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Executive Committee Report

In South Canterbury the mornings in particular have chilled off fast, although we are still getting some good days in between rain. The temperature has bought the stags on fast, so hopefully combined with good feed and well-conditioned hinds we are due for a nice early conception. By and large the whole country seems to be in a pretty good position feed-wise and prices are holding well. The arable farmers have definitely seen plenty of challenges as have those areas with wind and excessive rain proving challenging.

The first sales of weaner deer are being completed across both islands by all accounts, with prices lifting modestly, in line with what is being seen with beef and sheep. This is just reward for those breeders that have stuck with it over some tougher years.

This week I got to Southland for another mixed species field day run in partnership with Beef + Lamb NZ as part of its farming for profit programme. Matt Carrol from BakerAg shared his knowledge and analysis of Wakefield farm's (Dipton) impressive performance and the benefits that running multiple species bring to their whole operation.

There has been a lot of discussion in the deer industry around wild deer and both the benefits and risks these pose for our farmed deer industry. As farmers the best we can do is keep our joint integrity by correctly identifying these animals that end up on farm so the correct

checks and measures can be put in place for age, meat quality and residue testing. The new feral-now-farmed category is a way to still gain value for these animals, but we also need to protect our reputation for the premium products we farm specifically.

Lastly with NZDFA elections for the Executive committee coming up soon it's a good time to have a think about whether you have time to give the industry and help drive our collective future forward. Any of the current executive members are more than happy to connect and discuss the role and benefits.

Although there are always challenges, it seems farming in general is in a pretty good place at the moment across all species. Hopefully this will allow you all some well-earned time and space to clearly consider how to take your businesses forward.

Tom MacFarlane

NZDFA Executive Committee

NZDFA Vacancies 2026/27 year

Positions on the NZDFA Executive Committee and Selection and Appointments Panel, and the Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) Board are now open for nominations.

We encourage anyone who would like to be involved in the industry, or knows of someone who would be a great representative of the

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industry, to consider nomination for these roles.

Nominations for the 2026/27 year

NZDFA positions

There are four NZDFA elected positions up for nomination as they become available by rotation (appointment by nomination and election, if necessary). A further elected position is open for nomination due to a mid-term retirement – this position will have a term of one year.

The following members are up for re-election or retirement:

- William Oliver (SAP, elected 2024) – intends to seek re-election
- Dave Lawrence (SAP, elected 2024) – intends to seek re-election
- Karen Middelberg (Executive Committee, elected 2024) – not seeking re-election
- Evan Potter (Executive Committee, elected 2024) – intends to seek re-election
- Mark McCoard (Executive Committee, elected 2025) – not seeking re-election

This is a chance to shape the association's future and have a say in the industry as well with all positions responsible for appointing our four producer representatives to the Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) board.

Deer Industry New Zealand – NZDFA appointed board member

The DINZ board guides the actions that DINZ is taking to accelerate the industry recovery and give confidence that we have a sustainable and profitable future.

There is **one Producer**

Representative position vacancy due to retirement by rotation from the DINZ Board:

- Patrick Boyd (DINZ Board Producer Rep, appointed 2023) – intends to seek re-appointment

Nominees will have an opportunity to address the NZDFA AGM on 13 May 2026 and will be interviewed in June by the NZDFA SAP to decide on the best candidate.

Interviews for the DINZ board position will be held on Tuesday 9 or Wednesday 10 June (this will be confirmed as soon as possible).

Have your say in the industry's future and consider a nomination for the Deer Industry New Zealand board.

Nominations

All nominations must be received at the DINZ office (email: lindsay.fung@deernz.org) by 5pm, Friday 3 April 2026.

- Nomination forms and further information are [available here >>](#)
- If you would like to indicate your interest, or talk to someone in

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confidence about these positions, please get in touch with Lindsay Fung (lindsay.fung@deernz.org or 027 333-6551).

- If you would like to discuss the positions with a current Executive Committee or SAP member to get an understanding of first-hand experience, [please get in touch](#).

Rising Stars 2026

This year's Bayonet Rising Stars marked the fourth year that Waipa has hosted the competition, back at the Te Awamutu racecourse. Judging was carried out on Friday 6 March and covered 78 entries across 19 classes. This was down on last year, but the quality remains as high as ever.

While numbers were down it was good to see more young farmers attend – some just looking and others with entries. Hopefully this trend will continue, and we'll see more entries from the industry's next generation in the following few years.

Results-wise this seemed like 2025 déjà vu with Crowley Deer dominating the hard antler classes though pushed hard by the Adlams. Bucking the trend was Doug McCall and Andrew Scurr in the 4-year hard antler class, bumping Crowley Deer down the pecking order. And as with last year, honours went to the South Island for all velvet classes and the

fallow hard antler: Congratulations to Deer Genetics, Brock Deer, Dalmore Deer and Mayfield Deer. And a big thank you to all the competitors and Bayonet as the new competition sponsor.



The master at work. Hub Hall judging the goods



But wait! There's more...



MC Mike confers with the boss



And the (supreme) winner is... Crowley Deer

The brochure will be out soon and can be downloaded from the NZDFA website

Environment field day



It's not often we get the opportunity to showcase our smaller branches but on Wednesday 22 April we get to congratulate and celebrate Poverty Bay's Charles and Jane Rau (Matawai Deer Park) who took out the deer industry's Duncan NZ Environment Award last year.

The award, "for vision and management whilst mastering a demanding environment" was presented by Andy Duncan at the 2025 Queenstown conference and was received by Evan Potter on behalf of Matawai. The field day will conclude with Charles and Jane receiving it in person from Duncan NZ.

The judging panel noted "exemplary teamwork actively sharing environmental goals, encouraging new ideas and solutions that include new technology" and the "well-maintained QEII covenant bush and newly planted wetlands demonstrating a strong commitment to enhancing biodiversity".

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Attendees will get to hear and see these and more during the farm tour.

The day will start at 12 noon with a barbecue (venison of course), followed by a farm tour (4WD vehicles only please) and finishing up with the award presentation and socialising at 3:30 pm

Registrations are now open at [Events - Deer NZ](#).

Big Tick Day Out



Buck Norris fears nothing.... except ticks!

Staying in the upper North Island and following closely from Matawai Deer Park's field day is a Waikato branch initiative – the Big Tick Day Out – on Friday 24 April.

Ticks which are becoming more widespread in NZ can cause stock discomfort, damage to velvet/coproducts and in severe cases anaemia, weakness and death of young fawns. This event brings some of the country's best tick experts together to share their knowledge, tips and tricks.

Kicking off with a Duncan NZ sponsored fallow and red deer venison BBQ lunch at 12 noon and facilitated by Ginny Dodunski (veterinarian, Waipa Advanced Party Facilitator and Wormwise Programme Manager), this is shaping up to be a big day out indeed.

There will be a wide range of speakers:

- Dr Luis Carvalho Riveron (AgResearch)
- Colin McKay (Head Vet, Elanco)
- Richard Hilson (Research Advisory Panel)
- Velvet (CK Import) and venison (Duncan NZ) processors
- Farmer experiences (Kaipara branch)
- Panel of experts Q & A session
 - Including speakers above plus
 - Ian Scott (Vet & Tick Tag supplier)
 - Annika Ferris (Technical Expert, Agritrade)

There are also limited numbers of the 2026 Wormwise deer parasite calendar (very big and shiny!) to giveaway and a competition to guess the number of ticks on a stick of velvet.

Registrations are now open at [Events - Deer NZ](#).

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Next Generation 2026

The NZDFA Next Generation Programme is in its 14th year of running and this year it's the North Island's turn to host our young farmers and industry professionals. Bay of Plenty and Waikato DFA branches will be jointly hosting the two-day programme that combines farm visits with exposure to the deer industry beyond the farm gate.

While the venues are still being confirmed, the draft programme* is as follows:

Thu 6 August

- Tour of Gallagher (Hamilton)
- Raroa Red Deer Stud
- Oraka Wapiti
- Dinner and accommodation in Rotorua

Fri 7 August

- Venison Processor
- NZ Supreme Deer
- Workshop session – finishing mid-afternoon to allow flying out of Rotorua airport (*subject to change depending on availability and capacity of venues. A final programme will be published as soon as possible)

Registrations are now open and can be found at Events – Deer NZ

This year attendance will require a registration fee of \$75 (inc GST). This helps cover costs for running the programme (alongside

sponsorship). The registration fee will also provide NZDFA membership for the 2026-27 financial year (ending 31 March 2027) – that's almost eight months membership for half the annual subscription.

Please note attendees who are already NZDFA members will not need to pay the \$75 registration fee.

Seeka now available for use

Seeka, our new AI-powered knowledge tool, is now available for use on the Deer Hub section of the DINZ website. Seeka is designed to put decades of deer research right at farmers' fingertips.

Built specifically for the deer sector, the tool works in a similar way to other generative AI tools: you ask a question in plain language, and it generates a clear, practical answer.

The difference is what sits behind it. Every response is drawn from past deer industry research, including on-farm trials, science programmes, technical reports, and industry-funded projects. That means the advice is grounded in evidence and based on New Zealand conditions and real-world deer farming systems.

For farmers, the focus is simple: knowledge for gains on farm. Whether you're looking for insights on nutrition, genetics, animal health, reproduction, velvet or venison production, environmental performance, or management decisions at key times of the

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season, Seeka helps you quickly find relevant, reliable information without trawling through reports or archives.

Think of it as a smart, always-on extension of the industry's research programme, helping turn proven science into practical action.

To take it for a spin, head to the website.

Noticeboard & Events

Noticeboard

- [NZDFA Matuschka Award](#)
- [Deer Industry Award](#)
- [MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition](#)
- [Industry Conference 2026: 13 and 14 May - save the dates](#)
- [New DINZ podcast features DRL](#)
- [Thank-you to Farmers \(Bill Symons\)](#)
- [Jokes of the month](#)
- [North Island farmers - is Deer Select for you?](#)
- [Deer Industry News - Advertise with us](#)
- [Kellogg programme Applications open](#)

Events

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

- [MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition](#) - Entries close 28 April
- [Freshwater Farm Planning workshop](#) - April 8th & 22nd, Darfield
- [Deer Industry Conference 2026](#) - 13 May, Palmerston North

NZDFA Matuschka Award

The NZDFA Matuschka Award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and core spirit of deer farming.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate Branch or can be direct to the convenor. There is no set format or form to nominate someone. The nominations can be informal, from individuals or Branch nominations or industry groups, or have a nomination endorsed by the branch or other individuals and it's not necessary to advise a candidate of the nomination.

For more information, [click here >>](#)

Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA via lindsay.fung@deernz.org by 5 pm, Friday 3 April 2026.

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Deer Industry Award

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

The selection panel is made up of three judges who are the nominees of the following organisations: Countrywide Magazine (NZ Farm Life Media), The NZ Deer Farmers' Association (Inc) and Porter Holdings Ltd.

[An nomination form for 2026 can be downloaded here >>](#)

MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition

2025 winner: Leeza-Marie Pratt - Sunset roar

It's time to get snapping again! Gather up those great shots you have buried, or head out on the farm with your camera and enter the MSD Animal Health/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition.

Entries close 5:00pm, 28 April 2026

[See the event page for more details >>](#)

Industry Conference 2026: 13 and 14 May - save the dates

Following on from this year's Queenstown conference, planning is underway for the 2026 conference with the North Island's turn to host.

The venue is the Awapuni Racecourse, Palmerston North – the same venue that hosted the DINZ Tech Expo a few years ago. Registration will open in March. The conference format will follow:

Tuesday 12 May:

- NZDFA Branch Chairs meeting

Wednesday 13 May:

- NZDFA AGM
- Industry Conference
- Awards Dinner (Photo competition, Matuschka and Deer Industry awards)

Thursday 14 May:

- Central Regions DFA Field Trip

[Find out more information here >>](#)

New DINZ podcast features DRL

While down at the International Deer Biology Congress, DINZ visited the DRL lab and sat down with the team of Simon Liggett (lab manager) and Sara Ferguson (operations manager) for a chat. We also invited

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congress attendee and North Canterbury vet Georgie Martin to join to offer a vet's perspective. Our conversation covered the recent parasite PCR testing research done by DRL in partnership with the Bioeconomy Science Institute, as well as the lab's work, both historic and current, on Johne's disease and Tb.

[Listen to the podcast here](#) (head to online version of Stagline for the link.)

Media release:

[Promising new test to detect parasites in farmed deer | Bioeconomy Science Institute](#)

(head to online version of Stagline for the link.)

A belated thank you and appreciation.



(Te pohue cyclone damage) Photo Credit: Bill Symons

Three years since Cyclone Gabriel and we have almost completed our recovery of our two properties.

I wish to firstly thank HBDFFA for their massive help with recovery and especially Evan Potter who coordinated the help which we needed after the Cyclone.

Our gratitude is extended to firstly the two Southlanders who came to our Te Pohue property and did the repairs to secure the boundary fencing to stop the deer from escaping.

Our sincere thanks go also to Southland Deer farmer Mike Wilkins for the massive post drop at our property.

Also Mike Thomas and son for bringing their great dogs up and chasing most of the escaped stags back into their paddocks at Te Pohue.

Our thanks also go to the help we received from Steve Annon PGG and partner Ann-Marie. Carl Lynch S.F.F. for their massive efforts with temporary fencing and the clean-up of our house on Springfield Road.

Unfortunately, we lost all our Puketapu velvet stags and most were shot by non-caring people on rivers or land adjoining our property.

Lastly, great thanks to Scott Graham and his worker who came from Galatea to do the refencing.

To others who helped, and I have not named but you know who you are, thank you.

Sincerely
Bill & Hiromi Symons



Bills lost Stag on Sugarloaf. Photo Credit: Bill Symonds

Jokes of the month

Why did the scarecrow win an award? It was outstanding in its field.

Why couldn't the bike stand up on its own? It was two-tired.

North Island farmers - is Deer Select for you?

Recording your deer for velvet or growth? doing parentage? Getting hard to keep track of everything?

Deer Select has an interactive programme where you can record your data and work with it on your own computer.

If you are interested in a visit and discussion to see if this might be helpful to you, I have plans to be in the North Island in Mid-April and again around conference (13-14th May) and would love to visit as many interested deer farmers as possible to make the best use of airfares and travel costs.

Please get in touch by phone or email to talk or set up a visit.

Sharon.mcintyre@deernz.org or 027 634 9387



Kellogg Programme Two 2026 applications are open.

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