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DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 24 • April 2007 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA

INNOVATE! 2007 Conference Preview

NZDFA Annual Report 2006/07

Strong weaner sales: p10

Also in this issue:

- Proposed Johne's status herd classification scheme for live market
- New nitrogen reduction strategy from Environment Waikato
- 125 William Davidson conference
- Quality of skins needs to improve
- Cervena™ features at fusion food festival
- Research update
- Black Forest Park profile

DEER INDUSTRY NEW ZEALAND

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association

Deer code of welfare an example of industry leadership

Since the mid-1980s, a New Zealand infrastructure has been developed to ensure animal welfare issues are addressed positively and proactively, and international developments are monitored effectively.

This strategic approach has ensured that New Zealand is able to address animal welfare issues in a structured manner and that policies are formulated on the basis of available scientific data and full consultation. The 22 voluntary codes of recommendations and minimum standards, developed by the then Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (AWAC), from 1990-1999, were strongly supported by animal user groups and attracted favourable international comment. Under the Animal Welfare Act 1999, codes of welfare now have statutory recognition and are gradually replacing the voluntary codes.

Over the last 20 years, both livestock agriculture and the scientific community have supported initiatives designed to support the obligations and **duty of care** which go hand in hand with responsible use of animals. This has involved the introduction of voluntary, and then statutory, welfare codes in relation to the use of animals in agriculture and recreation. The codes, in turn, are increasingly being included in quality assurance schemes designed to meet the needs of both domestic and international consumers.

Over the same period, the New Zealand deer industry has taken a proactive stance on animal welfare issues. Its involvement with MAF, AWAC and NZVA in the early 1990s regarding the development of the AWAC code for velvet removal, the establishment of the NVSB and the commitment to animal welfare research funding all indicate a strategic, science-based and market responsive approach.

At an international level, the OIE (World Organisation for Animal Health) has, since 2001, assumed an international leadership role in relation to the development of animal welfare guidelines and standards for use by its 167 member countries.

Media, public, political and scientific interest in animal welfare and ethics has increased significantly in recent years. New Zealand is seen internationally to have progressive and contemporary animal welfare legislation, a cohesive national animal welfare infrastructure, a strong animal welfare science capability and an important enforcement partnership between MAF and the RNZSPCA.

Concerns of the New Zealand public, animal owners and farmers, overseas markets and consumers drive animal welfare change but there is often a difficult balancing of the welfare needs of animals with economics and ethical considerations. This balance requires that animals in New Zealand are kept, are farmed and live in conditions that are suitable for their age, species, sex and physiological state.

As work continues to promote animal welfare standards, it is also important to ensure that such standards do not place the New Zealand producer at a commercial disadvantage internationally or constrain scientific advances.

The Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) does not include animal welfare requirements and standards. New Zealand, thus, does not accept that animal welfare standards should be used as a condition of trade. It is important, however, that New Zealand producers stay responsive to changing consumer attitudes to contribute to optimum product positioning and market success.

Animal welfare is often viewed quite differently by various stakeholders. To aid understanding and acceptance of new animal welfare policies and standards, MAF strives to include affected parties and other key stakeholders in decision-making.

Science is the principal driver for identifying and confirming animal welfare needs. To promote the use of science-based standards, MAF works with animal welfare and behaviour and other scientists and researchers. Where information is lacking, MAF works to promote the undertaking of research aimed at clarifying particular issues.

The development of the code of welfare for deer, under the Animal Welfare Act 1999, is a further example of industry leadership. Animal welfare will continue to attract the attention of consumers, the public, and politicians, and it is anticipated that the deer industry will continue to provide other sectors with a model for proactively managing change.

A C David Bayvel, Director Animal Welfare, Biosecurity New Zealand, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

- ***The Deer Code of Welfare is scheduled to be issued by the Minister of Agriculture next month.***

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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: Quartz Hill weaner sale. Photo courtesy Ed Marfell, PGG Wrightson.

Innovate!

Deer Industry Conference

Hamilton, 22-24 May 2007

Continuing deer farmer requests to keep the conference relatively short and snappy were kept in mind when planning this year's event. Following the success of last year's shorter event with its attached Branch-sponsored field/technical day, the conference has a great programme for 2007.

The *Innovate!* theme reflects what has been going on with the promotion of our products: the innovative *Impress your Guests* retail promotion of venison in Europe, the promotion of velvet as a food in Korea and the new uses of velvet in western markets. The theme also recognises our productivity and Focus Farms initiatives and, of course, the role of Waikato as a centre of agribusiness innovation and promotion.

Conference welcome: Innovate with venison

The Waikato committee recognises the value of time out to catch up with friends, so the 2007 Deer Industry Conference will open with a welcome event on the evening of Tuesday 22 May at 7.00pm at Hamilton's spacious Kingsgate Hotel, Garnett Avenue, Te Rapa. Earlier that day the Branch Chairmen will have their biannual meeting, starting at 10.00am on 22 May.

We have a great dining concept built on the past few years, featuring a number of styles and presentation of venison as a series of entrée dishes. No smoke or outside dramas this year! The Executive Chef at the Kingsgate will be presenting five innovative and contrasting dishes from his kitchen featuring Pacifica themes, with suggestions for matched wines and beer. That social atmosphere will allow plenty of mingling and conversation prior to the formal meetings of the FGM and AGM next day.

Awards banquet

For further fine dining and excellent entertainment, the evening of Wednesday 23 May marks the traditional industry awards banquet and entertainment. This will also present an innovation when a guest chef serves an appetizer featuring velvet, an entree and outstanding venison cutlet main course, and some quite sinful desserts.

This year we feature Auckland headliner entertainment act *Chris and Chet,* who promise musical and stand-up improvisation of high quality, humour and good taste. The evening's highlight will be the annual Deer Industry Award, the Matuschka award and the Warnham & Woburn Society Photographic competition.

Conference partners: Thanks!

The conference's premium industry partner, **PPCS**, is providing extensive overall sponsorship and the cutlet product for the banquet night, with Duncan and Co sponsoring the range of cuts required in the opening 'Innovate with venison' evening.

Sponsorship of the 2007 event reflects the more positive mood of the industry with great support from additional industry partners, Rabobank, Telford Polytechnic, Intervet and Ravensdown, plus a number of strong trade supporters. The organisers are very grateful for this measure of support.

Business sessions

The business sessions on Wednesday 23 May lead off with the DINZ FGM occupying the morning session from 8.30 am-12.30 pm. The NZDFA AGM follows from 1.30 pm until close at 5.30pm.

The FGM will feature a slightly changed format, with formal reporting from the Board Chairman and Chief Executive and focused reporting from the venison and velvet markets. We welcome the new CEO of PPCS, Keith Cooper, to the conference to contribute to discussion on venison marketing and markets. Open discussion will again feature, with a producer-driven Q&A session with the DINZ Board and Executive.

The NZDFA AGM will lead off with a guest overview from a Rabobank senior market analyst with a presentation relevant to the deer industry and setting it in a wider agricultural and global context. Remits to date suggest the meeting is already shaping up to have some thought-provoking key issues.

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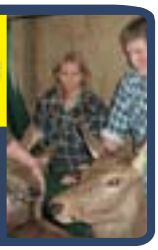

Remits include one from the Southland Branch requesting industry debate on the justification for joining the National Animal Identification and Traceability (NAIT) programme. Host Branch Waikato has put forward a remit seeking to replace the Selection and Appointments Panel system for appointing producer board members to the DINZ Board with direct elections. Canterbury Branch is requesting that the development and visible adoption of scientifically and practically sound sustainable farming principles be accelerated. The Johne's Research Group will report with the draft voluntary Johne's disease herd status classification system they were charged with developing at the last AGM (see proposal on p9). Further remits are bound to emerge as regional AGMs roll around between now and conference.

Field day and technical sessions

The Waikato Branch NZDFA is hosting the Waikato Innovation field day and technical sessions on Thursday 24 May. This is an extension to the conference proper and can be attended by delegates and locals as a one-off event.

The diverse programme will feature visits to AgResearch, Deer Improvement and Gallagher Group with a visit to Dexcel still to be confirmed as we go to press.

The day is based around the *Innovate!* theme. AgResearch will be showing MIRINZ carcass imaging and yield work, Dexcel the robotic milking platform (subject to confirmation) and Deer Improvement Ltd will take us through deer genetics and new innovation in breeding technology at LIC.

Lunch is at the Waikato Stadium followed by a trip to the Gallagher Electronic group of companies. This will focus on traceability and include a factory tour and an *Electronics in Agriculture* Innovation seminar.

The local organising group also has an option to visit the famous Cambridge Stud at 11.00am on the 24 May. That is a separate feature and being offered to conference delegates and locals alike. The technical day will be concluded by 3.00pm to allow onward travel. The fee to cover lunch and transport on what promises to be a fascinating day is just $50.

Get registered!

Registration for the conference, field day/technical sessions and hotel accommodation is all being arranged through the DCMS conference organising group. A registration form has been enclosed with this issue. Alternatively you can download and print off a copy from the DINZ website (www.deernz.org/n32.html) or just call DINZ reception on 04 473 4500.

There is an early bird incentive that closes on 7 May to meet the hotel demands to release rooms. It's an age-old request that often we ignore, but an early registration really helps everybody. The early bird fee is just $175.00 per registrant – a saving of $25 on the full fee.

Further information

- ***The conference organiser, Pat Johnston at DCMS, Tel 03 477 1377, email pat@dcms.co.nz***
- ***The Producer Manager, Tony Pearse, Tel 021 719 038, 04 471 6118, email tony.pearse@deernz.org***

DEER INDUSTRY CONFERENCE 2007: Programme Summary

(FGM timings provisional)

Tuesday 22 May	
6.00 – 7.00pm	Registration delegates & catch up
7.00 – 10.30pm	Welcome Function and "Innovate with Venison". Chef's selection of five venison entrees matched with drinks.
	Mayor of Waipa District Council, Alan Livingstone: Official conference opening and theme setting
	Venison Sponsored by *Duncan and Co*
	Intervet (5 min presentation)
	Duncan and Co (5 min presentation)
Wednesday 23 May	
8.15am	Conference Welcome: Waikato Branch NZDFA and John Scurr, Deer Industry New Zealand.
8.30am	Deer Industry New Zealand FGM
	FGM DINZ Chairman's report: John Scurr
	CEO's Report: Mark O'Connor
	Venison Report: Innes Moffat
	Innovation in the Venison Market and its progress: Mark O'Connor/Innes Moffat/Graham Brown
	Processor Exporters
10.15 – 10.35am	Morning Tea Break
10.35am – 12.30pm	*Ravensdown (5 min presentation)*
	FGM Continues
	Velvet Report: Vanessa Crowley
	Innovation in Velvet market – strategy and velvet science: Vanessa Crowley/VARNZ
	Research update: Lindsay Fung
	Board Q&A session
12.45 – 1.30pm	Lunch & Trade Exhibition
1.30 – 2.00pm	32nd NZDFA AGM
	Rabobank Hayley Moynihan (Senior Analyst, Animal Proteins, Food & Agribusiness). Research: "Meating the Market" *(20 min presentation)*
2.00pm	NZDFA 32nd AGM formally opens
3.30 – 3.50pm	Afternoon Tea Break: (timing flexible depending on AGM progress)
	Telford (5 min presentation)
3.50pm-5.30pm	32nd NZDFA AGM continues
7pm for 7.30pm	Annual Industry Awards Dinner and Entertainment: Venison sponsored by PPCS
	PPCS (5 min presentation)
	Entertainment by Chris And Chet
	Featuring : Matuschka Award, Deer Industry Award, and Warnham & Woburn Photo Contest
Thursday 24 May 2007	
	Field Trip: Draft programme 8.30am – 3.00pm
	Morning session is a rotation between the venues.
	After lunch we are hosted by Gallagher at their headquarters
	This is optional for conference delegates. Cost $50 per person
	(Includes bus transport from Kingsgate, lunch at Waikato Stadium: Hosted by Waikato Branch NZDFA)
	Dexcel Robotic Milking - TBC
	LIC/Deer Improvement Ltd – Deer Genetics in Action
	AgResearch Venison Quality and Features of the Carcass
11.00am	Depending on demand: Cambridge Stud.
12 - 1pm	Waikato Stadium Lunch with some of the Waikato Chiefs and Cheerleaders
1.15 - 3pm	Gallagher Group Factory tour, electronics in action and innovation seminar with the topic of traceability.

NZDFA AGM 2007: **Constitutional matters**

1. AGM: Notice of meeting

New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association, Annual General Meeting.

Notice is hereby given that the 32nd Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association (Inc) will be held in the Conference rooms of the Kingsgate Hotel, Garnett Avenue, Te Rapa, Hamilton on Wednesday 23 May, commencing at 1.30pm.

The Chairman and Executive Committee of the NZDFA invite all levy payers and members to attend.

2. Executive Committee appointments

Members of the NZDFA Executive Committee (two members representing the North Island and two representing the South Island) are elected for a two year term. Members retire by rotation and are eligible for re-election. Annually according to the NZDFA constitution rules, the Executive Committee elects a Chairman from amongst the four members.

Nominations have been called for the two vacancies created by retirement by rotation.

Executive Committee North Island

Three nominations have been received for the single vacancy created by the retirement by rotation of Andrew Mitchell, who did not seek re-election. An election is required by postal ballot. All levy payers and all full, elected and life members of the NZDFA are eligible to vote irrespective of their North or South Island origin.

Candidate profiles and statements have been copied and distributed with the Executive Committee voting papers. The nominees are:

Richard Broughton, Whangarei, Northland (Nominated Mike McCormick, seconded, Jo-Anne Huesser).

Sharon Love, Rotorua (Nominated Andrew Mitchell, seconded Paul McDowell).

Earle Wells, Whakatane, Bay Of Plenty, (Nominated Rex Vincent, seconded, Paul Burt).

Executive Committee South Island

One nomination received, **Bill Taylor**, Lora Valley, Winton, Southland (Nominated Peter Allan, seconded Brian Russell).

Declared **appointed** unopposed.

Bill Taylor and the successful voted candidate will join colleagues **Mark Hawkins**, Sutherlands, South Canterbury, and **Tim Aitken**, Waipawa, Hawke's Bay, as the 2007/08 Executive Committee of the NZDFA.

For members' interest, Bill Taylor's candidate profile follows:

In partnership with my wife Jill, we farm a 460 ha property in Central Southland, running deer, sheep and beef. We have three adult children.

My involvement with the NZDFA goes back to the time of the failed Venison New Zealand companies, when I and a small group of farmer creditors eventually managed to secure a small return for farmers.

Since then I have been a member of the Southland Branch Committee for 13 years including 3 years as Chairman. I have been on the Executive Committee for the last 4 years, also chairing the NZDFA Landcare Manual Committee, being a member of the On Farm QA Technical Committee, and am currently a member of the Velconz working group.

I believe that if deer farmers wish to see the continuation of the DFA Branches throughout the country, and the continuation of the Selection and Appointment process for the election of their farmer directors to DINZ, we need to maintain a strong Executive Committee as a governing body of the NZDFA.

I will continue to ask the questions and do my best to represent, and provide leadership for deer farmers, in what I believe is still an exciting industry.

3. Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP)

The SAP consists of the four-man Executive Committee and four non-Executive Committee elected members. Two of the non Executive Committee elected members of the Panel (one from each island) retire annually by rotation.

SAP North Island

Three nominations are received for the single vacancy created by the retirement by rotation of John Cusdin, who did not seek re-election. An election is required by postal ballot.

Candidates are:

Campbell Clarke, Waipa (Nominated Brian Wellington, seconded Graham Lawson)

Keith Sutton, Wellington, (Nominated Errol Croad, seconded Graham Hunter)

Ponty von Dadelzsen, Hawke's Bay (nominated Ian Walker, seconded Richard Hilson).

Candidate statements, voting papers, and return envelopes have been distributed in association with this publication under separate cover, to all known eligible levy payers and NZDFA members on a mailout on 24 April 2007.

Voting opens on 26 April for 21 days and closes at 5.00pm on Wednesday 17 May 2006, as required 7 days before the AGM. The results will be announced at the conclusion of the 32nd AGM, under General Business.

SAP South Island

One nomination received for the retirement by rotation vacancy:

David Stevens, Balfour, Northern Southland**.**

(Nominated Peter Allan, seconded Russell Marshall).

Declared **appointed** unopposed.

David Stevens and the successful North Island candidate will join current members **Mike Holdaway** Apiti, Manawatu and **Bob Kingscote**, Waiau, North Canterbury, on the 2007/08 NZDFA Selection and Appointments Panel.

For members' interest, David Stevens's candidate profile follows:

Married to Lynley with three adult daughters. Began deer farming in 1979. Currently farming 300 ha, running 2,000 deer and growing 400 tonnes of milling oats.

Past and present deer industry involvement.

- *Southland NZDFA committee member 25 years*
- *Southland President 3 years*
- *NZDFA Councillor 4 years*
- *NZDFA President 2 years*
- *Member of the DeerQA committee 6 years*
- *Chairman of DeerQA 2 years*
- *Current South Island NVSB representative*
- *Current member of the Velconz working group*

- *Current Judge of the Otago/Southland Deer Farmer of the Year.*

The credibility of the Selection and Appointment process depends on the correct choice of candidate and the professional manner in which this is carried out. This is essential for both candidate and industry confidence, and as a past NZDFA President and Councillor I feel I can offer valuable experience to the SAP.

4. NZDFA appointments to the Board of Deer Industry New Zealand

Producer-appointed Board members are appointed directly to the DINZ Board for a three-year term and that appointment is advised to the Minister of Agriculture as a formality. There are two vacancies for the 2007/10 Board term, those of sitting members Jeffrey Pearse and John Scurr.

Four nominations have been received for the two vacancies. The nominees are:

Rick Bettle, Wellington, (Nominated Jeffrey Pearse, seconded Peter Aitken)

Barry Cuttance, Oxford, North Canterbury, (Nominated Peter Fitzgerald, seconded Warwick Wright)

Keith Neylon, Winton, Southland (Nominated Chris Hughes, seconded Russell McDonald)

John Scurr, Cardrona Valley, Wanaka, (Nominated, David Allen, seconded, Jeremy Bell).

All nominees were invited to put forward candidate statements for publication in *Deer Industry News*. The statements which had been received are printed below. (Keith Neylon was overseas at the time of going to press and was not able to forward his contribution.)

Nominees are also invited under the NZDFA constitution to present a short overview of their candidature at the 32nd AGM in Hamilton on 23 May prior to the meeting's general business session.

The SAP will meet with and interview the candidates for a formal selection process within four weeks of the AGM at a date and venue to be determined by the operating code of the SAP. That date has been set as Wednesday 13 June 2007 in the DINZ offices, Wellington.

Candidate statements

Rick Bettle, Wellington

Rick Bettle is a professional director. His experience includes eight and half years as chairman of the New Zealand TAB and four and a half as chair of The Racing Industry Board.

He has previously chaired NZ Lamb Co, (10 Years), Capital Coast Health (4 years) and Wrightson Finance (4 Years).

He is currently President of the New Zealand Institute of Directors, having been made a fellow in February 2000 and was recently made a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

His current directorships of public listed and private entities include Chairman of: Dominion Finance Ltd and Ovita Ltd, and director Southport Ltd, Macquarie Goodman NZ, Synergy International Ltd and Revera Ltd.

Rick was the managing director of Wrightson from 1987–1991 and CEO of Alliance Group (a large South Island meat cooperative) from 1991–1995. From 1995–1998 he headed the law firm of Kensington Swann.

Barry Cuttance, Oxford, North Canterbury

I have agreed to stand for election to the Board of DINZ because I believe velvet producers and marketers need a strong, positive and progressive advocate to ensure that the production and marketing of velvet does not remain a 'commodity' sold on a 'ship it and see' basis.

Over the last ten years I have been actively marketing value-added velvet products and my company, Adeerco Natural Health in association with National Deer Horn, has established export markets in North America, United Kingdom, Israel, Italy, Germany, South Africa and Romania.

I am passionate about the holistic values of velvet, one of the very few nutraceutical commodities having scientific benefits proven through clinical evaluation.

While marketing velvet, I have worked closely with the Executives of DINZ, attending numerous conferences worldwide, ensuring the values of New Zealand deer velvet are positively promoted and marketed.

I offer to the Board and New Zealand velvet producers' strong representation, thereby ensuring the opportunity of maximum financial returns that all our farming businesses deserve.

John Scurr, Cardrona Valley, Wanaka

Deer Industry New Zealand is a mainstream, respected sector of our agriculture-based economy and we have developed a huge range of sophisticated responsibilities and activities such as trade liberalisation, access, welfare, science, R&D, market understanding and marketing.

Production-based research, assisted through the establishment of regional Focus Farms involving the local communities is a key to re-energising the industry as we return to prosperity.

For venison, although monitoring the changing dynamics, we must continue our investment in the market as we measure our success against our growth strategy. The growth focus is about value as we promote more consumption and extension of the higher valued chilled season.

For velvet, we must ask ourselves what has changed to bring stability to value.

I am committed to achieve the goals of our industry-agreed strategy through communication and support – necessary change in shaping the industry to ensure long-term stability.

Johne's disease discussion document

A proposed herd classification scheme for determination of the Johne's disease (JD) status of deer presented to the live sale market

The following scheme has been developed by the Johne's Research Group (JRG) as a draft discussion document in response to the AGM direction on Remit 11, In May 2006.

The remit read:

> *"That the NZDFA requests the JRG to prepare a set of voluntary deer industry protocols for the determination of the JD 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."*

In developing the scheme, the JRG considered models employed in the Australian ovine JD and bovine JD programmes, and a herd scheme based on prevalence data using the low-, medium- and high-risk herd classifications used in the current epidemiology study.

Key features of this scheme are.

- It is entirely voluntary.
- The JD status of a herd is one of transition, depending on results from a set of diagnostic tools of varying sensitivity and specificity and actions from the farmer and adviser.
- It is based around a risk assessment of likelihood of disease/bacterial prevalence in a herd (low, medium, high).
- Identifying a herd status at a point in time allows various control measures and management decisions to be made as part of a planned disease control programme.

Within each herd status listed below, there are variations which relate to:

1. Confirmed infected
   - The level of infection (prevalence)
2. Low risk
   - The level of assurance of freedom of disease
3. Unknown status

To date there has been little feedback from researchers, NGOs or AHB, but this is being progressed prior to conference.

Herd status classification

JD Herd Status score	Description	Explanation and conditions
0	Not assessed No status	Farmer not participating in project • no interest • direct to slaughter operation only • can be considered as a high trading risk.
1: Suspect Transition stage	DSP or on-farm test identified JD **Suspect** (No control programme operating) Classification based on timing. No further definitive testing plans in place as yet.	JD notification formally supported by either: • JML notice to farmer through works lesions detained and verified; or • On-farm post mortem with veterinarian
2: Undiagnosed	Not active in JD programme **But** No lesions etc detected in works/JML monitoring programme	No apparent history on farm recorded All casual diagnostics (Tb Testing, pathology etc) negative
3: Infected confirmed	DSP or test identified Infected JD (No herd prevalence data yet determined) (No control programme operating) Classification based on timing	JD notification formally supported JML notification Works lesions detained and verified Paralisa positive • Culture positive • Herd history verified by independent diagnostics
Risk and prevalence status	Herd incidence investigated under a planned programme	Prevalence levels established
4: High prevalence	Prevalence >10%	
5: Medium	Prevalence 2-10%	
6: Low	Prevalence <2%	

Basis of voluntary herd monitored negative herd status

Available for unconfirmed tested negative or low prevalence <2% herds only

Herd testing numbers based on sample numbers, herd history etc (see Table 1 for sample size needs).

Monitored negative status		
7 (see table 1)	Sample capital stock tested negative (initial test negative)	Appropriate within-herd sampling or whole herd No's required (Table 1)
8	Sample capital stock tested negative Year 1	(plus negative DSP/JML data)
9	All stock tested negative Year 1 & 2	(plus negative DSP/JML data 3 years)
10	All stock tested negative Year 1, 2,& 3. MAP assured (plus all bought in stock have been tested Paralisa negative)	Or stock sourced from equivalent JD status herd

The appropriate number of animals to test to determine a herd's JD status depends on the current size of the herd, including adult, rising 2 year old and weaner hinds and stags. The number in brackets is the minimum number of positive animals necessary within the tested group to classify the herd as infected. If less than this number of animals is positive, there may be false positives and re-testing of these animals within 3-6 months would be recommended.

The number of animals to be tested must be revised before each testing period based on the current estimated prevalence in your herd and the current herd size.

Table 1:
Appropriate number of animals to test low prevalence (<2%).

Diagnostic test	No. of animals in herd				
	50	200	500	1,000	2,500
Paralisa: subclinical	50*	200*	392 (5)	485 (6)	510 (6)
Individual faecal culture	50 (1)	200 (1)	275 (1)	295 (1)	308 (1)
Pooled faecal culture (5)	50 (1)	200 (1)	404 (1)	434 (1)	453 (1)
Pooled faecal culture (10)	50 (1)	200 (1)	480 (1)	515 (1)	537 (1)

* Herd size is not large enough to be 95% confident of the true Johne's Disease herd status using this diagnostic test.

Discussion

There is a considerable number of further issues to consider around active disease diagnostics and control measures in a formal programme. The JRG seeks input from farmers and other interested parties in this area.

- Participants must be formally enrolled in programme: Should this be administered by industry:
  - Through JRG?
  - Via JML?
  - Through DINZ via industry QA database managers?

continued on next page...

Weaner sales put smiles back on breeders' faces

Optimism is strengthening and confidence is being restored as prices at this year's weaner sales track higher than they have for years.

Latest reports show prices averaging over $3 per kilo for mixed-sex hybrid weaners, reflecting positive attitudes of both vendors and purchasers.

DINZ Producer Manager Tony Pearse attended an early Canterbury weaner sale at Insignis Park and was impressed with the market.

"Demand was very positive, with prices up to $3.50 per kilo," he said. "People breeding weaners measure confidence in their returns, and they're certainly starting to be pitched at the level they should be now."

Tony says purchasers are showing confidence as well, with prices up 45 to 55 percent on last year.

Ron Schroeder, PGG Wrightson's South Island Northern Area Deer Coordinator says the whole industry is looking a lot more positive this year.

"It's almost unbelievable. Velvet has almost doubled from where it was last year, weaners are up a full dollar per kilo and suddenly deer farming is looking pretty good again. It's really nice to see smiles on breeders' faces again."

While there aren't huge numbers of weaners out there at the moment, there is not likely to be a problem meeting demand.

"At the moment we're running at an even keel regarding supply and demand," says Ron.

"As long as prices don't go too high, everyone is pretty relaxed. You always get the odd sale where people go a bit silly, but when you look at averages it evens out. Generally we're very happy with where the level is at moment and we don't believe it's going to go over the top."

On-farm sales were held on Thursday 12 April at the neighbouring High Peak and Quartz Hill Stations, Rakaia Gorge. Ron Schroeder says the market for both sales was very buoyant. The 33 registered buyers from Central and South Canterbury snapped up all 1166 weaners on offer.

Average prices were:

High Peak Station	Ave. weight	$/head	$/kg
Hybrid stags	67.5	240.00	3.55
Eastern cross stags	49.5	160.24	3.23
English cross stags	38.5	108.62	2.82
Hybrid hinds	61.0	200.00	3.27
Eastern cross hinds	42.8	95.12	2.22
English cross hinds	45.0	116.87	2.59
Quartz Hill Station			
Hybrid stags	62.9	232.63	3.69
Rakaia Red stags	50.8	174.36	3.43
Hybrid hinds	60.0	192.72	3.20
Rakaia Red hinds	46.9	135.30	2.88

North Island sales positive

Enthusiasm and prices were up at the Taihape weaner sales on 11 and 12 April. Robert Auld of PGG Wrightson says this year's sales were well up compared to last year, where they struggled to reach $2.60 a kilogram.

There were 16 registered buyers on the first day and 876 weaners at sale. The top weighted weaner stag from J&M Hartley (Ohakune) weighed 75kg and made $234. There was a smaller crowd at the Taihape weaner hind sale. Another J & M Hartley entry, a 72kg weaner hind, made $252.

"At $3.50 per kilogram, it's quite outstanding money," Robert says. "One pen made $4, but most of the better end of the 70kg to 60kg hybrid stags made around $3.25. Quality was very good."

Results from first mixed origin weaner sale at Insignis Park 22 March

	Average weight	Breed	$/head	$/kg
Point Station	70	WapX	255	3.64
	58	WapX	187	3.22
	45	RxWap	142	3.16
Swyncombe	66	Red X	240	3.64
Kaikoura	54	RX	180	3.33
	40	R?	95	2.38
Mt White, Cass	49	R	162	3.31
	42	R	132	3.14
	40	R	135	3.38
	41	R	135	3.29
	36	R	102	2.83
	33	R	88	2.67
	32	R	75	2.34
WEANER FEMALES				
Point Station	69	WapX	230	3.33
	61	WapX	195	3.20
	53	RxWap	162	3.06
	44	Red X	130	2.95
Swyncombe	61	RX	210	3.44
Kaikoura	55	R?	182	3.31
	47	R	105	2.23
Mt White	48	R	142	2.96
	41	R	115	2.80

Johne's disease continued from p9

- Issues of disclosure. Participation is voluntary on the part of the farmer. What is the status or value or confidentiality of that information?
  - If farmers make confidential disclosure or disclaimer to an agent or purchasing party or claim in an advertisement, should this be independently verified.
  - Status can only be verified via farmer and veterinarian?
- A formal annual health testing programme will need to be developed, particularly if a farmer wants to work down through the monitored negative status levels. Such a programme needs to be formalised and signed off with farmer, their veterinarian, and/or diagnostic laboratory via JML?
- Whole-herd basis: what background information is required?
  - Herd history?
  - Tb status and testing history?
  - Incoming stock testing policy and knowledge?
- Can such testing be accurately or confidently based on the current diagnostic capability and affordability (culture individual faecal culture, pooled faecal culture), or be based on the Paralisa test only based on current specificity/ sensitivity data for clinical and subclinical infection?

Nitrogen net spread wider

Environment Waikato has launched a new strategy to protect Lake Taupo's water quality by reducing nitrogen use in the catchment area.

Nitrogen from land use, including farming and urban areas, is increasingly leaching into the lake, raising fears of water quality degradation and its subsequent impacts on a major tourism and environmental resource.

New rules aim to ensure that the current water quality is maintained by making pastoral farming in the area a controlled activity under the Resource Management Act.

Farming contributes 93 percent of the nitrogen generated by human activity in the area. Environment Waikato Chairman Jenni Vernon says the changes aim to protect farmers' rights to farm as they do now, while maintaining the lake's water quality.

While dairy farming is a major contributor to nitrogen loss, deer and sheep farming do have a nitrate effect which causes 14 to 19 kilograms of nitrogen loss per hectare per year (compared to 50 kilograms for cattle).

NZDFA Chairman Andy Mitchell says the restrictions are inevitable but more research is needed.

"Given the statistics, something needed to be done and it seems Government's decision was to do it sooner rather than later," he said. "But the tools used to monitor the outputs are crude and unsophisticated. More research is required to assess the impact of deer farming. A deer is not a cow and a crude conversion of one to the other is not acceptable."

He believes the need for resource consent to carry out everyday farming activities in the area could disadvantage farmers in the area.

"Resource consent will limit the amount of development anybody can do and inhibit further intensification activities," Andy says. "The tools used to measure a farm's environmental footprint will not take into account mitigating factors in some intensification and will just label increased outputs as likely and therefore stop any development within the farming system. It may also stop things like a change in livestock."

Rotorua deer farmer John Paterson has had more involvement than most with efforts to develop more sustainable systems for the deer industry. He helped organise the Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards, and as convenor of the Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual received the Minister for the Environment's Green Ribbon Award for Rural Sustainability. He says changes to land use could still be made if farmers could mitigate nitrogen loss.

"There is a lot of focus on farming near bodies of water especially inland where potassium and nitrogen can cause algal bloom among other things," he says. "There are lots of things farmers can do to mitigate surface run-off and the Southland focus farm is currently putting some attention into that."

He says capturing nitrogen on farms is hard but there are a lot of people working together to come up with a toolbox to deal with nitrogen loss.

"At the end of the day, losing nitrogen means losing money because of the wasted nutrients, so it's really in farmers' interest to mitigate nitrogen loss."

Photo: Chris Parkinson.

Environment Waikato strategy aims to protect the pristine waters of Lake Taupo.

Tips for reducing nitrogen loss*

- Spring/summer N application will achieve the most efficient results – 100 percent utilisation is possible if applications are timed to match vigorous phases of plant growth.
- Application rates of N from 20-60 kg N/ha are appropriate when applied onto actively growing pasture that is preferably 50mm high (1600-1800 kg DM/ha).
- It is a usual recommendation not to exceed 50 kg N/ha in any application.
- It is more effective to split N applications down to smaller, more frequent amounts (e.g. 30-45 kg N/ha at a time for grazed pasture) rather than large, one-off, irregular applications.
- Avoid application if rain seems likely and especially if the ground is already saturated. Direct leaching from nitrogen fertiliser is greatest in winter.
- As a general guideline, annual applications of N should not exceed 200 kg N/ha/year. In some areas (e.g. Southland and Otago) the recommendation is generally no more than 150 kg N/ha/year.
- Obtain a copy of the recently released *Code of Practice for Nutrient Management – Pastoral Farming Guide* from the NZ Fertiliser Manufacturers' Association, email info@fertresearch.org.nz, or you can access the Code on the Fert Research website: www.fertresearch.org.nz/code-of-practice

***Source: The New Zealand Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual, 2004.**

COMING EVENTS:
Branch AGMs
(list current 4 April 2007)

BRANCH AGM*	Date	Venue	Time	Features
Northland	Post conference			
SCNO	Thurs 26 April	The Poplars	6.00pm 7.00pm	Welcome drinks AGM
Kaipara	Fri 27 April	Porcini's Helensville.	6.00pm	AGM, meal and annual velvet awards
Taranaki	Tues 1 May	Funky Fish grill, Inglewood	6.30pm	AGM and meal
Wairarapa	Tue 1 May			
Hawke's Bay	Wed 2 May	Waipukurau Club	7.00pm	
Otago	Thurs 3 May	Cromwell Polytechnic	3.00pm 5.30pm 7.30pm	Seminar AGM and meal.
Marlborough	Thurs 3 May	Marlborough Club	7.30pm	
Canterbury	Tues 8 May	Sudima Hotel	7.00pm	AGM and supper
Central Regions	Wed 9 May	Feilding Golf Club rooms	7.30pm	AGM
Southland	Wed 9 May	Middle Pub Winton	7.00pm	Platter and drinks AGM 8.00pm
Waikato	Thurs 10 May	Woodlands Country Estate	6.00pm	Drinks AGM and meal at 8.00pm
Waipa	Thurs 10 May	Otorohanga Club	6.30pm	AGM followed by Dinner 7.30pm
Fiordland	July post conference			
JRG	October 2007			

*Rotorua, Tongariro and Wairoa AGMs were held prior to publication date.

OTHER EVENTS	
Date	**Event**
26 April?	Proposed "Deer and Beer" Deer Branch NZVA, NZDFA meeting social and information meeting with year 4 and 5 Massey veterinary students. TBC
1 May	Proposed inaugural northern region Focus Farm field day Rotorua at the Simmonds Property
15 May	Southland Focus Farm field day, John and Jackie McLean Mossburn at 1.00pm
22 May	Branch Chairmen's biannual meeting, Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton 10.30-5.00pm
22 May (evening)	**Innovate** 2007 Deer Industry Conference welcome and opening social function, Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton from 7.00pm.featuring Innovate with Venison
23 May	Deer Industry New Zealand FGM, Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton from 8.30am
23 May	NZDFA 32nd AGM, Kingsgate Hotel, Hamilton at 1.30 pm
23 May (evening)	Annual Industry Awards Banquet and Entertainment
24 May	Innovation Waikato. NZDFA Waikato Branch field day and technical sessions, featuring visits with AgResearch, Dexcel, LIC and Deer Improvement Ltd. Gallagher Group, Waikato stadium for lunch and an option to visit a leading Cambridge horse stud.
23-24 May	Palmerston North. Deer Branch NZVA in combination with the NZVA sheep and beef sections, annual technical conference.
12 June	2007/08 Executive Committee meets in Wellington
13 June	2007/08 Selection and Appointments Panel Board appointment meeting
20-22 June	Wanaka. NZ Society of Animal Production annual conference featuring deer technical session, Wednesday 20 June. Field trip to Mount Aspiring Station with John and Sue Aspinall, Friday 22 June.

NAIT update:
Project at design stage

The National Animal Identification and Tracing (NAIT) project, which is now being administered by Meat and Wool New Zealand, is currently in the analysis and design phase.

The project was set up to establish a register that will provide lifetime traceability for all animals from birth to slaughter through radio frequency identification to be included in an animal's eartag. Traceability will help improve our biosecurity response in the event of an incursion and reduce the risk of losing market access, or delays in re-entry to an export market.

The project operates under a Governance Group of New Zealand industry and Crown representatives. In February, a Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between the Crown and stakeholders (including DINZ). Producer Manager Tony Pearse says DINZ is committed to being involved in the process.

"At some point, industry will be asked mandate the requirements, whether we're involved or not," Tony says. "This way the group can get a better understanding about the special needs for deer and so far we have been able to make our unique requirements clear."

Tony is a member of the Technical Advisory Group (TAG) which is currently providing input into developing a data model.

"At the moment we're looking at the technical functioning of tags to ensure all the specifications for cattle can be used for deer," he says. "This will ensure it will be easier to implement when industry is ready to move down that track."

The TAG is also planning a NAIT presence at Fieldays, working to ensure privacy of farmer animal data, and working through the management of species other than cattle and deer.

"If the project really is about biosecurity issues then we need to ensure all companion ruminants, such as pigs and sheep, are included for consistency," Tony says.

In a recent development, the Governance Group endorsed a proposal that bobby calves under 30 days old going direct to slaughter will not need a NAIT tag or to be individually entered on the NAIT database.

The Group is considering a wide range of issues to reflect Crown requirements and industry needs.

Branch Chairman profile:

Johnny Acland

South Canterbury/North Otago

This may be his first term as chair of the South Canterbury/North Otago Branch of NZDFA, but Johnny Acland's involvement with deer farming goes back a long way.

Johnny manages Mt Peel Station, 30km up the Rangitata Gorge from Geraldine. The station has been in the family since his great-grandfather John Barton Arundel Acland emigrated from England and established New Zealand's first high country sheep station in Canterbury.

Well known in farming circles ever since, the Acland family have always had a pioneering streak. In 1975, Johnny's father and uncle began a deer farming venture by capturing deer on their land and surrounding areas.

These days, the Aclands farm 2,200 Red hinds – 1,200 to terminal sires – and 1,000 velveting stags. They also run 10,500 ewes and 900 beef cows, which Johnny says helps to offset downturns.

"Because we have a mix of livestock, we find that when one is up the other is down. Lamb prices helped offset the venison downturn and now lamb prices have slumped back a bit, we hope to see the rise in venison continue."

At the moment they have 1000 hectares deer fenced, but they are currently expanding this by 300 – 400 hectares.

"We're battling our way through rock and the fencing goes up to 4000 feet, but we hope to have it finished by autumn," Johnny says.

They're also in the process of developing a number of hill blocks, increasing stock numbers and have a tenure review fence going up along the DOC boundary.

"The tenure review is going alright for us at the moment," Johnny says. "But who knows, it might make life more difficult having DOC for a neighbour."

He employs a stock manager, a senior stockman, two shepherds, a student over the summer, a tractor driver and a fencer general, most of whom live on the farm along with Johnny's parents, his wife and their five children.

The South Canterbury/North Otago Branch is one of the largest in the country, and Johnny's been involved with them for the last six or seven years. He says his new position as Chairman is interesting and keeps him busy.

The 250 members are fairly active and there is plenty for them to be involved in.

"We've got an environmental field day coming up this month at Stuart Nattrass' property in Geraldine, which won the 2006 Elworthy environmental award, so there should be a good turnout."

The Branch also holds an annual velvet competition and Christmas dinner and last year organised a four-wheel drive trip to Stew Point and Dry Creek. They're currently planning a field trip to the West Coast monitor farm and are in the early stages of discussions to have their own focus farm.

Johnny says Branch numbers have dropped recently with people leaving deer for the dairy industry. Current members' main concerns centre around the price of product and returns, but there's an air of optimism.

"Velvet is definitely looking up and venison prices had a longer peak in October/November, so by all accounts everything should improve. A lower dollar would help the cause," he says.

Velconz:

Business case and investment proposal next step

In December last year, Velconz and PGG Wrightson sent a joint survey to all velvet producers to gauge support for a joint marketing venture. A total of 280 producers responded.

"The number of responses was down on the number of farmers present at the first round of meetings 12 months ago," says Velconz representative Ponty von Dadelszen. "But it was the silly season when the survey went out and there had also been a significant readjustment in prices, so all things considered we're pretty happy with the number we got back."

Of those who responded, 80 percent agreed that the industry would benefit from changes to the way velvet is marketed. The majority (73 percent) would be in favour of a single sales channel for New Zealand velvet, while 76 percent indicated support for a business jointly owned by Velconz and PGG Wrightson to achieve this.

Over half of the respondents (54 percent) would be willing to contribute financially to the costs of establishing a velvet marketing organisation. Two thirds (67 percent) would be willing to receive staggered payments if it resulted in higher returns and 78 percent agreed to consider alternate channels for the sale of lower grade velvet. Ponty says the results are pleasing.

"They give a clear indication that farmers are looking to have a greater involvement in the industry. Most are in favour of a single sales channel. Under the present climate this is very much a long shot, but it's worth aiming for."

Based on the response to this survey and a survey earlier last year in which 99 percent of producers who responded supported investigating better ways of selling velvet, the Velconz and PGG Wrightson Working Group will now develop a business case and investment proposal.

Ponty says the group is working on developing a model with sufficient flexibility to cater for a range of producers' needs.

"Once we've developed the business case we'll take it to the PGG Wrightson board and to farmers," Ponty says. "We received endorsement for Velconz a year ago at the NZDFA conference so we want to make representation to the same group at this year's conference in May."

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Carbon footprints and adding value

Deer industry personnel were among the delegates attending the 125 William Davidson conference in Wellington at the end of March. While celebrating the meat industry's milestone, the conference was designed to look at current issues and future challenges for the New Zealand meat industry's trade on the world stage.

"Food miles" came up time and time again in the presentations from shippers, marketers, food retailers, exporters, politicians and trade policy experts, with most agreeing that the topic had now moved on. Speaking at a dinner at Government House on the eve of the conference British High Commissioner, His Excellency George Fergusson had dismissed the food miles argument as no basis for serious environmental policy. He said the British Government had argued consistently that "products that could be grown efficiently in carbon terms, and then transported efficiently, should be welcomed; and in many cases will have a much smaller carbon footprint than products grown nearer to market".

John Scurr: The New Zealand deer industry is well placed to understand and respond to the factors driving consumers' purchasing behaviour.

Speakers at the conference agreed that the "carbon footprint" enables serious and objective consideration of all the environmental parameters of production and transportation. It is becoming increasingly important as exporters overcome the "tyranny of distance" getting New Zealand product to markets.

Minister of Trade Phil Goff pointed out that even with transporting produce by sea, with lower inputs a New Zealand producer's carbon footprint was a quarter of the size of a European producer's. The topic was becoming increasingly important in trade negotiating circles, especially the World Trade Organisation's Doha Round of trade talks. That is why the New Zealand Government had set the goal of being the first carbon-neutral country. "If we ignore the trend, that is becoming more obvious in more affluent markets, then we will suffer the consequences."

How to add value, in terms of cuts, packaging and branding, was another recurrent topic with fascinating presentations from John Huston of the US National Cattleman's Association – a driving force in the International Meat Secretariat's consumer marketing centre – and Professor David Hughes, Emeritus Professor of Food Marketing at Imperial College London. Geoff Ross of 42 Below – the New Zealand vodka company he recently sold to Bacardi for $140 million – gave his fresh and thought-provoking insights into story-telling "to the right people" and the power of word-of-mouth for the success of a consumer brand.

Chairing the summary session, DINZ Chairman John Scurr, referred back to Ngai Tahu's Sir Tipene O'Regan's opening words setting the scene for pre-European Māori trade and linking it to today. John Scurr's personal connection with Ngai Tahu, as the one of the earlier properties to negotiate pastoral leases with the iwi for his Cardrona Valley property, had showed him that sitting down for what initially seemed to be daunting negotiations had actually been both enlightening and positive over the 10 years. It proved to him that quality of communication and the communicators was essential and is a key element for the pastoral industry in going forward.

John commended the activity of processors and exporters in the market. He commented that the deer industry is well served by the close relationship that processors and their in-market partners have with consumers. As the factors which drive consumers' purchasing decisions evolve, the industry is well placed to understand and respond to those factors, he said.

New Zealand venison is also a big seller in Peter Gordon's London restaurant Providores, he told delegates as he demonstrated the New Zealand lamb dish they were to have for lunch in the conference presentation finale.

"William Soltau Davidson, the first meat industry entrepreneur, sailed through the issues of the time. As an industry now we need to recognise the modern issues and engage in positive communication. We must be tenacious and remain focused on issues and opportunities."

Bill Taylor of the Deer Farmers' Association remarked it was a shame that more farmers had not taken the opportunity to hear the high-quality speakers on offer. But, it's not too late: presentations and speeches are available at the conference web-site: www.williamdavidson125.co.nz.

Quality of skins needs to improve

Improvements on the current quality of New Zealand deer skins are being called for by independent deerskin exporter, Tradeskins New Zealand.

Deer skin is sought after as its distinctive grain translates into very high quality and sought-after leather. However, the best quality leather requires the best possible quality raw product – the preserve of Tradeskins New Zealand Marketing Manager, David Robins. After 25 years' experience in trading skins of all varieties, including sheep, lamb and cattle as well as deer, he knows what he's looking for.

Tradeskins New Zealand is based in Christchurch, and the New Zealand subsidiary of Tradevcogen SA (The Trading Company of Geneva) Switzerland. The company buys raw material for export but, unlike the finished leather processors, is not looking to add value to it, Robins says.

Skins from about half the New Zealand annual deer production of 750,000 animals are exported annually in semi-processed form to markets around the world. Tradeskins sells most of its deer skins in the raw salted form. Adding value takes place at customers' finishing facilities in the export markets. It's a small market, limited by the number of suitable skins available and the quality perception of the receiving tanneries.

The quality of the available deer skins has been a concern for Robins and other traders over the past year. "As farmers were, understandably, looking at the make up of their herds, we were seeing smaller skins and unusually low levels of the highest 'A' grades."

In 2007, Robins is already seeing signs of an improvement, but notes that if business is to be sustained, quality must be improved further.

Deer processors are very aware of skin quality and the procedures required to protect this, but he suggests that farmers and transporters need to be more aware of the potential for damage to skins during yarding and transport to the works. "Quite unintentional damage can be caused by one deer against another. Even slight bruising and exposed sharp objects can quickly render the value downwards."

Winter skins are generally better quality, having extra protection from the secondary hair follicles of the winter coat. However, winter production is lower than in summer, so with volume in mind, the company tends to export summer skins from September to May.

"We export about 50,000 deer skins each season, mainly summer skins due to the reduced freight component. However we are always concerned that the quality of skins from this period can limit the potential for tanners to make more garment grades than gloving or hand goods," David says.

China and Hong Kong are good markets for Tradeskins, with a mix of customers buying New Zealand deer skins for garment and glove manufacture. Others are the United States (upholstery market) and France.

One unexpected consequence of the 9/11 disaster in 2001 was a sharp decline of the German lederhosen market, which had been an important customer for New Zealand deer skins. Much of this market had been focused around the annual Oktoberfest, which runs in late September/early October. The 2001 event was all but cancelled in the period of shock following the 9/11 terror attacks, and that market has never quite recovered, Robins says.

Hoof marks along the backbone on a pickled (part finished) deer skin.

Even minor scratch damage on the deer skin is magnified in the finished deer leather and affects what can be achieved in returns from the hide.

According to Statistics New Zealand provisional figures, exports of deer skins (hides) earned over $10.5 million in the year to end January 2007. Italy is the largest market in both value and volume terms, followed by Japan, United States, Hong Kong and China, which has come on strongly in the past four years.

On top of the market for raw deer skins is that for finished leather. Over $14.6 million was earned from exports of 278,214 square metres of leather to the year end January 2007 (provisional).

Market	Value ($)	Numbers
Italy	4,759,551	192,691
Japan	1,926,172	71,684
United States	1,738,962	66,644
Hong Kong	516,293	33,020
China	451,539	21,278
Korea	433,076	8,401

Top six deer skin markets by value (to year end January 2007, provisional).

Source: Statistics New Zealand

Combining forces in United States

An exciting Deer Industry New Zealand initiative has seen New Zealand produce presented to students in some of the top United States culinary schools.

Graham Brown centre-stage during one of the sessions at the Greystone campus of the Culinary Institute of America in Northern California's Napa Valley.

In addition to Cervena™ venison, DINZ drew New Zealand lamb (Meat & Wool New Zealand), Greenshell™ mussels (NZ Mussel Industry Council) and New Zealand wines (Pernod Ricard NZ Ltd) into a larger joint initiative.

"We've used the existing goodwill that years of Cervena activity has built up in the United States but, with additional partners, we can cover more schools in more areas," DINZ Venison Marketing Services Manager Innes Moffat says. "Although students are some years away from being in positions where they can influence purchasing decisions, many of them will get there, and when they do they will be familiar with New Zealand food and wine and will be more inclined to include it on their menus."

The New Zealand delicacies were given top billing in March in the series of interactive demonstrations for students held on both coasts of the United States. Cervena and New Zealand Ambassador Chef, Graham Brown taught classes of chefs-in-training, giving them key nutritional facts and product qualities, and preparation information for each of the products.

Graham Brown's recipes were used during the lessons, along with his suggestions of wine matches to complement them and his tips and tricks for getting the best culinary results.

San Diego Culinary Institute's programme director, chef Larry Lewis, said the demonstration held there on 10 March was "outstanding".

"I have had only positive feedback from the attendees, who all felt it was not only informative and educational but enjoyable as well," he says. "The unique combinations of flavours as prepared by chef Graham Brown complemented the lamb, venison and mussels to create an outstanding showcase….The pairing of the indigenous New Zealand wines…introduced the students to wines they may not have tasted before but surely will consider in the future when creating a wine list for a restaurant or planning their next dinner party."

DINZ Chief Executive Officer Mark O'Connor says the New Zealand partners of this programme saw it as a great platform for promoting the use of these specific product groups and also to highlight New Zealand and its exceptional cuisine industry.

"Current trends in the US restaurant industry favour local and seasonal production. These trends are driven by disillusionment with the multi-national food production systems and a desire among top level chefs to reconnect with their suppliers."

New Zealand exporters must increasingly prove their sustainable credentials to sceptical food buyers to overcome the distance New Zealand produce must travel to market, O'Connor says.

This series of demonstrations was predominantly an educational exercise, and has the potential to develop long-lasting relationships with the schools and become part of their regular curriculum – and keeping New Zealand venison and other produce top of mind in the US food-service industry.

With a combined total of $429 million for annual exports of the four products to the United States – venison $20 million, greenshell mussels $57 million, New Zealand wines $138 million and New Zealand Lamb $215 million – New Zealand has a lot to offer and gain from the United States food and beverage industry.

The initiative was received well by the participating schools. An added benefit was a decision by the California Culinary Academy to host an evening function for 80 at their campus restaurant in San Francisco. The audience consisted of restaurateurs, concierges and chefs from San Francisco, making it a great opportunity to get in front of key industry decision makers.

Meat & Wool New Zealand Ltd Chief Executive Officer, Mark Jeffries said the initiative was an example of export industries combining resources to project New Zealand's quality produce onto the international stage.

"Our individual presence in the North American market might be small, but when exporters join forces using common attributes we can obtain significant exposure.

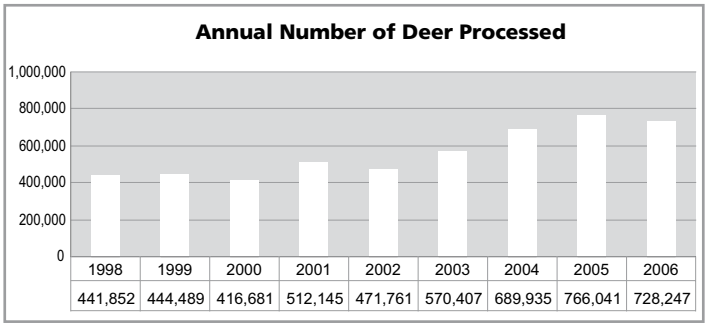
"It's positive to see organisations forming marketing networks like this to bring quality New Zealand produce to the fore. We'll keep looking for these opportunities because this sort of collaboration makes sense."

Venison

Total venison production maintains its downward trend. Published average schedule prices have stabilised at $4.90 although currency is still working against returns. Recovering European demand is pulling an increasing proportion of New Zealand venison towards those markets. Pre-Easter promotion programmes have successfully increased chilled venison sales outside the traditional game season.

Production

- For the year ending December 2006, total venison production was 39,250 tonnes (7% down on 2005, 5% up on 2004). The total numbers of animals processed were 335,000 stags (46% of the total) and 393,000 hinds (54% of the total). The total number of animals processed was down 7% from the record 766,000 in 2005.
- Number of Deer Processed (Year Ended December)



1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
441,852	444,489	416,681	512,145	471,761	570,407	689,935	766,041	728,247

Schedule

- At the time of writing, in Week 14 the national average published schedule for AP stags (55 to 60 kgs) was $4.90 per kg – 41% up on the same week in 2005 and 15% up on the average schedule 2002 to 2006. The North Island average was $4.80, and the South Island was $4.99.
- The average schedule for the season (since October) is 33% above the same period last season. Other grades show similar improvements – heavier grades are up 53%, and hinds are up 49%.

Currency

- Increases in the value of the New Zealand dollar erode improvements in the market prices for New Zealand exports. In week 14, 2007 the New Zealand dollar was worth €0.536, compared to €0.503 at the same point in 2006. The appreciation of the dollar means that each Euro of sales is worth 12 cents less in New Zealand dollars. One kg of venison sold in Europe for €5.00 was worth $9.94 in 2006 and is now $9.33.
- The situation with the US dollar is worse. In week 14, 2006 a New Zealand dollar was worth US$0.616. One New Zealand dollar is now worth US$0.715, meaning that every US dollar of sales is now worth 22 cents less to New Zealand. One kg for US$5.00 was worth NZ$8.12 in January 2006, it is now worth $6.99.

Promotions

- Working toward the objectives of the Industry Strategic intent, DINZ was pleased to assist several importers in Germany conduct pre-Easter promotions through retailers. The New Zealand industry has a strategic objective of increasing sales through retail to German consumers, and increasing sales outside of the traditional game season.

Velvet

As the velvet season winds down, there is little velvet left on farm and prices for A2S are over $160 per kg. Velvet promotions in Korea, Taiwan and China are making good progress. Lobbying for the removal of SET in Korea continues.

Velvet pools

- With the velvet season now coming to a close, there is, reportedly, little velvet left on farms. This is fuelling demand in the last of the season's pools, and continuing to push values higher. With prices for A2S over $160 per kg (at time of writing) producers who have managed to hold onto their velveting stock will be getting better returns.

Korea

- The 'velvet as a healthy food' event at the Seoul Millennium Hilton in December, proved so successful that Executive Chef Paul Schenck from the COEX Intercontinental Seoul Hotel has confirmed he wishes to replicate the promotion. The Intercontinental caters for a younger clientele than the Hilton offering a different platform to launch the concept.
- The Food and Beverage Director at the Seoul Millennium Hilton reports that recent hotel promotions have been less popular than the New Zealand velvet promotion and, as a result, they will be running a 'velvet' promotion again in December.
- In March, 13 members of parliament proposed the revision of current SET (special excise tax) laws and the subsequent removal of the 7% SET on deer velvet and royal jelly. The proposal is currently being reviewed by the finance committee but has already met stiff opposition from the Korean Deer Breeders Association (KDBA).
- During recent travel to Korea, DINZ Executive met with the KDBA to further discuss the potential of receiving their support in the removal of the SET and the potential for New Zealand to brand its velvet as the KDBA has been requesting for many years. While discussions in the past have been strained, considerable steps were gained in the understanding of both sides' positions. While the KDBA was not prepared to move from its stance on the issue, newly elected Chairman Jun-Su Kang agreed to communicate New Zealand's position to its members. Talks were also constructive regarding potential joint promotion opportunities to grow the market for velvet as a whole, and also collaborative research possibilities.

- The retail promotions indicate that the New Zealand industry is beginning to see progress toward achieving these aims. The volumes themselves were not large but the fact that many tonnes of chilled New Zealand venison were sold in the weeks leading up to Easter is confirmation of the work that New Zealand exporters and DINZ have put into collaborating with the German trade to sell venison outside the traditional game season.

New Zealand venison exports: Top 10 markets ranked by value

	Tonnes			Value NZ$ million – F.O.B		
December years	*2005*	*2006*	*% Change*	*2005*	*2006*	*% Change*
Germany	10,896	11,401	5%	$82.70	$102.70	24%
Belgium	2,532	3,642	44%	$28.80	$45.90	59%
France	2,063	1,749	-15%	$15.50	$18.60	20%
USA	1,386	1,129	-19%	$14.10	$17.90	26%
Switzerland	925	944	2%	$10.60	$13.10	23%
Netherlands	900	773	-14%	$11.80	$12.20	3%
Sweden	1,818	1,644	-10%	$10.10	$9.70	-3%
Austria	1,102	877	-20%	$7.40	$7.00	-6%
UK	506	526	4%	$3.00	$5.80	92%
Italy	897	764	-15%	$5.40	$4.60	-14%
0thers	4,998	2,641	-47%	$24.70	$18.70	-24%
Total venison	28,023	26,090	-7%	$214.10	$256.10	20%

Exports

- As demand for New Zealand venison in Europe recovers, the proportion of exports going to Europe is increasing. Traditional European markets (Germany, Netherlands, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, France and Scandinavia) accounted for 85% of total exports in 2006, up from 77% in 2005.
- As prices for manufacturing products increase in Europe, so exporters are able to supply to European customers at higher prices. This means many of the alternative markets used over the last couple of years are no longer being supplied in such large quantities.
- The value of exports to traditional European markets was $219 million in 2006. This is up from $176 million in 2005 and $108 million in 2003.
- Individual country statistics are misleading; Belgium for example recorded a 44% increase in imports, because several Belgium-based importers supply New Zealand venison to customers throughout Europe. This means that actual consumption in countries like Germany and France is more than shown on New Zealand export statistics.
- Markets such as Australia and Taiwan, which had been taking increasing volumes of manufacturing type venison, are now less important as outlets for this product.
- Even the United States has seen total volumes fall over the previous year as the weak US$ versus the Euro means higher prices can be obtained for manufacturing and forequarter cuts in Europe. Steak cuts, however, still obtain good prices in the United States, and exports of cuts like striploins and tenderloins continue to show measured increases into the North American market.

Taiwan

- In association with a large health supplement company, a Taiwanese film crew was recently in Canterbury filming scenes from the New Zealand deer industry. The footage is being used to promote the New Zealand velvet product in Taiwan where it is currently being showcased on the country's largest TV home shopping network. The capsules, which include New Zealand velvet, have a dedicated 40 minute slot where presenters talk about velvet's benefits and associated long-term use in oriental medicine. The channel has an estimated 4.6 million viewers, distributes 1.2 million catalogues every month and also sells goods on its home shopping website.
- During March, DINZ joined the New Zealand Special Agricultural Trade Envoy, Zespri, and Tourism NZ at a special 'New Zealand' seminar in Taiwan. The seminar organised by the New Zealand Commerce and Industry Office, provided the opportunity to address Taiwanese government officials, academic institutions and a number of farmer groups (including deer farmers).
- In an effort to build relations with the farming side of the Taiwanese velvet industry, DINZ held a meeting with members from the National Animal Industry Foundation (which supports the marketing of livestock industries in Taiwan) and the Chairman and Secretary-General of the Taiwanese Deer Farmers Association (TDFA).
- DINZ is keen to collaborate with the TDFA in areas of mutual benefit.

China

- New Zealand velvet has received an encouraging push into the Chinese market with products now stocked in retail chains such as Wal-mart, Carrefour, Neb-star and China Resources. A joint promotion between DINZ and a Chinese-based marketing firm will include the products being sold on China Central TV, the country's largest TV channel and also on two shopping websites.

Fusion food festival in Petone

"Just eating Cervena™ Venison is enough to make you healthy," Michelin-starred Adam Newell, chef owner of Zibibbo Restaurant told the rapt audience in the Taste Tent at this year's Fusion Food Festival in Petone, Wellington. The festival is a small but growing event on the foodie calendar.

Pointing out farm-raised venison's nutritional characteristics – high protein, low in fat and cholesterol – Newell turned out three Asian-style recipes for Cervena Venison during his 45-minute session arranged by Deer Industry New Zealand:

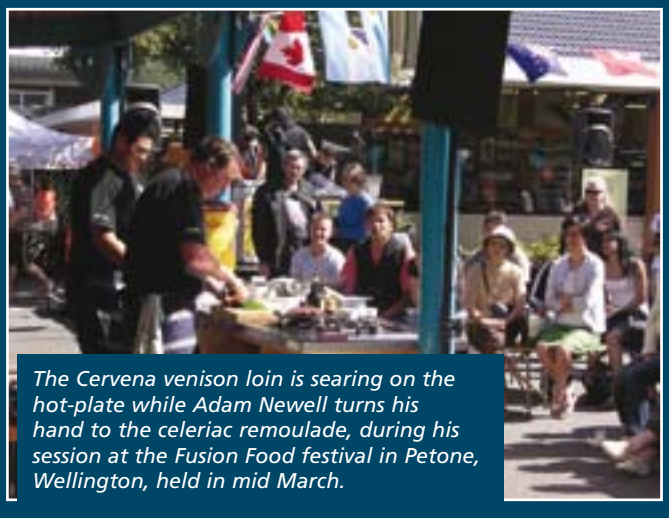
- Caramelised Cervena Venison with Spiced Cucumber Noodles and Pear Salad
- Seared Cervena Venison Loin with Celeriac Remoulade and aged Balsamic Vinegar Syrup
- Cervena Venison Yaki Soba (see recipe at right).

Each dish sparked a rush for the front for tastings.

Newell thought the milder flavour of farm-raised venison mingled well in the Asian-style recipes and was particularly impressed with the venison mince that he used in the Yaki Soba.

"Aside from all the healthier options, you can do so much with it: stir fry dishes, burgers for the kids or braised as meatballs. The best reason is that it's the same price as good quality mince," he says.

Newell is a regular chef contributor to TVNZ's *Good Morning* show and used two of the recipes on the 16 March edition (see www.tvnz.co.nz/view/page/410940/1024009).



The Cervena venison loin is searing on the hot-plate while Adam Newell turns his hand to the celeriac remoulade, during his session at the Fusion Food festival in Petone, Wellington, held in mid March.

Cervena™ Venison Yaki Soba

Enjoy this Japanese-style recipe for minced Cervena venison from Adam Newell, chef/owner of Zibibbo Restaurant in Wellington.

Serves 6

Ingredients

100 mls peanut oil
500 grams minced Cervena venison
2 tablespoons bulldog soy sauce
3 spring onions, chopped
Julienne of 1 large carrot
Julienne of 1 large onion
1 clove of garlic, chopped
500 grams cooked sushi rice (still hot)
pinch of bonito flakes
pinch pickled ginger
250 grams cooked noodles

Method

1. Heat a wok and sauté the Cervena venison mince in peanut oil until golden brown. Set venison aside.
2. Add all the vegetables (except spring onions) to the wok and cook until still crunchy. Add the bulldog sauce and toss for a couple of minutes.
3. Add the hot rice and cook for a further two minutes. Add the venison and stir thoroughly.

To serve

Divide into six bowls and garnish with the spring onions, pickled ginger and bonito flakes.

People on the move at PPCS

PPCS Venison Marketing Manager, Michael Smith.

Michael Smith is the new PPCS Venison Marketing Manager. He was previously Group Venison Operations Manager overseeing PPCS's seven venison processing plants in the North and South Islands. Bringing strong customer and market focus, he replaces former incumbent **Glenn Tyrrell** who has been promoted to a newly created position Group Marketing Manager, reporting directly to PPCS Chief Executive Keith Cooper. With over 27 years' experience at PPCS, covering both venison and sheepmeat, Tyrrell now holds responsibilities for international and domestic marketing for PPCS, including meat, wool, pelts, hides and skins, pharmaceuticals, pet food, by-products and process products.

PPCS Group Marketing Manager, Glenn Tyrrell.

Wayne Shaw, previously manager of PPCS Finegand large-scale meat processing facility in Balclutha, is PPCS's new Venison Operations Manager.

RESEARCHUPDATE

VENISON SUPPLY SYSTEMS PROPOSAL

A proposal has been submitted to the Foundation for Research, Science and Technology (FRST) to fund research to support growth in the deer industry. Venison Supply Systems is an industry-led research and development programme in partnership with AgResearch.

The proposal seeks funding of almost $11 million over a six-year period. Over the same period, deer farmers would contribute, through DEEResearch, a total or $2.7 million ($450,000 per annum including GST). The programme is estimated to benefit the industry to the tune of $305 million over the next 20 years. There are four key industry issues and science solutions featured in the proposal: matching seasonal demand; on-farm productivity; environmental issues and product spoilage. Grouped around these themes, research will look at:

- genetic approaches to advance seasonal reproduction, and management options to enhance early growth, to match supply with demand in peak periods
- on-farm productivity through focus farm programmes and parasitism research
- environmental issues affecting deer farming, include water quality, maintaining biodiversity and beneficial plant species
- developing a better understanding of the epidemiology of clostridial bacteria, processing technologies and the unique attributes of venison to reduce the risk of venison spoilage.

The Venison Supply System programme underpins the industry's productivity goals to increase the average carcass weight and fawning percentage by 10% each. The DEEResearch Board will have a governance role.

DINZ Science Manager Lindsay Fung is confident the proposal will be accepted.

"It is an extremely strong proposal that has been developed with extensive industry input and we are very optimistic of it being funded," he said. "The industry is now in a position to grow – science and technology will be crucial in ensuring market requirements are met."

A decision from FRST on the proposal is expected by 18 July 2007.

DIAGNOSING AND PREVENTING PARASITES

The Southland focus farm and AgResearch have submitted a Sustainable Farming Fund application to evaluate and develop diagnostic tools to tackle deer parasites and prevent the onset of drench resistance.

AgResearch's Marion Johnson says trials have shown that traditional sheep/cattle monitoring methods like faecal egg counting are not reliable measures of parasite burdens when applied to deer.

"Egg counting will tell us what parasites deer have, but not what the burden is, so we need a better method," Marion says.

Along with other research collaboration between AgResearch and Massey University, this study will help address the lack of knowledge about deer parasites and measure the effects of parasitism on growing deer.

A pilot study is currently underway to determine the efficacy of drenching. Marion says this small trial will pave the way for a national study on parasite species and drench resistance.

"All farmers say drench resistance is happening but some feel that unless they drench continually, production will suffer," she says. "We're studying a bunch of weaners which are not being drenched. We're carefully monitoring weights so we know what their parasite burdens are; if they reach trigger levels we will drench so their health isn't compromised."

She says trials they ran in spring 2006 showed there were a lot more gastrointestinal parasites around than they had thought, but they managed to get through the spring without drenching. They will also repeat the trials for lung worm on this small scale before applying for SFF funding of a larger-scale study.

RUMEN DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH PROJECT UNDERWAY

DEEResearch has approved funding for a combined Massey/ AgResearch study into rumen development in young fawns. The project will support the work of honours student Kirsty Hammond and is being funded by DEEResearch ($8000), NZDFA, Massey University and AgResearch. She has also rceived a Dave McGrath memorial Scholarship from Dexcel for this work.

The research project, which is already underway, involved scanning fawns at four week intervals, from four weeks to one year of age. Dr Simone Hoskin, who is supervising the project, says the research has two purposes.

Simone Hoskin (centre) is leading the Massey research into rumen development.

"Firstly we're testing scanning, to see how useful it is as a tool for scanning the gut and other internal organs. If it proves useful it could be a great research tool, and may mean not having to kill animals to see what's going on inside. Secondly, we're learning a lot by tracing rumen development, which hasn't been done before."

In the past, research using scanners has focused on carcasses. Kirsty's research will be among the first to scan the whole live animal, including all the internal organs, but focusing on the rumen and hind gut.

Simone says industry could benefit considerably from the rumen development findings.

"We may learn why methane production is lower in younger animals. If this technology is suitable, we might also learn how better to wean, test when the best time is and what are the best strategies for weaning," she says. "There could be all sorts of other potential spin-offs from this work, such as being able to test the impacts of different drugs, treatments and types of nutrition during the life of young animals."

NATURO™ RING STUDIES COMPLETED

The use of NaturO rings to remove velvet in spiker deer has been the focus of recent trials required by the National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC).

Research was required to determine whether the application of NaturO rings confers enough analgesia to prevent the awareness of pain and whether the application of the NaturO ring results in a "significantly noxious" experience.

Behavioural observation trials addressing analgesia were carried out by Massey and Lincoln Universities in the 2006/07 season. While completed reports are not due until June 2007, interim results from Lincoln are "very encouraging", says DINZ Science Manager, Lindsay Fung.

In the 2007/08 season, Massey University will carry out trials on behavioural issues relating to the effects of NaturO rings. Kotare Bioethics will carry out a bioethical comparison of velveting in the life-cycle of deer, in relation to painful animal husbandry procedures used for other livestock classes.

New animal health research institute opens

Hopkirk Research Institute, a collaborative venture between AgResearch and Massey University, opened last month.

Built on Massey University's Palmerston North Campus, next to the Institute for Veterinary Animal and Biomedical Sciences (IVABS), the 4,000 square metres of laboratory space at the institute can accommodate 90-100 research staff.

The $17 million state-of-the-art institute will focus on areas relevant to the health and welfare of sheep, cattle, goats and deer, with an emphasis on infectious diseases endemic to New Zealand.

Research and development will initially concentrate on three main areas:

- parasitic diseases (primarily in sheep and cattle)
- more effective vaccines to combat infectious disease (chiefly tuberculosis, but with a growing emphasis on Johne's disease)
- food poisoning threats and ways to minimise their prevalence and impact.

AgResearch CEO Dr Andrew West said it is important that universities and Crown research institutes collaborate where they have common areas of research expertise.

"We don't have BSE, scrapie or foot and mouth in New Zealand, but we do have other diseases and parasites that we must defeat."

The Institute is named after Dr. C.S.M. Hopkirk who headed up the Wallaceville Veterinary Laboratory for 21 years from 1923–1945. Pictured here at the opening are Dr Wayne Hein - Director Hopkirk Research Institute, Professor Grant Guilford (Massey) John Hopkirk (son of Dr Hopkirk) and Hon Steve Maharey.

Professor Grant Guilford, head of IVABS, said the collaborative venture benefits from the integration of Massey's clinicians, epidemiologists, pathologists and scientists, with AgResearch's microbiologists and parasitologists to anchor research in the practical reality of New Zealand's pastoral farming system.

He added that the potential for commercial success is enhanced by the guidance of leading farmers and veterinarians participating in the associated Hopkirk Foundation, and by the region's reputation for innovative companies and product development.

Dr Wayne Hein, AgResearch Animal Health Section Manager will be the inaugural Director of the Hopkirk Research Institute.

Sire sale report extra:Unfehlbar

Through no fault of their own, Unfehlbar English Red Deer was overlooked in our sire sale report published in February. For the record, here's how they got on at their first sire sale, held at Insignis Park on 9 January.

There was a total clearance of the 16 stags on offer, with a top price of $45,000 and a sale average of $5,625.

"Being one of the first stag sales in the South Island and our first sale, we did not know what to expect," says Unfehlbar's Guy Brady, "but an improved climate for the industry provided buoyancy and a great atmosphere.

"Lot 3, our star stag, was put up first. This created excitement and brisk bidding, and set a positive tone for the sale. Since the sale we have had a lot of positive feedback and interest for the future. We would like to thank all those who have supported us, and look forward to having North Island buyers join us next year!"

TUBERCULIN WHOLESALE COSTS

Following the passage of Waipa Branch's Remit 14 at the 2006 AGM, it was resolved that the industry should advise annually the wholesale costs for tuberculin from AgriQuality, so that farmers may discuss their retail supply costs with their own testing contractor.

For deer at the approved dose rate of 50,000 IU (low dose) the cost is now $0.36 per dose. Avian tuberculin is now $1.60 per dose.

Customer services AgriQuality have kindly advised from March 2007 the following applies:

Veterinarians and approved organisations under the Tb Pest Management Strategy

Product	Doses	Standard price	Large orders
Observe™ Bovine PPD Tuberculin 50,000 IU per mL	100	$36.00	$34.90
Observe™ Bovine PPD Tuberculin 100,000 IU per mL	100	$65.00	–
Observe™ Avian PPD Tuberculin 25,000 IU per mL	50	$80.00	–

For further information contact AgriQuality Ltd Customer Service Centre:

Email: info@agriquality.com or customerservices@agriquality.com
Freephone: 0508 00 11 22 • Freefax: 0508 00 11 33
Website: www.agriquality.com

Deer Improvement

Sales Representative, South Island

At Deer Improvement, we're committed to bringing the science of genetics to venison production. We're part of LIC - a world-class genetics company owned by NZ dairy farmers. Operating the largest reproductive technology programme ever seen in deer, we've invested millions of dollars in establishing a nucleus herd in Southland. We own some of the best stags in the industry, and these are available to all via Artificial Insemination.

One of our founding team members from 2003, Udo, is returning to manage his own farming operations. He'll be missed, and he'll be hard to replace.

We need a highly motivated individual with a strong affinity for the agricultural sector. The location for this role is flexible, but a base near Dunedin would be ideal.

Interested? Pick up the phone and have a chat to our General Manager Bruce McGregor on 027 233 2063, or email bmcgregor@deerimprovement.co.nz.

They're back!

New Zealand Warnham & Woburn Deer Society PHOTOGRAPHIC AWARDS 2007

- See entry form enclosed with this issue of *Deer Industry News* or download one from www.wordpict.co.nz/wwphoto
- Be quick! Entries close 11 May
- Contact: Rachael Mitchell, (07) 333-2151, (021) 457 715, Rodway@xtra.co.nz

Photo: The Deer farmer

Clayton Station:
Orbells confident in future of industry

When Andrew Orbell passed away suddenly in 2003, son Hamish, representing the fifth generation of this Canterbury farming family, took over the running of Clayton Station with his mother Ruth.

Clayton Station, located near Fairlie and half an hour north of Timaru under the foothills of Foxes Peak ski field, has 600 hectares deer fenced. They winter 1,600 deer, 90 percent of which are Woburn and Warnham Red deer.

"We generally sit at around 800 hinds, 400 stags and 250 weaner hinds, but it fluctuates a bit," says Hamish. "We held on to a few more last winter when we couldn't get rid of the fawns because of the snow."

While there is a focus on velvet, they carry 120 spikers each winter to look for potential trophy animals, culling half and replacing half.

The Orbell family have farmed around Timaru for five generations. When Andrew took over Clayton Station in 1967 he made many improvements through fencing, drainage and direct drilling. The family started deer farming during the boom of the early 1980s, with the help of investors who were bought out 20 years ago.

Hamish's involvement on the family farm started about 15 years ago, but he was "in and out" during that period, spending time abroad before finally settling on the farm seven years ago.

As well as deer, Hamish, Ruth and four staff run 1,300 sheep and 2,400 cattle, including breeding cows and finishing cattle. They also grow 100 hectares of barley feed a year, keeping 140 tonnes for their own feed and selling on about 500 tonnes.

In the last four years there have only been a few changes in the operation of the farm. They've reduced the number of Elk terminal sires and increased their percentage of Red deer and they're finishing more cattle. Until recently the old family farm in Timaru was used as a finishing farm, but has now been split from Hamish and Ruth's business and is run by Hamish's sister and her husband.

Hamish is optimistic about the future of the deer industry in New Zealand. He says they're now focusing more on quality.

"The industry is definitely picking up. We were caught in the same situation a lot of people were, with lots of animals on board for not a lot of reward," he says. "So we dropped our deer numbers back and consolidated a bit, while we tried to get a better system in place. Now we've started lifting our numbers and we're seeing a better quality and hopefully making progress."

Although he keeps an eye on what goes on in the wider industry, Hamish has no ambition to follow his father's footsteps into deer farming politics. He's content to focus on what he does and leave the politics to "people who are best suited to it".

Tenure review a long slog, but worth it

Clayton Station was one of the first high country pastoral leases to go through tenure review. The whole process took seven years and was completed about three and a half years ago.

As a result of the review, the Orbells freeholded 2,830 hectares with a further 971 hectares on the lower slopes of the Ben McLeod Range passed to the conservation estate. This conservation area of low altitude red tussock, shrublands and tall tussock complements a red tussock reserve that had been set up by the Orbells in the early 1980s. Hamish says having set up the earlier reserve put them in a good bargaining position for the review.

"The tenure review worked out extremely well for us, but there was definitely a lot of sitting around board tables for Mum and Dad over the seven years."

For sale: Peepoday Holdings Ltd

A quality deer, sheep and beef unit located on Peepoday road approx. 20km from Kimbolton and Waituna West.

Presently carrying 3650 stock units including 317 MA breeding hinds, the 180ha of deer fencing within the 338 ha property has previously run 800 Red hinds consistently returning 91% fawning. Weaners are sold end of April averaging approx.55kg. Easily mustered to lanes with good deer facilities including 3-way drafting, weighing platform, crush and load-out. Covered cattle yards and good woolshed as well as approx. 20ha 10-year pine trees complete the diversification. Also with roadside airstrip and covered bin. Spacious 5 b/room home with 4 bay garaging and established gardens including swimming pool.

This well-maintained unit consistently produces quality stock.

View by appointment: Geoff White
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geoff.white@bayleys.co.nz • www.bayleys.co.nz/201663
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Profile: Black Forest Park

Plenty more scope for genetic gain

by Yvonne O'Hara

Trevor Currie can reel off names like King Richard, Neskey, Salvador, Kurgan, Laszlo, Kabul, Berwick and Sintana and most in the industry will know immediately what he is talking about.

The owner of Black Forest Park stud says he gets a buzz from breeding better and better deer, and the rankings being achieved by his sires in DEERSelect's European and Composite table show he has good reason to be happy in his work.

With 16 of his stud animals among the top 30 in last year's industry-wide DEERSelect European and Composite rankings, he has bred some of the country's top venison, velvet and trophy animals.

All of this seems a long way removed from his former business – making and selling camping equipment for the New Zealand and export markets – but breeding high-performance European and English Red deer has been an agreeable career move.

Trevor Currie: Pleased to see innovative commercial farmers making real genetic gains in their herds.

Trevor established the 140 hectare stud property at Outram (near Dunedin) in 1980 and now has mainly Eastern European animals with some English stock.

"I had always been quite keen on deer and hunting," Trevor says. "The deer industry was starting up and it seemed exciting and vibrant so I was keen to be a part of it."

At the time he got into the business the national herd and genetic base had been depleted by hunting, so those who imported selected high-performing deer gave the industry a genetic gain.

His first deer were bought 26 years ago from Wanaka's Sir Tim Wallis; then he added Invermay weaners to his herd.

He also imported German deer, and then went to the bigger and faster growing Eastern Europeans. Today, he has 14 sire stags, including six two-year-olds, and 450 stud hinds and their progeny at Outram.

He keeps about 150 yearling stags on site until they are two years old to select stud animals for Black Forest's annual sire sale.

Trevor has also established commercial deer farms at Clinton, Wairuna and Maheno. The Clinton farm specialises in velvet and trophy antler. It produces about 70 trophy stags annually at present, but that will increase to 100 during the next two seasons.

The Wairuna and Maheno farms specialise in breeding and finishing venison.

Utilising high breeding value genetics, with the aim of finishing most during the chilled season peak, the Wairuna property currently gets more than 80 percent of production into this valuable market.

Trevor says early finishing earns a premium and saves on feed costs. He believes improving feed quality, as well as genetics, makes for better production, so he re-grasses about 15 percent of the properties in new palatable grasses each year.

As a founding member of DEERSelect he is pleased to see the industry has a tool which allows it to make rapid genetic progress, particularly with growth rates.

One of his stags, Kabul, has been the top-ranking animal with DEERSelect for the past three years. The ranking is also based on progeny performance and Kabul's have been the fastest growing. His progeny benefit from his breed value of 23, or 23kg above the base value.

He is also keen to see DEERSelect used to enhance velvet and trophy production with possible future trait additions being fertility, conformation (soundness) and disease resistance.

His partner, Lynne Rhodes, is one of the country's top AI technicians and pioneered cervical insemination in deer.

Lynne and her team have completed more than 70,000 successful deer inseminations in New Zealand and overseas. Trevor is pleased to see some commercial farmers making use of the technology as well.

"Some innovative commercial farmers have set themselves [the target of] getting top quality genetics in the traits of their choice – velvet, trophy or venison – and it is good to see the progress they are making. Some have genetics as good as some studs."

He is optimistic the industry is working its way out of the current trough.

"Prices have been quite depressed in the last three years, but especially velvet and trophy this last season have been very acceptable, and venison is also on track to return to good profitability in the short and medium term."

Black Forest's Salvador reminding the hinds who's boss.

Long term he suggests the market would develop with further processing and attractive packaging of chilled and "meal-ready" products into supermarkets, both domestic and overseas.

"The industry as a whole has better information now as to herd size and projections, and hopefully that will allow better planning and stability."

Trevor would like more work done on increasing fawning percentages, including first calving hinds, although that is more of an issue for intensive rather than extensive farms, which have a more natural environment to mate and fawn.

And, after experiencing a hind rearing a male and female calf with a combined weight on 3 October at 11 months of 177kg (with the male 101kg), he is also interested in researching and breeding for twinning potential.

His own plans include developing future strategic markets and refining Black Forest's 15,000su operations.

Trophy genetic progress continues apace

With all eyes on New Zealand to provide the world's first 600 SCI to be shot, it was English park Woburn Abbey who came out of the blue to take the honour when a 600 SCI stag was shot last month.

Despite being pipped at the post, New Zealand is still a front-runner in deer genetics and our industry is the increased interest in trophy stags has been providing an important boost, particularly during the past few seasons.

"New Zealand is consistently leading the world in deer genetics," NZDFA chairman and trophy stag breeder Andy Mitchell says. "With an increasing push from the industry towards animals in excess of 400 SCI, there is good solid support for gold medal trophy stags."

Trophy breeding is likely to have a huge economic impact on deer farming, according to Andrew Mitchell. Photo courtesy Tower Farms.

Trophy stags are given an SCI score by master measurers like Andy. This involves taking measurements at the tines, at the circumference in two places and at the inside span and then adding these measurements together.

"A 600 SCI stag has 600 inches of antler – that's an awful lot of antler," Andy says. "Any stag over 550 is pretty exceptional. Just five years ago a 400 SCI was reasonably rare, but that's more commonplace now, with most of the industry looking to breeding stags in excess of 550."

Andy believes more people are becoming involved in trophy breeding and the trend is likely to continue.

"It's a growing business which is likely to have a huge economic impact on deer farming in New Zealand. You only need to look at the stud industry and the prices paid for stags at this year's sire sales to realise good trophy breeding stags are commanding premiums."

He says there is strong international interest in New Zealand trophy stags, with many overseas investors showing interest at this year's sire sales.

"A European gentleman collected top class stags at this year's sales, paying $82,000 for a Stanfield's Bushey Park sire."

The sire of the stag in question, Woburn's Herbrand, held the world record SCI measurement for a five year old with a score of 588 last September.