

DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 34 • February 2009 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA



**Sire sale
report:
p16**

Also in this issue:

- Industry Survey results confirm trends
- Actions to weather the storm
- Big tick from Heart Foundation
- Deer farming Latvian style
- Deer industry conference preview
- Corporate membership proposal a "maybe"
- Parasitism research project



**DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND**

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association



We're in good shape for rugged times ahead

I thoroughly recommend deer farmers to take some time to go through this edition of *Deer Industry News*. For example, as the world grapples with economic volatility and uncertainty, Innes Moffat's article on page 8 gives a perspective on how these challenges relate to the New Zealand deer industry. It's vital that everyone in the deer industry forms a view on these events and what they mean for them. At Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ), we are reviewing industry market strategies for both venison and velvet and, importantly, DINZ's roles in those strategies. We are using the situation as an opportunity to ensure that DINZ is focused, lean and hungry to succeed with fewer resources.

We know that DINZ is likely to have fewer resources based on the results of the industry survey and Statistics New Zealand figures which are outlined in an article on page 4. With approximately 600,000 hinds mated in the year ended June 2008 and a total deer herd back at 1994 levels, the shape of the industry is as lean as the meat. This contrasts with an expanded market for New Zealand venison in Europe. Sales channels and key sales accounts need to be carefully managed and protected so that they are engines for growth once supply picks up.

More required reading is Stephen Borland's profile on page 25. He has some great points for debate. Don't get me wrong – I do disagree with some of what he has to say:

- The schedule price is not solely due to lower supply. New Zealand is still producing 50% more venison than it was on average in the 10 years before the “venison



bubble” in 2002. The market for venison in Europe is larger.

- DINZ is not a “huge organisation”. We are eight individuals in a team which is keen to contribute to a successful industry.
- Measurement is important when it helps us learn and grow. It is less important when it is used to justify activity or existence. We must all have the confidence to invest and make decisions based on information which is not perfect.

What I do like is Stephen's spirited, passionate debate, a keenness to learn from the past and willingness to cooperate to achieve success. No doubt we'll have a chance for more face-to-face debate some time soon.

The DEERResearch-funded Focus Farms continue to gather momentum as community groups, focus farmers and other interested people put time into making well thought-out projects successful. My view had been that if Branches were not contributing financially, there would be less commitment to making them successful. I am very happy to be wrong. I urge anyone who has not been to a field day to get along. The more people who think about how to improve productivity, the higher the chances of success.

An important decision for deer farmers this year will be the future of the National Pest Management Strategy for bovine Tb. The key question is around whether the objective should be containing the disease to specific parts of New Zealand, trying to eradicate the disease entirely or some combination of the two. The answer is not simple. The Animal Health Board will be putting out a consultation document in the first half of this year. I urge you to read it carefully, get along to a meeting, form a view and make it known. The disease is a serious one for the deer industry and we need to be heard as loudly as the other funders.

In part due to the New Zealand deer industry's smaller size and challenges already faced over the past few years, we are in as good a position as we could hope for going into these rugged times. There are no guarantees, but by focusing all our individual efforts on the efficient, ethical production of a great product, the industry stands a good chance of prospering and eventually growing as conditions change. I wish you the best for 2009. 🍀

Mark O'Connor, CEO, Deer Industry New Zealand

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Cover: There were mixed results from the 2008/09 sire sales. Photos: Remarkables Park Deer Stud and Tower Farms. From left: Geoff Warren, Remarkables Park, Joe Crowley, Tower Farms, Richard Baird and Harold Terry, Elders. See page 16.

Industry Survey confirms national herd smaller

The latest Deer Industry Survey shows our national herd has reduced to 1.3 million, with the breeding base becoming smaller. The total number of farms with deer on them declined 29.6% from 4,335 in 2002 to 3,051 in 2007 (the latest year figures are available for).

While the decline is neither unexpected nor welcome, there are encouraging signs that the down-sizing has almost run its course. In the 2006 Industry Survey, farmers collectively signalled their intentions to cut deer numbers by 130,000. In the 2008 survey, intentions are still for a net decrease but only by about 18,000 – about 1.4 percent of the national herd.

The final report uses data from a number of sources to build a picture of industry trends that is as complete and accurate as possible. The full report follows.

Deer Industry New Zealand wishes to thank all deer farmers who completed the Industry Survey. Your cooperation provides an important foundation for industry planning.

Survey methods

Industry survey

- The Industry Survey was mailed, then re-mailed to non-responders. There were 1,287 responses (2,257 were received in the 2006 survey) from producers who were farming deer as at 30 June 2008. The sample size is lower partly due to some farmers exiting the industry and because DINZ did not take the extra step of using a calling company to contact non-responders (to reduce the “annoyance factor” to producers and to save the cost).
- Based on the Statistics New Zealand Census 2007, estimated natural state production and Johnne’s Management Ltd data, the Executive estimates a total farmed deer population of approximately 1.3 million deer (compared to 1.4 million according to Statistics New Zealand in 2007). Deer Industry New Zealand received information on 788,000 deer, or 60% of total farmed deer in New Zealand (84% was achieved in 2006).

Statistics New Zealand figures

The Executive has drawn from Statistics New Zealand’s figures and the extrapolated Industry Survey results rely on the accuracy of the Agricultural Production Census which, in turn, relies upon accurate completion by producers.

Herd size and composition

The Industry Survey returns indicated the following herd size and composition as at 30 June 2008. The results have been extrapolated to Statistics New Zealand’s figures to account for non-responders (Table 1).

- The Industry Survey as at 30 June 2008 indicated a breeding herd (R2 and MA hinds) of 622,000¹ hinds, compared to 738,000 in the 2007 census, down 16%.
- The Agricultural Production Census figures of fawns surviving to weaning as a percentage of hinds mated (which includes non-conception and pre- and post-natal losses) ranged from 72 to 79% between 2002 and 2007. Applying this range to the breeding population available in the 2007 census (738,000) indicates total expected weaners in the 2008 survey of between 490,000 and 537,000. The number of weaners indicated by producers in the Industry Survey was at the upper end of this range at 533,000.

¹ The capital hind base of 622,000 seems low at 47% of total deer. Previous surveys have put this figure at closer to 50%. If 50% were correct, this would imply a breeding herd of closer to 660,000. There may be a sampling error due to the smaller sample size.

Table 1: Total deer numbers and hinds calving.

	Industry Survey ²	Extrapolation to Statistics NZ figures	
		2008	2006
Weaner hinds	156,657	256,751	306,454
R2 hinds	64,851	106,287	152,198
MA hinds	303,243	496,996	633,505
TOTAL HINDS	528,073	860,033	1,092,157
Weaner stags	158,147	259,906	311,542
R2 stags	31,674	52,054	84,467
MA stags	62,083	102,030	109,434
TOTAL STAGS	254,196	413,990	505,443
TOTAL DEER	788,372	1,274,023	1,597,600
Hinds calving (at 80% of R2 and MA hinds based on responses) ³	295,676	484,594	627,199

Intentions

Herd growth or reduction

- Respondents indicated intended changes in hind and stag numbers in their herd. This was expressed either as a change in deer numbers or % changes. Responses were converted to animal numbers and these results are shown below.

Table 2: Intentions to increase or decrease herd size in 2008.

INTENTIONS	Stags		Hinds		Stags and Hinds
	Number of respondents	Number of deer	Number of respondents	Number of deer	
Intentions to increase	200	6,253	334	16,212	
Intentions to decrease	259	(14,884)	237	(18,323)	
Net change indicated (decrease)		(8,631)		(2,113)	(10,744)
Extrapolated		(14,387)		(3,521)	(17,908)

- In comparison to intentions indicated in the 2006 survey (see Table 3 next page), producers’ intentions as at 30 June 2008 were more benign. Their total intention to reduce hind numbers by 3,521 in the YE June 2009

² The total hind and stag numbers in the Industry Survey do not equal the sum of the different classes within each gender because in some cases respondents provided total stag and hind numbers only. Further, as some respondents only provided total deer numbers, the total stag and hind numbers do not equal the total deer numbers provided. The extrapolated figures use the relative % in each sex and class from the Industry Survey to estimate total herd composition.

³ Estimations based on past returns of calves born and weaned from hinds calving is 95% (i.e. 5% loss from birth to weaning).

compares with an intention to reduce hind numbers by 92,278 in 2006. There was still some intention to decrease stag numbers, but less than half of that in 2006.

- However, these intentions do not appear to have been borne out. Data from other sources and general producer feedback indicates a large slaughter of older stags in late 2008. The brunt of this slaughter will feed through to lower velvet production in the 2009/10 velvet season.

INTENTIONS	Stags		Hinds		Stags and Hinds
	Number of respondents	Number of deer	Number of respondents	Number of deer	
Intentions to increase	240	11,846	351	20,704	
Intentions to decrease	553	(43,087)	647	(97,803)	
Net change indicated (decrease)		(31,241)		(77,099)	(108,000)
Extrapolated		(37,391)		(92,278)	(129,669)

Producers' intentions to slaughter

	Survey	Extrapolated	
Hinds for slaughter <2 yo		84,264	140,447
Hinds for slaughter >2 yo		49,746	82,914
Stags for slaughter < 2 yo		110,011	183,361
Stags for slaughter > 2 yo		29,993	49,991
		300,420	500,727

NB: care should be taken in using the figures for hind and stag figures by age. Some animals intended for slaughter were not broken down by age. Therefore, the individual classes will be understated.

- Extrapolated intended total production of 500,727 deer to June 2009 indicates slowing production levels. This is reinforced by producers' intentions not to significantly increase or decrease their exposure to deer. However, producers have continued killing capital stock (see Figure 1).

Farms with deer on them

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Classified as deer farms	2,277	2,085	1,741	1,641	1536	1479
Farms with deer (not specialising)	2,058	1,932	2,195	2,121	1860	1572
TOTAL	4,335	4,017	3,936	3,762	3,396	3,051

- Between 2002 and 2007 (latest available), the number of farms with deer on them fell by 1,284. This is a reduction of 29% over six years. There are 798 fewer farms (down 35%) which are classified as deer farms (farms for which income from deer is the largest source of income).

Farm size and composition

- Herd composition is very similar to the 2005 and 2006 surveys.
- The average herd size is 560 in comparison to 583 in 2006. The decrease is consistent with producer intentions in 2005 and subsequent Agricultural Production Census figures.

No. of animals on farm	Number of farms	% of farms of those responding	% of deer represented on these farms	Cumulative number of deer in each range (descending)
0-50	125	10%	0%	100%
51-150	239	19%	3%	100%
151-250	200	16%	5%	97%
251-500	275	22%	12%	92%
501-1,000	257	20%	23%	79%
1,001-2,000	138	11%	24%	56%
2,001-3,000	17	1%	5%	32%
3,001-4,000	8	1%	3%	27%
4,001-5,000	7	1%	4%	24%
5,001-10,000	8	1%	6%	20%
>10,000	1	0.08%	14%	14%

- The average size of farms with deer on them is 730 hectares, of which an average of 144 hectares are deer fenced (20% of the property). This is fairly similar to previous surveys and is an indication of the prevalence of mixed farming operations and therefore the ability of most farms to move in and out of deer depending on their circumstances.
- 42% of respondents indicated that they were predominantly deer farms.

Historical stag production as an indicator of future production

- Aside from the Industry Survey, venison production statistics over time give an indication of changes within the national herd. If one assumes that the velvet herd remains relatively constant over time⁴, it is logical that the difference between hind and stag production is an approximate indicator of changes to capital stock. That is, if more hinds are being slaughtered than stags, it is a basic indicator of a reduction in capital stock and vice versa.

Figure 1 below illustrates trends in that difference for the year ended September 1993 to 2008.

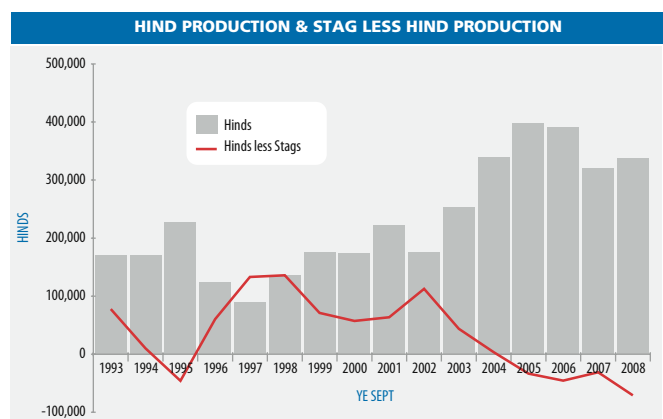


Figure 1: Hind production and stag less hind production

The last significant retention of hinds was in 2002 when 113,000 fewer hinds were slaughtered than stags. Since then, this difference has decreased to -70,000 despite a large increase in stag kill. **STOP PRESS: Prize draw winners – see P26.**

4 Clearly this is a large assumption. For example, at present velvet production is decreasing, and there was a significant decrease in the late 1990s following the Asian Economic Crisis. However, the purpose is to provide a 'rough guide'.

NVSB velvetting season update

Audits

Auditing of 10 percent of certified velvetters is nearing completion and the NVSB thanks all those involved for their cooperation this past season. Once completed, the audit results will be collated and the annual report written and benchmarked with previous seasons.

Outstanding fees

Of concern is the number of outstanding NVSB fees yet to be paid. Reminder letters and invoices were sent in December to those velvetters with outstanding fees. At the time of writing, many of these remain unpaid.

Using NaturO™ rings

If you are using NaturO rings for the first time this season, have you or your veterinarian advised the NVSB? Even if you're already certified for local or chemical restraint, you are still required to advise the NVSB. If you are not velvetting or have sold your deer, you can place your programme into abeyance for up to five years. Once again, either you or your veterinarian is required to advise the NVSB to ensure your velvet programme records are accurate and up to date.


Surveillance programme

The New Zealand Food Safety Authority has been running a surveillance programme of all consignments of velvetted deer presented at all deer slaughter plants throughout the velvet season. MAF Enforcement Group personnel have been actively following up on these consignments and speaking with suppliers to find out how the velvet was removed and by whom.

NVSB certification required

The NVSB reminds deer farmers that the removal of velvet is classed as a controlled surgical procedure under the Animal Welfare Act and can only be performed by veterinarians and those certified to do so under an approved scheme such as the NVSB. This procedure includes spiker velvet.

Reminder to vets

All supervising veterinarians are reminded that confirmation of supervisory visits and consultations for mechanical block were due by 15 December. If you are sitting on any of this information, please forward this on to the NVSB to ensure all records are up to date. 

National Velvetting Standards Body (NVSB)

Expressions of interest

Expressions of interest are called for, in writing, from interested persons from the deer farming producer sector for consideration by the NZDFA Executive Committee for appointment to the NVSB. Appointments are for a three-year term with right to be considered for further terms.

Prospective candidates will be invited for an interview to discuss their interest and potential to contribute as one of two farmer representatives on the NVSB. Interviews with the Executive Committee are not mandatory, but may be held in support of written expressions of interest. They will be held following the deer industry conference in Palmerston North on Thursday 28 May 2009. The Executive Committee will make its selection at that time.

Current members are John Spiers, Takapau, and Peter Allan, Balfour (South Island). John Spiers is due to retire by rotation and has decided not to seek reappointment following his 9 years' service in the position. These producer appointments are matched by two appointments from the veterinary profession. The NVSB is administered by DINZ.

An operating code and position description for the NVSB is available. It will be circulated via Branches and direct to individual candidates. Responsibilities include representing stakeholder interests, overseeing the NVSB audit tasks and advising on velvet removal research, velvet tagging, storage, hygiene and stag welfare issues.

Please forward any expressions of interest to the Producer Manager, Tony Pearce, Deer Industry New Zealand, PO Box 10-702, Wellington, email tony.pearse@deernz.org

Closing date is 20 May 2009. NVSB representation duties are available on request.

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DINZ Annual Report: 2007/08

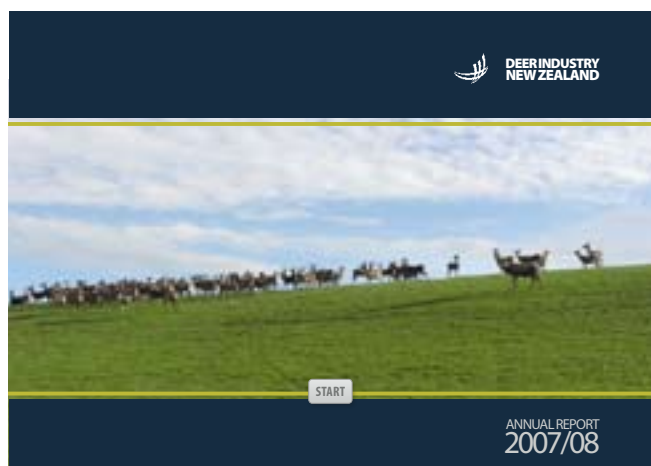
In a major shift from the traditional printed annual report format, the 2007/08 DINZ Annual Report is being published in electronic format, with just a limited number of hard copies being digitally printed.

DINZ Chief Executive Mark O'Connor says that while the cost of producing the reports has been reduced dramatically in the last two years, electronic publishing makes even greater savings available.


"The annual report is available online, which will satisfy most people's needs. The NZDFA has been publishing an electronic newsletter, *Stagline-online*, for some time now, and farmers are getting comfortable with that way of receiving information.

"Those who prefer a hard copy of the 2007/08 DINZ Annual Report can either download and print a copy of the report locally, or order a printed copy through DINZ. Copies will be printed on-demand and posted to those who require them. If people do not want to download a large (3Mb+) file, we can provide a copy on CD."

Mark says the on-line annual report has been designed in landscape format so that it is easily readable on screen, and features easy-to-use navigation tools.



"I think readers will be very happy with the changes, but of course we will be keen to receive feedback on the new format so we can constantly improve the way we communicate as cost-effectively as possible.

"This will also present an opportunity for readers to contact us with their updated email addresses if they have not received an electronic copy of the report." 

- For DINZ annual report: www.deernz.org/AR2008
- For a printout or copy on CD, email request to info@deernz.org

Velvet and coproduct research seed funding available

Velvet Antler Research New Zealand Ltd (VARNZ) has made a pool of up to \$30,000 available as seed funding for development of specific solutions, or to do background research into a particular issue surrounding production of velvet or coproducts.

Under this "Bright Ideas" fund, the kinds of practical solutions that might be investigated or developed as a result of this funding could be to do with enhanced methods for velvet removal (for example), but VARNZ is open to all ideas.

The initiative acknowledges deer farmers' natural tendency towards innovation and finding new ways to do things better.

This Bright Ideas fund marks a desire by VARNZ to ensure that ideas have a means of being investigated.

DINZ Science Manager Lindsay Fung says the initial pool of funding is available for the current financial year ending September 2009. He says future initiatives will be considered, dependent on interest and the availability of funds.

"We're very keen to hear people's ideas and see how these can be further developed towards practical outcomes. It's important for the industry that research and development picks up on needs or opportunities observed by producers and processors."

- For further information contact Lindsay Fung, Deer Industry New Zealand, ph 04 471 6116, lindsay.fung@deernz.org


MAF Report: Rising costs soak up increased income in 2007/08

If you're wondering where the extra income from your bigger venison cheque has been disappearing, MAF's 2007/08 Pastoral Monitoring Report may have the answers. The report is based on data from at least 20 farms covering both Islands.

Key points in the report were:

- Deer farmers' profitability improved in 2007/08 with higher prices for venison despite velvet prices falling by around a quarter compared with 2006/07. There were increases of 4 percent (\$6,000) and 24 percent (\$44,000) in the net cash income of North and South Island deer farms respectively compared with 2006/07.
- Average velvet prices fell 25 percent and 21 percent for North and South Island deer model farms respectively.
- Rising expenditure almost completely offset the increases in net cash income, resulting in farm profit before tax in 2007/08 being at similar levels as in 2006/07 for North and South Island deer model farms.
- Deer farm working expenses increased 6 percent and 18 percent in 2007/08 for the North and South Island model farms respectively.
- Deer farmers expect improved venison prices and revenue in 2008/09. The North Island model budgeted for farm profit before tax to increase 127 percent on 2007/08, while the South Island model budgeted for a 20 percent increase.

Producer Manager Tony Pearse says the markedly lower returns for the North Island farms reflected the impact of the 2007/08 drought, which hit production levels and stock weights, and the large expense incurred for bought-in feed.

Farmer expectations for increased pre-tax farm profits were much higher for the North Island, again a reflection of the drought aftermath. 

Actions to weather the storm

By Innes Moffat, Venison Marketing Services Manager, Deer Industry New Zealand

With venison prices at record levels, the New Zealand deer industry may seem immune from the current global recession, which many commentators believe is the most severe since the Great Depression of the 1930s. While the adage, *people have still got to eat*, provides some comfort for food producers, the New Zealand venison industry will not escape the effects of the economic slowdown in our main markets.

Consumers around the world, who pay for and consume our products, are worried about the security of their incomes and the value of their savings, and will spend less on non-essentials. The extent of the impact on the New Zealand deer industry will depend on how well the sellers of deer products can maintain sales and good prices by targeting consumers who are less affected by the recession.

	GDP % Change 2009	Current unemployment
Germany	-2.0%	7.6%
Benelux	-0.7%	7.5%
France	-1.0%	7.9%
Scandinavia	-1.0%	6.2%
USA	-2.0%	7.2%
UK	-1.7%	6.0%
ROK	-1.7%	3.3%
Hong Kong	-1.0%	3.8%
China	+6.0%	9.0%

Source: *The Economist*.

All the top 10 markets are forecast to contract in 2009. Unemployment will increase, incomes will fall and expenditure will reduce. While government stimulus packages may lessen the impact, the timing and effect are uncertain; even in the best case, it may take up to six months to show any effect. In Asia things are no better.

The saving grace for New Zealand currently is the weakness of the New Zealand dollar. This has added 20-30 percent to the New Zealand dollar prices for exported goods to Europe and the United States respectively over the past six months.

General effects on consumer spending

In Western economies, full employment and easy access to cheap credit have kept economies growing in the past few years. In nearly every country we sell to, these conditions no longer exist. Consumers who were secure in their jobs had been turning house equity into cash by borrowing against the increased value of their homes. They are now either unable or unwilling to do so as house prices fall and banks become less willing to lend. This is creating a drop in consumer spending on all items, but discretionary items may feel a bigger impact than everyday staples.

Impact of downturn on importers and distributors

The restaurant trade is the sector feeling the impact of the downturn the most. Conventional wisdom says mid-range restaurants feel the impact the most as people with some

discretionary income forgo meals out. People may choose not to eat out, but instead celebrate a special occasion with a nicer meal at home. This can provide a boost for better quality items through the supermarkets. Or diners are "trading-down" their dining experience, i.e., choosing quick-service restaurants rather than fine dining.

The retail sectors in most countries are currently experiencing a squeeze on margins as shoppers seek the best price. In the UK, discount stores offer a better price proposition over the established retailers who pride themselves on offering the better retail experience. Retailers report a fall in sales of certified organic produce as shoppers reject premium positioning for economic value. Of big concern for the venison industry is the current low price of imported beef in Europe. Until the current surplus works through the system, low-price tenderloins and striploins from Brazil and Argentina threaten to undermine demand for more expensive venison cuts.

Importers and wholesalers have been affected by the restriction in the amount of working credit available to them from their banks. With a container of chilled venison costing upwards of \$200,000, most importers rely on revolving credit from their bankers to fund their purchases. Banks drastically reduced the amount of credit they offered many of their clients in the last months of 2008.

Actions to weather the storm

The first action taken by all in the supply chain is to reduce inventories and shorten order times. Exporters, importers and wholesalers do not want to be holding unsold stocks for fear of not being able to sell the product for a profit, so they order as they need. This pushes the risk back down the supply chain.

Wholesalers are offering discounts to shift stock, but also looking at how they can add services and value to their offering to maintain client loyalty as everyone seeks a cheaper deal.

Restaurants are responding by:

- making their offering more attractive through promotion and advertising
- cutting costs wherever they can. Ingredient costs are examined and cheaper menus are offered to retain customers.

Implications for New Zealand farmers and exporters

It is possible that the deer industry may work through the recession without incurring too much damage, and New Zealand exporters will be faced with some choices in the immediate months ahead.

Stock levels

Firstly, with the expectation of lower supplies in the months to come, exporters will need to decide if they take the risk of holding stocks in the hope of receiving higher prices, or selling as soon as they can, for the price they get today.

We are informed there are few stocks in the market carried over from 2008, and that consumption is continuing at the moment, although at lower levels than through the traditional game season.

Based on DINZ survey numbers, production will decline substantially in 2009 because of the drop in breeding hind numbers over the past few years. This reduction in supply may counter-act any possible reduction in demand in our main markets later this year.


Choosing who to supply

Secondly, marketers will have to think about who they supply, which markets can best afford the product, and which customers are placed to finance purchases. Marketers will need to balance immediate concerns about ability to pay against maintaining long-term key account business. Ideally, long-term key accounts are also the most secure, in which case no trade-off is necessary.

Given the efforts marketing companies have made over the past few years to diversify their customer base, New Zealand now has more choice about where to send its venison. Retail provides options in several European countries, manufacturers are still demanding ingredients for their processed goods, and food service operators in most countries still want to offer venison on their menus.

A niche product

Thirdly, marketing companies will have to use their resources wisely in order to target market sectors and customers most able to continue purchasing higher-priced proteins. As a niche item, handled by a limited number of companies, venison is not subjected to the same competitive forces as mainstream goods. Even if 8 percent of the German workforce is unemployed, 92 percent still have well-paid jobs and will still be seeking good quality products to feed themselves and their families.

It's up to New Zealand to continue to position venison as a good value proposition to keep attracting purchasers in this time of economic turbulence. 

Netherlands venison promotion:

Nieuw Zeelands hert

Another collaborative effort between DINZ, a New Zealand exporter and their European importer resulted in strong sales of venison ready-to-cook meals through a major Dutch retail chain.

Last year was the second year that Dutch importer, Luiten Food, has arranged the marketing of ready-to-cook chilled venison meals through Dutch retail giant Albert Heijn, the Netherlands' largest retail chain, with over 700 high-quality supermarkets.

By carefully co-ordinating delivery of chilled venison from their New Zealand supplier, Silver Fern Farms, Luiten used a local processor to prepare and package ready-meals for distribution to all 700 stores for the two weeks before Christmas.

DINZ supported this by assisting with funding promotional messages in the Albert Heijn magazine which has a circulation of 2 million and is a main source of information for shoppers considering what to have for special meals at this time of year. Readers were shown the three venison items available: a bacon-wrapped roast, venison steaks with tapenade and a "game selection". These items were sold with prominent New Zealand origin branding.

Chilled venison exports to the Netherlands were worth almost \$10 million in 2008, up from \$5 million in 2007. Luiten Foods Managing Director, Jan Kunz, says the Dutch economy is in a terrible state, with optimism at rock bottom as companies close and workers lose their jobs. People are seeking ways of saving money, so to make sure that premium meat like venison continues to sell, its qualities must be promoted to shoppers. Luiten Food is grateful for the New Zealand assistance, which allows promotions to continue. 



The attractive packaging used in the Albert Heijn supermarkets. Image: Albert Heijn

German venison promotion:

Neuseeland Hirsch

DINZ liaised with a German importing company to run a week-long venison festival with a butchery company in Germany in the lead-up to Christmas.

Cordts Fleischwaren GmbH is a specialist butchery and local wholesaler in the northern German town of Bad Schwartau (population 20,000). A fan of New Zealand venison, owner Ralf Cordts has sold venison as a seasonal specialty for many years, and encouraged by DINZ, agreed to run a special Neuseeland Hirsch event during November. For a week, the store was decked out in DINZ promotional material, promotional videos were shown on the instore TV and an invited chef provided venison tastings for a day.

As well as instore activities, the promotion included outdoor billboard advertising in the surrounding area, advertising in local newspapers and press releases provided to local journalists expounding New Zealand venison's excellent taste and healthy attributes.

Mr Cordts was extremely pleased with the promotion. Venison was one of his top sellers through the week and DINZ is discussing with him when the next venison week will be.



Local press advertising was part of the campaign.



Billboard advertising supported the message.

This is the type of promotion that DINZ is arranging with venison sellers in Germany and other European countries. Rather than spreading the message very thinly via paid advertising on TV or in expensive magazines which will reach many people who will not be able to find venison in their supermarkets, DINZ is working with local companies to promote positive messages about New Zealand venison via the outlets where it is sold.

With product in short supply this year, DINZ did not support companies who were advertising the availability of New Zealand venison solely on price discounts. The New Zealand industry needs to encourage German shoppers to regard venison as a premium meat which, even at higher prices, is still good value because it is easy to cook and delicious.

Chilled exports to Germany were worth \$24 million in 2008. At an average NZ\$21,390/tonne, that was 48 percent higher than 2006. Most of this venison is sold through supermarkets and cash-and-carries, and it is important for the profitability of the New Zealand industry that shoppers are kept interested in venison when there are many products competing for their attention and shopping Euro.

Exit interviews conducted with shoppers in 2008 proved that instore promotions with tastings are an effective method of improving attitudes toward New Zealand venison. The main reasons why people do not buy venison are that they think it is hard to cook, and they think they will not like the taste.

Once they have been shown how easy it is to cook, and how good it tastes, their perceptions of venison's value for money improve substantially, and so their readiness to purchase. The next step is awareness of the product's availability in stores, and DINZ continues to supply retailing companies with promotional material which they can use to increase the visibility of venison in supermarket chillers.

Verkaufsoffener Sonntag in Bad Schwartau



Ralf Cordts ist vom neuseeländischen Hirschfleisch aufgrund der guten Qualität und dem hohen Nährstoffgehalt überzeugt.

Hirschfleisch aus Neuseeland

Bei Neuseeland denkt man zuerst sicherlich an einen Traumurlaub. Bisher wissen wenige, dass von dort auch ein ganz besonderes Hirschfleisch importiert wird. Hirschfleisch aus Neuseeland ist ausgesprochen mager, gilt mit einem hohen Anteil an Omega-3-Fettsäuren als positiv für Herz und Kreislauf, bringt ganz wenige Kalorien auf den Zeller, dafür aber viele B-Vitamine und hochwertiges Eiweiß. Eine Besonderheit ist, dass es so vielen anderen Wildfleischsorten vor der Zubereitung mariniert werden muss. Von der hervorragenden Qualität kann man sich bei der Fleischerei Cordts überzeugen. „Am Samstag, 8. November, und am verkaufsoffenen Sonntag, 9. November, findet bei uns eine Probeverkostung mit neuseeländischen Hirschfleisch statt“, lädt Ralf Cordts alle Interessierten ein. Auf Wunsch wird beim sogenannten „Front Cooking“ auch ein komplettes Gericht vor den Augen der Gäste zubereitet. Dazu gibt es Rezepte und spezielle Gewürze zum selbst Ausprobieren. Der gute Geschmack des Fleisches wird im Übrigen durch die besondere Fütterung der Tiere erzeugt. Sie ernähren sich ausschließlich von Weidgras und Kräutern, nur in kalteren Monaten wird Heu oder Grassilage zugegeben“, sagt Cordts. Die neuseeländische Hirschfleischindustrie verbietet darüber hinaus den Einsatz von wachstumsfördernden Stoffen oder Steroiden. Probieren gibt bekanntlich über Studieren und daher sollte man einfach einmal bei Cordts vorbeischaun, das Fleisch kosten und sich selbst ein Urteil bilden. Cordts Fleischwaren GmbH Marktstraße 12 23611 Bad Schwartau Telefon: 0451 / 212 00 Telefax: 0451 / 214 44 www.cordts.de

Butchery wholesaler, Ralf Cordts featured strongly in the press campaign.

Woodburn Venison first to get big tick from Heart Foundation

New Zealanders can now be sure they're enjoying top-quality and healthy venison small goods.

Hawke's Bay venison company, Woodburn Venison, has become the first venison supplier in the country to be given the Heart Foundation's Heart Tick for its venison meatballs and burger patties.

Products with the Heart Tick are independently tested to meet stringent standards designed to help people choose a more balanced and nutritious diet. A small fee is paid to the National Heart Foundation to allow use of the Heart Tick on packaging and promotions. The Heart Tick helps to identify food with reduced levels of "bad" fats and less salt.

Woodburn Venison Managing Director, Sally Haslett, says it has taken more than 18 months for the company to get the Heart Tick.

"There have been countless hours of market research and product testing to ensure we have our meatballs and patties just right to meet the Heart Foundation's stringent specifications, while still retaining their delicious flavour," says Sally.

High protein content

She says extensive research has found Woodburn Venison meatballs and burger patties have one of the higher protein contents of pure venison of any on the market. The research also highlights the extremely low saturated fat and sodium levels in the products, ensuring not only great flavour but also excellent health benefits, such as being very low in cholesterol.

With obesity and high cholesterol major health issues in New Zealand, Sally is delighted Woodburn Venison can now proudly display the Heart Tick on its flagship products.

Recent research commissioned by the Heart Foundation Tick Programme shows the Heart Tick is embedded in the New Zealand grocery shopping ritual, with most shoppers using the Heart Tick to help them choose healthier food.

Heart Tick Programme Manager, Ian Mathieson, says the strong consumer confidence in the Heart Tick means it is a powerful tool in the fight against obesity, and is helping to shape up New Zealanders.

"Many of us really want to eat healthier food but with our busy lifestyles we simply don't have the time to study and understand the nutrition information on the labels. The Tick takes the guesswork out of what to buy. All you have to do is look for the Tick symbol on the pack and you know you have made a healthier choice in that food category," Ian says.

Variety and healthy choice


Sally Haslett agrees. She says venison patties and meatballs provide variety in people's diets and at the same time give them a healthy choice.

"The Heart Tick for our meatballs and patties reinforces what a fantastic product we offer," she says.

Woodburn Venison has received strong support from Deer Industry New Zealand, which was keen to see Woodburn products receive the Heart Tick.

Venison is a nutrient-dense food and an excellent source of protein and iron. It is high in essential nutrients like Vitamin B12 and zinc. Venison is a very low-fat food and can be used in a huge variety of ways.

As well as the meatballs and burger patties, Woodburn Venison produces a variety of chilled cuts from its Hawke's Bay processing facility and a range of deli products including sausages. They are available in selected supermarkets and specialty stores throughout the country, Sally explains.

"This is just the beginning for us. We know what a great product venison is, and in the future I would like to see all of our products displaying the Heart Tick." 



Venison

Production

Production in the 12 months ending October 2008 was 586,500 deer, producing 31,500 tonnes of venison (carcass weight equivalent). This was 3% less than last year, and down on peak production of 760,000 deer processed in 2005.

Deer processing plants have been running to capacity through summer, and the MA stag kill is running at a very high levels. The numbers of hinds being killed remains similar to 2007. This signals continued contraction of the breeding herd, reducing the industry's productive capacity.

Schedule

The national average published schedule for AP stags increased 6 cents to \$8.10 (week beginning February 9. Source: Agrifax). Prices for frozen venison in Europe have held up well, despite concerns about consumption, and, combined with the fall in the value of the New Zealand dollar, have contributed to the healthy off-season payments.

Assuming continued satisfactory prices out of Europe, we could see upward movements in the schedule as manufacturers seek supplies for their processed products and wholesalers seek to secure supplies for the 2009 season.

Currency

The dollar is at 6-year lows against the Euro and the US dollar. At just under 40 Euro cents, the New Zealand dollar is more than 20% lower than this time last year. With venison at similar European prices, this adds 20% to returns.

Market conditions

Europe

Sales during the game season were reported to be satisfactory. European importers who had bought chilled venison for retail customers are apparently satisfied with the volume of sales. Frozen venison from the forequarter and leg cuts are reported to have sold well. Restaurant sales of middle cuts were not as good as hoped, but few report any carry-over of stocks, because deliveries from New Zealand were lower than last year due to the reduced kill in the last few months of 2008.

Post-Christmas trade is subdued, with reductions in sales through restaurants being offset by increased purchases of quality proteins through supermarkets as people choose to eat well at home instead of eating out. It is this level of restaurant sales that the main European importers are watching closely, because it will influence their orders.

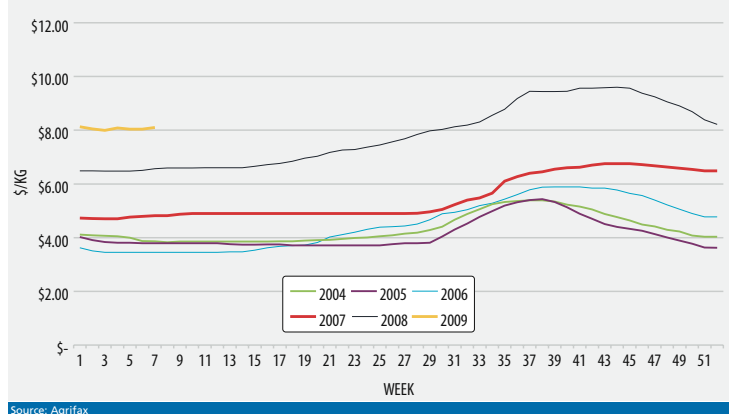
The contraction of European economies does not appear to have affected consumers significantly as yet. Most of the bad news is still in the form of forecasts, with expectations of increasing unemployment and reduced expenditure yet to affect food importers.

The very low price of South American beef is causing some concern. Russian importers withdrew from the market in December, meaning thousands of tonnes of chilled beef were diverted to Europe, driving prices down. We hope that because venison is a specialty meat, it does not have to compete as much on price as the volume proteins.

United States

The economic news just keeps getting worse for the United States. Rising unemployment, falling house prices, profit warnings for manufacturing companies and continued crisis in financial markets are all causing distress to consumers. The

AVERAGE NATIONAL PUBLISHED SCHEDULE. AP STAG 55-60KGS



Source: Agrifax

effect so far has been mostly delaying big-ticket purchases, and trading down every-day expenses. Top-end restaurants have maintained their turnover, but mid-level and up-market chains are losing customers to fast food (or quick-service restaurants) as diners move to save money.

Promotion

Germany: Impress Your Guests

The following promotion activities were undertaken in the past few months period to support sales of New Zealand venison and increase awareness among the targeted public:

- New Zealand venison stand at the consumer gourmet fair *Lust auf Genuss* in Stuttgart in November.
- New Zealand venison cooking display at an Agricultural Attaché function in Berlin to support New Zealand embassy officials.
- Thirty-eight days of instore tastings with the retail customers of six German importers.
- Promotional placement in Dutch retailer magazine (2 million copies) promoting ready-to-cook New Zealand venison dishes available for sale in over 700 stores.
- Press release on New Zealand venison as an ideal meat for Christmas circulated to food editors.
- Instore TV advertising with a chain of four hypermarkets.
- New Zealand venison as a nutritious food: TV advertorial, broadcast 41 times on nine urban television channels to a cumulative estimated audience of 21 million.
- Banner advertising on homepages of consumer websites, **essen-undtrinken.de** and **livingathome.de**. DINZ bought 500,000 "impressions", meaning our banner ad, with links to the **www.neuseelandhirsch.de** website, was guaranteed to be viewed 500,000 times as people entered the website, and searched for recipes. Traffic to the **www.neuseelandhirsch.de** website increased as a result, with 14,000 hits in December.

United States

- The editors of *Food Arts* magazine recently confirmed they will accept the DINZ proposal to host a feature writer on a visit to New Zealand. A DINZ press release resulted in Cervena® featuring as a full-page recipe in the most recent edition of the magazine.
- Preparation is underway for the 2009 Pure New Zealand Cuisine culinary school demonstrations. The Executive has secured funding from Aquaculture New Zealand, Meat & Wool New Zealand and Zespri for the year ahead.
- Preparation is underway to announce the 2009 Cervena Plates recipe competition.

Velvet

While velvet returns are back on last year as expected with the current economic conditions, some exporters suggest that prices are better than originally predicted, with a small trend in the positive direction for the season to date. Concerns are deepening, however, over retaining local processing capability with so much frozen velvet destined to be processed overseas. In Korea, raising awareness of velvet as a healthy food through the Seoul Millennium Hilton promotion exposed over 14,500 wealthy diners to the delights of velvet dishes.

Economic challenges and the 2008/09 velvet season

With the financial crisis now entrenched throughout the world, New Zealand's export commodity-based economy is reflecting its exposure as recently experienced in the dairy sector. World leaders are continuing to seek ways to find an end to the crisis, though it is apparent that any recovery is some way off yet. The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) reports that at the last APEC meeting in Peru (November 2008) the more optimistic were hoping for a recovery over the next 18 months. That remains to be seen.

Only a small quantity of velvet is being processed in this country as New Zealand velvet predominantly flows to China and Korea in frozen form. This puts further pressure on New Zealand velvet processors.

Stock levels and wholesale demand in Korea both remain low as distributors buy New Zealand velvet when required rather than hold stocks, and confidence in the Korean economy remains low.

Korea

The Seoul Millennium Hilton (SMH) ran a significant promotion on "velvet as a healthy food" for the month of December. Feedback from the organisers indicated that the promotion was successful. A New Zealand-based exporter made use of the promotion by hosting a number of clients at the event. The exposure and understanding that velvet can be used outside the traditional use patterns was increased and several follow up leads engaged.

Some statistics from the event:

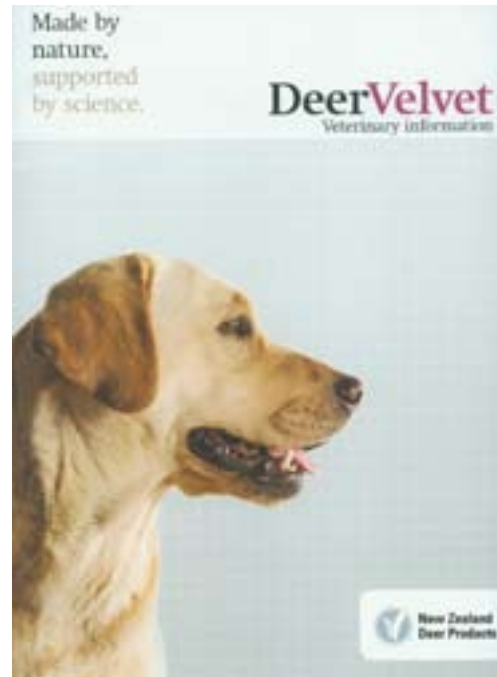
- one of the Seoul Millennium Hilton's premier events
- attracted 14,500 diners of which 85% tried one or more velvet dishes
- the most popular dish was *Samgyetang*, a traditional chicken ginseng soup (this time including velvet)
- many Korean guests were curious about New Zealand deer velvet and its healthy attributes
- a survey of 225 of the diners trying velvet returned a very positive response.

Co-products

Activity commenced in Hong Kong with two major exporters of co-products. The activity was designed to promote the use of co-products as a general healthy food, rather than just a health product. With an objective of promoting the nutritional and great taste, recipes were developed and a launch hosted at a high-profile restaurant in Hong Kong. A press luncheon was held immediately prior to Chinese New Year, resulting in good exposure through Hong Kong's main newspapers and television channels. This promotion runs from the end of January through to March 2009.

Pet supplements

DINZ Executive, a New Zealand marketer of velvet pet nutraceuticals, a New Zealand processor and a US distributor



Brochure for veterinarians promoting use of deer velvet as a frontline treatment.

attended the North American Veterinary Conference in Florida in January 2009. The pet marketer hosted a large number of Israeli veterinarians at the conference, most of whom use New Zealand deer velvet as a frontline treatment for the onset of degenerative joint disease (DJD) or in post-operative surgery. DINZ supplied generic marketing material, including a stand for the conference to help raise awareness of velvet's benefits among companion animal veterinarians.

The New Zealand contingent spoke to more than 600 professionals and collected contact details from about 400. Most people were unaware of the benefits of deer velvet and were very open to learning about these attributes. Meetings also included key presenters who were interested to learn more about New Zealand deer velvet's potential role in veterinary medicine. More than 7,000 veterinarians and technicians attended this year's conference. This was only slightly down on the previous year, while similar exhibitions in the United States have been at least 25 percent down – a good indicator that this segment is still relatively buoyant. The marketing company is carrying out follow-up from this event.

New marketing material

New companion animal marketing collateral has been sent out to key stakeholders in New Zealand, United States and Asia. Feedback has been positive, with many expressing the desire to use the artwork in their own promotions. Generic advertising commenced in February, targeting veterinarians and consumers. The idea behind this small marketing campaign is to continue to raise awareness of deer velvet's potential role in animal health.

NAIT update:

New round of roadshows in March

RFID (radio-frequency identification) will be the subject of a series of 14 field days run by the National Animal Identification and Tracing scheme (NAIT) throughout the country in March/April. Two of these will be held on deer farms. (At press time venues and dates were still being confirmed: check www.nait.org.nz for details.)

NAIT's Craig Purcell told *Deer Industry News* that feedback from roadshows and submissions had highlighted a need to take on some specific issues and these were to be considered at the 12 February meeting of the governance group. In particular, anecdotal evidence about problems with tag retention had been taken on board.

"We're determined to get to the heart of this issue before making any final decisions. We also recognise that generally there is less stock mobility among deer than cattle, and this too has implications for how the system is implemented. It's an evolving process without much set in concrete yet."

Need to adapt

Craig maintains that RFID technology does work in deer, "but it does mean farmers have to adapt their system – this is the same for dairy, beef and sheep farmers. I am yet to meet any farmer who has RFID that would go back to the old way they did things once RFID is put in place."

New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association Executive Committee Chairman Bill Taylor echoes concerns about stock mobility.

"Many members oppose individual tagging, especially farmers who run a breeding-to-slaughter operation where the animals aren't traded live so they never leave the farm. The Executive Committee supports traceability but is not happy to support NAIT until the technology for deer has been properly proven or properly developed. We're very concerned that it's being based on technology for cattle, which isn't necessarily suitable for deer."

Deer farmers well informed

He adds that at the roadshows it had been gratifying to see that NAIT staff recognised that the deer farmers voicing concerns were very well

informed and that they understood the issues.

Meanwhile, Minister of Biosecurity David Carter has moved to assure farmers the Government won't commit to the scheme until a full cost-benefit analysis is complete. "The emotion needs to be taken out of the debate and the facts considered," he said. "As I have said before, the economics of any scheme must be affordable."

Proposals sought

The NAIT project team hopes to wrap up the design and planning phase within the next six months, according to NAIT chairman Ian Corney. In January a Request for Proposal was sent out to seek a technical team to help develop a detailed business case. The next step is to find companies to put up proposals and cost estimates for the NAIT software. Once this is approved, NAIT will move to the building and implementation phase.

Responding to recent criticisms of NAIT from Federated Farmers, Ian Corney agreed that New Zealand's existing food verification systems were world class, but said they did not provide lifetime traceability of individual animals.

"The gaps in current animal traceability systems are acknowledged by MAF and the NZFSA, both of whom are represented on the NAIT governance group." He added that traceability systems were fast becoming a requirement for international trade in the face of increasing consumer demands to provide evidence that livestock products were disease free and safe to eat.

"The reality of the situation is New Zealand is now playing catch-up with the likes of the European Union, Canada and Australia. NAIT is about future-proofing New Zealand agriculture.

"We don't want to be in a position like Australia where life-time traceability



Craig Purcell: problems with tag retention will be taken on board.

has been forced on industry to meet EU requirements. And we don't want to be like Brazil. The European Union banned the importation of Brazilian beef earlier last year precisely because Brazil's systems for registration, animal identification and movement control weren't up to scratch." 

McDonald's backs traceability

Venison burgers aren't yet on the menu at Maccers, but the hamburger chain is certainly a supporter of the NAIT scheme, as the nation's biggest single purchaser of beef.

"Farmers ask why a paper system isn't good enough. But a paper trail just won't do it. For timeliness and accuracy it has to be electronic," says McDonald's Australia/NZ supply chain purchasing manager Arron Hoyle. "Consumers expect transparency and part of that is traceability: you can't have one without the other. Those that question the cost of electronic traceability need to look at the big picture. How can we afford not to do it? It's a small investment for the future of the industry."

Sire sale report

While prices didn't eclipse the heights of earlier years, the top price of \$52,500 paid for a Tower Farms trophy sire was not to be sniffed at. There was a good solid feel to many of the reports coming out of the 2008/09 sire sales, but some averages were back on last year. Many commented on an exceptionally good turnout this year. As for the past two seasons, buyers took the time to look for quality and were prepared to pay for it when they found it. In fact one attendee was so enthused by a sale he broke into poetry (see "Waxing poetic" below).

There are also changes appearing in sale formats, which have been well received. Peel Forest opted for a large-screen video presentation of the stags on offer, shown in the relaxed environment of their paddocks, rather than 'live' in the stressful situation of a revolving caged ring. The Helmsman auction system is also beginning to make its mark at sire sales.

Deer Industry News invited all known studs and significant breeders to submit a sale report again this year and we thank those who responded. If you didn't hear from us, please contact us with your up-to-date 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:

ARAWATA	15 January at Pine Bush, Southland
Stags sold:	27 of 29 on offer
Top price:	\$13,000
Average:	\$4,530
Other animals sold:	23 13-month hinds sold, average price \$650. 35 velvetting stags sold, average \$780, top pen \$900.
Sales compared with last year:	Up on last year
Comment:	Top price of \$13,000 was paid by Peter Allan of Southland for a Platinum son. Don Roberts, Canterbury, paid \$12,500 for a son of Austin. E. Brock paid \$2,300 for the top-priced yearling hind, a Hannibal daughter. Overall very a good result with deer sold to buyers from throughout the country.
CANTERBURY IMPORTED RED DEER STUD	
Sales compared with last year:	Prices back on 2008.
Comment:	Reasonable clearance of English; good clearance of Eastems. High BV spikers up to 23.74 sold very well – one to Brian Cribb and two to a focus farm in the Waikato. Full clearance of yearling hinds.
CLACHANBURN ELK	19 January on farm at Clachanburn, Ranfurly
Stags sold:	30 sold – total clearance
Top price:	\$7,000
Average:	\$3,840
Sales compared with last year:	No auction last year, but average was up on prices achieved from private sales last year.
Comment:	This was the first Wapiti sale to offer Elk BVs. The top price of \$7,000 was for a number one ranking EBV sire. Animals went to buyers throughout South Island.
DEER GENETICS NZ LTD	12 January at McKeown Rd, Geraldine
Stags sold:	16 sold – total clearance
Top price:	\$33,000
Average:	\$10,053
Other animals sold:	Yearling hinds, total clearance, \$3,333 average
Comment:	The top stag, a son of Odysseus DG, (tag 6070) went for \$33,000 to Bob Atkinson. The next top price was \$30,000, paid by Geoff Elder for Zama DG (tag 6074), a son of Scipio DG. Some unsolicited comments from the public after the sale include: "You gave the market what it wanted." "Best line-up of stags I have ever seen." "Didn't realise you had reached this level, will be back next year" "You got the best average in the country and you deserve it."
DONCASTER DEER	16 January at Waipahi
Stags sold:	23 of 28 on offer
Top price:	\$5,000
Average:	\$3,000
Other animals sold:	30 yearling hinds, average \$560.
Sales compared with last year:	Slightly back on last year.
Comment:	Good turnout of buyers, both new and repeat, selecting top quality, high BV sires. Breed values are playing a more significant role in sire selection.



Graham Carr says the big-screen display of moving images of the stags in their natural environment was a great hit with buyers at the Peel Forest auction.

FOVERAN DEER PARK	12 January at Foveran
Stags sold:	85 of 100 on offer
Top price:	\$20,000
Average:	\$5,000
Other animals sold:	10 yearling stags and 15 yearling hinds. Semen from Amadeus made \$600 per straw and Hector and Image semen sold for \$500 per straw.
Sales compared with last year:	Happy with result.
Comment:	Top price for the sale was Lots 1 and 2, both of which were sold for \$20,000. Lot 1 was a son of Archibald over a daughter of Hotspur and cut a new world record for 2yr old HH as cut after the sale at an amazing 12.53kg. This beat the previous record held by a Foveran-bred stag. Lot 2, a full brother to Prince Philip, also sold for \$20,000 and was sold to Argentina. A Warlord/Mr Peel 2yr old sold to Graeme Hawker for \$9,500 and an Awesome/Lewis combination achieved \$10,500. The top-priced 3 yr sire, a William John son, sold for \$13,500. A yearling stag of the same breeding as Amadeus sold for \$6,000 and the top priced yearling hind was a daughter of Amadeus at \$5,200.
LITLEDALE DEER PARK	13 January at Insignis Park
Stags sold:	14 of 16 on offer
Top price:	\$8,500
Average:	\$3,500
Other animals sold:	5 straws of Kingston semen @ \$500
Sales compared with last year:	Slightly down
Comment:	A good turnout with a lot of interest, but buyers cautious. Considering economic situation, a good sale.
NETHERDALE RED DEER	14 January at Netherdale, Balfour, Southland
Stags sold:	16 or 24 elite 3-year-old stags on offer and 2 of 2 commercial 3-year-olds on offer
Top price:	Top \$16,500, one at \$13,000, one at \$10,000, two at \$9,200
Average:	\$7,300
Other animals sold:	Full clearance of 40 2-year-old velvet stags; two pens of 10 @ \$950/head, one pen @ \$825/head and one pen @ \$750. Average \$870. Full clearance of 40 13-month recorded hinds. Top prices \$2,000, \$1,800 and \$1,100. Average \$650.
Sales compared with last year:	Average well up on a very poor 2008 sale due to drought. Two-year-old velvet stags and 13-month hinds also up on last year.
Comment:	An excellent sale with really positive feedback from buyers. Sale run under the Helmsman auction system and well attended by buyers from throughout New Zealand. We were delighted with our offering this year and the quality was reflected in the prices paid.
PEEL FOREST	10 January at Peel Forest Estate
Stags sold:	40 of 41 on offer
Top price:	\$26,000
Average:	English \$8,400; Eastern \$4,800
Sales compared with last year:	Prices up 10 percent on last year
Comment:	Strong sale; quality of stock complimented by clients. They liked the clean, open heads of the English, particularly the Fuzeland-influenced stags. Venison high DBV stags sold well with highest DBV offered stag in the country at 23.3 selling for \$16,000. New format of presenting the stags on a large screen having been videoed in the paddock, instead of on the revolving caged ring was well received by clients. The stags were on show in the back pens but the new format eliminated all stress on the animals and showed the stags off in their natural environment and in all different angles for the client to better assess the quality of the antlers. Top-priced stag purchased by Foveran Deer Stud for \$26,000.
PELORUS RED DEER	10 January at Frasers Road, Ashburton
Stags sold:	16 of 18 on offer
Top price:	\$22,000
Average:	\$6,900
Other animals sold:	20 yearling hinds, average \$1,480
Sales compared with last year:	About \$1,000 down on last year.

REMARKABLES PARK DEER STUD	14 January, Remarkables Park, Queenstown
Stags sold:	42 of 59 on offer
Top price:	\$8,700
Average:	\$2,902
Sales compared with last year:	All sale statistics showed strong improvement on Remarkables Park Deer Stud's 2008 sale. Average price up 12.2% and top price up 24%. Highest BV was 19 (13 in 2008).
Comment:	31 of the two-year-old stags were over 200kg and none were less than 180kg. The sale was very successfully conducted as a Helmsman Auction for the second year running. Purchasers found this system very straight-forward. It gave them greater choice and control over purchases as they could bid on all lots until the close of the auction. Buyers and agents noted the deer were excellent buying given they were the biggest two-year-olds and the highest range of BVs offered at any of the 2009 stud sales. There were great buys, often at least 50% lower than other deer studs, said Alastair Porter. "That is the penalty of having a deer stud located so far south – we just don't get enough buyers. However, attractive prices, plus the stud's emphasis on high BVs and big-framed quality temperament attracted very strong support from Southland and Otago farmers." He said the stud's reputation for great value was slowly spreading and more deer went north this year. He was optimistic next year's sale would attract more buyers. "We expect 50 of the two-year-old stags offered in 2010 will be over 200kg, with high BVs. More northern buyers will be attracted by more high-quality trophy potential two-year-olds, based on more trophy stag semen used over Adonis- and Brusnik-bred hinds.
RODWAY PARK & SARNIA DEER	8 January at Rodway Park, Rotorua
Stags sold:	24 or 31 on offer
Top price:	\$30,000
Average:	\$6,037
Other animals sold:	Some semen sold; maiden hind sale held on 21 February.
Sales compared with last year:	Last year we had a total clearance through the ring, with one stag only retained for sire duties at Sarnia Deer. This year, average was higher, which reflected the quality of the line-up.
Comment:	We were very pleased to see many new faces and have achieved a number of new clients for the studs this year. Our overall line-up of stags on offer was very well received and met a ready market. We had several enquiries about hinds but have decided to stay with the policy of running our hind sale in conjunction with the National Rising Stars Velvet Competition in February.
STANFIELD'S	11 January at Bangor, Darfield
Stags sold:	54 of 64 on offer
Top price:	\$40,000 (two Warnham stags at this price) \$20,000 (top Woburn) \$9,000 (top Eastern)
Average:	English: \$10,175 Easterns: \$5,260
Comment:	Craig Wilson purchased a Norton son for \$40,000, and Mike Dempsey paid the same for a Hotspur son (both pure Warnham). This year's sale was held in Stanfield's brand new selling complex which was opened by the local Member of Parliament. A big crowd attended, estimated at 450.
STEINVALE DEER STUD	27 January on farm
Stags sold:	23 of 28 on offer
Top price:	\$3,100
Average:	\$2,022
Comment:	Very pleasing result, especially as we've been out of the market for five years. Buyers from around Taupo, Hawke's Bay and Wanganui as well as local.
TIKANA	17 January at Browns, Southland
Stags sold:	15 of 21 on offer
Top price:	\$11,500
Average:	\$5,820
Sales compared with last year:	Strong sale on par with last year's exceptional sale.
Comment:	All Wapiti sales were well supported on the back of a strong venison schedule. At Tikana we saw good demand, particularly for the better animals. The top price of \$11,500 was paid for an all-round bull with highest growth rate and cutting 8.0kg velvet. In a departure from normal we put up a two-year-old Wapiti bull. Hosea was the first son of Trilogy (NZ record velvet 22.3kg) to go to auction. He was purchased by Paul Waller for \$10,000.

TOWER FARMS	6 January at Cambridge
Stags sold:	22 of 30 on offer
Top price:	\$52,500
Average:	\$8,715
Other animals sold:	14 R 1yr and R 2yr hinds, average \$1,916
Sales compared with last year:	Back a tad on last year
Comment:	This sale was first off the rank in the North Island. A full house of attendees with 49 registered buyers. The sale was a bit sticky in places, given the current state of the velvet industry and the economic environment. The top 2 year-old velvet sire, cutting 5.66 kg velvet, sold for \$17,500 to Whakamaru Deer. The top 2 year-old trophy sire (38 points) sold for \$52,500 to Rata Maire Deer (Ohakune).
UNFEHLBAR ENGLISH RED DEER	10 January on farm
Stags sold:	16 of 22 on offer
Top price:	\$19,000
Average:	\$5,075
Sales compared with last year:	We have improved from last year's average of \$3,100 with a better class of stag. Our stags were better this year compared with last year's and this reflected in the average price, despite the projected depressed market due to the economy and poor velvet prices. The industry still appeared to have a positive element with excellent stags still selling for good prices and huge attendances at sale venues.
Comment:	Unfehlbar English Red Deer put up 22 stags out of 23 stag fawns born. Lot 3 Aslan x Elizabeth sold for \$19,000 to Peter McIntyre and Lot 6 Aslan x McLeod/ Fergie sold for \$18,000 to Gary Fowler. The sale had an awesome atmosphere, huge attendance and positive comments about catering and presentation of the deer. They looked very impressive with great 2-year-old heads. Lot 9 (a Hermes son) cut 9.2 kg, excellent for a two year old. Our thanks to all who attended and best wishes to the buyers with their purchases.
WINDERMERE DEER	6 January on farm
Stags sold:	22 of 33 on offer
Top price:	\$20,000
Average:	\$5,800
Sales compared with last year:	Average \$8,790 last year
Comment:	This sale was back considerably on recent years. We think this is mainly because there are fewer farmers seeking sires this year and a cautious approach because of the current state of the velvet industry.

Waxing poetic

Kaikoura's Dave Mackie got caught up in the mood at the Deer Genetics sale and has broken into verse to record the occasion...

Ode to Deer Genetics

*Don and Anne's was the place to be,
Deer Genetics with superb sires to see.
Smoky bacon set the tone, with eggs to follow,
Before the drone, of Clarkie's voice, so well known.
Stunning stags, so young it's true,
So bid up – this one's for you.
So many stags of quality, it's hard to pick,
At just 2 years old! So bid up quick
Lot 3, the star, too slow you bid,
With 30 points and beam to boot,
Too slow, you missed the best,
Trophy sires with 30 points plus
Let's see what else, will do for us
Lot 7 next in line, with 34 points,
Damn, there's Bob, he knows his deer,
My budget smaller, going North I fear.
The 3 year olds are looking great,
Stunning trophy sires, so hard to find,
Don's breeding stags, the best around.
All lots sold, great average too,
\$13,000 for those at 2.
Sale average just over \$10,000
And yearling hinds, with future sires,
A mere \$3,300 average found.
Well done, Don, Anne and Kelly too
In a year so tough, to bring this through!*

Latvian deer farming conference

“Farm Management and Product Quality” Sigulda, Latvia 21–24 August 2008

This was the second successful deer farmers’ conference held in Latvia. There were 50–60 delegates from all over the EU on the first two days. The host city, Sigulda, is about 1½ hours from Riga, the capital of Latvia. The venue was the Research Institute of Biotechnology and Veterinary Medicine (“Sibra”) of the Latvian University of Agriculture.

The conference was opened by the Minister of Agriculture, Martins Roze, with welcome addresses from Aleksandrs Jemeljanovs, the University Director; and Dainis Paeglītis, Chairman of Latvian Wild Animal Breeders’ Association.

There were two days of presentations from various experts, then two days of farm visits, entertainment and wonderful food!

The speakers on the first day covered subjects such as nutritional deficiencies and antler chemical composition, farm management schemes in New Zealand and two presentations from the university staff on their deer research projects.

The next day focused on farming deer, starting with specialties and problems of Latvia, setting up a big deer farm, Zemitani, in Latvia, deer farming in China, breeding and production for trophy deer worldwide, feeding farmed Red deer by total maintenance ration (TMR) in Poland and reproduction issues.

Presentations were in English and Latvian, and an interpreter fluent in both languages did a wonderful job of translating both ways.

Two field days followed, and the 70 people who attended had a great time! The first farm visit was to Zemitani, a very large new deer farm. They have a slaughterhouse planned and under construction, and a processing plant already set up with all the stringent EU requirements met. Adjoining the processing plant is a beautiful indoor entertainment area. The buildings on this farm would make most Kiwis green. The farm is still in development,



White Red deer on Dainis Paeglītis’ farm, Latvia.

Yersiniosis bites deep into profits

Southland deer farmers, Dave and Sandy MacGillivray, received a healthy \$500 net per head when their rising one-year-olds went off for slaughter in late spring last year, but a recurrence of yersiniosis knocked some of the gloss from the good returns.

Dave and Sandy run 120 Red hinds along with 1800 Perendale ewes on their 260-hectare breeding and finishing property at Merrivale in Western Southland. One-third of the hinds are mated to Red stags for replacements with the balance mated to terminal Elk/Wapiti sires.

They’d been looking forward to better prices last season, but as the well-conditioned young stock were being prepared for winter, around a dozen of them were suddenly struck down with the bloody scouring typical of yersiniosis. Six of the animals died while the rest were eventually nursed back to health following a treatment with penicillin.

Dave says the direct cost of the outbreak was at least \$3,000. That’s not counting veterinary costs and the production losses experienced by the survivors.

It wasn’t the first time the disease had struck on the property since the MacGillivrays moved there in 1991, and Dave says the outbreak brought back bad memories from their early years of deer farming. Interestingly, he says the hybrid fawns born to the terminal sires were the most susceptible. “It was the biggest stag fawns that died.”

Yersiniosis will quickly kill fawns if left untreated. The bacterium that causes it, *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*, is widespread in the environment and survives well in soils and

water through winter. It is impossible to protect young fawns from exposure.

The danger time is late autumn and winter, and disease outbreaks are triggered by stress. This can come from a variety of sources, including bad weather, nutrition changes, parasites, handling, transport, mixing of social groups and, especially, weaning.

Six years ago, Dave MacGillivray changed to weaning after mating. “The fawns put on more condition prior to winter when they’re left with their mothers for longer. It also reduces the stress of weaning,” he explains.

It was that reduction in stress – a major risk factor with yersiniosis – that had convinced Dave that it would be safe to stop vaccinating his weaners against the disease. And for the first five years, that policy seemed to work. Although there was nothing remarkable about the late autumn period last year, yersiniosis made its unwelcome return.

Dave hasn’t hesitated to reinstate a vaccination programme using Yersiniavax®, and his latest crop of fawns will be receiving their two jabs three to six weeks apart during the coming months.

He is keen to maintain his policy of weaning after mating.



Mobile slaughterhouse.

but already has a large herd for breeding and trophy animals. Zemitani put on a wonderful spread with venison prepared and cooked in many delicious ways. This was the first day of the hard antler competition with some good heads, which were scored using the CIC method.

The next day was at Dainis Paegl tis' farm, and this was an open-air party which is equivalent to our conference dinner social. There was a farm walk to view the deer, which were very quiet, with a nice herd of white Red deer! There were plenty of marquees for delegates' seating and a food marquee where samples of Latvian delicacies delighted everyone. This was also the second day of the hard antler competition with more heads scored and prizes given. A roaring competition showed the prowess of the Europeans over the Antipodeans! This day was a wonderful final event for a very successful conference. Congratulations to the organisers for the smooth running of the whole show. 🇺🇳

Report contributed by Don and Anne Bennett



Dave MacGillivray.

While stock handling must be managed carefully during the rut, the vaccination programme can be fitted around this. Dave intends to plan a programme with the advice of his veterinarian, which will see the second of the two shots given at weaning. Protection reaches full strength seven to ten days after the second vaccination.

Dave says that, in tandem with protecting fawns from stress, vaccination will help reduce the risk of losing more valuable animals to yersiniosis. 🇺🇳

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Kingswood @ 5 yr



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dave.mackie@xtra.co.nz





A JML notification letter in the mail:

the tip of the iceberg

By Jaimie Hunnam, Johne's Management Limited

This is the first in a planned series of articles providing practical, up-to-date information on Johne's Disease (JD) in farmed deer, specifically on the available tools and advice to increase your understanding and/or to do something about any JD problems. Here we will focus on the industry initiative, Johne's Management Limited (JML) and what a notification letter in the mail may mean for you.

What is JML?

JML is a company funded through a voluntary per-carcass contribution from every deer processor in New Zealand. JML has been collecting data since January 2007, focusing on enlarged lymph nodes that are not considered suspicious for tuberculosis but are suspicious for JD as identified by AsureQuality meat inspectors according to an agreed standard at time of inspection. JML informs deer farmers of these JD-suspect lymph nodes via a notification letter in February, June and October, with each letter containing four months' worth of information. All information within the JML database is strictly confidential. An individual farmer's data is not visible to any party except that farmer and the processor from which the data was sourced.


I got a JML notification letter in the mail ... what does it mean?

Identifying a JD-suspect lymph node at slaughter is like looking at the tip of an iceberg. Even a single slaughtered deer with a JD-suspect lymph node can indicate that there are a number of infected deer still on your farm. A notification letter is alerting you to the possibility of a JD "iceberg" in your deer herd and invites you to consider making some test and management choices related to the control of JD. For this reason, and it's worth repeating, a JML letter should be viewed as a "heads-up" of a possible

JD problem in your herd – a sign that further action may be needed.

If you have not received a notification letter from JML, don't get too comfortable. Although it's a good sign, it is certainly not enough to say your herd is free of JD. Talk to your veterinarian about testing for JD to determine whether your herd is at low risk of infection.

What do I do?

If you decide to tackle JD in your herd, control rather than eradication is the aim. JD is a complex disease and a long-term, farm-specific management plan is the most efficient way to ensure you will get it under control in your herd. In June 2009, JML will train 30 to 35 specialist JD advisers and consultants around New Zealand to provide up-to-date technical knowledge to farmers when developing a JD management plan for their deer. Until then, talk to your veterinarian about the appropriate management of JD for your farm and, if they haven't already, encourage them to sign up to be a JML-trained consultant. 

- **If you'd like further information, please call me on (0800) 456 453.**
- **Dr Jaimie Hunnam (nee Glossop)**
Project Management
Johne's Management Limited
PO Box 134
Foxton 4848
info@johnes.co.nz



Johne's Disease - are your deer infected?



To find out, see the JML site at the South Island Agricultural Field Days or call (0800) 456 453

SOUTH ISLAND AGRICULTURAL FIELD DAYS
FARMING FOR THE FUTURE - LINCOLN: MARCH 25-27 2009

Johne's survey: it's not too late to respond

Johne's disease affects not only deer, but also other ruminants such as cattle, sheep and goats. While a significant amount of research has been carried out both in New Zealand and internationally into this chronic, contagious and sometimes fatal infection, the disease remains difficult to control and can be extremely costly for those who are affected.

The Johne's Disease Research Consortium (JDRC) is a newly formed initiative partnering the beef, sheep, dairy and deer industries with the Johne's research community. The aim is to speed the development of efficient and effective tools that will help farmers control and reduce the prevalence of the disease.

Earlier this year, JDRC researchers from Massey University sent out a survey to a number of beef, sheep, dairy and deer farmers in the Wairarapa, Hawke's Bay, Taranaki, Manawatu-Wanganui, Canterbury, West Coast, and Southland looking at the incidence of Johne's disease. The survey also includes questions about leptospirosis, a bacterial disease that affects both animals and humans. The survey will help JDRC develop an understanding of the prevalence of these diseases in New Zealand and guide our



Research into Johne's Disease and Leptospirosis in New Zealand

Farm health and production Survey



"Help to control Johne's disease and Leptospirosis, and reduce the risk of Leptospirosis among farmers, their families and workers"



work into developing techniques to reduce production loss and thereby increase farm productivity. The information from the survey is strictly confidential and will not in any way affect the privacy of individual farmers, practice clients or veterinarians.

If you have already seen and returned the survey, thank you very much. You are in the draw to win one of three portable DVD players. If you have not seen a survey and would like to participate, there is still a chance to enter the draw. Please contact the JDRC researchers to have a survey sent to you.

Contact:

- C.verdugo@massey.ac.nz or c.heuer@massey.ac.nz
Phone 06 350 5903 or 06 350 5948

Elk and Wapiti Society Velvet Competition

Dave Lawrence's bull Trilogly took top honours at the Elk and Wapiti Society's annual velvet competition last month. His 22.08 kg head is thought to be a New Zealand record, and in imperial measures he's being picked to break 50 lbs next season.

A very healthy \$10,500 was raised by the Society at its annual awards dinner to help fund research into animal health issues such as parasitism and drench effectiveness. Competition results are as follows:

Class	Winner	Weight
2 year-old	Tom May	5.3 kg
3 year-old	Tom May	11.9 kg
4 year-old	Donald and Leigh Whyte	11.8 kg
5 year-old	Tom May	16.9 kg
6 year-old	Dave Lawrence	22.08 kg

Other results:

Hard antler: 2 year-old	Murray and Trish Cook, Ashburton, 341 1/8 SCI
Open Supreme Champion	Dave Lawrence: Trilogly
Sire Three	Donald and Leigh Whyte: Superchamp bull
Champion of Champions	Tom May: Mayfield Magic
Reserve Champion	Dave Lawrence: Trilogly

Obituary: Neil Purvis

The tragic and untimely death of Neil Purvis on his farm near Tarras on 26 October has shocked the local community and his friends throughout the deer, agriculture, racing and sporting fraternities.

Vale Neil Purvis was born in Cromwell, and was the third generation of his family to farm at Cluden Station. More than a farmer, he also had an impressive sporting career, starting as an 18-year old in 1971 while working on the farm near Masterton of All Black captain Brian Lochore. He played for Wairarapa-Bush (including the match against the 1971 British Lions) and was in the New Zealand Under-21 side in 1972. In 1973 he returned to his home province, playing nine matches for Otago as a mid-field back, eventually notching up 56 matches for Otago before hanging up his boots in 1981. Highlights included touring South Africa in the 1976 All Blacks, scoring nine tries, and helping Otago to a 10-8 win over the Wallabies in 1978.

He was the owner and breeder of thoroughbred race horses, including Cluden Creek which won the 2004 Wellington Cup, and played Brabin Cup cricket for Otago in 1973.

PGG Wrightson's Graham Kinsman says deer were probably a small part of Neil's overall operation but he ran it very efficiently and was a very keen deer enthusiast.

"He sold a line of weaners every year and they were always very good quality animals and highly sought after. Whether you were a big or a small buyer he always made you feel an important customer. He was one of those special and unique guys I will always remember."

He is survived by his wife Lesley and three children. 



Welcome to Palmerston North!

“Passion and Profit 2009”

Industry conference 2009, Palmerston North, 26–28 May 2009

The NZDFA, Host Branch Central Regions and Deer Industry New Zealand warmly invite you to the 2009 New Zealand Deer Industry Conference, to be held at the modernised, comfortable and spacious Travelodge Hotel, Palmerston North, on 26–28 May 2009.

“Passion and profit” theme

The conference aims to build on the underlying passion that long-time industry players have always shown for their animals and products, and on capturing the relative profitability and productivity themes that are becoming mainstream drivers for committed deer farmers.

The conference social programme will build on the initiatives of venison versatility that have marked the opening evenings recently. Display and menus will be based on a smart Graham Brown-coordinated theme using top local chefs, winning New York Cervena® recipes and an interactive display in person and via video to the hotel kitchen. Our own Star chefs show won't indulge in any Ramsay-esque bad language but the event will feature stunning product, matched with the right wine, beer and non alcoholic refreshment.

Conference will open with an agribusiness seminar, first seen last year. The programme is still under development but will feature discussion around profitability and land-use options, a financial overview in light of the recessionary conditions, the productivity strategy, traceability and Focus Farms. We also expect that the National Pest Management Strategy, with its options of Tb eradication, containment or roll-back of VRAs – and the relative funding implications – will attract strong interest.

Programme outline

The industry retains its conference format this year, returning to Palmerston North for the first time since 1986, when Billy T James was the star attraction. In 2009, that entertainment slot will be filled in style by the “Beat Girls” as part of the annual conference banquet and Awards dinner. The programme outline is:

Tuesday 26 May:

- Morning: Branch Chairmen's meeting and DINZ Board meeting
- Afternoon: Agribusiness seminar, 2.00 pm – 6.00 pm
- Major welcome event: “An evening with Graham Brown and friends”.

Wednesday 27 May

- DINZ Formal General Meeting followed by NZDFA AGM
- Annual awards dinner, featuring the 25th Deer Industry Award and the Matuschka Award.

Thursday 28 May

- Central Regions Branch-hosted field day including an up-close visit to the Apiti wind farm and lunch and

relaxation with the Tui Girls and the Mangatainoka Tui brewery experience.

Participation is the key

As always, industry issues will be debated on the conference floor. The emphasis is on an informative, inexpensive and effective meeting that allows healthy debate, questions and answers from industry leaders, and a balance of good, innovative social events and entertainment. Central Regions Branch is also arranging a partners' programme.




Strong sponsorship and industry partner support

We appreciate always the loyalty of our industry partners and sponsors, and are proud to have committed support from industry partners **Rabobank, Telford Agricultural Polytechnic, Firstlight Foods, Allflex, Country-wide magazine and The Deer Farmer, Silver Fern Farms and Duncan and Company** to date.

Registration/contacts

Registration will be handled through the experienced DCMS conference management team (pat@dcms.co.nz) 03 477 1377, or through the Producer Manager 021 719 038, 04 471 6118 tony.pearse@deernz.org and MCA, Natalie Fraser 04 471 6110 natalie.fraser@deernz.org

Accommodation at the venue is limited to 65 rooms. Other options are available within a short distance. There continues to be pressure on accommodation with competing corporate and Massey capping events, so **early action and bookings are essential in 2009**.

An advance registration form will be available electronically from the end of February through DCMS, your local Branch or from the Deer Industry New Zealand office. Details are being finalised with the local conference committee who have a long track record of producing outstanding events with some surprises and innovations of their own. Accommodation requirements must be coordinated through the Conference management and can be booked now on request. The full programme will be available at www.deernz.org as soon as its finalised and will be circulated to NZDFA members through *Stagline-online*. 

- **For further information please contact Pat, Natalie or Tony as above.**



2009 NZDFA AGM, Constitutional and other matters

NZDFA Annual General Meeting: Travelodge Hotel, Palmerston North, Wednesday 27 May 2009

Remits, tight timelines, plenty of discussion areas

In 2008, Branches responded to a call for early remit submission. This allowed time for discussion around the Branches prior to the conference and lead to a very productive, informed and active AGM. This year, the Executive Committee will again lead Branch Chairmen in three separate regional meetings prior to conference to advance that preparation.

Remits to the AGM are customarily submitted through Branches. Members are urged to submit all remits to the Association offices by **Wednesday 15 April 2009** to enable them to be published in the pre-AGM *Deer Industry News* and meet our constitutional demands, which have a 30-day window prior to the AGM. Time lines are a little more relaxed this year with the later conference dates, but remits will still need to be written in March and early April.

This provides Branches the opportunity to develop remits before the Branch AGM round and have time during May to meet again locally and discuss remits and other industry issues to bring forward at this important conference. Discussion of late remits that have not had Branch input, irrespective of the wisdom of your Chairman and committee, is not encouraged.

It is to **everyone's advantage** for remits to be published and circulated to all members. Remits will be posted on the website and circulated to Chairmen as they are received and there will be a final session with the combined Branch Chairmen before the Conference opening on Tuesday 26 May.

Matuschka Award 2009

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

The award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and core spirit of deer farming. It will be announced at the 2009 *Passion and Profit* Deer Industry Conference dinner on the evening of Wednesday 27 May 2009 at the Travelodge Hotel, Palmerston North.

Given the nature of the Award, that recognises the unsung heroes at Branch level, the Award itself will be presented to the 2009 winner at a special mid-winter function in the recipient's Branch.

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 Friday 8 May 2009**.

The Rumpole Cup


Entries are invited for the 2009 Rumpole Cup, which is awarded to the best Branch or Associated Society newsletter. Newsletters submitted routinely to the NZDFA office will be entered automatically. The inaugural competition for this trophy was held in 2000 following the initiative of long-serving and eloquent NZDFA Councillor Colin Perrior QC, who amongst other attributes, was known affectionately as Rumpole.

Past winners have been:

2000	Coastal Bay of Plenty Branch
2001	Tongariro Branch

2002	Hawke's Bay Branch
2003	Wairarapa Branch
2004	Otago Branch
2005	Waikato Branch
2006	[Not Awarded]
2007	Central Regions
2008	Elk and Wapiti Society of New Zealand

The award is to promote good communication at grass roots level. Newsletters are professionally judged on variety, topicality, quality of writing/editing, effective communication, originality and presentation. Smaller Branch newsletters which cannot afford more expensive printing (e.g. more colours) are not disadvantaged.

Please submit your entry to the Rumpole Cup, NZDFA, PO Box 10-702, Wellington by **Friday 8 May 2009**. You can submit either one or a number of issues of the newsletter, provided it was published during the previous 12 months. 

For any questions or discussion on any of these AGM and conference matters please contact:

- **Natalie Fraser 04 471 6110, natalie.fraser@deernz.org**

or

- **Producer Manager, Tony Pearce, 021 719 038, tony.pearce@deernz.org**

AGM constitutional matters:

NZDFA and DINZ nominations: 2009/10

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 Sharon Love, Mamakau, Rotorua retires by rotation and is available for re-election.)
- Executive Committee member, South Island, one vacancy. (Current member, Bill Taylor, Lora Valley, Winton retires by rotation and is considering his options at present after 6 years in the role.)

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, elected or life members of the Association resident in the same Island as the vacancy,
- be signed by the nominee,
- be delivered to the Association's office by 5.00pm on Friday, 3 April 2009.



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 confirmation of timelines will be sent with the April edition of Deer Industry News or by separate post to meet deadlines. Postal voting runs for 21 days and must close 7 clear days prior to the AGM on Wednesday 27 May 2009 (i.e. voting opens on 29 April, closing on 20 May 2009).

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 Directors.

The 8-member SAP is made up from:

- Four Executive Committee members
- Four elected non-Executive Committee 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) Ponty von Dadelszen, Waipukurau, Hawkes Bay (retirement by rotation) and (SI) David Stevens, Balfour, Southland (retirement by rotation). Both have expressed an interest in consideration for re-election.

Nominations are now called for the following positions:

- 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, life or elected members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association offices by 5.00pm on Friday, 3 April 2009.

The nominees must be full, life or elected members of the NZDFA.

Further, nominees:

- may 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 the Deer Industry New Zealand Board.

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

C) NZDFA Appointments to Deer Industry New Zealand Board

The Ministerial approval of the Regulations to allow a 50:50 levy share from producers and the processor/exporter sector was formalised in October 2004.

The Deer Industry New Zealand Board comprises four producer appointments and four appointments from the processing/exporting sector. The producer appointments are selected by the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association, and have been appointed for a three-year term on recommendation by the NZDFA's Selection and Appointment Panel according to its detailed Operating Code of Practice and then advised to the Minister. Successful appointments who retire by rotation are eligible for further terms.

Nominations are now called for the following NZDFA-appointed position on the DINZ Board:

- 1 vacancy: Deer Industry New Zealand Board member retiring

by rotation (John Spiers, Takapau, Hawke's Bay).

The nomination must be moved and seconded by two levy-paying members, signed by the nominee and delivered to the Association's offices before 5.00pm on Friday 3 April 2009.

The NZDFA Constitution (2008) refers:


- 37.9 **Nominations for DINZ:** The Returning Officer shall publicly announce, in writing, the names of the retiring Association representatives of DINZ and call for nominations for their replacement, prior to the end of March each year. Nominations shall be:
- (a) made by any two Full Members, Elected Members Life members of the NZDFA
 - (b) in writing; and
 - (c) 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.
- 37.10 **Eligibility for Selection as DINZ Representative:** All persons interested or engaged in the deer farming industry shall be eligible for nomination, with the exception of employees of DINZ 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.
- 37.11 **Right to Address AGM:** Each nominee for selection as a DINZ representative may address the Annual General Meeting of the Association at a time and date to be specified by the Executive Committee.
- 37.12 **Selection Process:** As soon as possible after the closing date for nominations the Returning Officer shall publish to all Branches and in "Stagline" a full list of the persons nominated, together with any declarations of interests received from them. On the date determined for the selection (but not later than the end of **June** each year), the Selection and Appointment Panel shall convene, interview and select from the nominees as many Association representatives as are required to fill available vacancies on DINZ.

Nominations for the positions will be considered by the Selection and Appointment Panel following the 2009 AGM within 21 days of that meeting, with recommendations and appointment to the Board being advised to the Minister of Agriculture at that time subject to the Operating Code of Practice procedures.

Nomination Forms

Nomination forms for the Executive Committee, SAP and Deer Industry New Zealand vacancies can be obtained from the Association's office: Phone: 04 473 4500; Fax: 04 472 5549; email: natalie.fraser@deernz.org or tony.pearse@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 34, February 2009.

For further information please contact the Returning Officer, Tony Pearse at the Deer Industry New Zealand office or 021 719 038 or tony.pearse@deernz.org 

COMING UP!

21 May: Canterbury Focus Farm field day, Mendip Hills Station, Parnassus. Contact Peter Bradley on 027 649 1107 for details.



Branch Chairman profile:

Stephen Borland – Waikato

Stephen Borland, chair of the Waikato Branch of NZDFA, describes himself as “an old velvet diehard”. He’s been in the business 22 years and is a staunch supporter of Velexco, whose velvet collection he personally manages in the North Island.

“I believe it’s the future of the industry – it’s the only way out of the doldrums and that’s the only reason I am still in it.”

Stephen and his wife Judy run their operation on good fertile land, consisting of two 53-hectare blocks in dairy farming country, one a breeding block at Matamata and the other a mixed-farming operation at Pukeatua. As well as his own 150 velvet stags he leases out grazing and produces silage for the off-season.

“We cut velvet here plus we run a few trophy animals.” Daughter Monique and son-in-law Ross share-farm the Matamata breeding block, which they bought from Stephen and Judy in 2003. Son Chris is currently in his fourth year of OE but has deer farming experience with Landcorp, “and he’s good on the end of a fencing shovel on his breaks home”.

Stephen became Branch Chairman “to get action for a decent return to deer farmers”. The Waikato Branch is one of the oldest, is quite active and very committed to national policy. “We closely watch what DINZ is doing and for some reason seem to have the reputation of being a bunch of stirrers at the annual conference.”

Stephen’s own views are forthright: “We feel that DINZ is not measuring the return to levy payers for the investments they are making on behalf of the industry. It’s all about accountability and right-sizing, because when the reserve fund runs out in two years’ time, there will not be the funds to sustain the organisation at present levels and it will require big increases in levy payments – it’s the big issue this year. Originally it was expected the industry would be processing a million carcasses a year, which would be more than enough to support an operation at the present level, but now that it’s only [likely to be] 400,000 a year there is simply not enough levy revenue to support the present structure.

“The present value of venison is derived through growers going broke which two years later increases the price for those who stay – it amounts to pushing each other out to get a better return. The only reason venison is \$8 a kg is undersupply. Yet we have this huge organisation spending a lot on things that don’t have measurable returns. Of course, this criticism has been voiced before.

“One of the exceptions to this is the Focus Farm programme, which is 100 percent endorsed by Branches and will return valuable up-to-date management information for all deer farmers.”

As a farmer, Stephen is an ardent believer in diversification to minimise risk. Having “gone broke” once when he was 100 percent exposed to deer, he has since followed a policy of spreading the risk into thirds: a third in deer, a third contract grazing, and a third in his own herd of cattle. At present his extra grazing is being utilised by 300 stags for another Velexco supplier, but in some years it is used for dairy cattle. “The grazing equals cash, and the land can carry a very high stocking rate during summer. Then in winter these animals go home so only our stags and steers remain. The velvet stags

come out very fat and average 7 kg of velvet each including the second cut.

“I follow the grass growth patterns to get low-cost production and we produce 400 bales of silage a year for supplementary feeding. This means we never have to buy in feed, even though we had the drought last year. If it’s a good winter we even have spare feed to sell, which again is cash income. This isn’t a very common deer-farming strategy but it works for me. A lot of farms are so heavily stocked they never have spare feed in reserve.”


Stephen is critical of the proposed NAIT system, which he sees as a further burden on farmers who already have enough problems with identification and tracing technology.

“The ear tag system was sold to us as the last word in identification methods, but it hasn’t turned out that way even though MAF did a cost analysis beforehand and assured us there’d be lots of advantages. It was the same story with putting tags on our velvet to get us a premium price – it hasn’t.

“Tags are expensive and the manufacturers often get them wrong owing to poor quality control. Many farmers also get wrong tag numbers coming back from the works but when they complain, the processors don’t want to know. NAIT is full of holes and a nightmare for all farmers. With the average deer farmer managing around 400 deer, the cost of race or hand-held scanners is prohibitive. There is no doubt it would suit the larger corporate type of operation, and most are already using this type of technology.”

He adds that central North Island deer farmers kept closely in touch, especially over the summer velvetting season, and all were in agreement about these issues.

“The Branch is one of the oldest, and has a very active membership, generally at the older end of the range; I suppose that’s because many of us have been in it for so long. We get a full turnout of 14 committee members at meetings, and have a programme of regular activities.” The North Island velvet competition (NIVC) last December was particularly successful, with about 90 people attending – twice the usual turnout. This was thanks largely to good organisation and encouraging participation, for which he gives credit to Sharon Love as secretary/treasurer and a keen NIVC member. Waikato members were also looking forward to the National 2-year-old competition at Joe Crowley’s Oaks property (Cambridge) in February.

Social activities are an important part of the Branch’s programme. In September they had a “Spring escape” – a day visiting Duncan & Co’s plant at Mamaku in the morning, followed by lunch at the Blueberry County winery, a 4WD rally and finally dinner at a Cambridge hotel where they celebrated two members – Alby Cooper and Rodney Dixon – becoming eligible for the pension. 





Corporate membership proposal only a 'maybe'

Federated Farmers is considering a proposal to offer deer farmers access to its services through corporate membership, although the final shape of any arrangement is still very much up in the air. The uncertainty follows the departure from Federated Farmers this month of Simon Calvert, the Federation's former General Manager of Membership Services. It was Calvert who met with NZDFA Branch Chairmen at their meeting in Wellington in October, when he floated the idea of corporate membership for NZDFA at a total cost of \$6,800 + GST. With membership currently at nearly 1800, this works out at less than \$4 + GST per individual NZDFA member, but it's now unclear whether such a deal is still on the table.

NZDFA Executive Committee Chairman Bill Taylor met Calvert's replacement, Helen Mexted, on 18 February. Bill says the Federation, while not writing off the proposal, is still reconsidering the form an amended offer might take.

Corporate membership for NZDFA would not give individual voting rights but would come at a far lower price than the up to \$500 (including GST) paid by some deer farmers for individual membership of the Federation.

In October, Simon Calvert told Branch Chairmen that the Federation and NZDFA shared similar challenges with falling membership.

By taking up Federated Farmers membership as an entity, NZDFA would give its members access to new services and would boost the value of membership. Examples included access to legal services and discounts for products and services. He said the value of such benefits to members was about \$400 per person on average. In Calvert's plan, each NZDFA member would receive a branded NZDFA/FFNZ discount card to access the deals available.

The Federation estimates that there are currently 50-100 full members who are deer farmers. They acknowledge the risk that corporate membership for NZDFA could cannibalise some of this individual membership. However, this could be offset by income from the rebates the Federation received from retailers when the new members used their discount cards. Some of this income would eventually pass back to NZDFA, making it possible to recoup a significant proportion of the membership investment. (There have been calls in the past, notably by former DFA councillor Eric Clark, for a discount card to be available to deer farmers, but a deer-only scheme has never got off the ground – partly due to lack of numbers and purchasing power.)

Federated Farmers has been diversifying its income streams by selling services. It is aiming to get the proportion of total income from subscriptions down to 60 percent from more than 90 percent two years ago.

Another advantage of corporate membership would be having an input into Federated Farmers' policy development. The more people behind these policies, the more clout they would have with the Government, Calvert had told the

Chairmen. This could provide more consistency in rural sector submissions on big issues.

NZDFA Executive Committee Chairman Bill Taylor believes such a relationship will be positive for the NZDFA and provide a host of additional benefits for individual members. He stresses, however, that Federated Farmers would represent the NZDFA as an entity, not individual deer farmers. Individuals would still take their concerns to the NZDFA through the Branches, Executive Committee or the Producer Manager.

Bill envisages the NZDFA and its relationship with DINZ would continue as at present with the FFNZ membership being a "clip-on package". He points out that until the proposal receives further support from Branch Chairmen it is just that – a proposal. The cooling down of the Federated Farmers position following Calvert's departure underlines this point.


The proposal wouldn't be a big money spinner for the Federation, but would add to the political strength of both bodies. Following acceptance as a corporate member, NZDFA could apply to become an affiliate member of the Federation, with a seat on the 32-member National Council. This would give deer farmers a voice in Federated Farmers policy. New Zealand Pork and Rural Women New Zealand are affiliate members. Federated Farmers has moved away from absorbing rural sector groups into its structure (e.g. beekeepers and rural butchers), and is now pursuing more arms-length relationships such as the one originally proposed to NZDFA last year.

The Federation has moved from individual membership to membership of "entities". They now have a membership of 14,000 entities, but that represents 27,100 people, including spouses and staff.

Calvert had also been at pains to point out that corporate membership would not be at the expense of NZDFA's independence. Should there be a disagreement on policy, NZDFA would still have its own voice outside Federated Farmers. "That said, the NZDFA would still have a voice within the Federation."

About 80 percent of the policy work done by the Federation had direct relevance to deer farming, such as work on NAIT, the Resource Management Act and the Emissions Trading Scheme.

Federated Farmers had worked with NZDFA on the deer fencing issue, and more or less taken the DFA's position on board. Affiliates such as Rural Women will "front foot" issues of concern to them, with the Federation providing backup as required.

Tony Pearse noted that a move to taking up corporate membership would require constitutional endorsement at an AGM. In the meantime the proposal will be taken back to Branches by the Chairmen. 

Deer Industry Survey Stop Press: And the winners are...

The Branch with the largest proportion of producers who returned the mailed survey was Marlborough. They have been sent a cheque for \$1,000 towards Branch activities. The producer who won the draw of producers who sent in the survey was Graeme Horrell of Christchurch. They have also been sent a cheque for \$1,000. Congratulations!



Obituary: Clive Denize

Deer Industry News records with regret the death of **Clive Denize**, 79, a man described as “a stalwart” of the NZDFA Fiordland Branch.

Clive died in September last year, recording a long involvement with the Branch. He was born and educated in the Coromandel, and after attaining a Diploma in Valuation and Farm

Management from Lincoln College, settled in Invercargill where he became involved in agricultural contracting. He was one of the first to undertake land development work for the former Lands and Survey Department in the Te Anau Basin in the early 1950s.

In response to the expansion of land development he moved to Te Anau in the early 1960s and established a contracting partnership with Hans Hellebrekers. As land development continued to intensify, so too did the demand for infrastructure and Clive set up his own contracting business building roads and bridges. At one time he held the contract for maintaining the road over the Wilmot Pass from Lake Manapouri to Deep Cove.

Seeing new opportunities to supply Fiordland’s commercial fishing industry, Clive ceased contracting in the mid 1970s. That was also the time when deer farming was expanding rapidly in the Te Anau Basin and he became involved through association with people including Robin Rice, Dale Cocker and John Morrison.

Although never a deer farmer in his own right, Clive was prepared to invest in the industry through several deer farming partnerships and with that investment came his commitment to the industry through a long and active participation in the affairs of the Fiordland Branch. He was an inaugural member and its Treasurer and later Secretary-Treasurer until 2005.

Former Branch Chairman Chris Hughes recalled that Clive had been “very strong on constitutional issues,” and during through the 1980s and early 1990s, when the Branch had held velvet sales on behalf of its members, Clive had shouldered the bulk of the responsibility for organising the sales.

His services to the Branch were recognised in 2004 when he was accorded Life Membership. Clive Denize was also active in other community activities, notably Lions.

He is survived by his wife Denise and three daughters.

Obituary: ‘Butch’ Alexander

Ian ‘Butch’ Alexander died at Wairarapa Hospital on 2 November 2008, aged 60 years.

Andy Mitchell, of Rodway Park, says, Ian Alexander was most widely known in Warnham and Woburn deer circles, and was passionate about antler and velvet genetics.

“The Alexander family, through their deer stud, remained steadfast supporters for velvet competitions through the years with many successes along the way, most notably with sons of Warnham sire ‘Yeoman’, in particular ‘William Wallace’.

“After a long history in the fishing industry, Ian and Patricia established Alexander Deer Park on Hughes Line between Carterton and Masterton in the Wairarapa. After many successful years, the stud was closed in 2004, when Ian and Patricia retired to the seaside town of Mataikona.

“Ian was a man of strong principles and beliefs. He never backed down from a fight and took bureaucrats to task on a number of occasions and made them see the error of their ways. Above all though, he was a dedicated family man and will be sorely missed by Patricia, his daughters and extended family.”

Ian is survived by his wife Patricia, daughters Rachelle and Pauline, and three grandchildren.



Obituary: Morgan Saxton

The death of well-known helicopter pilot **Morgan Saxton**, aged just 31, has shocked friends and associates throughout the world of deer and deer farming. Mr Saxton died when his helicopter inexplicably crashed into Lake Wanaka on 1 November last year, an event which, along with his funeral, was extensively covered in the news at the time.

Morgan Saxton was initially raised in Queenstown but moved at age 8 to Haast, with a period in Wanaka while attending Mt Aspiring College. He left school at 15 and began working for his father Dave, a highly regarded pilot with a long history in venison recovery and live-animal capture. Morgan learned to bulldog deer and goats for his father, while also learning to fly. At 18 he gained his private pilot’s licence, but had to wait another two years before he was old enough to get his commercial rating.

He had a wide and varied aviation career and was regarded as an extremely clever and capable pilot. According to his sister Lisa Zwarst, Morgan’s father even said he was “a better pilot than me”. He had accumulated more than 6,000 hours’ flight experience, particularly in south Westland, central Otago and Fiordland.

Through the family company, Heliventures Ltd, he did frost-fighting at vineyards, flew hunting and fishing clients to remote mountains and rivers, worked on pest destruction missions and took scenic flights. Mr Saxton was a volunteer search and rescue pilot in South Westland and Central Otago and aerial fire-fighter. He was also a devoted partner of his long-term girlfriend Millie White.

Pastoral greenhouse gas research update

While debate continues to rage about the merits of emissions trading schemes to help mitigate global warming, New Zealand research targeting greenhouse gas output from pastoral farming has been making significant progress.

The deer industry has been contributing to this work through a \$35,000-per-year contribution to the work of the Pastoral Greenhouse Gas Research Consortium (PGGRC), a pan-industry enterprise. The deer industry contribution, which ends this year, represents about two percent of all industry contributions to the PGGRC's \$4 million annual budget. The commitment is about five percent of the DEEResearch annual research budget.

In the following report we review the PGGRC's progress towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions from livestock during its first five years (2002-2007).



Photo: Dave and Christine Mackie

Rumen ecology

Promising lines of research to minimise methane emissions include manipulating rumen ecology through diet and inhibition of methane-producing organisms, and selective breeding of animals and plants to produce less gas. Another possibility is substitution of methane-producing organisms with others that produce no methane and also convert more food to useable energy.

Rumen ecology research has been largely focused on identifying and counting rumen microbes, and particularly methanogens – the bacteria that generate methane from the hydrogen produced by protozoa in the rumen.

Research on marsupials may yield benefits, as they emit no methane. Gut organisms called acetogens soak up the hydrogen and fix it into acetate, which is used nutritionally. If methanogens in ruminants could be competitively displaced by organisms like these, not only would methane emission be abated but also up to 12% more energy would be produced: a real 'win-win' outcome.

Methanogen genomics

Methanogen genomics is providing new information which could not be obtained by conventional microbiological methods. Work includes identifying and genetically fingerprinting the many species of methanogens (so far nine

species have been identified), and this is combined with developing ways to measure their population density and trialling inhibitors.

Conveniently, the process by which methane is generated is common to all animals. If successful, targeting methanogens via the methanogenesis pathway enzymes will specifically target the root of the methane problem. Work on sequencing the genome of the common methanogen *Methanobrevibacter ruminatum* (completed since the 2002-2007 report was compiled) is helping to construct a picture of the organism's lifestyle in the rumen, identifying potential targets for inhibition and opportunities for control by vaccination.

Methane inhibitors

A review of methane production inhibitors has identified four most promising substances which are being further studied as to practicality, including cost benefit, animal health and food safety issues. Another well-known and highly effective inhibitor is chloroform, but there are problems with long-term exposure and residues so it appears only useful as a research tool.

Livestock genetics

Genetics of stock has some bearing, as some animals are innately high methane producers and others low. It's not yet clear what drives this, but selective breeding from low-emission animals may be a viable means of reducing emissions which would also improve production efficiency.

Manipulating diet

Dietary manipulation is another possibility for reducing methanogens in deer. Dr Simone Hoskin and co-workers at Massey University found the populations of ciliate protozoa harbouring symbiotic methanogens can be manipulated by switching between ryegrass and plantain diets. Low-fibre forages with more readily fermentable carbohydrate and protein offer better productivity and lower methane production, while high-fibre forage spends longer in the rumen and generates more methane. Low-methane producers include ball clover, *Lotus tenuis* and Caucasian clover, while *Rumex* and *Lotus pedunculatus* are intermediate. Most grasses, lucerne and chicory cultivars, and some *Lotus* species, are high methane producers.

Condensed tannins, present in some plants including lotus, clover flowers and dock, can lower methane by about 15 percent. Forages low in protein result in less nitrous oxide (N_2O) production, and north/south variations in forage constituents are another factor. "Caucasian clover is the most agronomically favourable plant forage to reduce methane emissions from grazing ruminants, consistent with meeting both productivity and greenhouse gas emission targets," the report says. Forage-based strategies are likely to provide a longer-term solution, but selectively breeding forages for low emission properties is an attractive option.

Nitrous oxide emissions an issue for New Zealand

With regard to nitrous oxide, a particular issue in New Zealand is the high emission rate observed in late autumn/winter, which recent research shows is related to high seasonal rainfall. Other studies showed N_2O emissions

increased exponentially with increased soil water content above field capacity, which supported the PGGRC findings.

With the recent appearance of the nitrification inhibitors (NIs) such as DCD on the market, the challenge now is to provide accurate accounting of their effects, both for Kyoto accounting and for marketing purposes. International acceptance of mitigation technology enhances the opportunity to have emission reductions credited against national emission inventories, and even becoming a tradeable asset for individuals, the report summary says.

Integrated science-based solutions for nitrogen management on farms are being developed in conjunction with MAF and the Fertiliser Manufacturers Research Association. Most of this work is with cattle, but looks at general issues like feed regime manipulation and the use of standoff pads and NIs in intensive-grazing situations. DCD has been shown not only to inhibit N₂O production but also to reduce the leaching of calcium, potash and magnesium.

Dietary oils

Dietary oils (e.g. sunflower and fish oils) have been shown to reduce methane production by up to 25 percent, by reacting with hydrogen in the rumen before it can be converted to methane. Work to study this further and evaluate the mechanism is continuing.

A carbon-conscious future

The report concludes with a look ahead to carbon-conscious agriculture of the 21st century. "With the government signalling the incorporation of agriculture in an Emissions Trading scheme in 2013, the challenge is upon farmers to think differently about their business in the future ... Better understanding may allow us to manipulate rumen microbial populations and develop technologies that move hydrogen capture away from methane to other substrates better utilised by the ruminants, thus reducing carbon emissions. Selecting livestock that produce low emissions will further enhance this reduction, but will need to be done with consideration for the selection of other traits.


"The consortium will be striving to deliver solutions that support this change in business drivers, be they products targeting livestock, microbes or the farm environment, or knowledge that needs to be adopted." 

Photo: Natasha Swainson.



Immature deer could produce up to 26 percent less methane compared with adult animals, according to recent research by Natasha Swainson as part of her PhD programme. The suggested overestimation of methane yields may have direct implications for the New Zealand greenhouse gas inventory. At present, the inventory recognises sheep less than one year old as having lower methane yields than adult sheep, but no such distinction is made between adult and immature deer. Furthermore, the present figure for deer used in the inventory is based on the mean of adult sheep and cattle.

The PGGRC report also notes that adult deer come out better than both cattle and sheep in preliminary results from studies comparing their methane production. However, Swainson cautions that this part of the study was preliminary and could not be extrapolated to a farm situation. "It's the first in New Zealand to compare the methane yields of cattle, sheep and deer when animals were fed the same diet and methane production was measured at the same time. The results from this initial study, where animals were fed chaffage, and the SF₆ technique was used to estimate methane emissions, cannot be extrapolated to farmed animals grazing fresh pasture in the national inventory. Although these initial results look favourable for deer, further research is required before we have enough confidence in this apparent difference between species."

- Reference: *Pastoral Greenhouse Gas Research Consortium: 5 year Science Progress Report 2000–2007. Developing Solutions to reduce New Zealand's agricultural emissions. PGGRC, PO Box 121, Wellington; www.pggrc.co.nz*

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By not letting weaners graze down too low, you can help reduce their intake of parasite larvae. Photo: Dot Mullay.



Diagnosis of parasitism focus for SFF-funded project

Fine-tuning nematode parasite diagnosis and monitoring offers prospects for better control of internal parasites in deer. This is the subject of ongoing research at AgResearch Invermay in association with the Otago and Southland Deer Focus Farm Community Group, comprising members of the Otago and Southland Branches of NZDFA, who supported the original Focus on Deer project.

The project is being partly funded through a \$20,000 Sustainable Farming Fund grant.

Dr Colin Mackintosh at AgResearch Invermay says the work is primarily focused on assessment of abomasal parasites, as these cause the most problems.

“We have been looking at improving the sensitivity and reliability of faecal egg counts (FEC) because there is not a very good correlation between faecal egg counts and total number of parasites present, especially in the abomasum.”

Technician Brendan Tolentino has been trialling the FECPAK testing method (marketed by PGG Wrightson), which appears to be more sensitive than the methods used by some diagnostic laboratories. Repeatability of the methods is also being tested.

“Shortly we will be slaughtering a sample of deer that have been extensively monitored over the past six months. This will provide reliable indications of the actual levels of abomasal worm infestation, and enable us to see how accurately these FEC results reflect the actual numbers of worms in these deer.”

Colin says parasitic worms are a particular problem with young weaners in autumn when a flush of rain could result in an abundance of larvae which would not be reflected in the faeces until some weeks later. “Interpreting tests and coping with seasonal variations poses some challenges. There is an inherent difficulty in indicating the true infection status, especially in young animals that have not had much exposure in the past. These are so susceptible, they can build up a large parasite burden very quickly. As they get older and experience a series of parasite challenges they become much more resistant, even when infectious larvae are abundant.”

Doubt about the accuracy and reliability of present diagnostic tests leads many farmers to over-drench, a “frightening prospect”, Colin says, because of recent developments in parasite resistance on sheep and cattle farms.

“Resistance is a huge threat to deer farmers as the industry

relies largely on one anthelmintic family (ivermectin/abamectin/moxidectin), which is the most effective for parasite control in deer. Levamisoles (clear drenches) are ineffective due to the physiology of deer, and white drenches (benzimidazoles) do not appear to be as effective against gastro-intestinal parasites.

“The reliance on one family, and therefore the inability to rotate between drench families, will increase the speed at which resistance is likely to develop. We need to reduce our reliance on anthelmintics by using improved diagnostic tests to monitor worm burdens and only treat animals when required. This should be done in conjunction with reducing the parasitic challenge with better grazing management. It would also be sensible to select for more parasite resistance/resilience.”

Larvae of lung and gut worms migrate up grass blades when ready to reinfest the host, and though they are reasonably resilient, many die in hot weather. They always survive better low down in the pasture, so it is recommended that weaners are rotated around pastures quickly and do not graze too low, thus reducing the uptake of infective larvae.

The severity of lungworm infestations is diagnosed by tests that measure faecal larval counts (FLC).

“These tests provide a reasonably good correlation between FLC and adult worm numbers in lungs. Generally this level of sensitivity is probably adequate but it still doesn’t tell us the magnitude of a recent parasite challenge as it takes three weeks for the ingested larvae to become egg-shedding adults. There is a lag before there is something we can measure in the faeces.

“Present FLC methods are cumbersome and time-consuming and there is a new technique being developed overseas which may make the test much quicker and more accurate.

“Hopefully, better diagnostic tools like this will finally produce benefits on the farm, especially by minimising or even eliminating over-drenching.” 