ISSN 1176-0753

DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 21 • October 2006 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA

Focus on productivity p3, 22

Also in this issue:

- John Spiers joins DINZ Board
- Venison benefits promoted to dieticians
- Chinese retail promotion
- Mark Hawkins profile
- NZDFA Executive Committee Report
- DOC fencing update
- Johne's manual launched
- New lepto research underway

DEER INDUSTRY NEW ZEALAND

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association

New focus farm programme rolling out

Long-term growth and sustainability is our industry's key goal. It is embedded in the venison and velvet industry strategies and complemented by on-farm management and production systems. While recent history has been dominated by the impact of low returns, industry investment in market development and strategic planning has continued. This resulted in placing the additional 70 percent production over the past three years without overloading key markets. The industry is well placed to take advantage of the impending drop in volumes.

Entering October, schedules are edging towards the seasonal peak at a weighted industry average almost at $6.00/kg. Marketers are reporting good prospects for the balance of the year and beyond.

The challenge ahead for those loyal and committed deer farmers who have maintained their belief in the industry's future, is to continue management and genetic improvement, minimising health risks, reducing wastage and adding 10% to the two main indices of performance:

- percentage of young deer born and grown for eventual production; and
- the growth performance of these young animals.

These two elements are central to the productivity strategy's next phase to enhance the further sustainability of the industry.

Significantly, the productivity strategy is closely linked to AgResearch's new bid to FRST for deer research funding over the next 6 years. That in turn incorporates many of the aims of the venison strategy, particularly as it applies to stretching the chilled supply season – the "heavier weaners earlier" catch cry.

The productivity group comprises leading farmers, NZDFA Executive Committee, AgResearch and DINZ Board and Executive. It met last month to finalise the strategy and identify the key areas for improving productivity, associated research and planned extension activities. The group identified a set of targets around lactation potential of hinds and within-breed influences on autumn nutrition. It suggests a target of a 2.5% increase in weight gain per year over this period for the next 5 years is both realistic and represents sound management. The flexibility gained by hitting lactation targets and better autumn management have a positive impact on venison production profiles. Monitor farms have demonstrated up to 10 percent gains over just 3 years, so the target is achievable.

Benchmarks could include:

- 65% presented for slaughter by 1 December (up from current estimates of <47% of available young venison animals); and
- 5% reduction in time on farm to slaughter per year over the next 5 years, or 25% more slaughtered at premium within 5 years.

The productivity strategy also notes the rate of only around 80% survival to sale indicates considerable wastage. The intent is to target an annual 2% increase in survival to weaning over the next 5 years – a cumulative improvement of 10% over the period.

The NZDFA sees the strategy as a framework for achieving real on-farm production gains, in line with market demands to ensure sustainable profitable deer farming. This requires identification of productivity constraints. The NZDFA supports upscaling focus farms into a nation-wide linked programme for most effective communication and technology transfer.

Our farmer participants see productivity improvement as earning more revenue, farming more stock per hectare without affecting individual performance, or earning more from fewer but superior animals, while getting back to basics.

Productivity means prioritising what makes the most profit on an inputs and outputs basis. The productivity group also recognises a serious drop in production levels in first

continued on next page...

Contents

Editorial: New focus farm programme ... 3
DINZ news: New DINZ Board member: John Spiers ... 4
Two new faces at DINZ ... 6
Survey reminder ... 6
Velveting: pre-season reminders ... 7
Industry news: Nutritional nudge for venison ... 8
Recipe: Barbecued venison leg fillets ... 8
Market talk: Youn Soo Lee ... 9
Chinese retail promotion starts ... 9
New Zealand velvet a hit with Israeli vets and pets ... 10
Impressing guests in Germany ... 11
Market Report: ... 12
Stagline supplement: Mark Hawkins ... 14
Velvet awards humming along nicely after 25 years ... 15
Central Regions Branch formed ... 16
Branch profile: Ian Bristow – Kaipara ... 16
Branch profile: Tony Bayliss – Wairarapa ... 17
North Island Velvet Competition ... 17
Executive Committee Bulletin: October 2006 ... 18
NZDFA conference 24 May 2006: Remit progress ... 20
Fencing with DOC ... 22
Focus Farms ... 22
Research: Johne's manual launched ... 24
Deer an important source of leptospirosis infection? ... 26
New leptospirosis research looks at cross-species factors ... 28
Kiwis feature at deer biology congress ... 29
General news: Coming events ... 29
Colin Young: OE just fine, thanks! ... 30

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 04 471 6114,
Fax 04 472 5549, 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: "Twin time". Photo by Alan Fraser, 2005 Warnham & Woburn Society Photo Awards.

New DINZ Board member: **John Spiers**

New producer-appointed Deer Industry New Zealand Board Director John Spiers, 52, needs little introduction to longer-serving members of the New Zealand deer industry. He's been a deer farmer at his Maranoa stud near Takapau since 1978 and an active member of his local Hawke's Bay Branch of the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association (NZDFA) from 1989 to the present day.

As NZDFA President from 1997-1999, he was generally regarded as a moderate leader with a positive, approachable style. He received the Deer Industry Award in 2000 in recognition of his valued contribution to the industry. Spiers continued that input from the sidelines as a Producer appointee of the National Velveting Standards Body and as an active member of the Hawke's Bay Branch, where he is especially proud to have mentored some of the younger members into leadership roles. His contribution at Branch level was recognised in 2004 with the awarding of Life Membership to the Hawke's Bay Branch.

Overseas travel in recent years, has enabled John to grow his understanding of farming systems, particularly in Europe, and the game venison trade in that region. Visits to Asia and Korea have enabled him to get to grips with issues affecting importation, distribution and retail of New Zealand's velvet trade.

He stood for election to the DINZ Board because his belief in the industry's products "has focused my determination to be involved in shaping the direction so critical for sustainable growth and success".

John Spiers: encouraging farmers to get behind Velconz initiative.

As a foundation member of the Velexco velvet co-operative, John says he is a strong advocate of farmers taking ownership of the product to optimise their returns, rather than leaving it to the pool auction system. For that reason, he is very supportive of the concept of producers taking the initiative towards better governance of the industry with the Velconz initiative, and he is encouraging farmers to make the decision and get behind it.

"Some years ago I saw a need for the velvet industry to take a lead in marketing velvet. This is a unique opportunity and we'll only get one shot at doing it right. It's in our hands."

After coming through the recent period of unsustainability, the industry needs to look at ways to manage itself better. "That starts on farm," he says, "and completing the Industry Survey is vital to the orderly planning for the future."

The venison and velvet five-year strategies are most important, especially market diversification and, he believes, the move by processors towards retail will set a solid platform for future marketing initiatives.

The focus farm concept has worked really well, in conjunction with Branch initiatives, especially for velvet where production has grown. However, less progress has been made for venison and John says focus farms open up real opportunities to look at areas like fertility, early calving, and lactation to increase venison yield per hectare and per animal. He's looking forward to seeing DEERSelect in action and says "it's another tool in the box for farmers".

One area that can be improved is dissemination of research information behind the farm gate, which is where the industry is lucky to have the skills of the DINZ Producer Manager Tony Pearse at its disposal. "While the industry has been good at research, this needs to be disseminated to the farmers, with more of an emphasis on the development side rather than research for the time being – little r, big D."

With one Board meeting under his belt at the time of writing, John says he has come to the table with a very open mind and has been impressed with the contribution of all involved. "DINZ has much more of a market focus compared to the production/political emphasis of NZDFA. I think it's very healthy to sit around the table with the processors and productive sector making decisions for the benefit of the whole industry."

While he thinks that the outlook for the industry is positive, it is frustrating for him that the one thing farmers can't control is the movement of the dollar, which directly affects returns. "The mere suggestion of higher interest rates in a comment from Alan Bollard this week moved the New Zealand dollar from 63 cents to 66 cents, which will have a short-term impact on farm gate returns. However, generally the trend of the dollar is downwards."

Editorial continued from previous page...

fawners, although stock genetics and quality seem to be improving. Health issues around integrated stocking and parasitism are becoming management features.

AgResearch is working to secure a long-term FRST R&D contract that is linked to industry objectives (market and productivity) and helps drive the strategy. They are committed to developing strong research and extension partnerships through focus farms. This bid to FRST has just been submitted as a concept document for acceptance to develop a full bid and is a true industry research strategy developed to set out priorities for the next six years in partnership and controlled by industry through DEEResearch.

The DINZ Board sees the logic of linking DEEResearch/AgResearch/FRST by coordinating and funding technology transfer through focus farms. They have supported four more focus farms for the first year and for the farms to then form part of the industry research strategy. Community ownership is central to focus farm success. Fifteen thousand dollars per farm has been budgeted to match funding from Branch and local or national initiatives. Initial emphasis is on small management changes and promoting understanding of productivity targets, presenting these as achievable by most farmers with better use of existing technologies.

Responsibility for these areas of technology uptake is an exciting development of the Producer Manager role and we look forward to advancing this initiative, seeking success comparable to the M&WNZ monitor farm programmes.

Tony Pearse, Producer Manager, Deer Industry New Zealand

Two new faces at DINZ

The Deer Industry New Zealand Executive has two new staff members on the crew.

Vanessa Crowley (left) and Pam MacLeman, the newest members of the DINZ Executive team.

New Velvet Marketing Services Manager **Vanessa Crowley,** 27, will be a familiar face to many in the industry following her move from Deer Improvement Limited to Wellington. Her new role will see her handling velvet and co-product promotion and market development, liaison with industry personnel and velvet researchers and she will also look after velvet industry standards including grading guidelines.

She is looking forward to her new role, which will see her working with members of the deer industry to help grow and improve their product market and building relationships here and overseas. "The only thing my new workplace is missing is the grass!"

Aside from her first tests which included "skirts, high heels and Wellington traffic", she sees the biggest challenges facing velvet as being access related, market development and retaining New Zealand velvet's country of origin right through to the end consumer.

Vanessa says she will initially be coming up to speed and learning as much as she can from farmers, processors, importers and even from oriental medicine doctors during her recent visit to Korea and Taiwan. "Then I'll be concentrating on the implementation of the five-year New Zealand Velvet and Co-Product Industry Strategy.

"Being a part of making this happen is very exciting and will undoubtedly be highly rewarding – so bring it on!!"

Vanessa was the subject of a *Deer Industry News* Deer Watch profile in October 2004 (page 18) in her previous role as Deer Improvement Limited's North Island Field Manager after her co-win of the New Zealand Society of Animal Production's Young Member's Award for Best Paper.

Although she has left her deer at home with her parents, deer farmers Joe and Amy Crowley of Tower Farms in Hamilton, she has managed to haul her two horses down to Wellington with her. The Lincoln University Agricultural Science first class honours graduate – awarded for her work with weaner red deer stags – will bring irrepressible enthusiasm for the job ahead of her, a keen mind as well as practical on-farm strengths to the team.

Pam MacLeman replaces Janice Attrill as Quality Systems Administrator and will be assisting John Tacon in quality matters and looking after the databases. Those who have phoned or visited the PricewaterhouseCoopers Tower in Wellington will already be familiar with Pam's friendly voice and face on the combined Meat & Wool New Zealand/MIA/DINZ reception desk. Pam is married with six grown-up children and several grand-children.

DINZ Staff List: September 2006

Main Line 04-473 4500 Fax 04-472 5549

Name	Position	Direct line	Mobile	Email
Vanessa Crowley	Velvet Marketing Services Manager	04-471 6112	021-506 647	Vanessa.crowley@deernz.org
Lindsay Fung	Science Manager	04-471 6116	021-556 925	Lindsay.fung@deernz.org
Innes Moffat	Venison Marketing Services Manager	04-471 6111	027-444 6512	Innes.moffat@deernz.org
Pam MacLeman	Quality Systems Administrator	04-471 6114		Pam.macleman@deernz.org
Mark O'Connor	Chief Executive	04-471 6113	021-743 624	Mark.oconnor@deernz.org
Tony Pearse	Producer Manager	04-471 6118	021-719 038	Tony.pearse@deernz.org
John Tacon	Quality Manager	04-471 6117	021-242 2873	John.tacon@deernz.org
Sandra Windley	Finance	04-474 0841		Sandra.windley@deernz.org

Survey reminder – Please respond!

The 2005 deer industry survey provided a unique snapshot of our productive base, and excellent data for industry planning. More than two-thirds of all deer farmers responded to the survey, an excellent participation rate which means we can have great confidence in the figures produced.

But time marches on, and to really build on the value of this information, we need to gather it regularly. That way, emerging trends become clearer, and the basis for our industry strategies becomes more robust.

All deer farmers will have received a copy of the 2006 industry survey, and if you haven't yet had a chance to complete the survey you have probably also received a reminder. Right now we are busy collating the responses received so far. While the deadline for responses was 1 October, we are more than happy to keep accepting the completed forms. Every one we receive adds to the quality of our data.

So if you haven't already done so, please complete your reply-paid survey form and post it back to us (or fax to us on 04-472 5549) as soon as you can. If you can't locate the original survey form, we'll send you a replacement. For another form contact Pam MacLeman at DINZ on 04 471 6114, or pam.macleman@deernz.org

Velveting: pre-season reminders

Following are some pre-season reminders for transport and velveting.

Selection

- Select only fit and healthy deer for transport.
- Any unfit deer require veterinary certification prior to transport.
- Water should be available to deer while awaiting transport.
- Deer should stand in yards or pens for at least two hours prior to transport.
- Deer should not be mixed during transport. That is, they need to be sorted for size, sex and species.

Unfit deer

- Deer must be able to stand and bear weight and walk on all four entire limbs.
- Deer must be fit enough to withstand the journey without suffering unreasonable pain or distress.
- Any deer showing signs of ill-thrift and scouring should be tested as part of the industry's CWD surveillance programme ($100 rebate for both vet and producer). Exotic disease hotline is 0800 809 966.

Transport

- The last day for transporting pregnant hinds is 1 October.
- There should be no velvet or hard antlers longer than 60mm (measured from the top of the pedicle not the top of the skull).
- Deer with broken/bleeding antlers or bleeding antler stubs will not be accepted for transport.
- All deer must have an official AHB tag before leaving the property.
- Deer being sent for sale must have been weaned for 10 days or more (hinds or fawns).
- Newly weaned deer can be transported from farm to farm provided it is within a six hour time frame from yarding to delivery.

Documentation

- A current valid Animal Status Declaration (ASD) form must accompany all consignments of deer. ASDs must be fully and accurately completed and signed by the owner or person in charge (supplier) of the animals.
- The correct number of animals must be clearly stated on the ASD.
- Any mistakes on the ASD must be countersigned by the signatory to ensure validity.

Velvet removal

- Only veterinarians or certified farmers may legally remove velvet.
- The nick test must be applied to each antler to ensure analgesia before removal.
- A seven day stand down period is required for all velveted stags going to slaughter to allow for any drug withholding and healing periods.
- Only official (NaturO™) rings may be used when velveting spikers by the compression technique.
- Official NaturO rings must be used in the correct manner.
- All velveting drugs and drug books to be returned to vets by 31 March each year.
- Official NVSB identification tags must be attached to each stick of velvet or bag of spiker velvet.
- Velvet is a health product and must be stored in a clean and hygienic manner.

For more information see Deer QA Manuals and NVSB Manual, or contact:

- John Tacon, DINZ Quality Manager on 04-471 6117, john.tacon@deernz.org
- Pam MacLeman, DINZ Quality Systems Administrator on 04-471 6114, pam.macleman@deernz.org

Heenan WEIGHBRIDGE

The Modern Weighing & Drafting System

- Inexpensive and labour saving
- Fast efficient one-man operation
- Remote controlled weighing & 3 way drafting
- Non-slip RubberDec flooring
- Can use existing weighing systems

NON-SLIP FLOORING MATERIAL - for existing sheds or new
It's super quiet and just hose to clean

Heenan WORKROOM

The Ultimate Deer Handler

- Works so quickly we recommend the operator controls it from the still platform
- The only deer handler to successfully hold comfortably and restrain securely both large and small deer
- Designed for easy cleaning
- Just Simply the Best
- Options include - Hydraulically controlled **Wedge Wall**
  - Semen collection faclility

Heenan Engineering Company Limited phone / fax: 64-3-442 2001 N.Z. Freephone : 0800 502 337

FREE : DEER YARD DESIGNS AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS

VISIT OUR WEBSITE : www.animalhandler.com

Nutritional nudge for venison

New Zealand venison is receiving a 'nutritional nudge' with recent activities including the launch of a comprehensive nutritional report focusing on foods from an animal origin, a Deer Industry New Zealand stand at the recent Dieticians' Conference in Wellington and fresh New Zealand venison nutritional material for health professionals.

Dieticians learn about New Zealand venison

New Zealand venison was on display at the New Zealand Dietetic Association conference, held in Wellington last month.

"We used this opportunity to communicate the health benefits of venison to this influential group of health professionals, and reminded them to recommend venison as a healthy option to their clients," DINZ Venison Marketing Services Manager Innes Moffat says.

A leaflet was prepared and distributed to over 100 dieticians at the conference. While the last nutritional study on New Zealand venison was done some time ago, there are plans to update the information over the coming months.

DINZ has produced nutritional information on venison for distribution to health professionals and food writers.

Spicy Grilled Venison features as one of the recipes in the Council's consumer brochure, 'Food for Balance', while menu ideas include venison as one of the lean meat protein suggestions for lunch or dinner. Venison is one of the sources of protein, iron, zinc, vitamin B_{12} and vitamin D, the brochure points out.

New report on foods of animal origin

Venison's properties are highlighted in a brand new report pulling together nutritional information about New Zealand foods of an animal origin, including meats, seafood and dairy products. It has been compiled by some of New Zealand's leading nutritionists and dieticians and was launched at a Parliamentary function, part sponsored by DINZ, in late September.

The report 'The Nutritional Importance of Foods of Animal Origin in a Healthy New Zealand Diet' has been published by the New Zealand Council for Foods of an Animal Origin (NZCFAO). It provides a scientifically referenced and peer-reviewed base for facts that counter sometimes spurious misinformation about the place of animal products in the modern human diet. There is also a six-page leaflet summarising the report and a consumer brochure.

In addition to DINZ, other Council members are Eggs Incorporated, Fonterra, the New Zealand Beef & Lamb Marketing Bureau, the New Zealand Pork Industry Board, the New Zealand Seafood Industry Council and the Poultry Industry Association of New Zealand.

- ***Copies of the paper are available from Fiona Carruthers, Nutrition Manager, NZ Beef & Lamb Marketing Bureau, phone 09 489 7119, fiona@nzbeeflamb.co.nz.***

recipe

Barbecued New Zealand venison leg fillets with toasted fennel seed crust and grilled summer vegetables and walnut pesto

This delicious summer barbecue recipe has been sent out by DINZ to food writers around New Zealand and has already appeared in the papers around the country.

Serves 4

Ingredients

700g New Zealand venison leg fillet
1 tbsp fennel seeds, toasted
Flake salt and cracked pepper
2 tbsp olive oil
Garlic
Fresh basil, oregano and thyme
Selection of seasonal vegetables – zucchini, aubergine, capsicum, asparagus, beans, red onion, corn, flat mushrooms, or young fennel bulb.

Walnut pesto

½ cup fresh walnuts
1 small clove garlic, crushed
2 cups flat leaf parsley leaves
¼ cup walnut oil
¼ cup extra virgin olive oil
1½ tbsp fresh cream
Salt and pepper to taste
To make walnut pesto, puree nuts, parsley, garlic to a paste, add oils slowly and finish with cream.

Method

Grind salt and pepper and fennel seed in a mortar and pestle and rub into the venison. Allow to stand for 30 minutes prior to cooking. Sear venison on high heat on barbecue hot plate until well browned. Remove to rack if barbecue has a hood, or to the side away from high heat and cook for about 10 minutes.
Rest venison, and slice when required.
Chop vegetables into bite size pieces and coat generously with olive oil and chopped garlic. Add a few small sprigs of basil, oregano and thyme and grill on the hot plate until just al dente.

To serve

Serve the sliced meat on top of the vegetables with walnut pesto on the side.

MARKET TALK

Youn Soo Lee, Managing Director of Canterbury-based UB Bio Ltd (known to many as National Deer Horn Ltd), has been a leader in the New Zealand velvet extracts and supplements field since 1980 when he first immigrated to New Zealand from Korea to process velvet. He shares his observations in this Market Talk.

Twenty six years on, UB Bio Ltd now offers a wide range of processed New Zealand velvet products, including velvet powder in a range of different grades, extract powders and a number of consumer-ready capsules and products for human consumption.

Youn Lee says that because of the total velvet circulating in Korea, exporters tend to send raw velvet to be processed over there. However, he believes exporters need to develop a new marketing strategy, letting customers conveniently buy and consume velvet products – or any dietary supplements – straight from New Zealand. This will allow New Zealand to survive rapidly changing consumer markets.

While consumers in Eastern countries like Korea and China are aware of velvet's benefits, educating Western and other potential new markets of the effectiveness and usefulness of New Zealand velvet is vital he says. "We need to research those consumers' needs more carefully and need to integrate all velvet product ranges to suit every different market. UB Bio's own efforts in this area have resulted in two new products: V-Power25 for people with bone problems like osteoporosis and who need more calcium, and V-One, focused on joint problems.

Youn Lee with some of the UB Bio Ltd range of products incorporating deer velvet. The range includes: V-Power25, V-One (both capsules), V-Force tablets (a granulated powder tea with velvet extract and herbs), Stag Blood (capsules) and a manuka honey with velvet extract and herbs. There is also a pet product – Super-Flex.

Youn Lee says UB Bio believes it has resolved one of velvet's problems – a low nutrition uptake – with a now patented innovative fermentation processing technique that broke down big velvet protein molecules into small molecular structures to raise the uptake rate without core nutrition loss.

While New Zealand velvet will continue to be sold as a medicine in markets like Korea and Japan, rather than as a complementary supplement, Youn Lee says the Korean Food & Drugs Administration needs to be persuaded to move New Zealand velvet into the contemporary category so consumers can approach velvet products more easily than before.

"However, if New Zealand velvet companies put more effort into marketing and invest more in research and development, New Zealand products will be competitive since we have already achieved a reputation for high quality products."

Chinese retail promotion starts

Following a recent visit to New Zealand by its principal Yiping Gong (*Deer Industry News,* April 2006), Shenzhen BCY Health Products of Beijing has started a New Zealand velvet promotion of consumer-ready health products in 100 retail stores. Gong says he expects to grow that at least eight-fold within two years.

Yiping Gong is confident that there is a great market for New Zealand velvet and other deer products in the Chinese market during the winter months. The promotion, featuring an in-store video and mural posters, started at the end of September.

He likes New Zealand velvet because: "It is excellent velvet from the pristine natural environment without growth promotants."

He is expecting consistently high standards of New Zealand velvet. "We do not want to see something happen like with honey products that are imported to New Zealand and then re-exported to other countries. Unfortunately, those so-called New Zealand products destroy the reputation of genuine New Zealand products because of poor quality."

Gong has chosen to promote New Zealand velvet so strongly in his company's stores because, he says, he can gauge market trends more quickly and directly from the sales at the beginning of the market promotion and, therefore, get first-hand information for the future wider promotion.

Yiping Gong (right) and the other Directors of Shenzhen BCY Health Product Co Ltd stores in Beijing have placed their confidence in the quality of New Zealand Velvet.

New Zealand velvet will be presented in modern retail fit-outs like this one during the promotion.

"We intend to sell New Zealand deer products in about 100 retail outlets at first, increasing to 300-500 gradually," he says, adding that he expects New Zealand deer products will be sold in 800-1000 retail outlets in China within 24 months.

New Zealand velvet a hit with Israeli vets and pets

The majority of veterinary practices in Israel are now actively recommending New Zealand deer velvet as their remedy of choice for their arthritic animal patients following one visiting Israeli vet hearing a presentation at a Kapiti Coast Business Networking International meeting in early 2005.

Dr Doran Zur was intrigued after hearing about the benefits of New Zealand velvet for pets from a relative of Adeerco's managing director Barry Cuttance. He saw for himself the efficacy of the product for degenerative joint disease (DJD) during a locum period at a Kapiti Coast veterinary practice when he tried out Adeerco Superflex tablets on nine arthritic dogs and achieved a 90 percent success rate. He saw it as a natural alternative to pharmaceutical drugs on the market.

Dr Zur took this knowledge, and some Adeerco Superflex product, back to Israel with him. After connecting with Israel's major veterinary product distributor, now 65 percent of the country's 600 veterinary practices, which do not as a rule have a retail side to their business, are recommending New Zealand velvet for DJD patients. When surveyed, 95 percent of the vets knew the product and its country of origin and more than 30 of the vets have given testimonials stating that it is their first remedy of choice to assist with the management of DJD. In addition, they have established that deer velvet provides marked improvement to chronic skin conditions and also speeds up recovery time following surgery.

A selection from Adeerco's 'Super' range.

One of the busiest vets in Israel, Dr Yuval Samuel has a 3.5 vet practice in Kfar-Saba and two other satellite clinics. He sees more than 30 customers every day and recommends using the product. "In addition, to the improvement I observed in joint condition, I also noticed that it had improved the fur and skin and the dogs' owners claim that the treated dogs are more alert and more active." It has also become the first remedy of choice for joint issues for Dr Gil Shavit who practises in the North of Israel and is using it after orthopaedic surgeries and for Dr Amiel Shlomi who says that he decided to use it on a dog that did not respond to any other treatment.

"Within only a few days, the dog started running! After that Superflex became very popular among my colleague vets in my practices."

Dr Shlomi is one of 15 of the vets reported to be using the human deer velvet product as a direct result of seeing its success on pets.

continued on page 11

Impressing guests in Germany

The 'Impress Your Guests' German promotion campaign is in full swing, with the launch of a new German language New Zealand venison website, the roll-out of new tasting wagons and the distribution of merchandise material.

Importers have received their merchandise material for distribution with New Zealand venison as it arrives with them over the next month or so. Over 250 stores have received recipe leaflets, store posters and a 'butchers goodwill kit'. Store-based promotions with 60 supermarkets commenced on 1 September and will continue into October and November.

"By getting venison into stores early and highlighting its availability, the promotion is working the shoulders of the game season, as well as the more traditional times of year, when much more venison will be available, and consumed," Venison Marketing Services Manager Innes Moffat explains.

Accompanying activities include a set of three television advertorials that started to be broadcast in September and will carry on in October. Press packs have been sent to consumer magazines and newspapers and the five key *trade magazines: Allgemeine Fleischer Zeitung, GV report, First Class, TK Report* and *Lebensmittel Zeitung* with trade advertisements appearing in the latter two publications.

To back up the activity, the new www.neuseelandhirsch.de website carries the distinctive new mahogany and deep red livery and carries product information, cooking tips and recipes. There is also a list of where German consumers can buy New Zealand venison through the game season.

New lightweight and easily transportable tasting wagons have been constructed (plus one for Benelux) and have already been pressed into service for in-store demonstrations around Germany. Demonstrations are also planned for the Netherlands, with Dutch language material ready for use.

DINZ butchery consultant, Geof Christie was over in Germany for three weeks in September working with a major importer through their retail butchery and cash and carry outlets. He provided butchery and display instruction, plus cooking at in-store demonstrations and large retail fairs.

In addition, five European importers displayed the new 'Impress your Guests' material at the main German food trade fair of the year 'Intermeat' in September and consultant chef, Hamish Brown cooked New Zealand venison on an importer's stand. To highlight the new campaign to the trade, DINZ took billboard space around the exhibition.

The new merchandise material includes posters, recipe leaflets and display stands and information for the butchers.

German consumers lining up for a taste of New Zealand venison from one of the new tasting wagons.

from page 10

"From our start on 1 January this year, we are now selling a couple of hundred bottles of tablets a week in Israel," Barry Cuttance says, adding that it has taken a long, long time to get to this point.

He says that while there has been plenty of money invested into velvet research, this shows the value of peer recommendation for the product, with a vet being able to show practical case studies and answer technical questions for other vets. He also maintains that the dosage levels currently used in New Zealand for pets are on the low side. His company recommends one 560mg tablet a day for small dogs, based on Canadian standards, while, according to Barry, other New Zealand manufacturers are producing 25mg and 150mg tablets. Bottles contain 60 tablets.

Adeerco recently sponsored of the annual Israeli Veterinarian Conference. Cuttance headed to Europe early this month for the World Small Veterinarians Conference in Prague, where he will be meeting with major distributors in France and Germany and introducing them to Adeerco's range. This also includes SuperDog for working dogs and SuperPet with smaller tablets for cats and dogs starting treatment.

Israeli has not been a market of note for either New Zealand velvet or venison, though this might now change.

Venison

The 2007 export season is underway and signs are better for the industry. Published schedules have been the highest since 2002, and indications are that the peak may last longer than it has in the past few years. The German retail promotion campaign has started, Cervena activities are ongoing in the US and New Zealand food writers and health professionals are hearing of the benefits of New Zealand venison.

Schedule

- In week 40, the average published schedule was $5.89 – 76 cents up on the same week in 2005, and 14% higher than the three-year average (2002 to 2005) but still 10% down on the 10-year average.

Market conditions

- In **Europe,** importers report a positive market for venison. This may ease as increased supplies of new season chilled venison arrive but, at the moment, wholesale and manufacturing importers are purchasing with confidence based on lower stock carryovers from last year, and availability affected by the reduction in production levels this year.
- It is understood that chilled production is heavily allocated through until Christmas. Some importers would like to order more chilled on later arriving vessels for the post-Christmas trade, but that supply may not meet their requirements.
- Exporters report that frozen shoulders are fully sold with some manufacturers struggling to purchase sufficient quantities to meet their retail orders for goulash and shoulder roasts. This has shifted more demand in the last month to legs which, along with middle cuts, have also sold well.
- For the first time in several years, there are almost no offers of frozen loins on the market and those few offers which are being made are picked up immediately.
- In **North America** the market remains steady as demand moves into the slightly higher plane of the fall season. Prices remain steady as volumes have increased slightly over the past year. Exporters report that prospects continue to point toward steady increases in volumes in this high paying market.

Venison promotion

- In **Germany,** the 'Impress Your Guests' retail promotion is in full swing (see Industry News, page 11 for more information).
- **Inter-Meat Trade Fair, September 2006** – New Zealand venison has been on display at the main German food trade fair of the year on the stands on five European importers.
- In the **United States**, Cervena® activities continue with sponsorship of the 35th annual American Academy of Chefs (AAC) Induction Dinner and customised Cervena materials using licensees' own brands. Contact details have been prepared, with assistance from DINZ.
- In **New Zealand,** DINZ has distributed a new press kit, providing summer barbecue recipes and suggestions, to food magazines and food writers for summer publications. At the

Velvet

Korean market

- Exporters and importers report there is little velvet in storage in Korea and New Zealand. Having a relatively 'clear deck' at the beginning of the New Zealand velvet production season is helpful.
- On balance, importers are showing positive sentiment for New Zealand velvet for the coming season given reasonable supply conditions, the oriental medicine trade's concern with Russian velvet (although the Russian velvet issue may have a negative impact on velvet demand generally) and a reasonable exchange rate – see below.
- However, New Zealand-based velvet processors remain very concerned at the ongoing growth in frozen velvet exports and the uneven conditions in Korea which favour frozen velvet. The Velvet Processors' Association has requested further investigation of initiatives such as removal of the lower tynes before export.
- The NZD-KRW exchange is currently neutral to positive. The exchange rate is currently KRW624 for a New Zealand dollar.
- In early September a Korean programme called *PD Diary* (the equivalent of *60 Minutes* or *20/20*) ran a piece entitled *Deer velvet – a mystery of oriental medicine*. The piece was commissioned after an oriental medicine doctor (OMD) alleged that North American elk velvet was smuggled into Korea and illegally distributed as Russian deer velvet, threatening people's health.

  The *PD Diary* team purchased Russian deer velvet from 21 oriental clinics and performed DNA tests. Only three samples were real Russian deer velvet – the rest was reindeer horn (prohibited item), Chinese deer velvet and North American elk velvet (prohibited due to CWD).

  Eight percent of all South Korean households viewed the story and sales of velvet have reportedly been adversely affected. The issue of smuggled velvet and country of origin integrity is now on the agenda for the National Assembly audit in Mid October. There have also been reports of a follow-up programme.

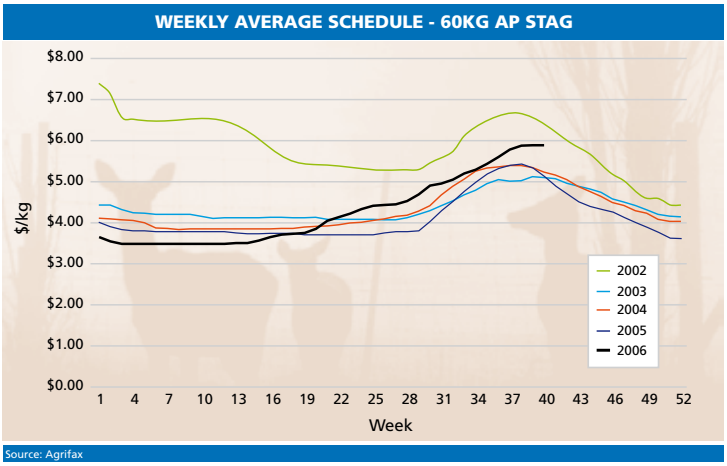
  There is a consensus among the oriental medicine community that genuine country of origin, traceability and approved farming practices will become increasingly important when sourcing velvet in the future. This is positive for New Zealand velvet in the longer term.
- In a glimpse at the future, one oriental medicine marketer reportedly commands a 30 percent premium for its products due to its single-minded focus on quality, authenticity and reliability. The company is now marketing New Zealand velvet as part of its range and hopes to develop a system whereby velvet sold direct to OMDs can be traced back to the farm or even stag it came from in New Zealand.
- DINZ is investigating new methods to differentiate New Zealand velvet from other countries' to ensure its integrity.
- It has been suggested the Korean deer herd is in decline as a result of a very low female replacement rate. Farmers have reportedly not replaced culled hinds as the cost to keep them (over NZ$1000 per annum) has been prohibitively expensive.
- Oriental medicine remains a popular career choice in Korea with more than 500 graduates each year from 13 different medical schools.

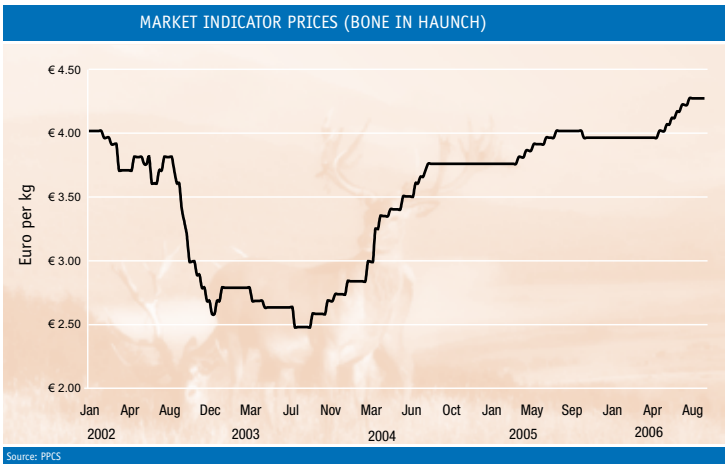
time of writing, DINZ has confirmed an interview with Kim Hill on national radio and the inclusion of venison in a barbecue feature in the New World magazine, *Essentially Food*.

- DINZ is sponsoring the Cervena Class at the **New Zealand Culinary Fare** in October. This is the main cooking competition for professional chefs in New Zealand and the activity continues to raise the profile of Cervena to the food service industry.

Chef activities

- Through August, September and October, **Graham Brown** has scheduled 15 days teaching venison fabrication and cooking to New Zealand polytechnics.
- Graham spent two weeks in the United States in September to provide demonstrations for distributors and their customers, on both coasts, as well as Mexico City and Atlanta.
- He is also presenting New Zealand venison at SIAL in France in October, and will do demonstrations in Belgium, UK, France, Hong Kong and China during his travels.
- **Geof Christie** was in Germany for three weeks in September working with a major importer through its retail butchery and cash and carry outlets, providing butchery and display instruction, plus cooking at in-store demonstrations and large retail fairs.
- Geof is developing a venison retail butchery tutor kit for use by the three butchery schools in New Zealand.
- **Hamish Brown** cooked on one importer's stand at Inter-meat in September.



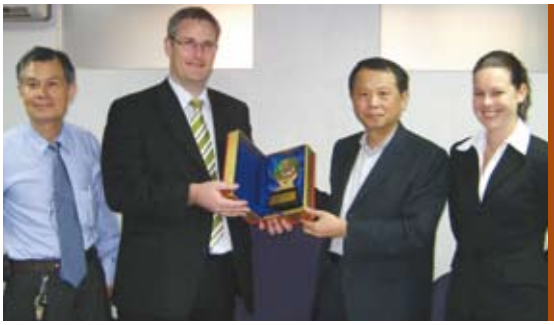


Taiwanese market

- Importers report that that due to the currently small frozen velvet quota of five tonnes, they have been unable to secure sufficient quantities of New Zealand velvet to meet demand.
- New Zealand Commerce and Industry Office, National Chinese Medicine Association of Republic of China and importers have all approached and lobbied the Council of Agriculture (COA – equivalent of New Zealand MAF) in an effort to resolve the frozen velvet quota issue. The COA's response remains unchanged, stating that the quota complies with Taiwan's current WTO obligations and that they are protecting their national deer farming industry.
- A sensitive political situation is currently causing low consumer confidence, and a feeling of instability in Taiwan as the Prime Minister and his family have been under investigation for alleged corruption. Many are looking forward to 2008 when a new, less conservative government may take over.
- Importers have shown a keen interest to source and use as much promotional material on New Zealand velvet as possible with a special interest taken in the latest promotional DVD.

Promotion

- DINZ had a presence and booth at the 8th International Exhibition on Oriental Medicine, held in Seoul from 27-30 September alongside a New Zealand velvet importer. Along with promotional material, the latest DVD of the New Zealand velvet industry also featured.
- A New Zealand velvet marketer has just begun a New Zealand velvet trial in 600 stores in the United States. In conjunction with DINZ, the company has run a coordinated public relations campaign and has achieved good coverage in sports nutrition magazines and dietary supplement industry publications.
- A Chinese marketing company has just begun a promotional campaign of New Zealand velvet products. A promotional DVD has just been completed and will be screened in the 100 retail stores which will initially sell the velvet.



Strong industry relationship in Taiwan

The National Union Chinese Medicine Association of ROC has shown its appreciation of DINZ's part in market access work with the presentation of a special trophy. The presentation was made during travel to Asia recently by Chief Executive Mark O'Connor and Velvet Marketing Services Manager, Vanessa Crowley. Pictured are Mr Huan (Member of the National Union Chinese Medicine Association of ROC), Mark O'Connor, Mr Lin (Chairman of the National Union Chinese Medicine Association of ROC) and Vanessa Crowley.

Executive Committee profile: **Mark Hawkins**

New NZDFA South Island Executive Committee member, Briton Mark Hawkins, says he's still a 'Pom' but thoroughly committed to the New Zealand deer industry.

Anna and Mark Hawkins at home at Sutherlands Deer Farm.

Having been given a few years to settle in after his family's emigration to New Zealand in 2001, Andrew Fraser invited Mark to join the committee and nominated him at this year's NZDFA conference. His early leadership skills – he was British Deer Farmers' Association President in 1996-1998 and was a Nuffield Scholar to New Zealand in 1999 – will benefit the New Zealand industry. Evidence of his performance in the UK shows that he is not frightened of shaking industry trees in his quiet, reasoned, yet determined manner.

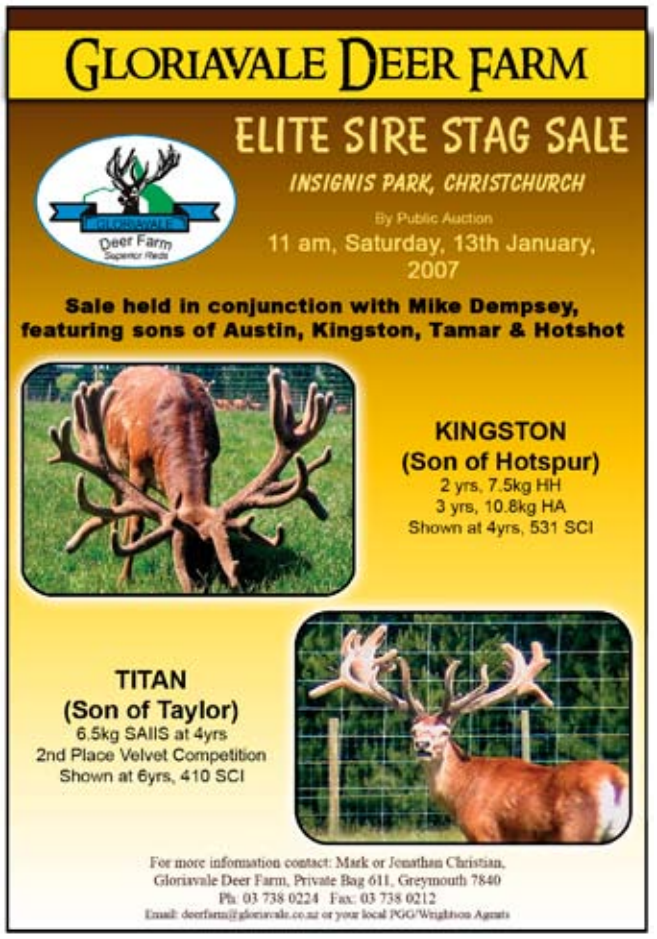
Mark's deer farming career was hatched in New Zealand when, as a 21-year-old doing his OE in 1985, he was working on Logan Sanson's station inland from Gisborne – ostensibly gaining dairying experience following his agricultural science diploma at Hertfordshire Agricultural College, near St Alban's, England. On his return to the UK he continued dairying until an opportunity to farm Whittlebury Park arose in 1988. Originally managing the farm, he then became a partner and subsequently bought out his partners, farming deer and cattle.

Mark, together with his wife Anna, chose to shift the 12,000 miles in 2001 to buy a farm here in New Zealand. They purchased Sutherlands Deer Farm near Timaru, running 1,730 deer, including velvet stags, breeding hinds, plus weaners. They also run 630 cattle including a Limousin stud, bulls and dairy heifers. It's a move they do not regret from either the family or farming perspectives, although last year, as it was for all New Zealand deer farmers, was a tough one.

Mark's experience at the retail 'coal face' of British deer farming, has nurtured his belief in quality assurance (QA) and retail. He says New Zealand deer farmers need to retake ownership of intellectual property and QA, and insists that "adding value starts at the farm gate" as well as further along the production chain. "The quality of New Zealand processors more than meets QA standards," he says. "Most of that is about having the correct structures in place for independent auditing." He sees an independent QA role for DINZ on behalf of the industry.

Exporting has always been part of Mark's diversified farming portfolio. In Britain, from Whittlebury Park, he exported livestock to Ireland, France, Spain, Holland, Belgium and Thailand, germplasm to New Zealand and by-products to Hong Kong and China. He says it is a difficult trade and he has maintained business contacts gained in those markets over the years. In fact, part of the reason the Hawkins bought Sutherlands was because the previous owner had bought germplasm from him and the original Whittlebury blood lines were intact. This has been an important factor in the recent, controversial, Chinese purchase of livestock from Sutherlands, by a previous Whittlebury Park customer.

Mark is married to Anna and they have three children aged 12, 10 and 5. When time allows, he and his family enjoy boating, skiing, hunting and duck-shooting.



National awards humming along nicely after 25 years

In an industry that has its ups and downs, one constant for the past 25 years has been the national velvet antler competition. This year's competition will be held on 13 – 14 December and, as always, will be hosted by the Southland Branch.

Southland stud breeder David Stevens has been involved in the competition for over 20 years. In that time he has seen the competition evolve into a showcase for quality New Zealand velvet and trophy antler.

"It's gone from being very much a Southland event in the 1980s to a competition which is supported nationally and is the largest of its kind in the world," he says. "In 1989 we introduced the velvet awards dinner which has helped showcase the competition and the deer industry."

The number of entrants varies from about 8 to 20 in each section with about 100 entrants in total.

"There are quite a lot of new velvet sections and all of the trophy section added to the competition over the 25 years, and a few sections have been removed altogether. There has been a huge change in weight and quality over the years," David says.

He credits the committee's dedication for ensuring the credibility and longevity of the competition.

"A huge part of the competition's success has been that the committee involved always puts the competition first. There are no egos or personalities involved."

Sponsorship has also played a large part in ensuring the continuing success of the awards. In recent years PGG Wrightson, and in the past Stanfield's Bushey Park and Landcorp, have all been valued financial supporters without whom, David says, the competition would not be possible. Members of the public have also been supportive, especially of the awards dinner.

"We've had fantastic judges over the years and there's been very little negative feedback"

"In the early years the competition was held at the Invercargill showgrounds at the same time as the Southland A&P show and many of the general public were really fascinated by the velvet display. The competition gives them a little bit of knowledge of the velvet industry, a practice some could find a bit different."

Judging criteria take into account both weight and the quality, and there are seldom complaints about the process.

"We've had fantastic judges over the years and there's been very little negative feedback," David says. "We're always looking at ways to improve the competition every year and to try and make it that much better, but we've reached the stage now where it's humming along particularly well."

2006 NATIONAL VELVET COMPETITION 25th SILVER ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Awards Dinner Thursday 14 December • Venue: Ascot Hotel, Invercargill
Guest Speaker: Invercargill Mayor Tim Shadbolt

An invitation is extended to all deer farmers to enter velvet or hard antler in the following classes:

a) Open Red **b) Elk/Supreme** **c) 3 Year Red** **d) 4 Year Red**

e) 5 Year Red **f) 3 Year Elk/Wapiti** **g) Elk/Wapiti One** **h) Elk/Wapiti Maiden**

Trophy Antler Section: Red • Wapiti/Elk Typical & Non-Typical • Fallow

National Certification • Excellent prizes in most sections with 1st, 2nd, & 3rd placings receiving up to $500 in cash or vouchers plus nationwide advertising

Main sponsor: PGG Wrightson

Host: Southland Branch, NZDFA

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association

Entries to: Brian Russell, RD 3, Winton, ph/fax 03-236 7848, email: deerpark@woosh.co.nz

Deadline for entries: Monday 11 December

Awards dinner tickets $65pp available from Mrs Judy Gerrard, RD3, Winton, ph/fax 03-236 8277
All other enquiries to Peter Allan (Competition Chairman), ph/fax 03-201 6313

Branch Chairman profile: **Ian Bristow** – Kaipara

Ian Bristow has been a member of the Kaipara Branch for over 25 years, longer than he's been deer farming. Now Chairman of the Branch, Ian has been farming deer for the last 15 years on 1000 fenced acres in the South Kaipara Heads.

With the help of his partner Diane and son Dean, Ian farms about 1500 Red deer for venison, velvet and trophy and 500 Fallow deer for trophy. They also graze 350 beef cows.

Ian's seen a lot of changes in his time with the industry and says the recent downturn has been hard.

"Venison and velvet returns have been really skinny for us," he says. "If it wasn't for the beef cows and trophy deer we'd be struggling a hell of a lot more than we are."

Ian Bristow: Involved with Branch for 25 years.

However, he says the future prospects are looking more promising.

"The indication at the moment is that the venison will be one dollar better than last year and there is talk that velvet is going to be considerably better too," Ian says. "While I'm not ecstatic about prices, at least it's a definite move in the right direction and the trophy market seems stable. We're in there for the long haul."

Ian took over as Branch Chair earlier this year, having decided it was his turn to have a go. He says there's been a drop in Branch membership over the last few years, which he attributes to a general reduction in the number of people farming deer.

"At the moment we have about 50 paid up members, but there are only about 12 or 15 who are really active. We certainly don't have the numbers we had years ago."

The Branch runs an annual velvet competition and have a regular field day where members visit a local farm.

"We have a wander around and discuss what the farmer's doing and offer or ask for assistance. We're really there to swap ideas."

Ian says members' main concerns centre around frustrations on DOC's fencing regulations.

"There are feral Fallow deer in Kaipara, but they're not a threat at all. There's a local committee who do a good job managing the herd," he says. "The Branch is working with DOC as best as we're able, but what they want to do in our minds seems controversial. We can't see why DOC have anything to do with deer farming. Deer should be the same as any other farmed animal and come under the jurisdiction of MAF."

But when it comes to national office, Ian has no complaints.

Personally, I think at a national level we've got things right. It's a pretty trying time for everybody and we all like to blame people at the top, but they can only do so much, can't they. I feel comfortable with what they're doing," he says.

On the odd occasion when Ian has time off he likes to go fishing or duck shooting.

"I only get to go about a dozen times a year. I'm pretty much working seven days here."

*Stag walks**

6-7 December	Waikato/Bay of Plenty
14 December	Stanfield's Bushey Park
15 December	Netherdale Deer, Balfour, 11am, Remarkables Park Stud, Queenstown, 2pm

*Sire sales**

13 December	Taihape Red Deer, 1pm
14 December	Maranoa, 1.30pm
8 January	Love Red, Pampas Heights, Deer Genetics
9 January	Kelly Oaks, Rodway Park
10 January	Raroa Red Deer, Tower Farms
11 January	Windermere
11 January	Foveran, 1.00pm
12 January	Stanfield's Bushey Park sale, 1.30pm
13 January	Gloriavale, 11am, Insignis Park
13 January	Black Forest, 1 pm
19 January	Remarkables Park Stud, Queenstown, 1pm, (viewing from 11.30am) Netherdale Deer, Balfour, 6pm, (viewing from 4.30pm)

*Correct as supplied by vendors at press time. Please check December issue to confirm dates and times.

Central Regions Branch consolidates lower North Island membership

The decline in the number of deer farms in the lower North Island has seen a merger of three Branches in the area.

At a special general meeting in Feilding in August, members of the Wanganui, Manawatu and Wellington/Horowhenua Branches decided to join forces and create a new Central Regions Branch.

Mike Holdaway, former Chairman of the Manawatu Branch, chairs the new Branch. Offices are also held by Vice Chairman Wilton Turner, Secretary Andy Jarden, Treasurer Tony Gray and Committee members Peter Adlam, Dave Blenkiron, Owen Cowie, Steve Rowe and Brian Shaw. The committee held its first meeting last month in Feilding.

"The meetings will tend to be in Feilding as that's a central location for everyone," Mike Holdaway says. "But other events such as field days and Christmas parties will be held around the region."

The Branch now has a combined membership of about 160, and Mike believes about 98% of them supported the merger.

"There may have been one or two unhappy with the merger, but most people see it as inevitable with the downsizing of the industry," Mike says.

The Branch's first event will be a field day at Ken Swainson's farm on 5 November, followed by the velvet competition and Christmas dinner on 25 November.

In the near future they also hope to join forces with the Hawke's Bay Branch to set up one or two focus farms.

Branch Chairman profile: **Tony Bayliss** – Wairarapa

Tony Bayliss, newly elected Chairman of the Wairarapa Branch, farms on limestone hill country between Gladstone and Te Wharau.

Tony Bayliss says small Branches like Wairarapa need to keep going through the tough times.

He winters just over 700 deer on 120 hectares. Made up of 300 breeding hinds, 300 weaners and the balance rising two year hinds, the herd is mainly bred for venison, with velvet as an offshoot. He also finishes cattle and sheep on the remaining 80 hectares.

Tony started farming deer in 1988 and admits at the time he was getting bored with farming just sheep.

"I'd been farming sheep all my life," he says. "In the mid 1980s sheep and cattle farming was in a bad way. The in thing was diversification so I decided to give deer a try."

In the early 1980s deer were reaching about $3000 a hind, but Tony says Rogernomics put paid to that through the realisation of true stock values.

"Prices plummeted overnight and kept getting lower. When I got into the market, hinds went for around $400."

The effects of the recent downturn haven't hit Tony as hard as others. He believes this is because he kept farming sheep.

"I've been in farming for a long time so I didn't have a great debt. I suppose over the last three or four years I've done quite well out of sheep and that's helped me through. But running deer hasn't been a complete disaster," he says.

Although the southerly storm in early October may have brought some relief to the region, Tony's main concern has been the lack of rain.

"The long-range forecast for the Wairarapa this summer isn't promising. We've got an El Nino coming, which means the east coast of New Zealand will be dry with northwesterlies through summer. It's already very dry here and it didn't really rain during September."

But Tony's positive about the future of deer farming and the prospect of the market improving.

"I think it's a great product and the roughest times are behind us now. The outlook is very positive," he says. "Venison has always been a meat for kings. It's a top shelf product and as long as it's marketed properly it always will be."

Better marketing would help improve the image of venison and Tony believes the industry has a duty to take venison marketing seriously. He believes we need to capitalise on our clean, green New Zealand image.

"Venison marketing in the past has been very poor, but it's improved a lot over the last couple of years," he says. "Any help DINZ and the NZDFA can give with marketing would be great, but at the end of the day it has to be done by the venison procurement and selling companies."

Tony first became involved with the local Branch in the early 1990s and says while he hasn't always been an active member, he's always been passionate about deer farming.

He took over from Neil Cameron as Branch Chair at the last elections and is optimistic about the future of the Branch.

"I believe as a small Branch we need to keep going. When things are down we're all inclined to quit, but I think it's important to go through those hard times and as a Branch we've got good and exciting times to look forward to."

Among the events organised for the Branch are the annual local velvet competition and Christmas dinner, a couple of home and away field days and a trip to Massey University.

"We try to get over to Massey twice a year to catch up on technology and the research they're doing with genetics and nutrition," he says "They have crops and a small deer farm over there and although the climate is a bit different, I believe we can learn a lot from their research."

North Island Velvet Competition – 2006

Saturday, 2 December, Quality Hotel Plymouth International, New Plymouth

Run by the Taranaki Branch, NZDFA

Class		Sponsor
1	Champion Red	Rodway Park
2	Maiden Red	Velexco
3	3 Year Red	Sarnia Park
4	4 Year Red	Windermere Red Deer Stud
5a*	5 Commercial Heads over 25kg	PGG Wrightson
5b*	5 Commercial Heads under 25kg	PGG Wrightson
6*	Elk/Wapiti Supreme	Totara Park
7*	Champion Elk/Wapiti	Elk Wapiti Society
8	Red Hard Antler	Love Red Deer
9**	Sire of Three	Xcell Breeding Services

Dependent on entries, prize money will be paid out to third place in classes 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8

1st – $250 2nd – $150 3rd – $100

*Classes 5a, 5b, 6 and 7 will only be paid out for first place.

**Class 9 carries $1,000 of semen services, 2nd and 3rd prizes as above.

Entry for the competition is $25 per class. Entry forms will be available from your local PGG Wrightson Store by the end of October and from your local Branch Chairman. Alternatively contact Rachael Mitchell direct on 07 333 2151 or Rodway@xtra.co.nz

Velvet viewing will be from 5.30pm to 6.30pm on December 2nd with a social hour until seating for dinner at 7.30pm. This year's NIVC is being held in conjunction with the Taranaki Branch's local Velvet Competition. Dinner tickets cost $40 each and need to be booked in advance of the competition. Accommodation is currently available at the Quality Hotel Plymouth International – call 0800 800 597 for bookings.

Executive Committee Bulletin: **October 2006**

The Executive Committee has met twice since the AGM: in June (Selection and Appointments Panel process) and in late August. Following the passing of a remit at the 2006 AGM requesting better communication of the Executive Committee's deliberations, we present a summary of the issues covered at these meetings.

Procedural

Returning Chairman Andrew Mitchell has advised that this will be his last of five years of contribution to the Executive Committee and that he will stand down at the 2007 AGM. He is keen to promote and ensure strong succession for the Executive Committee.

The NZDFA and DINZ have signed off the contract for services for the next two years that has been developed and negotiated from the MOU between the two organisations last updated in 2004. Branch Chairmen approved the draft at Conference.

Next Branch Chairmen's meeting

The next Branch Chairmen's meeting will be on Wednesday and Thursday, 1-2 November. A comprehensive programme will include an update on the venison and velvet markets with companies and Executive recently returned from Europe, a full session with the Board, including a meeting with the National Animal Identification and Traceability group, AHB update with discussion on the Equivalence programme and the 1080 reassessment process, and the progress with the productivity strategy, focus farm developments, DOC fencing and DFA evolution.

Executive Committee: Areas of interest and responsibility

While these titles don't assume a full portfolio role, Executive Committee members have indicated the following areas of association in conjunction with the Producer Manager and DINZ Executive. This role will allow respective Executive Committee members to be points of contact for Branch Chairmen and media and spokesmen for those areas on behalf of the Executive Committee following consultation with the group.

• AHB and RAHC	Bill Taylor
• Velvet issues (velvet marketing)	Bill Taylor
• GAFF	Mark Hawkins
• Productivity working group	Tim Aitken, Mark Hawkins
• Finance	Tim Aitken
• Environment	Tim Aitken
• Market development, compliance & QA	Mark Hawkins
• DEERSelect	Andrew Mitchell
• Velvet competitions	Andrew Mitchell
• Conference 2007	Andrew Mitchell
• Media and executive committee	Andrew Mitchell
• Administration & Branch Chairmen	Andrew Mitchell
• DEEResearch working group	All plus Volunteer BC
• DOC issues	Andrew Mitchell

From The Executive Committee Meetings

1) Voting protocol at Branch Chairmen meetings

(a) Selection of the Executive Committee chair proposals

Prior to the Branch Chairmen's meeting, if there is a simple appointment of Executive Committee members (i.e. no voting required), that any interest in seeking the Chairmanship be declared. Should there be two or more interests and the EC is not able to resolve that issue itself, it is proposed that the Branch Chairmen be advised, the candidates invited to present to the Branch Chairmen and that the Executive Committee will seek a recommendation from the Branch Chairmen.

If there is a full election for an Executive Committee vacancy, it is proposed that the returning officer advise the Executive Committee and candidates of the results before the AGM, with these still to be formally ratified at the AGM. If then an elected candidate wishes to seek the chair, that will notified to the Branch Chairmen meeting and a similar action as proposed be available. This would allow more certainty in the transition, better planning and use of resources and time for the important actions following the AGM. It would not apply to Selection and Appointments Panel elections.

b) Proportional representation in voting to be agreed

- Branch Chairmen to have an amount of votes equal to the number of paid up voluntary members to the branch.

The Executive Committee recommends (proposed Andrew Mitchell, Seconded Bill Taylor) that in advance, based on the database of paid up voluntary NZDFA Branch subscriptions (31 March), individual Branches are issued with a formal in proxy declaration of membership base and the Chairs will vote accordingly based on that representation. It is also suggested that, by prior arrangement, any absent Branch Chairmen may assign their votes to another Branch Chairman.

It is recognised that the result will always have the status of a recommendation. Such a voting process could be used in any, albeit rare, situations that the Branch Chairmen may wish to vote, and truly represent the power of their respective memberships. Affiliated Societies and special interest groups who do not attract a capitation fee, and have their own subscription base would not be eligible to vote in this instance but would be represented by their geographical Branch.

2) Selection and Appointments Panel

John Spiers, Maranoa, Hawke's Bay has been appointed to the DINZ Board for a three-year term, filling the single vacancy created by retirement by rotation of sitting member Warren Moyes.

The Selection and Appointments Panel wishes to thank all candidates (Barry Cuttance, Warren Moyes, John Spiers and Simon Vincent) for the depth of their research and commitment to the selection process. A further review of the operating code of practice has been made and will be discussed at the November meeting.

3) Department of Conservation update

See separate article on p22 of issue of *Deer Industry News*.

4) Live exports

Following news of the recent shipment of weaner deer to China, a number of Branches sought clarification on any NZDFA position.

As a preamble, the NZDFA, DINZ or any other body cannot interfere with such commercial activities, other than to comment and/or dissuade or equally support as the majority might decide. Strictly speaking, this is an NZDFA preference statement.

1) NZDFA position

- The NZDFA nationally has had an NZDFA Council-developed policy since 1992 of strong opposition to live exports in any significant numbers, save for small numbers that may have some value in reciprocal research or promotional ventures with some association to New Zealand.
- The Executive Committee established a further policy in 2003 that the NZDFA was strongly opposed to export of large numbers of New Zealand deer for slaughter and venison production anywhere offshore.

Explanation

That position was established in 1992 by the then NZDFA Council and Branch Chairmen following an earlier and contrasting resolution from the 1991 AGM that passed support for live exports on a card vote (144 for and 122 against). That topic had been left to lie on the table since the 1990 AGM for decision.

In reviewing all AGM remits since that time, the NZDFA has not again formally discussed live exports again nor changed its views. Equally, that 1992 Council policy change has not ever been formally ratified at any subsequent AGM.

The reason for the change in the late 1991-1992 period was that the borders to Korea also were to be opened up for live export (and yet the high tariff for our velvet product at 65% was still to be maintained) and the then Council was sufficiently concerned that the policy was revisited and debated formally concluding that an attitude to encourage Korean investment in the New Zealand industry in farming here was more beneficial and acceptable to the New Zealand industry.

In 2003 the Executive Committee was advised that MAF was establishing a protocol for sea transport-based exports of large numbers (claimed to be up to 5000 per shipment). The industry was involved in developing a stringent protocol based on welfare, nutrition, pregnancy status, shipping space needs and timing. MAF has initially set the load limit at 250 per shipment until such time as they are satisfied that the welfare needs of the animals can be met.

Also at that time the Executive Committee was aware through correspondence from the Australian deer industry that there was a significant issue being raised in a *60 Minutes* documentary about welfare abuses in Saudi Arabia for Red deer sent there for slaughter.

The Executive Committee then established its further policy that the NZDFA was strongly opposed to export of large numbers of New Zealand deer for slaughter and venison production anywhere offshore.

The opposition policy to volume live exports has remained since.

2) Current position

The Executive Committee notes that there has been a continuing trade in live exports over the last 15 years. Recently that has included significant numbers of elite genetics in trophy animals and well bred stud, trophy and commercial stock.

For example in the five years to June 2006, 759 animals have been exported: 433 to South America and 326 to Asia, typically, but not exclusively, in small groups of top genetics. Similar numbers of germplasm have also been exported. Given that history, the NZDFA is not in a position to single out and condemn any individual shipment, and continued export of live deer. These are the commercial arrangements of a number of New Zealand deer farmers and their own international connections and business opportunities.

The broad policy of opposition to the principle is maintained as noted in recent media coverage by the Executive Committee chairman (*Farmers Weekly* 7/8/2006) stating that "We don't want to see boatloads of deer leaving the country, especially not for breeding or processing. It's not practical or prudent."

In general, the NZDFA opposes the live export of deer that may impact on the sustainability of New Zealand deer farmers. That is most strongly expressed in the opposition to the export of live deer for venison slaughter.

5) Cervena Trust

The NZDFA has supported the Cervena Trust's move to extend the current arrangement with the licensees for a further three years. NZDFA was invited to meet exporter licensees and the Trustees as part of a stronger communication role as the promotion programme in the USA advances.

6) NZDFA Finances

By 30 September, subscription returns number just on 2000, some 10% short of budget. NZDFA expenditure is correspondingly being curtailed where possible. To put this in context, the AHB has reported that animal numbers and farms in annual testing returns are 30 percent down – a further indication of the overall reduction in farms and deer numbers. In terms of accuracy and importance, the industry survey posted in August remains highly relevant. To date, 1200 returns have been filed and farmers are urged to take the short time needed to complete and return the survey. This information is critically important for planning, especially after such a time of transition. Deer farmers who have not yet returned the data will be sent a reminder, with a follow up phone call.

7) Animal ID and traceability

NZDFA and DINZ are involved with the further development of the National Animal Identification and Traceability scheme, on the basis that taking part in the process is constructive. The NZDFA notes affordability is an issue against cost benefit, that the biosecurity call from government is somewhat flawed without sheep, goats and pork involved at the outset, and that in terms of market access for venison, there is no immediate hurry. The industry has made it clear to NAIT that a mandatory involvement in the short term is not supported by farmers, until such time as the technology, the database and the need is well established. Simon Vincent (Nelson) sits on the governance group on behalf of DINZ with the Producer Manager representing industry interests on the technical advisory group. Government is strongly supporting the rapid development of the individual identification of livestock and its lifetime recorded movement, with the use of Radio Frequency ID. DINZ and NZDFA have asked that the NAIT leadership attend the Branch Chairmen's meeting for a position and progress update and to address industry questions and commentary on the process, timeframe and implications for the industry.

8) Future events

DINZ will host an updated semi-formal FGM meeting in Hamilton on the afternoon of Wednesday 8 November at the Hamilton Airport Inn and Conference Centre. The aim is to attract the northern Branches and present information from the Executive, market report and update on recent visits and some technical papers including velvet removal research, productivity and focus farm developments, Velconz update, and a Q&A session with Board and Executive members. There is a similar programme planned for Southland in the week following, with a view to link with VetSouth's annual client update. Details will be advised by mail shortly.

NZDFA conference 24 May 2006: **Remit progress**

Formal motions

Constitutional financial motions

Action: The financial accounts for 2005-06 were approved, 2006-07 budget endorsed and the Executive Committee honoraria approved at current levels. In addition Deloitte was reconfirmed as auditor on acceptance of their quotation in advance.

Subscription response has been less than anticipated with ~2000 active members responding by 30 September, some 10 percent under budget. DFA expenditure is being curtailed accordingly.

The NZDFA commodity levy on deer products (2001) was reconfirmed as being set at zero for velvet antler and for venison as developed in the 2002 industry structural reforms and notified in the Gazette.

Motion 5. Commodity levy future from September 2007

The AGM confirmed the Executive Committee recommendation:

"That the NZDFA AGM recommends that any CLA remandation process not be pursued at this time and that the NZDFA allows the current Commodity Levy (Farmed Deer Products) 2001 to lapse at expiry in September 2007."

Action: MAF Policy Commodity Levy Adviser Ken Armstrong has been notified. The Executive Committee will meet with him prior to the 2007 May AGM to arrange process around the formal cessation on 19 September 2007.

The Producer Manager and Executive Committee will review the current NZDFA Constitution in November 2006 to accommodate any changes required with the cessation of the NZDFA levy. Any such changes will be notified at the 2007 AGM and implemented at an SGM or such meeting as required.

Branch remits

Remit 8 Amended

"That in the absence of an accepted velvet marketing restructuring, that NZDFA request DINZ to ensure that NZFSA (New Zealand Food Safety Authority) removes lower tynes from velvet antler (frozen or dried) destined for the Korean market, in accordance with Overseas Market Access Requirements (OMAR). The NZDFA requests DINZ to report conclusions by beginning of 2007 selling season.

Action: The industry endorsed the progress with the Velconz vehicle to establish an alternate market structure. Talks with PGG Wrightson and the working group continue to push, in good faith, for change to assist the orderly, pragmatic sale of New Zealand velvet. The group would like to be able to report a conclusive outcome, but at this point, it cannot. *Market Report* published an update (August 2006) and called for producer support for the positions expressed That said, progress continues to be made and both PGG Wrightson's and Velconz's positions are getting closer.

The Velvet Processors' Association (VPA) and NZDFA have requested an update on the lower tynes position (September 2006), fearing that the progress in this area may be slowed.

DINZ has advised it will develop the detail with the VPA to see how the removal could operate, e.g., would it apply to all markets, not just Korea? Would it apply to all grades or just Korean grade? Would it actually halt the alleged sale of New Zealand velvet by Korean farmers? Would it have any impact on velvet processing in Korea? Would it really make a difference to the frozen/dry imbalance? What are the longer-term implications of the proposed action? Plans are to report to the Branch Chairmen's meeting on 1-2 November

Remit 9

"That the NZDFA requests DINZ to utilise a proportion of velvet antler marketing budget to advance the research and promotion of the use of velvet antler in the developing pet supplement market within New Zealand and internationally, and to specifically retain the services of a veterinary expert to initiate and oversee this process."

Action: An allocation for research into the benefits of velvet as a pet supplement has been included in VARNZ's 2006/07 budget, which began on 1 October.

Remit 10

"That the Johne's Research Group ask NZDFA to support the introduction of the modification to the interpretation of the ETB blood test as an ancillary test in conjunction with the standard mid cervical skin test for diagnosing and distinguishing Tb and Johne's disease."

Action: The JRG has continued to champion this cause with the AHB. Currently the proposal has been approved in principle after full evaluation and risk analysis and awaits final sign off by the New Zealand Food Safety Authority as a formal part of the Tb ancillary diagnostic tests. (expected in October). The modified ETB will be available only for use in herds C5 and above.

Remit 11

"In order to keep deer farmers better informed of issues being addressed by the NZDFA's Executive Committee, the SCNO Branch requests the NZDFA to take a more proactive approach in using press releases, *Deer Industry News* and *Deer Notes* to publicise the Executive Committee's deliberations."

Action: Two Executive Committee meetings have been held since conference and a summary of news and action points released to Branch Chairmen. An Executive Committee update is published in this issue of *Deer Industry News*.

Remit 12 Amended

"That the NZDFA requests the Johne's Research Group (JRG) to prepare a set of voluntary deer industry protocols for the determination of the Johne's disease status of deer presented to the live sale market.

"It is further requested that the proposed protocols should be developed with the relevant science providers, appropriate government and NGO bodies and the wider deer industry groups with the aim of having the proposals available for endorsement at the 2007 NZDFA AGM."

Action: The JRG has progressed this and developed a timeline for industry consultation for early 2007. Early concepts on low risk, confirmed infected and unconfirmed are presented in the JRG manual enclosed with this issue of *Deer Industry News*. Researchers have completed a literature review of similar schemes in the United States, Australia, and Canada as a reference template. Feedback and reaction have been forthcoming from JRG seminars in SCNO and at the NZ Veterinary Association Deer Branch conference, along with discussions with AHB and stock and station agents. The JRG has been invited to be represented at an Australian summit meeting on Johne's disease in October 2006, where first-hand understanding of the Australian systems and Market Assurance Programmes will be assessed for New Zealand. Full proposals will be presented for consultation and developed into the recommendations for the May 2007 AGM by March 2007.

Remit 13 Amended

"That this meeting task the NZDFA RAHC Tb working group to work through the issues identified by the Southland Branch and come back to the NZDFA Executive Committee and DINZ Executive with recommendations of actions to deal with these issues as originally set out in Remit 13."

Action: Remit was on the table for discussion with AHB and the RAHC working Group in June 2006. It was resolved and subsequently approved by the Southland Branch and EC "That the amended Southland Remit (13) relating to payments for infected herds (in the areas outlined not already covered by the existing collective funding scheme) be adopted under the collective funding programme, and that a maximum number of reactor animals per infected herd be set at 100. The payments under this proposal are subject to the all conditions of the mandatory management plan required being met."

- The net cost of this programme was estimated at around $40,000. The Group agreed to defer implementation for 12 months to consider the options and monitor activity in this area for another 12 months.

Remit 14 Amended

"That the NZDFA monitor the charge out standard price for tuberculin and publish this information through our communication channels annually."

Action: Subject raised with AHB at the RAHC working group meeting. While AHB is not able to advise or influence tuberculin price, the issue of high variability in price was noted. Current (June) wholesale rates are reported through veterinary practices at $0.32- 0.38 per dose for standard tuberculin. NZDFA has written to wholesalers requesting information updates on price for tuberculin, both avian and bovine ppd. Farmer discussion with approved testing organisations and testing veterinarians is encouraged.

Remit 15

"The JRG requests the NZDFA's endorsement of the proposal to establish a body, Johne's Management Limited, to capture and manage Johne's disease statistics from the DSPs in order to operate a voluntary Johne's disease on-farm control programme, a QA system and establish a Johne's disease database on the prevalence and location of the disease. The aim of the project is to substantially reduce the incidence of on-farm Johne's disease."

Action: JML has been formally established with Independent Chairman, Geoff Neilson (Ovis Management Ltd), producer-appointed directors Eddie Brock (Southland, Johne's Research Group) and Ian Hercus (Landcorp), processor representation through Mark O'Connor (DINZ) and Ian Stewart (Mountain river). The database development and application process is underway through Dan Lynch (Ovis Management Ltd) and Jaimie Glossop (Massey University). The industry is collecting the $0.35/head contribution through processors.

Remit 16

"That NZDFA support the establishment of an industry-wide velvet producers' organisation to provide producers with representation as to how New Zealand velvet is sold."

Action: The industry working group Velconz was formed in early June and has been working closely with PGG Wrightson senior management to develop a blueprint for an effective working arrangement reflecting producer interests and desire for change. The group has made one industry-wide communication and hopes to seek input from industry shortly on a more concrete proposal. In spite of what may appear slow progress, the parties are working positively towards a sound long-term arrangement.

Remit 18

"That the NZDFA requests DINZ to re-establish an awards promotion for excellence in the preparation and presentation of New Zealand venison within hotels and restaurants."

Action: DINZ consulted with venison marketing managers, food writers and chefs in the New Zealand food service industry. The consensus was that there is little merit in repeating past awards-type activities.

DINZ is examining means of increasing the profile of New Zealand venison on the local market through cost-effective, direct approaches to food editors and opinion formers in the food service industry.

NZDFA Elections results

Executive Committee

- Mark Hawkins, South Canterbury (Appointed Unopposed)
- Tim Aitken, Hawke's Bay (Re appointed unopposed)
- Andrew Mitchell Rotorua (Sitting Member)
- Bill Taylor, Southland (Sitting Member).

Selection and Appointments Panel

- Bob Kingscote, Canterbury (Re appointed unopposed)
- Mike Holdaway , Manawatu elected, defeating Brian Marcroft (Waikato)
- Keith Orange, South Canterbury (Sitting Member)
- John Cusdin (Taranaki (Sitting Member)
- Bob Kingscote has been appointed Chairman Selection and Appointments Panel for 2006/07.

Fencing with DOC: Progress, but fight continues

The Department of Conservation's proposal in 2004 to introduce strict fencing standards for all New Zealand deer farmers seems to have been diluted following consultation, or more precisely a stand-off, with the deer industry.

In 2005 the NZDFA refused to become involved in DOC's public consultation process, declaring it flawed and unfair. As a result, DINZ facilitated discussions between these two organisations with significant input from the other strong allies involving Game and Forest Foundation, and the Association of Game Estates, outside the public consultation process as promised by industry to the Minsters of Conservation and Rural Affairs.

"We've had a good relationship with the DOC people, and all of the many sector groups that took part, and have maintained positive discussions the whole way through. That's helped take a substantial step towards common sense," says DINZ Producer Manager Tony Pearse.

However as an outcome of its own process, The Department has made recommendations to the Minister to issue a Gazette notice which prohibits deer farming in certain areas (extending some existing prohibited areas and introducing new prohibited areas in Kaikoura Island and Stewart Island).

The changes also seek to regulate deer farming in areas which have been free of wild deer (such as Northland, Auckland, Taranaki and parts of Waikato) and the farming of minor breeds. If this proposed Gazette notice is enforced, farmers falling into these categories will be required to obtain permits to farm deer and notify DOC of any escapes as soon as they occur. These farmers will also have to adhere to new perimeter fence standards (existing farms will be able to comply over time) and consent to perimeter fence inspections by DOC every two years.

These changes are significantly less onerous than those originally proposed, in that farmers of Wapiti, Red and Fallow deer in all of the South Island and much of the North Island no longer require permits to farm. However, industry representatives believe there is still a long way to go.

"Given where we started, we've come a long way," says NZDFA Chairman Andrew Mitchell, "but DOC is still working under the misguided principle that they can control where people farm deer in New Zealand. New Zealand Red, Wapiti and Fallow farmers feel the intrusion of DOC into their business is completely unwarranted."

Tony Pearse says the proposal has highlighted the need for farmers to follow their responsibility to keep stock well fenced, but DOC's views on deer farming need to change.

"As an industry, we want to develop some standards on best practice upkeep and maintenance of fences," he says. "Ultimately we'd like to see deer recognised as farmed animals, rather than noxious pests or wild animals in captivity as they are under the current outdated and inappropriate Wild Animal Control Act."

Andrew says the industry still has a responsibility to look after farms which are going to be disadvantaged by the proposed changes. "Seven out of eight New Zealand deer farmers have come out of this without any requirements, but we still have a responsibility to look after the remaining 350 to 400 farmers who are affected," he says. "The fight continues, but we're a long way from where we started."

Focus farm project development

Following the successful development of the Otago and Southland Focus Farms, supported through the Sustainable Farming Fund (SFF) and now well into year 2, an initiative through NZDFA Branches, supported by DINZ through the productivity strategy concept is underway (see editorial, page 3).

This year, four further focus farms, linked through the strategy, targets are sought. The strategy aims to produce more weaner deer for venison or breeding, heavier at the optimal time, and overall achieving their potential earlier. This will create flexibility in management, and provide more supply options.

Interest in South Canterbury, Canterbury, Hawke's Bay and Central Regions, and in the Rotorua/BOP Central Plateau and Waikato areas has been confirmed, with initial moves to identify willing farmers, expert facilitators and productivity themes and locally relevant aims. While the Focus Farm projects will be modelled on the successful M&WNZ monitor farms, the positive experience with involvement with the Otago and Southland regional councils, and the Sustainable Farming Fund, leave greater scope for incorporating environmentally sustainable projects and extension, and a link to a wider community group. These projects are intended to cover three years and become a centre of Branch activity and support. They will also provide a focus for sponsors, utilise Branch fundraising and build nationwide networks. There is strong support in principle from SFF to look at new ways of technology implementation and attracting deer farmers to these focus farms.

The farms will be categorised based on the various enterprise models, like Red deer breeding and finishing (Eastern sires), velvet antler production, dairy heifer grazing, lamb finishing, beef breeding, etc, allowing an enterprise analysis approach. It is then intended to add focus areas of local interest, some related to the productivity strategy, and others related to environmental sustainability, in collaboration with local authorities.

The DINZ Board has set aside up to $60,000 through DEEResearch's budget, to be spread on a $ for $ basis across the four farms, in conjunction with local DFA Branches who will spearhead funding drives and cement the focus areas and the programme itself. Profitability per hectare will be the bottom line.

Focus Farms as vehicles for technology transfer are strongly supported through the DEEResearch/AgResearch/FRST bid. Parasitism, integrated stock management and projects associated with the productivity strategy's heavier-weaners-earlier focus are likely to feature. This will allow new work in lactation, autumn nutrition, early breeding, strain evaluations and genetic programmes to be incorporated into field days and into the on farm programme. Experience from the Otago/Southland projects shows that input from industry, regional councils, processing companies and sponsors into the open days is well received.

Over the next few months, the Producer Manager will be working with Branches, researchers, and funders to source the most appropriate properties, select well-respected and dynamic facilitators and develop these projects as the next step in improving profitability and ongoing sustainability.

Johne's disease:
Deer farmers' manual published

It can hardly have escaped your notice that there is a substantial information resource enclosed with this issue of Deer Industry News. Johne's disease in deer: The way forward is being distributed free to all deer farmers, deer vets, scientists, and media.

Published by the NZDFA's Johne's Research Group, the manual is the culmination of many months of work by veterinarians, farmers and scientists. It brings together all of the current knowledge and management advice in one user-friendly package.

The publication has been made possible through the Sustainable Farming Fund, with additional support from advertisers and other sponsors.

A nine-person Johne's Research Group contributing team, led by Wanaka deer farmer and vet Mandy Bell, took on the formidable task of assembling the most up-to-date knowledge and management advice for Johne's disease in deer.

"We were very conscious that, to be useful, the manual had to contain information and advice that could be easily put into practice on commercial farms," Mandy says.

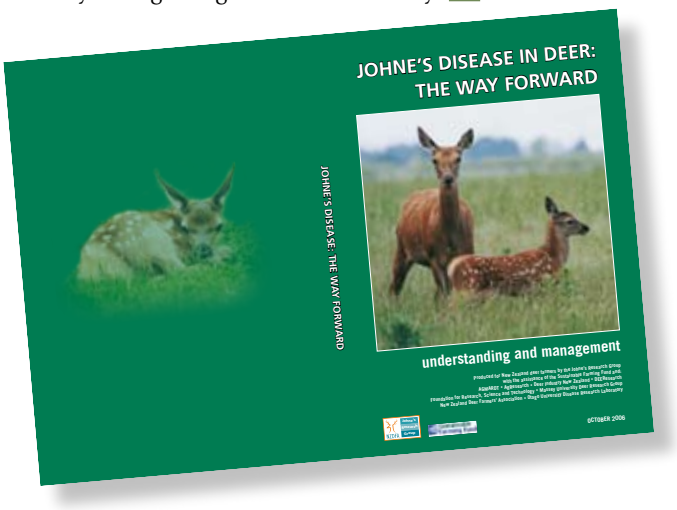
While the content is very accessible, it certainly has not been over simplified, and there is also plenty in there for vets, scientists and farmers who want to dig deeper, with an extensive list of references and further reading.

Mandy says putting together the manual was challenging because knowledge about the disease in deer and strategies for managing it are constantly developing. "It's a living document, and we expect there will be new recommendations and research results to build on what we have here. But this manual is a great start. We don't have a magic bullet available to wipe out Johne's disease, but it's already been shown that farmers can significantly reduce the impact of the disease on their business and there are best-practice strategies they can adopt to reduce its spread or keep it off their properties."

A new edition in the Johne's Research Group's series of information bulletins is also enclosed with this issue, and can be kept in the pocket inside the manual cover, along with any other updated information as it comes to hand.

Johne's Research Group Convenor, Peter Aitken says publication of the manual is one of several initiatives by the Group – aided by the wider deer industry – to confront a serious animal health challenge and do something positive about it.

Further Johne's Research Group endeavours to deal with the disease include the Johne's Management Limited proposal currently being developed and the undertaking, accepted by the Group following the NZDFA's 2006 AGM remit directive, to construct voluntary Johne's disease status protocols for live sales for industry consultation and approval. Both of these concepts were strongly supported at the 2006 Deer Industry Conference and are, Peter says, examples of the deer industry taking charge of its own destiny.



Fascinating facts about Johne's disease:

- Johne's disease is named after a 19th century German veterinarian
- The bacterium that causes the disease hides inside animal cells and has a thick waxy coating, making it very hard to eliminate.
- The bacterium is part of the same family of organisms that cause bovine Tb and avian Tb. Its full name is *Mycobacterium avium* subsp. *paratuberculosis*.
- It can survive in the environment for up to 12 months.
- For every single deer in a herd that shows clinical signs of Johne's disease, there my be up to 20 sub-clinically affected animals.
- Wildlife get Johne's too – even seagulls, ferrets and hedgehogs.
- Fawns can catch it from their mothers – either in the uterus or though the milk.
- A programme of testing and culling can significantly reduce the impact of Johne's disease in your herd.

Copies available for purchase

If you are not one of those to receive a copy of the manual with this mailing of *Deer Industry News*, (mailed to all known levy payers, key industry veterinarians and personnel in industry support structures) there is the opportunity to obtain a copy. A limited number of additional manuals have been printed and are available for purchase. Copies can be ordered and paid for by posting a cheque for $50 (includes GST and postage) to: Johne's Manual, Deer Industry New Zealand, PO Box 10-702, Wellington. Cheques should be made out to Johne's Research Group – and don't forget to include your address details.

PhD published:

Deer an important source of leptospirosis infection?

A Massey University PhD project has confirmed that leptospirosis is widespread throughout New Zealand's farmed deer herds, and suggests that deer might be an important contributor to the epidemiology of the disease in other farmed animals and humans.

Preliminary results from Alejandra Ayanegui-Alcérreca's PhD study of the epidemiology and control of leptospirosis in farmed deer in New Zealand were introduced to farmers at the 2005 Deer Industry Conference. The PhD, under the chief supervision of Professor Peter Wilson in the Institute of Veterinary, Animals and Biomedical Sciences at Massey University, is now completed and published, and the summary available to deer farmers on the DEEResearch website.

In a regional study, 82 percent of the 110 herds sampled showed evidence of leptospirosis infection. No regional differences were found (i.e. infection was found throughout the country). Most cases (78% of herds) involved the Hardjobovis serovar, with the Pomona serovar appearing in 20% of herds. Both types appeared together in 16% of the herds. A third serovar, Copenhageni, was found at trace levels, so its significance is likely to be limited. While Hardjobovis appears to have milder clinical effects in deer than Pomona, the same cannot be said for the humans who are infected with Hardjobovis through contact with animals.

Maintenance hosts

Ayanegui-Alcérreca concludes that deer are maintenance hosts for Hardjobovis, meaning that herds act as reservoirs of infection and possible agents of spread to other livestock species and man (approximately 80 percent of deer farms were concurrent with sheep and/or cattle and shedding through urine can persist for more than 9 months). They are more likely to be accidental hosts for Pomona and Copenhageni.

Little work on vaccines in deer exists. One part of her study involved vaccine trials using the trivalent vaccine Leptavoid®3, which covers Hardjobovis, Pomona and Copenhageni. The six trials over two years were carried out on four lower North Island farms, three of which were infected with leptospirosis. The trials confirmed that vaccination produced antibodies against the three serovars. It cut the number of animals shedding leptospirosis organisms, and the number of animals with kidneys showing signs of the disease – despite ongoing natural challenge from non-vaccinated animals.

In *one* herd, vaccinated hinds had a 9% higher weaning percentage than non-vaccinates. Ayanegui-Alcérreca cautions that these results would need to be replicated, but they suggest the impact of production losses caused by leptospirosis could be underestimated.

Further work with the vaccine in pregnant hinds and their progeny confirmed that vaccinated hinds passed on immunity through their colostrum. Immunity was passed on to calves in both infected and non-infected herds. This part of the study also confirmed that the antibodies passed on from the hinds did not interfere with the vaccination of progeny at 12-16 weeks of age.

The PhD research also looked at the relationship between three different ways of diagnosing leptospirosis in deer: serology (blood testing), inspecting kidneys for lesions, and bacterial culture from kidneys. The results confirmed a relationship between the three methods, showing that all are useful ways of identifying infection at the herd level and predicting the risk of people being exposed to risk from infected deer.

Ayanegui-Alcérreca notes that the risk to humans from infected deer comes not just through contact with urine, but also with the kidneys of infected animals – i.e. in processing plants, and home-kill. Although deer with negative blood tests and no kidney lesions present a lower disease risk to humans, the risk is not completely absent, she concludes.

Leptavoid®3 is a prescription Animal Remedy (P.A.R) Class I. For use only under the authority or prescription of a veterinarian. Registered pursuant to the ACVM Act 1997, No. A3876.

• ***See page 28 for article on new leptospirosis research.***

Improvement in human cases

Human cases of leptospirosis are nowhere near as common as they were at their peak in 1971, when over 800 cases were recorded. Nonetheless, the disease is still the most common occupationally acquired disease in New Zealand, with around 80-100 human cases reported each year over the past decade. There were 86 reported cases in 2005, and in the 8 months to August this year, 63 cases had been recorded.

Farmers, stock drivers and meat industry workers bear the brunt of the disease, and together they made up around 90 percent of last year's cases.

There is a glimmer of good news for those involved in deer processing, however. Last year we reported that five out of the 36 DSP slaughtermen in Otago/Southland had been diagnosed with acute leptospirosis in 2004. At nearly one in seven, that gave very short odds for catching the disease.

One year on, the news is much better. Derek Bell, Medical Officer of Health for Otago and Southland says there were no further cases amongst DSP workers in his region for 2005.

He says greater awareness of the risks and of OSH requirements appears to have helped. One general meat processor (not a DSP) is being prosecuted by OSH and this may have sent a message, he adds.

New leptospirosis research looks at cross-species factors

A new PhD research project at Massey University is set to build on Alejandra Ayanegui-Alcérreca's recently completed investigation into epidemiology and control of leptospirosis in New Zealand farmed deer.

PhD candidate Suptsak ("Art") Subharat started work in March on a project that will look more closely at the role of multi-species farming in the epidemiology of leptospirosis. It will also be looking more closely at the production impacts of leptospirosis in deer, providing more substantial data to validate, if real, the possible production benefits of vaccination that had been observed by Ayanegui-Alcérreca during her research – reproductive outcomes and body weights will be monitored throughout the programme.

Subharat's work will also develop the work on vaccination of deer against leptospirosis, including an investigation of strategies to accelerate reduction of the risk of leptospirosis. His supervisor, Professor Peter Wilson, says modelling from cattle suggests vaccination alone should reduce shedding of leptospires by deer (and therefore the risk to humans and other animals) to almost zero after 7-8 years, depending on herd demographics. "We will be looking at what can be done to achieve this goal more quickly," he says.

Wilson says research will also be done to develop and validate new diagnostic techniques, including tests for urine shedding and culture identification and sensitivity.

A key to the research is the role of multi-species farming in the spread of leptospirosis. "About 85 percent of deer farms are multi-species and we will be developing a method to type leptospires to see the cross-species infection situation," Wilson says. "We know that deer are maintenance hosts for the Hardjobovis serovar, but we're not sure about sheep. If sheep are only accidental hosts for the common serovars of leptospirosis – that is, they won't maintain infection on their own – it may only be necessary to control leptospirosis in co-farmed species like deer. But if sheep are also maintenance hosts, that would be a whole different question."

He says the sheep industry is concerned about the apparent spread and maintenance of leptospirosis in the sheep population. While there is reasonable evidence for this, it still remains anecdotal. Data from an OIE animal health reference laboratory in Britain shows a similar trend there. Wilson speculates that the boom in dairy grazing that began 20 years ago could have contributed to the spread of leptospirosis through other farmed species, especially as grazers are usually moved during wet winter conditions when the organisms are spread most easily in the environment. The growth of integrated sheep/deer or sheep/beef/deer systems could also be a factor.

The research is also going to look more closely at the distribution of leptospirosis around the body of infected animals. "There is some evidence that the organism might prefer the reproductive tract and/or brain [along with the kidneys] in some species. If that is the case it could help explain some losses of foetuses or perhaps more importantly, failure to survive to weaning."

Humans will also be part of the study, and Subharat will be analysing blood samples from slaughterhouse workers to build a better picture of human exposure to leptospirosis (nearly 50 percent of human cases are people who work in meat processing). Wilson says there has been very positive support from meat processing companies for this aspect of the work. "With some people there may be multiple risk factors," Wilson says. "For example, a meat worker who also hunts wild pig could be at risk from two sources."

Commercial deer herds are currently being selected for the research programme. "We very much appreciate the contribution of farmers to programmes like these, and we are seeking further volunteers from the Hawke's Bay, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape and Wairarapa regions. While taking part in these programmes requires some extra input from the farmers concerned, they are making an extremely valuable contribution to an industry-wide solution to this animal health problem, and will learn more about their own operations at the same time."

• To discuss taking part in the programme, contact Peter Wilson at (06) 356-9099 ext 7619, or email P.R.Wilson@massey.ac.nz

Australian velvet genetics available

Two Australian deer farmers have joined forces to import elite deer semen for velvet production into New Zealand. Export-accredited semen is available now from Yanek (Eastern) and two English stags, Kayden and Normy. Export semen from a further three stags will be available in the near future.

South Australian stud farmer Branko Sarunic and Victorian deer breeder Steve Lamplough have formed the partnership under Sarunic's International Deer Import/Export Agents.

New stags will be added to the partnership as it develops. The business also intends to act as a contract agent for anybody who wants to sell deer genetics to a world-wide market.

Lamplough is both a partner and selling agent. Initial markets will be in New Zealand and Australia, but future targets include South Korea and China.

Don Bennett of Deer Genetics says Sarunic "produces the best velvet I have seen in the southern hemisphere". Peter Chun, a velvet buyer from Korea, believes "the velvet is equivalent to any of the best in the world". Sarunic has previously sold deer to New Zealand, including Peel Forest Estate's Savar.

With more commercial farmers looking at artificial insemination as a means of improving their herds, the partners see good world-wide potential.

Lamplough says stags are bred for style, quality and weight of velvet, and for temperament.

Kiwis feature at deer biology congress

The Sixth International Deer Biology Congress, held in Prague in August, was attended by over 200 deer scientists from 38 countries. Simone Hoskin and Peter Wilson from Massey University and Colin Mackintosh and Chunyi Li from AgResearch made up the Kiwi contingent

The Congress, which is held every four years, is a chance for deer biologists, wildlife researchers, wildlife and game managers, veterinarians, agriculturalists and conservationists worldwide to share their knowledge and present their latest research.

Papers were presented on a wide range of topics, including reproduction, nutrition, diseases and antler biology.

"There was a lot of interest in Johne's disease and Tb in wild deer around the world and CWD was still a reasonably hot topic," says Colin Mackintosh. "It's definitely a North American concern and we should be grateful it's not here."

Chunyi Li's plenary lecture on antler regeneration and stem cell research, which highlighted how deer are inadvertently contributing the developments in human medicine, was well received.

"Chunyi Li gave an extremely good plenary paper on deer antlers and mechanism for antler growing, based around stem cells," Colin says. "It was recognised by everyone as an extremely good paper and I think it got universal acceptance for the basis of antler regeneration."

Peter Wilson says the congress went at least some way towards addressing the gaps in deer biology knowledge.

"We got the chance to look at what is going on in other places, different techniques being used and other diseases the industry is facing in different areas. But there are huge knowledge gaps and there always will be – that's the nature of science and developing industries."

Colin agrees that some knowledge gaps remain. "There's still a lot we don't know about the epidemiology of diseases and unfortunately there was nothing new in terms of anthelmintic resistance," he says. "But it was a very valuable networking opportunity. It's important to make new contacts in North America and Europe."

COMING EVENTS

Date	Event	Time/Place
Tue 24 Oct	Deer improvement Balfour Research Farm Open day	1.00pm On farm, Ardlussa Road, Balfour
31 Oct – 1 Nov	Selection and Appointments Panel/Executive Committee meetings	DINZ Board room PWC Tower Wellington
1 – 2 Nov	Branch Chairmen's meeting	James Cook, 147 The Terrace, Wellington
Thu 2 Nov	Southland focus farm field day	John and Jackie McLean's property, Lumsden 1.30pm
8 Nov	FGM Updated: • Market report • Technical Update	Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton 1.00-5.00pm
15 Nov (Proposed)	FGM Updated (in association with Vet South) • Market report • Technical Update	Southland (to be confirmed)
Tue 21 Nov	West Coast Monitor Farm Community open day (to be confirmed)	Murray and Gay Coates, Haupiri
Wed 22 Nov	DINZ Board meeting	DINZ, Wellington
Fri 24 Nov	SCNO Velvet competition	The Poplars , Pleasant Point
Sat 25 Nov	Hawke's Bay Velvet Competition	Clifton
Sat 25 Nov	Wairoa Velvet competition	Mahia Fishing Club
Sat 25 Nov	Waikato Velvet competition (to be confirmed)	
Sun 26 Nov	Central Regions Velvet competition and dinner.	Orlando Club, Marton
Thu 30 Nov	Northern Southland (Gore) Velvet competition	Riversdale (TBC)
Fri 1 Dec	Taranaki Velvet competition	International Quality Hotel, New Plymouth
Sat 2 Dec	North Island Velvet and Hard Antler Competition	International Quality Hotel, New Plymouth
Tue 5 Dec	South Otago Velvet Antler Competition	Clydevale? (TBC)
Fri 8 Dec	Oxford Velvet Competition	Oxford
Sat 10 Dec	Kaipara Velvet Competition	To be confirmed
Wed 13 Dec	National velvet and hard antler competition judging	Ascot Hotel Invercargill
Thu 14 Dec	25th national velvet and hard antler awards dinner	Ascot Hotel Invercargill
2007		
Sat 3 Feb	EWSNZ National velvet and hard antler competition	Invercargill
Sat 17 Feb	National 2 year velvet antler and 2 and 3 year hard antler competition	The Oaks, Cambridge
Tue 22 May	Branch chairmen's meeting Industry conference opening night & venison gala	Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton
Wed 23 May	Deer Industry Conference. DINZ FGM, NZDFA AGM. Awards dinner	Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton
Thu 24 May	Waikato Innovation. Branch Showcase and Technical sessions	Hamilton
Tue 19 – Fri 22 Jun	NZ Society of Animal Production. Features deer contract session and field trip. Thursday 21 June.	Wanaka

OE is just fine, thanks!

Deer industry personalities Colin and Wendy Young are proving that OE is not just the preserve of 20-somethings. They were back in New Zealand for a flying visit in August before returning to the UK to take up a 12 month contract managing a 35-acre estate at Horsley in England's Cotswold district.* Deer Industry News *caught up with Colin during their visit.

The Youngs have burned up plenty of air miles since Colin sold his share in National Livestock to business partner Malcolm Gourlie in March last year. Returning to New Zealand after a two-month trip to South America, they were keen for more travel and seized on the opportunity offered by a 6-month contract to manage the Red deer herd at the Finnebrogue Estate in Northern Ireland from November 2005 to April this year.

Colin said there wasn't the opportunity to apply much New Zealand deer husbandry experience as the contract period largely covered winter. It was an enjoyable stint nonetheless. The 750-hind herd, the largest Red deer herd in Ireland, was kept in a variety of situations: young stags were wintered indoors, rising one-year-old hinds were spread out on the farm, while the mixed-age hinds were feedlotted outside. Feeding dominated the daily routine.

A state-of-the art slaughter and processing plant is on the estate. The only deer slaughter premises in Northern Ireland, it's an impressive and very efficient setup, Colin said, and incorporates some features from New Zealand DSPs.

"They only slaughter one day a week, killing between 50-120 animals, but the rest is devoted to processing. Nothing is frozen. Most of the product goes chilled into Marks & Spencer with a little to Tesco and the restaurant trade. Some pork is also processed there, although it's slaughtered elsewhere."

Colin said that despite UK demand for venison growing by 100 percent in recent times on the back of some excellent marketing, the deer industry in Northern Ireland has been static. Supply is a constant issue, although the estate owner Denis Lynn is doing all he can to encourage greater production.

One problem has been the distortions caused by the Common Agricultural Policy. "Venison production on existing farms is unsubsidised. Deer farmers need to return £3/kg on venison [nearly $NZ9] to compete with the returns from subsidised beef and lamb."

At the finish of their 6-month contract in the northern spring, the Youngs continued their OE with an extensive trip through Egypt and Europe – and a spell sailing in the Bay of Biscay as guests on the yacht of their erstwhile landlord.

They enjoyed catching up with family and friends back in New Zealand, but the travel bug has bitten deep, and they have now returned to the UK to take up their 12-month contract in the Cotswolds. Colin said the owners, a young London-based couple, employ New Zealanders in their law business and were impressed by the kiwi work ethic.

New Zealand deer farmers who worked with Colin during his more than 30 years in the industry will know that the Youngs' new employer will be getting that faith in kiwis returned in spades. Although they now have no direct interest in the New Zealand deer industry, their links and interest remain strong. Colin and Wendy were among Hawke's Bay's industry pioneers, getting into deer in the late 1970s at Norsewood, where they ran about 1000 deer on 350 acres. His stock procurement work with Wrightson started to take over during the 1990s and took a big step up when they took on the contract for Richmond in 1994. The farm was sold in 1995, and in 2002 Colin started National Livestock with Malcolm Gourlie.

Colin's former Hawke's Bay deer farming clients Jamie and Alison Ritchie (far left and second from left) are among the many who enjoyed their association with Colin and Wendy Young (second from right and far right) during the Youngs' 30+ years in the industry.

Having been involved in exports of live animals to both Canada and Japan, Colin was interested to pick up on the current industry debate on the merits or otherwise of this trade. While he could see possible problems with the export of velveting animals to China, he couldn't see that country ever becoming a competitor with New Zealand venison exporters. Having seen the on-farm conditions in Korea and China, Colin's real concern regarding exports to China is the issue of animal welfare.

But now the Youngs are exporting themselves back to the UK and while they are still enjoying their travel so much, plans remain open-ended, Colin said. Hopefully for the New Zealand deer industry, there will be plenty more despatches from the Cotswolds and beyond.

Applications open for Hugh Williams Ravensdown Memorial scholarship

Applications are open for the Hugh Williams Ravensdown Memorial Scholarship. This annual scholarship offers sons or daughters of Ravensdown shareholders $5000 per year for the duration of their agricultural or horticultural degree at Lincoln or Massey University. The winners are also offered paid holiday work with Ravensdown.

The scholarship was established six years ago in memory of the late Hugh Williams who was a Ravensdown Director from 1987 to 2000. It aims to encourage young people into the agricultural industry.

Information and an application form for the 2007 scholarship are available from the Ravensdown website (www.ravensdown.co.nz) or by calling the Ravensdown Customer Centre on 0800 100 123. Applications close on Friday 8 December.