

A close-up photograph of a deer's head, focusing on the eye and the base of its antler. The antler is covered in velvet and is in the process of growing. The background is a soft, out-of-focus natural setting.

AP story competition 2016: HBAP winter crops

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Why the change was needed?

- several farms were using winter crops for the first time:
kale, oats, rape, swede and kale mix
- some were using crops already
- all were looking for more efficient winter feed management systems
 - post-roar stag feeding (five farms)*
 - MA hind wintering (four farms)*
 - R1 deer wintering (one farm)*
- many local farms are moving away from supplementary feeding and use of self-feed silage stacks
 - cost, environmental, time*
- expanding use of crops and re-grassing systems

The process of change...

- collective desire for change and better understanding of yield and feeding regimes
- support and resources from within the Advance Party provided confidence and motivation to make change: “all in it together”
facilitator organised and undertook the cutting and measurement
- all members were happy to have crops measured and for all data and photos to be shared within the group (and the industry)
- an “economy of scale” with everyone learning at once with shortened period of experimentation

the group was very focussed

What was done.

- all crops that were to be fed to deer were measured on AP farms
- management options were discussed one on one at the time of cutting
- all data was collated and shared by email
- some farms reassessed feeding system early on
- winter AP meeting at Maranoa was specifically about the crop programme and winter feeding experiences
 - involved local PGG agronomist Hamish Best for expert input*
 - group suggested that MA hinds be crop fed, not on silage stack*
 - group required follow up information on crop residuals at Maranoa*
- follow up discussion around success of cropping
 - Maranoa velvet weights up 650grams and bull policy change*

What was the outcome?

- all farms repeating the project in 2016
enthusiasm
- understanding of feed budgeting for crops, protein levels, ME
- use of DINZ website for feeding data
stags at Maranoa are bigger than those in Wellington!
- change is inevitable and ongoing:
*varietal change (Kestrel v. Sovereign)- information sharing
management change (break sizes, stock class)*
- Hamish Best: only two clients outside the HBAP measured winter crops in 2015
- deer farming experience shared with local agronomist: big positive
- national exposure for AP in Deer Industry News and CountryWide
two cover stories!