

DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 8 • March 2004 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA



**Sir Peter
Elworthy
Remembered
P16**

target the future
"Expanding the Vision"



Deer Industry Conference Taupo 2004

**Conference
Preview
P6**



Market Breakthrough in France P4

Also in this issue:

- Deer processing research review
- AGM, Awards and constitutional requirements
- Executive Committee report
- Selection & Appointment Panel
- Sire sales
- Lepto vaccine investigation
- Across-herd sire evaluation
- Johne's Disease
- Antler Science Symposium



**DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND**

NZDFA

New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association



Supply management crucial

There is no doubt that this is the toughest period the deer industry has had to endure. Drought in the South Island and floods in the North have added further pressures to an already difficult situation.



However, it is important to draw a distinction between low returns today and the industry's future prospects. Today's farm-gate price should be seen for what it is – a price signal reflecting market conditions today. The clear message is that the market does not want additional supply at this time. Aside from pressures imposed by the climate and financial

circumstances, we must all collectively manage supply in line with market needs to assist a recovery in the market's confidence. In this sense, the timing of any future recovery will be determined by our collective supply decisions.

Like other export industries, the deer industry has been hit hard by currency movements. In addition, and most importantly, our processors, exporters and marketers have once again had to deal with a dramatic swing in production at a time when the market and importer confidence were already fragile.

Taking the last 12 years on average, venison production has grown by a modest 3.5% per annum. If this could be achieved annually, this growth rate would be manageable and very positive. However, around this theoretical average growth rate, actual production has varied between years by as much as minus 24% (1995/96) and plus 31% (1997 to 98). This volatility in supply is one of the most important factors impacting market confidence and the industry's ability to develop new markets and build demand.

All companies agree that what is needed right now is stability in supply to assist a recovery of market confidence.

In the meantime, companies are investing heavily in promotion and new market development and Deer Industry

New Zealand is assisting with joint and generic promotional support. Together, we are building an integrated programme of company and generic activity which will be the biggest ever seen outside the game season. The programme has a clear retail focus aimed at showcasing New Zealand venison outside the game season to encourage consumption. As well as aiming to give an immediate boost to sales, it will also set the groundwork for out of season promotions in the future. We will provide details of these programmes and results as soon as they are available.

Last month's confirmation of year-round access to the French market was a welcome piece of good news (see article on page 4). While it is not a cure-all, it represents another important opportunity to develop new markets outside traditional channels and outside the game season. One company has reported they are actively building a chilled sales programme in France for Easter. In another case, a company is continuing to supply its retail customers, where in previous years venison was legally required to be removed from shelves on 1 March.

We have recently completed a series of meetings with venison exporters to discuss current issues, but primarily as the first step in developing a revised strategy for the venison industry. This has been a positive process and I can assure you that companies and their in-market partners are investing heavily, both in terms of time and money to build new demand for venison. There are significant opportunities being explored in a range of markets and segments. The importance placed on further processing and close relationships with end-users is universal.

The fundamentals of the current strategy appear to be widely endorsed and appear likely to remain the basis of the strategy for the future. However I believe the ultimate outcome will be an important and clear step forward. There is still much work to do on this, and I look forward to keeping you advised of progress over the next couple of months.

In the meantime, the industry approaches a critical period and I encourage all producers to work closely with your processing and exporting partners to manage supply in line with market demands.

MJ Loza, CEO, Deer Industry New Zealand 

CONTENTS	
Year-round access for venison sales in France	4
Deer processing review	5
Conference preview	6
NZDFA AGM, Awards and constitutional requirements	8
What is the Selection and Appointment Panel?	11
From The Chair: EC meeting, February 8, 2004	12
Branch Chair profile: Neil Cameron	13
Branch Chair profile: Peter Aitken	13
An open letter to the New Zealand deer industry	14
Obituary: Sir Peter Herbert Elworthy	16
After the flood	19
Sire sale report	20
Market Report	22
Challenging times ahead in the US	24
Venison to benefit from Aussie cash injection	25
Michael Rice: Weighing anchor	26
Possibility for lepto vaccine under investigation	27
Rapid Tb carcass test a step closer	27
Across-herd deer evaluation soon to be a reality	28
Johne's Disease in New Zealand farmed deer	29
Pastoral research strategy identifying priorities	30
International antler science symposium	31

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

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Cover photo: Venison Roulade with Roast Garlic and Herb Butter

C'est magnifique! Year-round access for venison sales in France

The confirmation last month of year-round access for venison in France is a long-awaited breakthrough for the deer industry.

"This is an excellent result, which has been achieved after more than 6 years of hard work by the Minister, the Ambassador, and Government and Embassy officials with Deer Industry New Zealand's input," says Deer Industry New Zealand Chairman Clive Jermy.

"Up until now we have been prohibited by law from selling venison to French consumers outside the traditional autumn/winter game season. This change in French Regulations allows the industry to build new demand outside the game season in a market with huge potential.

Another 6 months

"France is already our fourth-biggest market by volume (6% of all exports), and accounted for \$8.6million in export earnings last year. With this change, we have another 6 months each year in which the industry can sell New Zealand Venison in France. While we still need to convince consumers to try venison outside the traditional season, the opportunity is significant given France's large population and strong interest in fine food. Also, it is a market where people already know, understand and enjoy venison."

Building demand for venison outside the game season and reducing reliance on traditional market channels and segments in Germany are the main platforms of the strategy, being updated by Deer Industry New Zealand in consultation with exporters.

"To date, without the ability to sell our products year round, our promotional programme in France has been minimal," Clive adds. "While this will not be an immediate silver bullet for the industry, with the support of exporters and importers keen to develop this market, we look forward to spring and



Santé! His Excellency, Mr Adrian Macey (New Zealand Ambassador to France), His Excellency Jean-Michel Marlaud (French Ambassador to New Zealand) and Clive Jermy (Chairman Deer Industry New Zealand), toast year round access for New Zealand venison into France (venison dish prepared by Icon Catering at Te Papa). Photo: Anthony Phelps.

summer promotions in France, leveraging off our experiences with similar programmes in other markets. Working in co-operation with our French deer farming colleagues to promote venison is an important part of our plans.

"We would especially like to thank Minister Sutton and his officials for their time and efforts in securing this important result. Our Ambassador and Embassy staff in Paris also deserve special mention and our industry's gratitude for their persistence and professionalism." 

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Shultzwrede



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Kaiza 6.0kg SA2 @ 6 yr

ENGLISH
Woburn
Abbey
Warnham
Park

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Deer processing review

After consultation with venison processors, DEEResearch requested a review of the research around venison processing as one mechanism to assist in identifying process improvements and new opportunities for the venison industry. The following is a summary of the review.

To establish the scope of the review, input was sought from members of the processors technical committee, and people associated with the industry who have responsibilities for processing quality, auditing and final product quality and safety in the market.

This consultative process resulted in three areas of interest:

- processing for quality
- value-adding opportunities
- blown pack spoilage

Current industry processing standards have been in place for several years with the majority of processors working to these agreed standards. However, a number of quality issues are of concern to processors. New opportunities that have been exploited in the beef and lamb industries could be successfully applied in venison processing.

Purge losses, colour, tenderness

While the tenderness of chilled venison is generally highly acceptable, high purge losses in vacuum packs and poor retail colour stability are acknowledged as issues that can impact upon market acceptance. Similarly, some processors are identifying problems with the tenderness of frozen product and are finding challenges meeting the tenderness specification as laid down in the industry standards when product is frozen within 1 or 2 days of slaughter.

The original work to establish a process that would reliably generate tender, chilled and frozen venison was conducted in 1991. However, recent benchmarking quality work in lamb has shown that, despite improved processing consistency over the last 15 years, product tenderness is falling well short of the specification. The reasons for this non-compliance are a combination of the influence of different sheep genetics and modified production systems, leading to carcasses with different responses to processing conditions. There is a possibility that venison may be suffering from a similar phenomenon. The reviewers recommend that a quality benchmarking exercise be undertaken.

Blown-pack spoilage


In the past five years, "blown pack" spoilage of vacuum-packed chilled meats has significantly advanced. From once being considered a scientific curio, it is now recognised worldwide as a spoilage condition causing major economic losses in the beef, venison and lamb processing industries. This spoilage condition is caused by spore-forming anaerobic microorganisms that are capable of growth and abundant gas production at refrigeration temperatures.

The review describes the current status of knowledge on characteristics of blown pack spoilage and its causative agents, environmental reservoirs of blown pack-causing organisms, their incidence in foods, the DSP environment, and methods for their detection. Present recommendations for control of these microorganisms in a processing plant environment are discussed, with the emphasis on new opportunities and research directions for the future.

Review timely

Given the changes in animal physiology, production systems, their associated microbiology, together with shifts in market expectations of product quality, it is undoubtedly appropriate to re-examine processing specifications for the venison industry. Recent work with beef and lamb has shown that different combinations of stunning, stimulation and chilling can be used to dramatically manipulate product quality, and so tailor processing conditions to different market requirements. Similar opportunities exist for venison to define a range of optimised processing specifications for frozen, short-term and long-term chilled product to ensure that, once in the market, the quality attributes match or exceed customer expectations.

Similarly, quantum leaps have recently been made in the area of value-adding to manufacturing grade beef and lamb by understanding and exploiting attributes of individual muscles. While limited information exists in this area for venison, fundamental knowledge that has been developed to utilise this technology for beef and lamb, can now be readily applied to venison.

The review discusses the principles underlying the application of process tailoring and value adding and outlines the potential to apply this underpinning knowledge to venison. It is important that such work remains dynamic and that, as new processing technologies evolve into commercial reality, the existing specifications can be refined to incorporate these new technologies. Some new processing opportunities that are rapidly approaching commercial reality are also discussed. Strategies by which some of these can be incorporated into venison processing have also been explored. 

Further information:

Registered users can download the full report from the DEEResearch website by using the following link:
www.deeresearch.org.nz/dl.asp?id=1139

Coming events

16-18 April	Deer Industry Association of Australia, 2004 Biennial Conference, Mt Gambier, South Australia. Visit www.diaa.org/ for information and registration details
16-19 June	Mystery Creek Field Days – Hamilton
21 June	NZDFA Branch Chairmen's meeting, Wairakei.
22-23 June	2004 Deer Industry Conference and NZDFA AGM, Wairakei (timed to link with Mystery Creek Field Days, above)
28 June – 1 July	NZ Society of Animal Production Annual Conference Hamilton. At LIC/Dexcel campus in Newstead. Contact eric.kolver@dexcel.co.nz



Welcome!

Registration form included with this issue of Deer Industry News!

The NZDFA and Deer Industry New Zealand warmly invite you to participate in the 2004 New Zealand Deer Industry Conference to be held at the Wairakei Resort, Taupo.

The host branch, Tongariro, welcomes a continuation of the return to the provincial theme and have combined an excellent programme with superb food and entertainment.

The Branch believes its location, central to major North Island deer farming areas offers an attraction for widespread support, with the added incentive of following the National Fielddays as a bonus for Southern travellers. The focus is the formal presentations of technical sessions, the AGM and FGM and an extension of the open forum concept. There is also provision for informal discussion and building the contacts and friendships that are so important in our industry.

The theme "Target the future ... expanding the vision" is to extend the debates and understanding of marketing programmes in Europe and to openly discuss the many aspects of the industry that are opportunities and issues to all industry sectors at this time. The Branch wants to focus on positive outcomes and a realistic view of the future through all events. The planned format opens with a Fresh Look technical session developing some new concepts in integrated farming, sustainable pasture development and better production through suitable pasture species and concepts in management. The session will also cover velvet antler and a new look at deer health and sustainability. The afternoon is scheduled for the NZDFA AGM and its open remit and issues sessions. The first evening function will feature the launch of the Landcare Manual in association with the 2004 Environmental Awards with local chefs demonstrating prowess and promotion of venison in New Zealand cuisine.

The conference features an extension of last year's open forum ideas but with debate and interaction to express your views on the future directions and values of this industry. The Deer Industry New Zealand FGM concludes the business of this 2-day event before the traditional Awards dinner. Strong sponsorship support has been developing. This event is a well-planned, vital opportunity for you to target the future, to ask the tough questions, expanding the vision and strategic plan and your values and future ... together. Welcome!

Industry partners

This year sees the continuation of Industry Partnerships with different servicing sectors associating themselves with the Deer Industry Conference. We are delighted that Rabobank and Ravensdown have accepted this offer for the second year, representing the banking/financial and farm supply sectors respectively. The committee appreciates their early support and commitment. Further discussions with the processor/exporter, livestock, animal health, and training and education sectors are underway and we will give an update on Industry Partnerships in the May issue of *Deer Industry News*.

Conference exhibition

The Tongariro Branch has coordinated a display and presentation recognising the very foundations of the industry from Consolidated Traders' deer farm licence No 1 and a number of significant Taupo pioneers. They will present a detailed history museum alongside the sponsor booths. The Branch has developed additional themes and new concepts as a fund raiser that allows them to contribute to industry research through the Johne's Research Group, that many will find appealing.

Historical photos wanted!

Part of that display will include enlarged Black and White photos of our history. To make this work, the Branch will need your support. If you have any interesting photos please contact:

Chris Parkinson by email crispark@paradise.net.nz or phone 07 372 8649 or post to 18B Hinekura Ave, Taupo 2730. They will be returned within a week along with a copy on CD.

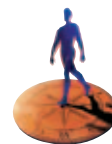
An extensive conference exhibition will be staged, giving registrants the opportunity to bring themselves up to date with the latest industry knowledge and services.

Exhibitor support and space is filling fast. For further information please contact conference organiser:

pat@dcms.co.nz
phone 03 477 1377

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Conference venue and location

The venue for this year's conference is the **Wairakei Resort Hotel** located at the heart of the district's geothermal power generation area. It is the complete resort in terms of venue, social relaxation and a host of leisure and sports activities on site.

There is a range of accommodation options and room selections. If you would like to keep these costs to a minimum and share twin, the conference organisers will be happy to arrange sharing with a nominated person or match you with other like-minded delegates.

Accommodation must be booked by 20 May for guarantees of the rooms you have requested. Following that, the hotel will work on a first come first served basis. There is any number of options available in Taupo for those wishing to be independent. However, the Branch would encourage people to choose the Wairakei Hotel for convenience and to gain the most from your conference experience. The committee will assist with airport transfers to the hotel.

Breakfast sessions

These will be held in the Exhibition Area at Wairakei on the Tuesday and Wednesday mornings from 7.30-8.30am. Topics will be detailed in the conference programme and will include topical issues facing the industry and an informal chance to talk. Breakfasts are included in the hotel room rate.

For catering purposes, please indicate on the registration form that you will attend at these breakfasts in the exhibition area, for those delegates not indicating it will be taken that they will breakfast in the hotel dining room. Delegates NOT staying in-house can register and pay for the breakfasts on the registration form.

Registration fee (\$340 full)

Full registration: includes full conference attendance Tuesday, Wednesday, morning and afternoon teas and lunches for these days, conference programme, satchel, Welcome Function and the traditional Awards Dinner.

Day registration: includes attendance and catering for the day of attendance, conference programme. No social functions are included – tickets for these can be purchased on the registration form as can the optional field trip on Monday 21 June to Murray and Barbara Matuschka's unique property.

Accompanying persons

Please purchase extra tickets for the social functions on the registration form. Accompanying people/partners wishing to attend sessions and enjoy conference catering need to register as a full delegate.



Cancellations

Cancellations must be advised in writing and a refund of fees, less \$50 administration cost, applies to cancellations prior to 15 June. After this date, refunds will be at the discretion of the organising committee. The organiser also reserves the right to cancel the conference should lack of support make this necessary.

Social events

For those interested there is a local field trip to Barbara and Murray Matuschka's farm. This is a must-see event. Lunch will be provided at your cost. Landcorp has also offered the Goudies block as a drop-in venue.

Mixer evening 6 pm – 10 pm, Heritage Room, Wairakei, Monday 21 June (the shortest day!)

It may not be the shortest day for the Branch Chairmen who meet from 11.00 am – 6.00 pm, but for delegates arriving early, a meet and greet at your own leisure and expense (we provide some finger food!) is arranged. This will be a great chance to mix with old friends, the local farmers, industry sponsors and with the Branch Chairmen and Deer Industry New Zealand Executive and Board Members. Chris Parkinson and team are keen that delegates have as much time together to talk over issues and develop some well-considered themes and discussion during the conference sessions.

Welcome Function – Tuesday 22 June, Wairakei Resort conference venue – (inclusive with full registrations)

Additional tickets: \$50.00

To be held in the exhibition hall venue, this function will take the form of a Food Festival. Graham Brown will show off the European venison market development programme with a demonstration alongside local chefs who will each prepare a venison dish in a different style for delegates to taste and enjoy. This year local chefs will be asked to each take a particular venison cut and prepare a costed venison serving adding a New Zealand flavour and local appeal to the presentation.

This evening will feature the Deer Industry Environmental Awards and the premier award sponsored by Fiona Lady Elworthy and family as an ongoing legacy to Sir Peter's passion and vision and the commitment to an advancing deer industry. The evening will be (at this stage) highlighted with the Minister's attendance and launch of the Landcare Manual after 3 years of development by the manual committee and advisers.

continued on next page

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NZDFA AGM, Awards and constitutional requirements

*29th Annual General Meeting:
22 June 2004*

Remits, Remits, Remits!

Late remits are not useful. Remits to the AGM are customarily submitted through Branches. Branch members are urged to submit all remits to the Association offices by **Friday 30 April 2004** to enable them to be published in the pre-AGM Deer Industry News.

Please note that the 1998 AGM unanimously passed a resolution from the Southland Branch that requires all remits to be in the hands of the NZDFA office for circulation 45 days prior to the AGM. For 2004, that means a 10 May final cutoff – but note remits received after 30 April can't be published in Deer Industry News.

This provides the opportunity to develop remits in advance at your AGMs and have time during May/June to meet again and fully discuss remits and other industry issues to bring forward at the conference. Discussion of remits that arrive late and have not had Branch input, irrespective of the wisdom of your Chairman and Committee, is not a useful process.

It is to **everyone's advantage** for them to be published and circulated to all members. Remits will be posted on the website and circulated to Chairmen as they are received.

Conference continued

Awards Dinner 2004 – Wednesday 23rd June – (inclusive with full registrations)

Additional Tickets: \$100.00

The conference dinner will be held in the Waikato Rooms at Wairakei and will incorporate the Warnham & Woburn Society Photo Award, Matuschka Award and the Deer Industry Award along with signature dish and entertainment.

2004 Deer Industry Conference programme summary:

Monday 21 June:

Branch Chairmen's meeting: 11.00 am – 6.00 pm
Mixer evening: 6.00 pm – 10 pm

Tuesday 22 June:

Breakfast session: 7.30 am – 8.30 am
Fresh Look Technical Session: 8.30 am - 12.30 pm
NZDFA AGM: 2.00pm-5.30pm
Welcome function – Food festival, NZDFA Environmental Award,
Landcare Manual launch: 7.30 pm

Wednesday 23 June:

Breakfast session: 7.30 am – 8.30 am
Open forum: 9.00 am - 12.00 noon
Formal General Meeting: 1.00 pm - 5.00 pm
Awards dinner: assemble for drinks at 7.30 pm

Constitutional deadline diary

Nominations for producer representatives on DINZ Board close: **23 April 2004**
Nominations for NZDFA Executive Committee/SAP close: **23 April 2004**
Remits to NZDFA AGM due: **30 April 2004**
NZDFA Executive Committee/SAP election voting closes: **14 June 2004**

Awards

Matuschka Award

Nominations are called for a farmer or farming entity who has made a significant contribution to deer farming and the NZDFA in particular at Branch level - as a quiet achiever.

The award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and core spirit of deer farming. It will be presented at the 2004 Deer Industry Conference, hosted by Tongariro Branch in the home territory of Murray and Barbara Matuschka.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate Branch. It is not a requirement of the award that the nominee be aware of the fact that a nomination has gone forward. Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA no later than **5.00pm on Tuesday, 1 June 2004**.

Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards 2004

Entries are now being received for the 2004 Environmental Awards and there's an information kit with entry form available on request from Reception at the Deer Industry New Zealand Office (ph 04 382 8626).

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

The winners also attract some positive media interest with their environmentally friendly deer farms featuring nationwide in regional newspapers and specialist rural publications.

As a result, the deer industry enjoys a positive rapport with several environmental organisations at a time when other rural industries have had a hammering from activist groups.

Environmental Awards an integral part of Landcare Project

Through publicity and knowledge transfer, the NZDFA promotes this important industry good activity to maintain a positive environmental stance and a sustainable industry image, by taking a pro-active environmental outlook to deer farming. The Landcare Manual will be launched at the 2004 Deer Industry Conference in Taupo, in June.

Associations are continuing with our loyal sponsors for the individual awards and particularly for the production of the 6000 widely distributed colour brochures. This will again feature the environmentally friendly farming techniques and profiles of the winning farms.

Elworthy name will continue to be linked with Premier Award

The NZDFA is honoured to announce that Fiona Lady Elworthy has generously committed the family's continuing support for the Premier Prize. The continuing association of

the Elworthy name with this award will ensure that it retains the prestige it deserves, and will be a fitting tribute to the genuine commitment of Sir Peter and Lady Fiona to sustainable farming practices.

The Elworthy Environmental Award winner's package includes a \$2,500 cash prize, awards dinner attendance, a commemorative native tree and plaque to feature at a special site on the winning property.

The independent judging team for 2004 will be lead by Simon Stokes, a Land Management officer from Hawke's Bay Regional Council who takes over from last year's leading judge Gary Morgan from Environment Southland. Other judges will be from the New Zealand Landcare Trust, Fish & Game and DoC. Judging will be during April and May.

Phone the DINZ office today on 04 382 8626 for a copy of the 2004 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards information kit. Entries are due by 5.00 pm, Friday 2 April.

Rumpole Cup

Entries are invited for the 2004 Rumpole Cup, which is awarded to the best Branch or Associated Society newsletter. Newsletters submitted routinely to the NZDFA office will be entered.

The award is to promote good communication at grass roots level. Newsletters are judged on: variety, topicality, quality of

Award entry deadlines

Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards entries close: **2 April 2004**

Warnham & Woburn Photo Awards entries close: **31 May 2004**

Matuschka Award nominations close: **1 June 2004**

Rumpole Cup entries close: **1 June 2004**

writing/editing, effective communication, originality and presentation. Smaller Branch newsletters which cannot afford more expensive printing (e.g. more colour) are not disadvantaged.

Please submit your entry to the Rumpole Cup, NZDFA, PO Box 10-702, Wellington by **Tuesday 1 June 2004**. You can submit either one or a number of issues of the newsletter, provided it was published during the previous 12 months.

NZ Warnham & Woburn Deer Society Photo Competition

The NZ Warnham & Woburn Deer Society has generously agreed to continue supporting this popular competition, which provides an excellent showcase for our industry to the rest of the world. This year we hope to pick the best of the entrants to feature in the next edition of the successful Deer Industry Calendar.

See the advertisement on p28 for further details – there's an entry form enclosed with this issue of *Deer Industry News*.

Constitutional matters

A) Executive Committee Nominations

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.

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

- Executive Committee member, North Island, one vacancy. (Current Member Errol Croad, Kapiti, will stand down by rotation and has advised he will not seek a further term.)
- Executive Committee Member, South Island, one vacancy. (Current member, Andrew Fraser, Waimate, retires by rotation and has indicated he will seek re-election.)

Further nominations are invited for both positions. A nominee need not be resident in the Island of nomination.

Each nomination must:

- be in writing and specify the Island which the nominee seeks to represent
- be moved and seconded by two other full members of the Association or levy-payers resident in the same Island as the vacancy
- be signed by the nominee; and
- be delivered to the Association's office by **5.00 pm on Friday 23 April 2004**.

All nominees are entitled to submit a statement of approximately 150 words in support of their election. This statement must be sent to members at the same time as the ballot papers.

Should an election be necessary, details of postal voting and procedures, candidate profiles and the confirmation of time lines will be sent with the May edition of *Deer Industry News*. Postal voting runs for 21 days and must close 7 clear days prior to the AGM on Tuesday 22 June (i.e. **voting opens on Monday 24 May, closing at 5.00 pm on Monday 14 June**).

B) Selection and Appointment Panel (SAP)

The role of the SAP is to make producer representative appointments to the Deer Industry New Zealand Board and to meet with those appointees at least once a year to discuss industry matters and their roles as Deer Industry New Zealand representatives.

The 8-member SAP is made up from:

- Four Executive Committee members
- Four non-Executive elected members (two farmer members from each of the North and South Islands).

The elected non-Executive Committee members whose term expires at the forthcoming AGM are **(NI) Suzie Hall** and **(SI) Chris Hughes**. Nominations are now called for the following positions:

Both current members have advised they will not be seeking re-election:

- SAP member, North Island, one vacancy
- SAP member, South Island, one vacancy.

Each nomination must be in writing and moved and seconded by two full members or levy paying members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association offices by **5.00 pm Friday 23rd April 2004**.

The nominees must be full members or levy paying members. Further, nominees:

- must not be a member of the Deer Industry Association
- cannot hold more than a 20% interest in any organisation which is a member of the Deer Industry Association
- cannot be a candidate for membership of the Deer Industry New Zealand Board, or a current member of Deer Industry New Zealand staff or board.

[The voting procedure and timing of the process is the same as that for the positions on the Executive Committee.]

continued on p10

C) NZDFA Appointments to Deer Industry New Zealand Board

Currently the Deer Industry New Zealand Board comprises five producer representatives selected by the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association. Four have been selected by the NZDFA's Selection and Appointment Panel in the usual manner. One is an extraordinary 2-year appointment and was made at the formation of DINZ.

Three representatives are selected by the Deer Industry Association (DIA) with an additional extraordinary appointment made by the DIA at the formation of DINZ. There is one government appointee.

The Ministerial approval for a change to the Game Industry Board Regulations to allow the 50:50 Board representation and the 50:50 levy is still pending at this time. If the Regulations are gazetted in mid April as indicated, there will be some change to the Board make-up as it reduces to 4 producer-appointed representatives and 4 members nominated by the velvet and venison sectors. The government-appointed member position will be disestablished. Until that time, the constitution requires that nominations be called for in the prescribed manner.

Should the revised Regulations be gazetted in April as planned, Board member Jeffrey Pearse has volunteered to stand down at that point for the period.

The government appointee, Andrew Thompson has advised the Board that he will stand down from his position at the end of April 2004, notwithstanding the timing of changes to the Regulations.

The current make-up of 10 Members is due to change irrespective of the timing of the awaited Minister's approval of the changes to the GIB Regulations at the two-year anniversary of the formation of Deer Industry New Zealand in August 2004. The extraordinary appointment positions for processor/exporters and producer-appointed Board members will lapse and the Board will reduce to an 8-member board.

Clive Jermy (Chairman), Warren Moyes, Mike Pattison and Jeffrey Pearse are the current producer representatives. John Scurr was appointed to fill NZDFA's extraordinary vacancy in 2002. He will seek nomination for one of the vacancies created by retirement by rotation.

Nominations are now called for the following NZDFA positions on the DINZ Board:

- Deer Industry New Zealand Board Members, retiring by rotation, 2 vacancies (Mike Pattison, Jeffrey Pearse).

Each nomination must be moved and seconded by two levy-payers, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association's offices before **5.00 pm on Friday 23 April 2004**.

The Constitution (2002) refers:

37.10 NOMINATIONS FOR DEER INDUSTRY NEW ZEALAND:

The Selection and Appointment Panel shall appoint a Returning Officer who shall publicly announce, in writing, the names of the retiring deer farmer nominees of Deer Industry New Zealand and call for nominations for their replacement, prior to the end of March each year. Nominations shall be:

- made by any two Full Members or Levy Payers
- in writing; and

- in the hands of the Returning Officer at a date to be specified which will be before the Annual General Meeting of the Association each year.

37.11 ELIGIBILITY FOR SELECTION AS NOMINEE TO DEER INDUSTRY NEW ZEALAND BOARD

All persons interested or engaged in the deer farming industry shall be eligible for nomination, with the exception of employees of Deer Industry New Zealand or of the Association. Each nominee for selection shall be required to make a written declaration of any office held or managerial position or financial interest that either the nominee or any of the nominee's immediate family or any partner or fellow shareholder in any deer farming project has in any organisation which deals directly in the products of or materials for the deer farming industry. The products of the deer farming industry refers to the commercial processing or commercial trade in venison, velvet, co-products and similar products but excludes live animals and velvet sold from the farm.

Nominations for the positions will be considered by the Selection and Appointment Panel following the 2004 AGM in July with recommendations being made to the Minister of Agriculture for appointment to the Board.

Nomination forms

Nomination forms for the Executive Committee, SAP and Deer Industry New Zealand vacancies can be obtained from the Association's office, Phone: 04 382 8626; Fax: 04 382 9143; email: info@deernz.org

Nomination forms are also available through your local Branch Chairman, Secretary or the Producer Manager and will be posted on the website: www.deernz.org at time of publication of *Deer Industry News*, Issue 8.

National Velvet Standards Body

Expressions of interest in writing are called for from those interested persons from the deer farming sector for consideration by the Executive Committee for appointment to the NVSB.

Prospective candidates will be invited for an interview and discussion on their interest and potential contribution as one of two farmer representatives on the NVSB. Representation is 1 member for each Island. Interviews, which are optional, are held in support of written expressions of interest and will be held following the NZDFA conference in Wairakei on Thursday 24 June 2004. The Executive Committee will make its selection at that time.

Current NVSB members are John Spiers, Takapau (North Island), and David Stevens, Balfour (South Island). John Spiers is due to retire by rotation and will seek re-appointment.

At the time of writing a draft refined operating code for the NVSB is being developed. Once available, it will be circulated via Branches and direct to individual candidates.

Please forward any expressions of interests direct to the Producer Manager. Closing date is **1 June 2004**. Details of NVSB representation duties are available on request.

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<p>FREE : DEER YARD DESIGNS AND INNOVATIVE IDEAS</p>	<p>VISIT OUR WEBSITE : www.animalhandler.com</p>

What is the Selection and Appointment Panel?

In the leadup to the next round of nominations and elections, Selection and Appointment Panel (SAP) Chairman Tim Aitken outlines the panel's role and functions.

The SAP comprises eight elected members. Four are specifically elected by deer farmers and must themselves be deer farmers. The other four are the members of the NZDFA Executive Committee. Of the farmer members, two are from the North Island and two from the South Island. In any one year two will retire, one from each Island. They may stand for re-election.

Deer farmers vote for the candidates irrespective of their own location, i.e. voting is not limited to North or South Island representation depending on a deer farmer's location. The four elected members presently are:

North Island	Tim Aitken (Chairman)	
	Susie Hall	Retiring and not standing for re-election
South Island	Chris Hughes	Retiring and not standing for re-election
	Keith Orange	

The other four representatives are the four members of the NZDFA Executive Committee who are elected in a similar manner. The four members currently are:

North Island	Errol Croad	Retiring by rotation; not seeking nomination
	Andrew Mitchell	
South Island	Andrew Fraser	Retiring by rotation; available for nomination
	Bill Taylor	

The SAP Chairman is elected each year at the first meeting directly after the NZDFA's AGM. This meeting also establishes the time-frame and reviews the industry issues that will form the framework of the interview and selection process for vacancies amongst the producer-appointed members on the Board of Deer Industry New Zealand.

The primary role of the SAP is to nominate suitable persons to the Minister of Agriculture to fill the vacancies for the positions of producer appointees to the Board of Deer Industry New Zealand.

In addition:

1. The SAP will also meet at least once annually with the producer appointees to the Board for an interchange of views on matters of topical concern within the deer industry.
2. As a committee from time to time, the SAP may review the performance of the Board and its effectiveness in dealing with industry issues and, where necessary, recommend to the Executive Committee that it make submissions to the Deer Industry New Zealand Board on any particular issue.

The producer-appointed representative's term is three years, so in any one year there is one seat up for reappointment, except for every third year when there are two vacancies.

There are currently five producer members on the Board due to the restructuring of the Board from the Game Industry Board to the Deer Industry New Zealand Board in 2002. Following the two-year transition phase this reduces this year

on the August anniversary of the formation of Deer Industry New Zealand to four producer-appointed representatives, which means there will be only two vacancies to be filled.

The current producer-appointed representatives on the Board are:

Name	Year of first appointment	Year of most recent appointment	Expiry of current appointment
Clive Jermy	1993	2002	2005
Warren Moyes	1998	2003	2006
Michael Pattison	1998	2001	2004
Jeffery Pearse	1998	2001	2004
John Scurr	2002	2002	2004

The SAP's role is to select the best person onto the Board who has been nominated by levy-paying deer farmers for that position, i.e. a nominee has to be nominated by two full or levy-paying members in writing and the nomination be in the hands of the Returning Officer before the Annual General Meeting of the NZDFA each year at a time set by the Returning Officer.

It is important that deer farmers consider who they want to stand for the Board and get their nominations in by the due date. The SAP is not the nominating body – they are there to select the best nominee through the selection process.

In 2002/2003 a formal operating code of practice was developed and distributed for comment and endorsed via Branch Chairmen. This code sets out clearly the interview process, timelines, voting procedures and the process that allows for declarations of action or potential conflicts of interest that may exist from time to time.

The SAP has a critical function within the industry and represents all deer farmers at the highest level through appointment of the most appropriate Board Members at the time. Your support through SAP member nomination and in nominations for Board positions is welcomed and encouraged.

Tim Aitken, SAP Chairman 2003/04

CWD testing – sample target achieved

For the year ended December 2003 the deer industry submitted 315 samples from farms for testing to support New Zealand's Chronic Wasting Disease-free status.

This is the first time since incentivised TSE surveillance programmes commenced in 1990 for sheep, cattle, goats and deer that **any** species has achieved the target of 300 samples in a year – a real credit to the deer industry.

Along with increased sampling at DSPs this is a very important result to support New Zealand's CWD-free status to maintain ongoing market access and confidence in New Zealand as a producer of safe food.

Thanks to all those Branches, farmers and veterinarians that have assisted us reach this important goal. There's no room for complacency however, and I seek your ongoing support to help us repeat this achievement in 2004.

MJ Loza
CEO, Deer Industry New Zealand



From The Chair: EC meeting, February 8, 2004

The Executive Committee met in Masterton following the National 2 year velvet competition. A full agenda included an update from the NVSB (John Spiers and Rob Gregory) on all velvetting issues.

They reported that the industry has developed a sound relationship and is working constructively and closely with the NZ Food Safety Authority. Extensive trial work has been completed with results due out next month. Deer Industry New Zealand expects to report in full on the arrangements for the next velvetting season once results are available and further discussions with industry stakeholders are completed.

Following comment from the Branches that the Executive Committee role needed formal definition and a clear profile, a draft discussion document on form and function of the Executive Committee was finalised after an extensive workshop process.

The draft budget will ensure reserves are maintained in excess of \$100,000 and that current subscription levels and Branch capitations are to be retained at present levels.

Conference will take place June 22-23 in Wairakei at Taupo. Mark your calendars now. This year's theme is 'Target the Future'. You need to be there to debate the issues.

Bill Taylor is overseeing the final editing and publication of the Landcare Manual. Bill informs us it is coming together and looking good, and has attracted strong sponsorship. The manual will be a reference book along the style and quality of the Deermaster Deer Industry Manual. Time lines are relatively tight for the planned conference launch.

The Executive Committee is taking farmer concerns direct to producer representatives on the DINZ Board. Farmers need some good news or this industry will continue to go through the ups and downs that it has in the past.

Some Branches in the north are talking about amalgamation. With the excellent information coming from our Producer Manager, *Deer Industry News* and *Deer Notes*, the need to have Branch meetings has diminished. Our Producer Manager is only too happy to work with members in outlying areas of Branches with field days etc. As long as areas are represented by having a member on the new Branch committee, their local concerns will have a voice and influence. The Executive Committee will assist with this process of amalgamation and rationalisation.

In this edition of *Deer Industry News* there are positions advertised for the Executive Committee, Selection and Appointment Panel and the National Velvet Standards Body and the DINZ Board. Please take time to think of those who could be suitable candidates, as a diversity of skills and competition for these positions ensures a healthy Association.

I would like to thank all Branches and their members for their support in this very difficult year. With membership at 2850, our budget is on track for a surplus.

The Executive Committee is continuing to address producer issues and improve representation and feedback.

Dry conditions on the East Coast of the South Island earlier this season dramatically reduced options for many farmers. While that drought appears to have broken, the focus has swung to the enormous difficulties now faced in the Lower western North Island. While the differences are extreme, the issues related to feed and farm survival are common.

I have been involved in organising relief before, and if there is a need I am prepared to do it again. There is baleage available and with back loads and assistance from Tranz Rail it can be done. 🇩🇪

Errol Croad
Chairman, NZDFA Executive Committee

Wairarapa Velvet Antler Competition 2004 Velvet Antler Results Branch Challenges

Adult Head	Weight	FINAL SCORE	2 yo Head	Weight	FINAL SCORE 2 yo	TOTAL Score Branch Challenge
Southland	9.51	21.13	6	4.62	16.44	37.56
Otago	8.58	24.01	5	4.21	20.80	44.81
SCNODFA	8.50	22.10	7	4.31	34.43	56.52
Manawatu	7.30	40.05	3	3.40	32.63	72.68
Marlborough	7.24	40.65	4	3.90	33.38	74.03
Fiordland	5.80	63.33	1	2.95	38.88	102.20

Branch Challenge 2 yo Heads only

Head	Weight	Average Beam	Quality points	FINAL SCORE
Southland	4.62	18.50	16.25	16.44
Otago	4.21	17.00	13.75	20.80
SCNODFA	3.40	17.50	20.75	32.63
Marlborough	3.90	16.75	23.38	33.38
Manawatu	4.31	18.00	30.13	34.43
Fiordland	2.95	16.25	20.50	38.88

National 2 yo Red Deer Velvet heads

Head	Weight	Average Beam	Total Quality	FINAL SCORE
Peter Swann	4.62	18.50	16.25	29.89
Eddie Brock	4.65	17.75	16.50	31.83
Jim Scorgie	4.21	17.00	13.75	34.25
MW & CM Stewart	5.01	18.75	29.00	41.13
Black Forest	4.54	18.00	27.63	43.65
Donald Whyte	4.31	18.00	30.13	47.88
Bruce Symonds	3.02	16.50	18.50	49.14
Chris Petersen	2.95	16.25	20.50	52.33
Cloudy Bay	6.36	18.50	49.13	53.75

National 2 yo Wapiti

Head	Weight	Average Beam	Quality Points	FINAL SCORE
Donald Whyte	4.38	18.25	12.63	19.90
Donald Whyte	4.61	18.50	22.00	24.68
Dave Lawrence	5.50	18.00	37.88	39.13

Branch Chair profile: Neil Cameron – Wairarapa

The Wairarapa Branch of the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association is one of the smallest in the country, in both membership and geographic spread.

However, Branch Chairman Neil Cameron says that among the members there is a solid core of very enthusiastic and able people. One of the highlights for the Branch in recent years has been the national 2-year-old velvet competition (2004 results on page 12), which is growing in popularity each year and requiring a lot of work by Branch members.

“We are very happy with the way this competition has developed over the past three years, and with the strong support it is receiving from around the country,” he says. Most of the entries this year were from stud breeders, many from the South Island, although there were also some from Manawatu and Hawke’s Bay.

Some very impressive velvet was entered, Neil says. “It gives a good indication that the New Zealand velvet industry is going in the right direction. Progress over the last 15 years has been quite phenomenal.” A new and very successful feature this year was the 2-year-old hard antler section.

The Wairarapa Branch covers the area from Ekatahuna to Featherston with a very variable climate that affects farm management practices. “Last summer we had a drought, while this year we have tremendous growth. It certainly can make farming a challenge!”

Neil was elected as Branch Chairman in September last year, filling the shoes of Andrew Mitchell who had run the Branch very capably, with his wife Rachael as secretary. He had been on the committee for about four years, and has been a branch member from “way back”.




Neil Cameron: happy with nationwide support for 2yo velvet competition.

The family farm is at Mauriceville, about 20 km north of Masterton. A highly visible feature (from the air) in the middle of the farm is a lime quarry, which has been operating for about 30 years.

Neil is the fourth generation Cameron to work on the farm, now some 600 hectares, of which about 110 hectares are deer fenced. He graduated from Massey with a Bachelor of Agricultural Science and returned to the farm in 1977 which at that stage was a traditional beef and sheep farm.

In 1984, he started introducing deer, in partnership with his father-in-law, beginning with a small herd of 20 weaner hinds. He now runs about 500 Red deer, breeding and finishing all offspring. He also breeds and finishes from 2700 Coopworth ewes and 110 breeding cows.

As with other Branches, Neil says his members are very concerned about the poor returns they are currently receiving. “A lot of our members are down-sizing and several are talking about exiting the industry – and once they exit, they won’t return,” he says. This trend is reflected in Branch numbers, which have shrunk from 60 to 46 in 3 years. 

Branch Chair profile:

Peter Aitken – South Canterbury/North Otago

Deer farming in the dusty Levels Valley in South Canterbury is long way from the world of a diplomat.

Peter Aitken’s earlier career had been as a public servant with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, but he had reached a time in life when he’d had enough of overseas postings and wanted to move on. Although he had been brought up in the city (Christchurch), both grandparents had been farmers and he had loved to visit them as a child. That interest had never died, so a shift back to South Canterbury and farming was a logical career move.



Now Chairman of the South Canterbury/North Otago Branch of the NZDFA, Peter has few regrets about his career change. It has brought him a lifestyle he enjoys, in a part of the country he loves, and he still manages to use many of the policy skills he developed in MFAT in several important projects to benefit the whole deer industry.

The South Canterbury/North Otago Branch stretches from the Rangitata River down to Palmerston and covers the whole of the McKenzie and Waitaki basins. Branch membership is currently around 300, most in the Timaru to Geraldine area. Members include some big velvet producers.

“Velvet production fits the South Canterbury climate,” Peter says, “with the hot dry weather not suiting breeding so well.”

Successful activities

Peter has been Branch Chairman for two or three years, and served on the committee for two and half years before that.

continued on next page

Peter Aitken continued


The Branch has run some very successful activities over the years, including more than 140 members entering a velvet competition with 16 different classes. However, it is harder to get people along to events these days.

“Deer farming used to be more on the fringe of farming, whereas now it has become very much mainstream,” he says. As people have become more experienced, have had access to better information and have had greater interaction with other deer farmers, he says it has become harder to get members enthused about Branch activities and field days. However, there had been an excellent turnout of around 150 people for a recent combined DINZ/DFA meeting on velvetting procedures. He praised the work done by Tony Pearse who he says has taken a lot of pressure off Branch Chairmen.

One new Branch initiative creating quite a bit of interest is a weaner growth competition, which involves a number of farmers all taking identical-aged weaners of the same breed and weight, assessing them at stages and then analysing the different factors that contributed to their results. At the end of the project, the information will be available to others in the Branch.

Animal health issues

As with other Branches, animal health issues are of concern in the region. Peter says members have been involved for some time in the Johne’s Research Group with the Canterbury, Southland and Otago Branches. They are soon to embark on an epidemiology project with Massey University and overseen by AgResearch. The research will involve 160 farms throughout New Zealand, with 80 of them having been identified as having Johne’s Disease and the other half Johne’s free. The study will look at a whole range of factors, and will in combination indicate the most appropriate ways of controlling or eliminating the disease. Peter has a major role, and is happy to be helping with a project which might help resolve a major problem for deer farmers.

Peter farms about 105 hectares in the Levels Valley, a very drought-prone part of the country. The farm is largely a finishing unit, carrying 500 weaners which he buys in late winter and sells about 12 months later at the peak of the chilled season. He also has a small breeding herd of some 70 hinds, mostly Wapiti/Red cross. 

An open letter to the New Zealand deer industry

“The New Zealand deer industry is worth fighting for”

This statement reflects the determination and industry concerns of the signatories to this letter. We invite all Deer Industry participants to work together at this critical time. There is no time left for past criticisms, finger pointing or industry knockers.

Competition in selected areas of marketing venison should be put aside in the overall interests of the industry.

Venison

Venison is the driver of the industry. Over-supply, and a schedule that is dropping weekly mirrors the difficulties experienced by exporters in the marketplace.

The current situation will not improve unless processors and exporters unite to clear export stocks and work together to get a stable market and acceptable returns for the producer.

Producers should understand that an increase in deer to be slaughtered (both stags and hinds) plus severe drought conditions in the South Island only accentuates the problem.

Action:

- Complete and full transparency relating to export returns and marketing outlook between exporters and producers
- Greater co-operation between producers, exporters, importers and distributors
- Voluntary restraints on volumes offered in any one market
- Stable prices and guaranteed supply to preferred distributors
- Identifying and being loyal to selected game distributors
- New market and product development to be supported by all sectors of the deer industry
- Producers must be prepared to supply to meet export

demand and not hold stags for grass markets or possible schedule increases. The future stability of the industry depends on guaranteed supply.

Velvet

The strength of the NZ\$ and an oversupply of velvet has resulted in velvet values being below industry expectations this season.

Action:

- Reduction in velvet production in New Zealand
- Heavier culling of velvet stags
- Review of possible velvet quota system
- Development of markets for sliced velvet and further processing.
- Identify new marketing opportunities.

DINZ

DINZ’s role is a changing one and must remain flexible to meet all industry requirements.

Action:

- Continuing strong leadership and direction
- Clear and prompt communication to the industry on all deer-related issues.
- Transparency on all industry matters
- Continue to drive market research and product development.

Conclusion

The time for division and procrastination has gone. Action is required by all the industry, led by a willingness to get the job done and work together to return the industry to profitability for all sectors.

Signed:

Malcolm Gourlie, Warrick Kent, John Spiers, David Ward, Colin Young, Hawke’s Bay



A champion for the industry

The deer industry was stunned earlier this year by the untimely death of Sir Peter Elworthy. Deer farming pioneer, founding president of the NZDFA, successful farmer and businessman, farming leader during the tumultuous 1980s, friend and mentor to so many – Peter Elworthy was proof that passion and vision do not diminish with age.

Readers of *Market Report* will have read Clive Jermy's tribute to Peter Elworthy on behalf of Deer Industry New Zealand. We now bring four further perspectives on Peter's contribution – from John Paterson, convener of the NZDFA Environment Awards; from Errol Croad, Chairman of the NZDFA Executive Committee; from Peter Aitken on behalf of the SN/NO branch of NZDFA; and from long-time friend and fellow deer farmer, Mark Acland.

But this would not be complete without first reflecting on the achievements that have characterised his long and distinguished career:

Peter represents the third generation of a Canterbury farming family whose roots run deep. At the age of 24 he took over Craigmore, part of the original block settled by his grandfather in 1863.

Educated at Christs College and Lincoln, he was awarded a Nuffield Scholarship to Britain in 1970. Shortly afterwards he became involved in the Canterbury branch of Federated Farmers and his life-long work in farming politics began.

It was also in the 1970s that he saw what many did not – the potential of farmed deer to complement sheep and cattle. He was founding President of the NZDFA and held the office from 1975-81.

Today Craigmore runs 1000 Red and 100 Wapiti/Elk hinds and 400 stags – Peter had been planning to further build deer numbers.

In 1984 he took centre stage as President of Federated Farmers. His term from 1984-87 coincided with one of the



Speaking at a recent deer industry conference – Peter Elworthy attended every conference since the inaugural gathering in 1975.

most turbulent times for farming in recent decades. Showing both steely resolve and deep compassion for the plight of farmers, Peter worked tirelessly on their behalf. In 1988 he became chairman of the NZ Rural Trust, formed to help farmers through the stress of the economic reforms.

But there was much more to come. He was founding chairman of the Ravensdown Fertiliser Co-operative, a director of the Reserve Bank (1985-99) and chairman of the Queen Elizabeth II National Trust (1987-93). More recently he became chairman of the Sustainability Council, a group formed to lobby for an extension of the GE moratorium.

Peter was director of many companies and had numerous business interests. Among these have been Wild Peter Products – a company set up to help control possums by putting a value on their products – and an organic chicken producer. He was also an enthusiastic supporter of a peony growing business started by Fiona in the 1980s.

His list of awards and distinctions reflects the success, intensity and diversity of his interests:

- 1970 Nuffield Scholarship to Britain
- 1978 McMeekan Animal Production Memorial Award
- 1987 Bledisloe Award Lincoln University
- 1988 Knight Bachelor in the Queens Birthday Honours
- 1990 New Zealand Commemoration Medal
- 2001 Distinguished Fellow of the Institute of Directors
- 2002 – Honorary Doctorate (*Honoris Causa*) Lincoln University

An extract from an editorial in the *New Zealand Herald* shortly after Peter's passing sums up the man and his legacy:

"His sudden death ... deprives the country of a man who had boundless interest in its welfare and much more to give. But his contribution should never be understated. He was calm, clear-headed and gently resolute. When due regard is given to those who led the late 20th Century liberalisation of the New Zealand economy, Peter Elworthy deserves to be remembered with the best."

To Fiona, their children Charles, Forbes, Josephine and Eve, and their extended family, *Deer Industry News* extends the deer industry's deepest sympathy and respect. 🇳🇿



Peter Elworthy addressing the thousands of farmers who descended on Wellington in 1986 to protest against the impact of Labour's economic reforms on the farming industry.

Sir Peter Elworthy and the Triple Bottom Line

by John Paterson, Convenor Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

As Convenor of the Landcare Manual Project and Environment Awards I had the pleasure and honour of working with Sir Peter.

Four years ago the Rotorua branch advocated that the industry should proactively address environmental issues in deer farming. This led to the creation of the Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual project. One of its objectives was to popularise sustainable farming practices. It was decided that



Tricia and Wayne Aspin, Peter and Fiona Elworthy at the field day held on the Aspins' award-winning property.

an annual environmental award programme, where the country's most environmentally friendly deer farmers could become role models, would be an ideal catalyst.

This strategy needed a premier benefactor. From the very outset the Elworthys provided the premier prize and Sir Peter was a key supporter of the strategy.

Just a few months ago Peter and Fiona traveled up to the winning farm and presented the premier prize at a well-attended and convivial field day. It was a warm and sunny day, and those who attended will remember the magnificent farm walk, informal discussions and friendly banter that revolved around Peter in the shade and shelter of the high quality conservation plantings on the Aspin property.

Sir Peter has set a giant example of true 'Triple Bottom Line' performance. He has been involved in all three aspects of the deer industry's economic, community/social/political and environmental developments over three decades.

I believe he would have been proud to be remembered as an advocate of Triple Bottom Line successes, both with his own huge portfolios of contributions and the balanced and respected environmental consciousness that has been achieved by the deer industry as a whole with his help.

Rest in Peace, Sir Peter – a job well done.

NZDFA Tribute to Sir Peter Elworthy

by Errol Croad, Chairman, NZDFA Executive Committee

The New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association and Sir Peter Elworthy will be forever linked.

The NZDFA shares its deepest respect and sense of loss with the many other groups, projects and individuals for whom Sir Peter has been a visionary, a champion, a leader, senior statesman, adviser and friend.

Last year's 28th Annual Deer Industry conference in Timaru was opened by Sir Peter. With typical skill and imagination he set the theme of "Vision and Values" in this stronghold of deer farming excellence and source of some of the world's most wonderful individual deer.

Peter's pride in the industry and its people was no better expressed than here in his home territory amongst the people and places he so valued.

Since retiring as the founding NZDFA President, he wore the affectionate mantle of "Founding Father", and each year for the past 23 years delivered the traditional response to the President's annual report.

Most of all he conveyed his admiration and affection for all deer farmers. This last conference was the first under the new structure, where the NZDFA's role had taken a further step in maturity.



Opening the 28th NZDFA AGM at Timaru in 2003.

This was the result of a process independently guided by Sir Peter and is now working successfully for the future.

The Annual Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards have been strongly supported by Sir Peter and Fiona Lady Elworthy. Peter also spoke eloquently in his role in the Sustainability Council, crystallising new challenges and the constantly evolving environment we all work in.

Finally a gathering at "Craigmore" hosted farmers and friends as part of the 2003 conference. Highlights included Peter's rich history of farming from the first intensive irrigated farming success at Papamoa to developments at Craigmore, and outings in his beloved aircraft.

Successive NZDFA councils have enjoyed the balance of hard work and commitment, and Peter's ability to take stock of friendships and relaxation.

"Cardinal Hough" remains as an awe-inspiring heritage to successive new councillors especially when presided over by Peter himself.

Each of us holds personal memories of this remarkable man and is fortunate to have walked part of our journey with him as colleagues, friends and admirers.

The NZDFA extends its deepest sympathy to Fiona and family.

Peter Elworthy: A Personal Tribute

by Mark Acland

I have been asked to write about Peter personally rather than his public life.

The sudden death of Peter was a huge shock for us all. For those of us who had been with him, at Tim and Prue Wallis' son Jonathon's wedding to Annabel Hutchinson the night he died, it was hard to believe that this fit healthy active man so much enjoying himself, was no more.

I have known Peter since I was a small schoolboy (along with Tim Wallis) at boarding school and he was a prefect. I was taken under his wing, on instruction from his mother maybe, and I can say he showed in those days the same leadership skills, fairness and concern for others that he later exhibited in his public life.

As a young man he had a slightly flamboyant, daredevil style of living, riding horses at hunts, show jumping events and winning steeplechases. Driving fast cars and learning to fly aeroplanes was all part of the action whilst at Lincoln College and later farming in partnership with his brother Jonathan at Craigmore. This trait continued through his life with the love of enjoying a thrill or two, including flying his Tiger Moth and whenever the occasion permitted, aerobatics in which he was still current.

As the numbers of deer were diminishing in the wild the need to be able to farm them became apparent. Peter became instrumental in getting the deer industry on a business footing in the political arena. Somehow, with his busy life, he had missed out on operational helicopter time with Tim Wallis in those early days of shooting, and then the live capture of deer; this was something he was keen to put right.



Mark Acland, Toby Wallis, Graham Carr and Peter Elworthy on the 1997 Martins Bay expedition.

For a number of years a group of us have teamed up at Martins Bay, Fiordland, to hunt deer, fish and dive for crayfish. With Toby Wallis flying and after several attempts, Peter shot his first "operational" deer in 1997. Peter had achieved many great things in his life but with his Tiger Moth flying jacket on, possum fur hat and trusty farm sheath knife on his belt, that deer went down as an ambition fulfilled.

The few days spent at Martins Bay on these occasions were very special for us all. Challenges during the day, great chat time in the evenings. Peter so interesting but also a listener interested in others' views, especially the young whom he loved to draw out. Good debates and great laughs

– there was plenty of that there too.

Recently Peter had begun to take life more easily, even though during his incredibly busy schedule he had had a remarkably balanced lifestyle, putting family and friends first, always willing to help someone in need.

It was typical Peter that on that last night at the wedding, he and Fiona had thoroughly enjoyed themselves but before leaving with friends to go back to their motel, they helped Tim Wallis into his car.

To Fiona who always supported Peter so well, who accompanied him to all of our deer conferences and many other deer farming activities, and to Peter's family, we share your sadness at losing such a wonderful man.

From South Canterbury-North Otago Branch

by Peter Aitken, Branch Chairman

Sir Peter's passing will be a huge loss to the South Canterbury-North Otago Branch. From the inception of the Branch he was a strong supporter of all Branch events and took an active and prominent role in our functions. This presence was of huge benefit and advantage to the Branch. Sir Peter's pioneering role in developing a structure for the deer industry, knowledge of deer farming techniques and his leadership in many aspects of farming provided a fount of knowledge and source of inspiration for deer farmers.

In particular his foresight in transferring high country animals to intensive farming on borderdykes at Papamoa opened many new possibilities with deer. His willingness to share this knowledge and to use his background to assist the Branch in dealing with critical deer farming issues provided solutions to many practical and management concerns for farmers. This gave the Branch a great deal of strength in

helping to advance the value of deer farming, in building a strong membership base and consolidating deer farming in the South Canterbury-North Otago area. Sir Peter was particularly obliging in making his own resources available for Branch activities. He willingly offered his home property of Craigmore and the services of his staff to support field days and other functions.

He had an ability to communicate with, and relate to, all Branch members and was always available when advice was sought. This was backed up by his readiness to provide his intellectual input into Branch projects. This was a key part in initiating the Deer Master Project and Deer Expo held in Timaru.

It is now difficult to imagine how the qualities he generated, which have proved so valuable as a driving force for the Branch, can ever be replaced.

After the flood

As Deer Industry News went to press, details of the impact of February's appalling floods in the lower western North Island on deer farmers were still sketchy. But for some smaller operators already driven to the edge by the continuing low schedule, the flood damage could be the last straw.

While deer did not suffer as badly as the dairy herds in the low-lying areas of Rangitikei and Manawatu, many will need help to contain and graze animals while damage is repaired.

There was a swift response from deer farmers to Levin farmer Euan Creighton's call for help, with his 300 velvet stags now being safely relocated to Hawke's Bay. According to independent deer agent Noel Cudby, the herd had to be swum half a kilometre to dry ground. He says that while the stags are now safe, Creighton has lost more than half a million dollars worth of squash and onions.

When *Deer Industry News* spoke to Cudby, he was busy trying to rally help for another client at Mangamahu, inland from Wanganui. With most of his boundaries gone, he was desperately trying to recapture his 200-300 deer, many of which had disappeared into adjoining forest.

NZDFA Executive Committee Chairman Errol Croad, who suffered some slips and bowled-over fencing on his own property, says the good season had meant there should be surplus feed around to help with displaced stock. Nonetheless, one deer farmer had lost 240 bales of baleage down the Manawatu River.

He says deer that have been 'liberated' through flattened boundary fences may not wander too far, and tend to stick close by their feed source.

Feilding-based Wrightson deer agent Colin Waller says hill country deer farms in his area have lost boundary fencing in places and there will be problems with mixed mobs, but by and large it has been 'surface' damage. But he notes that because so many tracks have been destroyed, it's too early for many farmers to have fully assessed the damage.

Manawatu Branch Chairman Mike Holdaway, who farms at Apiti east of Hunterville, says it has been difficult to get a clear picture from around the region, but by late last month his assessment of the impact on deer farmers was "patchy". He says that while many suffered slips and lost fencing he knows of no stock losses.

The few that had escaped had been recaptured.

Mike says the main problem for people rebuilding ruined fences has been getting access to gear and people with the right skills. He'd managed to get some help from friends outside the area, but was still facing a 2-week delay.

Noel Cudby says the damage to tracks and roads is also causing headaches for the trophy industry. With animals due to be moved onto safari trophy parks now, time is running out before the rut.

He says that for many smaller farmers, the flood damage will be the final push to force their exit from the industry. He has a number of clients now looking to book hinds for slaughter. Given current conditions, they may face a wait. 🟢

Photo courtesy of Countrywide Newspapers

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The AR1 Advantage is the advantage offered by combining the proven high performance Wrightson Seeds cultivars Quartet tetraploid perennial ryegrass, and Aries HD perennial ryegrass, with the novel endophyte AR1. In addition to the individual product benefits offered by both Quartet and Aries HD, you will also experience the benefits of AR1 endophyte which include:

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[#]Reference: Proceedings of the New Zealand Grassland Association 65: 83-90

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BR1/WSL233DIN



Wrightson Seeds

Sire sale report

It will come as no surprise that this season's round of sales reflected the current commercial conditions. Averages were generally back on last year, more animals were passed in, and the heady top prices seen in the previous two years were nowhere to be seen.

But it wasn't all bad news. The buyers were still there, even if a little more restrained. The presence of Deer Improvement in the market was a welcome boost at some sales (they paid the season's top price of \$39,000 for a Black Forest 2yo Eastern European sire cutting 4.75kg velvet). Many animals were sold by private negotiation after the auctioneer's hammer had fallen on the last lot for the day.

This year *Deer Industry News* invited all known studs and significant breeders to submit a sale report. Our thanks to those who responded. (A number of our letters/emails 'bounced'. If you didn't receive a sale report form either by fax, post or email, please contact DIN with your up-to-date contact details so we can ensure you don't miss out next time.) The following is a summary of the reports we received by press time:

Cloudy Bay Deer Stud: Insignis Park, 8 January 2004

Stags sold: 30 of 31 on offer sold. 1 passed @ \$12,000

Top price: \$10,000

Average: \$3,500

Comment: Pleased with sale in a difficult year. Met market so stags are out working where they belong. A good year for buyers as reflected by clearance rates.

Deer Genetics NZ: Kaharoa, 7 January 2004

Stags sold: 15 of 16 on offer sold

Top price: \$23,000

Average: \$6,300

Result compared with last year: Inaugural sale

Comment: Sale well attended. Total clearance. Adonis semen sold particularly well – \$1,500 per straw.

Gloriavale Deer Farm: Insignis Park, 21 January 2004

Stags sold: 23 of 28 on offer sold.

Top price: \$10,000

Average: \$2,000

Result compared with last year: First sale auction ever

Comment: It was probably the worst year possible to enter the stag selling arena with venison and velvet markets well down, along with ours being the last sale of the season – most buyers had already bought. During the sale, a lot of buyers sat on their hands, but immediately after the sale we had a rush of people wanting to buy, thus selling more animals after the sale than during. A big thank you to those who supported our sale, and we hope to see you again next year.

Ingor Deer Farm: Invercargill, 6 January 2004

Stags sold: 18 of 29 on offer sold

Top price: \$8,500

Average: \$2,640

Result compared with last year: Ave price approximately 40% less

Comment: All sires were sold. Went throughout the South Island. A total clearance has now been achieved. All yearling hinds were sold at auction. Ranging from \$725 - \$800. There was also a total clearance of the 36 2yo velvet stags.

Lochinvar Wapiti Farm: Te Anau, 11 January 2004

Stags sold: 42 of 42 on offer sold

Top price: \$4,800

Average: \$2,260

Result compared with last year: Back \$1,000 per animal

Love Red Deer Ltd: Rotorua – Private Treaty

Stags sold: 6 of 10 on offer sold.

Top price: \$10,000

Average: \$5,700

Result compared with last year: Down on last year, selling 10 with an average of \$9,300

Comment: Although our stag sales are down on last year, our current superior stag "Awesome" has stolen the limelight from our other sires. At 4 years old, his hard antler head has scored 520 SCI. He has excellent temperament and breeding, and as expected, all interest has been for his progeny. We are now selling semen for \$1,500 per straw (with conditions) and are expecting strong demand.

Maranoa Deer: Takapau, 18 December 2003

Stags sold: 39 of 40 3yo breeding stags on offer sold.

77 of 77 1yo velvet stags on offer sold.

Top price: \$8,900 3yo; \$650 1yo

Average: \$3,495 3yo; 549 1yo

Result compared with last year: Up on Dec 2003: ave. 3yo \$2,700 & 1yo \$480

Comment: 32 registered buyers – up on last year.

Sale exceeded expectations which was a surprise to myself and our agents, National Livestock. We have concentrated our breeding towards venison production sires by incorporating early growth rate figures in the catalogue Stags sold from the Waikato to Southland with most of the 1yo stags going south. The full impact of the current industry situation will be more evident in the 2004 season.

Mayfield Elk: Winton, 11 January 2004

Stags sold: 20 of 34 on offer sold

Top price: \$15,000

Average: \$5,400

Result compared with last year: 30% back on last season. Pleased with the Trophy Bulls. Low velvet and venison cheques to spend on Terminal Sire Bulls.

Comment: All of the Trophy Bulls went out of Southland, some to Otago, Canterbury and the North Island – the same as the last season. The Terminal Sire Bulls stayed mainly in Southland, one to Alexandra. Still not convinced that auction is the way to move your animals, at the price that you know that they are worth. There have been more private sales since my auction at 40% more than they were passed in at! Will do something different next season. Any ideas, give me a call.

Netherdale Red Deer: Balfour, 6 January

Elite stags: 19 of 31 on offer sold; average \$5,800, top \$13,200.

Commercial stags: 8 on offer; all sold, average \$2,500.

Hinds: 48 of 60 on offer sold; average \$890, top \$2,700.

2yo velveters: Total clearance of 60 on offer; top 2 pens \$800; average \$620.

Comment: A good gallery of buyers despite the market conditions. The main disappointment was the numbers sold. By contrast, only 3 were passed in last year; however several stags sold privately since.

Pampas Heights Deer: Hamurana, Rotorua, 7 January 2004

Stags sold: 20 of 29 on offer sold

Top price: \$14,500

Average: \$3,750

Result compared with last year: Up \$750/stag on last year

Comment: Also sold 10/10 R1 year hinds at average \$800 (top \$3,050), and 11 velvet stags at \$400 average. Over 100 people attended the sale and a top 3yo English stag was balloted and won by Colin Dayne of Wairoa. (Cutting 7.78kg of SA OG next day). A positive day and positive crowd, swimming confidently against short term market signals.

Peel Forest Estate: Geraldine, 11 January 2004

Stags sold: 30 of 32 on offer sold

Top price: \$13,500

Average: \$4,000

Result compared with last year: Good sale. 1st public auction after private sales for last 3 years.

Pelorus Stud: Ashburton, 9 January

Stags sold: 16 of 20 on offer sold

Top price: \$16,000

Average: Hinds \$4,200; Stags \$5,740

Result compared with last year: Back a little

Comment: Animals were in very good condition; heaviest 226 kg. Stags sold to buyers throughout NZ. Sale quite good; highlight of the year was antlers cut from our main sire Clive, weighing 19.4 kg stripped.

Remarkables Park Stud: Queenstown, 16 January 2004

Stags sold: 42 of 44 on offer sold. 1 passed @ \$12,000

Top price: \$12,500

Average: Approximately \$4,000

Result compared with last year: Top price was higher than last year and more deer were sold.

Comment: 25 2yo stags weighing over 200kg despite drought conditions; heaviest was 240kg (\$9000, sired by Janos). Weights believed to be heaviest of any sales this year, the 3rd year in a row that this was achieved.

All in all, a very successful sale which attracted more buyers, a bigger crowd and a top price which was higher than last year.

Stanfield Bushey Park: Palmerston, 13 January 2004

Stags sold: 53 of 63 on offer sold

Top price: \$37,000

Average: \$9,800

Result compared with last year: Down from \$17,800 last year

Comment: 4 stags sold at \$30 – 37,000 was pleasing as was numbers sold – 6 sold since sale.

Industry conditions difficult for sales so no complaints.

Interest in Eastern deer quite strong for body size with top weight of 241kg. Hotspur sons best of the English stags sold from Whangarei to Southland. Deer Improvement purchased top weight Eastern.

Top price Eastern to Graham Carr (Peel Forest)

Top price English to Foveran Stud.

Tikana: Winton, 10 January 2004

Stags sold: 10 of 18 on offer sold.

Top price: \$12,000

Average: \$4,700

Result compared with last year: Back slightly (2002 ave \$5,700)

Comment: Tikana made a successful move to its first on-farm auction. This year's offering presented yet another step up in quality. Ave 3yo sale day weight 310kg compared to 295kg last year and ave 3yo velvet weight of 5.1kg compared with 4.9kg last year.

On the day an absence of Nth Island buyers evident for the first time in a decade, with most bulls selling to Southland farmers. The 2yo son of Silverado was bought by W.W.Day for the top Wapiti bull sale price this year (\$12,000). A selection of yearling Wapiti cows sold for \$1000. Subsequent private sales have lifted the Tikana stud average for the year to over \$5000.

Tower Farms: Cambridge, 6 January 2004

Stags sold: 27 of 35 on offer sold.

Top price: \$16,000

Average: \$4,737

Result compared with last year: Slightly better average than 2002

Comment: Best attendance yet of happy people with a dismal industry outlook. Buyers were very selective for three main preferences safari, velvet and venison individually, with little interest in the 2 yr year stags cut at correct velvet stage. Offspring from "Mrs Antlers" son "Pacquin" attracted top prices for the second year in a row in safari and velvet.

Best uncut 2 yr safari stag \$16,000 Bob Atkinson; best cut 2 yr head 4.46kgs SA velvet \$8,200 Bob Atkinson; best 2 yr OG velvet head 9.12 kgs \$12,000 Roberts-Pearce Partnership; best cut 3 yr head 5.37 kgs SA velvet \$15,000 Brian Wellington.

Little demand for hinds. Top \$1,500; low \$300. Some of these were lighter hinds sold below cost in recognition of the support from our customers on a flat market. Most sales were to the North Island, with others spread from Wellsford, Blenheim, Timaru and Gore.

Windermere Red Deer Stud: Cambridge, 6 January 2004

Stags sold: 17 of 27 on offer sold

Top price: \$30,000

Average: \$11,200

Result compared with last year: A stronger sale than last year

Comment: This sale attracted one of our largest attendances for many years with 55 registered buyers. Several people commented on the very high quality of stags on offer. Despite the present industry problems, the general mood at the sale was very positive. Farmers generally still seem to carry a confidence that in time we will have our present problems behind us. 🍀

WRIGHTSON LIVESTOCK MARKET REPORT

February 2004

		North Island (\$/kg)	South Island (\$/kg)
Yearling Hybrid Stags	Top	1.80	1.80
	Medium	1.40	1.50
	Small Med	–	–
Yearling Red Stags	Top	1.80	1.75
	Medium	1.40	1.50
	Small Med	–	–
Yearling Hybrid Hinds	Top	1.40	1.80
	Medium	1.20	1.50
	Small Med	1.00	1.20
Yearling Red Hinds	Top	1.40	1.70
	Medium	1.20	1.40
	Small Med	1.00	1.00
		North Island (\$/hd)	South Island (\$/hd)
2yr Stags Velvet potential	Top	375	400
	Medium	280	250
2yr Hinds Hybrid	Top	250	230
	Medium	200	200
2yr Hinds Red	Top	220	200
	Medium	180	170
	Smaller	–	–
Mixed Age Stags Velveters	Top	450	500
	Medium	400	400
Mixed Age Hinds Hybrid	Top	260	230
	Medium	200	200
Mixed Age Hinds Red	Top	250	220
	Medium	200	200
	Smaller	150	150

Seasonal Comments:

Continued reducing venison schedules are impacting heavily on live sales enquiry.

In most cases very strong sire stag sales averages. Where quality was presented, very keen bidding resulted. Lack of depth in buying power saw higher passings than previous years. The current high dollar is also having an effect.

Velvet

Reports indicate a sluggish velvet export market with soft prices. A post-SARS stock overhang is impacting directly on prices.

Velvet Exports

- Export volume for the 12 months ending December 2003 is, provisionally, 180 tonnes dried equivalent - a decrease of 7% over the year ending December 2002 (194 tonnes dried equivalent).
- Export value for the year ending December 2003 is \$30 million, 12% lower than the year ending December 2002 (\$34 million).
- The velvet export market is reported to still be sluggish with soft prices. Exporters report that CIF export price is US\$185 for whole dry piece, compared to a reported price of US\$190, a year ago.
- The New Zealand dollar has appreciated by 27% against the Korean Won in the past year, accounting for much of the weakness of velvet prices to both exporters and producers.
- Coupled with this, there has been no shortage of velvet in Korea or in New Zealand, which has an impact directly on price. Market comment suggests that part of this stock overhang is due to the period of 'down time' when SARS was considered a significant health issue and economic activity slowed to a crawl.
- Reports of ever increasing quantities of frozen velvet being exported from New Zealand continue. (See Figure 1.)
- Larger volumes of velvet continue to be exported directly to China at the expense of Hong Kong. The two graphs (Figures 2 & 3) below indicate how New Zealand exports by destination have varied in the past five years.

Market Comment

- Traders suggest there is little chance of higher import prices this coming season.
- The general expectation is that the Korean economy will improve next year and that this will see a slow recovery of the Oriental Medicine business and, therefore, improved consumption of deer velvet.
- Aside from macro-economic influences, lack of transparency in the trade remains the key factor limiting the development of the market. The availability of cheap illegal product in the market is another factor influencing current pricing.

Korean Special Excise Tax

- Deer Industry New Zealand continues its efforts to have the Special Excise Tax (SET) on velvet removed. Currently, taxes and duties on velvet add 43% to the cost of velvet once it passes over the Korea border, which encourages unofficial trade. Removal of the SET will bring this figure down to 32% and make unofficial trade less competitive.

- Deer Industry New Zealand has retained the services of a top Korean law firm to lobby Government officials and implement strategies to have the tax removed. The firm has a top network of contacts and is putting in significant resource to have the tax removed.

Sliced Velvet Access to Korea

- New Zealand continues to make progress on the issue of gaining access to the Korean market for sliced velvet. The Korean Food and Drug Administration (KFDA) has advised that domestic standards for velvet slicing will come into effect on 1 April 2004. They have further agreed that New Zealand can have access to the Korean market from this date, if the KFDA is satisfied that New Zealand can meet KFDA's access requirements.
- Twelve New Zealand velvet exporters have applied to have their plants approved to export sliced velvet.
- KFDA officials were arranged to inspect velvet plants in February, but this was postponed. New Zealand Government officials and Deer Industry New Zealand are negotiating for a March visit.

Figure 1: FROZEN EXPORTS AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL EXPORTS

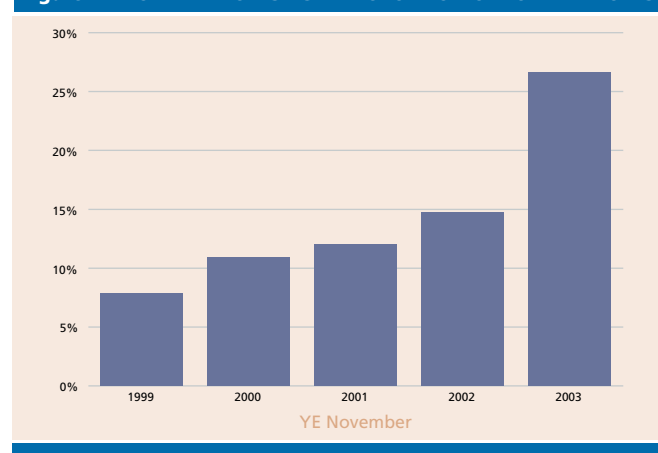


Figure 2: EXPORTS BY DESTINATION (tonnes dried equivalent - year-end November 1999)

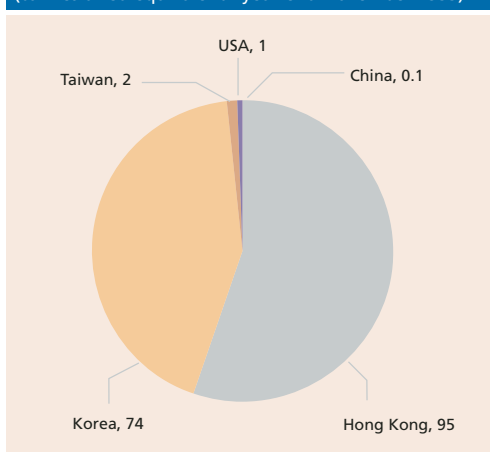
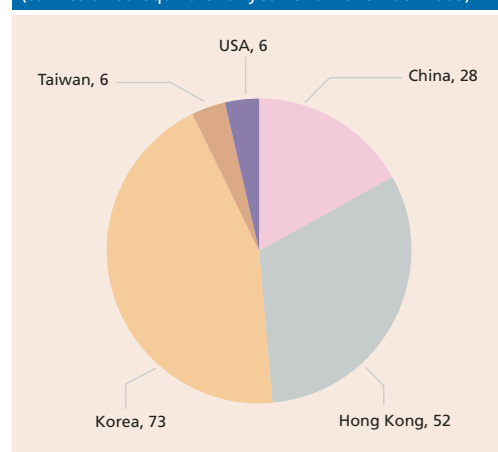
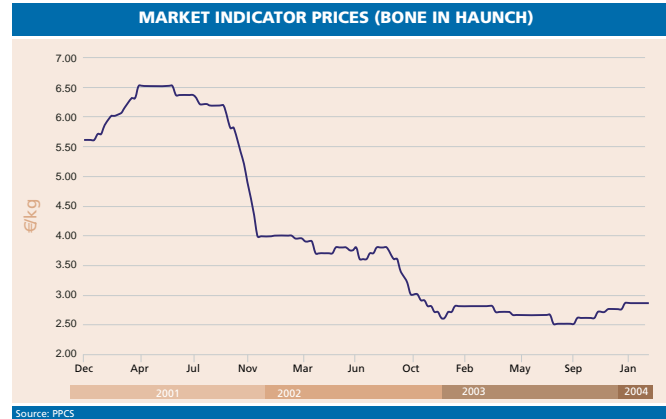
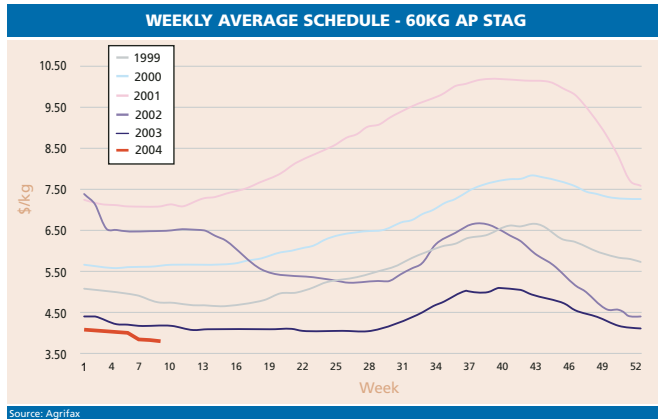


Figure 3: EXPORTS BY DESTINATION (tonnes dried equivalent - year-end November 2003)



Venison

Low market prices and the depreciation of the US\$ and the Euro over the past year have impacted on export returns, which at the end of December were 8.5% down on the previous year despite increased volumes. Production is up, with the South Island drought earlier in the year placing additional pressure on producers, however this has eased with recent rainfall.



Schedule

- The average schedule level for week 9 was \$3.79/kg, 9.8% below the average schedule for the same week in 2003 (\$4.20/kg).
- Currency fluctuations over the past year continued to have a considerable impact on market returns, with the US dollar depreciating by 27% and the Euro depreciating by 6.4%, against the New Zealand dollar.
- The current average schedule, adjusted for currency on a trade-weighted basis, is slightly higher than that for the same week in 2003.

Production

- Venison production in 2003 has been above that of previous years, with South Island drought conditions earlier in the year placing additional pressure on producers. Some of the drought affected areas have received some rainfall, easing pressure on those producers.
- Average carcass weights are tracking below that of the previous year, with the average weight for the year ended December 2003 being 53.7 kg, 1% below that for the same period in 2002 (54.2 kg).

Exports

- Venison export earnings for the year ended December 2003 were \$166 million - 8.5% down on the year ended December 2002, despite higher volumes.
- Chilled venison exports for the period August to December 2003 were 1,871 tonnes, a 7.9% increase on the previous year.

The Markets

- In Europe, market prices continue at low levels, with reports of increased production placing pressure on markets.
- Reports also indicate an easing of the market for middle cuts. This is because of the price relativity between legs and middle cuts, with low leg prices making them a more attractive option.
- Market conditions remain difficult and sensitive. Less than favourable exchange rates, especially in the US, are compounding what remains a difficult marketing environment.

- Market development initiatives continue, with a number of significant projects planned for the next quarter. Ongoing market development work plays an important role in introducing New Zealand venison to new markets and helping to maximise opportunities in existing markets.

Market Development: China

- Deer Industry New Zealand, in cooperation with an exporter and its market partner, recognises the long-term opportunities held by China.
- New Zealand venison will be represented at SIAL China, China's largest food trade fair on 30 March. Visitors to SIAL China will include retailers and those in the hotel, restaurant and commercial catering sectors. New Chinese language materials will be developed for the fair, and visitors will be encouraged to sample venison.

Chef Promotion

Throughout 2004, a series of chef promotional events in Europe are planned in co-operation with market partners.

- Hamish Brown spent two weeks at the end of February and early March demonstrating New Zealand Venison at a series of in-house trade fairs in Germany.
- Work with Graham Brown continues, with in-market promotions planned in April to coincide with the European spring and the SIAL food fair in Paris, in October 2004.
- Besides Graham and Hamish Brown, Geof Christie, a meat specialist and long time educator, will also be involved in promotional work.

Retail Meat Industry Conference: March 2004

New Zealand retail butchers and supermarket buyers will be offered venison at their industry conference in March. Seen as a good opportunity to raise the profile of venison among the domestic retail sector, Deer Industry New Zealand, in partnership with a processor and distributor, will offer attendees the opportunity to taste product.

Challenging times ahead in the US



Wealthy American consumers line up for a taste of Cervena at the famous Aspen Wine and Food Festival.

The value of New Zealand Venison exports to the US in 2003 was 19% lower at the end of December than the year before, even though volume had remained steady at just above 1,000 tonnes. Deer Industry News takes a brief look at what is happening in the complex market.

For Duncan & Company – the largest New Zealand Venison exporter to the US – it is the strength of the New Zealand dollar that has dug into its returns. Managing Director, Andrew Duncan says that US prices have remained reasonably steady, but there has been price pressure in some areas, which has ruled out price rises that might have otherwise absorbed the effects of the NZ\$/US\$ exchange rate that appreciated by 25% over the year.

In addition, new security requirements and checking procedures – both at the New Zealand and US ends – introduced after the 9/11 terrorist incidents and other food-related issues – are making it one of the most difficult and expensive markets for exporters to service.

While market pressures – including a recessionary US economy, BSE and CWD – have taken their toll on meat consumption, there seems to have been little effect on New Zealand Venison. Duncan points out that the recent BSE case in the State of Washington has had minimal impact on

venison consumption, which was recovering gradually after the CWD outbreak in Canada last year.

The free trade agreement recently signed between the US and Australia is unlikely to affect venison exports, as there is minimal Australian venison competing with New Zealand product, he says.

“There are a swag of opportunities for New Zealand Venison in the US,” he says. “The challenge is converting those into superior returns.”

He believes that one of those opportunities is the current American dietary obsession with obesity and low-carbohydrate diets, which has seen the recent introduction of bun-less burgers by several fast-food chains, as an opportunity for the New Zealand venison industry.

“Venison’s healthy profile places it much closer to salmon than many cuts of chicken,” he points out. 📺

Taking venison from farmgate to plate

Targeting European retailers with added value cuts is the aim of South Island co-operative Alliance Group Ltd.

Alliance Venison Marketing Manager, John Rabbitt, explains his company’s marketing strategy is to replicate the “farmgate to plate” model it has used successfully for sheepmeat. “Over many years, we have developed a mature, sophisticated distribution channel into both HRI and retail for sheepmeat. It will require significant investment, but we have seen that model work for lamb and are now using it for venison.”

Alliance has two aims for its venison programme, the first to establish a sound marketing platform through its ‘Gold Class’ product brand and then to extend consumption outside the traditional four-month game period. Rabbitt says the plan looks into the long-term and that venison is a valuable extension to Alliance’s product offerings for cash-and-carry and retail around the world.

Following demand patterns, Europe has been the logical region in which to start work and the company is targeting its key accounts in Germany, Benelux, Switzerland and the UK and may also add the product to its portfolio for French retail buyers, now access issues are sorted out for that

market. Outside Europe, development markets include North America and Asia.

Rabbitt doesn’t believe that venison is retailed to the extent that it can be: “In retail, the cardinal sin is to get retail space and not fill it,” he says. “You need to get all the facets working together – it’s a team thing requiring fine tuning.”

To effectively market venison, he says that Alliance requires consistent quality product throughout the year. “Retailers need to be confident that they will receive quality product, in the correct product form when the market demands it. Anything less is unacceptable.

“Opportunities also exist to provide high quality product able to be further processed in the market for the likes of ready meal manufacturers. The production opportunities are ideally suited to leg and shoulder cuts.”

Alliance Group first began processing venison about four years ago and its venison business has grown significantly since then. It is processed at the standalone venison plant at Makarewa, near Invercargill, and at its multi-species Sockburn plant, near Christchurch.

Gold Class

Venison to benefit from Aussie cash injection

South Island venison processing is likely to benefit from a cash injection from Australian benefactors, announced at the end of January.

Robotic Technologies Ltd – jointly owned by PPCS and Scott Automation – has moved up to a new level with an injection of \$3 million from a four partner arrangement between PPCS, the government's Technology for Business Growth fund, Australian meat company CRF (Colac Otway) - which processes meat for Australian domestic use only - and Meat and Livestock Australia.

Deer Industry News reported on the new robotic boning technology developed in a joint venture between PPCS and Scott Automation that was removing the aitch (pelvis) bone from lamb carcasses at PPCS's Silverstream plant in December 2002. Removing bones using a knife in much the same way as a human, the robotic arm has resulted in a revolution in both the speed and quality of processing, the company says.

It is now operating at commercial speed and in recognition of its potential, Robotic Technologies has been formed by the two companies. Thanks to the new funding, its development team is now working on stage two, which involves dividing the whole carcass into primal cuts.

Robotic Technologies chairman Chris Hopkins says: "The contract involves us providing PPCS Silverstream with a pre-production prototype this season and an upgrade to a production model next season. CRF will also have a production model installed next season."

The development of the project to stage two is significant, says PPCS Chief Operating Officer Keith Cooper: "We redesigned the boning process around the task - rather than just applying a task replacement approach. The result is a significant advantage in how we process stock. It allows us to divert valuable human labour from the injury-intensive



PPCS Silverstream Plant Manager, Michael Smith, showing the new robotic arm technology at work on lamb hindquarters to a group of visitors.

processes in the production chain and use them in other parts of the process.

"It is a significant project and we plan to make the technology available to our wider group, including Richmond, for evaluation and appraisal."

The technology is very new and PPCS is concentrating its efforts on the lamb processing in the first instance, says Keith Cooper. "However, in about three to five years - when we have the most difficult processes automated - we will look to extend the technology's use into other areas as needed. That is likely to include venison at some stage." 🌱

Interact with New Zealand Venison

Importers, distributors and chefs will soon have everything they need to know about New Zealand Venison at the touch of their fingertips with the launch of *Deer Industry New Zealand's* new interactive CD-ROM. This contains background information and step-by-step butchery and cookery Masterclasses from consultant chef Graham Brown. The CD-ROM clearly explains the breakdown of cuts from the carcass and gives tips on venison cookery techniques. Fresh and new recipes - such as "Spiced Moroccan", Bulgogi and Thai and Summer Salads - aim to inspire chefs to use the modern, light recipes in their summer menus.

Currently available in English. Planning is underway for German, French, Dutch and Italian versions. Contact Venison Marketing Manager Mat Moyes at *Deer Industry New Zealand* - mat.moyes@deernz.org - for copies or further information.



Michael Rice: Weighing Anchor

One of the deer industry's senior business minds is weighing anchor after nearly quarter of a century of involvement with venison processing and exporting. Former merchant sailor Michael Rice rose through the ranks to become a leading industry figure, experiencing the extreme lows and highs of the venison trade on the way.

Born and educated in England, Rice joined the Shaw Savill Line of London in 1958 as a deck cadet. After qualifying as master mariner (Foreign Going) in 1966, he served as chief officer on the New Zealand/Japan trade until 1970, when he left the sea to join Wilson Meats of Auckland and was engaged, primarily, in export sales.

In 1973, he joined the export meat division of Mair & Company in Christchurch and in 1983 became General Manager of a division, which had acquired the assets of the feral game company, Consolidated Meat Traders three years earlier. Initially operating as Stag Corporation with interests in plants in Rotorua and Hokitika, all group game and venison assets were brought together in 1987 and Mair Venison Ltd was formed.

Mair was among the first companies to export chilled farmed venison and grew to become the biggest exporter of chilled product from its plants at Rotorua, Hokitika and Kennington. The company always had a strong commitment to added



Weighing anchor from the deer industry after 24 years, Michael Rice, 63 (left), has retired from the board of Deer Industry New Zealand, his directorship of the Cervena Company Ltd and also as Trustee of the New Zealand Game Industry Board Research Trust. He is pictured during his Mair Venison days with colleague, Michael Foate, who is now employed by PPCS.

value processing. Michael Rice says it was this commitment that helped it through the difficult period when Venison New Zealand and Fortex (its two major competitors at the time) were placed in receivership in September 1993 and March 1994, "combined with the willingness and confidence to hold inventory facing a market in disarray following those events".

Today, Rice is still passionate about the deer industry, the product and the people – and is particularly proud of his friends and colleagues at Mair Venison Ltd during the life of the company.

"While the past 20 years have been a roller-coaster ride for farmers, there have also been stimulating and challenging times for processor/exporters and importer clients with the ever-present need for both

exporters and importers to carefully manage inventory and for exporters always striving to do their best for the industry on a sustainable basis."

Rice talks of a keen sense of responsibility towards deer farmers, overseas clients and to staff, and feels this requires a constant balancing act. He regrets that too much industry energy has been put into sourcing deer for slaughter and not enough into meeting the challenges of the market.

"In a perfect world, producers should be able to plan their businesses by factoring in a regular flow of clear market signals. The schedule system may not always be able to provide this."

Seventeen years on the Game Industry Board, including a time as Deputy Chairman, has allowed him to view all aspects of the industry. "Now we have a Board that functions extremely well and sectoral interests are never evident at the Board table," he says.

He salutes the Deer Industry New Zealand executive, ably lead by MJ Loza. "The Board has employed many excellent individuals in the past but the functionality, cohesion and output of today's executive is something very special and a huge asset of the industry."

While the past two years have been very downbeat, he is adamant that the industry must keep positive in the face of an extended vicious downturn.

With too much time spent at sea earlier in his life, retirement at home in Christchurch with his wife Colleen won't see any great oceanic adventures, apart from a quick sail around the harbour. Michael now lists his hobbies as investing, gardening, bridge and golf and hopes that his six children and six grandchildren (with another on the way) will benefit from his business advice. 🍷

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Possibility for lepto vaccine under investigation

A major nationwide regional survey will be carried out this year into the incidence of leptospirosis, part of a wider research project being carried out by Massey University.


Professor Peter Wilson of Massey's Institute of Veterinary Animal and Biomedical Sciences is leading a team who are about half way through the 3-year research programme. DEEResearch is supporting the research, budgeting \$33,000 for the 02/03 financial year, and \$71,000 for 03/04.

The survey will involve testing a sample of herds on farm, rather than through slaughter houses. He believes leptospirosis may be present in herds throughout the country.

The team will also be working with the Medical Officer of Health of a region where there appear to have been human cases of the disease through association with deer herds.

"The project team hopes to do case studies of those occurrences, find out who they are, meet with them, study all the medical evidence, identify which type of leptospirosis it is, and see if they can relate it back to a farm," Peter says.

Despite an unexpected setback last year due to drought, the investigation into how leptospirosis develops in deer herds, and search for a vaccine against the disease, are making good progress. Drought conditions in the lower half of the North Island meant a number of deer farmers had other priorities last year, and so Professor Wilson said his team had some difficulties finding appropriate farms for their research. However, they refocused their efforts and started analysing samples from their serum banks to help get a clearer picture of the disease and its development. Initial results seem to indicate that deer are natural hosts to the bovine *hardjo* strain of the disease, and that it is less likely that the pig *pomona* strain persists in deer.

The team is currently looking for at least three more farms to take part in the research project into a possible vaccine, two where the pig (*pomona*) strain is currently present in the deer herd. A range of tests will be carried out, including checking to see if vaccine could in fact, cause infection in a herd. 

Human cases of leptospirosis on the rise

Leptospirosis is the most common zoonotic disease in people in New Zealand. Symptoms range from mild to severe, and are potentially fatal. The source of infection is animal urine. It gets in through with cuts, abrasions or mucous membranes.

Farm and meat processing workers bear the brunt of human cases. ESR figures for 2002 show a total of 181 laboratory-reported human cases. Of these, 41.2% were farmers or farm workers and 48.9% worked in the meat processing industry.

The main leptospirosis serovars involved in human cases were *L. hardjo* (56 cases) and *L. pomona* (43). Contact with deer was implicated in 4% and 5% of these cases, respectively.

Origin National winds up

The shareholders of Origin National Ltd, formed 7 years ago when 10 independent deer agents formed a North Island network, have voted to wind the company up.

Chairman John Cusdin says the number of participating agents was down to five this year, and another two had indicated they would exit the industry later this year.

"Due to the very poor returns being experienced during the last two years by deer farmers, along with the lack of confidence in the industry, the remaining agents have decided to cease operating as a team. Our intention is to carry on independently with our own individual companies," he says.

Rapid Tb carcass test a step closer

A test kit to quickly identify Tb-infected carcasses is a step closer, but is now going through a validation process to independently confirm the accuracy of test results.

John Aitken, whose Christchurch-based company, Inward Bound, has been using hospital-based technology to develop the testing kit, says it is now at the validation stage with results of all the sampling he has done being checked by an independent laboratory. Results from his new testing programme take only 48 hours, compared with the current wait of at least 8 weeks. The work is funded 50:50 by DEEResearch and the AHB.

John is hopeful that by the end of March he will have confirmation of the accuracy of his product, which will open the way for the next phase – getting a very accurate, very rapid commercial Tb test.

"We have finished all the work in the prevalidation section of the project, and are in the process of gathering the pre-requisite number of positive and negative samples in collaboration with the Animal Health Board. Once the accuracy of those tests has been validated, the AHB will consider approving the test kit for commercial release," he says.

The benefit to deer farmers of the new test is that results will be available within 48 hours of an animal being slaughtered, instead of having to wait over two months for their stock to be declared Tb free. "An important first step in managing the disease is very early identification," John says. "It can have a major impact on a farmer's livelihood!"

He is very optimistic about the validation process, as earlier testing carried out during pre-evaluation had proven to be very accurate. In the longer-term, he would like to be able to develop a similar testing kit for use on live stock, rather than having to wait until after slaughter. It is also possible that similar technology can be transferred from medical applications for Johne's disease, he adds.

If and when a clearance is given by the AHB, and the test is available for commercial use, John expects the cost per kit to be somewhere between \$50 and \$60 – a reduction on the current cost for the same test.

DEEResearch is grateful for the cooperation of the Canterbury/South Canterbury farmers who allowed samples to be collected and evaluated by researchers as part of the research.

Across-herd deer evaluation soon to be a reality

Objective genetic evaluation of New Zealand's deer herds is now underway, and AgResearch is keen for more breeders to join the programme.

AgResearch has started a sire referencing programme with several leading New Zealand deer breeders, offering genetic benchmarking between deer herds for the first time in New Zealand.

AgResearch Invermay deer scientist Dr Jason Archer is leading the programme, which already has progeny on the ground and some initial measurements recorded. He's pleased that the work is underway.

"Genetic evaluation is already commonplace in the dairy, sheep and pig industries, and has proved an effective way of genetic improvement industry-wide. There's been a groundswell of support from the deer industry now that we are following suit," he says.

"Evaluating the national gene pool gives the industry genetic options – Estimated Breeding Values provide the tools to start the ball rolling for improving desirable genetic traits and ultimately production in the national deer herd. Huge benefits are expected long-term."

Six breeders (Black Forest, Doncaster Deer, Canterbury Red Deer, Taihape Red Deer, Landcorp and Hurunui) are currently participating, and the invitation has gone out for other breeders to join. Eventually, Dr Archer would like to see New Zealand-wide participation from breeders and commercial farmers with nucleus breeding herds.

The breeders have donated semen which has been used in an artificial insemination (AI) programme over the Invermay herd. Measurements from the resulting progeny will be carried out by AgResearch staff at Invermay so participating stags can be directly compared, but these stags will also be used in their home herds, so information will also be collated on relativity between herds.

The six stags will therefore facilitate cross-herd comparisons over the animals participating, so Estimated Breeding Values can be produced by AgResearch using sophisticated computer analysis on all of the many hundreds of stags and hinds involved.

The first crop of calves born at the end of last year will be regularly weighed to give accurate growth and weight records, allowing cross-herd comparisons to be made to identify the genetically superior growth characteristics of the stags involved. The progeny have already been weighed once, and will be weighed again at weaning.

The stags will be velveted as two-year-olds, and velvet growth traits similarly measured.

Growth rate is an obvious focus, to assist farmers targeting the spring venison schedule, but other productive traits including reproductive performance will also be monitored further down the track.

Further information for commercial breeders on selecting sire stags is available on-line, with AgResearch having collated a manual on selecting sire stags. This is available to all deer farmers accessing the DEERresearch website (have your user name and password ready):

www.deerresearch.org.nz/stagselectionmanual/default.asp

Not to be confused with....

Jason Archer says the setting up of Deer Improvement's operation on the Invermay campus, and use of 200 Invermay hinds for the first calf drop may cause some confusion about the two operations.

"AgResearch is providing a genetic evaluation service for the stags and herds of participating breeders," he explains. "These breeding values will provide valuable information for the breeders and those who purchase their genetics."

"Deer improvement, on the other hand, is creating its own stud based on genetics purchased from some of New Zealand's top breeders. They will be offering genetic improvement via semen sales and AI, rather than selling stags."

In addition to its hinds, AgResearch is also providing some consultancy services to Deer Improvement on a fully commercial basis.

Archer says that although the AgResearch Sire Evaluation service and Deer Improvement are fundamentally different types of operation, they share a belief in a transparent, performance-based culture. 



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Johne's Disease in New Zealand farmed deer

What does this mean for you and your farm in 2004?

An information bulletin provided by the Johne's Research Group

Johne's Disease – what is it?

Johne's Disease (JD) is a bacterial disease of the intestines, affecting a range of farm ruminants, including deer, and is caused by a mycobacterium named *Mycobacterium avium subspecies paratuberculosis*. It is a distant relative of the bacteria *Mycobacterium bovis*, *tuberculosis* and *leprae* that cause Tb in humans and animals and leprosy in humans, but *M. paratuberculosis* does not cause Tb or leprosy.

It is seen in two forms in New Zealand deer:

- **Weaner deer:** Outbreaks of scouring, weight loss and death in up to 25% of affected weaner deer herds during the first winter of life.
- **Adult deer:** Hinds and stags are affected, exhibiting symptoms of scouring, weight loss, and eventually death, usually as one-off cases in small herds or as a tail end of animals in large herds.

Slaughter premises lesions

JD can cause abscesses especially in lymph nodes of the intestine. To the naked eye these look like Tb and some abscesses can even look like Tb under a microscope. Consequently JD is a major cause of "detain rail" carcasses and a reduced per kg schedule. As well, non-specific skin reactions to the Tb test can be seen.

How is JD is spread?

All new infections come from other infected deer via faeces on pasture. Some infected deer are clinically infected while others are symptomless carriers. Other infected livestock such as sheep and cattle or even possibly infected wild animals can act as an infection reservoir. Otherwise we know very little about the how JD spreads.

How do I know if my deer have JD?

Clinical symptoms are an indication that JD maybe present. However, never assume that your deer have JD only on symptoms alone, as other diseases cause identical symptoms. Always seek a confirmed veterinary diagnosis. This will include:

- history of the property
- history of the source of the deer
- examination of the deer
- laboratory confirmation through
 - blood testing
 - post mortems – gross symptoms
 - laboratory samples, e.g. gut and lymph nodes from the post mortem.

Note: Currently there are no laboratory tests (blood or tissue) that can identify every JD-infected animal in a herd with 100% accuracy. Laboratory tests can identify some or most of the infected deer, but not all of the recently

infected deer that are incubating JD will be identified. However by removing any blood-test positive deer from a herd, you will be significantly reducing the number of infected deer shedding JD bacteria onto pasture.

What if I already have JD on my farm?

- Work with a veterinarian who is fully familiar with the latest recommendations for JD.
- Confirm the diagnosis of JD in the first place, then if positive, gain an indication of how many deer and which age groups are affected.
- Cull affected deer vigorously, and as early in the disease process as possible. This should reduce the exposure of other healthy deer to infective JD organisms, and reduce the spread of JD.
- Ensure that your deer health programme for parasites, Yersinia, trace elements etc is adequate and that nutrition is optimal. Stressed deer are more likely to become diseased.

continued on next page

New researcher for Johne's Research Group epidemiology project

German Researcher and PhD candidate, **Esther Homfeld** met with the Johne's Research Group after her recent arrival to begin work in earnest in the farm survey and investigation study so crucial to the project.

She graduated from Freie Universität Berlin, Germany in 2001, with a degree in veterinary medicine. During her studies she worked in large animal practice in various European countries.

Before accepting this challenge, Esther worked in the division of nutrition and physiology of the institute of animal genetics, nutrition and housing at the University of Berne in Switzerland.

Her project was an epidemiological study, comparing Swiss dairy cows in organic farms to dairy cows in conventional husbandry. It investigated several factors such as udder health, fertility, feeding, plasma concentrations of different metabolites and hormones, and milk traits and focused on milk production and milk composition.

Esther enjoys team work, and exchange of ideas and knowledge.

In the future, she wishes to connect her knowledge in epidemiology, interest in large (farm) animals and research in developing countries. She believes the Johne's Research Group is a wonderful opportunity to match her previous work and to advance these plans for the future.



Esther Homfeld with JRG chairman Peter Aitken.

Pastoral research strategy identifying priorities

Deer Industry New Zealand is working closely with Meat and Wool NZ, Dairy InSight and Fonterra in an attempt to develop a coordinated pastoral research strategy.

This is a direct result of FRST reviewing the process it uses to allocate funding to different objectives and across different industries.

The pastoral research strategy will reflect key pastoral industry issues and priorities and, once finalised, applications for funding to FRST can be measured against them.

DINZ Chief Executive, MJ Loza, says the process involves three phases.

In the first, each industry reviewed its own issues and priorities and then discussed them with other industry groups. MJ says this stage is largely completed, but deer farmers and other industry participants are welcome to review a list of draft deer industry issues and priorities on the DINZ website:

<http://www.deernz.org/?id=37#contentsection2093> and provide feedback back to him.

The draft list was developed through consultation and reviews commissioned by DEERresearch over recent years, and with input from industry representatives.

Stage 2 is identifying and agreeing common issues across all industries; stage 3 involves identifying priorities including cost-benefit considerations among these common issues.

MJ says it is planned to have this process largely completed by the end of April to fit FRST's timeline.

The four bodies, previously Meat New Zealand, the Dairy Board, the Game Industry Board and Wools of NZ, got together some years ago to try to identify common issues and research needs.

Several areas of common interest were identified and some progressed to the point where industry organisations and research providers joint-ventured on specific areas of research. Two of these, in which Deer Industry New Zealand is now participating, are:

- Pastoral Genomics Ltd, which is looking at improving clover pastures through non-GM means (see *Deer Industry News*, Issue 3, February 2003)
- The Pastoral Greenhouse Gases Research Consortium, which is looking at reducing ruminant emissions of greenhouse gases.

Other areas of common interest where work has progressed include meat bioactives, (a consortia the deer industry is not involved in) and Johne's Disease. Discussions and planning have been underway for some time to try to develop a pan-industry approach to Johne's and MJ Loza says these have been re-energised recently by the Primary Industry Council.

Johne's Disease continued

- Be honest to would-be purchasers about your JD status. Johne's-infected deer are a reality and there are methods to allow for any losses due to JD.
- Eliminate JD as a source from other livestock classes such as sheep or cattle. This is probably most easily done by segregated grazing.

NOTE: Until more research into vaccination, laboratory tests and epidemiology has been completed, chances of completely eradicating JD from a herd are difficult. At best, removal of some or most of a herd's clinically affected deer will be achieved through testing and slaughter programmes.

How do I buy "Johne's-free" deer?

It is likely that JD is widespread throughout New Zealand,

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but particularly in the South Island. Buying Johne's-free deer can't be fully guaranteed as:

- JD may be widespread and there is no formal property status system.
- JD has symptomless carriers.
- There is no one-off laboratory test that detects all JD-infected deer; recent infections that are still in the incubation phase will probably test negative.

Recommendations

- Ask the vendor outright for a firm answer on JD status and ask for permission to talk to other buyers, vets and deer agents. If JD has not been diagnosed, it that does not mean that the vendor's property is JD free. It is, however, a useful start, especially if the farmer has actively investigated any form of on-farm disease.
- It is also useful to know whether or not slaughter premise carcass lesions have been detected, or if there have been non-specific skin reactors to the Tb test.
- Consider requesting laboratory testing of individual deer prior to purchase and then be prepared to quarantine and repeat test those individuals on your property. Repeat testing after a quarantine period will allow for some of the limitations of laboratory tests as listed above.
- Consider not buying in live deer, i.e. close your herd to outside deer bloodlines. 

**For enquiries or donations to the JRG contact the chairman:
Peter Aitken, Levels Valley, R D 4, Timaru, 03 614 7482**

Stimulating start to international antler science symposium

The world's leading deer antler specialists gathered in Queenstown in the last week of February for the second International Symposium on Antler Science and Product Technology (the first was held in Canada four years ago). The following report from AgResearch on the first two days' proceedings was received as we went to press.

This year's theme was "building a scientific foundation for the nutraceutical uses of antler".

The first session centred around the role of growth factors and steroids in controlling antler growth, while Canadian and New Zealand scientists later discussed animal welfare aspects of farming deer for their velvet antler.

Regenerative powers

Deer antlers are nature's most dramatic example of mammalian regeneration, and understanding the mechanisms controlling their growth could lead to strategies to improve regenerative capacity of humans.

UK scientists have come up with evidence that regeneration in adult tissues like antler is likely to be regulated by factors that also control skeletal development in the embryo. Jo Price, from the Department of Veterinary Basic Sciences at the Royal Veterinary College in London has identified specific factors produced in antler tissue cells as having an important role in antler. This discovery will help understand the mechanisms affecting antler regeneration, ultimately leading to the development of novel therapies for enhancing regeneration in humans.

Meanwhile, New Zealand scientists have further added to current knowledge in antler biology, with a detailed study into the cellular mechanisms underpinning the unique antler regeneration process. AgResearch scientist Dr Chunyi Li reported his research supports the idea that regeneration is a stem cell-based process, which provides further valuable information for regeneration scientists to work from.

Techniques for antler removal

Dr Murray Woodbury, from the Western College of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Saskatchewan in Canada, has also been analysing analgesic methods, and is advocating the use of physiological responses such as heart rate and blood pressure to complement existing measures of welfare when determining methods of antler removal. He used such physiological responses alongside behavioural scores to measure animal response to lidocaine, electroanesthesia and pedicle compression methods of removal.

Nutraceutical qualities

Newly emerging functional food markets have created enthusiasm for deer velvet producers and researchers to develop value-added antler nutraceuticals, looking at antler beyond its traditional herbal medicinal uses in Western medicine. That means scientifically verifying claimed health benefits.

Symposium attendees were challenged to promote antlers as nutraceuticals, with some scientists presenting their vision for a nutraceutical focus for the velvet industry.

Developing a quality standard to compare quality and likely efficacy in velvet antler has been a major step forward for the industry. Dr Stephen Haines and his team at AgResearch Invermay have developed the Velvet Activity Index (VAI™) using a combination of sophisticated measures of the

components of velvet, reflecting deer velvet quality and commercial value much more reliably than the current ash content standard. In future it's proposed that the VAI™ be used as an objective quality indicator for New Zealand deer velvet products, providing consumers with the ability to make informed purchase decisions.

NZ Red velvet matches Chinese Wapiti


There has also traditionally been little data comparing composition and the effects of velvet antler from different deer species, and different countries. A study by Li Junde from the Institute of Chinese Materia Medica, China Academy of Traditional Chinese Medicine in Beijing found New Zealand Red deer velvet was almost identical to that of Chinese Wapiti. That result has positive implications for New Zealand velvet exporters, as it demonstrates velvet antlers produced from non-traditional countries or areas can also be effectively used as traditional Chinese medicine. This contrasts with a traditional Asian velvet consumer view that velvet antlers produced from the 'original' places like Northeast China and Siberia have greater clinical efficacy.

Processing developments

New Zealand deer velvet processor Charlie Ford told the Queenstown symposium the industry faces an exciting future, with new areas of use, further sophistication in processing techniques and continuing improvement in the antler produced on-farm important components. The New Zealand deer velvet processing industry is currently undergoing considerable change in technology, quality control and production systems, particularly in velvet extracts and powders. Mr Ford believes quality systems at all steps in the transformation of deer antler to final whole stick or sliced product or extract are the key to future success as the industry adapts to the changes.

Osteoarthritis trials

Hoon Sunwoo from the Department of Agricultural, Food and Nutritional Science at the University of Alberta, Canada, has been studying the safety of a particular protein component of antler known as glycosaminoglycan (GAGRA) in a human clinical trial to treat osteoarthritis. These trials demonstrated GAGRA was safe as a food supplement within the dose levels tested in humans. More studies may be needed to detect statistically meaningful therapeutic effects from this particular component on the treatment of osteoarthritis.

The session on velvet processing was excellent, with information presented on New Zealand and Chinese processing, and on Korean deer farming research. Attendees were treated to a display of velvet antler organised by Wrightson – a sponsor of the symposium. The day's activities concluded with a Gold Mountain (principal sponsor) Symposium dinner. 

For further information:

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Mark O'Connor, Deer Industry New Zealand,
phone 027-474-3624