

Executive Committee Report

Velvet rumours and misinformation

Well, the velvet grapevine is in full swing, rumours of pricing, containers on the water, grading guidelines and who is to blame for the current situation consume most deer farming conversations. Throw in an extreme weather event down south, maxed out overdrafts, unacceptable pricing, public spats on Facebook and you end up with a toxic situation that will benefit none of us.

The NZDFA's sole purpose is to advocate for farmers interests and be a conduit of information. We provide a voice to communicate your concerns and issues and actively work to advocate for solutions on your behalf. The NZDFA's doesn't make industry decisions, but instead offers a grassroots perspective so the decision makers can be informed.

We currently find our industry playing the blame game, with it being everybody else's fault but our own. This is natural given the before mentioned pressures combined with the fact no velvet farmer is likely to make a profit from velvet this season. The current situation is predominantly down to an oversupply of the heavy weight non-traditional velvet that has more than saturated the Korean market, coupled with market manipulation by unsavoury traders.

The NZDFA executive has been communicating the below messaging since March to draw

attention to things we can influence and help with forward planning.

- Quantity and quality of velvet produced, both individually and as an industry.
- Minimise OG1 and HV1, get an understanding of what the company you supply wants
- Cut NT heads shorter, don't push the tops!
- Get informed!! Talk to a range of farmers regarding prices being paid rather than trusting what a buyer tells you. There was evidence of different pricing structures and payment timing between clients of some buyers last season.
- Be aware once you have taken a deposit you have no control, only promises!!
- The choice of who you sell to and when (within reason), deal with reputable buyers, who has skin in the game versus a plane ticket in their back pocket?
- Industry grading specifications are only guidelines, each company grades according to their individual market's needs. If you aren't happy consider changing.
- Diversification – businesses reliance on velvet income alone is high risk.
- Timing and dispersal of surplus velveting stags, space is tight post velveting with growing numbers of stags

and limited capacity due to trucking window and processing limitations. What would be the effects on your business if those stags can't be killed??

The points around deposits, weak selling and high exposure to velvet income is especially important in a season like this one. Once velvet has left your property an exporter could then ship that overseas to prove to overseas clients they can provide volume at a predetermined price. The talk around possible containers on the water is officially unverified to date and only adds noise to the disrupters messaging. This provides oxygen to players that share no interest in the long-term sustainability of our industry while reinforcing the need to align yourself with a reputable buyer who you trust and share the same values and vision for the future of our industry.

The level of pricing released by a South Island buyer this season is completely unacceptable and the \$30 deposit offered by three companies is no better when unaccompanied by competitive pricing, so be careful and make sure you trust the person you've given your velvet to. Neither fairly represents the quality product you as producers spend twelve months preparing and delivering to the market.

For those questioning the value and quality of market indicators provided by DINZ over the past few years you have a valid point. I understand the desire to be positive; however producer's levies should deliver on point messaging to enable good business decisions

at ground level. The NZDFA executive has and will continue, to press this point.

Moving forward a coordinated industry wide approach will be required to rectify our current situation. The export licencing initiative still in development could be part of the solution. This will require farmer, exporter and parliamentary support to be achieved. This concept is an attempt to create a level playing field of expected business behaviour, while encouraging investment on our shores and the building of cohesive marketing strategies offshore.

I appreciate that the current season is going to test us in a multitude of ways as it did in the early 2000s when traders who are currently trying to manipulate the market successfully achieved his goal. But collectively we are stronger and by working together we can realise the true value that premium quality New Zealand Velvet should command. This in turn will ensure we are once again the vibrant and profitable industry we strive to be.

Cheers,

Evan

Velvet Export Licensing – Status Update

Here's the latest update on where export licensing stands and what's ahead.

The Export Licensing Working Group (ELWG) has been making steady progress in working

through key focus areas. Recent efforts have zeroed in on licensing requirements, such as adherence to grading standards, control and ownership of an RMP facility, and developing a cohesive marketing approach to ensure New Zealand velvet stands out in international markets.

Our guiding principle is unchanged: *export licensing should not create new compliance costs or audits for farmers*, nor allow additional costs to creep back onto the farm. The day-to-day work for farmers stays the same.

The benefits of export licensing are tangible, particularly in markets like China, where consumer choice is vast and competition is fierce. For velvet to thrive, overseas buyers need confidence in our product. Through export licensing, we offer that extra layer of assurance and transparency, making it easier for international partners to invest in new product development, sales, and marketing for New Zealand velvet.

Meanwhile, the DINZ executive continues to have regular discussions with the Ministry for Primary Industries on export licensing. In addition, the executive team has been engaging informally with other horticultural groups already operating under export licensing, seeking practical insights and lessons from their experiences. This collaboration is helping to shape a fit-for-purpose framework for the velvet sector.

The goal remains ambitious: *to have export licensing operational for the 2026/27*

season. For this happen new legislation needs to be introduced to Parliament and thereafter a vote needs to take place amongst farmers and exporters. Stay tuned for further updates as the ELWG continues its work and DINZ keeps advocating for a system that supports New Zealand velvet's reputation and market success.

But wait! There's more...

Velvet Export Licensing – What's it all about?

DINZ has produced a two-page summary of the concept and process. This was sent to all deer farmers last Friday (7 November). If you missed it, you can [download it here>>](#)

Farming's Full House: the benefits of diversifying with sheep, beef, and deer – Part 2

In last month's DFA Stagline we reported on the second mixed species field day, held at the Burden family's farm, Longbrook, in the Hawkes Bay. These field days are jointly organised by BLNZ, DINZ and NZDFA branches and the latest was held at Westview Farm in the Manawatu two days ago and hosted by Matt Carroll (farmer and BakerAg consultant).

A more in-depth article is planned for the December issue of Deer Industry News and hopefully Country Wide, but here a few photos from the day.



Farmers from Taihape, Manawatu and Hawkes Bay in attendance.

Around 40 people turned up to Westview in Pohangina Valley on a warm but overcast day with passing showers. Following the same format to the Hawkes Bay event, Matt ran through the financial benefits of a diversified operation as well as matching stock classes with the farm's productive potential (and environmental constraints).

Similar to Longbrook, Westview is a challenging farm: steep hill to rolling land and very little area for cropping. It also borders the Ruahine ranges so there is added consideration of wild animals and stock losses as well as boundaries that are impractical to fence off. The farm is a truly diverse operation: sheep, beef, dairy, venison, velvet (a new focus), forestry and carbon farming. No cash crops are grown as the focus is on providing sufficient feed for the stock.



You can't beat the Manawatu on a good day! Up near the boundary and the clouds.



The brains trust. Ginny Dodunski talks about all things parasites.

A few other snippets from the day:

- Don't fully stock the deer unit (allow for a one third "buffer")
- In practical terms all three livestock classes (sheep, cattle deer) can graze without cross contamination of parasites.

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- Forestry provides a better return than sheep on LUC class 7 land but needs to be close to the road. No pines have been put into carbon forestry.



Shane Carroll talks cropping, irrigation, dairy and flood management.

Back at the woolshed First Light put on a nice feed of venison patties. There were plenty of questions and discussion throughout the day and for the sheep and beef farmers in attendance hopefully a good appreciation of opportunities to expand their business as well as the support available from the NZDFA and industry.

As this is now a busy time of year for deer farmers, there will be no more field days for the rest of the year. BLNZ, DINZ and NZDFA will review future field days but if branches are interested in this topic please get in touch with Lindsay Fung (lindsay.fung@deernz.org).

New Parasite Management Calendar – Now with Deer-Specific Advice!

Deer Industry NZ, in partnership with Beef + Lamb NZ, has developed a new Parasite Management Wall Calendar for 2026, now featuring deer-specific information alongside sheep and cattle.

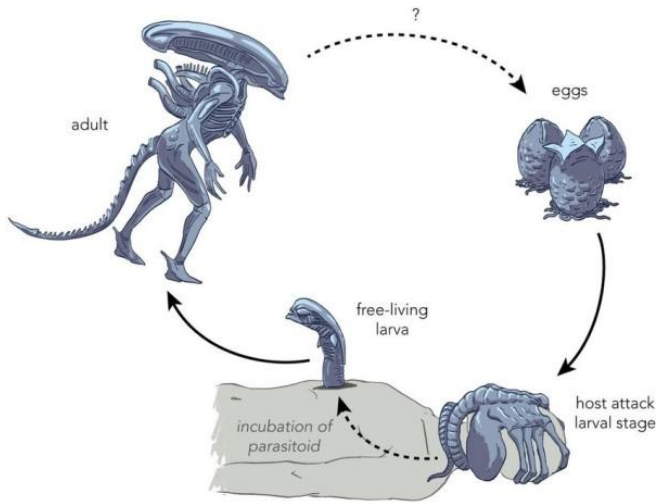
Designed as an educational tool, the calendar provides:

- Insights into parasite biology and the main parasite species of concern in New Zealand
- Practical management and monitoring tools for your farm
- Awareness of risk factors for drench resistance
- Monthly prompts to help plan and review parasite control activities

Because farm systems and environments vary across the country, the monthly prompts are intended as guides rather than fixed dates for action.

Calendars will soon be distributed nationwide to vets, facilitators, and NZDFA branch chairs who have requested copies — so keep an eye out for yours!

If you'd like your own copy, [click here to download](#), or you can request a hard copy from the Integrated Farm Planning team at ifp@deernz.org



Beyond the farm gate – Waikato Branch Field Day

Tucked away between native bush on the road from Rotorua to Tirau stands the Duncan Venison Processing Plant, established in 2001. Last month ten eager members of the Waikato DFA branch took the opportunity to tour the operation whilst it was in full swing.

After a welcoming cup of tea and a biscuit, the Duncan team kicked off with a presentation outlining kill sheet components, NAIT requirements, animal welfare expectations and other interesting things for farmers to consider when sending in deer. The group then dressed in PPE, and Group Operations Manager Troy Allison and Assistant Plant Manager Jamie Lane guided them into the busy plant explaining all processes that occur in both the slaughter floor and boning rooms.



Getting ready for a trip to Europe or North America

After viewing the process from start to finish boning room team leader Darin Pirika (who has worked at the plant for almost 20 years) demonstrated a full carcass breakdown, identified individual and groups of muscles and how showed how they are prepped to meet specifications for customer orders.

“The visit to the Duncan plant was enlightening even for an old hand around processing plants, the team did a great job, and we appreciated them taking the time out of there day to inform the group on the topics involved at the plant. At the end of the day, we are all part of the team to ensure we have a sustainable and profitable industry” - Grant Dixon.

Noticeboard

DINZ Board Observer applications open for 2026

DINZ is currently taking applications for the Board Observer role for 2026. A board observer typically sits in on board meetings and provides input but does not have the voting rights of a board director.

The role would suit someone who is interested in leadership/governance opportunities in the New Zealand deer industry; has experience or interest in the deer industry in some capacity; can add value to discussions and topics for deliberation; is available to attend the five annual DINZ Board meetings, along with some out-of-session meetings; and can demonstrate a career progression that would indicate a commitment to further career development.

Applications close 14 November 2025, with the selection process then leading to the successful candidate inducted to the DINZ Board in February 2026.

For more information: Notification of vacancy – DINZ Board Observer

2026 Elections and Appointments

Next year several NZDFA positions will be vacant by rotation:

- Two Executive Committee members
- Two Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) members
- One DINZ Board director

Key dates are as follows:

- 12 February: Nominations for positions open (published in DFA Stagline, eNews, Deer Industry News)
- 2 April: Nominations close
- 21 April - 5 May: Voting period for Executive Committee and SAP positions
- 13 May: Election results announced, DINZ Board candidates address the NZDFA AGM (5 minutes each)
- 9 and/or 10 June: DINZ Board candidate interviews. Successful candidate informed.
- 22 July: Successful appointee attends DINZ Board meeting

More information will be available in 2026.

You're Welcome!

An email received from the Tauranga Boys College top Senior Agricultural and Horticultural Science student for 2025.

Dear Mr Fung,

I am writing to sincerely thank you for awarding me the NZ Deer Industry Trophy and the \$200 prize for placing first in Level 3 Agricultural and Horticultural Science. It is an honour to be recognised by the New Zealand Deer Industry, and I greatly appreciate your support of students in agricultural studies.

Your generosity not only motivates me to continue striving for excellence in my studies but also encourages future students at our

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College to pursue learning and achievement in agricultural and horticultural science. I am grateful for your investment in our education and the opportunities it provides.

Thank you once again for this recognition and your support of students like me.

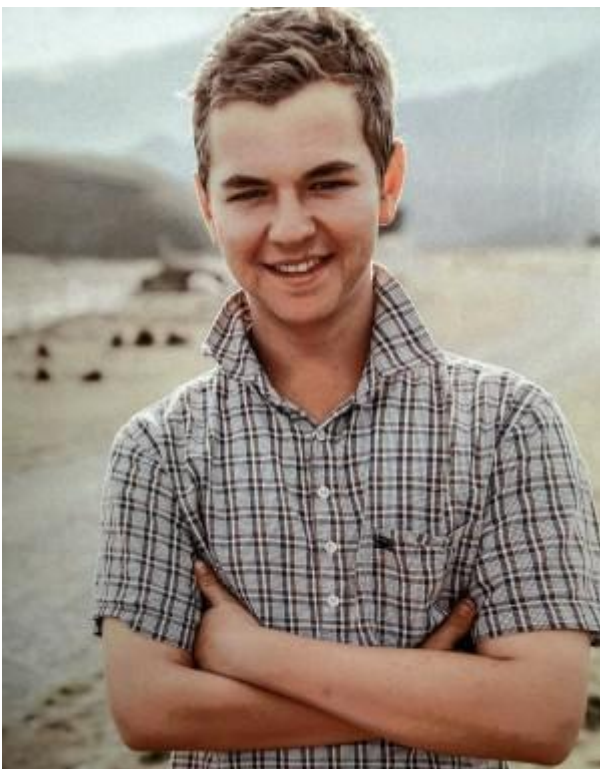
Yours sincerely,

Tann Mason

Note: The prize is sponsored by the Bay of Plenty Branch and DINZ. We have reminded the school about this for the future

Obituary

Lochie Longman-Roberts 16/11/2005 – 23/10/2025



The South Canterbury North Otago DFA would like to acknowledge the recent tragic passing of young deer farmer Lochie Longman- Roberts

Lochie had a strong family history of active involvement in the DFA, through his father Hayden Roberts and grandparents Don and Isabelle

Lochie left a lasting impression on those who knew him, with many referring to his enthusiasm for farming and life in general, with a real passion for deer. This was indicated prior to his passing when he was nominated as a junior judge for the upcoming Branch velvet competition

Employer Mark Tapley, from Peel Forest Estate, adds: "a respected and much liked young member of our staff. Lochie had a cheeky personality, massive enthusiasm and passion for deer as well as a very strong work ethic."

The South Canterbury North Otago DFA wishes to extend our heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Lochie

Velvet Competitions

We are aware of the following velvet competitions over 2025/26:

- Hawkes Bay: 20 November 2025.
Contact – Laura
Billings hbdeerfarmers@gmail.com
- Central Regions/Taihapa-Ruapehu: 22 November 2025, Coach House Museum (Feilding). Contact – Craig Hocken
chocken@inspire.net.nz

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- SCNO: 28 November 2025, Phar Lap Racecourse. Contact – Brad Travers btravers@hotmail.co.nz
- North Island's: 29 November 2025, Te Awamutu Sports Club. Contact – Craig Hocken chocken@inspire.net.nz [Entry form here >>](#)
- Kaipara: 7 December 2025. Contact – Dave Chisholm davechis369@gmail.com
- Tasman/Marlborough: 7 December 2025. Contact – Amanda Brooks amabrooks@gmail.com
- Nationals: 11 December 2025. Contact – Jane Campbell southlanddeerbranch@gmail.com. [Entry form here >>](#)
- Elk Wapiti Society: 7 February 2026. Contact – Glen Whyte elkwapitinz@gmail.com

Please also check the [events page found here>>](#)

Stag Sales Calendar

Upcoming stag sales for Dec 2025/Jan 26 can be viewed [here >>](#)

IFP – Final Hurrah

DINZ's funding from MPI to go toward farm planning is set to finish in April 2026, so time is running out to get in on the action.

More than 200 farmers have taken part in a DINZ-coordinated workshop on topics such as freshwater, animal health, pest and disease management, and more.

"The workshops are very well run by experts who also have practical farming backgrounds. The one-on-one tuition was invaluable in helping steer us through the process...the generous support from DINZ to engage in these workshops makes taking advantage of the opportunity a no-brainer. It places the whole deer industry in a very favourable position as we face challenges coming our way in farming."

Dave Lawrence, Southland (freshwater farm planning workshop)

As part of the integrated farm planning programme, DINZ is also coordinating 1-on-1 assessments to help those farmers who may have farm plans in place that need updating or for those who want to explore NZFAP accreditation.

"The rapid assessment conversation over the phone, regarding on-farm audits and what we need to have prepaid in order to pass, was an engaging one. It got me thinking more and more about our live documents with NZFAP, and I have updated a few records since our phone call. Great to know there are people out there willing to help farmers pass on-farm audits."

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Ru Gaddum, Kereru (1-on-1 assessment)

Visit the [events page](#) or email ifp@deernz.org to register for a workshop or 1-on-1 session near you. If there is no workshop planned near you, still reach out to the IFP team via the email listed, and we can look to organise something in your region if the numbers stack up.

Work Placement

Fred is currently a first year agricultural student at the Royal Agricultural University and hopes to work on a deer farm during their work placement and although it is a couple of years until it is time for their work placement (it is a 15 week work placement between my 2nd and 3rd year) if anyone can assist please get in touch with Fred via email at nicholasmmarshall4@gmail.com

Joke of the month

In a national park, a woman stopped to watch a deer.

A man walked over to her and said, "This is red deer, *Cervus elaphus*, it's pleased to meet you."

Then she watched him continue to other visitors and say the same thing.

She catches up with him and asks, "Why are you doing this?"

The man responds, "The ranger told me this species hadn't been introduced here."

Events

- [North Island Velvet Competition - Te Awamutu, 29 Nov](#)
- [2025 National Velvet Competition and Awards Night - Invercargill, 11 Dec](#)
- [Freshwater Farm Planning workshop - various locations from 21 Jan - 25 Feb](#)

If you have an event that would be of interest to the deer farming industry, please email info@deernz.org with details.

Visit the deernz.org website to view information about these events.