the vet is called in to find the cause, diagnosis is impossible if the sample for pathology isn't collected straight after death. In most cases this is impractical, not just for deer but for any livestock.

In this case some good luck and quick thinking by the Nelsons and VetSouth Winton veterinarian Hayden Dore meant a sample from a freshly dead stag could be collected in time and sent off for analysis.

Cam Nelson says a couple of the stags, which were from mobs of two-year-olds, and three and four-year-olds, had started looking a bit "off" before dying suddenly. "Then another one started getting sick and another after that. This time we got the vet in."

Hayden Dore, who attended the second of the callouts said he got there within 30 minutes but the stag had just died. Collecting a fresh sample meant they could get a reliable diagnosis.

Nelson said the stags were being flushed prior to velvetting, getting the pick of some good new ryegrass and clover pasture on a 4-5 day shift. This was being supplemented with a mix of barley, soy and peas.

Dore says the stags were in great condition and there was no obvious cause of death. "I did consider polioencephalomalacia (vitamin B1 deficiency), but that was ruled out. There was some acidosis, probably caused by the diet, but that wasn't what killed them."

The bug that caused these deaths was *Clostridium perfringens* Type D. It's one of several *Clostridium* species, ancient anaerobic bacteria that can kill farm animals with diseases such as blood poisoning, blackleg and tetanus. Some of these species exist naturally in the gut, usually without any problems, but numbers can explode given the right conditions. This can include a "high octane" diet when animals are on a rising plane of nutrition. In cattle, for example, fast-growing bulls in cell-grazing systems can get knocked over this way.

Vaccinating in the face of the disease is not effective as it takes several weeks for immunity to develop. However, on the advice of their veterinarian, the Nelsons took the young stags off the grain supplement and substituted hay to provide some fibre in the diet. They lost one more stag shortly afterwards but then the deaths stopped.

Cam Nelson says they are seriously considering a preventative programme in their stags with a five-in-one clostridial vaccine to stop any future losses. "The initial vaccination in adult stags would be done at the end of winter. They need two shots the first time and an annual booster after that." They breed their own stags, and weaners being recruited into the velvetting herd would get their first shot at tagging (they post-rut wean) and the second shot three weeks later.

Dore says that while clostridial disease seems rare in deer, a five-in-one vaccine is very inexpensive way to manage the risk on farms where this might be a problem.

"It is worthwhile considering the risk of clostridial disease on any farm, but particularly when high-value animals are involved," says DINZ Deer Health Manager Lorna Humm. "It makes sense to discuss it during your annual health planning session."

"As we are getting much better at feeding deer, the risk from [clostridial disease] will increase," adds veterinarian Dave Lawrence, who is facilitator for the Next Generation Southland Advance Party the Nelsons belong to. "As any sheep farmer will tell you, the lambs that die from pulpy kidney are always the best ones on top feed."

- Clostridial disease is just one of the diseases included in DINZ Deer Health Review workbook, see deernz.org/deer-health-review or email innes.moffat@deernz.org to request a hard copy. ■



We are feeding deer much better now, but with that comes increased risk from clostridial disease.

Wapiti antler champion is no more

THE 2018 NATIONAL Velvet and Hard Antler competition was a bittersweet one for the Whyte family. Their 8-year-old bull Seattle maintained his winning ways, taking out the Elk/Wapiti (Typical) trophy antler section with a 22.78kg head, which also won the Crystalyx Cup as overall Trophy Antler Champion. Added to this was the prestigious double: the Winston Day Memorial Trophy for the Best Elk/Wapiti entry and then the “People’s Choice” for the favourite head in the competition.

But, sadly, this was to be the last national event Seattle would be entered for. Donald Whyte told guests at the awards dinner that “everyone’s favourite” bull had been found dead in the paddock, probably killed by a lightning strike in early November.

He was a well-loved animal on the farm, Donald said. “He was definitely not the sort of elk bull who showed any aggression towards us and always there was ‘Seattle’s mob’, or ‘Seattle’s paddock’. He led the conversation.

“If he had been taken as a Safari Trophy this head would have been 25 inches SCI ahead of the standing World No.1.

“Hopefully he will live on, with notable sons already in several other breeding herds in New Zealand,” Donald said. ■



Seattle was a well-loved animal on the Whytes’ farm.



Are you planning for healthy, profitable deer?

A documented animal health plan is a vital farm management tool and is now an essential requirement for venison quality assurance programmes.

An annual health review will:

- give you confidence that you are aware of the main health risks to your business;
- identify issues limiting your herd’s productivity;
- create an action plan to keep on top of health issues.

Use the *Deer Health Review Workbook* to identify your priorities and make a plan with your animal health adviser.

www.deernz.org/deer-health-review



Johne's disease spikes up

by Solis Norton, DeerPRO Project Manager

There has been a spike in the signs of Johne's disease, after a steady downward trend over the past several years.

THE SPIKE HAS appeared during regular surveillance of the national database of processed deer for the control of Johne's disease run by DeerPRO. Records for all 4.8 million deer processed since 2006 are in this database, making it an ideal check point for disease.

The spike is in only one of five measures monitored each quarter. It suggests increasing levels of on-farm disease, which is a sudden change after a six-year trend of gradual decline.

We are investigating the underlying reasons. Some things about it are known from our data but others we will need to work out with the help of deer farmers.

The spike is in young deer (Figure 1), but there has also been a smaller and more gradual rise in the signs of Johne's in mature deer over the same period.

We also know the spike is linked mainly to farms throughout the South Island. Forty-five properties are being contacted by DeerPRO. Most of them have worked with the programme in the past, while about a quarter are new to it. But together with them, all deer farmers should refresh their focus on this disease and we will take steps in the coming months to raise awareness.

The young deer causing the spike killed out 3kg lighter than those without signs of Johne's. This stunted production and weight loss is a typical but invisible (subclinical) cost of the disease. The more obvious (clinical) cases seen on-farm with severe scouring, precipitous condition loss and death also drain herd productivity and we want to know if they have spiked upwards recently too.

Phoning around these farms should show if this is the case. It will also be a chance to talk about the most time-efficient and cost-effective ways for farmers to keep a check on their herd. The wide range of deer farm types and objectives means there is definitely not a "one-size-fits-all" approach to Johne's control. Fortunately DeerPRO can suggest a range of options to suit even the most discerning operator. The selection process is certainly best made in a Deer Health Review and we encourage the inclusion of veterinary expertise in this and wider herd health planning.

Another thing we know is that the quality of our data remains high. AsureQuality meat inspection staff collect it and were visited recently by the DeerPRO Project Manager, who confirmed that new inspectors were familiar with

the recording process and that everyone is operating consistently. During the discussions, more experienced inspectors agreed with the data, saying they felt they had seen more evidence of disease last season.

We don't know where the trend will head. Is the spike temporary, or the start of something more serious? Either way we believe "nipping it in the bud" completely and quickly is essential. Also essential is that all deer farmers are aware of the risk of renewed Johne's outbreaks and are monitoring their herds appropriately.

Over the next few months we'll link up the pieces of the puzzle and do what's necessary to get things back on track. As always, regular communication with stakeholders is an important part of the process. We will keep you posted on progress and as new insights develop. ■

Over the next few months we'll link up the pieces of the puzzle and do what's necessary to get things back on track. As always, regular communication with stakeholders is an important part of the process. We will keep you posted on progress and as new insights develop. ■

What can you do to avoid compounding or getting caught up in the situation?

- Immediately cull deer clinically affected by Johne's disease, especially in fawning mobs. A quiet walk (or ride) through those mobs now to remove any scouring, skinny hinds could stop a productivity time bomb going off next season.
- Maintain good biosecurity. Make sure purchased deer test negative for Johne's before being mixed with your own stock.
- Maintain a high level of herd health. Use the Deer Health Review booklet and your DeerPRO report; they're freely available and there to help.
- Be proactive. Call DeerPRO with any questions or for confidential advice and support (0800 456 453).

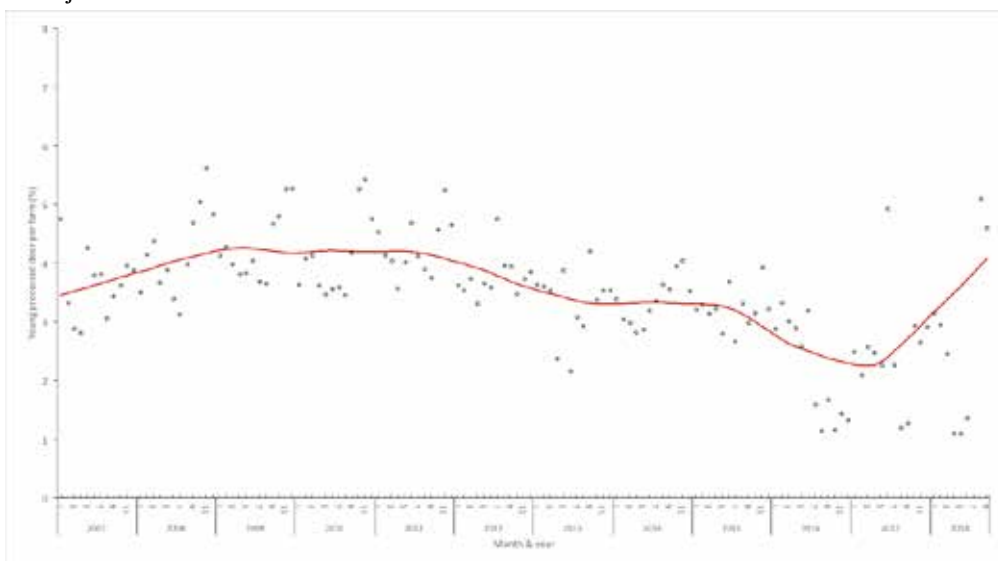


Figure1: JD-suspect lesion rate in processed young deer (2007–2018).

Three generations of velvetters

In what may be a first for New Zealand, the Rau family, who farm inland from Gisborne, can boast three active generations of accredited velvetters: Laurence Rau, his son Malcolm and grandson Murdoch.



Three generations of accredited velvetters: From left, Malcolm, Murdoch and Laurence Rau – all hands are needed on deck during velvetting. Photo: Caroline Rau.

LAURENCE STARTED FARMING deer in the late 1970s initially building a herd of about 400 based on live-captured deer. There were “a few headaches” back then, he says, when valuable deer had a habit of mysteriously disappearing. Those days are now well past and the velvetting herd he’s developed over the years has been based on seven Danish red stags he imported in the early days. Laurence says the clean, heavy beams of the Danish deer have provided an excellent base for the velvetting herd.

More recently he’s bought sires from Tower Farms and last month put in a successful phone bid for a Netherdale stag.

The family now run separate enterprises on two properties. Malcolm and Caroline Rau farm a home block at Matawai, about 90km west of Gisborne.

Laurence and wife Liz are closer to town in the Hexton district where they run deer, sheep and beef on a leased block run in partnership with another son, Charles, an accountant. Laurence, who is also a velvet competition judge, currently has 300 stags


cutting about 1 tonne, but would like to build that herd up to about 500. He now has a manager who he is also planning to get accredited for velvetting.

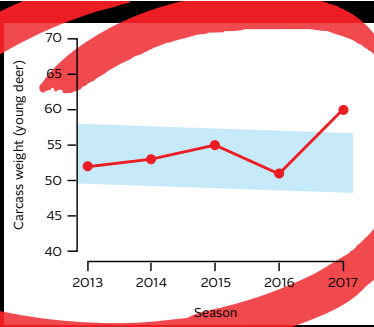
Malcolm and Caroline’s Matawai property is 600 metres plus above sea level, and, like Laurence’s farm, is summer safe. Stock are one-third each sheep, cattle and deer. There are 2,000 red deer producing both velvet (about 3 tonnes at present) and venison. There is some overlap between the two sides of the business in terms of breeding. “Our sires are dual purpose,” Malcolm says.

Son Murdoch, 16, has just left school and begun a farm cadetship at Otiwhiti Station, Hunterville, but his extra pair of hands during velvetting, along with Laurence’s, have been very welcome, Malcolm says. “Murdoch has grown up with deer and loves working with them.”

The Raus also have 19-year-old twin daughters – one has just qualified as a rural veterinary technician and the other is hoping to join NZ Police. ■

Benchmarked production and Johne’s disease info on your deer





Season	Carcass weight (young deer)
2013	52
2014	53
2015	55
2016	51
2017	60

Deer PRO

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

New kids on the block have been decades in industry

After 30 years quietly building a substantial venison and velvet business, John Ramsey decided it was time to see how the antler he has been growing measured up under the spotlight of national competition. Not badly as it turned out. *Deer Industry News* Editor **Phil Stewart** talked to Ramsey and his long-serving manager Gus Schischka about the background to their success.

AN INITIAL FORAY into competition by way of Rising Stars in 2017 was encouraging: Ramsey's entries took first and second places in the Super Heavy Weight (10+kg), and second place in the National 2-year-old Red Velvet class.

Last year he stepped it up, first entering the North Island Velvet competition in Te Awamutu, where he did very well indeed. His seven-year-old stag G296 (also a Rising Stars winner) took out the Champion Red Velvet class with a 14.44kg head and his four-year-old entry won Judges' Choice and People's Choice awards. Ramsey's entries also won the Three, Four and Five-year Red Velvet classes, an unprecedented clean sweep, edging out some of the North Island's highest profile breeders and commercial farmers.

He was sufficiently encouraged ("conned into it" by friends, in Ramsey's words) to enter the national event held in Invercargill in December. Once again he swept the field, showing that a commercial operation can produce the highest quality velvet antler.

His stag G296 again topped the red deer field, winning the prestigious Rural Livestock Open Red Velvet section. Ramsey also won the Four Year (Fogarty Cup) and Five Year Red (Downlands Deer) sections, with G296 putting the icing on the cake,



John Ramsey (left) and long-serving deer manager Gus Schischka celebrate their success at the North Island Velvet Competition.

Shepherd General

We are looking for an experienced Shepherd General to join our team.

We are a deer-only farm located in the Rerewhakaaitu, between Murupara and Rotorua.

We are looking for an enthusiastic and motivated person, preferably with previous experience working with deer. Ideally, you will have tractor, fencing and chainsaw experience.

On occasion you will be required to work on two other Company farms to help out and cover periods of leave. No dogs are required.

Success in this role may lead to a management position, in time.

A 3 bedroom house is available, so could suit a couple or family.

For more information please contact Mike Ramsey on 07 878 7077.

Please apply with your CV and cover letter to hra@crusadermeats.co.nz

Applicants must have NZ residency or valid NZ work visa.

winning the supreme PGG Wrightson Allcomers Trophy.

Tony Pearse, who helped judge the national competition, said the winning heads entered by Ramsey were a "classic" style. Co-judge Tony Cochrane agreed, saying winners like Ramsey's entries with good weight and tidy, rounded velvet sent all the right signals to the industry. "In a purely commercial operation they have got the breeding, feeding and management just right."

So where did this "new kid" on the velvet competition scene come from?

John Ramsey is probably best known as the owner of Crusader Meats at Benneydale, southeast of Te Kuiti. The company markets sheep, goats and bobby calves and venison under its LANZ Supreme brand. That is just part of an extensive set of primary industry interests, which have also included a timber business (the former Ramsey Roundwood) and kiwifruit.

For the past 25 years he and wife Bernice have also been owners of Pakatoa Island in the Hauraki Gulf, one of New Zealand's few privately owned islands. The 24-hectare island and former tourist resort has beaches, a golf course, swimming pool and numerous buildings. (It's on the market for \$40m, in case you're interested.)

But it's deer that have captivated the Ramseys for the past few decades and they are run on three of the four farms they own. A strong feature of the business is the lengthy and productive

partnership they have enjoyed with deer manager Gus Schischka.

Schischka started working for the Ramseys in 1992. "He really knows his stuff, especially genetics," John Ramsey says. "I pour in the dollars and he puts in the expertise and hard work."

The two share a pragmatic and hard-nosed attitude to the deer business, not letting emotion or sentiment cloud their judgment. Velvet, for example, is supplied to "whoever will offer the best price", according to Schischka. He says the industry needs several players to provide proper competition and options for growers.

Ramsey says Silver Fern Farms has told him the animals they supply are "the best they get in the North Island". He's enjoying the good schedule now, but has been around long enough to know there will still be ups and downs to come for both sides of the business. Recalling their first ever velvet pool, he says they got just shy of \$300/kg. "We probably won't see those prices again!"

Overall the business is weighted 60:40 in favour of venison, with a total 1,600 breeding hinds. Eleven hundred of these are on a farm at Rerehakaaitu, south of Rotorua. Of these, 700 are composite red x wapiti terminal hinds which go to home-bred wapiti or hybrid sires. The remaining 400 are capital red hinds, used to breed velvetting stags and replacements. Another 500 terminal hinds are at a farm on Great West Road, just west of Rotorua. About 1,000 animals are supplied to the venison trade each year, from September through to December.

Most of the velvetting stags – about 500 – are run at a farm near Glenbrooke, south of Auckland. "Their roaring wakes up my neighbours," Ramsey chuckles. A further 200 stags are run at Rotorua.

Gus Schischka says they currently cut about 6 tonnes of velvet. And while that provides a significant income stream, he's cautious about the prospects for the industry, concerned that overproduction and shady trading practices within the main markets could undermine New Zealand's current market position.

The early velvet genetics were based partly on sires from Peter Fraser's Beaufort Stud. Another significant contributor to the velvet genepool was Tower Farms' sire Buccaneer, with stags from Stanfield and Don Love also making their mark. Schischka says they still buy "a few bits and pieces", including a new velvet sire from Tower Farms this season.

That said, Ramsey and Schischka are pretty happy with the direction of their velvet breeding. They are keeping well clear of the trophy side – Schischka says trophy genetics can get "messy" if they drift into velvet lines.

Their recent success in the North Island and National velvet competitions has sparked plenty of interest from velvet producers wanting to tap into their genetics. Schischka says they are in a good position in that they don't need to sell velvet hinds and they keep most of their best two-year-old stags another year to see how they are maturing.

"We do sell the occasional stag, but not our top ones. People looking at our [mature] breeding stags are amazed when they ask which ones in the paddock are cutting more than 10kg and I say 'they all are'."

On both the venison and velvet sides, they have the luxury of strength in numbers when breeding replacements. Schischka says they are starting to do more DNA testing and also do single sire mating, so they have a clear idea where the best genetics lie. And while they are in a relatively mild and humid environment, none of

the farms is prone to facial eczema, another big plus.

He sees the operation as very much a commercial commodity trade, supplying top-of-the-line velvet and venison. And while deer studs still have a place, Schischka says the hold they once had over the industry has diminished somewhat. He partly puts this down to the emergence of breeding values, parentage testing, ET, AI and other reliable means of picking the best genetics, rather than having to rely solely on reputation or emotion when choosing sires. In addition, larger operations such as theirs now have the numbers to be able to develop and improve their own breed lines, although they still attend the occasional sire sale.

John Ramsey, now in his 70s, is something of a latecomer to the velvet competition scene, but he's enjoyed the experience immensely. He'll be back. ■



The stuff of champions. John Ramsey's 14.46kg head of velvet from seven-year-old Green 296 swept the field at both the North Island and National velvet competitions.

Farm Manager – Sole Charge

We seek a Farm Manager to join our team.

You will be in a sole-charge position of a predominantly deer farm located in Rotorua. The property is 236 hectares effective with 1100 stock units. Although there is also a small mob of sheep run on the property, experience with deer is preferred.

While you may not have management experience, you will have at least 2 years in a head shepherd or leadership experience.

For more information please contact Mike Ramsey on 07 878 7077.

Please apply with your CV and cover letter to hra@crusadermeats.co.nz

Applicants must have NZ residency or valid NZ work visa.

Obituary: Donald Alexander Johnston (1959–2019)

Southland deer farmer Don Johnston passed away on 16 January following a battle with cancer. The following are tributes to Don from Lloyd Thayer, and from Frank Griffin and Christie Rodgers, who worked with him to help tackle Johne's disease. The deer industry extends its condolences to Don's family and friends.

"Our brave and fierce friend"

Don Johnston was my friend. He believed in thinking. All things needed consideration; he was never rash and was possibly the most modest man I have known.

Some of his greatest triumphs were in Young Farmers debating teams, where Don led us to the National champion's crown in 1984.

As a deer farmer, Don was always probing for knowledge and advantages to help support his family, his companions and his partners striving for excellence, and a reasonable rate of return.

I was full of ideas and Don was careful and considered as we sat over his Meccano set at the kitchen table at Comely Bank with string and a tin of baked beans to come up with a lightweight

baleage buggy. And it worked perfectly of course.

Don's ability to look outside the square made him a highly valuable member of farm discussion groups. There were the monthly meetings with Don, Eddie Brock and myself checking out each other's farms, the Eastern Southland deer discussion group and the high-powered advanced nutrition group driven out of Invermay by our good friend Tony Pearse. And just as we thought we were getting to the answers, Don's enquiring mind would find us all new challenges. His work with Southland Deer Farmers' Association also brought him respect throughout the country.

During his own health struggles, as with the rest of his life, Don didn't want to bother others with his problems.

We will always remember the searching questions, the attentive looks, the creative solutions and the caring consideration of our brave and fierce friend.

– Lloyd Thayer

Nelson fires

As we went to press, the large fires in the Redwood Valley area south of Nelson were still burning. At this point, no deer stock losses had been reported. Nelson DFA Chair Kim Rowe told *Deer Industry News* that their own property was 15km west of the fires but they were carefully watching the wind. He said one deer farmer had moved his stock to safety on irrigated flats. Other farmers reported the constant noise from up to 22 helicopters fighting the fires had disturbed hinds and fawns, but the stock eventually got used to it and settled.

Graeme Sutton, who runs 80 deer and 20 cattle on 20 hectares in Redwood Valley said he moved his stock onto paddocks with the shortest grass to help reduce the fire risk and was set up with a water tank on a farm vehicle to fight any spot blazes. Fortunately that wasn't required but the authorities did evacuate him and his wife with just a few minutes' notice.

Sutton is on a community water scheme which was damaged and getting low, but still operating. Authorities were allowing him back for two hours a day to check stock water and feed out. On some lifestyle blocks stock water tanks had melted.

"We were very lucky the [southerly] wind on Tuesday [5 February] didn't keep blowing like it did for another day, or the fire wouldn't have stopped until it reached the sea. It was travelling at 1 kilometre an hour at one stage."

Sutton said it took some pressure through Federated Farmers and local MPs to get farmers allowed to go back to properties to make sure stock were okay.

"Your contributions will continue to sustain us"

You entered the lives of the staff of the Deer Research Laboratory (DRL) at the University of Otago in 1995, with your conundrum involving large numbers of reactors in your herd, but no evidence of tuberculosis at slaughter. Our initial results, though unsatisfactory, were sufficient to exclude *Mycobacterium avium*, until then the common cause of false positive Tb reactors. Years later we confirmed that the cause of reactors in your herd was *Mycobacterium paratuberculosis*, the causative agent of Johne's disease. Considering our tests were unproven, your faith in our diagnostics and trust in our results was unwavering. You allowed us to slaughter large numbers of animals on farm to validate our tests. When venison prices were high, your selfless decision to slaughter reactor animals, at huge financial cost, allowed us to develop and validate the Paralisa test. Your gift of this test to the deer industry has helped free farmers from the tyranny of Johne's disease.

We are poorer through your passing but richer through your shared wisdom. Your diplomacy, generosity of spirit, friendship, and the economy and incisiveness of your contributions will continue to sustain us. ■

– Christie Rodgers, Frank Griffin and The Deer Ones

Update details following NAIT upgrade

OSPRI is calling on NAIT users to re-register all their locations and ensure their NAIT accounts are up to date following a key system upgrade.

THE UPGRADE WILL help farmers and industry when using the national animal traceability system. The deadline to update details is **31 March**.

The enhancement involves development of an interactive map that uses LINZ parcel data to accurately define a NAIT location.

“This is a progressive step for the NAIT system. The new interactive map tool makes it more straightforward for NAIT users when they go online to register their properties,” says Kevin Forward, Head of NAIT.

“Reselecting the land parcels that make up your NAIT location will help us build more effective traceability through precisely identifying the locations where NAIT animals are kept.”

Existing and new NAIT users will be required to update their contact details, declare their herd enterprise type and the number of other species they manage at their properties by 31 March.

“Updating your NAIT account details is paramount. This is not only mandatory, it has also proved beneficial towards the Government and industry’s *Mycoplasma bovis* response,” Forward says.

“Where accurate records have been maintained for registered NAIT locations and the animals kept there, the tracing of animals and their movements has been faster and easier.

“The system upgrade was made in response to the recent NAIT review recommendations and feedback from NAIT users.

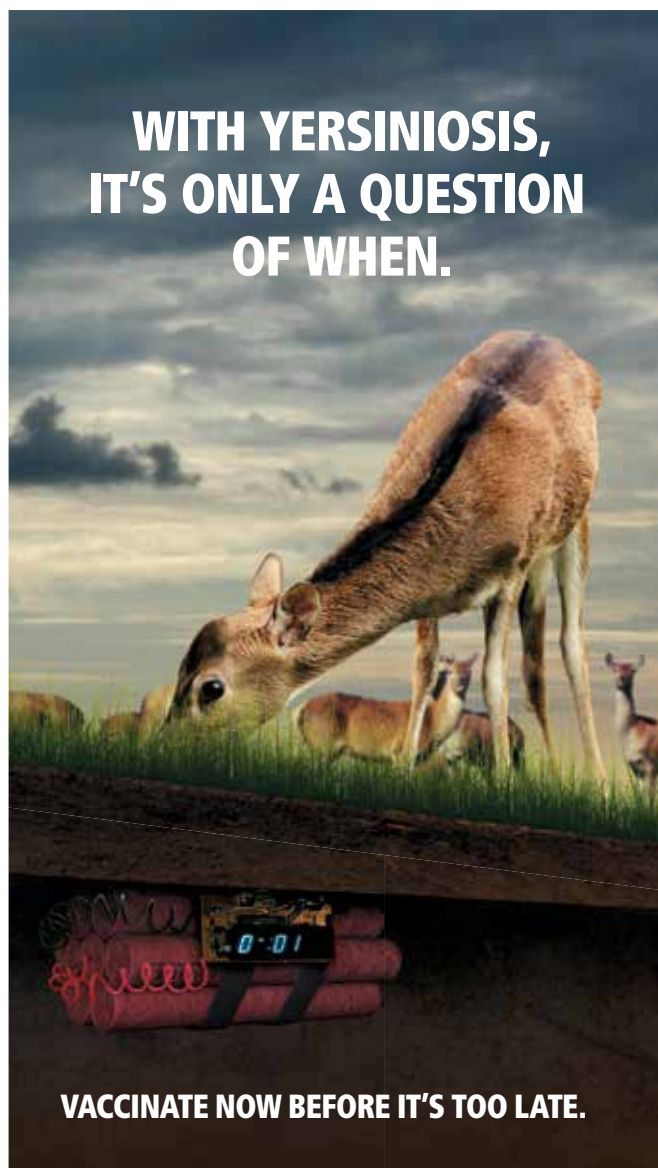
“We have listened to farmers, industry and our stakeholders. Our long-term goal is to build trust and confidence in the NAIT system. To improve NAIT’s capability, users need to ensure they have updated their accounts and registered all the locations and animals they have there before 31 March.”

A guide is also available on: <https://bit.ly/2TvZCKa>

For further information call the OSPRI contact centre:

0800 482 463 ■

- Article supplied



VACCINATE NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

Yersiniosis is a highly infectious disease that strikes weaner deer during late autumn and winter. Commonly triggered by stresses such as - poor nutrition, changes in feed, yarding, transport and bad weather - it rapidly leads to bloody scours and death.

To protect your herd over weaning and through the high risk periods, talk to your vet now about Yersiniavox®.



AVAILABLE ONLY UNDER VETERINARY AUTHORISATION.
ACVM No: A6151. ®Registered trademark. Schering-Plough Animal Health Ltd.
Phone: 0800 800 543. www.msd-animal-health.co.nz. NZ/YSVX/0914/0001



The good times continue

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Buyers were again out in force during the 2018/19 sale season and they were digging deep in search of top genetics underpinned by breeding values. A new record for a sire sold at auction, albeit a five-year-old, was set along the way.

NOT COUNTING PRIVATE treaty sales, a total of nearly \$8 million changed hands, with young hinds and velvetting stags also in keen demand. The offering for sale by auction of 722 sires was again down on last season's 789 and may partly account for the strong demand.

Clearance rates were very high: 94 percent for red sires and 99 percent for elk/wapitis, again a marked improvement on recent years.

Average prices for most sales were up on last year (see tables). (These figures can be taken with a small grain of salt when there is a big swing in average – often caused when there has been a single high-priced sire among a small number sold.)

As if we needed reminding, it was the Southland sales that made the biggest splash, not only in terms of price, but also turnover. Four sales – all in Southland – topped the half million dollar mark, with Netherdale ruling them all at an impressive \$873,000. Other sales to gross more than \$500,000 were Brock Deer, Altrive and Wilkins Farming (South Island).

Demand at the sales showed there is a big appetite for good velvet and trophy genetics especially, although high-BV venison sires (red and terminal) were also keenly sought. In what may be a first, the top price at Deer Genetics' velvet/trophy sale was \$51,000, for a hind, eclipsing the top sire (\$42,000).

Highest price of all was for a five-year-old son of Nixon, bought by Mount Cecil at Crowley Deer's December auction for \$155,000. (Nixon himself was sold privately to Mount Cecil for \$300,000 three years ago.) The record for a two-year-old stag sold at auction still stands with Raroa Red Deer, which sold Banks to Bob Atkinson in 2002 for \$142,002.

A number of other sales featured strong top prices, including Tower Farms (\$65,000), Netherdale (\$90,000) and Altrive (\$75,000).

Last year's newcomers, Rupert Red Deer and Forest Road farm both consolidated their early success and again had good sales.

John Somerville (Arawata) also enjoyed a good sale with 100 percent clearance and averages up on last year. He said buyers whose bidding may have topped out at \$10,000–\$15,000 on a velvet sire last year were more prepared to pay over \$20,000 this year. "They are starting to see the good results flowing through from their earlier purchases so they are now increasingly confident and coming back for more."

Another factor in the sire market was the growth in the velvet industry with newcomers adding to the competition for good sires. He says buyers are much more mobile than in past years, with many North Islanders heading to Southland looking for good sires. "John Ramsey, who did so well in this year's velvet competitions, was down here and bought half of the hinds I had on offer."

Somerville included a number of English-type maternal venison

sires in his offering and these also sold well, going for up to \$9,500.

Our thanks to those who responded to our survey and submitted sale reports, and to those who provided photos used in this report. ■

ALTRIVE RED DEER 17 January, Waipounamu, Southland

Stags sold	23 of 26 on offer		
Top price	\$75,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$12,456	+120%

Other animals sold 49 2yr old velvetting stags sold at an average of \$2,104. Our 58 surplus yearling hinds sold for an average of \$2,831 with a range of \$1,700 to \$7,000.

Comment 88 registered buyers in the huge crowd with very strong interest in our offering. This is shown by stags sold @ \$75,000, \$70,000, \$45,000, \$42,000, \$30,000 and \$27,000. There was demand after the sale for more yearling hinds but every one of our surplus animals was put up for auction and of our 50 surplus 2yr old stags only the velvet of one was considered not good enough to sell. 49 sold in 5 lots with a range of \$1,900 to \$2,350.

ARAWATA DEER FARM 17 January, Pine Bush, Southland

Stags sold	22 of 22 2yo on offer		
Top price	\$37,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$12,068.18	+7%

Other animals sold 20 of 20 hinds on offer; top \$4,000, average \$2,720 (+207% on last year). 31 of 31 velvetting stags, \$1,864.52 each (+11% on last year)

Comment Very successful sale. Buyers have money in their pockets from a good velvet season and are prepared to pay more for top stags. Established velvetters are competing with new entrants into the industry for good genetics. (See introduction to this article for further comments.)

BLACK FOREST*
15 January, Outram

Stags sold	21 of 28 on offer		
Top price	\$20,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$6,581	+21.5%
Other animals sold	8 of 8 hinds on offer; top \$6,000, average \$2,087.50 (+36% on last year).		

BROCK DEER
16 January, Merino Downs, Gore

Stags sold	22 of 23 on offer		
Top price	\$70,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$17,431	+35%
Other animals sold	28 of 28 yearling hinds on offer; average \$2,728 (up 74% on last year), top \$6,000 65 of 65 2yr velveting stags on offer; average \$2,130 (up 9% on last year); top \$3,200		
Comment	Huge gallery with spirited bidding. Clean, tidy velvet was very popular. Averages up considerably on last year.		

CLACHANBURN ELK*
23 January

Bulls sold	64 of 64 on offer		
Top price	\$7,800		
Average	% change from last year	\$5,320.31	+38%

CONNEMARA
20 January, Manapouri

Bulls sold	30 of 30 on offer		
Top price	\$18,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$6,300	+13.3%
Comment	A very strong sale proving that Breeding Values are being recognised, with a lift in prices of \$1,000 per head. The top bull was over 400kg with an average of 362kg.		



Wapiti bulls on sale at Connemara, which enjoyed another strong sale.

CROWLEY DEER
15 December, on farm

Stags sold	11 of 11 on offer		
Top price	\$155,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$30,136.36	+139%
Other animals sold	6 of 7 yearling hinds sold – top price \$20,000, average \$8714 (+26.3% on last year). 3 of 4 MA hinds sold – top \$3,800, average \$3,433.		
Comment	Excellent sale; very grateful for the continued support of clients and friends.		



This five-year-old son of Nixon from Crowley Deer achieved an all-time record for a stag sold at auction of \$155,000.

Superior Rubber Surfaces

Quality, Proven, Seamless, Sealed, Non-Slip Rubber Matting

Ensures safety, hygiene, comfort & durability – No Joins
Tailor made on site to suit your needs.

Our moisture resistant matting is installed throughout Australasia for the Dairy, Horse & Deer Industries.

SRS has been specialising in the Equine, Dairy & Deer industry since 1998 & provides a guarantee with confidence.



For more information please contact:

Owner/Operators Graeme & Michelle Paterson

Mobile: 021-949 721 **Landline:** 07-829 7069
Email: info@superiorrubbersurfaces.co.nz
Website: www.superiorrubbersurfaces.co.nz

continued on page 22

Sale report: continued

DEER GENETICS* 13 December: 3 year stags				Average	% change from last year	\$5,630	+43.4%
Stags sold	11 of 12 on offer						
Top price	\$27,000						
Average	% change from last year	\$11,454.55	-48%				
Comment	Excellent sale. Top priced stag sold to Canes Deer.						
DEER GENETICS* 13 January: 2 year stags				LOCHINVAR WAPITI* 20 January, Te Anau			
Stags sold	16 of 16 on offer			Bulls sold	27 of 27 on offer		
Top price	\$42,000			Top price	\$8,500		
Average	% change from last year	\$13,147	+71%	Average	% change from last year	\$4,818.52	-11.4%
Other animals sold	17 of 17 hinds on offer: top \$51,000, average \$5,576						
FAIRLIGHT STATION 12 December				NETHERDALE RED DEER 16 January, Balfour, Southland			
Stags sold	21 of 22 on offer			Stags sold	26 of 27 3yo sires on offer		
Top price	\$5,500			Top price	\$90,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$3,500	+13.6%	Average	% change from last year	\$19,615	+48%
Other animals sold	82 of 82 2-year-old velvet stags, average \$2,155 (+24% on last year) 49 of 49 13-month hinds, top price \$13,000, average \$2,967 (+85.4% on last year). 15 straws of semen from Bronx sold for \$2,750 each (+162% on last year).						
Comment	Very good attendance with strong buying power from both North and South Islands. All averages were up on the 2018 sale. The deer industry is in very good heart and this was shown in the very strong interest and results. Thank you to everyone who attended the sale; it is great to catch up.						
FOREST ROAD FARM 14 December on farm, Gwavas Road				PEEL FOREST ESTATE 7 December: 3 yo Forrester sires (English/German venison genetics)			
Stags sold	16 of 16 on offer			Stags sold	55 of 55 on offer		
Top price	\$14,500			Top price	\$13,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$6,400	+30%	Average	% change from last year	\$7,501.85	-0.8%
Other animals sold	95 of 95 yearling hinds on offer from sire lines: average \$935						
Comment	Really pleased with the stock we put up and the clean and tidy velvet we produce. Great local support and quite a few new faces which is great to build on. The gains we are getting in our stock are great and we can't wait to see what we can put up next year for sale!						
FOVERAN DEER PARK 12 January at Foveran				PEEL FOREST ESTATE* 13 January: Velvet sires			
Stags sold	33 of 40 on offer			Stags sold	21 of 21 on offer		
Top price	\$42,000			Top price	\$33,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$6,137	-19%	Average	% change from last year	\$9,738	-16%
Comment	Sale average similar to last year. Good gallery in attendance.						
LITTLEBOURNE* 22 January, Winton				RAINCLIFF STATION* 24 January, Pleasant Point			
Bulls sold	20 of 20 on offer			Bulls sold	37 of 38 on offer		
Top price	\$12,000			Top price	\$10,800		
Average	% change from last year	\$5,667.57	+13.2%	Average	% change from last year	\$5,667.57	+13.2%

RAROA RED DEER*
16 December, Cambridge

Stags sold	19 of 22 on offer		
Top price	\$14,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$4,000	+8%
Other animals sold	13 of 16 hinds on offer: average \$703		

ROTHESAY RED DEER*
14 January, Darts Road, Methven

Stags sold	10 of 12 on offer		
Top price	\$9,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$5,000	-19.5%
Other animals sold	23 of 23 velvet stags on offer, average \$925 (-11.9% on last year). 10 of 20 hinds on offer, top \$1,025, average \$887.50		

RUAPEHU RED DEER
12 December, Pukenua Road, Taihape

Stags sold	33 of 33 on offer		
Top price	\$11,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$6,900	0%
Comment	All stags were venison sires with 12 month BVs ranging to 30+. Buoyant sale with more catalogued than last year and the same average price. Started raining during the sale which lifted spirits and added to a great day overall.		



Good demand for high-BV red sires meant another good auction for Ruapehu Red Deer.

RUPERT RED DEER
14 January, Scotland Farm, 147 North Boundary Road

Stags sold	22 of 22 on offer		
Top price	\$41,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$10,809	-3%
Other animals sold	40 2 yr velvetting stags, average \$1587 (-4% on last year), 53 R2 hinds, average \$917, 18 straws semen, average \$275/straw.		
Comment	We were very happy with our second annual on-farm sale and felt that it went even better than last year, with plenty of motivated buyers and a total clearance.		

TIKANA WAPITI
22 January, on farm at Browns, Winton

Bulls sold	19 of 20 on offer		
Top price	\$15,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$8,360	-12.3%
Other animals sold	Four of four yearling cows sold for an average \$2,575 and top price \$3,200. Good demand for wapiti cows saw all six sold for an average \$3,900 and top price of \$5,500 paid by Murray Hagen of Connemara.		

**FOR ALL YOUR VENISON
KILL REQUIREMENTS**

Talk to Bede Crean, or your local Alliance livestock rep



Bede Crean : 027 229 9341
Or visit www.alliance.co.nz and select 'Contact Us' for more information.



continued on page 24

Sale report: continued

Comment (Tikana)

Larger than normal crowd. Quality of the offering was up on last year, with 16 of the 20 three-year-old bulls cutting Elk/Wapiti Supreme and 11 of these cutting more than 10.5kg. The only unsold bull was the Nepia son Yotam. He is the heaviest velvetting 3-year-old ever put on the market (15.3kg) and remains on sale for a realistic \$20,000 reserve. Support came from regular buyers but several new faces were a welcome addition to our client base.



Pre-sale velvet inspection at Tikana, where the bulls on offer featured heavy velvet weights.

Comment (Wilkins NI)

A large crowd with plenty of new faces as well as our regular clients. All stags were sought with good demand, a reflection of the quality Maternal, European and Eastern animals we provided for sale. This was our 7th North Island sale, and we'd like to thank all of our purchasers and under bidders. We look forward to presenting another excellent lineup of animals for our 2019 sale.

WILKINS FARMING
18 January, South Island: Wilkins Farming, Athol

Stags sold	61 of 61 on offer		
Top price	\$26,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$8,765	+35.5%

Comment A fantastic crowd present with purchasers coming from all over the South Island as well as the North Island. We were thrilled with the stags we presented at this sale, with at least two records being broken: +22eBV for an English Sired animal by Churchill and what we believe to be NZ's heaviest ever 2-year-old red stag (291kg), sired by WF144 – congratulations to Mendip Hills and Waihi Pukawa Station. There was an exciting mix on offer from both our new sires Cardrona, Rock Me and Mighty Image as well as our existing sires WF 144/05, WF 334/11 and Churchill. Our liveweights were the best we've achieved in the stud's history. Many thanks to our purchasers and under bidders. We look forward to presenting you with our 2017-born progeny in early 2020.

TOWER FARMS DEER
18 December at 188 Discombe Road, Hautapu

Stags sold	22 of 26 on offer		
Top price	\$65,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$16,500	+22.5%
Other animals sold	19 hinds, average \$1,950 (+6.5% on last year)		
Comment	We are very happy with the outcome of our sale, with velvet dominating again this year.		

WILKINS FARMING
14 December, North Island: hosted at Te Maire, Hawke's Bay by George and Laura Williams

Stags sold	28 of 28 on offer		
Top price	\$11,000		
Average	% change from last year	\$7,250	+37%

WOODTOWN WOBURN STUD (Private treaty)
Crown Range, Queenstown

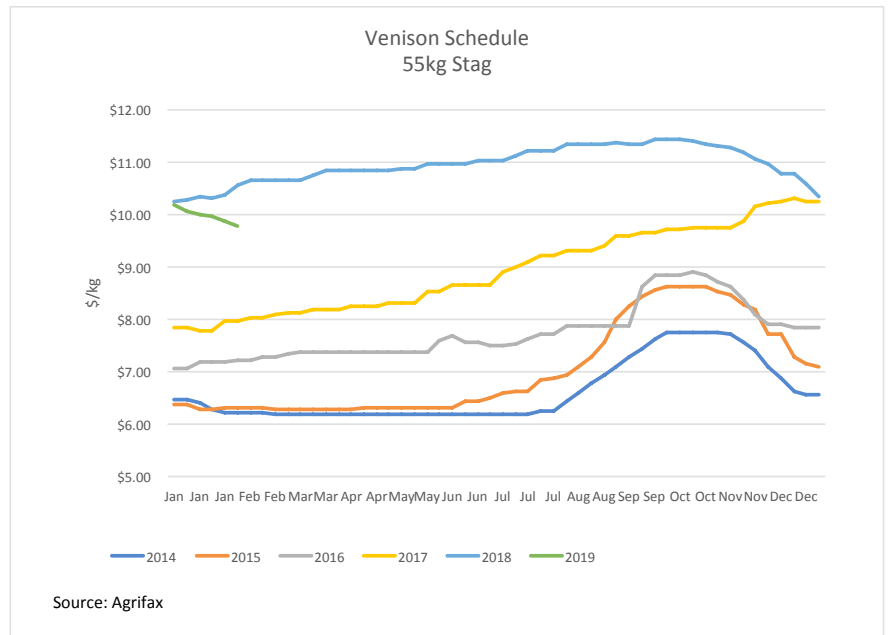
Comment Prices ranged from \$5,000–\$25,000 with a sales average of \$12,666 per head. The programme was virtually completed at the time of writing (25 January). Feature sires were the super Bloomsbury and brand new bloodlines direct from Woburn through Henry R. A top Bloomsbury had very heavy antler and 40 points and many 2yr sires were in excess of 190kg liveweight. The results to date have been very satisfying and augur well for next year.

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

Venison market update

THE NATIONAL AVERAGE published venison schedule was \$9.77 in the week ending 8 February. This is the second-highest recorded price for this time of year, 41% up on the 2014-2017 average, and down a little from the exceptional level achieved in 2018.

At this time of year most venison is being sold frozen, and stocks had built a little following disappointing sales in the European market leading up to Christmas. Some customers held off buying in 2018 as wholesale prices reached their historic highs. Manufacturing and trim prices are reported to be easing as customers for these goods reassess their formulations following a price spike in 2018. Buyers suggest that while the exceptional prices offered to New Zealand farmers in 2018 are unlikely to be repeated in 2019, demand remains strong. Most markets are still seeking more venison and remain willing to pay high prices for the guaranteed consistency offered by New Zealand farm-raised venison. ■



Canterbury trophy-breeding operation on market

Alastair and Jessica Midgley are selling their South Canterbury Farming operation, Willowbrook, after supplying trophy fallow and red stags to safari parks for 50 years.

IN MORE RECENT years, Alastair has concentrated on improving the “wow” factor in their red stags.

He says competition in the trophy market is very strong, which adds to the challenge.

Alastair has travelled the country visiting many leading red deer studs over the past decade.

Some of the prerequisites for sire selection are length of antlers, wide spread and exceptional bottom tynes, he says.

Alastair is disappointed that the Safari Club International scoring system rewards trophy antlers that, in his opinion, have lots of points but are too short and narrow.

“Some of the most attractive antlers may have only 18–25 points, but are 45 inches long and would struggle to get through a 5-foot gate.”

Alastair and Jessica are looking forward to spending more time with grandchildren, gardening and travel.

That said, the couple will never lose interest in the deer industry.

“They are such a beautiful and intelligent animal to farm and we have enjoyed our years with them,” Alastair concludes. ■

• **Article supplied**



Red trophy stags at Willowbrook - bred for the “wow” factor.

Venison feeding into collaborative meat study

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Venison raised at AgResearch Invermay is feeding into a wide collaborative red meat industry programme. The promise is for exciting and innovative New Zealand-developed red meat sensor technology adding value to New Zealand's red meats.

DINZ IS PARTICULARLY interested to find out more about the sensory aspects of venison quality, explains Dr Cameron Craigie, AgResearch science impact leader for meat products and supply.

Craigie is project leader of a team of eight meat scientists working on the development of new, and what will be world-leading, technology that has been funded by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) in a five-year \$4.5 million Endeavour Fund grant approved in 2016. This is aiming to extract more value from New Zealand's red meat markets over the next decade.



Project leader Dr Cameron Craigie.

Now halfway through, the research has moved from phase one – examining the available sensor technology for capability to measure meat pH, tenderness and intramuscular fat – and into phase two, taking the most promising technology out of the laboratory and into more real-life plant situations.

The research team's advantage was already knowing everything about the Invermay animals, which had been bred and raised on the research farm, explains Craigie.

“It was a good example of the industry collaborating to get more out of what we're all doing,” says Craigie, who drew on his own background assessing venison quality traits using near infrared (NIR) spectroscopy technology in a 2014 Society of Animal Production paper and in his PhD at Massey University.

The loins of 60 of the deer were tenderness tested to the 21-day Cervena® standard, for pH and muscle fibre (sarcomere) lengths – to assess whether there had been “cold-shortening” or toughening of the fibres – and also for micro-fibrillar fragmentation which



Cutting New Zealand venison samples ready for testing.

shows how much the meat had tenderised after the 21 days. For DINZ purposes, they also looked at the amount of weight lost after storage, the meat colour in packs and also on the shelf at retail.

The venison was subjected to five different sensor technologies at AgResearch Invermay, none of which are new in themselves. These included two Raman spectroscopy devices, linescan hyperspectral, snapshot hyperspectral and contact NIR spectroscopy. Each piece of data is now being analysed separately and together at the University of Otago and AgResearch.

“While 60 animals won't give us enough information now, in time we could look at calibrating the instruments to predict sensory scores specifically for venison. For example, predicting, at 24 hours post-slaughter what the consumer response is likely to be to the meat when they buy it,” says Craigie.

Commenting on the practicalities of applying the research, Craigie noted that: “When taking the most promising technology out of the lab into the plant environment, it changes a lot when you have a time budget of 10 seconds to get a reading.”

Callaghan Innovation is also part of the research team that has developed a robot to connect the relevant sensors. The researchers found the best way to get accurate and fast readings on the processing chain was to hard-mount the relevant sensors in a frame. This was recently tested on samples of chilled beef striploin and lamb, which had been taken out of the chiller, cut and rested for 30 minutes and inserted into the robot. The samples are 3D scanned for contour and shape, corrected for the undulations in the surface of the meat, and then programmed to be moved around the frame to the different sensor points to be accurately assessed.



The robot loaded and ready for sampling. Future meat quality assessment could be done in real-time in the plant, using a robot like this, guaranteeing consumers a high-quality experience.

“The robot is doing the job of five people from a research point of view. It gives us the chance to analyse the same piece of meat and in real-time with minimal human error, all in less than 90 seconds,” explains Craigie.

DINZ venison marketing manager Nick Taylor has been keeping abreast of the new technology, attending an industry day in Hamilton on 21 November where the team were running the robot sensor on beef and spent a day later checking in on the sensory testing of the venison.

“It’s interesting to see the evolution of technology and how quickly we can now get data to help inform decision making,” he says. “It is important for our industry to be aware of the technological developments and for us to start having conversations now, considering how we can use this technology in our business and the possible impact it may have.”

DINZ science and policy manager Catharine Sayer also notes the limitations of current quality assessment tools, such as the genetic prediction of the eye muscle area of a live animal which is positively correlated with tenderness (but not yet adopted by industry), or invasive techniques on the carcass involving taking physical samples from the venison, which is slow and costly in terms of assessment time and loss of product.

“While reliance on our Cervena standards for inputs and DINZ slaughter standards guarantees a consistent premium product, sensory techniques could allow even more precise differentiation between the optimum marketing channels for each cut,” she says.

Alongside DINZ, Craigie has appreciated the involvement of industry collaborators in the work. These include: Scott Technologies, First Light Foods, Duncan NZ, FarmIQ systems, Silver Fern Farms, Alliance, Beef and Lamb NZ Genetics and other beef and sheepmeat processors including Greenlea Premier Meats, ANZCO Foods, Progressive Meats, Provenance Meats and the Meat Industry Association.

“It’s what industry engagement is all about. We were able to work together and produce work to meet each other’s needs and for a better outcome for the whole industry,” says Craigie.

“In terms of venison, it’s a very high-value product and if you can get it even higher by guaranteeing the quality then I’m sure that will pay dividends for the New Zealand meat industry.”

Results from the sensory assessments will be available a little later this year. An update on the MBIE work will be reported first to red meat processing representatives attending the AgResearch Meat Technology Workshop in Hamilton (13–14 March), where attendees will see a trial with a prototype of the new robot. ■

- To view the sensor robot in action:

<https://youtu.be/E2xO2FAco7M>

- For further information contact Dr Cameron Craigie: Cameron.craigie@agresearch.co.nz, 021 289 9063



Nick Taylor (left) learning about the robotic aspects of meat sensor technologies from Luke Holibar from Callaghan Innovation, who ran the robot for the trial.



HYUN DAE DEER PRODUCTS LTD

9 Druces Road, Manukau, Auckland
WWW.HYUNDAEDEER.CO.NZ

Ph:(09) 263-7720

-Licensed Exporter -Mpi Approved Processing facility



Sliced Top



Sliced Jelly Tip



Processing



Processing



Export

Elk and Wapiti Society annual competition

Members gathered in glorious weather at The Gate, Cromwell, on 9 February for the 2019 Elk and Wapiti Society's annual antler competition and dinner. Champion of Champions for 2019 was Geoff Pullar's Littlebourne bull W63, which also won the 5-year velvet category. Reserve Champion was Dave Lawrence's Tikana bull, Nepia, winner of the Open Class.

THE EVENT ALSO provided a welcome opportunity to formally present the Elk and Wapiti Society's highest honour, the Evan Meredith Memorial Award, for Dr Mike Bringans. The award was announced at the society's 30th anniversary dinner in Wanaka in 2017 and was made for outstanding services and contribution to elk and wapiti farming and the wider deer industry. Velvet judges this year were Rhys Griffiths, Tony Pearse and Geoff Pullar (recused from the categories in which he was entered).

Velvet category winners

Category	Owner	Bull	Weight (kg)
2 yr	Tikana	Devon	9.8
3 yr	Tikana	Yotam	15.2
4 yr	Connemara	Forecaster	15.2
5 yr	Littlebourne	W63	17.1
Wap 1*	Raincliff	66/14	9.3
Open	Tikana	Nepia	24.4

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

Hard antler display

The enduring influence of Whyte Farming's sire Y801 was on show in the display of hard antler (there was not a judged hard antler competition this year). His son Yukon's 8 yr entry in the non-typical category had a score of 595. Four years' worth of hard antler from another successful son, Seattle, was also shown, with the bull's 2, 3, 4 and 8 year heads on display. The 8 year head, scoring 586, holds a world record in this category. (Seattle died in November, see page 13.) ■

- All photos by Tony Pearse.



Rhys Griffiths (left) and Geoff Pullar hard at work judging velvet entries.



Charlie and Lucy Falconer check out the velvet on display.



Di and Tim Bringans accept the Evan Meredith Memorial Award on behalf of Mike Bringans from Sir Tim Wallis.