



Deer Industry News

Reigniting
foodservice
in 2022

Exporters Positive

VENISON SENTIMENT
TAKES AN UPTURN AS
SCHEDULE PERKS UP AND
DEMAND STARTS TO FIRM

He Waka Eke Noa

FARMER FEEDBACK
NEEDED ON TWO
OPTIONS FOR
REDUCING EMISSIONS

Sire Sales

SALES BOUNCE BACK
FROM LAST YEAR'S LOW;
TWO SIRES TOP \$100K;
DEMAND ACROSS BOARD

Deer Industry News

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

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Cover: The year is starting with positive signs of recovery for the foodservice sector in our main venison markets.

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CIRCULATION ENQUIRIES

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Patience paying off as venison rebounds

Towards the end of 2021 we experienced a rebound in demand for venison from foodservice. Combined with a good supply of deer and the challenges of a dysfunctional freight sector, the 4th quarter of 2021 was one of the busiest times we have experienced. The result was good sales, happy customers, low stock, and optimism for the year ahead.



John Sadler.

OUR PARTNERS STEPPED up with innovative sales programmes and efforts to reignite their customers' businesses in the United States. In addition, high prices for other proteins helped support demand for venison as a menu option.

Our relationship with Force of Nature continues to strengthen with their launching of new products. Last year's launch of a Tomahawk venison chop has been an enormous success. We are struggling to supply enough chops! Recently, a breakfast sausage has been added to the venison product offering and is getting great reviews. Substantial sales growth is predicted for the year ahead based on Force of Nature's marketing work.

In December, we invited suppliers who signed up to our "raised without antibiotics" programme to a Zoom call with the Force of Nature team. The message was optimism for the growth in demand for premium meat products produced ethically and in environmentally conscious ways.

In Europe, customers in Switzerland reported "an excellent game season" with stock selling out and chilled-by-air business back to pre-pandemic levels. In Sweden, food service is also back, and retailers have reopened. As a result, sales have picked up, and stock is moving. In China, sales have continued well above 2020 levels. Connections to top-end foodservice customers continue to grow.

DINZ recently confirmed support from the Market Innovation Fund for our project to accelerate the launch of Mountain River-branded venison in the retail market in Sweden. We have an infrastructure established and ready to introduce the unique attributes of New Zealand farmed venison. The focus is on premium products to premium supermarkets.

Distribution remains a serious headwind, however. Freight services are dysfunctional and rates are much too high. In time this will resolve, but like the disruption to foodservice, that is unlikely while the pandemic is still a major influence.

Returns to suppliers have recently improved thanks to continued market recovery and a weakening currency. It is important that the recovery is sustainable into the future. That requires strategies that move away from the boom-bust cycle. Build back better if you like.

We believe the build-back better opportunity comprises strategies to target high value foodservice, retail, regional diversity, and product diversity. In addition, it includes a commitment to developing long-term business relationships. Our goal is to be part of an industry that manages the relationships from customers to suppliers to achieve the value our unique product deserves.

The Mountain River farmers have been active and supportive of the sustainable gains strategy. The Mountain River community in New Zealand and worldwide has also worked closely to address the market movements and the impacts of the Covid pandemic. By talking and working like this, we have avoided placing undue pressure on different parts of the value chain. Our community message is that patience is paying off. ■

– John Sadler, Director, Mountain River Venison Ltd

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Exporters positive, committed

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Higher schedule prices reflect venison exporters' recognition of the need for a sustainable deer industry and a more positive market outlook, despite continued Covid-19 uncertainty.

UNUSUALLY FOR THE time of year, average schedule prices at the end of January had lifted, with prices paid for stags by venison companies ranging between \$7.15-\$7.45 – 29 to 34 percent higher than the \$5.55 average national published schedule prices at the end of January 2021 (Figure 1).

Stop press: Silver Fern was paying \$7.55/kg for AP stags in the North Island and \$7.65 in the South Island at press time.

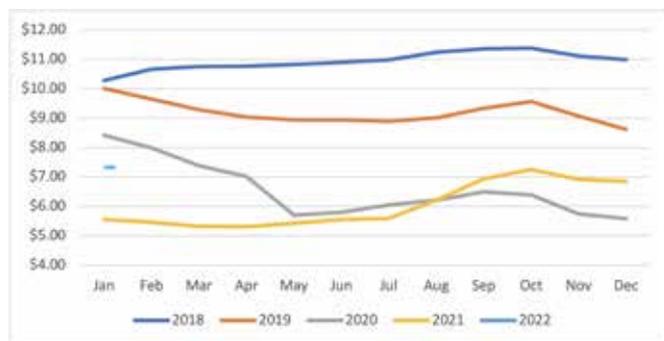


Figure 1: National published schedule 2018–2022.

“This reflects where we are in the markets: some wins from last year and the need to put some money back in, because we’re conscious deer farmers are struggling,” group sales manager Peter Robinson says.

Improvement over 2021

The schedule pricing has been boosted by successes in the United States and China. Traditional European markets are still negotiating 2022 programmes, with delayed recovery after yet another season of Covid disruption due to lockdowns. “However, we are seeing improvement on 2021 levels,” Alliance sales managers Terry O’Connell and Katrina Allan have found. While O’Connell declined to quote Alliance schedule prices, he says the company “will certainly be competitive”.

“All the efforts to diversify product away from the traditional EU markets will assist in the value recovery in Europe as volumes offered will be considerably less than in previous seasons,” he comments.

Industry was “moving in the same direction,” which was encouraging for First Light general manager venison Matt Gibson, whose company was



Terry O’Connell: Alliance prices will be competitive.

paying between \$7.15-\$7.30/kg to around 80 percent of its suppliers. He says the schedule has to be higher, to sustain deer farming: “somewhere in the range of that \$8–10 schedule. To do that, we need to be working off a base that’s higher than \$6.50 now in order to get to where we need to be.”

Meat companies have continued to invest in people, plants and markets over 2021 – another “sign of our confidence in the future of deer farming,” noted Duncan NZ’s general manager marketing and operations, Rob Kidd.

Duncan NZ remains focused on growing demand and achieving premium returns for New Zealand venison from the United States, he says. The company is working with in-market partners to promote value-added products through direct to consumer (DTC) channels, such as online retail and meal kit platforms.

“Support from Passion2Profit (P2P) funding has enabled us to work with content creators and digital marketers, developing compelling content to support the launch and continued promotion of these products through DTC channels. While volumes remain small, growth has been significant,” Kidd says.

All were encouraged about prospects for 2022, despite potential Covid-19 challenges and uncertainty about shipping logistics. The deer industry has proven flexible and has learned how to work around restrictions. Processors are also conscious of, and planning for, the impact of New Zealand’s Omicron outbreak. US and Australian experience has shown Omicron could disrupt production. Planning is building on protocols successfully employed in earlier lockdown Levels 2–4, which kept the sector running and will ensure services for their deer farmer suppliers can be maintained.

Major ports clearing congestion for the first time in over 12 months was welcomed by Kidd. He believes the recovery started in mid-2021. “I’m cautiously optimistic that our markets in Asia, the EU, United States and New Zealand have turned a corner. They’re now less reactive and more focused on learning to live with Covid-19.”



Matt Gibson, First Light: Schedule needs to be higher to sustain deer farming.



Robb Kidd, Duncan NZ: Support through P2P programme has helped.

continued on page 4

Exporters positive: continued

O’Connell agrees “It’s certainly tracking in the right direction,” he says. “There are good initiatives underway that can be built on, but we’ve got to be prudent about this recovery and make sure it’s sustainable.”

He says the plans and programmes in place will add stability and potential revenue growth.

“We’d all like it to happen faster but getting the basics right and getting that good foundation is equally important.”

- For a perspective from Mountain River Venison, see editorial on page 2 of this issue.

Adding to a positive outlook

There is a lot adding up to a more positive outlook for 2022, DINZ venison marketing manager Nick Taylor believes.

Despite the tough 2021, DINZ figures show total venison export volume for the 2020/21 season was up by 29 percent to 14,542 tonnes over the previous year, while export value lifted by two percent to \$155.4 million.

Rabobank’s 2022 forecast also notes recovery in 2022, with the re-opening of US and European foodservice. The rural lender anticipates farmgate pricing to remain subdued this year but to strengthen into 2022/23.

Continuing strong global demand for protein is lifting prices for beef, lamb and similar proteins, making venison a good alternative. He also sees positive signs for the premium petfood market.

“Despite lockdowns disrupting the tail end of the game season, generally it went well and I am hearing reports of significant stocks having moved through the system. Exporters had also reported good demand for chilled into December, with airfreight cost and capacity being the limiting factor.”

Although the potential remains for disruption from Omicron or another new variant, he says markets are cautiously re-opening as populations get vaccinated. The development of new retail channels has been going well with increased sales through those and, while diners are still hesitant about eating out in crowded restaurants, there is light on the horizon for foodservice again after two years, especially in the United States.

More shipping and air routes could open up as Covid-19 abates and countries adapt to it, but with airfreight rates currently double pre-Covid levels, that option will be restricted for some time, notes Taylor.

Work done in the Venison Recovery Programme, including

year two of the US and China retail programmes boosted by P2P initiatives, the \$400,000 DINZ Marketing Innovation Fund introduced last year and the joint venison positioning fund will provide additional support, helping boost the number of outlets and range and value of those products in those markets, he says.

Venison gaining ground in China

The Silver Fern Farms team was working hard last year within the Venison Recovery Programme on expanding its sales of New Zealand venison in China, working with influencers and digital media on retail and with chef workshops.

“We’re starting to gain ground,” Peter Robinson says.

Exports in 2021 were 125 percent up on 2020 and the team has set themselves a target of doubling that again in 2022. “Then I think we’ll get ourselves into a very positive position on venison. Once you have options, you start to create competitive tension, which is what we need in this category.”

In the United States, Silver Fern Farms’ focus was on e-commerce and continuing to build its branded venison retail programmes through increasing store numbers. Venison items were included in its retail range launched with assistance from P2P (see *Deer Industry News* August/September 2021).

Silver Fern Farms’ 2022 marketing campaign will feature an activity for each of the first eight months, focused around recipes and summer campaigns on digital media. Venison is an important part of the basket from the three-species company, which Robinson says is “committed to keep running” as it continues to build relationships and get gains.

The company is proud of the way it had been able to adapt and be agile with whatever was thrown at it in previous lockdowns, Robinson says. “We are committed to [venison], we are investing in it, we are positive in the direction it’s taking, whatever challenges Covid may bring for the premium food sector.”

Robinson also noted Silver Fern Farms’ team at its Kennington Plant were “rapt” to win the company’s Sustainability and Best Venison Plant category of the company’s annual site awards. ■



Peter Robinson, Silver Fern Farms: Company is conscious venison producers are struggling.

Benchmarked production and Johne’s disease info on your deer

| Season | Carcass Weight |
|--------|----------------|
| 2013 | 52 |
| 2014 | 53 |
| 2015 | 55 |
| 2016 | 51 |
| 2017 | 60 |
| 2018 | 59 |
| 2019 | 61 |
| 2020 | 62 |
| 2021 | 64 |

Deer PRO

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

Boosting sales of venison “bricks” in US

by Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer

Work continued in the second year of the P2P co-funded retail programmes in the United States for First Light and Alliance Group, with activities boosting sales of venison mince in the market.

SALES HAVE GROWN 45 percent for First Light’s venison brick since it was launched into 300 Whole Foods US stores in November 2021, helped by funds from the Passion2Profit Primary Growth Partnership programme.



The First Light ground venison “brick” of ground/minced venison has been selling well in US Whole Foods stores in the exporter’s Craft Venison campaign.

The sustained growth in First Light’s biggest new market and focus has been pleasing for its general manager venison, Matt Gibson. While it is early days, he reports it is going “really well”. Now it’s out of the promotion stage, and has become a staple in Whole Foods customers’ baskets, he hopes demand will stabilise so the company can do some forecasts to ensure continuity of supply.

Social media boost

First Light launched a venison mince pack and ‘Italian-style meatballs’ through Whole Foods, and the Whole Foods social media has been very helpful to push sales.

Gibson was also delighted to find good feedback on social media. US influencers had read the labels and worked out for themselves the nutritional benefits of venison. Plenty of chat was visible about the “bang for your buck of calories versus protein,” from venison. This was “not as a result of direct marketing by us,” he adds.

The venison meatballs have also been selling well and continuing to grow, albeit more sporadically, as new customers are added. They are being used particularly in cooked form through a couple of retail customers who have lunch bars within the supermarkets.

Focused on new markets, venison has neatly “tucked into the Wagyu beef slipstream,” says Gibson. “It’s a niche, within a niche, within a niche,” he says, adding the company’s key intent is “to retain value and move venison at a premium price”. Thanks to its work with Wagyu, the company already has access to a number of specialty supermarkets.

First Light has a long-standing partnership with New Zealand-owned sheepmeat marketing company Atkins Ranch, which operates on the US West Coast.



Alliance Group’s retail brochure is supporting the co-operative’s activity in the US market, through The Lamb Company.

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Strong velvet demand continues

Strong demand from Asian markets for New Zealand velvet was continuing through the bulk of the season, despite the still relatively uncertain shipping environment. Farmers need to keep in close contact with their buyers.

NEARING THE END of a hectic velvet season, strong demand was still evident from consumers and especially wholesalers in China and Korea, reports DINZ manager markets Rhys Griffiths.

“The wholesale market is on fire,” he says, with wholesalers trying to get hold of enough product to satisfy the steadily increasing consumer demand and to ensure decent stock levels in their factories.

Prices received, although varied, were on average “higher than most exporters initially imagined,” starting the season at 5–10 percent ahead of last year, with main grades up by 15–20 percent at the time of writing. Early reports of regrowth achieving prices more than 20 percent above last season show the potential for prices to move up still further, he thought.

Port access – a bugbear for the whole of 2021 – was still an issue for New Zealand velvet exporters. Signs before Christmas that the major Dalian Port in China’s Liaoning Province was ready to re-open, sadly, proved unfounded. The port receives most of the country’s frozen animal product imports, including velvet, but its position in a high-risk area for Covid-19 closures, coupled

with China’s aggressive elimination strategy, meant “further shutdowns are not off the cards”.

Consequently, velvet, much of which has already been purchased by customers, is still sitting in New Zealand stores awaiting despatch at the earliest opportunity.

Farmers need to keep in close contact with their buyers for the latest information, suggests Griffiths. ■



Rhys Griffiths: Advises keeping in close contact with buyers.

Boosting sales: continued

“With shipping the way it is, aggregating customers through Atkins Ranch will give us a certain amount of efficiency to get more material over there,” explains Gibson.

Atkins Ranch does further processing to produce frozen and chilled cuts for major customers like Whole Foods and other independent retailers, building on work with its Wagyu beef.

This year the company will be adding venison medallions with butter to its range for Whole Foods. These had proved very popular in New Zealand stores.

Switching tack

In-store tastings had to be put to one side and a new tack found when Covid-19 disrupted plans for Alliance’s launch of two new products in the United States – a ground venison brick and venison grilling steaks (see *Deer Industry News*, October/November 2021).

Flexible support from P2P enabled the switch for the promotional activity, through its part-owned US-based lamb marketer, The Lamb Company (TLC). This re-focused activity onto the ground venison brick and the development of an interactive brochure to support its launch through TLC’s own Four Seasons brand, explains Alliance sales manager Katrina Allan.

The four-part digital brochure is being used in a promotion targeting TLC’s retail customers, which started in late 2021 and is ongoing. TLC’s Nigel Morris explains it as “primarily a tool for our retailers to help them understand venison more and, in turn, use our material to educate their customers”.

TLC’s research had shown North American consumers were searching for alternatives to beef and bison meat and that venison

fitted the bill. The first section aims to help US customers get comfortable with venison and highlight it can be a substitute for beef or bison, says Allan. The second part focuses on the nutritional attributes of the product, including the fact it is natural, free-range, has no added steroids or hormones and is grass-fed “on sweet, fresh pasture all year round”. The third part gives handy venison cooking tips, including links to family favourite recipes, such as chilli and lasagne.

The aim is to have the digital brochure hosted on TLC’s customer websites, creating “a reinforced information loop between the [retailers’] customers and the store where they buy their venison,” says Morris.

The promotion has gone well so far, with venison leveraging off TLC’s strong connections with US buyers, reports Allan.

“It has been a great way of diversifying product away from Europe into a good outlet.”

The co-operative has worked hard significantly lifting sales volume out of New Zealand on last year, in particular for the manufacturing cuts that go into the ground product.

This year will see the consolidation of all the 2021 activity. “Hopefully we will get some real traction out of the promotional material that is out there now,” says Allan.

For 2022, other Alliance venison marketing activity will continue with instore tastings and continued social media engagement in Europe. However the main focus will be on its Chinese retail programme, for which it has been awarded marketing innovation funding (more on that in a later edition). Five new products will be launched nationwide over the year into 90 Grand Farm supermarkets, the company’s in-market partner. ■

Building connections with Korean OMDs

Two young Korean trainee Oriental Medicine Doctors were recently awarded a Deer Industry New Zealand scholarship to help with their studies.



Pictured at the presentation are (left to right): Ms Jeong-Soon Nam, chief of administration and Professor Jae-Dong Lee dean of the College of Korean Medicine, ByungChan Seo, Jin Young Choi, New Zealand Ambassador to Korea His Excellency Philip Turner and Trade Commissioner Stephen Blair.

BYUNGCHAN SEO AND Jin Young Choi, students at the Kyung-Hee University College of Oriental Medicine in Seoul, were presented with their Scholarships in early December by New Zealand Ambassador to Korea, Philip Turner.

Choi, who plans to practise as an OMD after she graduates, had used New Zealand velvet while practising at school. Receiving the award “will be a good memory” she told the *AKOM News*, a journal read by OMDs.

“I will do my best to become an oriental medicine doctor who can alleviate the suffering of many people in the future.”

Comments from student body leader ByungChan Seo showed Korean university students were having the same issues as their New Zealand counterparts. Medical education required a lot of practical face-to-face training that had been disrupted by Covid, he noted.

College dean, Professor Jae-Dong Lee, said in the article he was grateful to DINZ and the New Zealand Embassy for

providing annual scholarships “to nurture talent” at the College.

“In the future I hope that Kyung-Hee University of Korean Medicine will come up with various measures to further develop Korean oriental medicine through co-operation with New Zealand.”

Oriental medicine, “which is strong in immunity since ancient times” can play an important role in the emergence of new infectious diseases, he said, calling for an improvement in the legal system in the future.

Turner, who has a personal interest in traditional medicine, said he hoped “Korean medicine will be further developed and play a role in taking care of the health of people around the world as well as Korea”.

Similar DINZ OMD Scholarships are also awarded in two other Korean OMD colleges at Dongguk University and Wonkwang University. This was the second year the initiative has been run.

The strategy behind them is to nurture talent and to build relationships with the institutions that have traditionally only had connections with Russian velvet exporters, explains DINZ manager Rhys Griffiths.

“They get us a lot of kudos,” he says, adding DINZ is grateful for the involvement and interest of the senior New Zealand government officials, which had also attracted more publicity than expected. ■



Famous Korean OMD Dr Peter Yoon (left), who has had plenty of contact with the New Zealand velvet industry, recently met separately with NZ trade commissioner Stephen Blair in Korea to show him two preparations for New Zealand deer velvet – one for children, the other for adults. Fifty percent of his deer velvet consumption is for children, 20 percent for the elderly and 30 percent for adults, he told Blair. The meeting followed now familiar Covid protocols and also included a visit to the museum, laboratory and decoction (extraction) facilities. Dr Yoon was presented with the new New Zealand velvet technical manual and a copy of Lynda Gray’s book “In Hindsight” on behalf of DINZ in which he was delighted to “find my old Kiwi friends”, Tim Wallis, Tom and Gay Williams, James Guild, Clive Jermy and Collier Isaacs.

Facilitators sharpen their skills

by Phil McKenzie, DINZ farm performance manager

P2P facilitators are the essential glue to help groups of deer farmers leading the change they want for their farm systems and environment. In November a group of Advance Party and Environment facilitators met in Christchurch for a two-day workshop.

THE FIRST DAY was facilitator training and practice with Helen Ritchie and Michelle Rush from Participatory Techniques. The day focused on just one facilitation approach: the focused conversation method. This helps a group make sense of any topic, what it means to them and what they are going to do about it.



The workshop was valuable for experienced and new facilitators alike.

The facilitators split into groups and practised facilitating and observing each other, receiving useful feedback. Topics were chosen by the facilitators based on their experience with their groups.

There was a mix of new and experienced facilitators. All enjoyed practising in a supportive environment, receiving valuable feedback. One experienced facilitator commented that this was “the best training day I’ve been to in many years; the feedback I got made it worth the trip.”

Day 2 covered the P2P programme, including what a new programme might look like. As is usual when facilitators gather, the walls were soon covered in flip charts and Post-it notes!

There was also the opportunity for a deep dive into a couple of the projects the P2P environment team are working on: modules to help farmers develop their environment plan, and the “Know your [greenhouse gas] number” workshops for farmers.

“Safety in two and a half questions”

Tony Watson, until recently general manager of Safer Farms NZ, also had a session with the facilitators. Those who attended the 2021 conference in Invercargill will recall Tony’s engaging presentation. He was no less lively this time. His message: while it’s important to get the paperwork right, safety discussions shouldn’t stop there. He outlined “safety in 2.5 questions” for any situation.

1. What could happen here?
2. What are we going to do about it?
3. Is it enough?

If we ask these questions at any time and keep repeating them until we are comfortable, we will go a long way towards ensuring we are all safer, he said.

Tony was also wearing an intriguing “1737” lapel badge, sparking discussion about stress and mental wellbeing. (It’s a 24/7 freecall or free text number, available to anyone feeling stressed or just needing someone to talk to.)

This whole safety discussion reinforced the key role that facilitators play and where some small questions, or a pointer in the right direction, could help those we work with, and ourselves. ■



Bloat statement questioned

CANTERBURY DEER FARMER Grant Hasse has challenged a statement in our August/September 2021 issue that “deer don’t get bloat”. The comment on bloat was part of a report on a “feeding for growth” workshop at the North Island Tech Expo.

Hasse said that about 5 years ago two yearling red hinds in a mob of 120 died of bloat within a day or two of being put onto graze a paddock of lucerne on the farm where he was working. Until then the hinds had been in a “barren” paddock and fed lucerne baleage.

“Our vet Jim McPhee autopsied one of the hinds and confirmed it was bloat. It had suffocated the animal from the inside. He said he’d never seen it in a deer before.”

After the cause was confirmed Hasse said they took the hinds off the lucerne and then managed a slower transition back onto the crop. There were no further deaths after that.

He speculates that in other situations where a deer is found after a sudden death that’s put down to MCF or clostridial disease, the cause may indeed have been bloat.

“It’s something we need to be aware of. We’re certainly more careful now about transitioning deer onto something like lucerne or red clover.”

- Have you ever lost deer to bloat or suspected it? If you are a deer vet, have you ever encountered it in your practice? If you have, *Deer Industry News* would be interested in hearing your story. ■

Getting steamy in Oamaru

Quirky and fun times were had by all attending the Elk & Wapiti Society's (EWSNZ) annual velvet and hard antler competition in Oamaru during the last weekend of January.



Tony Pearce with the Open Supreme winner, a massive 27.53 kg head from Tikana's Nepia.

THE NORTH OTAGO town, with its Victorian precinct and "Steam Punk" vibe, was the perfect place for the 35 who gathered to celebrate the past, present and future.

A nod to the past was marked by the attendance of three notable EWSNZ forefathers: John Barber, an EWSNZ life member, elk importer and breeder; Neville Cunningham, a former president; and Tony Pearce, also a life member.

The line-up of competition velvet – including the Supreme winner, a whopping 27.5kg head from Tikana's Nepia, the heaviest ever in an officially recognised New Zealand competition – was a snapshot of the here-and-now. A visit to the Steam Punk Museum, an add-on activity, ticked boxes for the past and future as well as the quirky. The curious artefacts, installations, contraptions and a "Dr Who" light fantastic portal, helped explain the Victorian steam-powered and future-inspired theme.

The evening kicked off with antler viewing and awarding of the Open Supreme top three, all of which went to Tikana (see table). Pre-dinner drinks were supplemented by tasters of Red Berry Tea cold smoked venison and a salami from James Petrie, a.k.a The Merchant of Venison.

Adding to the fun was an EWSNZ version of "The Chase", including questions such as "to the closest 1/8th of an inch, how tall is Tony Pearce?"*

The Society recognised Tony's recent retirement, paying

EWSNZ velvet competition results

| Place | Bull | Owner | Weight (kg) | NZCWI Score |
|-----------------------|------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Open Supreme | | | | |
| 1 | Nepia | Tikana | 27.53 | 222.64 |
| 2 | Yotam | Tikana | 22.47 | 190.08 |
| 3 | Prophecy | Tikana | 21.29 | 176.12 |
| Two-year-old | | | | |
| 1 | Pretty Boy | Mayfield Elk | 10.43 | 126.24 |
| 2 | Hawk | Tikana | 9.83 | 116.34 |
| Three-year-old | | | | |
| 1 | Nasa | Tikana | 13.86 | 145.36 |
| 2 | Senator | Tikana | 11.38 | 132.93 |

For full competition results: elkwapitisociety.co.nz

tribute to his contribution to the advancement of farmed elk and wapiti. He was presented with a cobalt blue "Elkaholic" sash, the colour harking back to Tony's jaw-dropping "Speedo" stunt at the Society's 30th Anniversary celebrations in 2017.

Lead organiser and EWSNZ President Grant Hasse was relieved and pleased at the conclusion of the competition given the widescale cancellation of many events in the Covid climate. It had created extra work and the uncertain environment meant that some who would normally have exhibited velvet had instead sold it to avoid the possible delay of export and income.

"It was successful given the many constraints we had to work around, and we're pleased we went ahead with it."

*64 and 4/8" if you must know. ■



Three founding fathers, from left: John Barber, Tony Pearce and Neville Cunningham.



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www.provelco.co.nz

Velvet photo gallery

The cancellation of last year's major velvet competitions meant people missed out on the chance to show off what their stags and bulls had produced. *Deer Industry News* offered would-be entrants the opportunity to include their velvet antler in a gallery - here's what we received. Many thanks to **CK Import Export**, **PGG Wrightson** and **Provelco** for supporting the initiative.



ALTRIVE RED DEER - Andy Elder
142-17 11.2kgs @ 4yr old (ET brother to 145-17) Sire: Joseph



PEEL FOREST ESTATE
182070, 3yr old, 9.56kg



TOM CRUSE: 15.4kg 4yr old by 491 stag #401



FOREST ROAD FARM – Grant Charteris
Lazarus 13.05kg @ 5yr old



HENRY PEARSE
Brinks, 3yr old, 8.8kg, sire "Foggy"



NATHAN COBURN
P933, 7.8kg 3yr old, Sire: 299 (Dalmore Deer)



CLACHANBURN – John & Mary Falconer
Storm, 12yr old, est 25kg (being grown out)



GILL FAMILY: A stylish 3 yr old out of a maiden hind, 7.2kg



TOM MAY - mayfieldelk.com
Eureka, 4yo 1 week before cutting (cut 17.9kg 30 November)



Background photo: "Growing Christmas trees" by Eileen Ferris.

Deer connections among nominees

THE NOMINEES FOR the inaugural Beef + Lamb NZ awards (formerly the Sheep Industry Awards) include several with strong deer industry connections.

Most notable is AgResearch Invermay senior scientist **Dr David Stevens**, who is a finalist in the Alliance Significant Contribution Award. Stevens has done significant work developing tools to better manage deer nutrition.

The *Otago Daily Times* reports that he is also a previous recipient of the Sir Arthur Ward Award which recognised his

contribution to the sheep and deer industries.

Other nominees who have contributed research relevant to the deer industry include the **AgResearch parasitology team** in Palmerston North, and the **Strategic Winter Grazing Research Team** (AgResearch Invermay). Both have been nominated for the Science and Research Award.

The awards dinner has been postponed due to Covid and will be held when conditions allow. ■

Can we measure and mitigate?

by Bala TikkiSETTY, sustainable agriculture adviser (technical) Waikato Regional Council

Agricultural emissions are linked to intensive farming, with dairy cattle and road transport the largest contributors to the growth in emissions since 1990. Can these be measured and mitigated?

CURRENTLY, THE OVERSEER nutrient budgeting model can provide a reliable indication of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions at farm level.

But scientists are of the opinion that it is difficult to measure emissions on every farm. We should be relying on robust science that is able to develop equations that could calculate emissions based on factors such as stocking rates, dry matter eaten and fertiliser use. The primary sector partnership – He Waka Eke Noa – is currently consulting with farmers on two options.

We need to design a system that can bring a positive change and outcome that protects our environment and economy. The system should be flexible enough to adapt to future changes, a blend of new technology, such as vaccines and inhibitors, and current practices.

Over the past 20 years, our farmers have improved the emissions efficiency of production by about one per cent a year. This good work can be kept up by implementing good farming principles.

Where the emissions come from

Carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane (CH₄) and nitrous oxide (N₂O) are the three main GHGs.

The dairy sector contributes 46 per cent of New Zealand's agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, with an average dairy farm emitting 9.6 tonnes of GHG/ha/year.

The sheep and beef sector is next, contributing 43.6 per cent of our nation's agricultural greenhouse gas emissions, with current estimates showing that an average sheep and beef farm emits about 2.8 tonnes of GHG/ha/year.

(Deer emissions are similar to sheep and beef on a per-hectare basis. Emissions estimated for four case study farms running deer, sheep and cattle ranged from 1.2–5.4 tonnes of GHG/ha/year. According to the New Zealand's Greenhouse Gas Inventory 1990–2019¹, deer's share of total agriculture sector methane emissions was 1.2% in 2019. Ed.)

Emissions from dedicated cropping and horticulture contribute a small percentage of New Zealand's total biological emissions.

Methane, although considered short-lived, causes a lingering warming effect for a long time after the methane itself has gone. One tonne of biological methane traps about 33 times more heat than a tonne of carbon dioxide over a 100-year period.

About 80 percent of our country's total nitrous oxide emissions come from urine patches on paddocks. A recent government report indicated that the nitrous oxide emissions have increased by almost half since 1990.

Nitrous oxide gas generally comes from conversions in the soil by microbes of nitrogen in fertilisers, urine and dung. When soils

become anoxic, nitrate can be sequentially reduced to nitrous oxide and inert nitrogen. This is called de-nitrification.

Methane emissions are higher on farms with higher stocking rates and higher dry matter consumption. Some of the options to reduce methane are lowering replacement rates, reducing the dry matter feed per animal and lowering stocking rates.



Bala TikkiSETTY knows the deer industry well and was a regular contributor at Focus Farm events in the Waikato region.

Maintaining soil quality

Minimising human-induced erosion and maintaining good soil quality are essential for maintaining soil ecosystem services such as nutrient and water buffering, productive capacity, assimilating waste and minimising impacts of sediment and other contaminants on waterbodies.

Other good practices include optimum cultivation, increasing greater plant diversity in swards, avoiding over grazing and heavy grazing under wet weather leading to compaction, avoiding under or over-fertilisation, practising appropriate use of pesticides and other agrochemicals, managing pasture to maintain complete soil cover and careful application of any effluent to avoid saturation and optimise organic matter.

The options for reducing nitrous oxide could be reducing nitrogen inputs through judicious use of fertilisers, using low-nitrogen feeds and improving pasture quality.

A new long-term national soil carbon study conducted at 500 locations around New Zealand will benchmark soil carbon stocks in different land uses and then monitor how those stocks are changing with time. Initial data will provide a national-scale picture of how much soil carbon is currently stored and, later, whether those stocks are increasing or decreasing. (The research is funded by the New Zealand Agricultural Greenhouse Gas Research Centre and the Ministry for Primary Industries and is a collaboration between Manaaki Whenua – Landcare and the University of Waikato.)

- Article supplied.
- For further information contact Bala TikkiSETTY on 0800 800 401 or bala.tikkisetty@waikatoregion.govt.nz ■

¹ <https://environment.govt.nz/publications/new-zealands-greenhouse-gas-inventory-1990-2019/>

He Waka Eke Noa response due

by Innes Moffat, chief executive, Deer Industry New Zealand

Greenhouse gases are causing climate change and heating our world. Everybody needs to take steps to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Deer emit methane through digestion and nitrous oxide through the breakdown of excreta.

METHANE IS A short-lived gas, but is highly warming. Nitrous oxide, like carbon dioxide, is long lived.

Countries with livestock industries are looking at schemes to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture, and international buyers are seeking assurances from their suppliers that actions are being taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from their supply chain.

Agriculture in New Zealand is already included in the New Zealand emissions trading scheme (ETS), but it receives a 100 percent free allocation at this point.

DINZ is a signatory to the He Waka Eke Noa partnership between the agriculture and horticulture sectors, government and Māori. This partnership was negotiated with the government to allow the partners time to agree a system that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with government targets, but keep agriculture out of the ETS.

The partnership has come up with two options:

1. A farm-level scheme
2. A processor levy with emissions reduction contracts.

We are being asked to provide feedback on these two schemes, and on the ETS.

It is vitally important to keep agriculture out of the ETS.

Commentators who are looking at the options on the table and think agriculture would be better off in the ETS are mistaken. The ETS is designed to price fossil fuel emissions, and the price of those emissions will be set by the international price of carbon. This can only go up, irrespective of the achievements we make in New Zealand to manage and reduce our agricultural emissions.

For the deer sector, the price of the ETS would eventually be devastating. Prices for methane would increase year on year, irrespective of what farmers do to improve their efficiency or reduce their emissions. Deer are not as productive as sheep, and do not have beef's advantage of the inclusion of dairy-origin cattle – which lower overall emissions per tonne of production in the national inventory. The ETS also does not recognise emissions associated with velvet production so would place all deer industry costs on venison.

Essential outcomes for the deer industry are (see table of pros and cons under each proposal):

1. We remain out of the ETS
2. A split gas approach is applied, recognising the difference between short-lived methane and long-lived CO₂ and nitrous oxide.
3. Prices for gases reflect the performance of New Zealand agriculture in meeting targets, not set by the price of carbon credits

4. Farmer input into design of scheme and emissions prices
5. Reductions in emissions are rewarded at farm level
6. Mitigations available are recognised and their use is incentivised
7. The scheme is integrated with other government policies on environmental management such as freshwater and biodiversity
8. Administration costs are minimal
9. The impact on the sectors of the New Zealand agriculture industry is shared equitably.

For the documents, and a feedback form:

<https://hewakaekenoa.nz/your-say/>

We have sought and received an extra month to collect farmers' views on the options. The end date for consultation is 1 April. This is because of the widespread reluctance for meeting and travelling given the confusion caused by the red traffic light setting, and extended self isolation requirements.

We will speak to many of you over this period. We welcome your feedback and please make sure you complete the submission form to let the policy makers know the impact of the proposals on your business. We will be arranging some online discussions to receive your views.

Deer farmers are encouraged to attend Beef+Lamb NZ and Dairy NZ workshops on the emissions pricing options. For the programme: <https://beeflambnz.com/emissions-pricing-roadshow> ■

| | ETS | Farm levy | Processor levy |
|---|-------|-----------|----------------|
| 1. Not the ETS | Red | Green | Green |
| 2. Split gas | Red | Green | Green |
| 3. Not linked to carbon price | Red | ? | Red |
| 4. Farmer input | Red | Green | ? |
| 5. Rewards reduction | Red | Green | ? |
| 6. Recognises mitigations | Red | ? | Green |
| 7. Aligns with other environmental policies | Red | ? | Red |
| 8. Low admin cost | Green | Red | Green |
| 9. Equitable | Red | Red | Red |

Pros and cons of proposed partnership options, and the existing ETS.

Deer Select on track for makeover

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

When New Zealand went decimal a few decades ago, there was initial confusion over pennies and cents, or grams and ounces, but this was short lived. Kiwis quickly embraced the new framework for counting and measuring things. We never looked back.

DEER SELECT MANAGER Sharon McIntyre expects the deer industry will also be quick to take change in its stride later this year when the platform undergoes something of a transformation.

It's not just a cosmetic makeover either. There are important changes happening all at once that will make the genetic merit platform more functional, flexible and comprehensive.

Several especially big things are planned: genuine across-breed evaluation, the introduction of sub-indexes and, possibly, a 10-year shift in the baseline data year for creating breeding values (BVs) – moving from 1995 to 2005. McIntyre says this would literally bring Deer Select into the 21st Century and capture genetic improvement more meaningfully.

Cross-breed evaluation

Genuine across-breed evaluation is probably the biggest single change for Deer Select. This means that elk/wapiti and red sires will share a common numerical language when it comes to BVs.

Until now a BV for, say, weaning weight of +10 kg for a red sire, and +11 kg for a wapiti sire, couldn't be compared meaningfully. That's because they were calculated differently, using different baseline data.

That will change. When "Deer Select Mk 2" (working title) is rolled out later this year, people looking at BVs of sires can be confident that a difference between a red and wapiti sire of "X" kg will be a genuine, measurable difference. The key to across-breed evaluation is having both red and wapiti sires used across a stud recording herd, with the same sires also used in red or wapiti studs to maintain the "calibration".

This across-breed evaluation has been a very difficult nut to crack, and it has been a target since the Deer Progeny Test. If the industry values across-breed evaluation, we will need to maintain across-breed sire connections in a herd or herds to keep the values calibrated. This year, as for many previous years, it is the Tomorrow's Deer herd at Invermay that's providing this connection. (Incidentally, maintaining this herd at Invermay accounts for nearly 10 percent of the deer industry's investment in research, so is a significant commitment. The work is funded by DINZ through its levy-funded allocation for science, and AgResearch through its MBIE funding.)

Will all BVs be covered?

Theoretically, yes, but with a couple of exceptions. Across-breed evaluation won't be available for velvet BVs because there aren't enough herds from both breeds recording in big enough numbers and no single herd is recording on velvet for both red and wapiti.

Reproduction is also unlikely to be a candidate for across-breed evaluation because, in the Invermay herd, wapiti cross females are not retained for breeding, so the trait can't be calibrated between the breeds. There are also some issues around maintaining herd connectedness for velvet and reproductive traits.

But these exceptions won't detract from the usefulness of across-breed evaluation overall.

AgResearch scientist Jamie Ward confirms that it's unlikely people using elk/wapiti terminal sires would be interested in the reproductive traits for female first-cross progeny – it's rising yearling traits of growth and meat where the genuine comparisons are useful (for example, weaning weight or eye muscle area).

Will there be performance overlap between the breeds?

Yes, it's likely there will be quite an overlap for growth rates, with the top-performing red sires (which could be considered terminal sires) outperforming lower-merit wapiti, kg for kg. McIntyre points out that while growth BVs are important to most, they will be able to take other traits into consideration too, as they always have done.

Will the numbers be the same as before?

Not with all BVs. McIntyre explains that for the ever-popular weight at 12 months (W12) BV, absolute numerical values for individual red sires are likely to come down by several kg. Part of this change would happen if the baseline data changes from 1995 to 2005. Part of the change also comes about through the maths that's needed to put elk/wapiti and red sires on a comparable footing.

She urges breeders and buyers of sires not to get fixated on the absolute numbers. "It's the relativity between sires and changes over time that are important," she says.

"When we went from Fahrenheit to Centigrade we appreciated that 86°F and 30°C are very different numbers but the same temperature. People soon got used to the new scale and it'll be the same with BVs."

Getting there

Ward said bringing the across-breed evaluation to fruition has created some challenges. "The red population is much bigger than the elk/wapiti, so they have more variation and a more typical bell curve with different traits. With elk/wapiti the curve can be much narrower, so reconciling the two sets of data can be interesting!"

There have been other challenges too, including the untimely death in November of AgResearch's Sheryl-Anne Newman, who

had been doing much of the development and maintenance work for Sheep Improvement Limited. (Deer Select “piggybacks” on this platform.) McIntyre said it has been a sad and difficult time but is confident that the essential development is in place and covered.

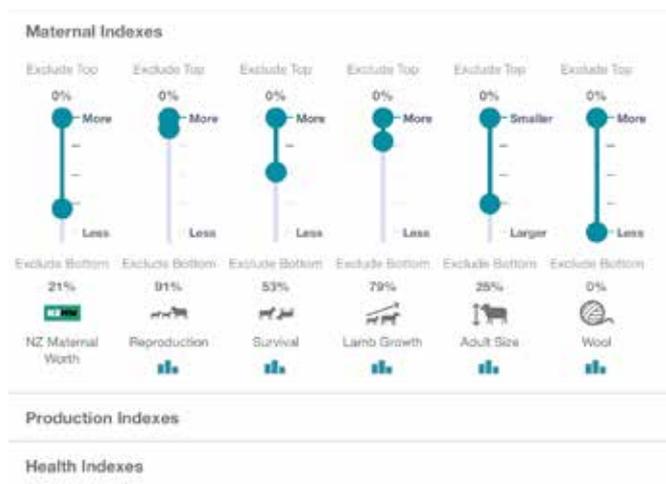
Also in the background is the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 and the risk of disruption caused by any restrictions or illness, which could affect planned AI programmes this season.

Fertility BV

A new range of BVs based on a combination of conception date and numbers of fawns born is also in the wings and will be of special interest to those breeding either replacements or finishers. The fertility BV will be split into three separate measures depending on hind age: first fawners, second fawners and mixed age.

New platform will enable sub-indexes

As Deer Select develops and we get more breeding values it can get more complicated finding individuals with the balance of traits desired for a particular farm. To make this easier, breeding values will be aggregated into a number of sub-indexes and overall indexes as they are with sheep. This will help buyers more easily find animals with the right combinations of key traits to suit their system.



The “slider” on-screen tool that sheep producers use for allocating importance to different traits when finding the ideal sire. Deer farmers will have a similar set of tools available in the upgraded Deer Select platform.

For example, this means instead of looking separately at conception date BV, and fertility at R2 and mixed age, the traits can be combined into a single reproduction index. A higher number would indicate higher merit for reproduction.

To enable this change Deer Select will be transferring to Beef+Lamb NZ’s more up-to-date and powerful nProve platform. The latest Deer Select updates are future proofing in anticipation of this next evolution.

Economic sub-indexes will empower stag buyers to drill down and easily see what sires will deliver what economic benefits based on different traits. McIntyre says this functionality will be a major improvement on the economic indexes available now, and will be in a very intuitive, user-friendly format. “We’ll be providing more information on this as the rollout approaches.”

Timing

Deer Select “official runs” with new tables are done bi-monthly except in the lead-in to sire sales, when they are done monthly from October to December. Ward said this will continue or frequency could increase, to compensate for the potential loss of “on-demand” runs by breeders when they’ve supplied new data.

McIntyre says they are planning to start creating new-look Deer Select draft runs for testing in February and for breeders from March onwards. “The intention is keep communicating the upcoming changes through the winter months and have the new system running in time for the 2022/2023 sire season,” she says. ■



An engine room for Deer Select: A pen of 2021-born fawns at AgResearch Invermay, in for pre-weaning tagging and tissue sampling for DNA parentage testing. Jamie Ward says there was a good crop of over 370 fawns bred by AI to eight Deer Select sires (about one-third elk/wapiti and two-thirds red). He says the sires covered a wonderful range of genetics and genetic merit and included the two highest growth-BV elk/wapiti and second-to-highest red.

Conference Covid contingencies

AS WE GO to press, it’s not certain what New Zealand’s settings will be under the Covid-19 Protection Framework in 3 months’ time. This presents special challenges for event organisers – including the team planning the 2022 Deer Industry Conference.

If the “traffic light” setting remains at red, then the limitation on gathering size means that an in-person conference won’t be viable. In that case we would need to revert to a virtual conference model as used in 2020.

At this stage, however, planning is continuing for a live event to be held in Wellington on 10 and 11 May.

We have learnt with Covid-19 that things can change quickly, so

please keep updated on conference plans. The best place to look for the latest information is the DINZ website: www.deernz.org

While we are looking forward to welcoming you to Wellington in May, the safety and health of our deer industry community is our top priority. Please watch for updates on plans for the 2022 conference and how it will be staged. By the time of the following (April) issue of *Deer Industry News*, we will have much clearer idea of our options.

In the meantime, watch for details in *StaglineOnline*, the DINZ e-News, and on the DINZ website. ■

Regenerative agriculture: Who's on board?

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

In our first article on regenerative agriculture (RA) we looked at definitions of the practice and recounted some of the debate on RA in the New Zealand scientific community. In this second of our three-article series we see who's getting on board the RA train – and what the venison marketing companies are making of the trends.

WHILE SOME SCIENTISTS question the value of RA, a number of farms around New Zealand have been taking the plunge and converting to the system or trialling it.

One of the most high profile is **Lake Hāwea Station**, purchased in 2019 by 42 Below founder Geoff Ross and his wife Justine. The Rosses are shifting the station to an RA system and it has become New Zealand's first certified carbon zero farm, sequestering twice as much carbon as it emits. (The audit was carried out by Toitū, with Overseer being used to do the calculations.) The 6,500-hectare station runs 9,000 Merinos and 200 Angus cattle and is managed by David O'Sullivan, who has worked in the deer industry in the past. Interviewed by *Farmers Weekly*¹, O'Sullivan commented that he'd noticed improved stock health and an abundance of birdlife and bees, attracted by the RA crop seed mixes of up to 30 species.



A regenerative agriculture trial is underway at Align Farms, Canterbury.

Align Farms in Canterbury is running RA trials² on one of its five dairy farms, split about 50:50 by area into RA and conventional systems. The company wants to know how RA affects profitability, environmental impacts, milk quality, animal health and the place of dairying in the community. After two seasons transitioning the RA block, the trial proper started in June 2021. It's early days but there are differences showing up in the farm performance data. By October, stocking rates on the RA side were lower and pasture growth and covers much higher. Animal health cases and somatic cell counts were higher on the RA side. Nitrogen

¹ https://issuu.com/farmersweeklynz/docs/fw_11-10_issuu

² <https://alignfarms.co.nz/regenerative-farming/regenerative-data/>



Central Otago's Linnburn Station has been practising RA since 2014.

applications on the conventional side have been considerably higher so far this season (90kg N/ha for conventional and 20kg N/ha for RA).

At Central Otago's 9,300-hectare, 25,000 stock unit **Linnburn Station**³ in the southern Maniototo, the transition to RA started in 2014. The sheep and beef property uses diverse crop mixes including deep-rooting species to help overcome soil compaction and improve soil structure. There is no tillage or synthetic fertiliser use and only 5 percent of the station is irrigated.

Heavyweights also taking a look at RA

There's been a lot of work investigating the potential of RA in New Zealand recently.

The **Ministry for Primary Industries** (MPI) last year put up \$390,000 through its Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures fund as part of its Fit for a Better World programme, for research into the global market potential of RA agriculture for New Zealand's sheep, beef and wine sectors. This was supplemented by \$260,000 industry funding. While deer aren't included in the work, there is obvious crossover potential.

The research aimed to understand consumer attitudes and build a large-scale, evidence-based picture of the potential market impacts for RA – both positive and negative.

Beef + Lamb NZ and **NZ Wine** commissioned the research. It showed growing support and awareness of RA among consumers in Western markets, with a willingness to pay more for red meat produced using RA methods. There was potential to link RA to climate change solutions as well as health and product taste claims.

³ <https://www.linnburnstation.co.nz>

Beef + Lamb NZ's report on this research urged quick action to capitalise on the growing consumer interest, with the proviso that we need to:

- define RA in a New Zealand context
- build RA attributes into the “New Zealand story”
- have verifiable and relevant RA standards
- ensure any approaches are backed by science.

MPI has also put up \$1.87m from its Productive & Sustainable Land Use – Extension Services fund for the Quorum Sense project for farmers to share knowledge about developing and implementing RA systems. The farmer-led project is supported by scientists and advisers. **Quorum Sense**⁴ is a charitable trust, providing “a place for farmers and the wider community to share knowledge and ideas about regenerative farming systems/practices, as well as successes, failures and learnings”.

Canterbury deer farmer Duncan Humm (see final article in the next *Deer Industry News*) is a Quorum Sense board member.

Meanwhile **Pāmu** and **Forest & Bird** are now working together under a 2018 memorandum of understanding to collaborate in several areas including climate-resilient farm systems, protecting endangered species and understanding regenerative agriculture.

The **White Paper**⁵, **Regenerative agriculture in Aotearoa New Zealand**, mentioned in the first article of this series, identified 17 priority areas for research into RA, as identified by three main stakeholder groups:

| Stakeholder group | RA research priorities |
|--|--|
| Sector groups: dairy, sheep & beef, arable, viticulture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freshwater outcomes • Food quality and safety • Farmer empowerment and mindset • Long-term viability of whole systems • Animal welfare • On-farm all taxa (total) biodiversity • Soil carbon <p>How RA might increase:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • resilience • accountability in our food systems • access to premium/niche markets |
| RA community | <p>How RA affects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • soil health • profitability and production • whole-of-system environment, social and economic outcomes at farm-scale |
| Agri-food sector | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • de-risking investment and transition to RA • ‘conventional-style’ practice guides for RA, customised for different sectors and NZ contexts • understanding the ‘RA continuum’ • definition/certification for RA. |

The 8-year **Our Land and Water Toitū te Whenua, Toiora te Wai** National Science Challenge has nearly \$100m of funding and was launched in 2016, hosted by AgResearch. Our Land and Water released five reports⁶ in October exploring the potential of RA in New Zealand. The reports, by Manaaki Whenua – Landcare Research built on the themes of the earlier White Paper, **Regenerative agriculture in Aotearoa New Zealand**.

What do venison exporters think about RA?

Silver Fern Farms included regenerative agriculture in a suite of sustainability initiatives announced in July 2021. The company

committed to:

- launching its first range of Toitū Net Carbon Zero Certified Beef in the United States in late 2021
- a “regenerative” future
- ending coal use in its processing plants by 2030
- joining the International Science Based Targets initiative (SBTi) by the end of 2021.

Making the announcement, Silver Fern Farms chief executive Simon Limmer noted that “consumer concerns are increasing with respect to soil health, emissions, biodiversity, agricultural intensity, water quality, and the resilience and sustainability of the current food system”.

The company has stated that its initiative will eventually include venison from zero-carbon supplier farms, while suppliers would be invited to voluntarily adopt RA practices.

Silver Fern Farms agribusiness and strategy programme manager Greg McSkimming said the company has done extensive consumer research into influences on buying behaviours for red meat. He told *Deer Industry News* that animal welfare has been a long-standing concern for consumers but in the past few years issues like water quality, packaging waste, biodiversity and climate change have emerged under the general banner of sustainability, which is also a good fit for RA practices.

He said Silver Fern Farms is acutely aware of the compliance pressure on farmers at present and won't be seeking to add to that. “We won't be setting [RA] as a condition of a supply or telling farmers they're doing it wrong and we won't be prescribing what fertilisers they use.”

That said, they were wanting to align RA standards with the new Farm Assurance Plan Plus (FAP+), a higher-level voluntary sustainability standard with three components additional to NZFAP: people, farm and natural resources, and biosecurity. (See more on p20.) FAP+ could use existing data and standards (for example, a Farm Environment Plan), so shouldn't put additional pressure on farmers, he said.

RA was solidifying into a strong trend internationally. For example, McSkimming said five of the world's biggest food retailers, with collective sales of US\$700bn, were openly investing in marketing based on RA products. “Some retailers are already losing business to others who were quick to get RA-generated products in place.”

Multinational food processor and supplier Cargill is supporting farmer-led efforts to convert over 4 million hectares of North American farmland to RA practices over the next decade, including the crops used for feedlot cattle.

McSkimming said RA was portrayed negatively by some, “but it's a lot more than paddocks of sunflowers!”

A survey by Silver Fern Farms of 280 of its suppliers revealed that 80 percent were already engaging in some RA, with 17 out of 24 regenerative practices identified by respondents. He said deer farmers were among those already practising some RA.

McSkimming said using RA practices would help differentiate New Zealand grass-fed meat even further. “Our markets want it. It's too good an opportunity to ignore!”

Alliance Group is taking a more “wait and see” approach to the opportunities presented by RA. Venison sales manager Katrina Allan said regenerative agriculture was “a bit of a buzzword”. Although it was good to be ahead of the game with positive farm

⁴ <https://www.quorumsense.org.nz>

⁵ <https://bit.ly/3BoNUPt>

⁶ <https://ourlandandwater.nz/news/overview-of-regenerative-agriculture-in-aotearoa/>

Regen Agriculture: continued



Multinational food company Cargill is supporting RA practices.

stories and there was likely to be demand for products from RA farms, she said it was still early days and Alliance would wait for more direction from markets.

Andrew Duncan of **Duncan New Zealand Venison** told *Deer Industry News* that it's likely New Zealand farmers are already doing most of what RA farming involves, such as free range rotational grazing, direct drilling and so on.

"Someone from the US once told me they assumed all New Zealand farming was organic! We're certainly closer to that end of the spectrum than we are to the industrial farming overseas."

He said that if it wasn't for the need to spray woody weeds and use tanalised fence posts, New Zealand deer farming would probably tick all of the boxes for organics. Like Katrina Allan, he's cautious about jumping on the RA train just yet. "If the markets are interested then let's see how close we already are [to RA standards]. The last thing we want to do is put more pressure on farmers."

Mountain River Venison director, John Sadler is highly enthused about the potential for RA to add real value to venison from farms that use the methods. "It's very much on our radar," he said.



Mountain River's US partner Force of Nature has built its meat business around a strong RA ethos.

Sadler is adamant that the drive for RA methods must come from consumers and Mountain River is already feeling that demand through its US partner, Force of Nature, who he is linking with New Zealand suppliers.

"They're asking us and we're asking farmers. Consumers are prepared to pay a premium for meat that they know is grown in an environmentally friendly way. If we can meet the standards, they'll pay."

He is also excited about the potential for venison grown under RA in Scandinavia, a growing market for Mountain River.

Just how to certify and verify venison grown under RA is still a challenge, he admits. "If you try and define it too strictly you could strike problems. Science must be a part of it, but consumers call the tune."

While agreeing with others that our systems already align well with much of the RA ethos, we need to be careful. Palm kernel, for example, has been invaluable in drought situations, but consumers would be less impressed if it was just being used to boost production. But overall, Sadler and Mountain River are definitely on board.

First Light sees RA as an opportunity to both add some value to New Zealand products and crystallise the story of what good work New Zealand farmers are already doing.

Matt Gibson, general manager marketing with First Light, agrees consumer awareness of RA is growing.

"In the United States, consumer perception on RA is tied to the juxtaposed large-scale industrial farming that has pillaged the soil of nutrients and destroyed the natural balance of things. RA in the market is the story of this damage being repaired through good farming practices."

Like others, he says New Zealand's baseline of soil quality and farming practices is much closer to the future state that RA farming practices aspire to achieve on damaged ground. "This is the reality we need to communicate to consumers."

He said First Light is now working with its farmers to understand what's already being done, improvements being made and how to measure this practically on farm.

Gibson agrees there is confusion around the definition of RA in New Zealand. Comparing our soil quality and farm practices with the century or more of intensive cropping in parts of the United States is not comparing apples with apples, he said.

"The RA movement was born from areas where soils have been continually depleted of nutrients and carbon, leaving them in a critical state. Regenerative practices are designed to help repair long-term neglect and mismanagement, so when applied to New Zealand farming systems it often causes confusion."

Despite this, Gibson says First Light sees the surge in interest in RA "as an opportunity to showcase the good work our farmers are currently doing, the initiatives and progress being made in the environmental space, and our intention for continual improvement over time".

To make this work he said we need auditable standards for market assurance to ensure there is credibility to claims made in this space. "We're working with our farmers to ensure that these standards are both practical and measurable on farm."

In the third and final instalment of our regenerative agriculture series we'll profile a Canterbury farmer who's been converting to RA over the past few years. ■

Venison flatbread pizza

Homemade pizza is hands-down delicious. This flatbread pizza from **Fresh.co.nz** is easy and quick to make. Topped with sustainable and lean New Zealand farm-raised venison mince and fresh flavours, it's perfect for an easy but impressive family night or gourmet picnic meal with friends. After making this, you'll never want takeout pizza again.

Makes: 2 pizzas • Serves: 4 • Prep: 20 min • Cook time: 15 min

Ingredients

Flatbread pizza dough

- 2 cups self raising flour, plus extra for flouring bench
- 1 cup natural unsweetened yoghurt
- 2 tsp runny honey (optional)
- Generous pinch of salt
- ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
- Water, as needed

Venison mince

- 500g New Zealand farm-raised venison mince
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1 tbsp Italian herb seasoning
- 1 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- Salt & pepper

Toppings

- 1 pot Seasons Gourmet basil pesto with parmesan & roasted pine nuts
- 2 mozzarella balls, torn
- 1 courgette, peeled in ribbons
- Extra virgin olive oil, a drizzle
- Chilli flakes, optional

To serve

- Handful of Superb Herb basil



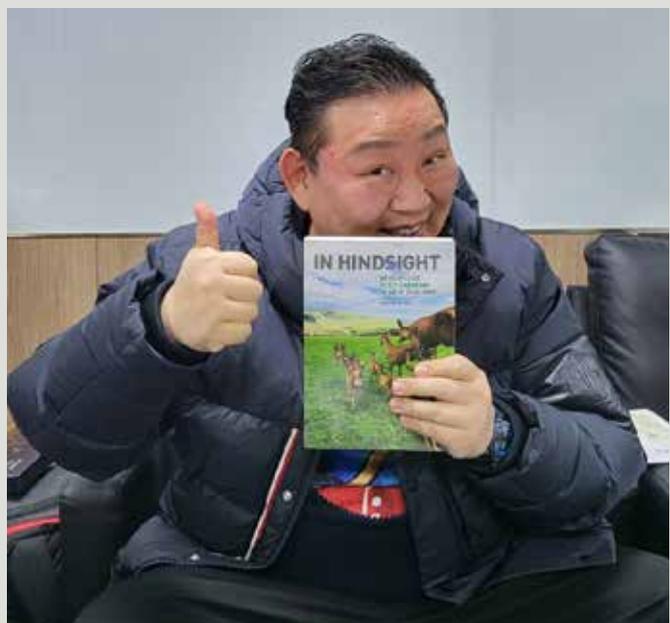
Method

1. Preheat oven to 230°C. Alternatively, use a pizza oven.
2. For the flatbread pizza dough: combine all ingredients in a large bowl and mix well. Add water if needed. Turn out onto a floured bench and knead, then roll out two flatbread pizzas. Transfer to lined baking trays, cover, and leave in a warm place while you prepare the venison.
3. For the venison mince: add oil to a frying pan over medium-high heat. Add remaining ingredients and fry until browned, about 3–5 minutes.
4. Slather flatbread pizza dough with pesto, top with venison mince, courgette and mozzarella. Bake 10–15 minutes, until the base is crispy and the mozzarella is deliciously melted.
5. Serve with fresh basil and chilli flakes (optional). ■

A deery Christmas

DR LEE, THE “deer doctor” shows his appreciation for the gift from DINZ of Lynda Gray’s book, *In Hindsight*, received just before Christmas on 23 December. A strong supporter of New Zealand velvet, Dr Lee has visited here several times. He sponsors a new category in the Deer Farmers Environment Awards and also helps sponsor a branch velvet competition.

Others to receive gift copies of the book included senior executives of Korea Ginseng Corporation, Dr Peter Yoon, the New Zealand embassy in South Korea and other close contacts. ■



Covid-19: Are you prepared?

While Covid has been in New Zealand for just on two years, it's been well contained for most of that time. With the arrival of the far more infectious Omicron variant last month, this is all changing. Health officials and the Government are planning for a steep rise in case numbers but having a highly vaccinated and boosted population is expected to help reduce the impact of the virus.

NONETHELESS, THE EXPECTED rise in cases will reach into all corners of Aotearoa and the deer industry will be among those to feel the effects.

Not only could Covid directly affect farming families and staff, but it will also affect those you interact with and who provide goods and services throughout the supply chain.

Who would help if you can't get your mating mobs ready? Who can help you feed out, shift stock or move the k-lines if you or your staff can't do it? What would you do about your weaners if there was no-one to truck them to the finishing farm? Who would feed your farm dogs and pets? It's wise to think these questions through well ahead of the event.

DINZ has been part of a pan-sector industry working group that has been learning from the experience gained across the Tasman, where Omicron has affected hundreds of thousands. The group is encouraging farmers to put together an "on-farm survival kit" that includes essential supplies that might be needed if your normal retail or service businesses couldn't help for a time.

Farm checklist

There is also an excellent checklist available to create a plan in the event that you are unable to look after your animals, staff and business.

continued on page 21

Standard focuses on environment, sustainability

Sheep, beef and deer farmers now have the opportunity to prove their sustainability credentials with the launch of New Zealand Farm Assurance Plus (NZFAP Plus).

THE STANDARD BUILDS on the existing New Zealand Farm Assurance Programme (NZFAP) and includes a focus on people, farm, natural resources and biodiversity.

Nick Beeby, chair of New Zealand Farm Assurance Inc (NZFAI), says NZFAP Plus is the culmination of three years' work.

"NZFAP Plus is about demonstrating and communicating to New Zealand and an international audience that the New Zealand red meat and wool sectors are farming sustainably and ethically. NZFAP Plus was initially developed by the Red Meat Profit Partnership (RMPP), a Primary Growth Partnership."

Megan Mounsey-Smith, NZFAI General Manager, says the programme has been piloted with 30 farmers and feedback has been positive.

"Many of those in the pilot were already doing some or most of the work and it was simply a matter of recording and providing evidence to support their management practices.

"While NZFAP Plus aligns with some new regulations, it does not replace or supersede regulations. The new programme is an entirely voluntary standard that has been developed to support access to markets internationally."

The programme is aligned with Beef + Lamb New Zealand's

Farm Plan to avoid duplication and provides tools and resources to support farmers in working towards meeting the standards.

To take part in the programme, farmers need to have completed NZFAP, the foundation programme. They can then apply to become a member of NZFAP Plus and will carry out an initial self-assessment to determine what aspects of their business they need to work on. They then have up to three years to meet the required standards and be audited by anASUREQuality independent auditor.

The cost of the certification audit is covered by NZFAI member companies with whom farmers have a relationship.

A handbook has been developed to support farmers as they work towards NZFAP Plus certification, along with other tools and resources. The NZFAP Plus Standard and handbook can be found on www.nzfap.com

NZFAI is an incorporated society that is a collaboration of 16 meat processing companies, 23 wool companies, Beef + Lamb New Zealand and Deer Industry New Zealand. ■

- DINZ has reviewed the NZFAP+ standard and encourages deer farmers to consider it and decide if it is right for their farming operation.
- **Article supplied**

Covid: continued

There's a link to the checklist and much other useful information besides on this DINZ website page dedicated to Covid-19 preparedness: www.deernz.org/deer-hub/support-services/covid-19-information/

The checklist is in four sections:

- 1: About your farm – How it works.
- 2: COVID-19 on farm – the next 14 – 21 days
- 3: Information to assist the Medical Officer of Health
- 4: Personal wellbeing

Velvet

While the 2021/22 velvetting season is all but done, it's imperative that we take all precautions to limit the risk of transmitting the virus through the supply chain. The Covid-19 page on the DINZ website includes advice from the National Velvetting Standards Body on preventive measures and steps to take if anyone involved in velvetting is affected by the virus. This includes what to do if normal labour isn't available, plus good hygiene recommendations.

Meetings

Whether it's a small DFA branch meeting, an Advance Party group or a full-on conference or workshop, deer farmers get together quite a bit. The traffic light settings and vaccination requirements have made this a bit more complicated, but DINZ has put together a handy table to show what the options are for various types of meeting under each of the three (green, orange and red) settings. The options also cater separately for groups that are either 100% vaccinated, or where vaccination status isn't known.

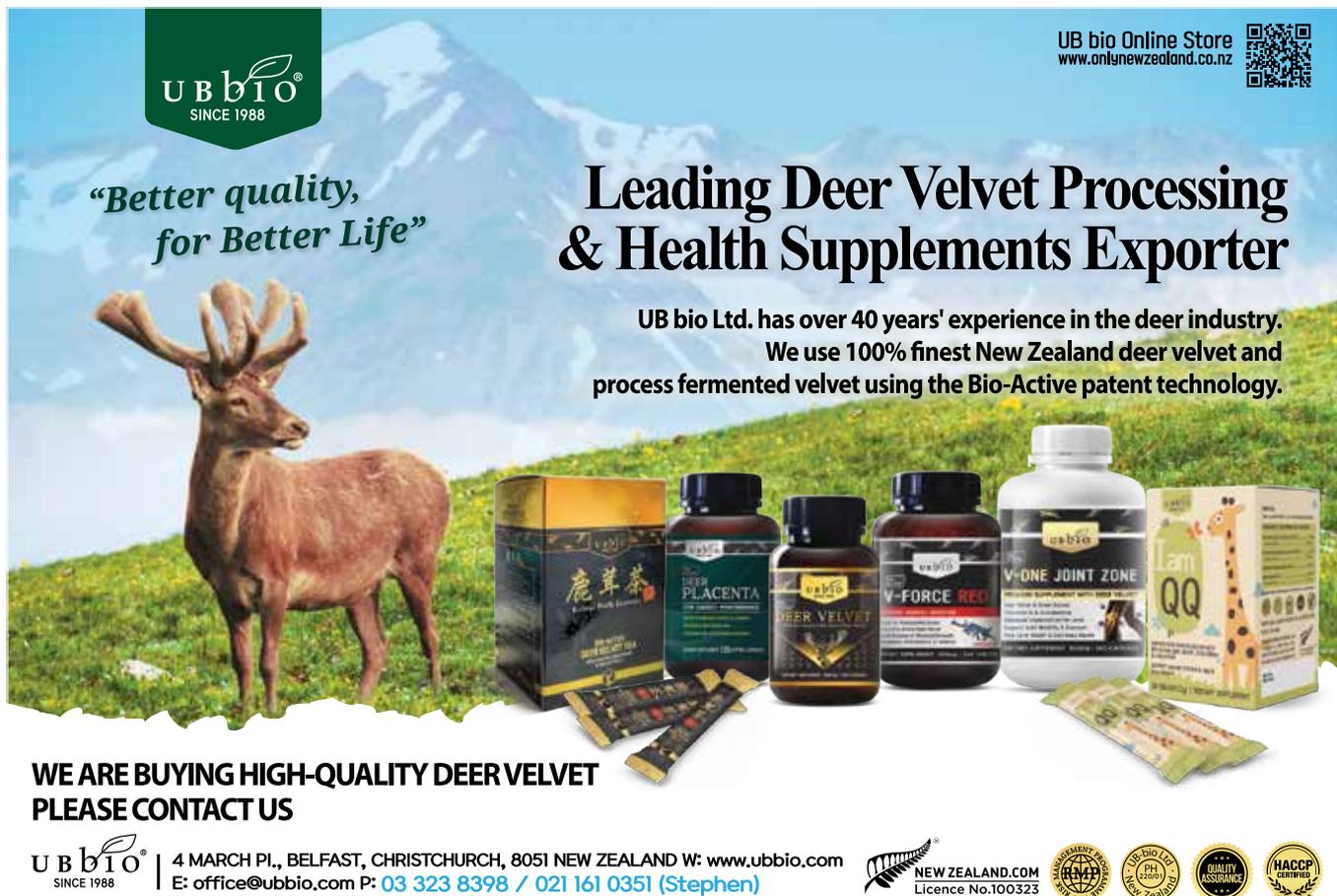
Unite against COVID-19

Vaccination

DINZ recommends Covid-19 vaccination and requires all visitors to its office to be vaccinated. We also recommend that all attendees for DFA or DINZ-run events are required to be vaccinated.

There's plenty of other advice on events and vaccination policy on the Covid page of the DINZ website, plus a useful webinar on Covid-19 measures by DINZ quality assurance manager, Rob Gregory. ■

- www.deernz.org/deer-hub/support-services/covid-19-information/



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Deer writer co-authors history

If you didn't see many articles from our regular industry writer Ali Spencer last year, it's because she was very busy on a different project: a new book examining the past 25 years of the New Zealand red meat sector.

MEETING CHANGE: THE *New Zealand Red Meat Sector Story 1997–2022*, marks the past 25 years for the sector and celebrates the New Zealand Meat Board's Centenary.

Co-authored by Ali Spencer and Mick Calder, and edited by Janet Tyson, the book covers the quarter century of evolution for the organisation and its place in New Zealand's wider red meat sector.

It finds the sector used a mix of collaboration, ingenuity, innovation and sometimes number eight wire to survive and thrive through a period of political, cultural and economic volatility. Key figures to feature include Sir Graeme Harrison, Jeff Grant, Mike Petersen, Tim Ritchie and Craig Hickson.

Spectacular improvements in productivity, farmer–processor collaboration, challenges from demanding markets, development of world-leading farming approaches, science and insights, and cultural changes are all hallmarks of the past 25 years documented in the book.

It is the third in a series of histories about the sector. The first, *Golden Jubilee* (Dai Hayward editor) was published in 1972. *Meat Acts*, co-written by Janet Tyson and Mick Calder, followed in 1999.

"We found a fascinating story, about one of New Zealand's most significant export-earning and employment sectors and its complex, myriad changes over the past 25 years," says Ali Spencer.

"It was an exciting era for the sector, which should be proud

of what it has achieved. It has proven it is capable of handling any change that might be thrown at it, and that there is much to celebrate during the New Zealand Meat Board's 100th year."

The 400-page book will be fully indexed and generously illustrated with photographs, cartoons and drawings. Due to be published by Mary Egan Publishing in mid-2022, *Meeting Change* will be available in hardback and paperback, then later as an e-book.

Postscript: Now that her contribution to the book is wrapped up, we're pleased to welcome Ali back to the fold, contributing articles to *Deer Industry News* – several feature in this issue. ■



Meeting Change authors, Ali Spencer and Mick Calder.

Observer role for Manawatū farmer

Matt Carroll is the third person to join the DINZ board observer programme, following on from Amy Watts and Rob Kidd.

HE GREW UP on Westview Farm, a Manawatū sheep, beef, deer, dairy and beef finishing property and has always been interested in venison production.

Matt has Diplomas in Agriculture and Farm Management from Lincoln, followed by a Bachelor's degree in Agri-commerce from Massey.

He worked with Perrin Ag Consultants for 3 years, helping with financial analysis, budgeting, investment analysis, environmental compliance modelling and farm environment plans. He was also facilitator for the P2P Central North Island Advance Party.

During a year in Scotland, where Matt worked for a farmer who had recently introduced a deer herd, he gained a good insight into the contrasts between UK and New Zealand deer systems. He's now been back as assistant manager on the family farm in Manawatū for over 2 years. "I would like to see deer take a growing role in the business and build the percentage of deer that we have

against the other stock classes," he says.

Off farm he's a volunteer firefighter, is on the committee of the Central Regions DFA, chairs the Pohangina Catchment Care Group and is on the committee of the Manawatū River Catchments Collective. He's also taken part in the DFA's Next Generation and New Faces programmes, and is currently doing the Kellogg Rural Leadership Programme. ■



Matt Carroll, photographed during the 2020 Next Generation programme.

Sales bounce back

by Phil Stewart, *Deer Industry News* Editor

If the sire sale season is a barometer for the health of the deer industry, then maybe, just maybe, the needle's starting to shift in the right direction.

THE OVERALL PICTURE was fewer sales and slightly fewer animals on offer, but good rewards for those who've kept the faith and put up a good catalogue of sires with decent BVs.

While the top price is never a reliable indicator for the whole sale season, it sure can boost morale. This season two six-figure stags were sold on the same day in the same part of Southland. First it was a \$135,000 three-year-old velvet sire from Netherdale Red Deer Stud that created a pleasant buzz around the industry. Then a few hours later Brock Deer added some fizz with \$110,000 for its Lot 1, a two-year-old sire. Brock also had the top grossing sale of the season with an average of \$22,300 and full clearance.

These weren't the only big-ticket sires either. Black Forest Park realised \$70,000 for a trophy sire, purchased by John Scurr, while Peel Forest Estate broke the \$50k barrier for each of its two auctions: \$56,000 for a venison sire and \$67,000 for a velvet sire. Altrive also had a great sale, getting \$51,000 for one sire with a sale average of \$13,396. The stud also sold surplus yearling hinds and velvetting stags at good prices.

It wasn't just velvet sires doing well. At the business end of the venison sector, Clachanburn was delighted with a strong sale that saw the biggest number of sires sold at one auction. Sales with a trophy focus generally didn't do so well, although there were some individual bright spots.

A better indicator than top prices is movements in average prices, year on year. Last season, all but four of the sales we reported had a drop in sale average prices and the tone was a bit gloomy (we won't mention the C-word). This season, all but two sales recorded an increase in average prices.*

The total known offering of sires was down slightly from 672 last season to 628 in 2021/22. This partially reflects the withdrawal of some regulars from the auction circuit, but doesn't entirely capture the move by some to private treaty sales.

Sale-day clearance rate for red sires was 92.1 percent (slightly down on 2020/21). For elk/wapiti the clearance rate was 94.4 percent. This was more usual for this breed and well up on last season's disappointing 85.7 percent clearance rate.

An estimated \$5.85 m changed hands on sale day, nearly \$1 m up on last season but still well down on the \$7.5–\$8.0 m estimated for the two seasons before that. (This figure doesn't capture all private treaty sales, sales negotiated post auction or semen sales.)

The figures in the summary below are mainly courtesy of PGG Wrightson Deer (<http://deer.agonline.co.nz>). *Deer Industry News* has taken steps to verify these numbers with individual owners and has sought additional comments which are included in the table below where received.

*A caveat: in some cases the averages can be skewed by the effects of one very good stag price among a small number sold. If that isn't repeated in a following year, the year-on-year average might fall dramatically, but this won't be telling the whole story.

Another top sale for Netherdale

For the second year running, David and Lynley Stevens' Netherdale Red Deer Stud has sold the top-priced stag for the season, but with a difference: going under the hammer at \$135,000, this year's top seller fetched more than twice last year's – that was a Harlem son that went for \$56k.

David Stevens always knew this year's Lot 1 was a special stag but was delighted with the price. The 3-year-old Bronx son cut a whisker over 10 kg and has a Mature Velvet Weight BV of +3.59 kg. He cut 6.66 kg as a two-year-old.

The stag was bought by a South Canterbury syndicate comprising the Pearse, Hood and Roberts families and will initially be at the Pearses' Trewarlet Station.

David is sanguine about letting such a top stag go, but that's because he has another good 'un coming through the ranks that he will keep. The two-year-old, also a son of Bronx and with McCaw also in his heritage, has already cut 7.2 kg.

Having Covid precautions such as requiring vaccination certificates, and keeping people separated from the velvet on display, caused no dramas for this year's sale, David says.

Reflecting on the industry's progress he noted that 20 years ago his average three-year-old head was only 4 kg. "Now it's 8.26 kg!" He says you definitely need to be prepared to ride out the bumps.

"In 2002 we grossed \$380,000 at our sale. Three years later it was down to \$70,000. You have to be in for the long haul."

But as the years have ticked over, the stud is cementing its position as a go-to place for good velvet genetics. David says the whole velvet industry has evolved more than he'd ever imagined, especially in the way products are now processed and presented. "We've been proactive in areas like welfare and food safety and we'll need to keep that up. China buying directly is making a difference too."

He's optimistic for the future of both velvet and venison, despite the recent challenges for the latter. Part of the industry's resilience he puts down to the strong connection between deer farmers and their animals. "People really enjoy their deer. You don't get that with other stock classes." Equally important are the strong bonds between people throughout the industry. "Looking around at our sale I could name virtually everyone in the room. Those connections really make a difference." ■



David Stevens: Delighted with result for top stag.

continued on page 24

Sire Sales: continued

ALTRIVE RED DEER
13 January, Waipounamu, Southland

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------|--------|
| Stags sold | 24 of 25 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$51,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$13,396 | +21.5% |
| Other animals sold | 49 surplus yearling hinds, ave \$1,576, top \$5,000 47 velvetting stags, ave \$1,667 | | |

Comment

Thank you to all those who attended the sale this year and a huge thanks to all those taking part on BIDR. In these times it is great that we can all still be part of an auction, despite the circumstances! We were very happy with the line-up offered for sale and they sold well. See you next year, hopefully with a little more freedom.



Altrive had another strong sale this year.

ARAWATA DEER FARM
13 January, Pine Bush, Southland

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------|-----|
| Stags sold | 19 of 20 2-year-olds on offer | | |
| Top price | \$14,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$7,221 | +7% |
| Other animals sold | 31 yearling hinds, ave \$958, top \$3,200 29 velvetting stags, ave \$1,388 | | |

BLACK FOREST
11 January, Outram

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------|------|
| Stags sold | 13 of 23 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$70,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$10,962 | +86% |
| Other animals sold | 8/8 hinds sold, average \$1,962, top \$5,800. | | |

BROCK DEER
12 January, Merino Downs, Gore

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|----------|------|
| Stags sold | 30 of 30 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$110,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$22,300 | +73% |
| Other animals sold | 27 of 27 yearling hinds; average \$2,380, top \$7,000 85 of 85 2-year velvetting stags; average \$1,280; top \$1,700. All semen straws sold, top \$1,100 | | |

Comment

Top-priced sire was a Bluerock son and was bought by Kelly and James Hudson. Thanks very much to all bidders and purchasers who partook in the sale. Great to see the deer going to all parts of NZ. And a special thanks to Adam Whaanga, Tony Pryde, Craig North and the rest of the Rural Livestock team who did an amazing job.

CLACHANBURN ELK
18 January

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Bulls sold | 71 of 73 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$5,800 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$3,683 | +22% |

Comment

We're as proud as punch with our sale, which saw the most sires sold in any single sale in NZ this year, and accounted for nearly half the country's terminal sires sold at auction. By the end of the day we had a complete clearance. All the bulls we sell are commercial terminal sires. Our average price is in line with the current venison schedule. When the schedule was \$10 our average was about \$5k, so the proportionality is still about right. We'd like to see the schedule starting to creep back up though! We're really looking forward to seeing the Deer Select across-breed BVs coming available. It's hard to promote your sires without these, because you can't make meaningful comparisons between breeds.

DEER GENETICS
9 January, McKeown Rd, Woodbury

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|----------|-------|
| Stags sold | 12 of 12 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$35,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$14,545 | +6.3% |
| Other animals sold | Hinds: 18/18 sold, ave \$3,642, top \$18,000 | | |

FAIRLIGHT STATION
8 December

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|-----|
| Stags sold | 13 of 17 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$5,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$3,292 | +7% |

FOREST ROAD FARM
10 December on farm, Gwavas Road

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------|------|
| Stags sold | 21 of 21 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$14,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$7,238 | +20% |
| Other animals sold | 50/71 yearling hinds: average \$922, top \$2,500 35/35 8yo velvetting stags, average \$920 | | |

Comment

We sold another four stags post auction, maintaining the sale average price. There was a total clearance of the yearling hinds after the sale, with a final average of \$830/head. Really pleased with the line up of extremely clean traditional velvet sires. Bidr worked extremely well, especially in the uncertain times we had in front of us and we are really looking forward to what we'll produce for our clients in the years to come!

FOVERAN DEER PARK
8 January at Foveran

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Stags sold | 46 of 50 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$12,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$4,000 | -31% |

Comment

Results were back on last year.

LITTLEBOURNE
17 January, Winton

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|-----|
| Bulls sold | 21 of 21 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$6,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$3,530 | +1% |

LOCHINVAR WAPITI
16 January, Te Anau

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|------|
| Bulls sold | 20 of 20 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$10,500 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$5,155 | +27% |

NETHERDALE RED DEER
12 January, Balfour, Southland

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|----------|------|
| Stags sold | 24 of 24 3-year sires on offer | | |
| Top price | \$135,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$20,042 | +33% |
| Other animals sold | 77/77 2-year old velvet stags, ave \$1,677. 50/57 13-month hinds, ave \$1,984, top \$3,400. | | |

Comment

A very pleasing result with a total clearance of stags. The top stag was a Bronx son that cut 10.02 kg as a 3 year old. He was bought by a South Canterbury syndicate. This was the second year of using Bidr, which worked well, although most of the bids were coming from in the room. The Covid precautions with vaccine certificates worked fine. Numbers at the live event were down from the usual 250 or so to about 180, but overall bidding support was strong. (See also separate article on p23.)



The 10 kg head from Netherdale's Lot 1 that caught bidders' eyes.

PEEL FOREST ESTATE
15 December: 3-year Forrester sires (English/German venison genetics)

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Stags sold | 55 of 55 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$56,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$10,027 | +8.5% |

Comment

We are very happy with how this sale went on a very wet day. The quality we put up keeps on improving year after year and this shows with many repeat buyers. Our top two prices were \$56k to Wilkins Farming and \$29k to Melior. It's humbling to have studs come and buy our genetics for their own breeding programmes. Thanks to all the buyers and underbidders for a very successful sale.

PEEL FOREST ESTATE
9 January: Velvet sires

| | | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------|------|
| Stags sold at auction | 23 of 25 on offer | | |
| Top price (sale day) | \$67,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$14,409 | +14% |

Comment

We were very pleased with the style of velvet we presented this year with clean, traditional velvet on offer. Top price of \$67k went to Tom Cruse. Lot 3 passed in at \$41k as he is valued higher in our opinion. He will remain in the stud as a pivotal pure Warnham, crossing well with our Windermere bloodlines. Thanks to all the buyers and underbidders for another successful sale.

continued on page 26

Sire Sales: continued

RAINCLIFF STATION: Velvet sires
10 January, Pleasant Point

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| Stags sold | 25 of 27 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$11,000 | | |
| Average | \$4,508 | | |
| Other animals sold | 7/7 hinds, ave \$850 103/131 velvetting stags, ave \$800. | | |

RAINCLIFF STATION: Venison sires
10 January, Pleasant Point

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------|--|
| Bulls sold | 25 of 27 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$10,000 | | |
| Average | \$4,508 | +15.4% | |

ROTHESAY RED DEER
10 January, Darts Road, Methven

| | | | |
|---------------------------|---|-------|--|
| Stags sold | 8 of 12 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$23,500 | | |
| Average | \$8,937 | +143% | |
| Other animals sold | 6/6 hinds, average \$1,400, top \$2,300 36/41 velvet stags on offer, average \$928 | | |

RUAPEHU RED DEER
8 December, 37 Pukenua Road, Taihape

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|-------|--|
| Stags sold | 36 of 36 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$17,000 | | |
| Average | \$7,561 | +7.6% | |

Comment

Great bench of buyers most of whom have been buying stags at the sale for the 20 years we have been holding an auction.
The top price stag was a standout by our own sire Mataroa out of a first fawner, with a W12 BV of +30.3 kg, a weaning weight BV of +21.7 kg, a Carla BV +48 and a sale day weight of 253 kg.
The temperament of the line was also noteworthy with them all standing quietly during the auction.
There were plenty of compliments about the stags overall which was also very encouraging.
It looks like the venison schedule has turned a corner and everybody is back in business.



Ruapehu Red Deer had a complete clearance of its venison sires.

SARNIA
Private Treaty

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--|-------|--|
| Stags sold | 12 of 14 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$10,000 | | |
| Average | \$5,000 | -7.4% | |
| Other animals sold | 24 of 24 hinds on offer, average \$1,200 | | |

Comment

Happy with the result in current environment. Currently winding down operation in preparation for leaving the industry after more than 40 years' involvement.

TIKANA WAPITI
17 January, on farm at Browns, Winton

| | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------|--|
| Bulls sold | 14 of 19 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$20,000 | | |
| Average | \$8,607 | +20.5% | |

Comment

Bulls sold to farms throughout the country. Thanks to our loyal clients and welcome to a number of new purchasers. Private treaty after the sale has seen complete clearance.



Tikana's Lot 3, Prophecy, set a NZ 4 yr velvet record @ 21.5kg EW Supreme. Purchaser was David Morgan, Raincliff Station.

Deer Industry News
2022 Publication dates

There will be four further issues of *Deer Industry News* published in 2022, to be mailed on the following dates:

29 April
15 July
3 October
16 December

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WILKINS FARMING 14 January, South Island: 65 Harvey Road, Athol

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|--------|
| Stags sold | 48 of 52 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$33,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$7,800 | +16.4% |

Comment

Our 13th annual on-farm sale on 14 January once again saw an excellent turnout of purchasers from all over the South and North Islands. We extend thanks to those who return year after year, and to our first timers.



Sires on view at Wilkins Farming's South Island sale in January. There was good demand for the venison sires with the sale average up 16.4 percent on the previous year.

We were thrilled with the stags we presented at this sale. The animals had some of the biggest 15-month weights and eye muscle area (EMA) results our stud and the industry have seen. We're extremely proud of the results we are achieving within these specific traits.

A sale highlight was Lot 15 fetching \$33,000. He was sired by Maple, going back to Rock Me and hind 350 Red. This well-presented and high-performing stag is packed with proven breeding and was hotly sought after. The sale was really successful for us, selling 48/52 on the day with the balance sold privately.

We eagerly await the opportunity to present another impressive line-up at our 2023 sale, hopefully on the back of better farmgate pricing for venison and continued confidence in velvet.

WILKINS FARMING North Island: Private Treaty

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|---------|-------|
| Stags sold | 25 of 25 on offer | | |
| Top price | \$11,000 | | |
| Average | % change from last year | \$6,500 | +9.4% |

Comment

This year, due to the Covid challenges, we chose to sell these animals via private treaty because they were already based at Te Marie in Hawke's Bay.

Within the offering we presented our first sons of both Big Don and Mortlach, two of our stud's new European sires. We had a good response from our regular buyers and achieved a complete clearance. Prices were consistent with last season's sale.

A special thanks to George and Laura Williams for hosting us at Te Marie.

Important decisions around weaning

Consider the following diseases when seeking to minimise death post-weaning, while maximising weight gain.

1. Yersiniosis

Yersiniosis is the number one cause of death in weaners¹. Most, if not all fawns will be exposed to *Yersinia* bacteria, which are widespread and survive well in soil, water and pasture. Carrier animals also shed bacteria in faeces. Weaners are most at risk and usually become infected in their first autumn or winter by eating or drinking faecally contaminated material.

The time between first infection and death is often very short. Often weaners are just found dead. The main sign is green watery diarrhoea, usually turning dark or bloody. Affected deer tend to separate from the group, becoming rapidly dehydrated and weak. Sick animals shedding bacteria significantly expose other fawns. Once an outbreak of yersiniosis has started, it is too late to vaccinate.

Vaccination with Yersiniavax® can prevent losses. Vaccination enhances rather than substitutes for good management and will help prevent a serious epidemic by reducing disease spread through a mob. Timing is important; ideally the course will be completed before weaning, a stressful event. Weaners can be vaccinated from 3 months of age.

2. Leptospirosis

There are several New Zealand research papers on leptospirosis in deer, especially on the effects of *Leptospira* Hardjo. Eighty percent of deer herds are permanently infected, regardless

of where you farm². Leptospirosis enters farms through deer, sheep or cattle harbouring leptospires in their kidneys, or in contaminated water³. Leptospirosis is zoonotic, meaning farmers and staff are also at risk of illness.

Hardjo infection in deer also reduces growth rates. Massey University research showed on farms with evidence of Hardjo infection, deer vaccinated with Leptavoid®2 at weaning grew on average 10g/day faster (120 vs. 110g/day) to slaughter compared with non-vaccinated deer in the same mob⁴.

Weaners should be first vaccinated at about 3 months followed by a booster 4–6 weeks later; this can occur at the same time as their Yersiniavax vaccinations. Talk to your vet early about a vaccination programme suited to your farm requirements. For more on vaccinating your deer visit:

- Article supplied

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ACVM No's: A6151, A1948. Schering-Plough Animal Health Limited, Phone: 0800 800 543. www.msd-animal-health.co.nz NZ-YER-220200001.

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¹ Audige et al (2001) Disease and mortality on red deer farms in New Zealand. *Vet Record* 2001; 148: 334–340

² Ayanegui-Alcerreca et al. (2010) Regional Seroprevalence of leptospirosis on deer farms in New Zealand. *NZVJ* 58 (4) 184–9

³ Wilson et al. (1998) Observations of leptospirosis in farmed deer. *NZVJ* 46, 131–9

⁴ Subharat et al. (2008) Leptospirosis: A Massey University research update. In: *Pro.Deer NZVA*, 115–20

Nominations for 2022/23 year

INDUSTRY POSITIONS FOR the NZDFA (Executive Committee and Selection and Appointments Panel) and the DINZ Board are open for nominations.

We encourage anyone who would like to be involved in the industry at another level, or knows of someone who would be a great representative of the industry, to consider nomination for these roles in 2022.

Vacancies in 2022 have been created by retirements by rotation for:

- NZDFA Executive Committee: Two vacancies – **John Somerville** (not seeking re-election) and **Karen Middelberg** (seeking re-election).
- NZDFA Selection and Appointments Panel: Three vacancies – **Patrick Boyd** (not seeking re-election), **Stephen Borland** (extraordinary vacancy; not seeking

re-election) and **Leith Chick** (seeking re-election).

- DINZ Board: Two producer-appointed vacancies – **Ian Walker** and **Mark Harris**.

Further information

If you would like to talk to someone in confidence, please contact Lindsay Fung, lindsay.fung@deernz.org or 027 668 0141.

For the constitutional information, visit:

www.deernz.org/industry-positions

Nomination forms can be requested from the NZDFA office (phone: 04 473 4500; email: lindsay.fung@deernz.org) or can be downloaded from the website address above.

Nominations must be received at the DINZ office (email: info@deernz.org or fax: 04 472 5549) by 5.00pm Friday, 25 March 2022.

Awards and competitions

Matuschka Award 2022

NOMINATIONS ARE CALLED for a farmer or farming entity who or which has made a significant ongoing or lifetime of contribution to deer farming and the NZDFA, in particular at Branch level.

The award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and core spirit of deer farming. "Traffic light" settings permitting, the award will be announced at the Deer Industry Conference dinner on the evening of Wednesday 10 May 2022 in Wellington.

As recognition of the unsung heroes at Branch level, it is appropriate that the award itself be presented to the 2022 winner at a special mid-winter function in the recipient's Branch.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate Branch.

It is not a requirement of the award that the nominee be aware that a nomination has gone forward.

Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA no later than 5.00pm on **Monday 2 May 2022**.

Contacts

- Cenwynn Philip, 027 326 1213 cenwynn.philip@deernz.org
- Lindsay Fung, 027 668 0141, lindsay.fung@deernz.org

NZ Deer Industry Award 2022

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

For nomination forms: **deernz.org/deer-industry-award**

2022 MSD Photographic competition

MSD ANIMAL HEALTH has kindly agreed to continue its sponsorship of the annual deer industry photographic awards, with some great prizes on offer. The awards will again be a feature of the 2022 annual conference with entries viewable on a large monitor. (If an in-person conference is not possible, entries will be displayed on the DINZ website and results published online and in *Deer Industry News*.)

Judging will be coordinated by the *Deer Industry News* editorial group with results including Judges' and People's Choice awards.

Only the digital photos and entry form/fee are required, not physical prints.

The entry fee is \$5 per photo entered.

Rules and entry form are available from via the DINZ website at **www.deernz.org/MSD-photo-competition**

Alternatively contact Rebecca Norling, Lindsay Fung or Phil Stewart (details below).

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

Rule reminders

- This competition is for **amateur photographers only**. Professional photographers, who derive income from photography, are not eligible to enter.
- Deer photographed for this competition must be **farmed deer** in a farm environment.

Judging criteria

Key criteria are:

- technical aspects (focus, composition, balance, etc.)
- conveying core values including best practice for animal and relevance to the modern deer farming industry
- the spectacular or wow factor.

Closing date for entries is Monday 2 May 2022.

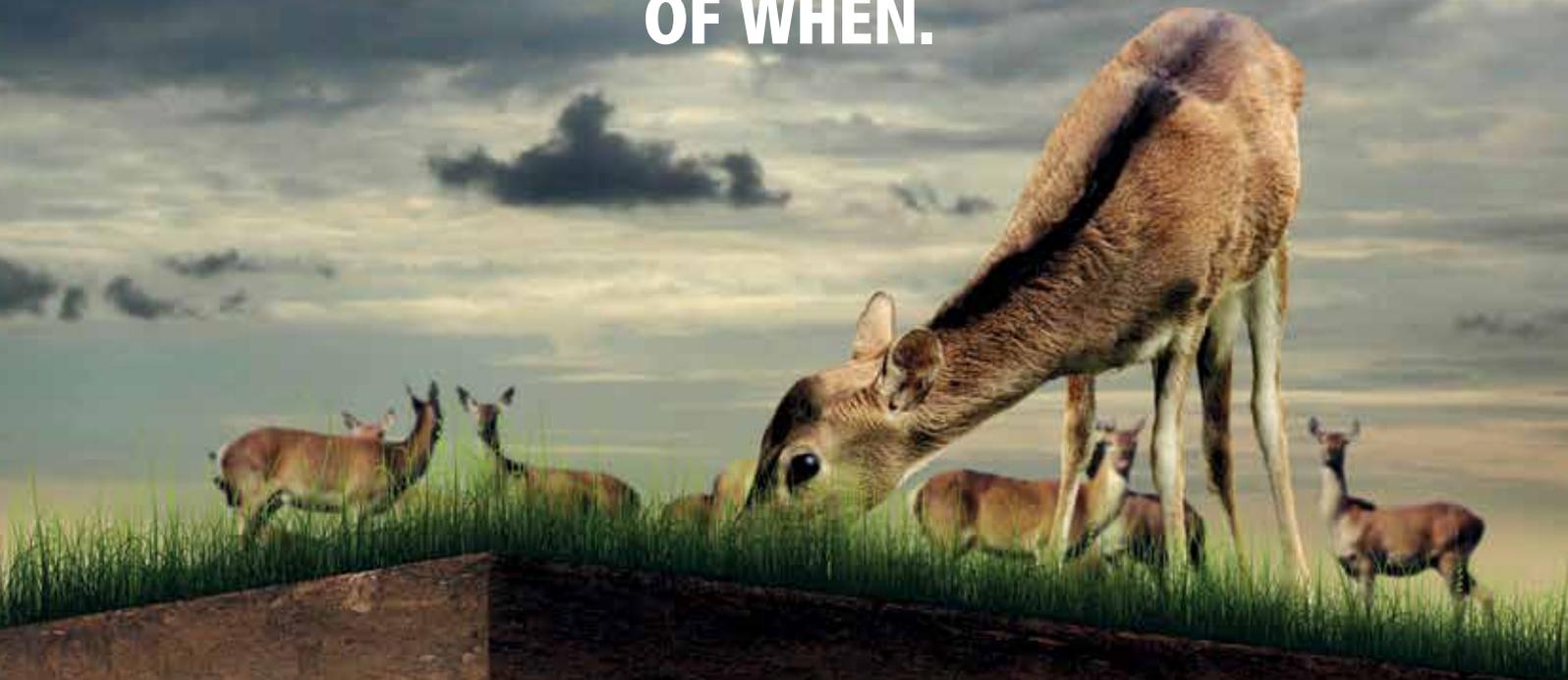
Contacts

| | |
|--|--------------|
| phil@wordpict.co.nz | 021 620 399 |
| rebecca.norling@deernz.org | 04 473 4500 |
| lindsay.fung@deernz.org | 027 668 0141 |



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VACCINATE NOW BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.

Yersiniosis is a highly infectious disease that strikes weaner deer during late autumn and winter.

Commonly triggered by stressors such as - poor nutrition, changes in feed, yarding, transport and bad weather - it rapidly leads to bloody scours and death.

To protect your herd from Yersiniosis, vaccinate now with Yersiniavax®

