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**1. From the Chairman's Pen**

Welcome to the March edition of our Wairarapa newsletter.

All farmers, but particularly deer farmers have been seriously challenged over the last few months. It seems we have been subjected to a sequence of bad news, good news, bad news, in a variety of fields.

Take the weather – just as drought was threatening, we had a series of good, warm rains – great news. Until we realised the rain would not stop and our thoughts and offers of assistance go out to anyone who has had significant farm damage or stock losses from the recent weather event. Mauriceville has had in excess of 600mm of rainfall so far in 2004 and would normally average about 1500 per year. Are we in for either an extremely wet 12 months, or a prolonged dry spell?

Venison prices have also taken us on a roller coaster ride. Schedules were expected to collapse to around \$3 at the end of the chilled season, but held on at better levels than predicted. The recently announced 12 month NZ venison access to the French market has to be positive news.

To date our product has only had access to this market for the six months of the year around the traditional game hunting season, which has made promotion difficult and therefore minimal. Although only taking 6% of our production at present (approx \$8.6 million) the announcement does open doors for future growth, and as deer farmers we will want to see real price improvements sooner rather than later. We would be ignoring the obvious if we did not admit that the viability of deer farming is not competitive with more traditional land uses at present.

On a positive note, the National 2 Year Old Velvet and Hard Antler Competition recently held at the West Bush Deer Stud was a great success. The quality of the entries was magnificent and an indicator that our stud breeders are certainly doing their job with regard to antler genetics. Thank you to all sponsors and competitors and the organising committee.

Finally, our committee is in the process of putting together branch activities for the coming year. We have some interesting ideas, as you will read in this newsletter, and we would welcome suggestions and input from you all at any time. Here's to a more positive 2004!

## 2. Richmond letter

At the November committee meeting the state of the market was discussed and the Committee agreed that a letter should be sent to Richmond expressing the current feeling of our members. That letter is included here, together with the response we received.

“Dear Sir,

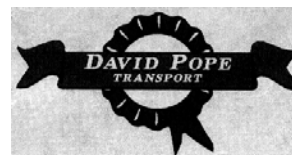
I am writing to you in my position as Chairman of the Wairarapa Branch of the Deer Farmers Association. At our recent committee meeting, concern was expressed at the disappointing venison returns meat companies are providing to suppliers at the present time. This is resulting in some farmers significantly reducing herd numbers, particularly breeding stock. Concern was also expressed at the very slow appearance of venison products on local supermarket shelves, an area where there does appear to be a demand for all levels of product. With the current strong market prospects for sheep meats, and a positive market outlook for beef, can you see any significant positives in the near future to encourage deer farmers to maintain their herds? .....Neil Cameron”

“December 2, 2003

Thank you for your letter to Richard Carver regarding the venison industry.....We are very aware that current returns for deer farmers are not generating sufficient revenue comparative to other farming options and that this situation must be improved to ensure the ongoing viability of NZ deer farming. As a major exporter of venison Richmond must play a major role in this future viability and recovery. We wish to see a strong industry with stable livestock numbers in both Islands, but particularly the North. I am sure all your Wairarapa members are aware of the ups and downs that have plagued the industry in its short history. As a company we have been through three of these cycles and are determined not to experience one again where possible.

However, the over reliance on one market has been the industry's downfall again and it has really taken this latest downturn for the industry bodies and exporting companies to acknowledge that a global market for venison is required to take the industry forward. I believe all companies are united on this front. Germany will remain a key market for NZ venison but we desperately need new emerging markets.

For Richmond's part, we have been looking to market diversification away from Germany over the past 2-3 years into markets that have the potential to consume quantities of venison. The progress has been slower than we would have liked as in a number of these markets the product awareness is very low or zero. We must build consumer demand through education and promotion. Product development is key to succeeding in new markets also and in certain instances we have been held up through bureaucratic redtape. I am pleased to say that some of these initiatives are beginning to bear fruit in the market although full potential and returns are yet to be realised.



In our existing markets such as Europe we are concentrating on improving sales channels so that we exercise more control over the end product and its sale. This is another significant area of change to how the traditional business was handled into Europe but we must leverage off other skills learnt from our lamb business and use this advantage for our venison business.

We believe these are amongst the positive developments for the venison business and will influence farmgate returns. However, the industry will still rely upon stable market conditions in Europe to provide prompt improvement to these farmgate returns. There are signs that the European markets are recovering both in terms of demand and pricing for the 2004 year. Our partners in Europe are more optimistic than 12 months ago and with the German economy showing small signs of improvement this will lift returns. We do not expect rapid improvement in terms of jumping up \$\$/kg at a time but the gains must be sustainable and realistic. Customers in the market place understand this also.

Another area impacted earlier this year was the Asian Co-Products business with SARS affecting our sales and values of these important items. The recovery has been slow for these products also but we see a better outlook for 2004.

With a Cervena review currently underway we see the potential for a much better aligned North American strategy to be developed. This market should be providing us with much greater volume than currently exported and with market returns sitting above Europe, can enhance returns significantly.

Of course we continue to suffer under the high NZD against the major currencies, which is certainly having an impact on current returns. However, all other industry sectors face the same issues on this.

Regarding NZ market sales for venison, I can tell you Richmond continue to supply a significant amount of product into a range of sectors within NZ. The one area that continues to prove difficult is sustainable supply to retail. Recent restructuring within our NZ Division will provide us with more penetration on the NZ market as a whole however.

In summary it is our feeling the industry has reached the bottom of this downward cycle and an improved season is upon us. As mentioned we are very focused that current returns to deer farmers are not sustainable and as our business is reliant on securing livestock, we need to ensure returns are attractive enough to keep farmers growing these animals.

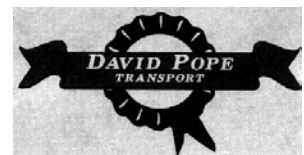
If you have any queries please don't hesitate to contact Richard or myself. Thank you.

Nick Sherwood

Venison Manager"

### 3. TB Update

I am the deer farmers' representative on the Masterton RAHC (Regional Animal Health Committee). This committee liaises between farmers and AHB (Animal Health Board) on the running and effectiveness of the measures to combat TB in our deer and cattle herds. Significant gains are being made in the fight against TB, with the boundary of the DMCA (Designated Movement Control Areas) being moved further South into the Wairarapa this year. This indicates that TB is being virtually eliminated in these areas. If you have any comments or queries regarding TB or noxious animal control measures, please contact me - phone 06 3725854, or email [lochiel@xtra.co.nz](mailto:lochiel@xtra.co.nz) - Neil Cameron.



#### **4. Genom NZ – DNA testing**

After some negotiations on behalf of the DFA, Genom NZ have agreed a reduced price for DNA testing on deer. The cost structure is set out below and is available to all deer farmers. By using the services of GenomNZ all previous DNA profiles, created by them, are able to be used. Hopefully many of you will be able to take advantage of this service to improve your deer herds.

If you have any queries about the programme please contact Andrew Mitchell, **Tel: 00 64 7 333 2151, Mob: 00 64 21 457 715 Web: nzstags.com**

However, to obtain DNA testing through GenomNZ you need only contact them directly - their contact details are:

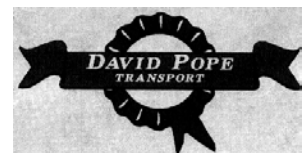
Mary McEwan  
 Research Associate  
 AgResearch  
 Invermay Agricultural Centre  
 Private Bag 50034  
 Mosgiel

Deer Parentage Proposal prepared for the NZ Deer Farmers Association :

1. The cost of generating a DNA Profile for each animal will be NZ\$28.00 per head. This is for sample types of hair and semen. If blood is collected on our FTA samplers this would reduce the cost of the DNA Profile to \$26.00.
2. The analysis will be included in the price of \$28.00. However, if further analysis is required (*e.g.* due to incomplete or incorrect information or samples submitted by the breeder), this will be charged at \$70.00 per hour.
3. The cost of the Dam Profile will be \$20.00 per head as stated in the original proposal.
4. Given that the NZDFA has been able to generate substantial commitment to testing animals, we are prepared to drop the previous criteria of 6000 minimum samples (which would be difficult to administer) and offer this price to any NZDFA member submitting 50 samples or more at any one time.

The above prices are for parentage testing of deer. This profile price could be reduced further if it was included with the combined DNA parentage and breeding values package presently under development. This is similar to what is currently being offered to the sheep industry.

A DNA Profile is not transportable between laboratories. It has been our policy to store the profile on our database for future use and our sample submission form details this in full. Our marker set and data analysis methods are proprietary to AgResearch and therefore even if we sent the profile to the client it could not be used by other laboratories. This is an important aspect for those breeders considering shifting from one laboratory to another because their dams and sires would have to be re-genotyped. The pedigree analysis software we have developed is world-leading and it underpins the large scale adoption of parentage testing in the New Zealand sheep industry.



You should also be aware that all revenue generated by Genomnz is an indicator of industry support for research, and is used to leverage substantial government investment into deer research programs. Thus by choosing Genomnz as your preferred provider of parentage testing services, you are supporting research investment to benefit the deer industry.

### **5. Branch Day - Velvet Competition and Stag Walk - Saturday December 13, 2003**

Alan Griffin of West Bush Deer Stud once again generously made his premises available for viewing. Entry to the competition was FREE and it was restricted to financial members only of the Wairarapa Branch of the NZDFA. Results are as follows:

#### CLASS 1

##### **“South Wairarapa Veterinary Services” Stud Class, for any stud stag**

1 <sup>st</sup>	West Bush Deer Stud	Atlas	33.43	6.98kgs
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#### CLASS 2

##### **“Goldpine” Commercial Red Stag**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Te Parae		33.35	4.91kg
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dean Wilkinson		36	4.02kg
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Te Parae		37.7	4.72kg
4 <sup>th</sup>	Dean Wilkinson		41.25	6.29kg
5 <sup>th</sup>	Te Parae		41.45	4.92kg
6 <sup>th</sup>	Tony Bayliss		65	4.27kg

#### CLASS 3

##### **“Dave Anderson Motorcycles & Marine” Wapiti Stag**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Dean Wilkinson			7.65kg
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Dean Wilkinson			11.19kg

#### CLASS 4

##### **“Sharpes Grain & Seeds” Best three commercial heads**

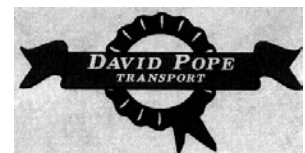
1 <sup>st</sup>	Te Parae		12.81kg
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Te Parae		14.56kg
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tony Bayliss		12.38kg
4 <sup>th</sup>	Phil Gray		12.46kg
5 <sup>th</sup>	Lochiel Cameron Trust		9.32kg

#### CLASS 5

##### **“Wrightson” Hard Antler Class**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Te Parae		348 1/8
2 <sup>nd</sup>	Te Parae		344
3 <sup>rd</sup>	Tony Bayliss		248 3/8

The day was completed with a bbq dinner hosted by Tony Bayliss. Once again we would ask you to support our sponsors who generously assist in making this competition possible.



## 6. National 2-Year Old Velvet & Hard Antler Competition & Branch Challenge

A great start to 2004 and a day for our Branch to be proud of. This year saw a large increase in entries of both hard antler and velvet.

We were also delighted to welcome the DINZ Executive Committee – namely Bill Taylor, Errol Croad, Andrew Mitchell and Andrew Fraser as judges and Tony Pearse – Product Manager DINZ who were able to co-ordinate their annual meeting with our event. We have extended invitations to participating Branches from outside our region to attend in 2005 and hope the event will continue to grow. We are looking at moving the competition back a couple of weeks to mid-February so that it doesn't coincide with other Branch competitions or Waitangi weekend.

A huge thankyou is due to Guy Williams who spent an enormous amount of his time co-ordinating the arrival and return of the velvet and hard antlers. Our grateful thanks also to the following judges:

### **Hard Antler**

Andrew Mitchell and Peter Crowle

### **Velvet**

Tony Pearse, Trevor Walton, John Spiers and Andrew Fraser

Results and editorial coverage of the competition will be published in forthcoming issues of The Deer Farmer Magazine and DINZ, but for those of you who are champing at the bit here are the unofficial results!

### **National Hard Antler Competition 2004**

1 <sup>st</sup>	Salvador	Black Forest Park	308	
2nd		Peter Adlam	305	2/8
3rd	Herbrand	Stanfield's Bushey Park	301	5/8
4 <sup>th</sup>	Little Rock	Mike Dempsey	298	3/8
5th	Aragorn	Stanfield's Bushey Park	277	4/8
6th	Norwest	West Bush Deer Stud	261	5/8
7th	Atlas	West Bush / Sarnia Farms	257	1/8
8th	Merlin	Stanfield's Bushey Park	250	5/8

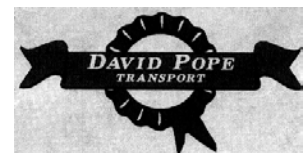
### **National Velvet Antler Competition 2004 Velvet antler results**

#### **Branch Challenges**

Adult Head	Weight	FINAL SCORE	2yo Head	Weight	FINAL SCORE 2 YO	TOTAL Score Branch Challenge	
Southland							
6	9.51	21.125	6	4.62	16.4375	37.5625	
Otago							
5	8.575	24.0125	5	4.205	20.8	44.8125	
SCNODFA	7	8.497	22.0975	7	4.305	34.425	56.5225
Manawatu							
3	7.303	40.0525	3	3.395	32.625	72.6775	
Marlborough							
4	7.24	40.65	4	3.895	33.375	74.025	
Fiordland							
1	5.8	63.325	1	2.945	38.875	102.2	

*Branch Challenge 2yo Heads only*

*Newsletter Sponsored by David Pope Transport*



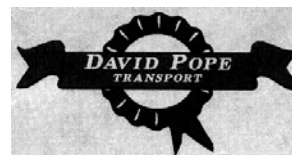
Head	Weight	Average Beam	FINAL SCORE	Quality points
Southland 6	4.62	18.5	16.44	16.25
Otago 5	4.205	17	20.80	13.75
SCNODFA 7	3.395	17.5	32.63	20.75
Marlborough 4	3.895	16.75	33.38	23.375
Manawatu 14	4.305	18	34.43	30.125
Fiordland 1	2.945	16.25	38.88	20.5

**National 2 yo Red Deer Velvet heads**

Head	Weight	Average Beam	FINAL SCORE	Total Quality
Peter Swann 13	4.62	18.5	29.8875	16.25
Eddie Brock 5	4.645	17.75	31.825	16.5
Jim Scorgie 1	4.205	17	34.25	13.75
MW & CM Stewart 6	5.005	18.75	41.125	29
Black Forest 8	4.535	18	43.65	27.625
Donald Whyte 14	4.305	18	47.875	30.125
Bruce Symonds 2	3.02	16.5	49.1375	18.5
Chris Petersen 4	2.945	16.25	52.325	20.5
Cloudy Bay 3	6.355	18.5	53.75	49.12 5

**National 2 yo Wapiti**

Head	Weight	Average Beam	FINAL SCORE	Quality Points
Donald Whyte G3	4.38	18.25	19.9	12.625
Donald Whyte G2	4.61	18.5	24.675	22
Dave Lawrence G1	5.5	18	39.125	37.875



## **7. Lincoln University**

Lincoln University's Farm Technical Manual has recently been revised (last edition was 1996).

It is Lincoln's top-selling book. It is sought-after by farmers, farm consultants and many others associated with the farming industry (e.g., life-stylers, students, fertiliser & seed representatives, bankers, etc.) The 2003 edition is massive -- over 1000 pages and weighing 1.5 kg! It is crammed full of essential technical information about farming in New Zealand, including chapters on the following topics:

Livestock Management and Nutrition (includes special sections on deer management and nutrition, written by recently retired scientist, Ken Drew); Animal Health; Pastures; Crops; Weed, Pest & Disease Control; Fertilisers; 'Organic' Farming; Farm Forestry & Shelter; Farm Improvements & Equipment; Climate Information; Legal Information; Contact Addresses & Telephone Numbers of key agricultural organisations; Glossary of Agricultural Terminology.

In other words, the Manual contains 'everything you need to know about farming -- from Animal evaluations to Zero endophyte'.

Cost is \$79.90 (incl. GST, p. & p.). Discounts are given for bulk orders (10+ Manuals). The Manual can be purchased by sending a cheque (*make to Lincoln University*), or credit card details, to:

***Manual Sales, AMAC Division, Box 84, Lincoln University, Canterbury***

Other options are to:

- Phone Lincoln on (03) 3253859 and give details
- Email [manuales@lincoln.ac.nz](mailto:manuales@lincoln.ac.nz)
- Post an order form to the above address. See the form on Lincoln's web-site: [www.lincoln.ac.nz](http://www.lincoln.ac.nz) => 'search' => manual sales => Farm Technical Manual - order form

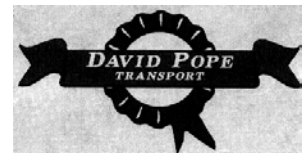
## **8. Branch Events for 2004**

The Committee have given considerable thought to events which we hope will stimulate interest from branch members. A branch event is the ideal opportunity to get together with fellow farmers and share thoughts and ideas about the industry. Our events are still very much in the planning stage and we really do want your feedback on the following:

**May 27/28 Hastings Slaughter Plant** – May 27/28 is a tentative date for an overnight visit to Hawke's Bay. It is intended that a couple of farms be included in the visit as well as visiting the slaughter plant. In order for your committee to progress these activities and advise costs and details we need an indication of your interest.

**July – Breeding Seminar** - We are looking to involve Tony Pearse and a representative from LIC (Livestock Improvement Corporation) who are exploring the use of AI in commercial herds.

**2005 – 4-5 day trip to the lower South Island Deer Farms**



So that the committee can progress these activities we need an indication of your interest.

Please complete the form at the end of this newsletter by March 15<sup>th</sup> and email it to [allens@wise.net.nz](mailto:allens@wise.net.nz) or post it to Ann Allen, Buchanans Road, RD4, Masterton.

**9. JOKE OF THE MONTH! ( Contributions welcomed – we all need a good laugh!)**

The School of agriculture’s Dean of Admissions was interviewing a prospective student. “Why have you chosen this career?” he asked. “I dream of making a million dollars in deer farming, like my father”, the student replied. “Your father made a million dollars in deer farming?” echoed the impressed dean. “No” replied the applicant. “But he always dreamed of it”.

**10. Meeting Date and Venue:**

Next Meeting: Monday March 29<sup>th</sup> 7.30 p.m.

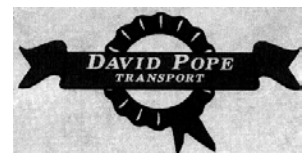
Venue: Gladstone Inn, Gladstone, 7.30pm

All members are welcome to attend these committee meetings. The meetings generally only take about an hour, are often preceded by a quick meal, and followed by a good deer industry catch up over a drink. It's a great chance to keep in touch with your fellow members.

Chairman	Neil Cameron	06 3725 854
Secretary	Ann Allen	06 3727 706
	Louise Walker	06 3727 865
Treasurer	Mike Allen	06 3727 706
Committee	Tony Bayliss	06 3727 865
	Chris Bunny, Viv Bunny	06 3725 710
	Bobbie O'Hara	06 3798 552
	Guy Williams	06 3722 622
	Roger Wood	06 3787 488

Please feel free to contact any of the above members if you have any comments or suggestions about the running of our local association. Your input will be appreciated.

**PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THE UPDATE FORM ON THE NEXT PAGE**



**11. UPDATE FORM post to: Ann Allen, Buchanans Road, RD4, Masterton**

WAIRARAPA BRANCH – MEMBERS UPDATE FORM	
Name:..... Please print clearly	
Postal Address:..... ..... Phone No.....	
Email address:	
I am interested in hearing more about the following activities:	Possible Number attending
<b>May</b> Hastings Slaughter Plant visit	
<b>July</b> Breeding Seminar	
<b>2005</b> South Island Trip	
Any other comments:	

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