

# Deer Industry News

Deer Industry Conference:  
Full report

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AND SOCIAL MEDIA  
TAKE OVER AS KEY  
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WEIGHING UP COSTS  
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AGM FULL REPORT  
HOW THE SAP WORKS  
PROFILE: MARK MCCOARD  
LIFE MEMBERSHIP FOR  
JANET HORRELL



# Deer Industry News

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

ISSUE 96 | JUNE/JULY 2019

ISSN 1176-0753

## Contents

Editorial	2
Deer Industry Conference	
Could we do better?	3
Environment work accelerates	4
"Safe, green, guilt free"	4
Brain function tests	6
Science investment priorities	8
Venison: Using natural advantages	9
Velvet: Always more to do	12
Sustainability issues addressed	16
Ultimate wellness products?	17
Generational change in politics	18
Good policy needs good science	19
Bottling quality and value	20
Export opportunities	21
Happiness and heartbreak	22
Awards night	23
Industry News	
Skin in the game	26
Markets	
Digital goes mainstream	28
US Cervena® promotion	30
Passion2Profit	
Canadian retail market	31
High-octane forages	32
NZDFA News	
44th Annual General Meeting	36
Report back session	38
Life membership for Janet Horrell	39
DFA contacts	40
Executive Committee profile: Mark McCoard	41
How the SAP works	42
Animal Health	
Move to risk-based TB testing	43

**Cover:** "Jumping into the weekend like" by William Pears was highly commended in the 2019 MSD Animal Health Photo Awards. See page 23 for full results and more photos.

*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

## Shift in emphasis at conference

When delegates for the 2019 Deer Industry Conference gathered in Wellington on 16–17 May, there were still a couple of weeks to go before the delivery of the Government's "wellbeing" budget. But there were foreshadowings of this more holistic approach in the conference programme too.



Phil Stewart.

**AS WELL AS** the usual economic indicators for the deer industry – and that continues to be a positive story – there was a strong emphasis on other elements of the "triple bottom line". The industry's focus on environmental issues was again centre stage. There were updates on the essential work advocating for the industry at regional council level and discussion about the newly formed P2P Environment theme group and Deer Industry Environment Groups. The Zero Carbon Bill, and its implications, especially the methane reduction targets, focused many minds.

The third part of the triple bottom line, social wellbeing, also resonated. This was most powerfully expressed in the keynote address by Grant and Ele Ludemann. Their story was extraordinary and you can read more about them on page 22.

This year marked an efficient and seamless service provided by Wellington-based professional conference organiser Melissa Bähler of Positive Events Plus. While Melissa was new to the industry she also added the Executive Committee and NZDFA Branch Chairs' meeting plus a business breakfast for Wellington agribusiness interests and a Super rugby outing in the capital with great skill and a minimum of fuss. Thank you.

Probably the most noticeable change in format and style was the involvement throughout the conference of Jamie Fitzgerald of Inspiring Performance. Jamie was far more than a conference MC, although he did that really well too. He provided a welcome burst of humour and energy and showed the value of an outside perspective.

Showing a tremendous eye for detail and a big commitment to getting to know the industry, Jamie entertained and engaged delegates from his deep well of experience. He, along with Melissa and the DINZ team of Tony, Cenwynn and Rebecca put together a memorable event. There's comprehensive conference coverage throughout this issue, and you can also watch the presentations on: <https://bit.ly/2K1bzql>

This issue of *Deer Industry News* also marks an important shift in emphasis. It's the official magazine of both DINZ and the NZ Deer Farmers' Association and it would be fair to say that we haven't been featuring as much NZDFA content as we should.

The Association communicates through *Stagline-Online*, but this magazine is another important channel. Starting now we are featuring more on NZDFA matters and working with the Executive Committee to make sure the Association is better represented here.

In this issue we begin with reports on the AGM and a "report back" session at the May conference. We explain the inner workings of the Selection and Appointments Panel and there's an updated list of NZDFA contacts. In addition we profile the Executive Committee's newest member, Mark McCoard (Taihape). And finally we mark the tremendous contribution of Southland DFA's Janet Horrell.

Enjoy your reading and, as always, we welcome feedback and ideas for content in your industry magazine. ■

– Phil Stewart, Deer Industry News Editor

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# Could we do better?

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

If anyone was worried about the industry snoozing at the wheel, Dan Coup helped shake them out of any complacency during a “state of the nation” introduction to the 2019 Deer Industry Conference in Wellington. The DINZ CEO focused on the “reflections” component of the conference “Reflections and Directions” theme, followed by DINZ Chair Ian Walker’s take on “directions”, or where to from here.

**COUP GOT THINGS** started in a kind of discipline master’s role, by assessing the industry with a report card. This was done through the lens of the four pillars of DINZ’s industry strategy. Needless to say we’re not in straight ‘A’ territory just yet. Here’s how the grades went.

## Premium positioning of our products

**Venison:** The percentage of total exports that are chilled is a good benchmark for premium positioning. This has actually gone backwards, from about 20 percent in 2017 to just under 15 percent. Needs to wake up a bit. **B-**

**Velvet:** A teacher’s favourite. Great progress shifting product out of commodity trade into healthy food segment, where the New Zealand Velvet tag attracts a premium. At the same time, both prices and volumes have been rising. **A**

## Develop and diversify markets

**Venison:** A bit of a shift, especially into “Other” markets than Europe or North America. Overall **B-**

**Velvet:** Continuing growth into the valued healthy food segment at the expense of the traditional Korean medicine channel, but room for “Other” segments such as Hong Kong to grow. An improver. **B+**

## Sustainably growing on-farm value

Not paying enough attention. Progress has been a bit slow on the “sustainably” front; for example, only 40 percent of farms have a Farm Environment Plan (FEP). However there’s been good work on the people side with succession planning; environment groups are forming and animal welfare performance has been OK. Overall **C**

The “on-farm value” performance has been stellar over the past couple of seasons, with slaughter weights and fawning percentages spiking up. Teacher’s pet. **A+**

## A cohesive and respected industry

On the “cohesive” side, the work with Advance Parties, rejuvenation of DFA activities and a popular Next Generation programme are all good signs. Willing learners. **B-**

And are we “respected”? Other rural sectors like us, but the respect of politicians, customers and the general public is still a work-on. Trying hard, but a **C**

Coup said declining deer numbers over the past 15 years show farmers have been voting with their feet, but the recent uptick in the deer population is a good sign. He gave the industry an overall **B** grade – not bad, but room for improvement.

## Directions

Following the report card, DINZ Chair Ian Walker assumed the headmaster’s role and discussed what it all means. He said there is no shame in making a profit, but more investment is needed in both people and the environment.

He said the industry needs to be doing the right thing, and to earn the respect of our communities and customers for it. The “right thing” is a moving target, he added. ■

Deer Industry Report Card 2018	
Premium Positioning - Venison	B-
Premium Positioning - Velvet	A
Market Diversification - Venison	B-
Market Diversification - Velvet	B+
Sustainably...	C
...growing on-farm value	A+
Cohesive...	B-
...and respected industry	C



Dan Coup (top) and Ian Walker: Identified areas for improvement in the industry.

# Environment work accelerates

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

While “reflections and directions” defined the style of the 2019 deer industry conference, the continuing focus on environmental matters made up much of the substance. Delegates received a comprehensive update on progress since the launch of the Deer Industry Environmental Management Code of Practice last year.

**THE HELP THAT** DINZ Environmental Stewardship Manager, Lindsay Fung gives to local branches of NZDFA in responding to regional council environment plans was mentioned numerous times during the conference and it was Fung who updated the conference on developments in the regions.

The challenges faced by livestock farmers in the different regions, and progress made by councils in developing regional plans in response to the national policy statement on freshwater management, varies hugely (see summary).

## Concerns in some regions

Fung said proposed plan changes in regions such as Waikato were concerning, whereas in Canterbury they were complex but mostly manageable. In other regions plans were still at proposal stage and not operative, or under appeal, so it remained to be seen what issues might emerge as they went through the Resource Management Act process.

He said the main focus when responding to regional plans was on whether restrictions such as stock exclusion would place an undue burden on deer farmers. In some regions, having a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) could counter some of the more onerous requirements of a regional plan. Even when an FEP wasn't required, it could provide good insurance against the impacts of some local rules.

While regional plans affected day-to-day operations on a deer farm, government decisions will flow through as well. The first of these is a new National Policy Statement on Freshwater Management, which will be released soon. Issues such as stock exclusion, grazing practices, identifying priority catchments and the requirement to have FEPs will feature in this.

Fung noted that the deer industry has a voice at government level with the inclusion of Wanaka deer farmer Mandy Bell on the government-appointed Freshwater Leaders' Group.

The Zero Carbon Bill with its methane reduction targets was occupying the minds of all primary industry organisations, he

# “Safe, green, guilt-free” future

by Grace Prior, guest writer

Lindsay Fung, DINZ Environmental Stewardship Manager, spoke at the deer industry conference about the future of deer farming.

**REGIONAL COUNCILS' PLANS** to manage water quality are at various stages of development or implementation throughout the country. Fung wants to know if the regional plan rules are discriminatory or impose a greater burden on deer farmers than other farming sectors.

Included in regional plans can be stock exclusion, which can become a problem for deer farmers if they have to fence off large areas of land at high cost: Deer fencing along waterways costs around \$25 per metre compared with as little as \$5 per metre for electric fencing on a dairy farm.

The only region where there are no regulations for managing on-farm activities that could negatively impact on waterways is Otago, although Fung recommends that farmers still develop Farm Environment Plans (FEPs) to demonstrate that risks are identified and managed appropriately.

A FEP is a tool that can help you recognise environmental risks on your farm and sets out a programme of prioritised actions (by level of risk and available budget) to manage those risks. FEPs are

unique to a property and reflect the local climate and soils, the type of farming operation, and the farmer's goals.

FEPs are already required for farms around Lake Rotorua, Gisborne (intensive only), Tukituki catchment (Hawke's Bay), Canterbury and Southland, and Waikato is likely to follow.

Fung posed the question to attendees as to where the industry wants to be positioned moving forward.

His image for the future is “safe, green, guilt-free” deer farming in New Zealand.

The deer industry needs to be doing the right thing all the time because “as soon as we stop we fall behind the game,” Fung explained.

This includes looking into diversifying land use with the likes of planting trees where space allows, farm stays and a mix of livestock to suit the land and climate.

“Farmers need to practice change at farm level,” said Fung.

Becoming involved in local deer industry environmental groups could help farmers make that change. ■

said. DINZ had already released a strongly worded statement on the potential impacts of the legislation. An alternative proposal would be presented to the government over the coming weeks.

Government policy being developed on biodiversity and on protecting productive land from encroachment could also possibly affect deer farming, so was being watched.

“[Environmental policy] is a busy space!” Fung said. He advised that where possible the deer sector was part of a pan-industry response to all the challenges faced.

Fung told the conference the deer industry was responding to water quality issues through the P2P programme focusing on farm-level practice change, while DINZ and NZDFA had the shared aim of getting all deer farmers on board with an FEP. The new Deer Industry Environment Groups had borrowed the Advance Party model and would focus on members getting their FEPs completed, using the Environmental Management Code of Practice as a guide.

## Environment theme group

Under P2P an Environmental Stewardship theme group has been set up, chaired by Simon Vincent, who admitted he would prefer to subvert the industry’s aim for a “confident, growing deer industry” to a “confident, **sustainable** deer industry”. The theme group would take a more strategic look at how the industry should be positioning itself. It is a diverse group including three farmers, a scientist, an environmental consultant, a marketer, DINZ executive and observers from Beef+Lamb NZ and the Ministry for the Environment.

Vincent said three of DINZ’s four strategic aims for the industry directly involved environmental stewardship and at a planning level, this boiled down to three key areas:

1. Doing the right thing through good industry practices
2. Making sure people recognised we are doing the right thing
3. Helping ensure that there are reasonable rules in place and encourage recognition of industry self-regulation, as we continue to do the right thing.

He said that while there had been a necessary focus on the regulatory side of environmental management (government legislation, regional plans and so on), the industry needed to make sure it celebrated its achievements and garnered respect for what was being done.

While this all sounded esoteric it was important to build a good framework to guide specific activities, Vincent said.



Simon Vincent is chair of the Environmental Stewardship theme group.

Region	Plan status	Stock Exclusion	N limit	P focus	FEP required
Southland	Operative/Appeal	Yes			Yes
Otago	Operative		Yes		No - but good?
Canterbury	Operative/Proposed		Yes	Yes	Yes
West Coast	Operative				No
Tasman	Operative				No
Marlborough	Proposed	Yes			No?
Greater Wellington	Proposed	Yes			?
Manawatu-Whanganui	Operative/Plan Change				?
Taranaki	Operative/Draft				No
Hawkes Bay	Operative	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gisborne	Operative	Yes			Yes
Bay of Plenty	Operative/Appeal		Yes		Yes
Waikato	Proposed	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Auckland	Operative				No
Northland	Operative	Yes		Yes	No

Summary of regional council water plan status.

## Deer Industry Environment Groups

Phil McKenzie, who works with DINZ coordinating Deer Industry Environment Groups (DIEGs), said the groups aimed at far more than a box ticking exercise as each member worked towards developing an FEP. He noted that it’s always easy to spot opportunities for improvement on other people’s farms and the knowledge and experience of the whole group would be leveraged to suggest solutions on each place.

The number of DIEGs is growing rapidly and feedback from members has been good to date, McKenzie said. “They like the way a programme can be broken down into bite-sized chunks.”

He said he was trying to link the DIEGs to existing Advance Parties and noted that some of the APs that have been around for a while are refreshing their purpose with a new focus on environmental management.

He said a good FEP shouldn’t sit in its own silo. It needs to be integrated with farm planning for feeding, welfare, genetic improvement and so on. He noted that in some regions, existing environmental consultants are so busy helping farmers deal with council regional plans that they don’t have time to get involved with the DIEGs. That said, regional councils are very supportive.

McKenzie said the Aparima Catchment Engagement (ACE) group in Southland was a great example of how community groups within a catchment can join forces with a common purpose – ACE comprises eight separate groups.

He said there was also help available for isolated farmers. “We are developing Deer Industry Environment Groups Online (DIEGO) to ensure they can still access advice and support.”

McKenzie said that in addition to the Environmental Code of Practice, there were plenty of other resources available, including Deer Facts and videos, all accessible on the DINZ website. A reference handbook and online version of the code of practice are also being developed over the next couple of years.

While the primary aim for the groups is to get their FEP up and running, it was noted that this is just a starting point for a continuous process.

So how easy will it be to get the whole industry on board with an FEP? A show of hands in the conference revealed about half of the farmers had completed one. Getting the other half across the line will be the next challenge. ■



# Interesting results from brain function tests

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Does taking deer velvet help promote healthy brain ageing amongst the middle-aged and slow down cognitive decline? Some people think so, but targeted research could show how significant this effect might be.

**TO HELP START** this journey of discovery, the former Warnham & Woburn Society donated \$50,000 of its residual funds to Velvet Antler Research NZ to support research at the University of Otago into this question. The work is being led by Associate Professor Ping Liu as a side project to her research into Alzheimer's disease.

*Deer Industry News* reported on this work in its February/March 2018 issue and Ping spoke at the deer industry conference in May to update progress and report on a trial involving rodents.

Since rats can't really name a string of Prime Ministers or do simple maths tests to show how well a velvet treatment might affect their cognitive function, the researchers used a combination of behavioural and physiological tests to measure the effects.

In the blind trial (research assistants didn't know which rats were in the treatment or control groups), some rats were given a large dose of freeze-dried velvet antler powder. The trial using 12-month-old (middle aged) rats lasted 19 days, with velvet administration covering the last 14 of these days.

A key component of healthy brain function is blood circulation, and the presence of nitric oxide in the walls of the tiny blood vessels of the brain is an important part of this. It helps keep the vessels functioning properly and enables good interaction between blood flow and activity of neurons. "Neurovascular coupling" is the scientific term, and it means that the right amount of blood is being supplied to specific parts of the brain to help it function properly when the demand arises. "In Alzheimer's patients, we see neurovascular coupling impaired," Ping explained.

The researchers tested neurovascular coupling in the rats by the simple mechanism of stimulating their whiskers – this in turn stimulates a known area in the brain, so the impact can be measured accurately.

Several markers were used to measure the effect on blood circulation in the brain, including the presence of the enzyme (eNOS), a measurement of blood vessel density in the hippocampus region of the brain, and the presence of an antibody (RECA-1). All pointed to the same thing: increased microcirculation in the brains in the velvet-treated rats.

The researchers also carried out behavioural tests including activity levels and performance in a water maze. These also showed the velvet-treated animals having a cognitive advantage over their control group companions.

Ping noted that the treated rats did not suffer any impact on body weight over the course of the trial.

So what does all this mean? As cautious scientists are wont to be, Ping cautioned that this trial was limited in scope. The number

of animals used was limited, the dose was high and it covered a fairly short period – a longer trial period may have shown up greater differences between the treated and untreated groups.

And although not all of the results were statistically significant, she said – perhaps with some understatement – that they were "interesting nonetheless".

Results in animal trials don't always transfer directly to humans, but Ping was encouraged by the trial outcome, concluding that the preliminary findings do support the beneficial effects of velvet supplementation in middle-aged rats.

And in a postscript that is found in the results of many such preliminary trials, she said there is plenty of scope to build on this research to determine whether velvet would have effects in different dose patterns, age groups and to determine how it having an effect. ■



Dr Ping Liu: Encouraged by results of the preliminary trial.



Could deer velvet hold the secret to healthy brain ageing? Photo: Eileen Ferris, entrant in 2019 MSD Photo Awards.

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# Science investment priorities: you tell us!

by Grace Prior, guest writer

Dr Geoff Asher spoke at the deer industry conference about prioritising science in the industry. The industry needs to be “doing the right things for the right reasons”, Asher said.

**IN MOVING FORWARD** in the industry, Asher suggested that we need to be developing modern deer management systems through farmer innovation, supported by science.

Asher said there is a limitation on what gets funding and that farmers and scientists need to begin speaking a common language. There were many other stakeholders in the industry such as processors, marketers and regional councillors. Getting their perspectives and priorities was also necessary, but all took time.

Co-innovation, a process by which science providers and stakeholders collectively design, implement and complete research projects, was important, Asher said.

He explained that this process was being followed through several mechanisms:

- vesting governance for research investment by the industry and AgResearch to the DEERResearch board
- using industry advisory groups to provide expertise around specific outputs (e.g. environment, feeding)
- consulting with stakeholders such as farmers and processors
- linking science activities to P2P initiatives.

He said DEERResearch, now in existence for nearly 20 years, helps prioritise investment in research based on the potential industry-good outcomes and feedback from the industry. “There are always more potential projects than we have funding available for,” he said.

P2P was providing a valuable channel for communication on science, through Advance Parties, managers and theme groups.

Asher also reminded the conference that a tremendous amount of good science-based information resides in the Deer Hub. “There

is loads of really cool stuff there.”

The big four current science activities are environment, parasite management, genetics and nutrition.

Asher said more money needs to go into the science surrounding environment, though this is already a big focus, with one-third of funding going towards it currently.

Looking ahead, he saw potential for several areas that would help take the deer industry forward. These included:

- DNA-based technologies such as use of genetic markers (the deer industry is an early adopter)
- smart farming systems based around GPS/GIS technologies, or pen-side real-time diagnostics
- greenhouse gas mitigation
- facial eczema and ticks (increasingly important as climate warming allows them to spread south)
- DNA-based traceability.

“Science is an investment; it can be short term or long term. It’s not a cost,” said Asher.

He urged farmers to take part in the investment process. “Don’t let us tell you what you need...you tell us,” he concluded.

*Additional writing: Phil Stewart*

- The science session was sponsored by **DeerPRO**. ■



Geoff Asher: Don't forget the Deer Hub for good information.

## Worth your weight in beer, dear

People of a more, er, solid build may well have envied the winner of a prize draw run by Datamars at the deer industry conference. In a promotion for the Trutest scales and EID recording equipment on display, conference-goers were invited to step onto the scales for a weigh-in. On offer for the winner of a prize draw was their own weight in beer. The lucky punter was the relatively petite Di Bristow (pictured here enjoying the post-conference Super rugby). Di, a modest 64kg on the day, told *Deer Industry News* that much beer would be enough to keep her and husband Ian well supplied for some time to come. ■



## Next generation journalist learns about deer

At every deer industry conference we invite local student journalists to come along, learn about the industry and get a chance to contribute some articles for publication.

This year we welcomed Grace Prior (pictured). She is a second-year student, studying for a Bachelor in Communication (Journalism) at Massey University.

Grace, whose family has a farming background in Taranaki enjoyed her first day at the conference so much that she came back for a second session the next day. She has contributed several articles for this issue, taking a bit of the load off the editor. All the best with your journalism career, Grace! ■



Photo: Peter Burke.



# Venison session: Let's use our natural advantages

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Germany-based chef Shannon Campbell reported in to the deer industry conference by way of a video update, starting off a fast-paced update on activities in venison markets.

**CAMPBELL SAID CONSUMERS** remain strongly interested in how our venison is raised, with its free-range, low-impact farming putting this protein well ahead of others such as pork and poultry. He said chefs are always looking for interesting new products. He has done a lot of work with trainee chefs, running sessions for 100–120 of them over the past year. “This will help cement the story of New Zealand venison, especially here in Germany.”

The influence of social media was continuing to grow, he said. “It’s important to keep a clear message out there that we all agree on. People want quick access to information.”

Campbell said the venison market is moving towards a perfect storm of consumer demand for healthy, sustainably produced food and a shift away from “industrialised” food sources.

He also brought messages from several market partners including Jeroen Demolie of Bimpex Meat in Belgium. Demolie said demand was shifting. “People are eating less meat, but they want high quality and they will pay a bit more for it.” He said customers need to be educated that the environmental cost of sending product from New Zealand is not significant, given modern technology and freight systems.

## Alliance Group: Looking to Asia

**Shane Kingston** has recently joined Alliance Group as General Manager Sales. He said the group now sells \$1.8bn of products annually into 35 markets, on behalf of more than 4,000 farmer shareholders.

Following a strong 2018 he said the market was likely to be more subdued this year, with some correction in prices for high-value cuts. However, confidence was building in the market as inventory cleared.

Kingston said he’d like to see the profile of New Zealand venison lifted further. He said the company was making inroads into Asia with the acquisition of Goldkiwi Asia (now Alliance Asia). Meanwhile a dedicated foodservice team in the United Kingdom was securing new premium business.

Alliance was building relationships with chefs so they could

champion the New Zealand product story, he said. They were targeting both the foodservice and retail sectors.

Kingston said Alliance remains strongly committed to venison. There is plenty of upside but a lot of effort is required to generate a better return, he added.

## Duncan New Zealand: The plant-based trend is real

**Rob Kidd**, Group Operations Manager with Duncan New Zealand is a self-declared millennial. This group, he said, represents tomorrow’s high net-worth consumers. Looking at food trends, he said there is no doubting the rise of vegetarianism, veganism, flexitarians and others. For example, the number of vegans (who eat no animal products) in the United States increased six-fold in three years and now accounts for 6 percent of the population. Meanwhile there are one million vegans in the United Kingdom and the global meat substitute market is expected to be worth more than \$5bn by next year.

Other products and brands



Shane Kingston: Wants to see venison profile lifted further.



Rob Kidd: We need to highlight the positive aspects of venison.

*continued on page 10*



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*Venison: continued*

were also moving away from animal-related ingredients, from Tesla stopping the use of leather seats to vegan condoms!

In the United States there was a move to stop non-dairy products using the term “milk”.

“The plant-based food revolution is definitely here,” Kidd said. He suggested the best way to respond was to highlight the positive attributes of venison as a natural, free-range, GMO-free, antibiotic-free and possibly carbon neutral product.

He said Duncan New Zealand supported DINZ’s response to the Zero Carbon Bill as it treated methane, saying that alone should not be considered as a measure for our carbon footprint.

## Firstlight: Looking for the feel-good factor

**Toni Frost**, GM Venison Sales and Supply with Firstlight, profiled the company’s UK market, where it’s been active for 10 years and which takes 30 percent of the venison it produces. “It’s a non-seasonal, premium, added-value market.”

She said that with the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, UK retailers were having to adjust. Firstlight has done some market research and was encouraged by what they found. The retail segment for venison is quite small (£13m), but takes in 4.2 percent of UK households and 1.16 million shoppers.

She said venison is bucking the trend for declining red meat sales, with sales steadily increasing. This is in spite of venison being one of the most expensive proteins (second only to fish) and overall venison sales from New Zealand to the United Kingdom having fallen.

Current consumer demands for healthy eating, novelty, convenience and celebrating special occasions were perfect for venison, she said. “These are worldwide trends – it’s not just the UK.” These trends were more powerful than any disincentive caused by price.

Looking ahead, Frost said UK shoppers were likely to be increasingly influenced by wellbeing and environmental issues. She agreed that the industry needed to be respected by consumers for doing the right thing by the environment.

“We are now focused on tidying up our own back yard, but how



**Toni Frost:** Wellbeing and environment loom large in consumers’ minds.

do we communicate that to the customer?”

Frost said she had recently had a new home built and included solar panels. While working out the economic benefit of that was difficult, the feeling that she was doing something good for the environment was a strong motivator. A monthly report showing how much carbon she had offset “gives me the warm fuzzies”.

She said the same principles could apply to consumers buying meat, and suggested a simple holistic “traffic light” system that would inform consumers how the product rated from an environmental perspective. “It is still only a concept and we’ll need to do a lot of work to show this on the venison packaging. That’s when price becomes less important than the feel-good factor.”

## Mountain River Venison: Connecting with customers

**John Sadler**, Marketing Manager with Mountain River Venison, described how the company was helping connect chefs and consumers with those who produce venison, thus completing the circle from farm to plate. He said suppliers like Clayton Station’s Hamish Orbell were taken into markets to meet sales staff and teach them about the origins of their product but also to learn about the requirements of end users.

He confirmed Rob Kidd’s analysis about the boom in vegan food products, but emphasised that venison is beyond ‘Beyond Meat’ with its GE-soy constituents.

Sadler said Mountain River’s clients in Sweden like the “clean, fresh” aspect of New Zealand venison and its flavour and tenderness. He said Mountain River is keen to differentiate it from wild venison.

Venison is sold in Sweden through Menigo, the country’s second-largest food distribution company (pallets, rather than container loads).

Looking at China, Sadler said Shanghai-based chef Alan Yu had been brought to New Zealand in March, and Graham Brown has visited Yu’s restaurant in China. Yu had learnt his trade in the United States and provided a great entree into the China market because he valued venison as an ingredient.

The US market for venison has dropped back a little since it peaked last year, but the importance of that country has grown



**John Sadler:** Completing the farm-to-plate circle.



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significantly, he said. Up until 2011 it accounted for 5–7 percent of New Zealand venison exports – now it is taking about one-third of our product.

The petfood industry had been subject to takeovers by big food companies looking to create premium products and boost stagnant sales, Sadler explained. They all competed for venison as an ingredient which created a bubble effect which has since subsided.

## Silver Fern Farms: Seizing the premium market advantage

**Nicola Johnston**, Group Marketing Manager with Silver Fern Farms, said the company was working to convince chefs and consumers to make venison a conscious choice. She said millennials were young consumers with more food choices than previous generations had ever enjoyed. This increases the challenge for marketers, who need to use a loud voice to get the message through.

While there was a lot of chatter about the decline in meat consumption and growth of veganism, Johnston, like other presenters, saw this as an opportunity rather than a threat for New Zealand venison.

She said people are becoming more “protein fluid” – even chickpeas and quinoa were considered a useful protein source, so it would take work to keep venison on people’s tables and leave no room for doubt about its value as an ethically and sustainably raised “superfood”.

She warned that there should be no room for doubt in consumers’ minds that we were leading the way.

Johnston agreed that venison needs to keep itself well distanced from “industrial” farming and protect that advantage.

Silver Fern Farms’ new communications strategy was based around strong emotional connections, using key words such as “respect”, “care” and “passion”. Its overarching marketing slogan had evolved to “Delicious starts here”, promoting origins with taglines such as “Fresh grass 365 days a year”.

Packaging using refreshed Cervena branding was being used to position venison as a premium superfood. Marketing to chefs in The Netherlands and Germany using this positioning was already underway, she said.

The company identified ambitions for directions that we need to follow, such as traceability, non-GMO, antibiotic-free options, no hormones, no feedlots, completely grass fed and 100% farm assured, all ambitions that would require farmer support.

“This is the direction we need to travel and we need to keep raising the bar. That means continuing to invest in innovation right throughout the value chain.

“It can’t be an empty promise,” she concluded. ■

• Photos: Lindsay Keats



Nicola Johnston: We need to keep raising the bar.



New packaging will emphasise the premium positioning of Silver Fern Farms’ Cervena venison.





# Velvet session: There's always more we can do

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Reflections on how we regulate ourselves, an update on the change to a better velvet tagging system and an overview of where the velvet market is heading were all featured in the velvet session on the last day of the conference.

## Acknowledging our past, protecting our future

In its early days the velvet industry was fragmented and had few rules. In line with the conference theme, DINZ Quality Manager **John Tacon** discussed how far we've come since then (reflections), and what still needs to be done (directions).

He said things started to improve when a few vets started gaining more experience with deer and started working with farmers, "but it was a real learning curve" as the demand for experienced vets initially outstripped supply.

The watershed time came in the late 1980s when forward-thinking farmers, veterinarians and the then Game Industry Board collaborated to form the National Velvetting Standards Body (NVSB). This came with the support of key agencies and groups including the then MAF, NAWAC, NZ Veterinary Association and DFA, Tacon said.

Putting together the NVSB standards in the Farmer Velvet Antler Removal Manual was a formidable task and involved some "big battles" along the way, but the system has stood the test of time. Tacon said the use by accredited velvetters of Restricted Veterinary Medicines was one of the biggest hurdles to overcome before the system finally got started in time for the 1993/94 velvetting season.

While the deer industry had always been ahead of the game with its model for self-regulation and animal welfare protection, it is a high-risk industry and we mustn't rest on our laurels, he warned.

Tacon said that of those who were registered velvetters in time for that first season, a remarkable 103 are still registered 26 seasons later, and 331 active velvetters have been registered for 20 or more seasons. There are currently just over one thousand registered velvetters, an increase on recent years.

About 10 percent of the 332 selected for audit under the new Regulated Control Scheme (RCS) chose to opt out, often because they have sold up or only have a few deer that need velvetting. One hundred and seventy six had passed their audit, 70 were still awaiting action, 32 had opted out, one was pending and 53 audits were still to be done.

This latest season's audits saw a lift in compliance. "This was expected, as awareness and understanding increased," Tacon said. The most common non-compliances were a lack of floor plans showing clean zones in the shed and the Velvet Status Declaration (VSD) not being completed correctly.

Floor plans didn't need to be "flash". Ideally they were

laminated and pinned to the wall.

"I take my hat off to the farmers who have got on and done what's needed in their sheds. For some it has cost a lot of money, even building a new shed. There have been huge transformations across the country."

Looking at sheds from the outside didn't always reveal the big improvements made inside.

Tacon said passing an audit was not the end of the matter. There was a responsibility to keep standards up to that level.

Another 300 or so sheds will be selected for the next round of audits and it was likely compliance levels would continue to rise.

He reminded farmers that the VSD is a legal document, so should be filled out accurately. "If you've not bothered to do anything to meet RCS requirements, then think very carefully about the penalties that come for falsifying a legal document."

Tacon said it was possible to volunteer to be audited under the RCS, and farmers should contact him or Pam MacLeman in the DINZ office if they wanted this.

Auditors had been trialling a new electronic device for recording audit results as they are done – something designed to save time and paperwork. "It's a great system when it works properly," he said. "We are assured it will be sorted. Once it's working we will put the velvet removal audits onto the same platform."

Tacon said MPI, which does 1200 market access on-farm audits a year, encountered two deer farms that had velvetting drugs outside the season, contrary to the requirements of NVSB. "It's not



John Tacon: Compliance with RCS requirements is improving.

worth the risk of keeping velvetting drugs on farm for any other purpose,” he warned.

The NVSB did trial audits on road buyers and collection depots last season to see if the system fitted. He said the audits did identify areas that needed changing and the NVSB's work would expand and follow the process right through until velvet is delivered at an RMP (Risk Management Programme) premises.

In conclusion, Tacon said the industry continues to grow along with consumer and government expectations for food safety and welfare.

“Velvet processors have invested a lot into their businesses. They have a right to expect that their suppliers are meeting the required standards,” he said.

## Redesigned velvet tags coming soon

One or two farmers joked that the current velvet tags are good for staking your tomatoes but not so good as tags. They can fall apart and marketers don't like them. DINZ Science and Policy Manager **Catharine Sayer** updated the conference on plans to replace the old tags with a new wristband-style tag that will eventually carry a UHF chip.

She said a new type of tag is required to reduce risk to the industry (e.g. of non-compliance) and also to help add value the product through adding provenance information and assurances of product integrity. While it was fortunate there had been no major biosecurity or food contamination issues for velvet thus far, we can never assume it won't happen in the future, Sayer said.

The current system does give stick-level and farm-level

traceability and signals to the customer that animal welfare requirements have been met, she said. However there are shortcomings too: tracing takes time, information transfer is slow, there's no indication of food safety compliance and no capacity to apply branding.

Consultation on a new tagging system has cast the net wide. Included have been the NZDFA, grading facilities, processors, marketers, exporters, MPI, NVSB, veterinarians, and suppliers of tags and tag readers.

Sayer said the new wristband-style tag (first reported in the April/May *Deer Industry News*) would be stronger and wouldn't fall off. Each tag would have a unique ID that could be scanned and captured automatically, e.g. by mobile phone or UHF scanner.



The new velvet tags will likely be a wristband style like this.

There would be a barcode and also a UHF chip, helping take the legwork out of the system, and giving space for branding.

The concept for a database would remove the information from the paper now held in drawers on farms and vet clinics to

*continued on page 14*



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*Velvet: continued*

a cloud-based database. That will deliver an on-line inventory of all the tags that had been supplied to a farm, along with a record of all tagged velvet in-store or supplied elsewhere. Every supplier's NVSB and RCS compliance status would be brought together on the same database, meaning a VSD could not be generated if the supplier didn't meet the criteria for those programmes. "VSDs will also move from paper to electronic," she said.

"It means that velvet can only get into the market if it has complied with all of the NVSB and RCS rules, providing an assurance to our markets."

The detail of how the system would work for all in the traceability chain is available on the DINZ website at [deernz.org/velvet-traceability](http://deernz.org/velvet-traceability). Sayer encouraged all those involved to check what the changes would mean for them and respond directly to her with their thoughts.

The full system with electronic capture won't be implemented until the 2020 velvetting season, but the new wristband-style tags will appear for the 2019 season and they will include barcodes



Electronic capture of data will feature when the new tags are introduced.



Catharine Sayer: Welcomes comments on the proposed new velvet tagging system.

that can be employed by farmers to use for their own records if they wish. Vets, farmers and buyers will be kept up to date in the coming months.

## From the markets

We've come a long way in the past 10 years in the velvet industry, but we still need to work hard to stay ahead. Those were the two key messages from DINZ Market Manager, Asia, **Rhys Griffiths**.

Griffiths said the transition from the traditional medicine market (where there was little opportunity for product differentiation) to healthy food was continuing apace. This was thanks in no small part to the research and product development being done by companies like KGC. Velvet consumption in Korea has been growing at double-digit rates in this sector. He said the typical customer for products containing New Zealand velvet was now a 30–50 year-old Korean business woman buying for herself and her husband and children.

DINZ estimates that New Zealand's farm-gate earnings for velvet have almost quadrupled in the past 10 years. Griffiths said it's unusual to see both price and volumes rising in tandem, but that has been down in part to strong underlying demand. He said big customers like the stability that has come to the velvet market.

KGC has celebrated the New Zealand origin of its velvet-based products and this "emotional connection", also mentioned in the venison market session, has been vital to our success.



New Origin Cafe with Alpine Group's Jonathan Wallis on the monitor and finished NZ velvet products on the shelves.

Griffiths said a market survey done in Korea had some positive news for New Zealand's velvet industry, showing about one-third of consumers had increased their consumption of velvet-based healthy food products in the past five years and 28 percent were planning to do so in the next five years. It also showed stronger support for healthy food products than velvet in traditional oriental medicines.

The traditional medicine segment was stable but under pressure, he said.

There was also good news in the "future purchase intention" results, with two-thirds of respondents favouring New Zealand velvet. The top attributes of New Zealand velvet identified by consumers were trustworthiness, safety and its "pure image of nature", something that aligns well with the market positioning.



"I tell customers that we farm more deer than anywhere else in the world and that our product has end-to-end government oversight. They like that," Griffiths said.

While the market research results were positive, the industry had to make it all stick, he added, noting five key areas where we need to focus efforts to build on these advantages:

- **Welfare:** We shouldn't be afraid of industry growth, but it mustn't be at the expense of welfare standards.
- **Meeting or exceeding new regulatory requirements:** Being the only exporters with formal access to China was a huge marketing tool.
- **Cash flow:** The days of receiving cash up front for velvet are passing. Food companies pay after delivery and producers will need to adapt to these patterns. "Please be loyal to your buyers!" Griffiths said.
- **Supporting our key overseas partners:** This includes companies like KGC, Yuhan, Lotte and LG Household & Healthcare. These companies are investing in innovative products and deserve our support. Griffiths said that innovations such as LG's New Origin cafes or the Taipei 101 stores with velvet-based cosmetics were an exciting way for our velvet to be sold. "There are now 39 companies marketing 105 products in South Korea and more than 80 percent of those have New Zealand velvet."
- **Creating new markets:** We should work closely with our healthy food partner companies to expand into new products and markets. KGC has launched Cheon Nok Sam in the United States and Vietnam, for example.

"We've got to keep innovating," he concluded. ■



Rhys Griffiths: Please be loyal to your buyers.



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# Sustainability issues addressed

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

If you can't get the politicians to come and talk to you, then the next best thing – perhaps even better – is to hear from someone who is advising them. Former Zespri CEO Lain Jager is Chair of the Primary Sector Council (PSC) and did just that, talking to conference attendees about the challenging task ahead for the group.

**JAGER EXPLAINED THAT** the 16-strong PSC, established in April 2018, is tasked with developing a vision for the food and fibre sector and advises Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor. Its work streams include the areas you might expect – improving value, science, technology, innovation, farming systems and so on – also includes Taiao, an all-embracing concept for healthy land, air, water and people.

He said it will be challenging to make the vision relevant to all sub sectors – including deer – and a “triple-helix” model will incorporate business, government and the science/education sectors. Jager said the group had started by looking at the visions already expressed by various sector organisations and found a few common themes. All are trying to add value and secure long-term prosperity, for example. Also rated highly were environmental sustainability, health and nutrition – highly relevant to the deer sector as well.

Jager said Treasury had forecast GDP growth to average 2 percent per year out to 2060 and this could be taken as a reasonable target for the food and fibre sector if it is to retain its place in the economy.

Environmental sustainability is “fraught” for the primary sector, Jager said. As the population continues to grow and consumption increases, so will global warming, with its associated climate crisis.

He said public awareness of climate change has increased and there was little room for rational dialogue. Farmers he had spoken to were pushing back hard on the issue, with main points including:

- New Zealand's contribution to global emissions is only 0.3 percent, so we can make little impact by cutting ours

- nearly 50 percent of our emissions might be from agriculture but that is because we are food producers
- we are passionate about sustainability but we still might get taxed for emissions, which is unfair
- if you're keen on cutting emissions, stop flying
- we need the technology to cut methane emissions – where is it?
- we want to help, but we need more time.

Jager said the 10 percent cut in methane emissions by 2030 spelled out in the Zero Carbon Bill is probably achievable, but the later target of 24–47 percent has no science to support it.

“It's a fraught conversation. The primary sector has never been positioned so weakly in the public relations space.”

Jager said New Zealand needed to develop first-class, pan-sector policy and not just about emissions. It also needed to address air, water, land and soil, biodiversity and marine health. There was a lack of policy framework around issues such as water storage, genetic modification, carbon pricing or science priorities, for example. “It's very important that we step forward and show some leadership in these areas.”

He said the world needed to learn how to produce more food with a smaller environmental footprint. Part of the process would be putting an accurate cost on “externalities” such as emissions.

While he disagreed that the days of animal protein are ending, he said we need to adapt to climate change, and change the way food is produced. Just pushing back against the science or refusing to do its share would mean losing the PR battle for the primary sector.

“We need to acknowledge where we need to get to globally, ensure our policy is first class and do our bit. No-one will listen to you if you just claim to be methane neutral. First you need to win hearts and minds and have a conversation about shared goals.”

For more information on the Primary Sector Council: <https://bit.ly/2EAtPT2> ■



The primary sector needs to win hearts and minds and have a conversation with society about shared goals for the environment.

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2017	51
2018	56
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# Ultimate wellness products?

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

If you were feeling depressed by all the talk of veganism and falling meat consumption, Anna Campbell would have made you feel better. The Managing Director of AbacusBio is a self-described advocate for New Zealand agricultural products and she had plenty good to say about the prospects for deer products.

**CAMPBELL SAID TODAY'S** millennials (born 1980–1995, practically middle aged already) and centennials (born 1995–2008; where did they come from?) have short attention spans (12 seconds and 8 seconds respectively) compared with their predecessors. (If any of you youngsters are thinking of bailing out now, please don't – this is all about you. Do read on.)



Anna Campbell: Millennials want authentic experiences rather than possessions.

These younger generations are more interested in having authentic experiences than accumulating possessions, Campbell said. “This generation is very purpose driven and we need to understand how to keep them engaged.”

She said problems such as poverty, climate change and animal welfare suited the criteria for the types of issues that the millennials and centennials wanted to help tackle.

Continuing the vegan/vegetarian theme discussed by the venison companies, Campbell said products for this market were now moving alongside conventional animal products in the supermarket aisle, and not being quarantined in their own section. This challenged meat products, but it also invited a challenge in reverse: Campbell said vegetarian or meat substitute products deserved scrutiny and they didn't always measure up well.

For example, the plant-based “impossible burger” uses a gene found in soybean roots in genetically modified yeasts to produce a product that will emulate the taste of blood and give the “meaty” taste. “I'm reasonably in favour of GE, but these products need to have the same transparency lenses applied to them that we have applied to us.”

Milk replacements were another case in point. In 2017 New Zealanders spent \$52m on substitutes made from almonds, soy, oats, coconut and rice – up \$12m in two years.

Almond “milk” for example contains only 2.5 percent almond.

The rest is very expensive water, Campbell said, adding that almonds grown in California use huge amounts of the state's scarce water resources – about 5–6 litres per almond.

Campbell said it was a huge challenge communicating complex ideas about our products in simple soundbites suited to an 8-second attention span.

And despite the talk of falling meat consumption, Campbell said the opposite is happening on a global scale. Meat consumption in China and India has grown as wealth has increased and the same thing was starting to happen in Africa.

She said that unlike in the West, livestock were still valued in developing countries both as a source of income but also in terms of nutrition.

The deer industry is a boutique industry – that's the space for us. That also works for millennials, Campbell said. “They don't have money for houses or designer products and they don't want fine dining – they want authentic experiences.”

Looking at carbon footprint she said we are converting inedible cellulose into nutritious protein. So while cows' milk had a larger footprint than soy milk, it was also a higher nutritional index.

“We need to create indexes for consumers to show how different products like venison and corn syrup really measure up.”

Campbell said food as medicine was an emerging trend that could also suit the deer industry, where venison could fit into highly personalised nutrition plans.

Another opportunity was nutritious, gourmet soft foods made for older people who had developed swallowing problems – a welcome alternative to the pap they are served at present.

Alluding to the upcoming “wellness” budget, Campbell said wellness is about many things, not just food, but that venison, with its unique qualities, fits nicely into the whole wellness niche.

“We need to do more R&D to support the product itself, in terms of what you do on the farm, welfare, environment and nutritive value. Deer products could be the ultimate wellness products.”

• Anna's presentation was sponsored by **Wilkins Farming**. ■

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# Generational change in politics

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

While no government MPs were available to speak to deer farmers, conference attendees received potentially far greater insights into the political zeitgeist from commentator Colin James. He is a political journalist with nearly half a century of experience.

**LOOKING AT THE** global environment, James said the world is still in the midst of a period of economic and political instability. Power was shifting away from the countries (European nations and the United States) and institutions (UN, World Trade Organisation) that had presided over a relatively peaceful and stable period following World War 2.

The continuing emergence of China as a powerful economic force would continue to contribute to geopolitical instability, James said.

The traditional dominance of centre-right and centre-left political parties – and the baby boomer generation – was starting to weaken. The emergence of strong-man dictatorships in countries like Turkey and Poland, the mess of Brexit and Trump's erratic rule in the United States were all symptoms of this.

“Macro” personalities such as Justin Trudeau, Emmanuel Macron and Jacinda Ardern were an alternative to populism.

The old economic orthodoxies were meanwhile being challenged by a new generation of politicians born in the 1970s and 1980s. In New Zealand this was exemplified by the current Government's focus on the Treasury-led “wellbeing economics”. This marked a move away from the traditional obsession with inflation and GDP, to include markers such as the state of the environment and personal wellbeing as measures of how well a country is doing.

James said a shift towards wellbeing economics could offer countries like New Zealand a way to soften the impact of major global shocks: climate change, access to fresh water, economic upheavals and wars. He noted that the 2019 “wellbeing budget” would likely fall short of true wellbeing economics.

In the 2020s, James suggested agriculture will continue to be affected by developments in artificial intelligence, gene editing and alternative proteins.

He said New Zealand had been in something of a bubble compared with other liberal democracies, with Winston Peters soaking up what little populist reaction there is in this country. He said the “youth adjacent” Jacinda Ardern exemplified the generational shift in New Zealand politics, with the proportion of MPs aged under 40 continuing to grow. With the exception of Winston Peters, the baby boom generation was finally gone from the cabinet table since they stormed into power in 1984.

He said Ardern has intelligence and substance and has what it takes. “She has a good intellect, fully capable of mastering foreign and domestic affairs. She is tough, with a solid moral base. A telling off from her hits its mark – and she does that without being nasty.”

Leading a three-way coalition meant the Government could not be as bold or as transformative as it might have hoped. Decision-

making had been slowed in some cases, options narrowed and some of the grander ambitions postponed. This term was marked by reforms, fixing up what the Government considered had been neglected, such as housing, education, health, social assistance and workplace relations.

James said Finance Minister Grant Robertson was said to have grown into the role and was the Government's effective number two. Over-worked ministers such as Chris Hipkins and David Parker would hopefully get some backup after a mid-year Cabinet reshuffle. Although the current pool for Cabinet was limited, there was a cohort of new, talented MPs likely to step up if the Government is returned in 2020. He also gave a shout-out to some of the lower-profile ministers who are achieving well – people such as Chris Faafoi, Nanaia Mahuta and Tracy Martin, for example.

Shane Jones (“wear high gumboots if you are standing close by him”) presented some risk to the Government with his rash comments and the way he handled the Provincial Growth Fund, James noted.

Looking ahead, James said the odds were in favour of the current Government being returned in the 2020 election and perhaps even in 2023. He said National's only hope was that NZ First and the Greens both fell short of the 5 percent threshold and they could beat Labour head to head. But he sees that as only an outside chance, and if either of the smaller parties is to fall below the threshold he says it will be likely NZ First.

He said National leader Simon Bridges has yet to perform and had failed to make a “youth adjacent” stamp on the party. With the exception of a couple of younger MPs, National's policies were still rooted in the 1980s orthodoxies. Its only possible partner, ACT, was an electoral “dead man walking”, he said.

In answer to a question from the floor, James agreed that green policies are not the preserve of the left. A more conservative green political party was a possibility, but he hadn't seen any signs of that, despite murmurings about a “blue-green” party. He said current Green Party politicians James Shaw and Julie Ann Genter could conceivably work with a National-led government, but if they did “their party would disappear from underneath them”. ■



Journalist Colin James gave intriguing insights into the current political scene.

# Good policy needs good science

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

If you're talking about environmental matters, avoid coming across as defensive and entitled. That was the advice of Mark Adams, Chair of Beef + Lamb New Zealand's Environmental Reference Group.

**REFERRING TO THE** earlier presentation by commentator Colin James, Adams said it's important to understand that issues around the environment and social justice are no longer issues of "the left". "These are issues of the centre now!"

He said the current environmental awakening has parallels with the "brutal" economic reforms of the 1980s. "We can't repeat the mistakes from that period, when the changes were too rapid. They destroyed businesses and communities."

Adams said that responding appropriately to environmental issues required access to good science and the sharpest minds. He is concerned that science is currently being underfunded and neglected. He said good policy is rooted in science, allowing innovation and covering off unintended consequences.

"Bad policy is overly complex, prescriptive and rooted in politics."

On tree planting, for example, Adams said blanket foresting whole farms was not a good outcome. He intends to plant about 17 percent of his own farm near Fairlie, focusing on steep, erosion-prone and weedy areas. "Governments can be clumsy. I would challenge local authorities to ensure we get good results from tree planting. We need the right trees in the right places. Having carbon credits available for riparian plantings would be an example of good policy doing the right thing."

On the lack of any kind of environment tax in the Zero Carbon Bill, Adams said Federated Farmers deserved some credit. "They have bought us some time, but the issue won't go away."

He said that when a farmer really considers how they affect their environment, then something special happens. Getting involved in a community catchment group, for example, farmers can start helping collect data on water quality and get a better understanding of their starting points and where any hot spots might be. "Community catchment groups need to understand and manage their issues, but they also need teeth to be able to make effective changes. Decisions need to be community led, science based and emotionally mature."

When engaging with the media, he counselled against coming across as defensive. While farmers can use a lot of facts and figures to present their case, he said the passion that underlies their

environment work can give a very powerful message. "Often it is women who articulate this the best."

And your own home is a great place to put your side of the story – not many other businesses use their homes as a business meeting place, Adams said. Farmers shouldn't underestimate the power of their own hospitality and their ability to put their side of the story on their home patch.

He said groups such as the deer industry Advance Parties or catchment groups can leverage a lot from the energy of others.

"That's why these groups are flourishing."

Adams concluded with a plea to the Government.

"Work with us, respect us and don't run right over the top. Allow us access to the best science, the sharpest minds and realistic time frames."

"Then together, with our institutional knowledge, passion and skills, we can help transition this economy into a brave and exciting future."

• Mark Adams' presentation was sponsored by **Firstlight**. ■



Mark Adams: Leverage off the energy of others.

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# Bottling quality and value

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Just as venison can pair nicely with a good Pinot Noir, so too does the experience of the deer industry share some experiences with New Zealand's wine industry.



Philip Gregan: Aiming to diversify markets and products.

**PHILIP GREGAN, CEO** of NZ Winegrowers, shared his insights about the success of the industry and, having been involved since the early 1980s, there was plenty to talk about.

The wine industry comprises about 1,400 individual businesses, roughly 700 grape growers and 700 winemakers – a similar total to the current number of deer farms. About one-third of the industry has foreign ownership.

Gregan said that in 1992 the industry's export sales were a modest \$25m. (At the time, the deer industry was bringing in about \$180m.) The deer industry has been somewhat left in the dust since then, however. Wine exports currently earn about \$1.75bn, while the deer industry clocked total revenue of \$322m in 2018. Wine exports should top \$2bn by about 2021, Gregan said.

A more relatable figure, however, was about value. New Zealand has the second-highest value per litre of wine traded in the world (\$5.39). Only France (\$6.59) is ahead of us and many big wine producers earn a lot less. Creating and protecting that premium value was a common theme throughout the conference.

Gregan said the Sauvignon Blanc variety was largely responsible for this success, currently accounting for 85 percent of exports. This dominance also carried risks, of course.

New Zealand's reputation and origin were the industry's biggest assets and were jealously protected. In the United States our reputation is about the All Blacks, *Lord of the Rings* (still!) and ... wine.

Our premier wine-producing region, Marlborough, had pretty much maxed out in terms of acreage, having grown from 2,600 hectares in 1981 to 40,000 hectares in grapes today. Gregan said good Sauvignon-growing land there costs about \$250,000–\$300,000/hectare.

He said the growth of tourism in New Zealand has been good for the wine industry, with more than one-quarter of overseas visitors including a stop at a winery on during their stay. For US

visitors it is 40 percent. Globalisation of trade had also helped.

There are, of course risks. In the 1980s the risks were around competition from Australian wines and heavy regulation. Today, in addition to the heavy dependence on Sauvignon Blanc and the Marlborough region, the winds of anti-alcohol sentiment or trade protectionism are also threats, along with the potential impacts of climate change.

Diversifying outside Marlborough, and into new varieties and markets will help protect the industry's future, Gregan said – something that resonated with deer farmers. Another common aim was to continue investing in quality to help protect New Zealand's reputation.

And while the deer industry had its visionaries like Sir Tim Wallis, the wine industry had the likes of Te Mata Estate's John Buck, who started elevating quality way back in the 1970s.

Innovation such as the change from corks to screwcaps had also helped the industry. Gregan said despite the protests of purists, the change had been a huge success and now 98 percent of our wine was sealed this way. "We made it about protecting quality of our best wines, and it worked."

And just as New Zealand's five venison exporters have embraced "co-opetition", so too have New Zealand wine companies. For example, several have joined forces to create a greater presence for New Zealand wine in Texas – something that would have been hard to do alone. NZ Winegrowers does help out if required when companies are cooperating in joint ventures, but sticks to its mandate.

Gregan said the industry has been market led, listening to what customers want and providing it.

In summary, he said the industry will continue to work on its reputation and grow sustainability, diversity (markets and varieties) and value. ■



The wine industry has been a New Zealand export success story.



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# Export opportunities

by Grace Prior, guest writer

New Zealand meat exports could be on the rise following African swine fever wiping out a large population of pigs in China.

**RABOBANK HEAD OF Business Development** Hamish Midgley told the deer industry conference that the Chinese market is opening up for venison and that the African swine fever situation creates a “really good opportunity for protein out of New Zealand”.

African swine fever was called out over 12 months ago by Rabobank representatives, seeing the crisis as an opportunity for exports from New Zealand.

About 30 percent of Chinese pork production could be lost to the disease, creating an opportunity for other proteins – including venison – out of New Zealand.

In the quarter to April 2019, New Zealand meat exports to China reached \$1.5 billion dollars.

China consumes 74 million tonnes of pork, beef and poultry per year, which is nearly double the consumption of the United States, according to USDA estimates. Of that, about 25.5m tonnes is pork.



Hamish Midgley.

If China replaced the 30 percent of domestic pork production, New Zealand could help make up some of the shortfall.

Midgley said the 25–35 percent of Chinese pork production that could be lost represents more than the total pork production of the United States.

Trade wars and other issues between China and the United States could present an opportunity for New Zealand to take advantage of US protein exports to China being lost.

However, Midgley warned that New Zealand is a small exporting nation of agricultural products and at times we can become collateral damage.

“Consumer preferences are being shaped by three trends: authenticity, convenience, and trust,” Midgley said.

With markets looking to invest in trends, as exporters it is important to understand that “human health, plant health, financial health is everything,” he said.

“We’re in a really good space in terms of agriculture right now.”

Export values from New Zealand to China rose 22 percent between April 2018 and April 2019. China now accounts for nearly half of all exports from New Zealand to Asia, and about a quarter of all exports from New Zealand.

• Hamish Midgley’s presentation was sponsored by Rabobank. ■



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Year Born	Approx Tally	VIC to	Price by Neg
2017	35	Best 2yr stags, multi sire mated	
2016	13	Gump	
2015	15	Brexit	<b>SOLD</b>
2014	12 (3 & 9)	3 Hefner	
		9 Maverick	
2013	26	Even Stevens	<b>SOLD</b>
2012/11	40 (23 & 17)	23- Omar	<b>SOLD</b>
		17 Halo	<b>SOLD</b>
2010	32	Mortar	<b>SOLD</b>

Sire	Summary
Mortar	Cobra (Tamar- Awesome-Lewis) over an Aros (Heath- Pacquin-Buccaneer) Hind. 11.3kg SA @ 7yr (32 cm beam)
Even Stevens	Netherdale Bred. (Harlem- Hotere- Armani). 11.8kg SA@ 7yr
Gump	Wotdonis son (Watson- Adonis-Buccaneer) 8.3kg SA @ 5yr. Beautiful style and fantastic size and temperament
Brexit	Tower Bred (Britain- Buller- Austin) 10.8kg SA @ 4yr. Amazing stag. Pure Warnham.
Omar	Apex son (Cruse Deer) . Cut 8.6kg SAP (cut early) @ 4yr. Huge quiet stag.
Halo	Apex son (Cruse Deer) . Cut 8.0kg SAP (cut early) @ 4yr. Very quiet stag.
Maverick	Green 26 son (Cruse Deer). Cut 5.0kg SAP @ 2yr, very quiet stag.
Homebred 2yr Stag	The yearling hinds were multisire mated to our best 2yr velvet stags all cutting in excess of 4.2kg @ 2yr.

# Happiness and heartbreak: Ludemanns share their story

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Grant and Ele Ludemann epitomise the virtues of hard work, perseverance and strength through adversity, sharing their story in the last formal session of the conference.

**GRANT LUDEMANN, WHO** has just marked 50 years in the business, bought his first farm at the tender age of 16. He's come a long way since then. The couple now have four irrigated dairy units on their home farm, milking 2,300 cows with sharemilkers. They also have five sheep and beef units between Southland and southern Hawke's Bay.

He said one of the most important ingredients of a large and successful business like theirs has been the culture and relationships developed. They employ 45 staff, ten of these for more than a decade. One, who started with them aged 59 is still with them 30 years later at 89, still doing tractor work.

Grant said he and Ele have complementary skills and that has also been a secret to their success.

Staff are kept in touch through a weekly newsletter and Grant said employees should be paid well and treated fairly.

He started his business growth during the turbulent 1970s and 1980s when droughts and Rogernomics were taking a heavy toll. "Opportunities can come out of adversity," he said, relating how as a young man he had bought up pre-lamb ewes for \$4 each and later sold them for \$34. This built to a business supplying 130,000 ewes a year to a meat processor.

The other opportunity he had spotted was for irrigation, initially drilling in 1995 for artesian water and converting a dairy farm in the drought-affected Waiareka valley. This marked the start of a 15-year journey that involved 60km of underground piping to bring water from the Waitaki River – something he'd been told wouldn't work. "But land plus irrigation was still cheaper than the equivalent in Canterbury and Southland."

They bought several neighbouring dryland farms and converted them to dairy or dairy support. The North Otago Irrigation Company scheme now brings water to 17,000 hectares with 99.9 percent reliability and no government assistance.

Grant has retained a clear-eyed perspective on finance. He's understood from an early stage the benefits of taking moderate but secure returns instead of a high risk-high return strategy, and the old maxim that "cash is king". "I am a risk taker, but they are calculated risks. We also understand the power of leverage, added value and niche products."

Their combined business now boasts some impressive production numbers:

- more than 1 million kg of milk solids
- 200,000 lambs finished
- 1,500 prime cattle finished.

"When you do a deal, do it in a way you'll be welcomed back to do another – always leave something in it for the next person. Earn loyalty from others and repay it with loyalty to them, and always

show gratitude, especially to your employees, friends and family."

Former journalist Ele Ludemann picked up the narrative, sharing an intensely personal story of the highs and lows of their family's life. It's been a tough road.

After the premature birth of their daughter Jane, Grant and Ele had two sons, each afflicted with an ultimately fatal degenerative brain disorder. Tom lived only 20 weeks. Ele said attending a Women in Agriculture workshop following Tom's death had helped her deal with the grief and anger.

After being assured by a geneticist that Tom's condition was one in a million, Grant and Ele went on to have a second son, Dan. Sadly, he was affected by the same condition. Dan survived infancy but died shortly after his fifth birthday.

"He taught us that people are people, regardless of what they can and can't do," Ele said, "and he taught us that ability isn't a right – it's a privilege."

Hosting an Argentinian AFS student, Bruno, had brought a new happiness to family life and the Ludemanns have since forged long-lasting ties with their guest and his family.

But further heartache lay ahead. Grant had a serious tractor accident and then came the devastating news that their daughter Jane had a rare, and usually incurable, subtype of ovarian cancer.

Jane has thrown her energies – with support from Grant and Ele – into raising funds for research into low-grade serous ovarian cancer, a disease commonly affecting women in their 20s and 30s (donations can be made through [cureourovaryancancer.org/nz/](http://cureourovaryancancer.org/nz/)).

"In business and family life, there are always challenges. I'm grateful that after the rain, there have always been rainbows."

It was a powerful and moving story, and followed by a sustained, standing ovation.

- The Ludemanns' presentation was sponsored by FMG ■



Ele and Grant Ludemann: A powerful and emotional presentation.

# Warmth and humour at packed awards night

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

With a tight, two-day format that finished on a Friday, this year's awards dinner fell in the middle of the conference rather than at the end. And with four sets of awards packed into the evening, we became our own entertainment, ably led by the indefatigable conference facilitator, Jamie Fitzgerald, who shared some hilarious tales from his own adventures.

**THE DINNER AT** the waterfront Wharewaka function centre was again generously hosted by Silver Fern Farms. The menu included a delicious venison carpaccio followed by either a roasted beef fillet or a kawakawa rubbed lamb rump, all of which went down well with guests.

In his welcome, Silver Fern chief executive Simon Limmer confessed to not having known too much about red meat or venison before he came into the role last year (he was previously with Zespri) but he has quickly got up to speed on both, and said the exporters set an example that others in the red meat industry could do well to follow.

## MSD Animal Health Photo Awards

*Deer Industry News* Editor Phil Stewart announced this year's awards. He said there was a record 92 entries this year, sent in by 28 individuals with photos from the "heart warming to the humorous to the heroic". Not only were the entries almost double last year's, he said the quality was also up, with people putting a lot of thought and creativity into their shots. Needless to say none of this made the judges' job any easier. Results were as follows:

### Highly commended

Mark Tapley: "Hey there"

Melissa Crawford: "Foggy summer morning"

William Pears: "Jumping into the weekend like"

Angela Dempster: "Snap"

### Third place

Billy Pullar: "A young bull finds symmetry amongst the macrocarpas"

### Second place

Sandra Stevens: "Two & two"

### First place

Joel Galloway: "Mount Gold stags"

### People's Choice Award

Melissa Crawford: "Foggy summer morning"

## Matuschka Award

The Matuschka Award, first awarded in 1996, is given to "a farmer or farming entity who or which has made a significant ongoing or lifetime of contribution to deer farming and the NZDFA in



Winner of the 2019 MSD Animal Health Photo Awards was Joel Galloway with "Mount Gold Stags".

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".

Murray Matuschka, the award's originator and sculptor, wasn't able to be at the presentation this year because he was busy on a new commission for a full-sized hind and stag sculpture, but did judge the award along with Bob Swann.

This year's winner was a couple, **Graham and Vicki Patterson**, from the South Canterbury/North Otago branch of NZDFA.



Graham Peck accepts the Matuschka Award on behalf of winners Graham and Vicki Patterson.

*continued on page 24*



*Awards night: continued*



Sandra Stevens earned second place in the photo awards for her entry, "Two & two".

The Pattersons were nominated for many things, including their tireless work at branch level in the roles of secretary and treasurer, for making newcomers feel welcome and included, for great support of local events, for showing a strong interest in industry issues and, although very quiet and retiring, for great communication with both farmers and professionals.

The award was accepted on the Pattersons' behalf by their branch chair, Graham Peck, and will be formally presented to them later this year at a branch function.

## Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

For the first time since the awards were launched in 2001, all winners were present on the night and able to accept their awards in person from the award sponsors. Lead judge Janet Gregory said it was a privilege to visit five "amazing" properties during the judging and share some of their stories with the deer industry.

A comprehensive summary of the entrants, awards given and judges' comments is included as a separate insert with this issue of *Deer Industry News*, but in brief the results were as follows:

**NZ Landcare Trust Award** for excellence in sustainable deer farming through action on the ground:

**Evan and Linda Potter**, Waipapa Station, Hawke's Bay.

**Duncan New Zealand Ltd Award** for vision and innovation while mastering a demanding environment:

**John and Mary Falconer**, Clachanburn, Central Otago.

**Gallagher Technology and Innovation Award** for excellent



This black and white entry in the photo awards by Billy Pullar, "A young bull finds symmetry amongst the macrocarpas", won third place.



People's Choice winner, and Highly Commended in the photo awards, was "Foggy summer morning" by Melissa Crawford.

utilisation of farming technologies to improve on-farm productivity and manage resources:

**John and Mary Falconer**, Clachanburn, Central Otago.

**Firstlight Foods Ltd Award** for total commitment to farming sustainably with a strong customer focus:

**Adam and Sharon Waite**, Northbank Station, Canterbury.

**NZDFA Next Generation Award** for outstanding performance across environmental, financial and social aspects of the business:

**Adam and Sharon Waite**, Northbank Station, Canterbury.

**Highly commended** for excellence in business planning, farm environment planning and farm succession:

**Kiri Rupert and Josh Brook**, Leamington and Scotland Farms, South Canterbury (sponsored by DINZ and NZDFA)

**Premier Award: The Elworthy Environmental Award** sponsored by Deer Industry New Zealand

**Evan and Linda Potter**, Waipapa Station, Hawke's Bay.

## Deer Industry Award

The only surprising thing about this year's Deer Industry Award recipient is that it has taken this long for him to be recognised with the industry's premier accolade.

With a research career spanning nearly four decades, self-confessed "aspergic nerd" Geoff Asher has become the go-to guy



Environmental Awards haul: From left – Adam and Sharon Waite, Mary and John Falconer, Linda and Evan Potter, and Martin Rupert (on behalf of Kiri Rupert and Josh Brook).



Premier Elworthy Environmental Award winners, Linda and Evan Potter.

in deer science in recent years and his award was warmly endorsed by the crowd at the awards dinner in Wellington.

Standing in for judges Mark O'Connor, Dave Lawrence and Don Bennett, DINZ Producer Manager Tony Pearce remarked that the AgResearch scientist "is clearly held in the highest esteem by his industry colleagues for his numerous contributions and achievements over an outstanding career; but the same people also describe much heartfelt affection for him as a friend."

He said Geoff has always been guided by the simple imperative of doing the right things for the right reasons.

If the judges had any doubts about Geoff's nomination, the citations for his award would have swept them away. An impressive line-up of deer science luminaries past and present supported the award. A small sampling:

*Much of our understanding of the effects of nutrition on reproduction success rate in red deer has come from Geoff's work. This work has enabled the industry to focus on achieving prescribed weight for age in order to reach good calving rates. This is a hugely important matter for deer farmers and getting it right has resulted spectacular lift in productivity and profitability.*

– Ken Drew, former Deer Research Group Leader, AgResearch Invermay

*Geoff's impartiality towards any commercial operation and respect for commercial decision-making, whether in the farming or processing space, has engendered trust from multiple parties, and brought about genuine appreciation of the value of industry-good research.*

– Catharine Sayer, Science and Policy Manager, DINZ

*Geoff happily travels the country to talk to farmers to extend the science outcomes to assist farmers adopt the knowledge and build into their production systems.*

– Sharon McIntyre, Manager Deer Select, DINZ

*His passion for and myopic interest in deer (no other livestock species is of remotest interest to him) means that he has always had the interests of the deer industry at the forefront of everything he does.*

– Jason Archer, AbacusBio

*Geoff led from the front, with good sense of humour and never expected his team to do anything he wouldn't do himself.*

– Catherine Morrow, deer reproductive specialist

*Geoff has a unique ability to transfer information, be it science reporting, international conferences, practical one-on-one advice, [or] out in the field with farmers encouraging them to think wider, ask questions and ... develop better farming performance and management.*

– Tony Pearce, Producer Manager, DINZ

*Geoff has made an extraordinary contribution to the deer industry over the past 40 years – the very impressive work became evident in the early 1980s with the fallow work at Ruakura.*

– Peter Fennessy, AbacusBio

*In the early days of the Deer Progeny Test the project sailed some very stormy seas and Geoff took the helm to navigate through these seas.*

– Jamie Ward, AgResearch

Clearly moved by the recognition from his peers, Geoff said he has always loved deer, but working alongside and becoming friends with their owners has also been "the best part of it all".

The Deer Industry Award is sponsored by Porter Holdings, NZ Farm Life Media and the NZDFA. ■



Geoff Asher (left) accepts the Deer Industry Award from DINZ Chair, Ian Walker.



Geoff Asher doing what he does best, on the job at AgResearch Invermay.



# Getting skin in the game

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Getting more out of deer skins – currently averaging about \$20 each on the schedule – is back on the radar, with new research due to start in July.

**NEW ZEALAND SEEMS** to have bucked a significant global hides and skins trend over the past year to the end of February 2019. The internationally respected Sauer global price index saw world prices for beef and sheep hides and skins plummet by 34 and 33 percent respectively, to reach their lowest points since the 2008 Global Financial Crisis.

However, the value of total New Zealand hides and skins exports fell only by about six percent to approximately \$340 million over roughly the same period. The value of New Zealand deer skin exports, on the other hand, fell by only around one percent to \$5.9 million in the year ending 2018 (DINZ figures).

“This reflects the premium nature of the product,” notes DINZ Science and Policy Manager Catharine Sayer, adding that even though New Zealand may have been shielded from the worst of global conditions, processors are always looking for ways to improve quality and returns.

About 40 percent of skins produced by the New Zealand deer industry slot into the top-quality grade and DINZ is seeking ways to get more into this top band.

“The price differential is quite significant,” Sayer says. “I’m told the top grade gets a 40 percent uplift on the next grade down.”

The DEERResearch board recently decided to invest about \$100,000 of uncommitted expenditure in its 2019/20 year, which starts on 1 July, into three learning-phase projects. One of those is a desk-top study for optimising the value of deer skins.

“This will inform us of the impacts of working in new areas and to scope out precise areas where research could add value,” explains Sayer. (The other two pieces of work are likely to relate to breath or saliva-based on-farm diagnostic tests for lungworm and DNA-based venison traceability.)

Skin quality data will be analysed from at least one of the venison companies, Venison Packers Feilding, which also processes wild or feral deer that have strayed onto and been killed on-farm, she says.

“We will get back skin quality reports from the ‘farm ferals’ and compare them with data from the farmed deer. This gives us an opportunity to compare and assess the extent



LASRA research scientists Drs Sujay Prabakar (left) and Rafea Naffa pictured at the Meat Industry Association's annual R&D Workshop in March.

to which the end-of-life processes for the farmed deer may be responsible for any defects,” she explains.

The scoping work will also look into what has been done on deer skins in the past, by AgResearch, Leather and Shoe Research Association (LASRA) and other providers. Sayer says DINZ would like to build on that knowledge.

“We, and DEERResearch, are happy to know there’s a research community out there already, whose expertise we can leverage off. We really respect the skills at LASRA, for example, and wouldn’t want to grow leather and skin processing research capability when it already exists.

“DEERResearch offers excellent access to AgResearch capability in understanding the influence of deer farming and transport practices and identifying potential improvements,” she says.

“This study will re-examine existing knowledge and identify whether new avenues of investigation could be fruitful. Any further significant work the industry is tempted to invest in will be informed by this learning phase, which will attempt to quantify the value of going into something boots and all.”

## Sustainability and collagen

Sayer is also keeping an eye on work already underway at LASRA into ways to add value to hides and skins, making their processing more sustainable and finding uses for one of their main components, the protein collagen.

Research scientists Dr Sujay Prabakar and Dr Rafea Naffa spoke in March at a Meat Industry Association research and development workshop in Hamilton.

Their work has been prompted partly by the global collapse in world prices for sheep and beef skins and hides, says Prabakar.

“It’s unusual for hides to see that kind of drop and difficult to put a finger on a single reason,” he says, “Globally, there’s been a drop in prices and demand. Tighter environmental regulation of the tannery industry in China has had a lot to do with that.”

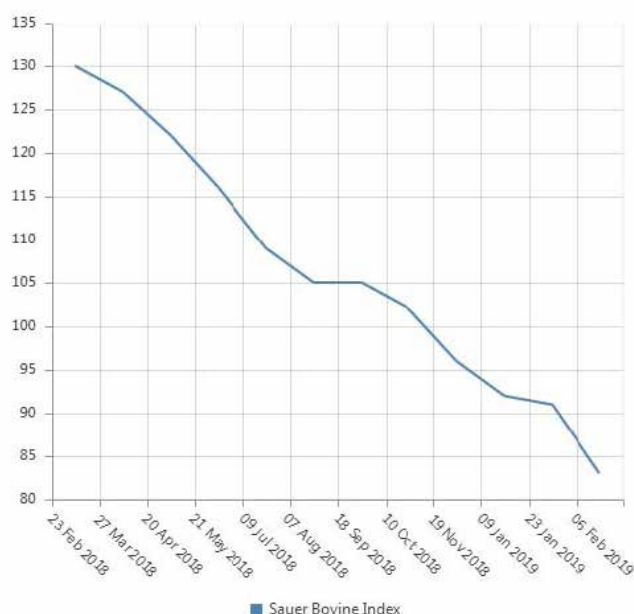
Other reasons include a rise in global beef production, meaning there are more hides on the market. Increased interest in synthetic leathers has affected the shoe leather market, again especially in China.

This has prompted LASRA to explore ways the processing of natural hides can be made more environmentally friendly, especially in landfill.

“In particular, we’re looking at how to minimise the use of chrome in the processing – currently a finished hide contains more than eight percent of it – while preserving the natural elements and increasing biodegradability,” he explained.

Naffa has focused on the extraction of collagen, a major constituent comprising about 10 percent of the hide. In 2018, the collagen market accounted for nearly US\$3.5 billion and is





Prabakar drew attention to the dramatic drop in bovine hide price. (Graph: The Sauer Bovine Price Index.)

projected to reach nearly US\$4.6 billion by 2023.

“Demand is high,” he noted, explaining that collagen has superior characteristics such as gelling, emulsification and binding of food products. “So it has many applications, such as food and dietary supplements, medical devices such as drug delivery and wound healing, and cosmetic formulations such as anti-ageing and skin-rejuvenating ingredients.”

LASRA is working on extracting high quality native collagen, collagen peptides and gelatine from the hides for use in food and dietary supplements. Encouraging results have also been reported from a Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment-funded animal trial testing a new drug delivery device incorporating collagen, following a surgical procedure.

While much of the work to date has been done on bovine hides, religious restrictions for those products in some parts of the world mean there is also opportunity for ovine (sheep) hides, says Prabakar. New Zealand is one of only a few countries working on collagen extraction from sheepskins and there is also potential for deerskins.

“We haven’t really looked at collagen from deerskins as yet, but our chemists will definitely be interested,” he says.

Working with research partners Massey University, the University of Auckland, COMSATS University Islamabad and AgResearch, one of the areas of LASRA core funding is genetics and seasonal effects on skin and hide quality. They are also working on the circular economy, multispectral analysis for identifying quality and traceability in hides and skins, market compliance and high value co-products from new generation beef.

## Global exports of New Zealand deer leather

Since 2014, the volume of New Zealand deer leather exports has declined 43 percent to reach 83,275 square metres in the 2018 year. The value fell nearly 40 percent over the same period to \$5.9 million, Statistics NZ figures show. A large part of that decline has

been the drop in deer numbers, but other market factors are also in play.

In 2014, Italy was the largest market for New Zealand deer leather, accounting for 39 percent of exports. By 2018 this had fallen to 22 percent, partly due to the general downturn in luxury goods since the 2008 GFC.

Another key market, China, takes the top-quality leather and also some of the lower-grade products for gloves. In 2018, it took 29,000 m<sup>2</sup>, worth \$2 million, compared with Italy’s 19,000 m<sup>2</sup> worth \$1.7 million.

Over the same period, however, Germany increased its share of New Zealand deer leather, possibly for luxury car manufacturing, with imports rising. ■



A range of fully finished deer leather in fashion colours which are used in luxury branded bags, garments and shoes. Photo: NZ Light Leathers.

**PGG Wrightson**

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**Tony Cochrane, National Velvet Manager, 027 591 8438**

# Digital goes mainstream for NZ venison

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

While print still has a place, it is no longer on the marketing frontline. Websites now largely take the place of brochures and social media enables direct communication with chefs and consumers.

**THERE HAS BEEN** a move to a more planned approach for social media and bloggers, by both DINZ and New Zealand's venison exporters.

"Social media offers a massive opportunity for any company," says Silver Fern Farms brand manager foodservice, Rebecca Stratton, "especially when you're trying to reach customers globally with a consistent marketing message and also because you can track it."

It's quantifiable too. DINZ venison marketing manager Nick Taylor points to results from the recent German game season campaign's press dinners (*Deer Industry News* February/March 2019). These yielded more than 100 online items, were seen by 167,000 and, for a cost of €18,000, had a calculated advertising equivalent value of over €100,000 based on the print rate cards.

Stratton explains Silver Fern Farms looks at who's using each channel, when they are using it and why, to decide how to approach each group. For example, in most markets, Facebook is great for a more broad reach (and for deer farmers here in New Zealand), while Instagram, Snapchat and Pinterest are attracting chefs, foodies and the younger demographic.

"All platforms are different and can be used in so many different ways," says Stratton.

"Social media is also flexible enough to tweak depending on its popularity and how topical the item is," says Taylor who is currently developing content – including video stories – and brand messages for targeted audiences for New Zealand venison and Cervena®.

The other advantage, from Taylor's perspective, is that while the channels are largely global, they can easily be geo-targeted with language-specific material for markets such as Germany and Belgium.

The messages he is pushing through the social media channels for Cervena in this year's Summer Cervena programme in Germany and Benelux are: the benefits of the product(s) for chefs; their origin, shown through pictures of stunning scenery and farming; and showing chefs their own peers using the product and actively linking with them.

The aim should always be responsiveness to the online community and providing feedback, says Taylor.

## Great social media response for Big Green Egg

Over the past couple of years, Silver Fern Farms has been involved in an ongoing social media-driven competition working with

partner distributor Luiten in Holland and Dutch bloggers @chickslovefood, who boast more than 90,000 followers on Facebook, 127,000 followers on Instagram and 12,400 followers on Twitter.

The campaign results speak for themselves: 55,000 unique visitors to the Chicks Love Food website, 1,200 YouTube views, and 53,000 likes on Instagram and 28,000 Facebook.

The winning contestant Esther van den Berg, cooked on a 'Big Green Egg' – a trendy type of barbecue – to win a trip to New Zealand at the end of this year to visit the source of New Zealand venison. Her grand tour will include visits to New Zealand deer farms.

"This campaign touched on all the digital channels and it had a massive response, involving a large number of females – our target market – correctly cooking our product," says Stratton.

"Not only did it get our branding and messaging out there, but it also educated consumers about the right way to cook and eat our product. In Northern Europe, venison is always seen as a gamey meat, eaten in winter, so having this promotion using a barbecue – seen as a summer tool – was fantastic."



DINZ has been busy preparing video material for use online in Europe this summer.

## Instagram resonates with chefs

Instagram in particular resonates with chefs, foodservice and foodies because of its visual nature, says Taylor.

Mountain River Venison's marketing director John Sadler agrees. He has invested a "significant portion" of his Swedish marketing budget into funding Mountain River Venison (MRV) posts on an Instagram feed @Kvicken71's 'Meat for Chefs', which he started working with 18 months ago.





A delighted Esther van den Berg's barbecue skills on the Big Green Egg have earned her a trip to New Zealand. Social marketing activity has been spreading the news via posts and videos.

He relates that Henning Kvick, a sales person for MRV customer and Swedish distributor Menigo, built his following on the channel to 107,000 from Sweden and around the world. They come to find daily posts of quality images, creative approaches, inspirational recipe ideas and information about great quality meat. But it's not a case of just firing out shots "willy-nilly", says Sadler. "We work with Kvick to give him ideas for a certain number of posts a year featuring Mountain River Venison.

"We're happy because the results are creative and good and it gives the opportunity to continuously remind the followers about our product in a low-key way."

In addition, @Kvick's supporter base is always growing, "which tells me that it is targeted, influential and of interest to a large number of chefs and food-lovers," says Sadler.

Sadler also works with another US distributor, New York-based



Mountain River Venison's tie-up with @Kvick71 is yielding results.



Silver Fern Farm Cervena featured in the Big Green Egg competition. D'Artagnan Foods. Its Instagram account @dartagnanfoods has more than 18,800 followers and MRV products again feature in the stream of creative ideas and inspiration.

"If you're active, rather than passive, the story gets out," says Sadler. ■

### What to follow on social media

**Instagram:** @cervena\_venison, @kvick71, @dartagnanfoods, @chickslovefood

**Facebook:** Deer Industry NZ, New Zealand Venison

Get in on the conversation using **hashtags:** #nzvenison #newzealandvenison #Cervena

## 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](http://www.alliance.co.nz) and select 'Contact Us' for more information.



# US Cervena® promotion continues

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Chefs, culinary students and salespeople have been exposed to DINZ Executive Chef Graham Brown's Cervena knowledge and skills in his latest packed US itinerary in March and April.

**WHILE THE US** market for Cervena has been growing over the past year, DINZ statistics reveal a mixed picture. This shows the importance of keeping up the promotional effort to get the most out of the market.

While exports of frozen product grew significantly from \$14 million in the year to December 2016 to \$35 million in 2018, the volume of chilled venison shipped to the market actually slipped back from 623 tonnes in 2017 to 484 tonnes in 2018. However, the value of those chilled exports only fell back by 3 percent, from \$15.2 million to \$14.7 million, notes DINZ Venison Marketing Manager Nick Taylor.

"High prices have helped hold the value up despite lower volumes," he says, adding the increase in frozen product is probably attributable in the main to petfood, as well as ground product. Industry comments at the recent deer industry conference suggested the petfood business is starting to fall back now, however.

"We are really keen to continue to support companies undertaking promotional activities to help maintain the premium position of Cervena in the United States," says Taylor.

Venison exporters and their US in-market partners, took advantage of DINZ Executive Chef Graham Brown's skills and knowledge during his recent three-week trip to the market in late April/early May.

As part of the trip, Brown re-filmed and updated the Cervena cutting demonstration.

"The aim was to give people an updated heads-up on how to deal with a Denver leg," he says. "The editing was fantastic. It brought the demonstration up to speed with all the latest things we're doing."

The new video will be used alongside demonstrations to educate chefs over coming years.

The team of DINZ and venison exporters has evolved a tried-and-true presentation format around an informal family-meal style event, as the best way to introduce Cervena to customers and to allow Brown to engage with them productively. They put this formula to work in Los Angeles for exporter Duncan NZ at a demonstration kitchen for all of importer Broadleaf's distributors in the area, plus salespeople and chefs.

The experience was repeated again for another brand-new Broadleaf customer, bringing another tranche of sales staff and chefs into new rooms and a commercial kitchen, giving an intimate atmosphere.

"We had a really good turn-out, with about 30 people jammed in," says Brown.

A mini-trade fair in Charleston, South Carolina, for The Lamb



Graham Brown's skills were centre-stage for the update of the Cervena cutting video.

Company and another customer, Sysco, was his next stop where he gave a 90-minute presentation to their regional sales team.

"We were able to give them a live cooking demonstration showing them all the dishes and different cuts. It was invaluable to get them to try Cervena, some of them for the first time."

More than 160 professional students and lecturers were next to be educated at the Culinary School at Johnson & Wales University in Charlotte, North Carolina, one of the biggest chefs' schools in the United States. This is part of the Pure New Zealand Cuisine events, which DINZ runs in conjunction with Aquaculture NZ and Beef + Lamb NZ.

After many years of travelling to the market, Brown has developed a warm relationship with many of his chef contacts.

"There's a great level of trust. They know what to expect from us and, more importantly, they know what is expected from them," he said.

The biggest thing is they keep coming back for more.

During his trip, despite all the trade war ructions, Brown observed the US restaurant trade seems to be doing reasonably well. For them, it's just "business as usual," he said.

Taylor is pleased with how Brown's trip went. "Graham is such a fantastic ambassador and is in high demand," he says.

"We need to continue undertaking promotional activities in North America to help Cervena maintain a premium position in the minds of chefs and introduce it to new and up-and-coming chefs."

The work goes on with Cervena, supported by three importers, having a presence at the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago, the largest food service trade show in the United States. ■

# Exploring new markets – Canadian retail

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Planning for a retail trial for Cervena® in Western Canada is well underway, with venison exporters and DINZ exploring a new market niche. The work is being done within the Passion2Profit programme.

**IN THE TRIAL**, Alliance and in-market partner The Lamb Company will undertake a \$50,000 pilot with a high-end retail chain, Choices Market based in Vancouver, British Columbia. This will provide the venison marketers with some insights into how Canadian consumers view Cervena as a summer protein.

This is the first time Cervena has been promoted at retail in Canada, where exports of chilled venison have been sitting at about 60–70 tonnes worth \$1.5 million a year for the past five years.

“We are really keen to find out how Canadian consumers feel about Cervena as a summer protein,” explains DINZ Venison Marketing Manager Nick Taylor.

Throughout the two-month promotion, starting in July, qualitative data will be gathered from various groups including store meat managers, instore promotions staff and customers who have bought and/or consumed Cervena, explains Taylor. This will be combined with quantitative data from online engagement statistics and store sales data to help paint the picture.

“We are keen to find out directly from customers what they did with the meat when they got home, how they cooked it and what their family and friends thought when they served it. These insights will help the companies understand the potential of the Canadian summer market,” he says.

## Strong nutrition focus

Choices Market’s focus is on natural groceries and the chain is committed to supporting farmers who use environmentally friendly and humane farming practices. In addition, it has a strong focus on nutrition, with all of the retailer’s stores dedicating a large section of the floorplan to health wellbeing products, explains Taylor. Each outlet also has an in-store nutritionist and runs regular nutrition events.

“Given the nutritional benefits of venison, it is a great partner to have promoting the product,” explains Taylor. He says customers can book an appointment with a nutritionist to go shopping with them and make recommendations based on their nutritional goals.

“The nutrition team were particularly interested in the venison nutritional data that DINZ has recently updated.” (See *Deer Industry News*, April/May 2019, page 17.)

Choices is looking to sell venison in the Northern Hemisphere summer as a barbecue protein.

Taylor has been working closely with Simon Zilm, The Lamb

Company’s regional manager for Western Canada, to develop the promotional programme and materials.

“The Choices programme features tastings run by the meat department managers, who want to front the activity themselves,” Taylor says. “They believe in the product and want to share their passion for it.”

The instore tastings will be supported by advertisements and recipes in monthly magazines and telling the Cervena story through social media.

As a result of this P2P activity, DINZ executive chef Graham Brown was also in action in Canada in April ahead of his US itinerary (see page 30). Again working with The Lamb Company, he was introducing chef customers of Vancouver-based wholesaler Trimpac Meats to Cervena in an exclusive invitation-only workshop. ■

**Cervena**

Choices is proud to be the exclusive Canadian retailer of Cervena venison. Cervena venison comes to us straight from New Zealand, and is a unique product with an interesting history we thought we'd share with you.

Deer are not native to New Zealand, and are in fact an invasive species. Deer were introduced to New Zealand in the late 1800s from Great Britain and released into the wild to provide sport for the European settlers. Eventually the rapidly multiplying wild deer numbers became a problem as they had no natural predators in the forests and fields of New Zealand. Their browsing was damaging New Zealand's native forests. Starting in the 1930s the government enlisted professional hunters to cull the population. During the 1960s entrepreneurs recognized the opportunity to ship to Europe where venison was traditionally a favored dish. Eventually, as New Zealand deer became more popular, deer farming to supply venison to the rapidly growing European market became economically viable. In 1970 the first deer farming license was issued. Today, there are more than 1 million deer on 2,500 farms throughout New Zealand.

Farmed deer must be three years or under and raised in the most natural ways—free range on farms ranging from 200 to over 2,000 acres, fed grass with natural supplements such as hay, and given no hormones or steroids. Animal welfare is key to achieving the highest quality venison, as well as sustainable land management. Cervena deer are never kept in feedlots or confined spaces. They are never fed corn-based diets and are fed on natural grass and hay. Most deer are farmed in mountainous regions with vast fields stretching over hundreds of acres.

Cervena is the venison of choice at many of the finest restaurants, and our store, because of its delicious mild flavor and natural tenderness. But did you know that it is low in calories and fat, and packed with iron and zinc, making it a high quality protein that is one of the healthiest red meats available today?

If you're looking for a unique, nutritionally rich and very delicious animal based protein for your grill this summer, give Cervena venison a try. You won't be disappointed.

**Venison Burgers**

**Cervena venison is exclusive to Choices!**

450g chopped Cervena  
30g dried breadcrumbs  
1 tsp chopped fresh thyme  
Salt and pepper

Finely dice venison with a sharp knife. Mix together venison, breadcrumbs, and thyme. Form into one inch thick patties. Season with salt and pepper; flame grill to medium rare. Serve on brioche or your favorite bread or bun with fresh local veggies and your favourite sauces.

4 | Choices July 2019

# Getting more grunt with high-octane forages

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

We all know that the better you feed your deer, the better the performance you can get. But how does that work in practice? Otago Advance Party facilitator Simon Glennie sat down with a group at a Regional Workshop at Poolburn in Central Otago on 10 April to tease out the issues around use of “high-octane” forages.

**EARLY DISCUSSION FOCUSED** on the best types of pasture and forages for the region. The pros and cons of ryegrasses in this relatively dry area were a concern to some. Tetraploid species were more palatable but prone to overgrazing and pugging unless covers were at least 3,000kg/hectare. Diploids on the other hand were more resilient but the quality wasn’t so good – they can get “chewy” when covers are higher. If rainfall is less than about 600mm, ryegrass may not be the best choice for the area.

While later-flowering varieties preserve quality for longer than early-flowering ryegrasses, their persistence is not so good.

Some in the area use ryegrasses but back them up with species such as cocksfoot, brome, prairie grass or fescue, but they can take some time to establish. Without good fertility and adequate nitrogen, grass quality in the area can go off. Cocksfoot can perform well in the heat, but needs plenty of nitrogen. It can become dominant after 5–6 years, so it was suggested a cocksfoot pasture mix should be replaced after about five years.

Workshop attendees agreed that subterranean clovers were valuable especially on dryland. They could be tricky to manage, though, as they needed to be allowed to flower in spring so they can seed. Under irrigation, white or red clovers are a better choice.

Facilitator Simon Glennie challenged the group to work out how they could use high-octane forages like lucerne, clovers, plantain and chicory to boost performance and get better returns. Some in the group were already using them to some extent.

He started by comparing scenarios where weaners for finishing were either 67kg or 76kg pre winter. The lighter group would take longer to finish, be sold at a lower schedule and would yield a still-respectable 31c/kg dry matter (DM) consumed. The heavier group would be finished more than a month earlier, consume 70kg less DM per head and yield \$97/ha more, overall. They would yield 34c/kg/DM consumed.

All of this comes at a cost, of course. Glennie said the entire dry matter production needed to support a faster-finishing system should be viewed as a crop. It would require between 10–20 percent of the farm to be regressed each year, a cost of between \$29–\$58/hectare over the whole farm. But even at the top end of the regressing programme range (20 percent per year), the net financial benefit on a 500-hectare finishing farm would be about \$19,500, he said.

So could the workshop group see a way to apply this model to their own properties? What would they need to do to make it work, even if they renewed pastures on only 10 percent of the available

area each year?

Some are already making good use of productive forages and grasses so have seen what some of the real-world opportunities and constraints are. For example, Cam Nicolson, who farms nearby in the Ida Valley (the group had a quick tour of the property before the workshop) is already using plantain, chicory and clovers. He had found that while useful, chicory can open up and get weedy if left too long.

## Making it work

While it was tempting to dive straight in to the best grasses and forages, the group noted sensibly that you need to get the groundwork done first. These tasks included:

- Fertility – soil tests and a three-year lead-in with capital fertiliser to get things right.
- Farm configuration – fencing, subdivision, water reticulation, lanes and any environmental protection work to accommodate a more intensive finishing system.
- Genetics – get the right genetics through the breeding herd and for terminal sires (if breeding and finishing) to give you the type of animal that will grow well and quickly on the feed you’re providing.
- Identify the right mix of pasture and forage species for your environment.
- Plan a programme of pasture renewal further out.

## The “how”

Getting the best out of good deer on good tucker still requires careful management. The group came up with the following recommendations:

- Watch mob sizes and don’t have too big a weight range within a mob.
- Plan timing carefully. For example, consider getting the larger yearling hinds away early for slaughter, as you don’t want large-framed hinds retained as replacements. Also, consider retaining the stags until January or February so you can benefit from harvesting some velvet and the higher body weights.
- Manage pasture quality carefully. For example, take a cut for baleage in November so there is good grass available for the next crop of weaners.
- Plan rotations carefully so the needs of all stock classes are taken care of and feed is used as efficiently as possible. (Glennie



strongly recommended the Deer Feed and other apps for planning feed intake requirements. They are available free at: [deernz.org/deerapp](http://deernz.org/deerapp))

- If you can get all your home-bred finishing stock away early, consider buying in stores to utilise remaining feed.

## Priorities

The group was then asked to rank decisions in order of priority. This is what they thought:

1. Decide on what kind of deer farm system is right for you, e.g. venison, velvet or a combination; breeding and finishing, finishing only, etc. (There was general agreement that trying to develop a dual-purpose animal – for venison and velvet – is not a good idea.)
2. Financial planning – costs and benefits. What will be your return on capital? What are the payback periods? Is it worth changing?
3. Genetics – getting the right mix for your system and to suit your timing priorities.
4. What areas of the farm you will use for new pastures/forages and in what order.
5. Choosing appropriate pasture and forage species.

## Meanwhile at my place...

Group members reflected on their own situations. All appreciated the value of high-octane feeds, but also needed to make them fit

properly within their farm system, especially when multiple stock classes are involved. Individual comments included:

“We have 40 hectares of pure red and white clovers. We need to refine and plan our rotations in summer better to get the best from it.” (Thomas Dalley)

“About 10 percent of our farm is in lucerne now. We need to make sure the stock numbers are right for that amount.” (Glen Harrex)



From left: Jim Barclay, farm employee Theo, facilitator Simon Glennie and Cam Nicolson talk over the options.

*continued on page 34*

## 4<sup>th</sup> Elite Mixed Age Hind & Weaner Sale

### Monday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2019, 1.30pm

**Max 9.9kg @ 4yrs**  
3<sup>rd</sup> NZ 4yr Velvet Comp

**Rocky 8.99kg @ 3yrs**  
2<sup>nd</sup> NZ 2yr & 3<sup>rd</sup> NZ 3yr

**SIRES REPRESENTED IN SALE**

Maple (8.8kg @ 3yrs) – Lot 1 2019

Bluerock (10.48kg @ 4yrs) - 4<sup>th</sup> NZ 3yr Velvet Comp 2017

W795 (9.3kg @ 1yr) – Hudrock Spiker

Parker - Sire Lot 1 2018 (Ali) & 2019 (Maple)

Joseph (14kg @ 6yrs) - NZ Reserve Velvet Champion 2016

Hudrock (590 IOA @ 3yrs)

**\*\*Special Entry - Weaner Stag\*\***

Full Brother Ali, Lot 1 2018 – Peoples Choice Rising Stars Velvet

**Eddie Brock 027 607 6822**

**Elliot Brock 027 277 6733**

**Email: [eddie@brockdeer.co.nz](mailto:eddie@brockdeer.co.nz) & On Facebook**

### High octane: continued

“We also have about 10 percent in high octane feed, lucerne and clovers. A lot of the good production comes in spring, but we need to think more about getting stock through winter up to that point.” (Jim Barclay)

“Subdivision is the biggie for me. I have some forages such as chicory but need more. I prioritise the weaners for the forages – don’t be tempted to give it to the lambs.” (Brent McKenzie)

“We have to look harder at what we are using. Our adviser has suggested a chicory/clover/grass mix for three years, followed by a two-year grass. In the longer term we will scrap our border dyke irrigation in favour of K-Line, which uses water more efficiently.” (Cam Nicolson)

Reflecting on the day, Simon Glennie said it was good to see attendees sharing their own experiences and strategies, in combination with what others had found, to question the merit of intensive areas that allow faster finishing.

“It is important to show or discuss the size of the prize, which was the intention of comparing fast and moderate growth scenarios. This allows farmers to answer the standard and important questions: how much does it cost and what’s it worth?”

### Farm tour

Workshop visitors were taken for a quick tour of Cam and Amy Nicolson’s 508 hectare sheep, beef and deer property. About half of the farm is currently irrigated and Cam is working on the optimum crops, grasses and forages for the conditions.

He said they had recently switched to pre-rut weaning after some pretty average scanning figures from post-rut weaning. This autumn they were carrying 200 wapiti cross weaners for finishing and about 115 weaners to a red sire. (Replacement hinds are bought in and put to a red stag.)

During autumn the weaners were getting baleage three days a week, plus barley. Cam said. He targets liveweights in the low 70kgs going into winter and said feeding well during autumn is “worth its weight in gold”.

“It’s no good trying to shovel a whole lot into them in spring. Things are still quite tight here then.”

Cam usually winters weaners on turnips and grass (a good low-cost option) plus baleage. They get excellent growth rates through winter on this diet of 220–250g/day, something Cam puts down to good genetics, a good climate and of course the feed. “We did try

kale but found it’s just a filler. They grew at 90g/day on kale.”

He gives his deer first dibs on good pasture at crucial times of the year, keeping fresh feed in front of them. “They’re not like ewes, which just go through like a plague of locusts.”

One recently regrassed paddock has a mix of 18kg Prospect AR1 ryegrass, 4kg Greenly cocksfoot, 3kg Hilltop white clover and 2kg AberLasting caucasian white clover. In another paddock he had a Rohan ryegrass and white clover mix.

Although the kale didn’t suit them, Cam said they have also started using rape as a winter feed, something he’s been encouraged to try by his Otago Advance Party. ■



Bought-in replacement R2 hinds from Minchmore (Outram). Average weight in January was 109kg.



Another line of bought-in hinds that are being mated and sold in calf, depending on scanning results.

### A night at the rugby

The deer industry conference finished late on a Friday, so what better way to cap off two great days than to have some drinks and canapes followed by a game of Super rugby at Westpac Stadium. This lot thought so, and while the rugby ended up not being quite so super (for the Hurricanes fans at least), the conference group were clearly enjoying watching the carnage on the field. (If you must know the final score: Jaguares 28, Hurricanes 20.) The farewell function and night at the rugby were sponsored by Alliance. ■





## DFA Branch to celebrate 40th Anniversary

**THE KAIPARA BRANCH** (Auckland) of the NZ Deer Farmers' Association is planning its 40th (1979) anniversary.

**When:** Friday 6 September 2019

**Where:** South Head Golf Club (venue for the branch's early meetings)

**What:** Golf followed by anniversary dinner and celebration

**Who:** This is an invitation to all members past and present, and people who have been associated with the Kaipara Branch of NZDFA.

**Contact:** Dave Chisholm 09 420 7058 or email: davechis369@gmail.com, Ian Bristow 09 420 2852 or Ruth Ross 09 420 4363 with names, contact addresses and phone or email addresses. ■



**This is a preliminary notice: More to follow!**

## Netherdale confusion

Following our feature and front cover heading in the April/May *Deer Industry News* about the Laird family's deer farming business in the Whanganui region, there has been some confusion over the use of the name "Netherdale".

There is no partnership or connection between the well-known Netherdale Red Deer Stud in Southland and the Laird family partnership. The Lairds' Netherdale block (part of the family's farming business) and Netherdale Red Deer Stud are completely different entities.

*Deer Industry News* apologises for any confusion caused. ■

## Nicky Hyslop appointment

Nicky Hyslop, who grew up on Clayton Station in South Canterbury with brother Hamish Orbell and sister Philippa, has been elected to the board of Beef+Lamb NZ to represent the Central South Island district.

"Ultimately Beef+Lamb's extension programmes, research and innovation must deliver sustainable production and profitability, focused on reducing and enhancing our environmental impacts," she said.

Hyslop is aiming to bring diversity of thinking to the board and to use her farming and governance experience, which includes 20 years as a registered farm adviser in the sheep, beef and deer sector and 15 years of rural governance.

She is the current chair of Irrigation NZ, is a regional committee member of Canterbury Water Management Strategy and holds a company director's certificate with the Institute of Directors.

Hyslop's previous experience includes contracts with Beef+Lamb NZ to facilitate extension programmes including monitor farms, profit partnerships and a future farm programme.

She was facilitator for a Focus Farms programme at Clayton Station from 2012 to 2015.

**Source: Timaru Herald, additional material from Deer Industry News** ■



## Glenn Tyrrell moving on

Long-serving DINZ Board member and Deputy Chair Glenn Tyrrell is stepping down at the end of June. Board Chair Ian Walker said Glenn has made a "huge contribution" around the board table during his time there.

He is being replaced on the board at the end of June by Firstlight Foods chief executive Gerard Hickey. ■



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# 44th Annual General Meeting

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

The NZDFA's 2019 AGM was the first order of business on day one of the deer industry conference in Wellington. Following procedural formalities, Executive Committee Chair John Somerville presented his report, which can be read in full in the association's 2018/19 Annual Report at [www.deernz.org/publications](http://www.deernz.org/publications)

## Chair's report

David Stevens seconded the chair's report (available in the NZDFA Annual Report: [deernz.org/publications](http://deernz.org/publications)). "It's been an exceptional season for venison but a reality check means that the high prices were getting uncompetitive against other proteins. We have a premium product and must continue with market development."

Stevens congratulated venison exporters for their responsible stance on supply, demand and price.

On the velvet side he was pleased to see the response of farmers to the Regulated Control Scheme, especially considering the product going into the healthy food sector. "Well done to the DFA and NVSB and the uptake of the scheme."

He was also pleased to see the progress being made on traceability tags for velvet sticks. "I'm a bit old fashioned, but please don't over-complicate the system. We have enough databases," he said.

Stevens noted the concern about declining membership, but said the percentage of all deer farmers directly represented by the DFA was quite high, at 78 percent.

"The timeframe we are facing for [reducing] methane emissions is one of the most important political challenges in front of us. We need to continue to be seen as representative and relevant. Working on this issue will do just that."

He said the DFA also had a big role in keeping up the momentum for Advance Parties and the Next Generation programme. "A good facilitator is essential for Advance Parties."

Stevens said he supports the DFA's objective that all deer farmers have a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) in place by 2020. "It will be a challenge for branches to sell this and become more proactive encouraging farmers to achieve this."

The good relationship between DFA and DINZ was a testament



David Stevens speaks in support of the chair's report.

to all concerned and the envy of other industries, he said.

In conclusion, Stevens congratulated the Executive Committee for their work during the year with thanks in particular to David Morgan, who was stepping down at the AGM. "It's impossible to make that contribution without strong support from your family."

## Financial performance

Justin Stevens commented on the DFA financial report, noting a net surplus of \$2,029. Other highlights included nearly \$3,000 in sponsorship received for the Next Generation programme and a slight growth in reserves to \$172,581. This was due partly to sponsorship and savings in expenditure. He noted the project to make and sell DFA-branded jackets was not a money-spinner but rather to raise the profile of the association. The 2019/20 budget was very similar to the previous year's, he said, with allowance for a small surplus, "a bit like a farm budget".

All NZDFA formal financial motions were carried.

## Remit report

There were no remits for debate this year, but a report was made on a Southland branch remit from 2018, which was:

*The Southland Branch NZDFA asks that DINZ seek a review of the deer-specific sections of Overseer which relate to deer wallowing and fence pacing. The review should consider whether there are better ways to input data around the scale, risks and impacts of wallowing and fence pacing and whether the associated nutrient losses are accurately reported.*

Chair John Somerville reported that this issue was still alive and that NZDFA was still unhappy with the accuracy of Overseer, particularly regarding loss of phosphorus. "We are doing our best to get the best results for deer farmers."

## Election results

### Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP)

**Donald Whyte** (Canterbury) was elected unopposed as a member at large

**Steve Borland** (Waikato) was elected to represent the North Island.

### Executive Committee

**Justin Stevens** (Marlborough) was elected unopposed to represent the South Island

**Mark McCoard** (Taihape) was elected unopposed as a member at large (see page 41 for a profile on Mark, who is a new member for the Executive Committee).

John Somerville said branch chairs had further discussed the ongoing need to have representation for both North and South Islands on these groups, with some feeling that the need to ensure geographical spread was becoming redundant. He said a special general meeting of the NZDFA would be convened, probably in

October at the next branch chairs' meeting, to vote on dropping the member-at-large and Island designations from the positions on the Executive Committee and SAP.

Steven Borland explained that the "at large" category had been introduced several years ago when two very good candidates had stood for one available Island position, meaning that a one good candidate was lost to the industry. Getting rid of the geographic requirements altogether (currently two out of the four positions on each body are Island based), would help ensure the best talent isn't lost through a quirk of geography.

Grant Charteris noted that if people from a region felt their interests weren't being represented, it was up to them to nominate someone who could represent them.

## Honorary membership

This is a special category of NZDFA membership that has been accorded only a few times over the years – previously to Gay Williams, Trevor Walton and Mark O'Connor. The list was added to this year with honorary membership awarded to *Deer Industry News* editor, **Phil Stewart** (who now finds himself in the awkward position of reporting on this).

Tony Pearce said Phil had had an "enormous influence" in his supporting role to the NZDFA. John Somerville noted he had shown great enthusiasm for the association's events over many years. "We really appreciate your input into the industry at a professional and social level."

*[I was too stunned by this to say anything much at the time, but I'd like to sincerely thank NZDFA for this honour. Working with the deer industry since the mid-1990s has been, and continues to be, an enormous privilege. I'm never happier than when having a look around your farms, trying to avoid stepping in deer poo or getting zapped by your outriggers, and collecting images and stories about you and the amazing things you do. Spending most of my time in a warm Wellington office is easy. What you achieve with those incredible animals and wonderful farm environments is truly remarkable and I hope to keep telling your stories for a while yet. Ed.]*



Phil Stewart (left) is presented with a memento of his honorary membership by NZDFA Chair, John Somerville.

## General business

Edmund Noonan (Canterbury) raised the issue of a possible database of deer farmers with FEPs. John Somerville said the 2020 target for all deer farmers to have an FEP was aspirational and a more likely date was 2023. In addition the requirements for FEPs varied by region. He said it was unclear how a database could be put together. Less than 20 percent of farmers had responded to a DINZ survey on FEP progress, which indicated that collecting accurate data was challenging.

Noonan said a start needed to be made at some point, albeit accuracy might be a difficult for a start. He said the industry

needed a commitment to collect this data, which would be useful when presenting its environmental credentials. "It won't be that simple," Somerville said.

Tony Pearce said a working paper would be presented at the October branch chairs' meeting.

## DINZ Board candidates

The SAP will interview Ian Walker and Mark Harris, who are both standing unopposed for re-election to the DINZ Board.

**Ian Walker** (DINZ Chair) thanked the meeting for his renomination. "It's a privilege [to serve on the board] and enjoyable." He said the role spanned a wide range of issues from products in the markets to animal welfare, science and politics. He said the combination of farmer representatives and venison and velvet industry nominees was the secret to the board's success. He urged anyone with an interest in a governance role to approach SAP Chair Paddy Boyd. "If you're interested in politics, this could be a great start."

**Mark Harris** noted that although he's a farmer appointee he actually works in an international business, not as a farmer. He said the deer industry is still young but has done well to build up the good relationship between the five venison exporters. Supply chains are harder to understand in the velvet sector, "but it's good to see it becoming more stable". He said the whole pastoral sector faced challenges, especially on the environmental front, and must stay engaged to influence regulations that affect them. "DINZ has good people working on this."

## Appreciation for service

The AGM concluded with a strong showing of appreciation for the six years of service by **David Morgan** on the Executive Committee, including two years as Chair. John Somerville said David brought good thinking to the table and had been a strong mover behind DFA initiatives over the years. ■



David Morgan reflects on his time on the NZDFA Executive Committee.

## Correction: Central North Island Regional Workshop

There was an error in our article *Data Focus for Central North Island Regional Workshop* published in the August/September 2018 *Deer Industry News*. In the article, Dorothy Young was quoted as acknowledging Kevin Morley as the "grandfather of the deer industry". Dorothy has got in touch to say her comments in the article were actually describing Don Love, who she says had more than 40 years' experience in the industry and has been of huge help to Red deer farmers over that time. Our apologies to Dorothy and to Don and Kevin for the mix-up. ■

# Deer Farmers' Association report-back session

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

The NZDFA Executive Committee (EC) and Branch Chairs met for some strategising the day before the conference proper began, and members of the 2019/20 Executive Committee briefed the full conference on what the association had been up to over the past year.

**EC CHAIR JOHN** Somerville said the DFA helped provide cohesion to the industry's efforts on the environmental front. At local level, branches with the assistance of DINZ could strongly represent deer farming interests to regional councils as they developed their plans for freshwater management.

In addition, DFA branches could help host environment-focused field days, such as the recent event at the property of Stu Stokes, hosted by the Canterbury West Coast DFA.

He said DFA members were also working on strategy within the P2P programme.

Justin Stevens said the series of succession planning workshops that involved more than 90 families was a successful collaboration between DFA, DINZ and the Ministry for Primary Industries' Sustainable Farming Fund.

"The workshops weren't intended to tell you what to do. They were a catalyst for families to start the succession planning process."

## Good succession planning

EC member Grant Charteris said no business is sustainable without a good succession plan. "We need to create an environment in our industry where we actively encourage the next generation," he said. Charteris noted that the DFA-driven Next Generation programme was now well established and was regularly oversubscribed. It attracted 50–60 people each year and people who had already attended a workshop were now being asked to hold back from applying to go again so that the demand from "new" next generation people could be met. The DFA was also working with training institutions and schools to provide a pathway for young people to get involved in the deer industry.

Charteris said the perception that the success of Advance Parties had weakened DFA branches was untrue. Now just on the wrong side of 40 himself, Charteris said that success for him would be to be soon sitting down among the audience at an industry conference with a panel of younger deer farmers sitting up on stage as a next generation EC.

Newly elected EC member Mark McCoard (see profile on page 41 of this issue), himself a velvet producer, said the development of the Regulated Control Scheme was a challenge to some, but the branch network had helped get the message about required changes out to farmers quickly and effectively. He said it was very positive for the industry that the scheme had been implemented within the industry – no external involvement was needed.

## Where are the women?

During a Q & A session, NZ Landcare Trust's Janet Gregory had a challenge for both NZDFA and DINZ: How do we make it easier for women to take a more active role in DFA and DINZ?

This was met with a few seconds of awkward silence before DFA Chair John Somerville noted that it was indeed a good question. "We like to think they have every chance of being active in the DFA. Everyone is welcome."

Grant Charteris urged women to "stand up and be counted", adding that he would like to see women sitting around the Board table at DINZ and on the NZDFA Executive Committee.

Mandy Bell (Otago) said women made up half of the workforce in the industry and in areas such as catchment environment schemes they are showing strong leadership. She is the lone woman in the P2P governance group and would like to see more women also representing the industry at that level.

Gregory noted that many talented women are involved in the Next Generation programme and in farm partnerships. She suggested events and activities could be planned and timed with more care, or crèche facilities provided so that women who might otherwise have family commitments can also take part. "A lot of women are also involved in charring Advance Parties and doing environmental work. We definitely bring a different flavour in these areas."

## Editor's note:

The deer industry lags well behind other primary sectors when it comes to diversity and gender balance in leadership positions. In the more than 20 years I've been involved with the industry, only one woman has served on the DFA Council or Executive Committee and only a small handful have served as branch chairs.

The situation at DINZ Board level is even worse. In its 17 years of existence, the DINZ Board has had zero female board members. Out of interest I did a quick survey of the boards of 10 other organisations\* in the primary sector (or related to the sector). All 10 boards had at least one female director. Of a total of 81 directors on these boards, 26 (about one-third) were women. On a couple of boards, women were a majority.

It's time the deer industry – men and women – joined in and encouraged more women into leadership roles. It's not as though we are lacking good candidates.

\*Boards surveyed were Beef+Lamb NZ, DairyNZ, Horticulture NZ, Pāmu, NZ Veterinary Association, Silver Fern Farms, Alliance Group, PGG Wrightson, Primary ITO and Fonterra. ■



# Life membership for Southland stalwart

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

When Janet Horrell went down to the local “Top Pub” in Winton in February with her daughter-in-law and husband Mervyn for what she thought was to be a quiet family lunch, she was delighted to be greeted instead by a who’s who of deer farming who had gathered to celebrate the award to her of Life Membership by the Southland branch of NZDFA.



Janet and Mervyn Horrell with Janet's Life Membership award.

**JANET HAS SERVED** as the branch's secretary continuously for the past 26 years and is only now handing over the role to her successor.

Although the Horrells are arable and sheep farmers – not deer – they live in the heart of deer country. Janet says with a laugh that knowing neighbour Neville Cunningham (he was on the interview panel for the secretary position) may just have helped swing the decision her way.

Whatever influenced her appointment to the job, she's repaid their faith in spades over the years with staunch and loyal service. When she was appointed to the role in 1993, the now-flourishing Southland branch had “zero funds”, Janet says.

“At that time the main source of income was from droving for the Castlerock and Lorneville saleyards,” she explains. “Nowadays there is only the Lorneville sale and that's just once a year.”

But she and the Southland DFA committee soon got cracking and found other ways to raise funds for the branch. One was the *Southlander* newsletter started by Suzanne Toomey, which covered all of Southland and Fiordland and attracted plenty of advertising revenue. The running of the National Velvet Competition and results booklet by the branch has seen a continuation of this kind of revenue raising, Janet says. *Southlander* has now ceased publication as advertising support has been concentrated on the national velvet results booklet. Janet says the branch newsletters were an important tool for getting information out to members in their day, but have now been

superseded by the internet, emails and social media.

Another great fundraiser has been the research auctions at the velvet nationals, for which deer farmers donate prizes such as holiday home stays and semen straws. Janet says the branch maintains a ring-fenced research fund to support projects that will benefit deer farming. “The fund has provided a great backbone for the branch.”

The branch itself has moved around a bit. When Janet joined, the committee met in the Invercargill Federated Farmers offices, but that meant quite a hike for many members. They then moved to the more convivial and central surroundings of Winton's Top Pub, but that got a little too noisy when the pokie machines moved in, so they now meet in the seminar room of the nearby VetSouth clinic.

A big highlight during her time with the branch was being involved on the organising committee, alongside Tony Pearse, for the wildly successful “Silver to Gold” Deer Industry Conference in Queenstown in 2000. The conference, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the DFA attracted more than 400 delegates.

She's also been proud to be associated with branch productivity initiatives such as Deer South, working with people such as Dave Lawrence and John Somerville. The many field days arranged by the branch have also been a point of pride – far more than were hosted by some other branches, she notes. Over the years she has loved the interactions with the many industry personalities such as Frank Griffin who regularly visit Southland.

And ultimately it's been about the people, Janet says. “It's always been a very happy branch and I've really enjoyed working with the people I've met.”

The feeling was obviously mutual. No less than eight former branch presidents turned out to wish Janet the best at her Life Membership award. She was delighted and touched to see so many there, and especially thrilled to see DINZ CEO Dan Coup make the journey, as well as Tony and Julie Pearse. PGG Wrightson's Tony Cochrane contributed a lovely bouquet to mark the occasion.

Janet's family also came for the presentation. She and Mervyn have two sons, Bryce (now working on the family farm) and Simon, who works as an engineer in Alexandra. Both are married and each couple has a son and daughter – a symmetry that pleases the long-serving secretary who likes nothing more than a tidy set of accounts.

The future isn't looking so good for Janet. She is suffering from pancreatic cancer and her health is one reason she's reluctantly

*continued on page 40*

*Life membership: continued*

had to hand over her secretary duties to successor, Judy Gerrard. She still helps where she can, and in true Southland style is philosophical about her situation. "I'd much rather people came along to celebrate [the life membership] with me while I'm still around, rather than waiting for my funeral!"

*Deer Industry News* joins with Janet's family and many friends in the Southland DFA in congratulating her for her huge contribution to the deer industry. ■



Eight former Southland branch chairs gathered to honour Janet. From left: Bill Taylor, John McLean, Brian Russell, Peter Allan, Janet Horrell, Eddie Brock, John Somerville and David Stevens. (Neville Cunningham also flew in for the gathering but was delayed by low cloud and missed the photo session.)

## Contacts: branches, societies and committees

IF YOU HAVE any updated information for this list, please email [info@deernz.org](mailto:info@deernz.org) with updated details.

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*continued on page 41*

# Personnel change on NZDFA Executive Committee

Mangaweka velvet producer **Mark McCoard** has joined the NZDFA Executive Committee, replacing David Morgan, who stood down at the conclusion of the Association's AGM in Wellington last month. He spoke to *Deer Industry News* Editor, Phil Stewart about his new role.

**MCCOARD IS RELATIVELY** new to deer industry politics, having been Chair of the Taihape DFA for two years after the long-serving Andrew Peters stood down.

He's not new to the industry, however, and has carried on and expanded the deer enterprise his father started on the family farm in the live capture days. The deer are run in an extensive system alongside a high-fertility open-faced Romney flock, plus trading beef heifers.

The stock classes complement each other well, with ewes and lambs able to follow the velvetting stags onto the deer block after they have "shut down" over the summer and the trading heifers acting as a grazing relief valve. "It can get summer dry here, so we need to be flexible."

McCoard is currently running about 180 velvetting stags, which he sources locally as two-year-olds. For the past four or five years he's been keen to significantly build up the velvet side, but the handling facilities weren't up to scratch, so he's not putting the cart before the horse. On the advice of industry colleagues, the new deer facilities have had to come first. They weren't cheap, but are now just about complete and will get a growing velvet business off on the right foot. As the number of velvetting stags grows, he is hoping to buy some replacements as spikers, so will also produce some venison as he culls young stags based on their velvet weights.

The flats on the property can get fairly wet, so any expansion in the deer fenced area will be on the freer-draining soils, McCoard says. "That will give me an area where I can winter feed, which will give the deer block, which is predominantly hill country, much better balance."

His introduction to leadership at national level came after he was approached by others to consider putting his name forward. His predecessor has been a great mentor as he has grown into the branch role and when the national nomination came, he thought

"why not?"

He will continue serving as Branch Chair for now, but has his eye on one or two potential successors, who he hopes to eventually introduce to DFA leadership through the NZDFA new faces programme.

He's keen to make sure the deer industry keeps being well represented, especially now as challenges around compliance

and environmental issues mount up. "Any regulations need to be sensible and well thought out." Raising awareness of any unintended consequences of changes such as the Zero Carbon Bill will be an important task for the NZDFA, McCoard believes. He's keen to engage directly with decision makers to ensure the deer industry's voice is heard.

At a national level, he is already well involved in environmental matters, being one of three deer farmers in the P2P Environmental Stewardship theme group that is helping develop an environmental plan for DINZ.

His wife Louise works full-time off farm and they have two adult children. Both have recently graduated and are starting to make their way in the world, each in agriculture-related jobs. Callum, 21, has completed a commerce degree at Victoria University and is currently working on a local farm gaining additional practical experience to complement his degree. Hannah, 22, has completed a double diploma at Lincoln. She's now working for Farmlands as a technical field officer and was on duty at the company's stand at the Wellington deer industry conference.

His sister Sue McCoard is a research scientist at AgResearch Grasslands. "That has been of great benefit getting my head around science-related topics, particularly when recently assisting the research team at Invermay with a 'grassroots input' as part of their process around prioritising research to best benefit the deer industry," he says. All of the family enjoy being involved on the farm at the busier times, when their own commitments allow.

"I was still pretty busy helping out with school and sports stuff when the kids were growing up, but now I'm keen to put something back into the industry and help make sure they will also have a decent future in the agriculture sector." ■



New Executive Committee member Mark McCoard: Keen to grow his velvetting business and contribute to the deer industry.

*Contacts: continued*

## Selections & Appointments Panel (in addition to Executive Committee)

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<b>Stephen Borland, Waikato</b> Oparau, Waikato	07 871 0117/027 666 4269 southerndeer@xtra.co.nz

The SAP Chair is traditionally selected from the non-Executive Committee members and is for a 12 month renewable term.



# How the Selection and Appointments Panel works

by Tony Pearce, NZDFA Returning Officer

Since the founding of the NZ Game Industry Board and the subsequent emergence of Deer Industry New Zealand in 2004, the NZ Deer Farmers' Association has favoured an electoral college process, through a Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP), to interview and select the four producer-appointed directors to the eight-member DINZ Board.

**BOARD APPOINTMENTS ARE** for a three-year term and there is no set limit to the number of terms a board member can serve. The producer-appointed directors do not have to be deer farmers or DFA members. The SAP places huge emphasis on skills and experience and a person's fit with the whole eight-member DINZ board. (In addition to the four producer-appointed members, three directors are appointed by the venison processor/exporter sector and one by the velvet antler processing/export sector.)

In formal terms, the NZDFA SAP is responsible under the Constitution for selecting suitable producer-appointed DINZ Board members from nominations received. These nominations are well described as Rule 37.2 of the Constitution.

The eight-member SAP is made up of:

- the four NZDFA Executive Committee Members
- four additional people elected in the same manner as Executive Committee Members (one representing each Island and two members at large). Typically, these have been senior well-established deer farmers and may have a strong connection with the NZDFA, although this is not a prerequisite.

Historically there have been remits and discussion from time to time suggesting the four producer appointments to the DINZ Board should be decided using a first past the post voting system. This would operate under a majority vote that decides the outcome of the annual nominations for the Executive Committee and SAP's two vacancies created by retirement by rotation each year.

NZDFA members have, however, preferred to keep with the current system which is based on formal individual interviews with the DINZ Board candidates and a formal SAP voting procedure following the interviews and in-committee discussion.

Before this, the SAP has an opportunity to formally consult in confidence with the DINZ chair (or deputy chair if the current chair is up for re-election) as is laid out in its rules. Discussion focuses on what skills the DINZ Board is seeking in terms of replacement or reappointment of Board members for their three-year term. That discussion does not involve the relative merits of the candidates, but rather explores future Board direction, alignment with the DINZ five-year strategic intent, succession and any industry challenges the Board may have to address.

The DFA rules also allow for the SAP to consult with DINZ producer appointees twice a year. It has become a tradition that the DFA SAP and these producer board members (processor/exporter members) will attend the annual October meeting of the NZDFA branch chairs to meet formally or informally.

The DINZ board too has a policy of holding two of its six scheduled meetings in the main deer farming regions, and to hold an open meeting with stakeholders. This is largely in a Q&A format with discussion initiated from the floor, rather than a formal DINZ presentation. It is followed by an informal hour of socialising and one-on-one conversation.

## SAP interview and selection process

In recent years the SAP has had a close association with the Institute of Directors, where time is spent with staff who specialise in board function and management advice, so the SAP continues to upskill in effective governance and interview skills.

Board candidates present their CVs and are interviewed on the basis of their skills, governance fit with the current Board experience and connection with DINZ strategy and board. These interviews are in confidence. SAP conduct is governed by an annually reviewed Operating Code of Practice that, among other things, deals with declared or likely conflicts of interest (related to voting eligibility and any perceived material conflicts of interest).

Following final deliberations, the SAP code describes a strict voting process for the SAP members and is overseen by the NZDFA solicitor and the IOD accountant as scrutineer.

There is an appeal process should there be any material conflicts of interests not declared that an appellant may feel were prejudicial. Any such appeal is time bound and is adjudicated with the NZDFA solicitor.

Current SAP chair Paddy Boyd (South Canterbury) observes that the time spent with the IOD specialist (Kelly McGregor), and the ongoing integration of upskilling and support by IOD has added immeasurable value to the integrity and robustness of the electoral college interview and appointment process.

He says SAP members take their responsibilities seriously and believes the SAP is something that the DFA and wider deer industry should be rightly proud of and have full confidence in.

"This is especially so in today's excellent environment and relationship with the DINZ Board and executive team, and being fully involved in the DFA conference, the annual branch chairs' meetings and in wider DFA activity."

Examples of this relationship include commenting on the DINZ budget, Five Year Strategy review and interaction with DINZ Board members at various industry events.

For further information:

[deernz.org/being-on-the-dinz-board#](http://deernz.org/being-on-the-dinz-board#) ■

# Deer farmers lead move to risk-based testing

The TBfree plan is entering a new era of TB testing as New Zealand moves towards eradication, and North Island deer farmers are leading the way. OSPRI's disease management leader **Kevin Crews** explains how risk-based testing (RBT) is being piloted in four areas.



Risk-based testing is totally reliant on NAIT data, so accounts need to be completely up to date.

**THE HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL** TBfree programme's objective of removing bovine TB from cattle and deer by 2026 is still seven years away, but progress is ahead of schedule.

OSPRI has made significant progress towards eradicating TB from vector risk areas (VRA) across New Zealand. Since 2011, VRA status has been revoked from 2.02 million hectares, with 7.78 million hectares in 14 areas still to be cleared before freedom from disease in wildlife can be declared.

There are 25 infected herds at present. Only four TB-infected deer herds are currently under management and each has its own plan for a pathway to eradication.

It's a positive position to be in after the long gains of the programme over the past two decades, but we need to bear two things in mind: the last few are the most difficult to clear, and there's still possum control work in large areas to be done to ensure there's no reinfection from wildlife TB sources.

With the North Island now clear of TB-infected deer, we're confident that the time has come to shift the focus from whole herd testing – looking for animals that react to a scratch test. A more efficient method of disease surveillance, and a better use of deer farmers' investment at this stage in the TB eradication journey, is to check carcasses after slaughter at meat processing premises.

To that end, OSPRI has been working closely with meat inspectors to ensure these highly skilled workers are properly qualified to spot any sign of the lesions that indicate disease and have them sent for lab analysis. This post-mortem surveillance is one of the pillars supporting a risk-based approach to TB management which deer farmers are supporting with a pilot trial.

Since AsureQuality (AQ) took over as the sole TB testing provider, questions have been raised about what other activities can be completed at the time of TB testing. Additional services, such as velveting, can be carried out but this must be arranged with AQ in advance of any TB test.

Another frequently asked question is whether farmers can use their own vet for TB testing when they are velveting. This may be possible if the vet is accredited and subcontracted by AQ to complete this service, but in all instances questions about additional services must be raised with AQ.

## Risk-based testing trial

We've started the pilot programme in four regions of the North Island considered to have the lowest risk of infection, based on the absence of TB in wildlife and no recent infections in livestock.

The herd status of all herds in the RBT pilot area will change to "CM" (clear-monitored) meaning TB monitoring now occurs at slaughter.

Because RBT is totally reliant on accurate NAIT data, farmers' accounts need to be completely up to date, and OSPRI staff will be visiting farms to ensure all animals are registered in NAIT accounts. NAIT RFID tags will be scanned during testing to keep data updated and complete.

The pilot programme involves stopping all herd testing for deer in four regions – Northland, Auckland, Taranaki and Gisborne. Herd testing is being replaced with TB surveillance at slaughter premises, and all meat inspectors are undergoing refresher courses on identification of TB lesions.

## How it works

When an animal is sent to slaughter, its carcass is examined by highly trained inspectors looking for signs of any disease. Carcass and viscera inspection at meat processing plants is a key tool for detecting bovine TB in deer.

As bovine TB is systematically eradicated from deer herds, the incidence of finding TB has lessened dramatically, and the expectation is that very few will be found. If any suspect lesion or lymph node is found, a tissue sample is sent for laboratory examination and analysis.

A positive result will be passed to OSPRI's disease management team for immediate discussion with the herd owner about herd management requirements.

A successful trial will see RBT rolled out for deer in other parts of the country during 2020.

• Article supplied. ■

# Deer Tech Expo for profitable sustainable deer farming

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All deer farmers, and farmers interested in deer are invited to:

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**Deer Tech Expo**  
**Manfield Stadium**  
**Feilding**  
**Friday 28 June 2019**  
**From 10am to 3pm**

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