

DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 12 • December 2004 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA



Don't fence us in!
DoC plans opposed - p19



*Deer Industry News wishes
all readers a Happy
Christmas & a far better
2005!*

Where the wild things are.
Special foldout
map - p21



Also in this issue:

- Fresh fields for MJ
- NVSB fee change
- Velexco in Korea
- Deer Farmers of the Year
- Asher on efficiency vs dogma
- DINZ poll results
- Farmers' role in research
- AHB funding proposal clarified



**DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND**

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association



Supply holding back a recovery

It is difficult to be upbeat given the current state of both our venison and velvet markets. However, producers can take real heart from the huge level of activity underway right now to assist immediate prospects but also importantly to ensure the industry is well positioned for a sustainable future once the inevitable recovery kicks in.

On the venison front, there are reports of a relatively strong chilled season and strong leg sales, though demand and prices for middles and forequarter cuts are soft. The industry's promotional programmes, like Sommerkampagne, not only boosted sales in the summer season, but raised venison's profile, encouraged retailers to stock venison through the game season and beyond. For the first time we are hearing reports of good post-Christmas demand at retail for products at current frozen prices. However, the high dollar and other big-picture factors, like Germany's soft economy, continue to play a major role.



Your exporters and their in-market partners are investing heavily in market development supported with Deer Industry New Zealand activity (see article later in this issue on current promotions) and doing a good job of managing the high levels of production. Despite high production, there are no reports of stocks and product is moving well through to consumption. However, the market does not want more product at this time. Rather than making supply decisions based on today's prices – which are heavily impacted by the high kill – hold back if you can, although this is easier said than done for some.

A recovery simply can not happen at current kill levels in spite of demand-creation activity.

The start of the velvet season has been a major disappointment for all producers – not only because of the low velvet prices being achieved, but also because of the possible flow-on effect for venison markets of a high stag kill. While a certain level of reduction in the velveting herd is seen as positive for returning some balance to supply and demand, too large a cull could be detrimental for venison in the short term and possibly negative for New Zealand velvet's position in the market in the longer term. If New Zealand velvet production is reduced by too much, competing suppliers will be encouraged to lift their own production, displacing New Zealand product in the market.

Velvet prices are roughly 30-40% down on last year with many of the main grades down more than 50% on the 10-year average prices for those grades. Main drivers of current conditions include:

- the slow Korean economy, sluggish consumer spending and low consumer confidence
- our continued reliance on Korea as a market for an estimated 90% of all New Zealand exports
- global supply greater than current demand (limited to Korea) and New Zealand supply (550 tonnes) roughly 15% – 20% higher than market demand indicates
- our lack of access into important potential markets – Taiwan, China, Japan, into which we can diversify. The recently announced ban on velvet into China (where access for processing and re-export was previously in place) is a further challenge

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Deer Industry News is published by Deer Industry New Zealand and incorporates the former *Stagline* and *Market Report*. *Deer Industry News* is published five times a year, in the months of February, April/May, June/July, October and December. It is circulated to all known deer farmers, processors, exporters and others with an interest in the deer industry. The opinions expressed in *Deer Industry News* do not necessarily reflect the views of Deer Industry New Zealand or the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association.

Circulation enquiries: Deer Industry New Zealand,
PO Box 10-702, Wellington, Ph 04 381 6014,
Fax 04 382 9143, Email info@deernz.org

Editorial and advertising enquiries: Words & Pictures,
PO Box 27-221, Wellington, Ph 04 384 4688,
Fax 04 384 4667, Email din@wordpict.co.nz

Cover photograph: Warnham & Woburn Photographic Competition 2003; "New Born" by Trevor Studholme

MJ bids farewell to the industry

Many in the industry will have already caught up with the news that Deer Industry New Zealand CEO, MJ Loza, is moving to a new job with Fonterra in the New Year. In the following article, MJ reflects on his time with the deer industry and ventures a peek into the future.

After 10 years with the deer industry I am really looking forward to new challenges in my role with Fonterra. However, I am leaving the deer industry with a real mixed bag of emotions. I am disappointed to be leaving at a time when things are so difficult. I am encouraged by the industry's response to the recent poll, but disappointed at the low level of participation. I am optimistic about the industry's future, passionate about the industry's products and frustrated, all at the same time, by our collective inability to change some of the fundamentals which remain at the core of the industry's issues.

However, overwhelmingly positive thoughts take over when I reflect on the last 10 years and look forward to think about the potential the industry is about to unleash.

People

Without a doubt, a highlight of working for the deer industry has been the people I've had the pleasure of meeting and working with. I would especially like to thank all of the people I have worked with at the GIB/DINZ – both staff members and Board Members, current and past, and the range of farmers, vets and other experts we've roped in from time to time to help us out on all manner of projects.

My experience with people in the industry has covered a broad spectrum. On one hand I have been welcomed into deer farmers' homes all over the country and received countless calls and emails of thanks. On the other hand I've been held against a wall by the throat in the wee small hours at a national velvet competition and been offered an armed guard in Seoul because of protesting Korean deer farmers. In the end, all of it a pleasure, and memories I'm sure I'll never forget.

editorial from p3

- the continuing restricted market access into Korea and the high level of unofficial trade
- the relative strength of the New Zealand dollar versus a weak USD and Korean Won
- high levels of stocks carried over from last season and high levels of illegal product in the market (e.g. banned Canadian velvet due to CWD and banned product forms in Korea being smuggled into Korea).

At the time of writing we are:

- meeting with all major players in the velvet industry to discuss these issues and what can be done to improve things. Discussion includes ways to manage volumes onto the market, and possibly reduce New Zealand volumes through quality control
- in discussion with venison companies about managing the potential impact of the velvet situation on venison markets
- met with producer, venison and velvet company representatives at the end of November to discuss supply management issues. For velvet, quota, single

Partnership

I think we all need to remember that the industry's partnership between sectors is still young – 5 years ago two halves of the industry were barely talking. We have made dramatic improvements, but like any successful relationship, we need to keep working at it. Chucking it out the window at the first sign of tough times is not a good long-term strategy, but all parties need to benefit if the partnership is going to be sustainable. It is easy to throw stones, but wouldn't that energy be better spent helping the whole industry move forward together?

Repositioning venison

I believe that the industry's exporters and their in-market partners are doing a fantastic job in the market to reposition venison. Some very exciting things are happening with your products through the expertise, investment and networks brought to the table by your exporters and their in-market partners.

Consumers first

In whatever we do, we can't lose sight of the needs of the consumer. I believe the deer industry has been exceptionally

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desk and export licensing options were all discussed. Reporting on outcomes is imminent.

- working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, MAF and Embassy officials to attempt to resolve China's current ban on velvet imports
- raising these issues with the Minister and seeking his assistance to resolve access issues and assist the industry.

We will be reporting to the industry through *Market Report* and *Deer Notes* so you are kept informed of any developments in a timely manner.

I hope it is clear that we are continuing to do absolutely everything possible to help improve conditions with an exceptionally high level of activity underway, at all levels.

From the Board and Executive at Deer Industry New Zealand we wish you a safe and Merry Christmas and a happy, productive and prosperous 2005. 🍷

Clive Jermy
Chairman

good in this regard, but we can't let the focus drift. Increasing demands for environmentally sustainable and natural production systems and increasing scrutiny of animal welfare practices are a fact of life – we need to make sure we can consistently meet these needs and credibly prove we can. To ignore these needs, or dismiss them as the whim of people who don't understand farming is to ask for trouble – those people buy your products.

Passion and innovation

In looking for examples of passion and innovation, it is easy to point to the distinguished list of our industry's pioneers – people with vision who conceived of a farmed deer industry and made it happen. However, innovation and passion can't stop there. The industry needs a new wave of innovation – people striving for excellence to meet continually changing consumer needs and improve on-farm productivity. "More of the same" is not an option. The industry would never have started if that was the attitude and the industry won't realise its full potential until the new pioneers tackle the next set of challenges in the industry's development. Do the industry's pioneers proud by continuing their example.

"New Zealand Agriculture Inc."

The deer industry punches well above its weight in terms of its representation on a wide range of issues – especially as our work on producer issues has grown in size and

From the Chairman

MJ leaves the Board having lifted the bar considerably in terms of the Board's professionalism, outputs and capacity that come from his tremendous skills and energy.

He is admired and respected by all sectors within the industry and all those outside the industry, be it government and like organisations through to the marketplace.

While we are all disappointed to lose him, MJ was always destined for "higher office" and we can only be grateful for the time the industry enjoyed his services.

I know the entire industry joins your Board in wishing MJ and Sarah well for the future, and while we watch his future success he will be keeping an eye on our progress and prospects.

Clive Jermy

...and from Deer Industry News

The team from Deer Industry News would also like to join with the deer industry in wishing MJ all the best for the future and thanking him for his tremendous support in creating and developing this publication. MJ has an eye for detail, a flair for communication and a respect for deadlines that would put many professional journalists to shame. But they are only a few of his many talents. The deer industry's loss is indeed the dairy industry's gain!

Phil Stewart, Ali Spencer, Sue Miller and Arvind Sardar

sophistication. However, many of the issues facing the deer industry are shared with other agricultural industries – the need for a robust biosecurity system, traceability, water rights, JD, land access, Tb and market access to name a few. We need to make sure we continue to work alongside other organisations as much as possible, not only to avoid duplication and minimise cost but, more importantly, so that New Zealand Agriculture Inc. develops a strong, united voice. We need to make sure those in our cities understand that "what is good for New Zealand agriculture is good for New Zealand".

The future

I see a strong future for the deer industry based on the quality of its products and its consumer-driven attitude and focus.

I believe today's prices are a factor of today's high level of supply and do not reflect the real value of the industry's products which will be achieved when supply and demand fundamentals come back into line. It seems that supply decisions are being made today based on today's supply-suppressed prices, which seems self-fulfilling and self-defeating. Market returns will look significantly different when supply and demand come

back into balance. That's when the real benefit of today's significant investment in demand creation will be evident.

That's enough from me except to thank Sarah, my wife, for her support and tolerance, and to wish all the best to you and yours for Christmas and a much brighter 2005. See you again soon. 🍷

MJ



Change to NVSB annual fee and compliance audit

NVSB members will have noticed two major changes to the programme this velvet season: an increase in the annual fee and an increase in the NVSB's audit target. This article offers some background to the changes and explains why they were necessary.

NVSB fee

The NVSB fee was originally set in 1994 at \$61.88 by the Animal Products (Develvetting) Regulations. Under the Regulations, the NVSB was unable to change the fee. Although not initially an issue, a decade on, in 2004, the NVSB fee was unable to keep pace with inflation, effectively limiting what the NVSB could fund. Increasingly, the NVSB has relied on extra funding from Deer Industry New Zealand to perform its activities. This is less than ideal, diverting funds from other industry-good functions, such as velvet market development, promotion and research.

With the removal of the Regulations in July, the NVSB Constituent Bodies (DFA and NZVA) agreed that a fee increase was necessary in order to redress the balance between member and industry funding of the NVSB. Initially, a \$120 fee was proposed; however, this was revised downward based on acknowledgement of the industry-good components of the programme and the belief that farmers would reject a doubling of the fee after 10 years. Following intense discussion, the Constituent Bodies agreed on the new annual fee of \$90, as this gave a more even split between member and industry funding, while meeting the costs of an increased audit programme and participation in velvet removal issues.

Increased audit target

Last year, the NVSB annual compliance audit revealed an increase in the amount of non-compliance with programme requirements. As any non-compliance is unacceptable to both the NVSB and regulatory authorities, the NVSB decided to examine the situation in more detail this season, in order to provide the necessary assurances that velvet removal is always acceptable on animal welfare and food safety grounds. Increasing the audit to cover 20 percent of velveters each year enables the NVSB to audit everyone over the next 5 years, as was originally envisaged by the programme. Velveters who pass their audit will not be selected for further audits for 4 years, subject to completion of a satisfactory annual supervising vet visit. 📺

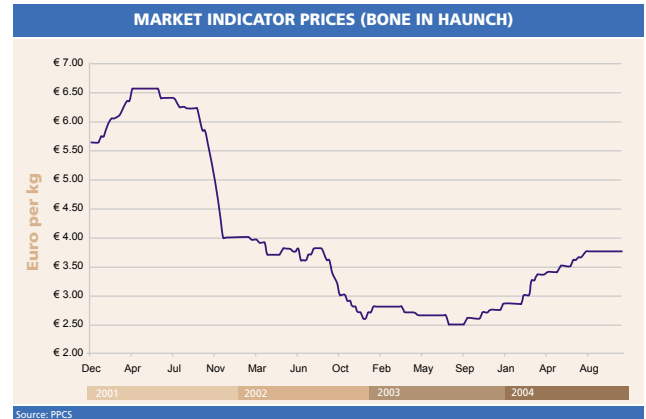
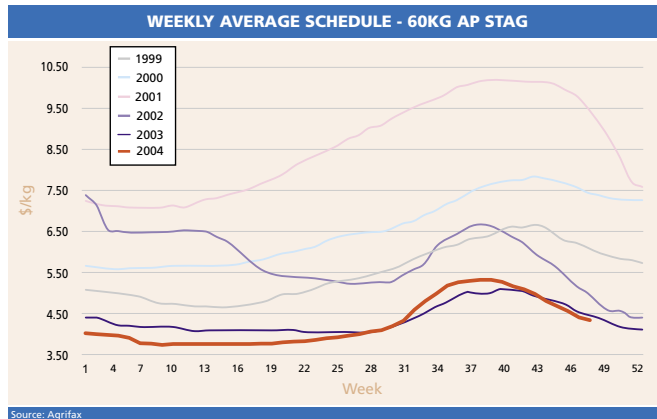
Please contact Rob Gregory, NVSB Manager, on 04 471 6116, rob.gregory@deernz.org for more information.

Code ready for public consultation

The code of welfare for deer farming is currently with the NAWAC subcommittee and Deer Industry New Zealand has been advised that it is ready for dissemination for public consultation. It is expected that NAWAC will allow extra time for submissions over and above the normal 30 working day timeframe to compensate for the Christmas/New Year period.

Venison

There is evidence of increased confidence for New Zealand venison's position amongst the European trade. Throughout 2004 legs have sold well and prices have firmed. Chilled volumes have been encouraging and importers are committed to expanding consumption beyond the game season. However, production levels and exchange rates will continue to impact on the recovery.



Exports

- There is good confidence with legs, which have sold well, and prices have gradually firmed throughout 2004. However, some other items, especially middles, have not seen similar price increases.
- The trade is reasonably confident good demand can be found for chilled and frozen venison at current levels.
- Currency movements have eroded much of the potential gains from increased leg prices. For the period September to November 2004 versus 2003, the New Zealand dollar has strengthened 12.8% against the US dollar and 4% against the Euro.
- There is little or no talk of stocks, reflected in the increased confidence among the trade.
- The level of consumption through the game season will affect the carryover of stock and confidence going forward into 2005. Positively, exporters are reporting relatively good demand this game season.
- The speed of any recovery, and, ultimately net schedule returns, will be driven by factors including production volumes, exchange rates, the economic health of our markets and ongoing demand creation programmes.
- Importers are committed to expanding consumption beyond the game season.

European Chef and Media Programme

Deer Industry New Zealand, alongside exporters and their market partners, has been involved in a record level of activity in 2004. Work in recent months has highlighted this commitment to market development.

In October, Graham Brown was in Europe, where he assisted exporters and their partners promote New Zealand venison to importers, distributors, chefs and media, primarily in France and Germany.

Events in the programme have included:

- A regional trade fair held in a French abbey
- Participation in the massive biennial food and drink trade show, SIAL, in Paris
- Media presentations in Germany
- Major hotel chain promotion in Germany
- Tastings by Hamish Brown for chefs and food professionals at the foodservice trade show *Horeca*, in Ghent, Belgium.

A spread of photographs showing just part of this activity can be found on the Industry News pages.

Meanwhile, Geof Christie recommenced work in Hong Kong, working alongside Alliance and its partner in a major retail initiative. More news of that later.

Market Talk: Migros' buying policy

This issue we have an insight into the purchasing policy of the meat and meat products division of Switzerland's largest retail group, Migros, supplied with New Zealand venison by PPCS.

Migros has been involved with PPCS since 1980 and has more than 590 supermarkets and hypermarkets. The Migros Group has a total turnover of over 20 billion Swiss Francs (NZ\$24.5 billion).

The strategy for the Migros meat buyers is to buy directly in the country of origin and to offer high quality venison into the Swiss market at the best possible price without any intermediate trade. So, the place of purchase as well as the supplier has to be chosen very carefully. Migros' policy dictates a clearly structured relationship with a leading producer in the country of origin – in New Zealand, the meat division says, this is guaranteed through the retailer's relationship with PPCS.



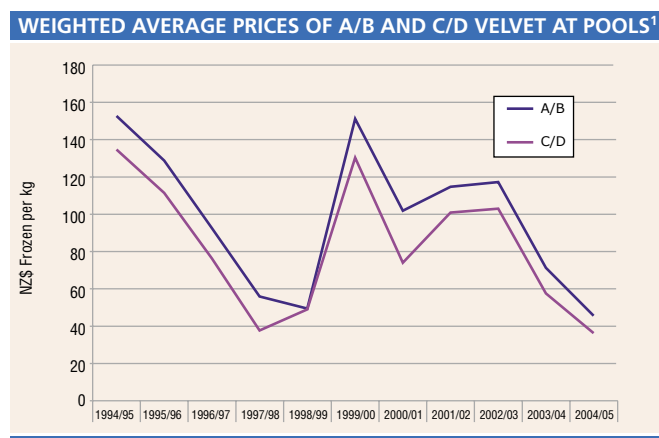
Velvet

A weak start to the New Zealand velvet season is reflected in the current low prices for producers. The weak Korean economy and currency (the won), together with high stock levels in market are all affecting demand for velvet, but there is a way forward – consultation, managing supply, monitoring and lobbying.

Velvet Season: First Month

As all producers will be acutely aware, the New Zealand velvet season has begun weakly. This is reflected in the low prices being offered. Both volume of velvet and the number of buyers tendering at each pool has gradually increased but, at this point, prices remain at historically low levels and buyer interest appears thin.

The following graph puts the situation in context over the past 10 years:



¹The 2004/05 figure is the weighted average of a pool in mid-November.

The current weakness is not peculiar to producers' prices. Exporters' prices, which were already low, have dropped from US\$180 per dry kg to US\$140. Export prices for velvet from other countries are reported to have also dropped. In addition, wholesale prices (the price paid by oriental medicine doctors to wholesalers) have been reported (from several sources) to be at low levels.

Key reasons for the situation are:

- **Stock levels** - Stock levels in the Korean market and China (destined for Korea) are reported to be significant. This means there is less demand for new season's product.
- **Exchange rate** – From its low of 800 at the start of the season, the Korean won is currently trading at 755 to the New Zealand dollar. The 10 year average is 610, so that the won is about 24% weaker than the average.
- **The Korean economy** - remains extremely soft to the point where its government is introducing tax cuts and other measures to stimulate consumer spending. This negative

economic outlook and weak consumer confidence mean less willingness to buy luxury items – including visits to the oriental medicine doctor and, so, the purchase of deer velvet.

The Way Forward

- **Exporter consultations** – A meeting has been called by Deer Industry New Zealand with all exporters to discuss the one variable that the New Zealand industry can potentially influence in the short term – the quantity of velvet flowing on to the Korean market. Deer Industry New Zealand will raise a number of options to lower, or slow, the quantity of velvet going to Korea. In particular, the impact of lower quality product will be considered.
- **Supply management meeting** – Short and long-term options for the management of velvet supply were discussed by Deer Industry New Zealand and the industry in late November.
- **Close market surveillance** – Market pricing, activities and stock levels are being closely monitored both in New Zealand and Korea to ascertain whether any parties are unfairly gaining at the expense of others (not the case at present).
- **Sticking to strategies despite difficult conditions**
 - Diversify from the Korean oriental medicine market, using avenues such as lifting the Taiwanese quota limiting five tonnes of frozen velvet allowed into Taiwan. Exporters, importers and distributors enthusiastically support quota removal and the National Chinese Medicine Association - with 18,000 retailer members - has given its support to New Zealand deer velvet as its preferred product.
 - Stop market distortions such as unofficial trade in velvet and the imposition of taxes that encourage smuggling.
 - Ensure that New Zealand velvet competes equally with domestically produced velvet. For example, Korean velvet may be sold through infomercials, supermarkets, home shopping catalogues and directly to consumers – all channels not currently available to New Zealand.
 - Enable access for New Zealand velvet into China.
 - Capitalise on scientific results such as the athletic performance sales in Western markets.
 - Product development research to bring a wound-healing product based on New Zealand deer velvet to market.

Opportunities in the Swiss Market

Although life in Switzerland seems to have become more and more risk-free, the Migros meat buyers acknowledge there are new fears coming up, which are mainly grounded on ecological themes such as personal health and nutrition.

“We would like to fulfil consumer demands and are therefore offering safe food to our customers. Consequently, our suppliers must also be able to offer safe and transparently produced meat which can be traced if required.”

The hunting season in Switzerland's mountains starts in September and ends in November.

“Our customers are used to buying venison around this three-month period. Venison in Switzerland is a traditional autumn speciality.”

Animal welfare and the conditions in which the animals are farmed and raised is also of importance for Migros, as its customers take a strong interest in it.

Velexco: Co-operating in Korea

Getting a grip on its sourcing and distribution system, targeting food buyers and directly winning over Korean consumers is how the newly launched farmer co-operative group, Velexco, plans to weather the current storms in the velvet trade. Deer Industry News takes a closer look at its plans.

Sourcing from velvet producers nationwide, the co-operative sprang from a private company established in 1999 and provides an alternative for larger and more serious velvet growers to the traditional pool system that has been operating for the past 30 years.

Essential to its start-up was producer belief in the future and willingness to invest in a company committed to bringing about change, according to Velexco Chairman James Guild, a deer farmer from High Peak Station in Central Canterbury. "Recognising the faults and investing 'beyond the velvet freezer' shows a new determination and maturity in the velvet industry," he says.

Guild's fellow Board members include deer farmers Kelly Hudson from Timaru, Tom Williams of Te Parae Station in the Wairarapa and Graeme Ramshaw, Executive Director for Alpine Deer Group in Wanaka.

The first step has been taken and Velexco is unique amongst New Zealand companies in gaining the necessary licences to import and distribute velvet in the Korean market, which takes 80% of New Zealand's velvet. An office has also been opened in the Jeki-dong natural medicine district of Seoul.

Strengthening the company infrastructure at either end of the chain, stretching from New Zealand to Korea, is the task now for General Manager Ross Chambers. New appointments in New Zealand are Procurement Manager, Kelvin Kimber and Administrator, Denise MacGregor. Kimber is well known in the deer industry as a former DeerQA assessor, NVSB auditor and committee member of the Canterbury Branch of the NZDFA. MacGregor brings accounting and administration skills, having specialised in small to medium enterprises. When the right person has been found, a Business Development Manager will be added to the Seoul office, which already has an Office Administrator, Hyeonok Lyoo, in place.

"Their brief will be to continue with sales in the 'traditional' velvet market while examining opportunities with other sectors, such as the food market rather than pharmaceutical," Chambers says. He explains that commercial considerations and the need for product diversification are motivating the exploration by the co-operative of the food grade sector, which he says has not been fully developed.

His company research has shown that wellness and product safety are the two issues that make a Korean consumer 'tick', while credibility, product integrity and getting the specifications right are essential for contact with traditional buyers.



Building closer and stronger links with the Korean consumer is essential for Velexco: Chairman James Guild (right) watches a nurse mixing up a prescription with velvet and various chinese herbs drawn from the shelves behind during a visit to an Oriental Medicine Doctors clinic in Seoul.



Velexco operates from an office in the ground floor of this building in the Jeki-dong natural medicine district of Seoul.

Republic of Korea

Population: 48.6 million (July 2004 estimate)

GDP per capita: Purchasing power parity US\$17,800 (2003)

GDP composition by sector: services 60%, industry 36.4%, agriculture 3.6%.

Agriculture products: rice, root crops, barley, vegetables, fruit, cattle, pigs, chickens, milk, eggs, fish.

New Zealand velvet exports to ROK: 109 tonnes (dry) worth \$15.4 million (year to end September 2004)

New Zealand co-products exports to ROK: 1.6 tonnes worth \$104,000

Visits from the company's Korean strategic processing partner are fine-tuning production and processing procedures. Chambers says there are ongoing trials with drying velvet in Korea.

"We have to be close to the Korean customer and prove 'stickability' in the market. Traditional linkages, language, cultural and regulatory issues make this a long and sometimes difficult process."

Opening the Jeki-dong office is just part of the company's long-term campaign and physical evidence that the co-operative means business in Korea. Chambers suggests that the outlay is worth it and the only way to create positive change in a production system with high investment and long lead times. "Our goal is to apply commercial solutions to move New Zealand velvet away from a commodity to supplying a range of branded products to a wider consumer base."

According to Chambers, it's going to be a long process. Though the company is currently marketing frozen whole stick, dried whole stick and trimmed stick deer velvet: "Moving to more refined specifications, such as sliced packaged velvet, is a development exercise requiring a thorough understanding of the (always subtle) Korean specifications and preferences," he says. 🇰🇷

New Zealand venison links to The Princess Royal

Mark Dixon, British winner of the 2004 NZ-UK Link Foundation Hospitality award, a culinary competition open to trainee chefs in both countries, was presented with his award by Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal at a function in New Zealand House in October.

Dixon who works at The Imperial Hotel in Great Yarmouth, Norfolk, was delighted to find that he had headed off five other British competitors in the final cook-off. His menu featured Richmond/PPCS' prime loin of farmed New Zealand venison alongside asparagus and shiitake mushrooms and a rich thyme jus, teamed with a Cottesbrook 2001 pinot noir.

He was, reportedly, surprised and impressed by the quality and flavour of the meat. "When I was practising for the event, I used wild venison and found it very strong with a flavour like liver, but when I tried the farm-raised New Zealand venison, it was more like the best quality fillet steak."

Dixon is now looking forward to his six-week all expenses paid trip to New Zealand to sample working in some of our top restaurants early next year.

He got some hot tips at the function from the New Zealand 2004 winner, Logan Turner of Sky City Restaurant in Auckland, who was part way through his assignments at Peter Gordon's Restaurant, Providores, the Savoy Grill, The Fat Duck and Gleneagles – all placements organised by celebrity chef Peter Gordon, who has been heavily involved in the organisation of the competition.

In Britain, over 30 entries were received from trainee chefs aged between 18 and 21. These were whittled down to six for a final cook-off in early October at Westminster Kingsway College by a team of judges including Peter Gordon, representatives from the British Craft Guild of Chefs and food

writers. Each finalist had to cook and present a three-course menu using New Zealand hoki fillets, green-lipped mussels and loin of farm-raised New Zealand venison.



British trainee chef Mark Dixon wowed the judges in this year's NZ-UK Link Foundation Hospitality Award with his New Zealand venison dish. Seen here with Link Foundation patron Princess Anne, after receiving his award.

Fish link sells for Pohangina

Pohangina Valley Venison's new retail outlet, alongside Ocean Fisheries in Palmerston North, opened in early October and is already showing promise.

Even though it is early days yet, the partnership between the fish and venison outlets seems to be working well, Robin Ferguson says. "Partly because Ocean Fisheries sells to over 80 percent of Palmerston North's restaurant trade, we have picked up good early interest from that sector.

"Creating awareness of the shop has been our first step," he says. This is being addressed, with support from Deer Industry New Zealand, through a local advertising campaign in the Manawatu Evening Standard and Central Districts Farmer. Rural post drops are also planned and a radio advertising campaign will start soon.

Robin Ferguson says future plans include smoked Fallow hams for Christmas to run alongside the company's popular Fallow packs, which already sell through the Pohangina mail-order business. And keep an eye open for him if you're passing the new Lindale Market that opened on 11 December. On Saturday mornings only at Lindale Centre, near Paraparaumu, he'll be there at the Pohangina Valley venison stall with his wares....



recipe

PAVÉ OF VENISON WITH BÉARNAISE SAUCE & POMMES FRITES



INGREDIENTS

4 x 180g - 200g leg steaks
 4 x large waxy potatoes
 Oil for frying
 Black pepper corns
 Glass of red wine
 Half a cup of strong meat stock
 50g unsalted butter

Béarnaise sauce

250ml of melted unsalted butter
 3 egg yolks
 1 finely chopped shallot
 50ml water
 50ml tarragon vinegar
 1 tablespoon chopped tarragon
 Salt and pepper
 Cayenne pepper

METHOD

For the Pavés

Heat a heavy saucepan until very hot and season them with cracked pepper and salt. Add a little oil to the pan and sear the steaks on each side for two minutes. Continue to cook with the heat reduced slightly or finish for five minutes in a moderate oven. Rest for two minutes in a warm place. Add the red wine to the pan and lift off the pan brownings, reduce, add the meat stock and season. Finish by whisking in the cold butter over high heat.

For the Béarnaise sauce

Poach the shallots in the vinegar and water until soft and reduce by half. Add the chopped tarragon and blend in the egg yolks off the direct heat or over a water bath. Pour the warm butter in very slowly and whisk vigorously until it has emulsified completely.

Season with a pinch of cayenne pepper and salt.

China Bans Velvet

Deer Industry New Zealand has had rumours officially confirmed that China has banned all imports of velvet. While official and practical access is not in place for exports of velvet to China for consumption in China, we have been able to export velvet into China for processing and re-export. The ban takes velvet exports back to the situation pre-2002 when China acceded to the World Trade Organisation and velvet began being officially exported to China for processing and re-export.

For the year to June 2004, official export statistics indicate a significant trade in velvet (51 tonnes frozen) into China. Advice from New Zealand's Embassy in Beijing and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) is that:

- There is a ban on all velvet being imported from all sources (not New Zealand only) for processing and re-export.
- The announcement came as part of a broader ban on a number of other products which have been prohibited from import into China for a range of reasons: environmental (used computers); strategic (coal); and "to avoid revenue fraud (for example, deer velvet)".



- The rationale for the deer velvet ban appears to be that tax inspectors have not been able to correlate the volumes of velvet imported (for processing and re-export, imported free of tariff and VAT) with the volumes exported.

Deer Industry New Zealand has been in contact with MAF, MFAT and the Minister about this issue since unconfirmed reports of the ban were received in mid-November. Deer Industry New Zealand will keep the industry advised of progress via Deer Notes and other industry publications.

scene in europe

A taste of some of the European venison promotion activity: a spread of scenes captured during Graham Brown's recent programme of activity.



Pont-à-Mousson, France: The mobile venison kitchen was put to good use in mid-October with over 800 chefs sampling New Zealand venison – and coming back for more – at a regional fair staged in the stunning 16th Century Abbey des Premontres. Working in the beautiful and hallowed atmosphere, Graham Brown was kept busy feeding the visitors with samples of New Zealand venison. Tastings were leg medallions with a mushroom Madeira sauce. "Many were captured by the delicate taste of New Zealand venison and had further servings of product on its own, with a light seasoning of salt and pepper, allowing them to really appreciate the delicate flavour," he says.



Berlin, Germany: Graham Brown – partnered by his son, Hamish and award-winning German chef Lutz Niemann – created a media luncheon in partnership with PPCS, a market partner and a major German hotel chain. The lunch launched a New Zealand promotion at the hotel, where New Zealand venison held centre stage.

Below: German media presentations: German food editors from the Feinschmecker and Für Sie consumer magazines enjoying their taste of New Zealand venison expertly prepared by Graham Brown – clean plates is a good sign in any language! Media relationships established during this year's Sommerkampagne gelled when Deer Industry New Zealand gave culinary demonstrations in the test kitchens of Germany's top two culinary publications. Keen to spend time cooking, sampling and partnering the meat with various wines, the editors were very impressed with what they tasted, in particular, how easy and quick New Zealand venison is to cook, and the tenderness of the end result.

Für Sie is preparing a diet and health special for the 2005 Northern Hemisphere Spring. Negotiations are underway to include New Zealand venison in the spread. Having tasted venison prepared in new and exciting ways, key food media are now well aware that New Zealand venison is a protein suitable for year round consumption. The positive response to Graham Brown's presentations will help future media exposure in Germany.



Branch Chair Profile: Geoff Burton – Tongariro

The New Zealand deer industry needs to continue with strong leadership – particularly people unafraid to take the industry into different cultures, worldwide.

The Tongariro Deer Farmers’ Association Branch Chairman, Geoff Burton, is keen on this issue. “We need leaders who will make the hard decisions for the industry’s sake – people with little or no self-interest. This has to colour decision-making, even unconsciously. We need someone with business acumen and marketing nous who can stand aside from the day-to-day realities and say: ‘This is what we must do.’ Someone who can deal with venison as a product. It is in danger of becoming a commodity meat,” he says.

“DINZ does a good job, but quite a few of us feel the industry lacks punch and new ideas at present. This is what we are looking for – a shot in the arm.”

50 have left industry

Geoff says many farmers are getting out of the industry, which could affect long-term plans for marketing. Over the last five years in the Tongariro Branch area around 50 deer farmers with an average of 150 hinds each have left.

“We have lost the edge – our forward thinking, that made the early days so exciting. We need something to give us sustained growth every year, without the peaks and troughs we have been going through – especially now that we know so much more about the animal with regard to feeding and breeding management.”

The Tongariro chairman farms 51 hectares, 15 minutes north of Taupo on State Highway 1. He has 220 straight Red hinds and puts Wapiti over them, running a yearly breeding and finishing unit. Weaners are sent to the works at 10–11 months with a 50-55kg carcass weight. He runs a closed herd as his frontline Tb protection.


NZ too attractive to leave

Geoff is an engineer by profession and balances the farm economics by working three days a week at Waratah, a forestry engineering company in Tokoroa. Born and raised in Lancashire, England, where he qualified as an engineering draughtsman, Geoff arrived in New Zealand in 1973. He had planned to live and work two years in each of five Commonwealth countries before settling down. He reached South Africa in 1968, then Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), Australia and New Zealand. Canada was the fifth country but New Zealand was too attractive to move. “However,” Geoff says “I arrived in Auckland on Labour Weekend and found the place closed.” But it didn’t discourage him from staying in Auckland for ten years enjoying the relative freedom and lack of crowds.

In 1979, Geoff invested in deer. They were grazed near Te Puke, then near Taupo and in 1983 he packed up and followed them to the block he lives on still. Despite the strong feelings he has about the industry’s current direction, he is positive about the place of deer in the New Zealand farming equation. He enjoys having his days spread between the farm and the office and, with his wife Debbie, plans to stay for some time to come.

Amalgamation debated

The Tongariro Branch has been debating over the suggestion that it should amalgamate with another branch. While it might have some advantages, Geoff says members are very aware of the previous situation when Taumarunui combined with Taupo to form the Tongariro branch. The new structure went well for a year but the huge geographic spread means they have hardly seen the distant members since. The Branch currently has about 55 members and covers the Taupo, Taumarunui and National Park districts.

The Branch is active with field trips every couple of months. The last was to the Te Kauwhata Richmond processing plant, north of Hamilton, which impressed the members with its efficiency. “But the highlight of the year was definitely the National Conference in June. It was a lot of work, but a lot of reward with the ground work being done by the last president, Chris Parkinson – especially with regard to the tender of Murray Matuschka’s concrete stag, topping off the conference with \$4500 being raised for John’s research.” 



Geoff Burton: sad to see exciting days for industry have turned to exiting days for many.

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Lobby group acknowledges deer industry support

Lobby group, the Game and Forest Foundation (GFF) has acknowledged the support it has received from the deer industry.

GFF's constituent organisations are Safari Club International New Zealand Chapter, The New Zealand Association of Game Estates; NZDFA; Recreational Hunters NZ and The New Zealand Professional Hunting Guides Association. (The Deerstalkers' Association Executive has distanced itself from GFF, due to its total opposition to any commercialisation of game animals.) These groups are joined by Hunters and Habitats, Tokoroa Pig Hunting Club, Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and individual branches of NZDA to provide an organisation that brings together all the interests in New Zealand's game animals.

GFF chairman, Tom Williams told NZDFA Branch Chairmen at their October meeting, that many issues concerning deer are of common interest to both deer farmers and the hunting fraternity. He said definition of feral ranges could have a profound impact on where certain species can be farmed. He noted that Forest & Bird is an aggressive environmental lobby group, and it is important that GFF continues to provide a balanced view when issues like the Wild Animal Control Act are up for discussion.

Executive Director, Garry Ottmann, told Chairmen that the organisation is seeking formal game status for deer, tahr and chamois. New Zealand is the only country in the world where tahr can be hunted in the wild, and is one of the drivers behind this country's growing reputation as a trophy hunting destination. "Red stags still remain the top trophy for visiting hunters and New Zealand is the international destination for Red stags. There are still significant opportunities for hunting outfitters and farmers to develop this sector of the hunting industry."

Williams noted that there has been useful discussion between the hunting estates and stud breeders about the best directions for trophy breeding.

Ottmann said that there has been good local cooperation between DoC and GFF on issues such as 1080 application


on Stewart Island. Ground application has been introduced in place of aerial drops. Possum numbers have been successfully controlled with minimal impact on whitetail deer.

He noted that trials with deer repellent on carrot baits have been highly successful. Even where trials had been less successful, by-kill of Sika with deer repellent-treated baits was 25% compared with 90% with poison drops where no repellent was used. The latest operations, where both Fallow deer and Red deer were present, were highly successful with the deer apparently unaffected by poison drops when repellent was used.

Apparently the deer repellent has the added bonus of attracting mustelids. Unfortunately it is not yet available in a form suitable for pollard (pellet) 1080 formulation used by DoC.

Ottmann said GFF has managed to bring organisations like hunters, the AHB, DoC and landowners together to come up with common sense solutions when there has been conflict over pest control operations or wildlife management. "We have made real progress on many issues by taking a proactive common sense approach. We come up with solutions we don't focus on problems," he added.

Safari Club International (SCI) has previously been the main funder of GFF's activities, but this revenue is due to dry up later next. GFF is working on a funding strategy. Independent chairman of GFF, Tom Williams, appealed to Branch Chairmen to seek donations – a stick or two of velvet, perhaps – to help GFF continue lobbying the Government on issues of interest to both hunters and the commercial deer industry.

"The common bond for recreational hunters, guides, estate operators and farmers is that we all value deer are a resource that must be managed to cater for our individual needs," he said. 

Life membership for Spiers

Fifteen years of dedicated service to the deer industry has been recognised by the granting of life membership of the NZDFA Hawke's Bay Branch to John Spiers.

John, who farms "Maranoa" at Takapau, has been a member of the Hawke's Bay Branch committee since 1989. John's other service to the industry has included:

- 1991-1994, Hawke's Bay Branch Chairman
- 1993-1995, member of Deer Industry Quality Assurance Committee
- 1994-1999, elected to NZDFA Council
- 1995-1996, director of Animal Health Board
- 1996-1997, Vice-President, NZDFA
- 1997-1999, President, NZDFA and member NZDFA Selection & Appointments Committee
- 1996, founding committee member of Wrightson/Richmonds Deer Performance Project
- 1998, deer industry representative to World Deer Congress, Ireland
- 1999, organising committee for Napier NZDFA conference
- 1999-2001, Chairman Wrightson/Richmonds Deer Performance Project
- 2001 – present, member of NVSB.

John's contribution at national level was also recognised in 2000 when he was awarded the prestigious Deer Industry Award.



John and Marie Spiers with the plaque conferring life membership to the Hawke's Bay Branch of NZDFA.



DON'T FENCE US IN!

NZDFA Branch Chairmen strongly oppose DoC plans disclosed in proposed launch of public consultation on deer farming regulation review

Representatives from the Department of Conservation received some robust feedback from NZDFA Branch Chairmen at their October meeting when they outlined DoC's options for changes to the requirements governing where deer can be farmed and how they're to be contained.

Don McKenzie, Technical Support Manager, Northland, Alan Gardiner, Ranger Deer, and Leigh Honnor, TSO Deer, explained the Department's rationale in seeking to update the Deer Farming Notice No 4, 1986, (published under S12A of the Wild Animal Control Act 1977) and the Third Schedule of the Noxious Animals in Captivity Regulations 1969.

McKenzie said the Gazette Notice and perimeter fence standards are well overdue for an upgrade, with some standards still in imperial measurements. There have also been big changes in the shape of the deer industry and in technology such as fencing materials in the last 18 years. Against this background there have been noticeable changes in the location and range of populations of wild deer in recent years.

He explained that any new Gazette Notice for deer farming would take into account:

- whether wild deer of the same species were already present in the area concerned
- whether deer-induced modification of the environment is likely to differ from modification caused by other introduced species already present
- whether the presence of that deer species is likely to add to control costs.

Chairmen at the meeting made their hostility clear to the permitting system for deer farming set out in the Wild Animal Control, Act 1977. They argued that the industry has become a significant and responsible mainstream livestock

enterprise since the pioneering days when the law was first framed. Simply, the law the DFA argues, is no longer relevant and this is simply officialdom for the sake of it.

While sympathetic to deer farmers' point of view, the DoC representatives stressed the provisions of the Wild Animal Control Act 1977, which relate to permitting for deer farming are not up for review, and that there was considerable concern about the establishment of new deer populations in previously deer-free areas (see map). McKenzie was adamant that they were in the business of seeking deer farmers' support in legislation review and that without it the process would be difficult.

To provide accurate up-to-date information on where wild deer are found, DoC commissioned an investigation by Landcare Research. The report produced updates a database created in 1996 of wild deer populations, based on field reports by DoC staff and private individuals and organisations. Key points to come out of the report are:

- 157 new deer populations were reported in 1996
- of these, 77 are still in existence in 2004
- between 1996 and 2004, 109 new wild populations appeared
- most new reports are of Red, Fallow or Sika deer and most are alleged to have resulted from escapes or illegal liberations of groups of less than 10 individuals
- a small number (8%) of the new populations were put down to natural dispersal
- the collapse of venison recovery industry has contributed to wild deer population increases.

The DoC representatives told Branch Chairmen that farm escapes were the known or suspected cause of 30 (48%) of the new populations where the origins were known or suspected. The source of 29 new populations was unknown



so they were excluded from the analysis. Verified escapes created 27.5% of new location records (c.f. 29.5% in 1996).

The Branch Chairmen were quick to point out that most escapees try hard to get back in to the farm, where the best food supply is found. However this is disputed by Alan Gardiner who said in his experience escaped deer will pace the perimeter fence for 2-4 weeks, and then visits become less frequent.

The Landcare Research contract report shows 60 percent of the new populations were in the Waikato, Wanganui and Auckland conservancies. Nationally these are predominantly Fallow deer (57% of new populations) and Red deer (38%). The greatest number of eradications have been achieved in Northland.

One of the foundations of the proposed review will be the setting of wild range for the various deer species. The New Zealand wild deer distribution map, pictured here because of its importance in this consultation, drew some sceptical comments from Branch

continued on back of map...

Northland example of keeping a region wild-deer-free

Northland's successful Wild Deer Eradication programme was held up as a good example of DoC/deer industry cooperation to maintain a largely wild-deer-free region. Apart from a small population of illegally released Sika deer around Russell, there are no wild deer in Northland. Despite this, there are escapes reported from between 4-11% of farms each year.

However, a high-profile publicity campaign and good cooperation between farmers, DoC, the AHB and Northland Regional Council means that escapees are recovered efficiently. About 90% are returned live, and the animals are rounded up by an experienced team of five contract hunters (with farming experience). Operations to recover escaped deer are kept low profile to avoid the attentions of opportunist hunters.

Ranger Deer Alan Gardiner told the Branch Chairmen that some Northland deer are farmed by absentee owners who are not always aware of escapes and cannot recapture animals on their own. However, the majority of deer farmers promptly report escapes and are fully involved in decisions about destroying any escapees that cannot be recaptured.

Don McKenzie said the Northland programme showed that it is possible to keep wild deer out of a deer-free region and still allow deer farming. He admitted though that DoC could not afford to set up such a programme nationwide. The \$2000/year/farm cost in Northland could equate to \$12m New Zealand wide, he said.

STOP PRESS: Selection and Appointments Panel supported

The DINZ poll result has confirmed producers' preference for the current Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) mechanism for appointing producer representatives to the DINZ Board. The Deer Farmers' Association's SAP process was supported by 82% of those deer farmers voting, accounting for 75% of the deer owned by those voting.

continued from p20

Chairmen. Some felt it underestimated the range, especially in Canterbury where most of the Canterbury plains area was not included in deer wild range. The wild deer distribution map is being used to define wild range.

As well as publishing the maps showing the distribution of wild deer populations and wild range, the consultation

Report recommendations indicate possible directions

Recommendations by Landcare Research to DoC in the report *Wild deer in New Zealand: 2004 revision of species ranges* should have farmers sitting up and taking notice when the consultation begins. These are some of their recommendations in abbreviated form:

- Given the inevitability of escapes, the Department should not permit the farming (either for conventional or safari park purposes) of any deer species outside its feral range.
- DoC should seek the support and cooperation of the NZDFA (and other relevant stakeholders) for addressing potential solutions to the ongoing problem of farm escapes, including developing improved ways of detecting, reporting, and managing these. This process also needs to be extended to properties used for safari hunting.
- The eradication programmes for new populations of deer currently ongoing in Northland and Taranaki should be continued, and these programmes should be extended to other high-priority and previously deer-free areas, particularly in the Auckland, Waikato, and Wanganui conservancies.
- Management action to eradicate new deer populations should be undertaken irrespective of [new population] size.
- DoC should consider regular surveillance for deer (and other game species) in previously deer-free areas, particularly those with high conservation values (e.g. Coromandel Peninsula).
- DoC needs to clearly define what is accepted as established range for each of the deer species present in New Zealand. (Wapiti should be excluded since no pure Wapiti populations still exist in the wild, and any Wapiti escaped from farms are likely to become quickly integrated into local wild Red deer populations.)
- The accepted established ranges should form the basis for any new regulations relating to revised deer farming standards, in particular clear definitions of where the farming of each deer species is either permitted or prohibited.
- [DoC] also needs to consider what management actions will be undertaken where deer occur outside the defined ranges, and develop a prioritisation system for ranking new populations for management action. The priority system should take into account a number of factors, most importantly the species in question and the area. In terms of potential threats to conservation values, the ranking order for the three most important deer species should be: Sika deer, Fallow deer, Red deer.
- Recreational hunting of deer should not be considered as a control tool in areas where deer need to be removed and, because of potential expectations by recreational hunters, this activity should be actively discouraged in such areas.

document will map out options for new requirements to govern the keeping of deer for deer farming and for safari parks/game estates, and new perimeter fence standards.

It seems likely that DoC will promote that people farming deer (The Wild Animal Control Act specifies that wild animals cannot farmed outside their wild range) can expect to have to shoulder some costs for fence inspections and rapid response capability to recover deer which have escaped from farms. Don McKenzie floated the idea of a \$50 permit fee renewable every 5 years which would also cover initial inspection of perimeter fences for deer farms. This did not go down particularly well with the Branch Chairmen, some of whom rose to a new level of bluntness against what they perceived as bureaucracy in the extreme.

Garry Ottmann, Executive Director of the Game and Forest Foundation asked DoC representatives what bearing the DoC Deer Control Policy would have on this process. Would any new regulations have to be consistent with this policy? DoC responded that they were not sure how it would affect the process. Garry Ottmann noted that the Deer Policy called for the reduction of wild ranges for deer where possible, and questioned whether there was, in essence, a predetermined outcome. Wild range had unfairly been used as a blunt instrument by DoC to control deer farming and game estates, he said.

“The law governing game animals in New Zealand is an uncomfortable mix of legislation amended and modified as different interest groups achieve ascendancy in promoting their causes, and as attitudes change,” Ottmann said. “Current legislation is based in a time when game animal populations were out of control and before the advent of deer farming.”


Garry Ottmann said this review should include all laws governing game animals rather than again tinkering around the edges.

“Wild deer, deer on game estates and farmed deer need legislation that recognises their different status and management needs and this is the time to conduct a comprehensive review.”

The consultation is expected to begin in earnest early next year. Prior to that, Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA have asked for a combined meeting of all assumed stakeholders to act as a discovery of viewpoints.

The Branch Chairmen took a pragmatic position at their October meeting and passed a motion calling for a complete review of all legislation relating to farmed deer. The intention is to seek repeal and abandonment on the basis that farmed deer are a mainstream livestock industry with responsible standards of security and a QA-based fence standard and a responsibility in law to report and remedy escapes.

The Branch Chairmen questioned the need for a continued wild range administration and spelled out their intention to promote that view vigorously.

Producer Manager, Tony Pearce says there will be extensive discussions and he strongly encourages deer farmers to forward their views to the NZDFA. “This is a real opportunity for deer farmers to push for a sensible law that recognises and caters for the needs of the deer farming industry,” he says. 

Affiliated Society profile: New Zealand Warnham & Woburn Deer Society

A plan to revitalise the Warnham and Woburn Society is being developed and will be communicated with all members over the next few months, according to current chairman, John Carter.



The NZ WARNHAM and WOBURN
Deer Society Inc.



The Society's annual general meeting was scheduled for early November, but a low turnout meant there was not a quorum. However, John Carter says a very useful discussion was held among those who turned up, and they came up with a range of proposals that will be notified to all current and past members by early January to seek their acceptance and approval. If all goes well, he sees the Society calling an annual general meeting in April next year.

The Warnham and Woburn Society currently has about 60 members, which John Carter says makes up a good proportion of potential members around the country. He has been chairman for three years and had been intending to stand down at the November AGM. Getting members together for an AGM has been a problem in the past, largely because of the large geographic spread and the costs associated with travel. "With the current state of the market, it is hard for people work up any enthusiasm about going to an annual meeting," he says.

The Society has been in existence for about 20 years, and has assembled a unique set of pedigree recordings; it would be very sad to lose them, John says. He hopes that one of the proposals being considered will not only retain that record but start adding performance records as well.

At the November gathering, DINZ chairman, Clive Jermy, and committee

member, Harry Robinson, were delegated to work on a new-look Society plan. Clive says progress on that plan is well underway and was expected to be completed by early December.

"The Society had provided members with everything that any other breed Society does," he says, "including newsletters, annuals, herd book and promoting the breed. What it has not done is provide a service to register deer breeding values and performance records for members."

DINZ and NZDFA have established a steering committee to work with Sheep Improvement Ltd and investigate how the SIL performance evaluation programme can be modified and adapted for the deer industry. Clive says if this becomes available it will be a key service for Society members.

"It will provide a whole new focus and give us the opportunity to rebuild the membership." He hopes it can be set up and underway within the next six months, and that it will build on the wonderful database of pedigree records that have been collected over the past 20 years.

He describes the influence of top Warnham and Woburn genes into the New Zealand herds as 'profound'.

"They probably have had the greatest influence on the genetic advance of antlers in the industry." 📷

Deer Focus Farms: participants (and funding) sought

The NZDFA Executive Committee (EC) is hoping to establish the Deer Focus Farm concept throughout New Zealand.

With joint funding from AgResearch, regional councils, Southland and Otago Branches of DFA, Deersouth and Wrightson, the Otago/Southland Deer Focus Farm project is currently seeking participants to progress the concept. The Executive Committee would like to see more projects set up in other areas to reflect different regional conditions and management styles.

Ideally there would be three or four such farms in each Island. Producer Manager, Tony Pearse, says the ideal focus farm would be one which has been achieving above average returns, and has an owner who is keen to learn and improve further and doesn't mind being in the spotlight.

"We need strong grass roots local support for the concept to work," Tony says. "We'd like to see both breeding and finishing units that are facing management and environmental issues."

Tony says each of the Meat & Wool New Zealand sheep and beef monitor farms have significant annual costs, including expenses for the facilitator, testing and communications. Costs would be similar for Deer Focus Farms.

There are indirect substantial inputs from the farmer and community groups as well. "The Deersouth benchmarking group would provide some of its base data for individual Deer Focus Farms," Tony adds. 📷

NZDFA Branch structures under review

Servicing representation and democratic balance chief challenges

Smarter and more effective representation systems are being discussed by the NZDFA Chairmen and Executive Committee. It's not so much about reducing Branch function at grassroots level, but developing better systems to communicate and represent Branches nationally and build a stronger DFA at local level.

Although it's a growing anomaly in the NZDFA – the North Island has two-thirds of the Branches but only one-third of the deer – this is not a main driver for a different balance. In addition, some Branch boundaries cut through regional and district council boundaries, and some Branch members live outside their Branch territory.

NZDFA Executive Committee member Tim Aitken is leading a review of the Branch structure and is under no illusions as have been the councillors before him that this is a tough issue. At the October Branch Chairmen's meeting, Chairmen made it clear that while further amalgamations in the North Island are possible, no-one wants this forced upon them.

Motivation a challenge

For all Branches, it is getting harder to motivate members to take part in formal activities but there is a strong appeal for local on-farm practical events. The Branch review shows that most share a common concern on the main issues: profitability, government regulations, Tb, the environment, relatively static membership, reluctance to become new faces on committees etc and the database.

It was noted at this point that where a Branch has a strongly focused activity such as a research project or an innovative social and practical event, e.g. Wairoa Branch's highly successful possum drive, then support is easier to round up.

On the positive side, the number of voluntary subscribers to date this year (currently about 2815) is very similar to the final figure for 2003 (2885) and above the budgeted 2650. Canterbury and Otago, two of the biggest Branches, are showing good growth.

Figures show that on average only 48% of the people on the industry list in a Branch area are voluntary Branch members. (The industry list includes share farmers, velveters, farm managers and associated people as well as the core farm owners and farmers.)


However, current work to purge the list of redundant names will bring that average up. (In a possible pointer to the shape of the future, the John's Research Group has been given the status of a special interest Branch, giving the group a mandate to act on behalf of the industry when heading funding or research initiatives.)

Looking at the current Branch structure, Wellington/Horowhenua Branch Chairman, Vince Connolly, floated the idea of a ward system at the political and representation level which could make the structure less top-heavy and expensive to run, and decision-making easier.

To kick off discussion he suggested a system of eight wards – four in each Island – which could pool resources to combine activities on a regional basis.

Working group

Executive Committee member Bill Taylor suggested a working group (whose members were volunteered at the Branch Chairmen's meeting) to look more closely at the options, which could include more streamlined meetings involving the Executive Committee and ward representatives, each standing in for three or four Branches. A successful proxy pilot for this was held when 6 of the SI Branch Chairmen met last year to discuss key issues of venison production and AHB programmes.

The Chairmen's meeting appointed a working group to look into options – Tim Aitken will head the group. The NZDFA stresses that activities at local level, with local flavour and all of those unique characters, are still the life blood of the organisation. Any changes once agreed will carry with them a commitment to more and better communication at all levels. 

**Contact: Tim Aitken, Telephone: 06 856 5522,
Email: timlucy@xtra.co.nz**

Fifth generation Canterbury farmer takes Mountain River award

One of the few deer farmers to have actually grown up with the industry won the Mountain River Canterbury Deer Farmer of the Year award.

Banks Peninsula farmer Mark Shadbolt reckons the contest between the top three farmers was very close.

“The credit for this award goes as much to my father as to anything in particular I have done. He had the initiative to get in on the ground floor and establish us,” says Mark who is the fifth generation on the 750 ha Barry’s Bay Estate.

Those were the ‘glamour days’ of the deer industry with helicopter netting, bulldogging and crazy chopper pilots. Mark has grown with the industry and seen the high and lows. He remembers when the young industry was trendy and the big city investors were jumping on the bandwagon paying up to \$5000 for a commercial hind only to have it bottom out at around \$300 in the 1980s crash.

Barry’s Bay is a tourist attraction having the only remaining cheese factory in the area and the Akaroa-bound buses all pay a visit. The geography lends itself to sheep and that is the Estate’s prime business.

“We run 2600 specialist high performance Romney ewes which are lambing at 135-145% and 170 Angus, Angus cross cows. All progeny are finished with the use of summer and winter crops of rape, kale, swedes, Italian ryegrass and a lot of fertiliser.

“But we have retained 220 ha for the deer. It is ideal breeding country and that is what we concentrate on – sending hybrid weaners on to finishers and breeding Red replacement hinds from the European hinds. The Red stags are used for mating



Mark Shadbolt’s constructive approach to the hill country environment impressed the judges. Photo: Kerry Walker.

yearlings and then contracted for venison as rising 2-year-olds. Wapiti were chosen as a compact terminal sire, bought in as weaners to acclimatise. The best are used for mating as 3-year-olds or sold to other hill country deer farmers.

“We have a long way to go with deer to get up to that Romney performance on a comparative basis,” says Mark.

Judges decided Shadbolt’s integration of deer with other livestock was a strength, and that as a committed deer farmer he has taken a constructive approach to tackling his hill country environment and making it more productive. 🇺🇲

Southern award for new deer farmers

General excellence has won the Southern Region Deer Farmer of the Year title for Dave and Rachel O’Connell, managers of Glenory Deer Park, near Balclutha.

Dave was surprised by the award as he had ‘only’ picked up the environmental award before the main announcement was made.

“The judges said we were right up there across the board,” he says.

The environmental award mentioned three main aspects of Glenory practice:

- the 97 ha of trees which protect a lot of the gullies on the property
- the fencing regime
- the washdown from the sheds being filtered through the old swimming pool.

The run-off issue, which has hit the headlines again recently, is something South Otago farmers are acutely aware of, says Dave.



Rachel and Dave O’Connell: across the board performance ‘right up there’.

“There is a lot of hunting and fishing around here which is important to the local economy. If anyone isn’t up to scratch, they will be told – from several different sources.”

Glenory is 8km up river from Balclutha on the north bank of the Clutha. The O’Connells run 1000 hinds and weaners and 70 stags, predominantly Red, on the 340 ha.

The farm and the O’Connells are new to deer farming. They have been on the property for two-and-a-half years,

converting it from a traditional sheep and beef venture. Dave has been farming for 20 years, mainly sheep and beef but also running a few deer. Before arriving on the Clutha, he managed a farm near Ohai. 🇺🇲

Te Anau host for 2005 conference

It's the South Island's turn again for the deer industry conference in 2005, and this time we'll be heading deep into the industry's heartland. Mark your calendars now for 16-18 May 2005, when the industry gathers in Te Anau for what promises to be a memorable event.

The conference will be coinciding with the 100th anniversary of the first release of Wapiti in Fiordland, an occasion to be marked by the unveiling of a special statue.




Visitors to Te Anau for the 2005 conference will be treated to some spectacular scenery. Photo: Chris Petersen, Warnham & Woburn Society photo awards.

The NZVA's Deer Branch will also be gathering at Te Anau and organisers are hoping to put on some interesting side trips and combined technical programme.

Fiordland Branch Chairman, Chris Petersen, says visitors will be encouraged to club together for transport and come by minivan via one of the main South Island centres. There is also talk of a special DC3 charter for those with a nostalgic affection for the old boneshakers.

For the third year in a row the conference will be organised by Dunedin Conference Management Services, a decision sure to please those who have enjoyed the well-run affairs put on by DCMS at Timaru and Taupo.

It's proposed that there will be a technical day and an open forum, which will further refine the successful formula that's been developed over the past couple of years. One suggestion is that formal parts of the conference may be run as a series of smaller parallel workshops so that attendees can focus more closely on the areas of most interest to them.

Plans are still at an early stage, but start planning now for a conference that will hopefully herald the industry's long-awaited upturn. There will be more details and a registration form in the February 2005 issue of *Deer Industry News*. 

Sociology and the need for feed

Understanding the sociology of deer is one of two theories Jim Sanson credits for his success in the recent Gisborne/Wairoa DFA branch Pasture to Plate competition.

On his Manutuke property, Jim produced the best live weight pre slaughter of 131.5kg – way up on the lowest 93.5 and significantly ahead of second place.

Where there any trade secrets? we asked.

Surprised at the results, Jim put the difference down to two theories:

- a comprehensive understanding of he sociology of the animals – happy stock grow better and faster
- matching the animals’ optimal growth patterns with feed requirements.

Deer grow during very specific periods of the year, and there are certain times when they need far more feed. Making sure they have plenty of food during those phases is essential to achieve maximum growth potential, he says.

Based on his own experience, Jim developed his own growth production graph, which he says is almost identical to one supplied by Deer Industry New Zealand. He describes this as an essential tool for those involved in finishing deer.

Jim’s core business is finishing sheep and cattle, and running deer for velvet. The competition deer were simply run with his other young stags.



A miserable winter last year extended Poverty Bay’s “Pasture to Plate” out to the following cold season.

Giselle Rutland says last year’s winter was too wet, too cold and probably the worst for 40 years. “While we had a few up to weight by early December, the schedule itself wasn’t great, so we held over until a better schedule presented itself.”

Thirty-five weaner stags were purchased (Brown Bros, Matawai) in May last year for the exercise.



Giselle Rutland (left) checks over the talent during the finale of the Pasture-to-Plate competition. Photos: Tony Pearce.

They weighed in at an average of 63kg and cost \$2 per kg. The deer were distributed around the Gisborne region: Matawai, Whangara, Ormond, Manutuke, Ngatapa and Pehiri. First weigh-in was 1 September, then 1 December 03, then August this year. One farmer weighed also in May this year and found his stock had lost weight between May and August.

Some supplements were fed by some of the farmers including apples, kiwifruit and persimmons.

The end result was an average carcass weight of 59.3kg and the payout was \$5.20 per kg. A donation was made to the Johne’s Research Group.

Wairoa

Nearby in Wairoa, Peter Willis averaged the best growth with 149gm/day over 432 days; John and Lyn Bullied 145gm/day over 446 days and Richard and Sue Cook, 125gm/day over 436 days.

The average pre slaughter liveweight for the area was 117.12kg from an average first weight of 67.2kg. John and Lyn Bullied achieved an average weight gain of 64.7kg while Peter Wills averaged 64.53 kg. 🇩🇪

Vector control the Wairoa way

There are considerably fewer possums in the Wairoa area, thanks to the efforts of 95 hunters who took part in the hunting competition organised by the Wairoa Branch of NZDFA.

Over a couple of weeks in late September/early October, the competition accounted for 1900 possums and 400 hares, rabbits and ferrets.

Wairoa DFA secretary Ian Pickering says the shoot was a great success. The actual number of pests killed was down 300 on the last shoot in 2001, but he says the Animal Health Board had recently conducted a 1080 drop in the surrounding national park area, dampening numbers.

The spectre of Tb hangs over Wairoa farmers who, like cattle, deer and dairy farmers anywhere, are on constant guard. The hunting competition is part of that defence.



Albie Cooper, 10, in the orange sweatshirt poses on his new quadbike with his mates. Albie racked up the top tally of 194 possums in this year's Wairoa possum hunt. Unfortunately he will have to wait a few years before he is legally able to drive his quad bike around the farm. Photo: Wairoa Star.

Wairoa has been Tb free until recently and Ian says it is somewhat ironic that the disease most likely arrived not through pests, but by introduced cattle.

"We have three reactors in the same herd, and they are introduced cattle. There is a lot of stock bought into the area for relief or general


grazing," he explains.

"It's a risk that is taken. Unfortunately there are some farmers who are not as scrupulous as the rest of us, and the Wairoa area is now paying the price."

Two-thirds of the hunters were school children and the sharp-eyed winner was a youngster who

brought in 194 possums. Young Albie Cooper had a great day – he not only picked up the money for the most successful hunter, he also won the draw for a motorbike.

The hunt started 10 years ago but only happens every three to four years. "The community really gets behind it with sponsorship, but you can't expect a small community to put up that level of support every year," says Ian.

The prizegiving attracted a sociable crowd of 200 and a MAF vet was on hand explaining how to identifying Tb in possums. 

Hawke's Bay Branch velvet competition results

The open (and overall) grade was won by **Mangapurakau Station** with 7.88 kg. Other results were:

Red Breeder	C. & S. Thomson of Skagen Deer, 7.5kg
Maiden Red	Temco Ag, 7.47kg B. Timmins, 5.43kg C. & S. Thomson, 6.35kg
Weight for Age	Mangapurakau Station, 6.28kg, 4-year-old, 24.88 pts Tuapae Farm, 5.4kg, 3-year-old, 25 pts R. Hilson & K. Middelberg, 6.17, 4-year-old, 33.3 pts
Elk/Wapiti	P. & A.M. Ritchie, 7.36 kg J.K. & A.M. Ritchie, 7.36kg J.K. & A.M. Ritchie, 6.62 kg
Commercial Red (best head)	Mangapurakau Station, 7.88 kg R. Hilson & K. Middelberg, 8.5 kg Hatuma Lime, 6.78 kg
Commercial Red (best 5 heads)	Kilgaren Farm, 28.16, \$1729.09 V. Mackie, 29.02, \$1705.93 Homeplace Partnership, 27.32, \$1587.46
Hard Antler	B. Timmins, 4-year-old M. Kane, 2-year-old M. Kane, 3-year-old
Novelty	R. Hilson & K. Middelberg

Record field day turnout at award-winning Southland farm

Deer farmers from all around Southland turned out on a blustery spring day for a field day on the Pukerua farm of George and Mary Scott, winners of this year's premier deer industry environment accolade, the Sir Peter and Fiona Lady Elworthy Environmental Award.

Nearly 100 people attended and, as well as having the opportunity to look over the award-winning farm, were treated to an afternoon of speakers who challenged people to implement a range of sustainable management and environmental protection programmes on their farm.

A highlight of the day, which was organised by the NZDFA Southland Branch and the Scotts, was the attendance of Lady Elworthy, who planted a commemorative tree to mark the award, at a special site near the entrance of the farm.

A keynote speaker was Bala Tikkisetty, a soil conservator from Environment Southland, who focused on the importance of water quality and how to achieve it. Advice was given on tree planting and the most suitable trees for Southland conditions. A speaker from Southland Fish and Game, Mark Sutton, outlined a number of different options when dealing with wet areas on deer farms. Other speakers included Gary Morgan and Jim Risk (on soils) and Arne Cleland on appropriate trees to plant.

John Paterson said the Scotts had taken their guests to one of the few remaining wet sites on their property, which made the day more meaningful as it enabled farmers to relate the various possible options to their own areas. John is involved in both the Landcare Manual project and the Environmental



(above) Work in progress: The Scotts invited guests at the field day to share ideas about what could be done to enhance this wet area on their property.

(left) George Scott welcomes Fiona Lady Elworthy to the field day on his award-winning property. Photos: John Paterson.

Award teams, and was extremely impressed at the record turnout at the field day.

"The Environment Awards are an important part of the deer industry environmental awareness programme initiated by the Landcare Manual project," he says.

"One of most important parts of the Landcare Manual is Part Two – about having a sustainable management plan (SMP) – identifying risks to the environment and having plans in place to tackle any effects.

"Start with a map of the farm, then plot out some issues and objectives to resolve those issues.

"A simple map with identified risks, solution plans, and a schedule of action written in note form on it, constitutes a basic SMP," he says. 🌱

Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards 2005

It's already time to start thinking about your entry into the 2005 Environmental Awards.

The Awards have been a great success since their launch in 2001, and many of the winning properties have subsequently found themselves the subject of local Branch field days.

The winners also attract some positive media interest with the environmentally friendly deer farms featuring nationwide in regional newspapers and other publications. As a result, the deer industry enjoys a positive rapport with several environmental organisations.

Over \$5,000 of Environmental Award prizes

As in previous years, a range of five prizes from long-standing key deer industry sponsors will be available for the entrant farmers to contest. Judging is undertaken by invited professionals from various environmental organisations including Regional Councils, Fish & Game, the NZ Landcare Trust, and DoC. This is relatively informal and invariably both entrants and the judges find it enjoyable with a two way exchange of knowledge and experience. 🌱

Phone the DINZ office today on 04 473 4500 for a copy of the 2005 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards information kit or request it on e-mail from reception@deernz.org

Environment Awards up for review

It will be business as usual for the annual Deer Farmers' Environmental Award competition in 2005, but the NZDFA Executive Committee is to consider options for its longer term future during the year.

The annual awards have now been running with great success for four years. They attract a range of sponsorship and have the ongoing support of Deer Industry New Zealand and the Elworthy family for the premier prize.

The awards have lifted the profile of the environment and welfare within the industry, and generated good publicity and valuable working relationships with the environment organisations that annually provide judges. They have also served as an invaluable companion activity to the recently published Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual and the Code of Welfare for Deer, now in development.

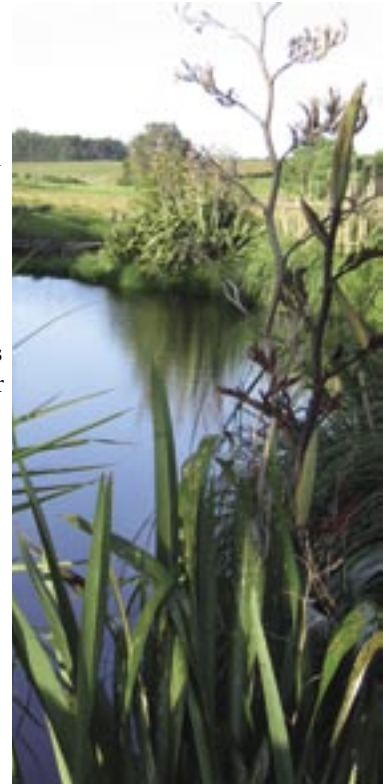
Against the background of this success are a number of challenges. The number of entrants each year is not high, and attracting entrants is not always easy. The awards, while they have generated goodwill for deer farming are now taking place amongst a number of other environment awards open to all farming sectors, e.g. the annual Ballance environmental awards and regional council-sponsored awards. It is particularly gratifying to the deer industry that deer farmers have featured among the winners of these 'mainstream' awards a number of times.

The Executive Committee will consider a number of options. For example, should the awards:

- stay as they are?
- remain an annual award but with a different structure/criteria?
- be incorporated as a division of a mainstream environmental award?
- become incorporated into a national deer farmer of the year competition?

If you feel strongly about these or any other future options for the Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards, pass on your ideas to Executive Committee member Tim Aitken, who will coordinate next year's review. 📧

Contact: Tim Aitken, Telephone: 06 856 5522, Email: timlucy@xtra.co.nz



Production efficiency vs dogma

by Geoff Asher, AgResearch Invermay

The New Zealand deer industry is undergoing much soul-searching in the face of lower returns over the last year or two. What strategies will drive it into a successful future? How will it rebuild and consolidate itself as a viable, sustainable and lucrative industry embedded with New Zealand's other primary industries? What lessons have we learned from the past?

I believe there are many options open to the industry that will assist in creating a viable future ... and I guess it really comes back to one's faith in the intrinsic values of deer products; venison and velvet.

The questions I pose are:

- (1) What can farmers do to influence the things they can control?
- (2) What can farmers do differently to help ensure a sustainable industry?



One answer comes foremost in my mind – get real about production efficiency! For too long now, the industry has hidden behind a façade of “efficiency” when in fact its true success has rested on high market returns for venison and velvet. In current circumstances, where returns do not provide a secure premium over the produce from other livestock industries, the truths about biological “efficiency” have become exposed. *Present* deer production systems often do not stack up very well alongside our traditional livestock industries in New Zealand.

We can look at “efficiency” in a number of ways, for example

- kg grass DM eaten per kg net carcass gain
- ratio of 12-week weaner weight to pre-rut hind weight
- carcass output per hectare of land.

These are all measures of outputs versus inputs. When we start putting the numbers together, things just don't stack up. The other livestock industries are out-performing deer biologically (and, as many farmers will contend, economically). The irony is that the other meat industries in New Zealand recognised 10 years ago the need to improve the biological efficiencies in the face of flagging product returns existing at the time. For example, while there has been a dramatic reduction (~40%) in the number of breeding ewes in the national flock, overall lamb outputs have remained the same. The sheep industry has gained considerable ground in ensuring a sustainable future in the primary sector.

So what does the New Zealand deer industry need to do? Firstly, we need to shatter a few myths and get real about improving the biological (and economic) efficiency of the industry.

These myths are essentially dogmas that became embedded in the industry psyche during the heady days of the industry's genesis. They were often extrapolated from early research findings – and, in all fairness, possibly served the industry well at the time. But while times and our knowledge have changed, the dogmas haven't! We have often used them as a crutch to support inefficiencies or we have allowed them to impede implementation of new ideas that may improve efficiency.

Let me give you some classic examples.

1. Deer are more efficient at converting pasture to meat than other domestic livestock species

This is a good one – and in my view, a concept that has done much hidden damage to the deer industry. And this dogma persists in the industry! It hints of a mythical creature that can live off the smell of a blade of grass – a creature that will always out-perform other animals selected for millennia for high efficiency production. Is this why we so often see deer grazing very short pastures in what is clearly an overstocked situation, in the mistaken belief that they can efficiently utilise the small amount of grass available?

The sad fact is that deer are not more efficient in the overall scheme of things. And why should they be? There is no one magical feature of deer that sets them apart from sheep and cattle. For every positive, there is a negative. They are just another medium-sized ruminant.

If we compare similar systems between species, the fact is that sheep and cattle can out-perform deer in converting feed to meat. Recently Mike Peterson of Hawke's Bay stunned deer farmers by reporting conversion figures for sheep, beef and deer systems on his farm (see: *The Deer Farmer*, August 2004). The results were sobering. To produce 1 kg of product (meat) required 15 kg of dry matter (DM) for sheep, 16 kg DM for bulls and 21 kg DM for deer. I might add that Mike's conversion figures for deer are close to those reported in 1986 by Mike Adam at Ruakura for a yearling stag system (19-21 kg DM).

So how did the “efficiency of conversion” myth come about? Probably from some early research at Invermay during the late 70s that showed remarkable efficiency in liveweight gain relative to feed intake for rising two-year-old stags at pasture in spring and summer. However, this ignores the previous 18 months of the animal's life, which included long periods of low, or even negative, growth over two winters. Deer still eat during winter, but invest this intake more into heat production than body growth. When you look at the overall picture for the 24-month period, the overall feed intake to net carcass gain ratio does not stack up that well compared to, for example, an equivalent beef system.

Okay, we no longer use a two-year system. How does the yearling stag system stack up? I also question whether a yearling system (i.e. turn off at 12-15 months of age) for venison production matches the inherent efficiency of equivalent beef systems. That's because young deer perform relatively poorly over their first winter due to their innate physiology driven by photoperiod.

So, while we can no longer lay claim to superiority of deer on the feed conversion efficiency front for *present* venison production systems, I strongly contend that we can significantly improve overall efficiency of venison systems. How? By capitalising on the first six months of the animal's life. This is a time when the animal, by nature of its physiology, is most efficient at growing. But it is also

the time when many farmers consistently fail to provide adequate nutrition for young deer to express their true growth potential. This is manifest as huge variation between farms in the six-month (pre-winter) weight of deer.

I can envisage a system in which a significant number of our deer are at 100 kg liveweight by six-months of age and readily available to supply peak chilled demand in, say, August and September. That's when we will start seeing a major shift forwards in biological efficiency. How will we achieve this? Well, let me just say that there are heaps of options here – cross breeding, early calving systems and improved forage crops, to name just a few.

It's time to think outside of the dogma square. In many cases, science has already shown the way, but sadly few have implemented existing knowledge.

2. It costs no more for a Red deer hind to produce an 80+ kg hybrid weaner than a 50 kg Red deer weaner

I call this the “free-lunch syndrome” and it has emerged several times during field days I have attended. The feeling was that if a particular property or management system had difficulties turning off well grown Red deer weaners, then simply use a Wapiti sire to produce larger hybrid weaners.

There seems to be a perception that the hybrid calf is more efficient at converting milk intake into body growth. But the numbers just don't stack up on that one. For example, in a recent Invermay trial, hand-reared F1 hybrids drank nearly twice the quantity of milk as Red deer calves in order to achieve a 40-50% advantage in growth rate.

If a hind has difficulty producing enough milk for a Red deer calf, how is she going to cope with the increased demands of a hybrid calf? Current studies at Invermay indicate that hinds raising F1 hybrid calves have to produce about twice the output of milk compared with similar hinds raising Red deer calves. Therefore, there is a cost to the hind of producing fast-growing hybrid offspring. To produce more milk she needs to eat more (or better) feed.

Furthermore, the cost of not providing more feed for lactation will be borne by the hind and the calf: reduced body condition score (BCS) of the hind and lower than expected growth of the calf. In one extreme recent example at Invermay, a hind produced and reared twin F1 hybrid calves (an unexpected by-product of AI). At three months of age, the total weight of the calves nearly matched the pre-conception weight of the hind. However, the process of high-demand lactation cost her a severe loss in BCS from 4.5 at calving to 1.5 at weaning, despite the provision of high levels of nutrition to her group of contemporaries (many of which raised single F1 hybrid calves at a cost of 0.5 BCS loss).

The terminal sire system is a brilliant option for early turn-off venison production systems and, in my opinion, will have a big role to play in efficient venison production systems. However, its success is dependent upon a high level of nutrition to the lactating hind in order to ensure calves grow to their genetic capability. There is no free lunch.

3. Never graze sheep and deer together as this will lead to MCF outbreaks in the deer

There is a certain irony that while we often view deer

farming systems as having to compete successfully against traditional New Zealand animal industries, in reality they must be able to integrate with, rather than supplant, sheep and beef systems. The ability to integrate livestock species, will be one of the most important aspects of improved production efficiency for the deer industry. Let's face it: sheep and beef integration has been around for a long time.

If there has been one single dogma that has held back mixed-species grazing practices for deer systems, the perceived link between MCF and sheep is it. It has pervaded the entire deer industry and created considerable barriers to the adoption of potentially more efficient livestock systems.

Let me get one thing straight ... I do not argue against the scientific finding that sheep may be non-clinical carriers of MCF. However, what are the real risks of mixing sheep and deer given that:

1. MCF is not rife across New Zealand Red deer hinds, despite the close proximity of sheep to nearly every deer in the country (i.e. just through the fence)
2. Disease outbreak situations reported during the early years of deer farming have been causally linked to poor nutrition and high stress levels on the deer
3. Some farmers who openly confess to mixing sheep and deer have not reported outbreaks of MCF decimating their herds (one farmer did say to me that he does lose a few more deer than normal to MCF if lambing ewes are present in the deer herd)

A recent article in *Deer Industry News* (Issue 10, July 2004) describes a mixed sheep/deer grazing system used very successfully by Matt Holden in Central Hawke's Bay. Matt acknowledges the risk of exposure of deer to MCF, but argues that MCF is triggered by stress. By keeping stress levels down, MCF has not become a problem. Matt's production figures per hectare using mixed-species systems speak for themselves: a 35% increase in gross income over and above a stand-alone deer system, plus the tangible benefits of ragwort control and improved pasture production.

I used to think that co-grazing cattle and deer was bad practice – based on one observation of a trampled Red deer calf in a paddock containing heifers. However, I am now well aware that co-grazing of the two species has become very common practice, has been associated with few “interspecies conflicts” and has greatly benefited pasture production on deer units. This is a big step forward for the deer industry. Now, how do we integrate sheep into the system?

My challenge to vets, researchers and farmers is: “how big an issue is this connection between sheep and clinical MCF in deer?” As it stands, a perceived inability to mix sheep and deer represents a huge lost opportunity of increasing overall farm productivity. Is there some way we can integrate the two species to maximise pastoral productivity while minimising the impact of MCF? What are the other health considerations when integrating livestock species (e.g. Johnes's)? And what are the social interactions between species when co-grazed?

I take my hat off to Matt Holden and others who have been brave enough to integrate livestock species systems ... they have seen beyond current dogma. I predict that “integrated species management” will be a necessary consideration for productive livestock farming of the future.

continued on p34

continued from p33

Postscript

Much of this article has been geared towards changing our attitudes to production efficiency on deer farms – this is absolutely vital for the ongoing viability of the industry. However, let's not take our eye off the ball when it comes to ensuring that venison attains a premium on the world market for its attributes as a high quality dining experience and as a healthy product. All the production efficiency in the world will come to nought if we can't sell the product at a good price.

Get these three things right – production efficiency, quality products and quality marketing – and the New Zealand deer industry will have a bright future. Personally, I have every confidence that this will happen. 🍷

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STOP PRESS: Poll results - strong support for DINZ

The Deer Industry New Zealand poll of its stakeholders showed a disappointingly low turnout from farmers, but strong support from those who responded.

Six hundred and four deer farmers (15% of the total) who farm roughly 435,000 deer (25% of the total) responded to the poll. Venison processors accounting for 98% of total production also responded, but only a handful of velvet and co-product companies.

Of those farmers voting for each question, 93% supported retaining DINZ and 92% supported DINZ's industry-wide, partnership approach.

There was clear support for all activities proposed for the next 5 years: industry representation (94%), communication and producer liaison (94%), venison promotion (91%), velvet promotion (89%), velvet research (91%), on-farm research (91%), processing research (88%), velvet removal welfare assurance systems (93%), other assurance systems (88%).

In most of these areas, 100% of venison and velvet companies voting also supported DINZ's continuing role. However, venison company support was less than unanimous in the following areas: processing research (86% support by number and 89% by volume), velvet removal welfare assurance systems (86% and 89%), and other assurance systems (71% and 26%).

“While we are generally pleased with the support shown by those who voted, we are concerned that there wasn't better participation,” says DINZ Chairman Clive Jermy. “The Board will be meeting in the New Year to analyse the results. In light of the different producer and processor results in respect of other QA systems, the Board will also review our activities in this area, concluding the DeerQA review started earlier this year.”

Poll returns were received from a further 101 farmers (farming 58,000 deer) after the 22 November closing date. These polls indicated support for DINZ and its proposed functions roughly in line with the rest of the farmer polls received.

Effect of molybdenum on copper uptake in deer confirmed

Increasing molybdenum (Mo) intakes of deer results in a marked decrease in their copper (Cu) status, while topdressing with Cu does not appear to counter the effects of increased Mo.

These were the key findings of a trial completed earlier this year by Dr Neville Grace of AgResearch for the New Zealand Fertiliser Manufacturers' Research Association¹ with DEEResearch support.

Although the interaction between Cu and Mo, especially in the presence of sulphur, has been well documented for sheep and cattle, it had not been studied specifically in deer.

Blocks subdivided

Grace's trial grazed weaner hinds on three separate blocks with sodium molybdate applied respectively at 0 (control) 0.5 kg/.ha and 1.0 kg/ha (well over the rates of 50 to 100 g/ha normally used to boost clover growth). Each of these three areas was subdivided into two blocks, one of which was topdressed with 12 kg/ha of copper sulphate, to see if this applied copper would help mitigate the Cu-depressing effects of higher levels of pasture Mo.


Both liver and serum Cu concentrations were checked during the trial, which confirmed that, in deer, an increased level of pasture Mo (> 3mg Mo/kg DM) induces a marked Cu deficiency. The effects on the Cu status of deer were similar at pasture Mo concentrations of 3-5 mg Mo/kg DM and 10-13 mg Mo/kg DM. The copper topdressing was not effective in countering the high Mo intakes.

Grace notes that pasture Mo levels of 3-5 mg Mo/kg DM, which are dependent on soil type, would be found on some deer farms, and higher concentrations have been reported in spring pastures on peat soils. He says that although some of the weaners in the trial clearly had a very low Cu status (i.e. liver Cu concentrations < 25 µmol/kg fresh tissue) there were no clinical signs such as enzootic ataxia and osteochondrosis.

Supplementing hinds

He says that supplementing pregnant hinds from mid-gestation onwards will help ensure their fawns start with a high Cu status to take them through to weaning in March.

The lack of response in the Cu status of the deer to the autumn application of Cu in the pasture with low molybdenum levels (1-2 mg Mo/kg DM) in this trial was disappointing, Grace says. In two earlier studies on the same property the use of Cu-amended fertiliser did markedly improve the Cu status of deer grazing pastures containing < 2 mg Mo/kg DM. He concludes that for Cu-amended fertilisers to be satisfactory and effective, attention might be needed to copper sulphate particle size in terms of its mixing properly with the fertiliser and its impact on plant uptake of Cu.

For a full copy of Neville Grace's report, go to: www.fertresearch.org.nz and follow the links to research. 

¹ Grace, N.D. *Effect of increasing Mo uptakes on the Cu status of deer and the impact of Cu topdressing on the Cu status of animals grazing high Mo pastures*, June 2004.

Commercial deer farms are a vital part of industry research apparatus

Active involvement in on-farm research projects contributes to the wider deer industry as well as benefiting individual farmers practically, financially and socially. We talk to two deer farmers and the head of the Massey Deer Research Group to find out more.

Roped into a DEEResearch leptospirosis research programme almost two years ago via his veterinarian Ian Walker, Tim Aitken, who farms a mixed deer/beef enterprise in Tikokino, is enthusiastic about his involvement. He says his initial concerns about confidentiality and time-wasting were swept away.

“We had a recurring problem on-farm with fawns dying in March through to May and, despite all our efforts, we just could not get to the bottom of it,” he says.

“Initially we thought it could be yersinia, but because yersinia is a stress-related problem believed there was another factor affecting the weaners and first fawners. After blood testing extensively and finding it wasn’t that, Ian (Walker) suggested we joined the Massey research programme to find out first if we did have leptospirosis and from there become part of the research programme.”

No commercial disadvantage

Confidentiality was secured with a written agreement between Massey and Aitken, which also binds in the veterinarian to the contract. The farm was then coded and all research notes refer to the code rather than the property name, which covers any issues of commercial disadvantage after disease disclosure.

In-depth recording over two years has established that the problem was leptospirosis, isolated the strains, which times were best to vaccinate, whether hinds were protecting the fawns adequately during pregnancy and also looked at weight gains.

“We also discovered the fact that it was sourced from the cattle and we now ensure that all of those are vaccinated when they come onto the farm,” Aitken says.

“We now have percentage weight gains, fewer losses and other problems were also picked up along the way. Financially, it has been a great success.”

Holistic programme

For Pohangina Valley velvet farmer Chris Pullar, the collection of scientific data over 10 years has benefited his holistic farming programmes and enabled him to focus on increasing production and prevent diseases like leptospirosis and Johne’s from entering his herd, which in turn has reduced his animal health bills.

Seemingly common sense principles like removing aggressive hinds from the herd, were a result of meticulous observations in a PhD student’s paper in 1986 (Laurent Audige) that the aggressive hinds were seven times less likely to conceive. In addition to immediate pregnancy rate improvements, his herd is now easier to handle. He advocates the application of the principles from “that excellent piece of work”.

“Together we’ve built a picture of the herd and a production profile for my fawns, younger and older animals. This allows me to be objective when making production decisions and looking at my annual animal health plan. I’ve just applied the principles learned and maintain involvement in ongoing research.”

In terms of time, involvement in the lepto project has cost Aitken one full day every six weeks and, for one winter semester each year, Pullar hosts a group of final year Massey students every Monday for half a day. Aside from the raft of statistics each now has at their fingertips, both he and Aitken have found the procession of researchers of every nationality, including French, Mexicans, Indians, and Uruguayans “very entertaining”.

Multi-lingual deer

Commenting on the fluency with which the researchers switch between their native language and communicating complex technical detail in English, Pullar has noted another advantage: that his deer are now “multi-lingual” and respond to commands in Dutch and German along with a wide variety of other languages!

“Another incremental gain has been having new people on farm with new ideas,” Pullar says. He adds that minor problems with a handful of research individuals “focusing too strongly on the science and not enough on people skills” have been ironed out quickly. As a part-time deer farmer – he is also an orchardist, which requires extensive travel around the country – he has found the researchers have been totally co-operative with his tight and exacting schedule.

Intellectually, it has been stimulating for Aitken who says he has learned more about his enterprise. “The free advice has been very gratefully received,” he says, adding cheerfully that it has been given as well.

Pullar agrees, saying that active participation benefits both parties. “Our farm wouldn’t have improved in terms of velveting standards without the input.

“I have to be involved; it’s in my nature,” he says, adding that he likes to be “at the sharp end, not the blunt end, of the business”.

Aim for continual improvement and industry good

The current project at Tikokino, run by Massey Veterinary Researcher and Masters student Alejandra Ayanegui-Alcerra will come to an end in the next few months. Aitken says he has offered the blood samples that have been collected from his herd over the past two years for use in other research projects and has also asked to be involved in any future work for which his property might be relevant. Why? Because he



Tim Aitken says taking part in the Massey research helped him identify and manage a problem with leptospirosis.

wants to continually improve what he's doing with the herd, which ultimately affects his bottom line, but also for the greater development of the New Zealand deer industry.

"We still have a lot to learn about deer and I am happy to be involved with anything that can be used to better the industry."

He is appreciative of the acknowledgement that farmers are given for the time and effort they put into the project at no charge.

Aitken's eagerness to remain involved and Pullar's long-term participation reflects what Massey University's Professor of Deer Health and Production Peter Wilson has learned over years of being involved with research groups and forming life-long friendships with many of the farmers.

"Even though, these days, deer farmers are getting over-burdened with their business with an increase in the number of deer per person, extreme climate events and the pressure of prices, we have still been able to recruit farmers to help us."

In addition to the obvious positive benefits, he feels the trials have another social dimension. "In my experience, once they are involved, many farmers don't want to let us go!"

Grateful to farmers

Wilson is grateful to all of the participating farmers who allow his Deer Research Group team onto their properties. Massey Deer Research are currently working on 14 projects – including DEEResearch and VARNZ-funded research into leptospirosis, Johne's Disease, antler analgesia techniques and post-velveting stag deaths – with up to eight people working full-time sampling, surveying and observing on about 1,000 properties. Within that, over 200 volunteer farms have agreed to participate with the Johne's Research Group and the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology sponsored research into the same disease. A further 500 have been invited to participate in a new anthelmintics research project.

He explains that while ideas can start in the research station, much of the research needs to be applied on-farm in order to accelerate the rate of progress. The experiment often needs to be repeated in a number of commercial farming operations to guarantee validity, he says.

continued on p38



Professor Peter Wilson says results from 'real-life' deer farms can be necessary to validate experiments.

Research: from p37

“The leptospirosis research, for example, needed real-life farms with the right strain of the disease that could not be introduced into an experimental herd. In addition, understanding of the regional prevalence of the disease could only be achieved with participation of over 130 farmers from Northland to Southland. This knowledge will shortly be reported back to industry so a national strategy can be developed, with solutions available direct to farmers and vets through the research conducted in the ‘real world’,” Wilson says.

“Research stations are enormously expensive to run and money for deer research does not grow on trees. If farmers are not involved in contributing their time and access to facilities, we could not move forward as fast. A lot of research cannot be done in a controlled research environment anyway.

“Farmers should recognise that industry research is for the benefit of farmers. Without farmer support and participation, the rate of industry improvement will be curtailed.

“In addition, in a real-life setting we are virtually assured of getting the information directly back to farmers,” Wilson says. 📍

Chris Pullar is happy to talk to anyone who would like to know more from a farmer's perspective – 06-329 4863, email ckpullar@clear.net.nz.

To volunteer for Johne's Disease sampling or velvet analgesia research or for further information about how to become involved in one of Massey University's research projects, contact Peter Wilson on 06-356 9099 ext 7619 or by email p.r.wilson@massey.ac.nz

Appeal for more farms to join Johne's research project

The Johne's Research Group (JRG) has achieved its target of at least 160 properties registering for the five-year epidemiology project with 210 now registered. But don't relax – they are now raising the bar.

Reporting to Branch Chairmen at their October meeting, researcher Jaimie Glossop told farmers that she's now looking for between 100-120 in each of the groups of infected and non-infected properties for the PhD project, rather than the 80 of each first planned. She said the bigger numbers will give more robust statistical coverage of the different variables being studied.

Jaimie said the study would focus on management variables, while filling information gaps about transmission, shedding rates, longevity and any role of wildlife in its spread.

As an initial step, Jaimie is carrying out a 20-property case study from among the 210 farms that have so far joined the project.

JRG convenor Peter Aitken told the meeting the project is fully funded for its first year, but further funds will be needed for year 2 and beyond. He explained each of the JRG's four constituent Branches has committed \$10,000 a year from its own resources, but more funding will be required. Peter thanked the Tongariro and Poverty Bay Branches, and the Fallow Deer Society for their recent contributions. (The JRG is now a special interest Branch of the NZDFA.)

The Sustainable Farming Fund is helping by providing \$120,000 pa for disseminating information on JD to deer farmers. This will meet the costs of the information distribution associated with the project, including the first three JRG Bulletins and a fourth edition (enclosed with this mailing of *Deer Industry News*) in the pipeline.

He said there is still no reliable test for Johne's within the 72-hour window required to export a detained chilled carcass, but that one is hopefully not far away.

The current epidemiology project within the deer industry is part of a wider industry approach using FRST funding to find solutions to Johne's Disease; including developing improved diagnostic tests and vaccination.

Jaimie noted that the disease is also well entrenched in the sheep, beef and dairy populations. She said that because of the way Johne's manifests in deer, the animals make a sound scientific model for the expression of the disease. 📍

**To take part in the epidemiology project contact Jaimie Glossop on 06 350 5600 (x 2854) or 027 289 8508, or email at J.C.Glossop@massey.ac.nz
Or phone Peter Aitken on (03) 614 7482, e-mail aitken@orcon.net.nz**

AHB clarifies funding proposals

While the overall trends are tracking in the right direction for the Animal Health Board (AHB) to achieve the objectives of the National Pest Management Strategy for bovine Tb, the deer sector is starting to lag behind cattle herd clearance.

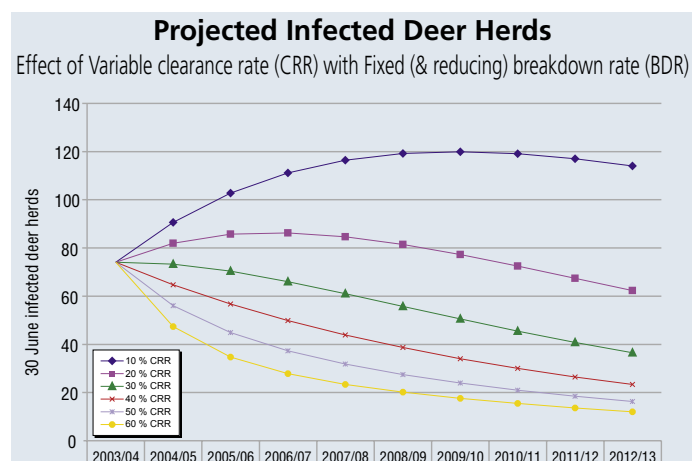
The AHB describes the medium-term objective of the strategy of 0.2% infected herds by 2013 as “ambitious but achievable”. Latest figures from the Board show 15 infected deer herds in the North Island and 58 in the South Island at June 2004.

While the overall number at June 2004 (73) is much lower than the 233 infected deer herds a decade earlier, progress has stalled somewhat over the past 5 years. During 2003/04 the number of infected deer herds actually increased by 9 percent – the biggest percentage jump for more than 10 years. Deer herds now make up 24 percent of all infected herds – a disproportionately high share.

The AHB puts the problem down to:

- poor infected herd clearance in deer compared with cattle
- a breakdown rate for deer nearly twice as high as cattle.

At a presentation to Branch Chairmen in October, the AHB’s Chief Executive William McCook outlined what the Board saw as key reasons for the poor clearance rate – and suggested some solutions for accelerating the clearance rate. The following AHB projection (see graph) illustrates just what a big impact improving the clearance rates could have on the overall numbers of infected herds.



The AHB has targeted a number of causes for the poor clearance rates on deer farms. The analysis shouldn’t surprise farmers, but what should be encouraging is the Board’s strategy for aggressively targeting these constraints.

As the Board sees it, this is what slows down clearance:

- infected herds not tested frequently enough
- ancillary testing too expensive and slow
- difficulty in quickly disposing of reactors
- large-scale breakdowns
- effectiveness of vector control – ferrets vs. possums.

The Board is proposing a mix of initiatives to target these factors and kick-start the sought-after improvement in deer industry performance. These include collective

industry funding for Tb testing in infected herds, reactor compensation for high-risk herds, and building up a fund to compensate for herd depopulation at fair market value.

The proposal takes on board the Board of Inquiry recommendation that: “The deer industry should reconsider its opposition to collective funding where the current means of funding results in an unfair distribution of the funding burden.”

Proposals to address each issue are:

Increasing testing frequency in infected herds

- Continue collective funding of herd management plan and second herd test/year subject to commitment to plan
- Penalties if deviation from plan
- Collective funding for legitimate ancillary serial testing.

Parallel testing

- Continue collective funding for parallel blood testing in specific infected (acute and chronic) herds, to reduce number of false negatives and risk of residual infection.

High risk herd support

- Financial assistance for advice on herd management options after a sudden change in Tb situation.

High risk infected herds

- Compensate reactors
- \$200 for hinds and non-breeding stags
- \$400 for breeding stags.

Sensitivity of re-testing

- Collective funding to pay for first three IgG1 ELISA (ETB) retests on CCT test positives at whole-herd tests – farmers encouraged to pay for balance of ETBs.

The following two strategies are draft proposals, shortly out for consultation with the deer industry:

Depopulation

- Develop funding reserve \$100-\$200k to compensate farmers with badly infected herds to allow them to depopulate to minimise risk to herds, vectors and programme’s existing control.

Special Testing Areas (fringe)

- Change to collective funding of alternate year testing in fringe areas.
- Purchase deer at fair market value for surveillance purposes.

Contact for further information:

William McCook, Animal Health Board, ph 04 472 2858, www.ahb.org.nz

Update: as at October, there were 62 infected deer herds – the lowest number on record.

Terminal sire role for Elk/Wapiti gaining momentum

More and more deer farmers are coming to recognise the benefits of using Elk/Wapiti bulls as terminal sires for their more traditional breeds of hinds.

The reputation of the larger Elk and Wapiti bulls of being unruly and difficult to handle, particularly during the roar, may sometimes be justified.

But experienced deer farmers say that if you treat them with respect, ensure any stock handling yards are substantial, and steer clear of them during the roar, the positives far outweigh the negatives.

Three farmers who run only Red hinds are very specific about the main benefit to them – larger progeny with better growth rates, meaning heavy weights early in the chilled season, in turn meaning better prices.

Forget genetics – use Elk/Wapiti!

Central Southlander, **Bill Taylor**, strongly supports the principle of using Elk/Wapiti bulls to improve productivity. In fact, he goes as far as suggesting that many deer farmers would be well advised to do that rather than using genetics to breed heavier animals.

Bill has been deer farming for nearly 20 years, and from the start stocked Red deer. Over the years he experimented with different hybrids to improve productivity and by the mid 90s had decided that the best results came from using Elk/Wapiti-type bulls as terminal sires. He found that if the sires he uses are 80% or more true to breed and he gets the benefit of the first cross, the growth results strongly reflect the sire's genetics in the progeny.

For him, this means larger progeny with better growth rates – and that means a higher percentage of his animals killed at the best weights and price for the chilled season.

Currently he mates about two thirds of his Red hinds to Elk/Wapiti bulls, the progeny all being sold for venison. The other third are mated to Red stags to produce replacement hinds.

Bill admits that working with the Elk/Wapiti bulls can be “a bit of an adrenalin rush” at times, but if they are handled with caution and respect, they are not a problem. He recommends anyone buying Elk/Wapiti terminal sires to ensure they are quiet – and would like to see all breeders getting into the pens and scratching the animal's ears to prove it! “You certainly don't want to buy a large, grumpy elk bull,” he says.

Good handling facilities a must

Ian McCorkindale runs a small operation within Invercargill's city boundaries, and also uses Elk/Wapiti-type sires to achieve the best possible weights during the chilled season. He runs around 115 Red hybrid hinds and admits that he doesn't pay fancy prices for his bulls.

However, he is more than satisfied with the results and says that as long as you have good handling facilities, the Wapiti sires are generally pretty easy to work with – although he admits he has one that is pretty grizzly at the roar.

Hitting the peak for chilled prices – normally a window of 3-4 weeks – is really important. Ensuring the animals

reach a top weight by that time is essential. Using the Elk/Wapiti sires is the best way to do that, he believes. His biggest concern is that everyone will decide to do exactly the same, and there could be a space problem!

Hybrid vigour for weight gains

Geoff Burton has been farming hybrid hinds near Taupo since 1983. Today he and Debbie run a 51 effective hectare breeding and finishing unit for hybrids, but using Wapiti bulls over straight Red hinds. Gradually they have changed from hybrid hinds to Red hinds on a ratio of 2:3 and continue to use Wapiti over them.

Debbie says the short answer for the change in hinds is hybrid vigour for weaner weight gains, a better fawning percentage and better temperament in the hinds. The fawns are bigger and grow faster and, with careful grazing management, are ready earlier. By mid to late November over 90% of the weaners have gone in time with the chilled season.

She says they have few handling problems with the Wapiti bulls so long as they are respected. The present line have good temperament for most of the year. However, she agrees that you have to be careful around them once the roar starts. “Once they are in with the girls we leave them alone,” she says. One bull is so eager to get on with the job that he jumps the fence in January so some hinds are calving up to a month earlier than usual.

Their Red hind/Wapiti sire breeding percentages are generally good with a final weaning percentage of around 89%.



Handled with care, Wapiti terminal sires are well worth the effort. Photo: Linda Scott.

Invercargill show launch for new Elk product

Visitors to the Royal Show in Invercargill this month were given the opportunity to be the first to sample the newly launched range of Elk meat.

Marketer Bill Floyd approached Invercargill chef, Graham Hawkes, to be part of the low-key, soft launch of the newly-branded product, and asked him to develop several recipes to tempt the thousands of visitors to the show.

Graham was delighted at the invitation – he has been encouraging people to eat New Zealand venison, nationally and internationally, for going on 20 years. In 1987, he visited the United States, promoting farm-raised New Zealand venison and organised the first Cervena® Plates competition in Southland with local deer farmers. Later he worked with fellow chef, Graham Brown, during the launch of Cervena, and has also promoted beef and lamb extensively for many years, including serving on the Beef and Lamb Marketing Bureau's Advisory Group.

He now owns three restaurants in Invercargill and a catering business, and has 'always' served venison in his restaurants. He believes good lean red meat is essential in a healthy diet, and says that the Elk he has cooked so far has been excellent in both flavour and tenderness. "It is very lean, with good-sized muscling, and is very easy to handle."

At the Royal Show, Graham has arranged for a team of boys currently studying 'culinary arts' at Southland Boys

High School, under the supervision of their tutor, to prepare the bite-sized finger-foods for people to sample. He had to develop recipes that could be prepared in bulk, that were "removed from the meat sandwich or kebab that you usually see at these types of events" and that demonstrated the versatility of the meat. These are two of Graham Hawke's recipes:

LADIES' FINGERS

500g Elk mince
10 ml olive oil
1/2 medium onions, peeled and finely chopped
1 clove garlic, peeled, crushed and finely chopped
1 fresh chillies, deseeded and finely chopped
1/2 tsp ground all spice
pinch cayenne pepper
50 gm tomato paste
50 ml chicken stock
50 gm toasted pine nuts
1/4 cup chopped coriander

Method

1. Heat the oil in a heavy based saucepan and seal the meat.
2. Add all the other ingredients and cook out.
3. Allow to cool.
4. Brush four sheets of Filo pastry with beaten egg and cut into 6 or 8 pieces.
5. Place 1 tbsp mixture on each and roll up.
6. Fry in clean oil.

TEX MEX ELK

500g Elk trim (diced small)
1 clove garlic, peeled, crushed and diced small
1 medium onion, peeled and chopped medium dice
1 tsp crushed chilli (or 1 fresh mild red chilli, seeded and finely chopped)
10 ml olive oil
1 can chopped tomatoes
100 gm frozen whole kernel corn
2 spring onions, sliced
1/2 cup chopped Cilantro (coriander)
1/2 green pepper, deseeded and medium diced
1/2 red pepper, deseeded and medium diced
Sea salt
Freshly ground pepper

Method

1. Sauté the meat in the olive oil in a heavy based saucepan.
2. Add onion, garlic and continue to sauté for 2 minutes.
3. Add crushed chilli, corn, peppers, tomatoes, Cilantro and cook out.
4. Check seasoning and once completed add sliced spring onions.

Tortilla shell

Method

Cut the tortilla shell into the desired size. Grill on a hot plate with a little butter and once brown on each side roll up and allow to set. Fill with the sauté mixture and top with sour cream and a corn chip if desired.

First century for Fiordland Wapiti to be marked

Ninety nine years ago, a small herd of Wapiti were released in Fiordland, a gift from US President, Teddy Roosevelt.

The animals had travelled across the States by train, 6000 miles by ship to New Zealand (with two dying on the voyage), and were then transferred to the Government vessel *Hinemoa* for the trip down to Fiordland, to be released in remote George Sound in 1905.

President Roosevelt was a keen conservationist and outdoor sportsman. By about 1920, there were very few Wapiti surviving in the United States, and the former president and many of his fellow hunters took the lead in conserving the habitat of the Wapiti and bringing them back in large numbers.

In 2005, one hundred years after the eighteen surviving Wapiti were released into their new inhospitable home,

hunters from around New Zealand will be gathering in Te Anau to mark the occasion.

In early May next year, a life-size ferro-cement statue will be erected at the main entrance to Te Anau, the work of Taupo deer farmer and sculptor, Murray Matuschka. The antlers are being cast by Clive Seddon, who is using a single massive cast antler found in Canyon Creek, in 1938 as his model. This measured 64½ inches, a world record at the time, and still one of the largest ever seen in New Zealand.

One of the event organisers, Ron Peacock, says they have invited one of Teddy Roosevelt's descendants to come to New Zealand to be part of the celebrations.

A second major event to celebrate the 100th anniversary will be a black tie hunters' ball, to be held that evening ("not a 'swannie in sight,'" Ron says). A

number of other activities are planned, including an impressive display of past Wapiti trophies.

Fiordland's remote, glaciated valleys, dense rain forests, snow capped mountains and rainfall of over 300 inches a year have been a challenge for the Wapiti as they had to quickly adapt to their new environment – but they have produced some outstanding trophies over the past 100 years and lasting memories for untold hunters.

- Wapiti is the North American Indian name for the animals and translates to "white rump". The first European settlers saw the Wapiti and confused them with the European moose which are known as "Elk" in Europe. The Wapiti are still called Elk but in fact are Wapiti. The word moose is the North American Indian name for the North American moose.

Diversified enterprise for former vet



Making a living off 200 deer on 35 ha is a feat few farmers will pull off. But Dave Lawrence of Tikana (near Winton) seems to have developed the formula.

Dave principally produces sire bulls for the terminal sire market. "It's a specialist, high value niche market and a stud like this is the only way you can make a living of that acreage," he says. The operation runs over 20su/ha and grosses around \$200/su.

The former veterinarian arrived back in Southland in 1983 after practising in the North Island and set up practice with his mate, Mike Bringans, who had been involved in live capture of deer and other aspects of the industry in the early days.

As the practice evolved it was one of the few to concentrate on deer. The partnership was involved in the first frozen embryo transplant (on Gordon McDonald's farm in Dipton). Being a deer vet in the early days meant managing the transition of the imported animals across the changed seasons, as well as general medicals.

Then he decided to import his own bulls in 1985. The veterinary practice was sold five years ago, realising Dave's ambition to concentrate on farming.

Dave's partner, Donna Day, diversifies the land use by breeding thoroughbred horses. They have also diversified into tourism, building a small luxury lodge.

"The tourists are

blown away by the close contact with the deer. The Europeans and Americans sit out on the deck having coffee and the animals will come up to the fence sniffing curiously and stick their head over the balcony wall.

"We drive around the farm with the tourists. A honeymooner had her first

kiss from an elk when it stuck its head in the open truck window," Dave recalls. "The elk are majestic. There is an appeal in the quietness of them."

The objective at Tikana is to maintain an 80 percent elk gene herd. All are DNA blood-typed so all buyers of stock know what they are getting..

"We are pleased with our growth rates and the quality and quantity of velvet. Average 2-yr-old velvet weights have gone from 2.8kg to 3.9kg in 10yrs and average beam diameter increased from 14.7cm to 16.6cm. To maintain her place in the herd, a hind's 2-yr-old male progeny must produce better than 3.5kg and 16cm beam. Our aim is to be offering the market the ideal sire that gives 20 percent ROI just on velvet, and an animal that will have trophy potential and therefore another avenue of income."

Selection also focuses on growth rates, such that last year the average daily gain of bulls (from March weaning until 15mths) was 334g/day with the best over 400.

How does he see the future? "I'm an optimist. The development of a venison market outside the traditional game season in Europe will be our saviour.

I would have liked to have seen the Cervana brand pursued harder in North

America, making more use of the branding support giving by the President and top baseball players.

"Elk is recognised in the USA. A single product market is needed there. EWS has some initiatives to do just that but it will need to be niche."

Dave concedes the industry is "doom and gloom" at present.

The Chinese decision to ban velvet product hasn't helped.

"However," he says, "looked at in the right light, the banning of velvet imports due to smuggling, etc, is really a positive move."

Dave has been involved in the establishment of the National Deer Performance scheme. "The aim has been to develop a database to the point where anyone serious about getting into deer, or improving, can access all the relevant information."

He is a foundation member of the EWS, has done his time on the quality assurance committee, is an auditor of the velvet scheme, has been a judge of Southland and now Southern region Deer Farmer of the Year competitions and spent a few years on the local DFA committee.

Tourism and Wapiti a great mix at Oraka Deer Park



Psst! Don't look now, but there are some tourists in the garden! As well as being a chef, tourist guide and raconteur, Linda Scott is a talented photographer. This entry in the 2004 W&W photo awards featured on the 2005 deer industry calendar.

Every week coaches full of tourists from around New Zealand and many overseas countries pull up at the main gate of a picturesque Waikato farm.

Warmly greeted by their hostess – and sometimes their host – they are driven on a 45 minute conducted tour around a working deer farm. The novelty for the tourists is that the deer are largely the majestic Wapiti. For many of the visitors, it is the first time they have come in contact with these generally friendly, very curious animals.

For the past 15 years, Ian and Linda Scott have been deer farming, five minutes' drive from the thriving town of Tirau, well known by travellers for its cluster of antiques shops, cafes, and the corrugated iron sheep and dog buildings.

Ian has established a hard-earned reputation in the district as a successful dairy vet. Out among the deer fraternity around the country he is known both for the quality of his Wapiti terminal sires and for his contributions in the develop-

ment of velveting standards and on-farm quality assurance programmes.

Successful tourism operator

Linda, a former school teacher who later worked with her husband on the farm, is now fully occupied as a highly successful tourism operator, hostess and cook in their very popular restaurant which is set in a spectacular show garden she has developed.

From her years of working on the farm, Linda has accumulated a wealth of amusing stories about deer in general – and Wapiti in particular – which she uses to entertain and educate the coach loads of visitors to Oraka Deer Park. She talks about deer farming and about all the products that come from the deer and what they are manufactured into. Linda's anecdotes are based on fact, are

humorous and at times a little risqué – but she tempers them to suit her audience. To most, she cheerfully describes the mating rituals of the Wapiti, and whips out the dried deer pizzle, highly valued in traditional Asian culture. "Ninety-nine percent leave with a great big grin on their faces," she says.

While guests enjoy Linda's tales, they also love watching the Wapiti come running to the fence line to be hand-fed as the coach approaches, and to pat what Linda describes as her 'old girls' in a corral near the restaurant. Many of the city-bred overseas visitors relish the opportunity to hand-feed the fawns and for many just patting the cats and a dog is a treat.

About half of the tour groups are international visitors, but the show garden and restaurant attract coachloads of gardening clubs, senior groups,

continued on next page

family celebrations and weddings, and she regularly hosts school groups. As a former teacher, she is well suited to educating while she is entertaining, and she says she has received incredible feedback from many of her visitors.

Product is easy to talk about

It is easy, she says. "I have a product that is exceedingly interesting to talk about." She describes them as majestic beasts, big and impressive, especially when they have their full mane on, or when magnificent trophy stags fully antlered are on show.

The souvenir shop on the farm has an extensive range of products that link directly to deer, and Linda says these always attract a lot of interest. However, it is the restaurant which has proved a real success.

Opened initially as a small coffee shop for the tourist buses, it quickly grew and is now a full restaurant and function centre. Venison is the main feature on the menu, purchased from Gourmet Direct and cooked on the barbecue. The

Scotts encourage everyone to sample the Cervena® and, unless they are vegetarians, almost always succeed. Even those who have unhappy memories of gamey wild venison eventually taste a bit and then join the queue for refills.

She is passionate about venison, and takes every opportunity to promote it. "It's not fatty, it's very tender, high in iron and low in cholesterol – it is great for the body," she says. "Every time it is real hit." Linda regularly works at the restaurant, and, when he's not too busy, ropes Ian in to help with the barbecue.

Three separate operations

Ian combines his veterinary practice with deer farming. They run 1700 animals, predominantly Wapiti, on three separate farming operations – two at Tirau and the third with friends Jeremy and Tina Johnston, near Kaikoura. While he farms for both venison and velvet, he is one of the largest suppliers, by number (60–70 per year), of Wapiti terminal sires in New Zealand.

He agrees that central Waikato conditions are less than ideal for Wapiti, but says as he supplies terminal sires to deer

farmers around the North Island, they are expected to perform in the environment where they are going to live.

Earlier this year, Ian won The Deer Industry Award, the highest accolade given to an individual who has made a major contribution to the deer industry. His main involvement has been as chairman of the National Velvet Standards Body. Last year saw frantic activity to preserve the rights of all deer farmers to have access to traditional velvetting drugs when faced by a serious challenge brought about by legislative changes.

He has also been involved in the on-farm quality assurance programme since its inception, and has a liaison role between the veterinary profession and the New Zealand deer industry. This has involved presenting numerous scientific papers at conferences and forums.

The couple named their farm, Oraka Deer Park, after the river that meanders through their property. Oraka means swift and agile, which Linda says is very appropriate to their farm. "Deer are swift and agile, deer farmers need to be and that's what velvet capsules can help you become!"

US market a 'sleeping giant' says marketing guru

Marlborough marketing guru, Bill Floyd has gained a reputation for taking unusual culinary delicacies and establishing niche markets for top quality, small quantity, high value products.

So when he predicts a rosy future in America for New Zealand Elk meat, people listen! For the last 12 months he has been researching the markets, the consumers, the opportunities, and the product.

Now he is firmly convinced that New Zealand Elk meat will be the next delicacy to win the hearts and minds of some dedicated red meat eaters in the United States. Elk meat is highly regarded in some parts of the States – in fact to many, the Rocky Mountain Elk has iconic status, second only to the bald eagle.

New Zealand is one of the few countries outside North America where Elk are farmed, and this gives New Zealand Elk farmers a real edge. There are a number of restaurants in the inland states where Elk meat is an important feature on the menu, and their patrons want it all year round. Bill's objective is to find an up-scale restaurant chain or a group of supermarkets which cater to discerning meat purchasers, and offer them fresh New Zealand Elk meat during their off-season (the New Zealand fresh and chilled season).

Bill says the potential for New Zealand Elk meat to North

America is not going to threaten any existing venison markets. "The potential is to focus more narrowly on the New Zealand Elk, rather than on venison. We will be playing on its strengths," he says.

He knows of one chef at a game restaurant who would buy New Zealand Elk during the off season, 'in a heartbeat'.

Bill has been working with the EWSNZ on developing the right approach for marketing their product. One early decision was that the closely related Elk and Wapiti would be marketed as New Zealand Elk, and it will only be from animals that contain a minimum of 75% Elk genes. To support some of the Elk meat brand values being developed, he plans to undertake some research, including tenderness and flavour testing, and the effects of different cooking styles.

The plan is to gradually develop awareness of Elk as a distinctive New Zealand product, allowing the 'New Zealand Elk brand' to be developed progressively. He believes there are good opportunities for the product in the food service industry in New Zealand, and wants to see this developed. Another market with considerable potential is Australia.

But he sees the greatest demand coming from up-market American restaurants. "It is a sleeping giant," he says.



DEER SALE CALENDAR 2004/2005

December			
Wednesday 15	1.30pm	Westbush	Masterton
	1.30pm	Taihape Red Deer	Waiouru
Thursday 16	1.30pm	Maranoa	Takapau
Friday 17	12.30pm	Egmont	New Plymouth
	3.00pm	Rockvale	New Plymouth
January			
Wednesday 5	11.00am	Gloriavale	Insignis
	12 Noon	Deer Genetics	Rotorua
	12 Noon	Ingor Deer Farm	Waimatua
	2.30pm	Pampas Heights	Rotorua
	3.00pm	Canterbury Red Deer Stud	Tai Tapu
	4.00pm	Netherdale Deer Stud	Balfour
	5.00pm	Love Red Deer	Rotorua
Thursday 6	11.30am	Windermere	Hamilton
	12 noon	Cloudy Bay	Insignis
	2.00pm	Doncaster Deer	Waipahi
	4.00pm	Rodway	Rotorua
	6.00pm	Beaufort	Rotorua
Friday 7	12.30pm	Tower Farms	Cambridge
	4.00pm	Raroa	Cambridge
	2.30pm	Willow Creek	Insignis
Saturday 8	1.30pm	Pelorus Red Deer Stud	Ashburton
	11.00am	Harwood Deer	Ashburton
	12.00pm	Elite Wapiti Sale	Invercargill
	3.00pm	Tikana Wapiti	Winton
	5.30pm	C J H Smith Wapiti	Winton
	5.30pm	Deer Genetics	Geraldine
Sunday 9	12.00 noon	Carran Farms Wapiti	Te Anau
	5.30pm	Mayfield Elk Wapiti	Winton
Monday 10	11.00am	Peel Forest Estate	Geraldine
	4.00pm	Foveran Deer	Hakataramea
Tuesday 11	1.30pm	Stanfield's Bushey Park "English" & "Eastern"	Palmerston
Wednesday 12	1.00pm	Black Forest Deer	Outram
Thursday 13	1.30pm	Arawata Partnership	Waimahaka
	6.30pm	Pinewood Deer	Merino Downs
Friday 14	12.00pm	Remarkables Park	Queenstown
Saturday 15	11.00am	Marylands Elk – Wapiti	Tarris
Monday 17	1.30pm	Edendale – D Whyte	Ashburton
Tuesday 18	1.30pm	S J Mitchell – Don J Greig	Insignis
Friday 21	2.00pm	Lotus Estate	Timaru

Sale information kindly supplied by Wrightson Ltd

WRIGHTSON LIVESTOCK MARKET REPORT

November/December 2004

		North Island (\$/kg)	South Island (\$/kg)
Rising 1 year Hybrid Stags	Top	2.00	2.00
	Medium	1.70	1.70
	Small Med	1.40	1.50
Rising 1 Year Red Stags	Top	1.80	1.80
	Medium	1.60	1.60
	Small Med	1.30	1.30
Rising 1 Year Hybrid Hinds	Top	1.60	1.80
	Medium	1.30	1.50
	Small Med	1.00	1.20
Rising 1 Year Red Hinds	Top	1.40	1.70
	Medium	1.20	1.40
	Small Med	1.00	1.20
		North Island (\$/hd)	South Island (\$/hd)
Rising 2yr Stags Velvet potential	Medium	280	300
	Smaller	240	250
Mixed Age Stags Velveters	Top	320	350
	Medium	270	300

Seasonal Comments:

Currently no mixed age or rising two year hinds being sold due to fawning. Rising one year stags still in demand while one year hinds are changing hands at reduced levels. Market for velvet stags very limited.

Results: North Island Velvet Competition '04

Place	Entrant	Address	Tag No/ Name	Weight (kg)
Class 1 Open Red				
1	West Bush Deer Stud	Masterton	Sherwood	13.01
2	B M & A I Simmonds	Rotorua	G265	7.74
3	Sheerwater	Helensville	1456 Reece	7.24
Class 2 Maiden Red				
1	Mangapurakau Stn	Waipukarau	287	7.86
2	Love Red deer	Rotorua	9111	6.28
3	Hunter Red Deer	Te Awamutu	Y7	6.96
Class 3 3 Yr Red				
1	B M & A I Simmonds	Rotorua	Y626	4.27
2	Hatuma Deer	Waipukarau	135 Tristram	5.72
Class 4 4 Yr Red				
1	Tower Farms	Hamilton	00-138 Watson	9.16
2	West Bush Deer Stud/ Sarnia Deer	Masterton	00-38 Atlas	7.02
3	Mangapurakau Stn	Waipukarau	Y149	6.25
Class 5 Commercial Red 5 Heads				
1	Sarnia Deer	Hamilton	38.31Kgs	\$2,130.18
2	Kahikatea Trust	Waikanae	30.01 Kgs	\$1,742.15
3	B M & A I Simmonds	Rotorua	27.07 Kgs	\$1,530.34
Class 5A Commercial Red 5 Heads under 25 Kgs				
1	Raroa Red Deer	Hamilton	24.74 Kgs	\$1,561.93
2	B M & A I Simmonds	Rotorua	24.87 Kgs	\$1,410.74
3	G W Blackmore	Wanganui	23.96 Kgs	\$1,320.86
Class 6 Elk/Wapiti Supreme kg				
1	Cotswold Hills	Ashurst	B16	10.99
2	Totara Park Wapiti	Masterton	Goldie	9.60
Class 7 Champion Elk/Wapiti				
1	Totara Park Wapiti	Masterton	Rock	8.68
Class 8 Red Hard Antler Score				
1	Love Red Deer	Rotorua	Awesome	484 7/8
2	Love Red Deer	Rotorua	Carbine	469 7/8
3	West Bush Deer Stud	Masterton	Sherwood	439 3/8
Class 9				
	B Timmins	Pahiatua	Sire	Maire
	Kahikatea Trust	Waikanae	Sire	Terrance

Coming events

22 January 2005:

Elk and Wapiti Society Velvet and Hard Antler competition: Millennium Hotel, Queenstown. Contact Tracey MacLean, 03-318-3101

19 February 2005:

National 2 y/o Velvet and Hard Antler Competition, Masterton. Rooms available at the Cophorne Solway. For further details contact Anne Allen, Secretary, Wairarapa