

DEER INDUSTRY NEWS

Issue 35 • April/May 2009 • Official magazine of Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA



Graham Brown in North America: p12

NZDFA ANNUAL REPORT 2008/2009

Also in this issue:

- 2009 Deer Industry Conference, Palmerston North: Be there!
- Five-year Strategic Intents for venison and velvet
- Changing supply and demand patterns in our markets
- Tails and sinews centre stage in Hong Kong promotion
- Velvet season review
- Central Regions Focus Farm field day
- Using chemistry to trace velvet origins



**DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND**

NZDFA
New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association





Succession planning crucial for industry

It is with some sorrow this month I will be giving up my 22-year practical involvement in the deer industry.

Over the past two decades I have run 200 hinds on an extensive hill country property between Waiau and Kaikoura. During this time I have seen the industry ride a wave. Prices have had huge highs and crashed spectacularly. Happily, the current situation has seen returns to deer farmers improve.

The lower Kiwi dollar has helped to maintain overseas consumer interest in our product and demand is holding, despite the global economic downturn.

As I meet with farmers up and down the country, I am hearing positive stories. I too am optimistic about agriculture. Farmers are ever resilient and I believe it will be agriculture that leads New Zealand's economic recovery.

At times like these, gaining and maintaining access to valuable and dynamic export markets is critical. It is a busy time for the Government's trade agenda, and there are a number of significant new opportunities presenting themselves.

With more than 65-75 percent of the New Zealand deer industry's products being exported, an important part of recovery from the current global financial crisis is the continued development of free trade.

A few weeks ago, I hosted the Korean President and the Korean Agriculture Minister as they visited New Zealand.

This will be of particular interest to the deer sector as Korea is the ultimate destination for about 65-75 percent of New Zealand's export velvet. Anything that can be done to improve the conditions for trade will have positive spin offs for both New Zealand and Korea.

The meeting was a real opportunity for me to tell the New Zealand "life without subsidies" story. As South Korea looks to move towards free trade, they were interested to hear from both a politician and a farmer who had experienced first hand agricultural reforms in the 1980s. What I was able to emphasise, and what they were interested to know, was that there wouldn't be a farmer in New Zealand who would go back to the time of subsidies.

At the end of the visit, Prime Minister John Key with the Korean President announced the launch of negotiations with South Korea – a goal New Zealand has been working towards since 1999.

New Zealand produces two-thirds of the world's farmed venison. It goes without saying that significantly improving market access for New Zealand firms through a progressive trade agenda ensures that we continue to stimulate economic growth and help safeguard the jobs of the many thousands of New Zealanders who work in, or support, export-oriented industries, including the deer industry.


Despite this good progress, there are still challenges at home. Competing land uses, low returns over the past three to four years and the average age of the New Zealand farmer have meant the deer industry has downsized. The industry needs to be careful it doesn't contract its productive capacity further at a time when prospects are comparatively favourable.

Succession planning is crucial. It is not an issue that the deer industry is facing alone. Agriculture, it seems, could be more attractive. I'm not talking about calendars featuring young men leaning over fences with their shirts off or voluptuous milk maids, but somehow we must make farming sexy again.

Money is certainly a key attraction. Keeping returns high enough to get young farmers interested is a start. But to ensure our future, our industry must offer a plan – a path, where top operators can climb a ladder of success.

Currently we are disjointed in our approach to education and training in our sector. This is an area I would like to see develop. It will take some coordination.

We must make New Zealand's young people aware that in these tough times there is still plenty of opportunity, job security and prospects in agriculture.

I have great expectations for New Zealand agriculture and the deer industry. Although I am about to step back from the practical aspects of the deer industry, as your Minister my interest in the sector remains. 

■ **Hon. David Carter,**
Minister of Agriculture and Minister for Biosecurity

Contents

Editorial: Succession planning crucial	3
Stagline supplement: Passion, profit and Palmerston North:	
Conference preview	4
NZDFA AGM 2009: Constitutional matters	6
DINZ news: Venison industry strategic intent	8
NZ profile lifts among German consumers	9
NVSB update	10
Key plugs NZ food in German magazine	10
Industry news: Recessionary times: clear signals needed	11
Board appointments for Cooper	11
Graham Brown in North America	12
Tails and sinews as functional food in Hong Kong	14
Recipe: Cervena® Shabu Shabu	15
Velvet season review	16
Market Report: Velvet and venison; Velvet industry strategic intent	18
General news: Mesopotamian Fallows	12
Obituary: Gerald Amos	15
Reducing the risks from Johnes'	21
Wealth of information at HB Focus Farm field day	22
Innovative construction; Deer on the net	24
Coming events	25
Research: Identifying country of origin for velvet	25
Research/university merger looks good for deer	26
DEER Select Sire Summaries: 1 April 2009	27

Deer Industry News is published by Deer Industry New Zealand six times a year in February, April, June, August, October and December. It is circulated to all known deer farmers, processors, exporters and others with an interest in the deer industry. The opinions expressed in *Deer Industry News* do not necessarily reflect the views of Deer Industry New Zealand or the NZ Deer Farmers' Association.

Circulation enquiries: Deer Industry New Zealand,
PO Box 10-702, Wellington, Ph 04 471 6114, Fax 04 472 5549, Email info@deernz.org

Editorial and advertising enquiries: Words & Pictures, PO Box 27-221, Wellington, Ph 04 384 4688, Fax 04 384 4667, Email din@wordpict.co.nz

Cover: Graham Brown (left) directing the serving of Cervena® loin wrapped in prosciutto with a pearl barley risotto at the Gala Dinner of Charlie Palmer's Pigs and Pinot festival, Hotel Healdsburg, Sonoma County, California, in March 2009.



Passion and Profit 2009

PALMERSTON NORTH

34th Deer Industry Conference: 26 – 28 May 2009

The last time a deer industry conference was in Palmerston North (1986), Billy T James was the host entertainer, Dr John Fletcher was visiting from the United Kingdom singing the praises of modern farmed red deer, the first new domesticated species for 5,000 years, and the late James Innes of Haldon Station and Dr Frank Griffin had combined passion and individual flair with vision and finance to develop a new blood Tb test and new skills in science and research to the industry.

The conference returns to Palmerston North this year, to the Central Regions Branch with the industry poised at an interesting

cross roads with returning profitability a key feature of venison production, balanced by strong demand but reducing supply against volatile currency. Equally, productivity and profitability have been emerging themes through the Focus Farms project, with our deer reaching new levels of genetic merit and new DNA and reproductive technology available or, as with SNP chips for gene selection, emerging. We also have some animal health challenges in John's disease being addressed through JML and a research consortium with the impacts of parasitism emerging as the next challenge. Industry issues to be discussed include:

- NAIT
- Tb eradication and the next NPMS
- priorities for levy spend
- the next five-year venison and velvet strategies – developed following consultation against a challenging international financial crisis, with New Zealand's recovery underpinned by its agricultural strength.

The 2009 Industry Conference runs from Tuesday 26 May to Thursday 28 May, at Palmerston North's spacious Travelodge just off the central city Square in Cuba Street.

Electronic registration forms are available on line at www.deernz.org or simply use the form contained in this issue. It's important to register early this year, as on-site accommodation is limited to 80 rooms. However, alternative accommodation is arranged and within relatively easy reach of the conference venue.

Industry partners

We are grateful for the support from industry partners, **Rabobank**, **Telford Polytechnic**, and **Firstlight Foods**. This year we have attracted increased trade interest from past and new sponsor supporters covering animal health, tags and RFID, agronomy and seeds, deer leather and electronics.

Day 1 – Opening: Tuesday 26 May

Agribusiness in Action seminar: from 2.00 pm

The success and format of last year's pre-conference opening Agribusiness session has prompted a further development this year. The DINZ Board and DFA Branch Chairmen will meet earlier in the day as usual, but the conference will also host a seminar on emerging issues at 2.00 pm on Tuesday 26 May.

The seminar will explore three major themes, opening with two



Rabobank
Greater Perspective



overviews on the financial implications of the recession and plans throughout the world, in particular Europe, through the analytical services of industry partner **Rabobank**. We have asked for a further insight into broad international consumer trends under a changed financial outlook and to touch on the drivers in consumption trends, especially how that relates to red meat proteins in retail markets and in the restaurant trade. These views will be extended through the FGM on Wednesday 27 May with input from four of the industry's leading venison marketers.

The opening session will also feature **Landcorp CEO, Chris Kelly**, giving a perspective on the New Zealand agricultural situation and the five-year prospects, and a view of the mix and balance of deer farming in the SOE's farming portfolio. This, like all presentations, will allow time for discussion and Q&A with delegates.

Session Two features some different perspectives on the use of electronics in agriculture. This session, sponsored by **Allflex**, will feature traceability, RFID and what the future could hold in terms of management, application and a fresh constructive perspective on NAIT. A speaker from the **Aleis** Company of Australia has been invited to cover the evolution of new scanning technology that can read multiple groups of animals at speed using LF technology. This company provides the vast majority of equipment to the Australian National Livestock Identification System programme.

We have invited **Dave Walker** (Gen-i) and **Gary Alexander**, Integrated Foods, to provide background to the combination between RFID, internet, information gathering and analysing systems as used in a farm to processing end product foods system in a Gisborne-based sheep and beef operation.

Peter Stevens, CEO of GS-1, has been asked to update developments in retail, warehousing as the Web 2.0 evolves internationally linking RFID and bar code-based technology, and the power available as consumption demands and the request by consumers for increasing product knowledge continues to grow.

Silver Fern Farms will present the Cooperative's perspective on traceability in the marketplace and extend the recent messages the industry has seen on the need for rapid and clear progress in establishing New Zealand's traceability systems and its promotion and verification in the market.

We also hope to have a view from Europe through MAF on the impact of growing interest in farming welfare, quality systems and food safety on consumer buying patterns. Again, discussion will follow.

The NZDFA's current position on NAIT will be subject to an Executive Committee remit at the Annual General Meeting on the afternoon of 27 May. It will seek deer farmers' commentary on that position and



allow further discussion and understanding of NAIT's progress and timing. DINZ and NAIT will also be available to comment.

Session Three will feature the **Animal Health Board's (AHB)** presentation on the imminent and hopefully agreed and fully costed National Pest Management Strategy (NPMS). This follows on from the current development with the NPMS review committee, AHB and the NPMS stakeholders. This strategy is planned to be released for consultation in early May. Farmer and industry views are keenly sought as part of the consultation round that will recommend an action plan to the Minister. Given the passion that deer farmers have for Tb control and the considerable expense and impact that Tb has on deer farming budgets and its levy, this is an extremely important session which will allow plenty of time for discussion.

Passion for great food Welcome Evening: 7.00 pm

The expansive use of venison (as feature entrees) that have welcomed delegates in recent years has been scaled up to a full course degustation featuring three venison courses, cheeses and desserts prepared by three distinguished chefs from top restaurants in Palmerston North. DINZ Executive Chef **Graham Brown** will prepare and commentate on the dishes on stage during the evening with a live camera feed into the Travelodge kitchen allowing guest chefs to commentate on their interests and preparation and to give an insight into the work behind the scenes for such an event. The venison is sponsored by **Firstlight Foods** with recipes selected by Graham from amongst the top chef recipes working with New Zealand products. It will be presented with matched wine, beer and non-alcoholic choices. This function will be a memorable event, reflecting the passion that the industry has for creative venison cuisine and fine dining.

The opening night will also feature presentation of the prestigious **Matuschka Award**, recognising the quiet contributors within DFA Branches. Nominations close on 1 May at the DINZ office.

Day 2 – Formal events: Wednesday 27 May

Formal meetings

The business sessions lead off with the DINZ FGM from 8.30 am – 1.00 pm and the NZDFA AGM from 2.30 pm until close at 5.30 pm.

The FGM features reports from the Board Chairman and Chief Executive and from the venison and velvet markets. We again welcome the processor/marketers and their CEOs (Alliance Group, Duncan and Company, Firstlight Foods and Silver Fern Farms Ltd) and look forward to their commentary. Reports will lead into a producer-directed discussion and Q&A session with the Board and Executive.

DINZ executives will briefly report on their portfolios to allow time for presentation of the new five-year venison and velvet marketing strategies.

The 34th NZDFA AGM appears at this stage to be relatively quiet in terms of notified agenda, allowing time to concentrate on what will be two of the year's larger issues for NZDFA and wider industry: NAIT and the new National Pest Management Strategy. Both issues will have been profiled on the Tuesday and will be in the AGM arena for consultation. Branch AGMs will doubtless bring more issues to the table.

Awards dinner

The previous night's fine dining and entertainment will continue at the traditional industry awards dinner. The evening features the **Deer Industry Award**, to be presented this year for the 25th time. Organiser *The Deer Farmer/Countrywide Publications* will take a look back at some of the past award winners then and now before announcing this year's candidates. The Awards Banquet will again feature venison in more traditional form, complementing the popular music, song and dance from the fabulous **Beat Girls** – also a past conference favourite.


Day 3 – Field day: Thursday 28 May

This one-off event costs just \$40 for lunch and transport and is an extension to the conference proper. Delegates and locals are welcome but you must register separately as this is a Branch event. This trip will take in a tour of the extensive **Apiti wind farm** and lunch with Tui and the Tui Girls as hosts at the famous **Mangatainoka Tui Brewery**. It is timed to have delegates returned mid afternoon to allow onward travel.

Get registered!

Registration and hotel accommodation is again being arranged through the DCMS Conference management group. There are three ways you can register:

- complete the registration form enclosed with this issue
- use the user-friendly electronic registration form available from www.deernz.org
- contact Natalie Fraser at 04 471 6110, natalie.fraser@deernz.org

An early bird incentive closing on 10 May offers a top Otago Pinot Noir wine prize for three delegates in an early bird draw. It's an age-old request, often ignored, but an early registration really helps everybody! 

For further information contact:

- Natalie Fraser as above
- Pat Johnston, DCMS at 03 477 1377, pat@dcms.co.nz
- Tony Pearce 021 719 038 or tony.pearce@deernz.org

Agriculture
(Sheep & Beef, Dairy, Deer)
Equine
Beekeeping
Forestry
Rural Business



1 year of 'hands on' training Gain national qualifications, Regular farm placements
5 and 7 day hostel options. Scholarships start closing August 2009 for 2010 study
Over 30 correspondence courses available.

For an information pack please call:
Freephone 0800 835 367
Or look online at www.telford.ac.nz

Cert. Agriculture
mid year intake July
Enrolling now!



Telford
Rural Polytechnic
Te Whare Wānaka Ō Puerua



NZDFA AGM 2009: Constitutional matters

1. AGM: Notice of meeting

New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association, Annual General Meeting.
Notice is hereby given that the 34th Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association (Inc) will be held in the conference rooms of the Travelodge, Cuba Street, Palmerston North on Wednesday 27 May 2009, commencing at 2.00 pm.
The Chairman and Executive Committee of the NZDFA invite all levy payers and members to attend.

2. Executive Committee appointments

Members of the NZDFA Executive Committee (two members representing the North Island and two representing the South Island) are elected for a two year term. Members retire by rotation and are eligible for re-election. According to the NZDFA constitution rules, the Executive Committee annually elects a Chairman from amongst the four members for a term also decided annually. This has been traditionally a 12-month term as well.

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

Executive Committee North Island

A single nomination has been received for the vacancy created by the retirement by rotation of Sharon Love, who did not seek re-election after two years in the role. The Nominee, **Wilton Turner**, Apiti, **Central Regions** (nominated Sharon Love, seconded, Andy Jarden) is declared **appointed** unopposed.

Executive Committee South Island

A single nomination has been received for the vacancy created by the retirement by rotation of Bill Taylor. One nomination has been received, **Bill Taylor**, Lora valley. Winton, **Southland**, (nominated Brian Russell, seconded David Stevens), and is declared **appointed** unopposed.

Bill Taylor and **Wilton Turner** will join colleagues **Edmund Noonan**, Christchurch, Canterbury and **Earle Wells**, Whakatane, **East Coast Bay of Plenty** as the 2009/10 Executive Committee of the NZDFA.

For members' interest, nominees' profiles are as follows:

Bill Taylor

I have gained a good deal of satisfaction and enjoyment out of representing deer farmers in recent years and believe I am still able to offer something to the deer industry.

As our industry returns to profitability, a range of new challenges face the NZDFA. Firstly, is such an organisation needed today and, if so, how do we excite people enough that they want to be involved?

Farming experts are fond of saying "today's farmer is production driven and not very interested in politics". However, in my experience, most believe that someone should be looking out for their interests.

I am happy to continue to do this with your support but I would be just as happy to see, and would encourage the next generation of deer farmers to step up to the challenge.

Wilton Turner

After spending 10 years managing deer farms for other people I had the opportunity to lease then deer fence a family-owned block in the Apiti district. Ten years later I am still here. After adding 200 acres of deer-fenced land and buying a house and another 20 acres, the basic structure is complete.

I spent many years on the original Manawatu DFA committee and after the recent amalgamation with Horowhenua and Wanganui Branches became Chairman of this new and dynamic Branch, a most enjoyable and challenging experience.

I was recently invited to be a trainee velvet judge at the national velvet competition's Elk/Wapiti section, an opportunity I enjoyed.

The next challenge is becoming the Chairman of the North Island Velvet Competition and the future there looks bright. Becoming involved with the Executive Committee is an opportunity to repay the industry for the exciting career and challenges it has given me.

3. Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP)

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

SAP North Island

One nomination has been received for the single vacancy created by the retirement by rotation policy:

The sitting member, **Ponty von Dadelszen, Waipukurau**, (nominated Richard Hilson, seconded Ian Walker) is declared appointed unopposed.

For members' interest, **Ponty von Dadelszen's** statement follows:

One of my roles is to represent deer farmers on the Members' Committee for the Animal Health Board (AHB). We are working on proposals for the ongoing National Pest Management Strategy. The AHB has made rapid progress. Eradication of Tb appears feasible within 40-55 years, based on funding being maintained over the next 5-10 years and reducing after that.

Members do not want a repeat of 1980-1995, when the number of infected herds increased dramatically, after funding and focus were removed.

The challenge now is to maintain funding commitment among all participants. Regional councils are backing off and the Crown would look for any excuse to reduce their funding. Farmers must hold the line to prevent history repeating.

Another challenge is to convince future farmers, who have never had the Tb experience and associated business costs, to continue to contribute through levies.

SAP South Island

One nomination has been received for the single vacancy created by the retirement by rotation policy:

David Stevens, Balfour, Southland (nominated Peter Allan, seconded Brian Russell) is declared **appointed** unopposed.

He and the successful North Island candidate will join current members **Mike Holdaway, Apiti, Central Regions**, and **Mark Hawkins, Sutherlands, South Canterbury**, on the 2009/10 NZDFA Selection and Appointments Panel.

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

Married to Lynley, we farm the Netherdale Red Deer Stud at Balfour in northern Southland.

My involvement in the deer industry spans 30 years and during this time I have held the position of Southland Branch Chairman, NZDFA Councillor and President, DeerQA Chairman and have been a member of the NYSB.

In the past two years I have represented deer farmers on the SAP, a position I value highly and feel privileged to be a part of. The process of selecting the correct candidate for their future contribution as a Board member of DINZ is an important role. Every effort is made to carry out this duty professionally. This is essential for both candidate and industry confidence in the SAP process.

I feel with the knowledge gained from being involved in most



aspects of deer farming and the deer industry, I can continue to offer valuable experience to the SAP.

4. NZDFA appointments to the Board of DINZ

Producer-appointed Board members are appointed directly to the DINZ Board for a three-year term and that appointment is advised to the Minister of Agriculture as a formality. There is a single vacancy for the 2009–2012 Board term, that of sitting member John Spiers.

Three nominations have been received for the vacancy:

Jeremy Bell, Criffel Station, Wanaka (Nominated, Ian Walker Seconded, Richard Burdon)

Bernard Card, Aveyron, Upper Hut, Wellington (Nominated Errol Croad, Seconded Vince Connolly)

John Spiers, Maranoa, Takapau, Hawkes Bay, (Nominated Richard Hilson, seconded Mike McCormick)

The candidates are invited under the NZDFA constitution to present a short overview of their candidature at the 34th AGM in Palmerston North on 27 May prior to the meeting's general business session. All nominees were invited to put forward candidate statements for publication in Deer Industry News:

Candidate statement: Jeremy Bell

I farm all deer at Criffel Station, Wanaka, with my wife Mandy, with an emphasis on high production and sustainability. R&D and information transfer is critical to support this.

I am 46 years old and have 25 years' experience in a number of businesses as a director and shareholder involved in sourcing, processing, wholesaling and food distribution. I have experience and knowledge of the entire supply chain.

My main success has been the establishment of long-term profitable strategies for delivery of food products into restaurants, hotel chains, international airlines, exporters, multinational food businesses and the catering sector. I have also owned a company which was a category food purchaser for a New Zealand supermarket chain.

I have been involved in a business in China for the past five years and have studied velvet and all deer-related products and their markets closely.

I wish to assist in implementing the New Zealand deer industry's full potential for the long term, for all stakeholders.

Candidate Statement: Bernard Card

I have been involved with the deer industry for many years and could make a valuable contribution as a director of DINZ.

The New Zealand deer industry is a world leader and must retain this position. To do this, it needs to stabilise and grow.

The volatility of production and prices give it the appearance of a

young, unstable industry. This needs to change.

The industry faces many of the same challenges as the broader agriculture industries such as the Emissions Trading Scheme. The difference is the deer industry has world leadership status.

It is important deer research is not put under threat by any restructuring of wider agricultural research. The excellent world-class research which underpins this industry needs to continue and be enhanced.

The expansion of markets is essential to broaden the base for venison, a world-class red meat, with the health tick.

This industry has an excellent future provided we manage this business well.

Candidate Statement: John Spiers

My farming experience and knowledge gained working with various industry groups has exposed me to a wide group of industry members who have encouraged my continued commitment to the Deer Industry New Zealand Board.

I see the future of the deer industry depending on a stable market environment, which will create steady growth and confidence across all sectors.

Venison exporters have worked with their customers to focus on building strong relationships for the future, so now production must increase to support industry growth at a sustainable level.

Velvet returns remain disappointing. Changes made have improved selling systems; however further consolidation is required to better market the product and add value to the velvet industry.

With your support I look forward to representing you as a farmer advocate on the board.


5. NZDFA Call for Expressions of Interest: NVSB

NVSB DFA appointment, currently John Spiers, Takapau.

One industry-appointed position is due for review this year following retirement by rotation at the end of the three-year term.

Appointments are made by consideration of the Executive Committee at their June 2009 meeting. Existing appointees are eligible for reappointment.

Expressions of Interest are called for from interested individuals for the NVSB, closing 20 May 2009. An interview may be required. Terms of reference are available on request.

Please advise in writing (post or email) with short CV and description of interest and background for consideration. 

Please contact for further information or send EOI to:

■ **Tony Pearce, Producer Manager,
Deer Industry New Zealand, PO Box 10702, Wellington,
tony.pearce@deernz.org**



Take control of your business growth

Rabobank's market leading All In One loan account

The Rabobank All In One loan account combines our market leading rural loan with secure internet banking, phone banking, debit card, ATM and cheque book access. Having all your accounts in one lets you manage all your farm finances in one flexible account, helping you take control of your business growth.

- Interest-only loan of up to 15 years.
- Your income automatically reduces your variable loan balance.
- Saves you time transferring money between accounts.
- Interest payments can be timed to suit your peak income periods.

To find out more, talk to your local finance manager on 0800 722 622 (0800 RABOBANK).

www.rabobank.co.nz
29 branches throughout New Zealand



RAB00108-9642

Review of Venison Industry Strategic Intent: 2005-2010

The venison industry strategic intent 2005–2010 had three clear objectives:

1. Build demand in new and existing countries outside traditional game channels.
2. Increase consumer demand for venison outside the game season.
3. Manage herd growth and supply of animals in line with market needs.

Progress toward these objectives would better align New Zealand production with consumer demand, reduce the inherent risk of the industry's reliance on one sector, and improve returns to the industry through better prices from chilled exports.

The past five years

What has been done in the past five years to achieve these objectives, and what progress has been made toward their attainment?

1. Build demand in new and existing countries outside traditional game channels

Actions

- New Zealand venison marketing companies have developed products for a range of customers who now specify Zealand venison. Examples include the evolution of German retail sales, Benelux ready-to-cook retail items and supply agreements with upmarket US chain restaurants.
- Collaborative promotions, agreed around the table by New Zealand exporters and implemented in conjunction with their importers, have introduced 60–70,000 German shoppers to New Zealand venison.
- Sales of New Zealand venison to manufacturers have been undertaken with the highest standards of food safety and hygiene. Advertising and editorial have reached millions of viewers and readers with the message that New Zealand venison is a quality and safe product.

Results

- Branded New Zealand venison items are now found in a wider variety of markets than before.
- More European consumers now know that New Zealand venison is an easy-to-cook, delicious and

tender meat. More European consumers look for it in their supermarket shelves (see “profile” article on p9 opposite).

- New Zealand has a better balance of customers, with less reliance on the traditional European seasonal restaurant sector. For example, Germany accounted for 44 percent of venison export value from 2000–2004. It now accounts for 36 percent.

2. Increase consumer demand for venison outside the game season

Actions

- Consumer advertising and in-store tastings via the *Sommerkampagne*, followed by the *Impress Your Guests* theme were used to generate interest in New Zealand venison as a non-seasonal item.
- Ongoing chef education through work with distributors and culinary schools to reinforce New Zealand venison's suitability for a wide variety of cooking styles.
- Chilled venison supply push to Europe post game season.

Results

- A 50 percent improvement in German consumers' acceptance of venison as a summer item.
- Out-of-season chilled exports up 50 percent on 2004.

3. Manage herd growth and supply of animals in line with market needs

Actions


- Formation of the Venison Productivity Strategy to improve on-farm productivity and better align production with market requirements.
- Introduction of the Focus Farms programme to disseminate productivity and environmental management information to a wider farming audience.
- Industry surveys undertaken in 2005, 2006 and 2008 to provide data on future intentions.

Results

- Survey numbers used for marketing planning.
- Improvements in average slaughter weights.
- Dissemination of techniques for winter finishing and discussion of genetic potential for early calving and early finishing.

Changes from 2004 to 2009

The average CIF value of New Zealand venison exports has increased from 5,500 Euros per tonne in the period 2000 to 2004, up to 8,700 Euros/tonne in the year ending January 2009. For the same periods, volumes increased from an average annual quantity of under 17,000 tonnes during 2000 to 2004, to 19,450 tonnes for the previous 12 months.

New Zealand venison is now selling to a wider variety of customers, more differentiated products are being produced, collaborative industry actions have been undertaken, and more venison is being sold for a higher price than at the beginning of the strategy period. 



Venison Industry Strategic Intent 2009 – 2014 for consultation

The New Zealand venison industry faces challenges from nature, regulators, competition for land use and competing proteins. How do we as an industry build on the advances made in recent years which have returned the industry to profitability and established a clear preference for New Zealand venison in many of our markets?

The Venison Industry Strategic Intent will guide DINZ actions, and producer and processor thinking, about longer-term industry priorities. The Strategic Intent proposes actions that should be taken to position the industry for a profitable future. Five areas of activity are key:

1. Continue to position New Zealand venison as a premium red meat

Venison marketers have made great strides in improving customers' perceptions of New Zealand venison in a spread of markets. Venison has attributes which make it suitable for positioning as a premium-priced red meat, so these are being used to attract customers who are willing to pay higher prices. Farm-raised venison's attributes of consistency, taste, tenderness, and health, combined with New Zealand's well-earned reputation as a producer of safe food, are enhanced by the product's relative scarcity.

2. Take steps to ensure long-term sustainable returns to the industry

To reduce volatility and encourage long-term investment, the industry is working to smooth out fluctuations in supply and demand. This is being achieved by better alignment of seasonal supply and consumption, and longer term, by better communication of industry production and prospects. The industry needs to continue to:

- Improve year-round consumption of New Zealand venison, specifically targeting post-Christmas European consumption through both retail and food service.
- Improve returns for venison co-products. Deer co-products and skins make a significant contribution to the industry.
- Improve demand for chilled venison to reduce reliance on the seasonal frozen trade. The more venison that can be exported chilled, the more that has to be consumed, not stored for later consumption.

3. Encourage commitment to market development

Encourage committed supply arrangements where producers can give venison marketers the assurance of supply so marketing programmes can be maintained.

4. Increase on-farm productivity


The venison industry must produce more kilograms of venison from fewer inputs, ready when consumers want it. By reducing on-farm wastage, producers can improve profitability. The main objectives of the New Zealand Deer Industry Productivity Strategy are:

- Improve hind productivity through improved fawning rates and fawn survival.
- Earlier calving animals, to allow deer to hit target weights earlier and meet consumers' demands.

- Faster growth, more meat per kilogram of dry matter consumed.

5. Ensure venison industry has freedom to operate

Regulators, competitors, lobby groups, and customers all have expectations and requirements which can have an effect upon the profitable production and sale of New Zealand venison. Issues such as climate change regulation, environmental stewardship, food safety, animal welfare, and market access have the potential to constrain or strengthen the industry's ability to produce and sell venison for the best returns. In many cases, concerted industry action is required to either resist unnecessary requirements, or implement change when needed.

A draft document has been circulated among many industry participants, and DINZ expects changes will be made to ensure the document captures accurately the current state of the industry, and proposes practical actions to be taken to achieve realistic goals which will have a real impact on deer farming in New Zealand. 

New Zealand profile lifts among German consumers

Deer Industry New Zealand recently commissioned a comprehensive study into consumer attitudes toward meats and New Zealand venison in particular. Six hundred affluent meat consumers were interviewed by telephone on their attitudes to meat.

The aim of the research was to examine if consumer attitudes had shifted since the last research was conducted in 2004. Not only has the New Zealand industry invested strategically in retail promotion over this time, but consumer attitudes toward healthy foods and natural foods are reported to have shifted. Venison marketers wanted to know if the main impediments to purchase – lack of knowledge of cooking, historical aversion to the taste of wild venison, and a lack of awareness of availability at retail had altered at all, and what changes could be made to marketing programmes to better align promotion messages with consumer purchase drivers.

Key findings from this latest study include:

- Awareness of New Zealand as a supplier of venison has increased by 57 percent since 2004. Twenty-two percent of the surveyed population knew that New Zealand-supplied venison to Germany, up from 14 percent in 2004.
- The proportion of the sample group who consider themselves "venison consumers" has increased from 31 percent to 39 percent since 2004.
- Cooking as entertainment is more important in 2009 than it was in 2004. Consumers look to the media for information on cooking, and have a high regard for food celebrities.
- In terms of self-assessed reasons for purchase, freshness, taste and appearance are the most important criteria when buying.
- Food safety, health and price are second-ranked considerations, while the producer or place origin is ranked last.
- Health, food safety and origin are all considered less important now than they were in 2004.
- When asked to rate the quality of venison from five possible countries, Germans rated venison from New Zealand second behind Germany. In 2004, venison from New Zealand was third after France. 

NVSB update

Reminder to return record books and unused drugs

NVSB would like to remind all velvetters that this is the month to return their velvet record books and any unused drugs to their contracted supervising veterinarians for signing off, (including the mechanical block system) to ensure their season can be completed.

Please ask your veterinarian to ensure he or she passes this on to the NVSB, so that endorsement stickers can be sent out to each velvetter to certify them for the past season. This process has begun earlier than normal this year and endorsement stickers have already been sent out to many velvetters.

New edition of manual

A new *Farmer Velvet Antler Removal Manual (2009)* is to be sent to all certified velvetters during April. This manual replaces all previous editions of the *Farmer Velvet Antler Removal Manual* and velvetters are asked to destroy any old copies in their possession. If you haven't received your new manual by the end of April, please contact Pam MacLeman on 04 471 6114 or email pam.macleman@deernz.org

Velvet audits


Velvet audit assessment sheets are being collated and analysed and a full audit report will again be compiled for benchmarking with previous seasons.

The NVSB thanks all those who took part in the audits this past season. Some velvetters missed their audits for one reason or another, and those names will go onto the audit list for next season.

Changed to mechanical block?

If you are a certified velvetter using either "local" or "chemical restraint" and have just begun to use the "mechanical block" system this past season, please ensure that either you or your supervising veterinarian advise the NVSB of this change so that the contract and database records can be updated accordingly.

Good time for cleanup

Now that freezers will be empty again, this is an excellent opportunity to thoroughly clean them out and set up good standards of hygiene for the next velvet season. 

John Key interviewed by *Stern* Magazine

Prime Minister John Key was the focus for an article featuring New Zealand venison, initiated by Deer Industry New Zealand, in Germany's best-selling weekly news magazine, Stern.



DINZ PR representatives in Germany have been discussing with the magazine's food editorial staff how to get more information on New Zealand venison into the magazine. Alongside receiving recipes and press releases, the editors felt it would be a good idea to interview someone in New Zealand about the food New Zealand produces and exports to Germany. DINZ contacted the Prime Minister's department and set up a meeting between the PM and a visiting German journalist. The focus of the interview was not just venison, but all the food New Zealand produces and exports.

As well as the interview, the journalist was treated to a cooking display at Wellington restaurant, Logan Brown. DINZ ensured that venison received a good showing by supplying the chef with German-branded venison cuts. The magazine editor also visited Hawke's Bay farmer Duncan Holden, at the recommendation of chef Al Brown. 

Technical conference planned

A mid-year technical conference of the Deer Branch of the New Zealand Veterinary Association, in association with Deer Industry New Zealand, has been scheduled for Christchurch on 13–15 July.

DINZ Science Manager Lindsay Fung says more technical conferences like this are intended to help take the time pressure off adequately dealing with technical matters at the annual industry conference in May. Vets and the Focus Farm network will be able to get together and concentrate more on a bundle of technical issues and provide better value for attendees, he says.

Recessionary times:

Demand for quality venison will remain

In the February 2009 issue of Deer Industry News we looked at the possible impact of the global economic slowdown on our venison industry. In the following article we continue the theme, taking a closer look at changing consumer behaviour in our main markets, and the likely effects of changing supply and demand patterns.

As April 2009 draws to an end, the global recession, which started with falling house prices in the United States in September 2007, enters its 18th month. At the time of writing, it is still not certain that the world's economy has reached the bottom, or even where that bottom might be.

Recent efforts to talk up confidence in the United States and other developed economies, accompanied by the prospect of bank subsidies and fiscal stimulus packages seem to have given stock markets in some countries a boost. But the stock market gains are not translating into increased business or consumer confidence. Unemployment figures are getting worse in our main markets and consumer spending continues to decline. German business confidence fell to its lowest level since reunification in 1991.

Reassurance and value key for shoppers

Shoppers are increasingly turning away from convenience, perceived health benefits and claimed environmental benefits as they seek reassurance and value. The German discounter, Aldi and US retail leviathan, Walmart report increasing turnover and are opening more stores. At the same time, upmarket grocery outlets such as Wholefoods in the United States, Kaufhof in Germany and Waitrose in the United Kingdom all report falling sales and are cutting costs and

shedding staff as consumer expenditure falls. Restaurants in all our markets report falling sales as diners seek value meals, or chose to eat at home instead of eating out. This is reducing orders for expensive cuts of meat like venison striploins.

Factors underpinning demand

At present, however, prices for frozen venison being exported to Europe are holding steady. Despite the very real worries about future consumption, two factors are underpinning demand for New Zealand venison at a time of traditionally low consumption:

1. The diversification of customers that marketing companies have achieved over recent years. By having a good spread of geographic markets and retail versus food service customers, exporters have more choice about where to put venison, and up to now have been able to avoid overloading any one sector in the face of concerns about slowing demand.
2. The expectation of falling supplies from New Zealand. Volumes exported from New Zealand are only slightly down on immediate past years, but with the prospect of reduced expenditure on quality meats in Europe in the coming year, importers are buying now, in the expectation that production will not exceed this reduced demand.

Reduced demand for "exotic" meats in northern spring

Where does this leave New Zealand venison? While some concerns about the price of middle cuts, for consumption later in the year, is causing reluctance to order, sales of forequarter items for manufacturing, and leg cuts have proceeded well. Chilled venison exports in recent months are down on previous years, reflecting both the decrease in venison slaughter, and also a reduction in current demand for exotic meats (which venison is, during a European spring).

The expectation is that venison in season, in Europe, is not an exotic treat, but a seasonal requirement, and despite the recession consumers will still demand quality venison. We will see the unravelling of some of the programmes marketing companies have put in place in recent years due to the reduction in supply, and there will be some downward price pressure. However, in these unprecedented times, the industry stands to benefit from the marketing effort made over previous years, which has substantially increased the potential market for New Zealand venison.

All things being equal, the expected reduction in production in 2009 will relieve fears of oversupply in our main markets as they battle with the effects of the most severe economic recession since the 1930s. At this time, more than ever, marketing companies need clear signals from producers of expected deliveries in the months ahead to allow some certainty in planning in an extremely uncertain environment. 📧

Board appointments for Keith Cooper

Silver Fern Farms Chief Executive, Keith Cooper has been appointed to the boards of Meat and Wool New Zealand and the New Zealand Meat Board.

Keith Cooper was nominated by the Meat Industry Association to be one of two industry representatives on the boards. He replaces Alliance Group Chairman, Owen Poole, who resigned at the end of last year.

Mike Petersen, Chairman of Meat and Wool New Zealand, has welcomed the appointment of Keith Cooper to both boards.

"Keith has extensive knowledge about the meat industry in his role as Chief Executive of New Zealand's largest meat company. We look forward to working with Keith and utilising his knowledge to assist in our decision making to advance the industry."


Keith Cooper has been the Chief Executive of Silver Farms since early 2007, having begun working in the meat industry with Producer Meats Ltd in 1980. He is a board member of the Meat Industry Association, the NZ Lamb Company North America, Farm Brands Ltd and Robotic Technologies Ltd. He is a member of the Institute of Directors. 📧



Graham Brown in North America

Graham Brown was invited to cook alongside long-time friend and successful restaurateur, Charlie Palmer, at a charity event in Northern California in late March. Chef Palmer, with a chain of upmarket restaurants to his name, had been looking for an opportunity to work with Graham again after being a Cervena® Ambassador during the 1990s. When Chef Palmer knew that Graham would be travelling to the United States to undertake some distributor work and culinary demonstrations, he asked if he would have time to join a line-up of renowned US chefs for the gourmet charity event “Pigs and Pinot”. Graham prepared three Cervena (and wild boar) dishes for audiences of hundreds of Northern California’s well to do during the weekend-long festival.

■ For further information: www.charliepalmer.com

While in the United States in March, Graham also undertook training with groups of up to 40 professional chefs in the San Francisco area, accompanying sales staff when visiting new clients to discuss and introduce New Zealand farm-raised venison. The particular focus at present is introducing value cuts, and exploring serving smaller portion sizes as chefs in the United States examine ways of retaining quality while restraining plate cost in these difficult times. Graham also undertook five culinary school demonstrations as part of the Pure New Zealand Cuisine grouping of DINZ, Aquaculture New Zealand, Meat and Wool New Zealand and Zespri. 



Chef Charlie Palmer introduces Graham Brown at the charity event.

Sputnik heads ‘satellite’ Fallow herd

Six extremely rare Mesopotamian Fallow deer have been moved from Invermay to Hawke’s Bay where they have settled in on the Takapau property of deer farmers and veterinarians, Richard Hilson and Karen Middelberg.

Mesopotamian deer (*Dama mesopotamica*) are a close but larger relative of European Fallow deer. There is some debate over whether they are subspecies or a separate species. They are today extremely rare and the only known wild population is in western Iran. Only a couple of hundred survive in captivity. A small herd was introduced to New Zealand from Germany in the 1980s by pioneer deer farmer Dr Whitley

Otway, in the hope that their larger size and earlier rutting season could provide a genetic basis for improving Fallow herds.


However, farming Fallow, whether crossed with Mesopotamian deer or not, has always remained a relatively small segment of the New Zealand deer industry and the animals and were moved to Invermay in 1997. With the



Mesopotamian Fallow deer like these are now extremely rare. The antler lacks the palmated form seen in the European Fallow.

numbers growing since to two dozen, it was felt necessary to set up a second herd to reduce the risk that a catastrophic event could pose to such an isolated group. Appropriately perhaps for a “satellite” herd, the group is headed by a mature buck named Sputnik, and includes a spiker and four does.

Richard Hilson says he has no other Fallow on the property. This was a factor in their being located there, as it assured the ability to maintain the pure Mesopotamian bloodline. Although the long-term future and use of the herd remains uncertain, they are CITES-listed as endangered and cannot be used for hunting or for meat.

“In the meantime it’s been interesting watching Sputnik coming into rut a month earlier than normal Fallow, driving the spiker down to the other end of the paddock and urinating all over himself like a goat and discolouring his coat.” 

New role for tails and sinews as functional food in Hong Kong

In true partnership style, two New Zealand exporters, along with DINZ, have launched a campaign with their Hong Kong-based offices/distributors to lift the profile of New Zealand deer products.

An issue had been identified later in 2008 as sales for deer tails and sinews slowed. This was in part due to the economic slowdown but also due to the identification of fake sinews and poor-quality tails starting to appear again in the market. The campaign kicked off in late January, in time for Chinese New Year celebrations and was designed to diversify the market from medicine to functional foods.

The well-integrated promotion included cooking demonstrations at New Zealand Trade and Enterprise's (NZTE's) "NZ Focus" stores, a launch at two high-profile five-star Hong Kong restaurants (West Villa Restaurant and The Royal Garden Hotel) and a VIP media event. New Zealand's Hong Kong Trade Commissioner attended the VIP and subsequent events, enjoying the meals on offer and was pleasantly surprised with the tail soup!

The media really picked up on the story and it received prime time attention through Hong Kong's top two television stations and coverage in major newspapers and magazines including *Cosmopolitan* and *Marie Claire*. While the promotion exceeded expectations in media coverage and sold-out cooking demonstrations, this is the first focus on co-products for many years and long-term investment is needed to create a new market.

Kenny Chan has been key in the promotion. Kenny is executive chef at The Royal Garden Hotel and also leads the cooking demonstrations at NZTE. His youthful enthusiasm and charisma enabled him to connect with the audience, inventing new dishes which were eagerly learnt by the willing participants. This same energy carries through into his restaurant, where experimental dishes are well received

by diners. Of the 22 sinew and tail dishes created for the campaign, six remain as signature dishes at these restaurants, showing the success of the promotion beyond the campaign period.

Point of sale is also evident with posters throughout the Hong Kong's Koishung market (medicine market) promoting sinews and tails as healthy food for wellbeing and beauty. The "beauty" angle was picked up by the fashion magazines and promotes the high collagen levels of deer sinew. Some posters had even found their way into the medicine markets in South China.

It is understood that the presence of fake sinew issue has lessened somewhat. The positive aspect of the healthy food angle is that it should stimulate consumption during the slower summer period, with fresh cold dishes such as deer sinew terrine, spicy Sichuan-style deer sinew and sinew with sesame oil. 📺



Menus featuring dishes based on deer sinews and tails.

Hind Sales

Do your
research @



trade deer.co.nz
TAKING DEER ONLINE

Email: tradedeer@xtra.co.nz

Website: www.tradedeer.co.nz

recipe

Cervena® Shabu Shabu

This recipe from US chef Peter Pakh was awarded First Prize in the 2008 Cervena Plates recipe competition. Peter is Executive Chef at the Silverado resort in Northern California, and is also a great supporter of Cervena. The Silverado recently held a workshop on Cervena for local chefs and hospitality staff, and featured Cervena on a gala dinner menu to celebrate the region's annual "Mustard Festival".

This recipe was used by top US culinary magazine *Food Arts* as a feature shot in its January issue.

A shabu shabu is actually a very quick, easy and delicious way of cooking. The broth is light and the selection of vegetables adds variety and texture to the dish.

While not all of Peter's ingredients can be found at our local supermarkets, most have an Asian section where tofu, fish sauce and dipping sauces can be found. Try with a mixture until you hit on a stock that you like. The broth can be prepared earlier, and the fresh vegetables and Cervena prepared and cooked just prior to serving.

Serves six.

Ingredients

- 600 grams venison shortloin or deskinning leg fillets
- 3 litres chicken stock
- 1 thumb-size piece of ginger, peeled and smashed
- 2 cloves garlic, smashed
- 3 eggs
- 1 leek, finely sliced
- 12 Shiitake mushrooms, halved
- 8 – 10 spring onions, finely sliced
- 6 leaves Chinese cabbage, cut into squares
- 2 cakes of firm style tofu, cut in 1-inch cubes
- 8–10 pieces Aburage – Fried Fish Cake, cut into small triangles (available at most Asian markets)
- 1 kg cooked Udon noodles
- 10 sprigs coriander.

Preparation

- Slice the venison into very thin ribbons about 3 mm thick
- Bring chicken stock to a boil with the ginger and garlic, simmer for 5 minutes
- Remove the garlic and ginger
- Make a flat omelette with the 3 eggs, allow to cool and cut into ribbons
- Arrange 6 large soup bowls next to the pot of chicken stock
- Re-heat the Udon noodles in batches in the chicken stock, remove with tongs and divide evenly among the six bowls
- Heat the vegetables in the chicken stock one by one and divide equally into the six bowls
- Dip the Cervena slices in the stock, about 10 seconds, and divide equally into the bowls
- Bring stock up to a rolling boil and pour it evenly into the bowls over contents, (you should have about 10 – 12 oz. of broth for each bowl)
- Garnish with slices of omelette, the green onions and coriander
- Serve hot with Asian-style dipping sauces.



Gerald Amos. Photo courtesy of The Deer Farmer

Obituary

Gerald Amos

It is with regret that we note the passing of one of the true pioneers of our wonderful industry. Gerald Amos, along with his brother Mervyn, created the iconic deer farm "Tawa Park", named after the beautiful tawa trees that grew there.

The brothers carved a park-like farm that was to be the envy of every aspiring deer farmer who went there. Gerald was a power house. He worked so hard to make that place, and when they sold out and moved from Waimiha to the sunny Bay of Plenty, something went out of deer farming.

He purchased another farm on the Kaimai Ranges and as the farm was split by a huge gorge, Gerald made a bridge and what a bridge it was. He loved visitors and took great delight in sharing with you all his treasures and theories on health-giving products.

He was a hunter, when hunting was horses, walking and 3030s – no high-tech clothing, food and so on – and he had the head to prove it.

His great passion was deer and he would talk non-stop on his ideas for the industry and good ideas they were too.

Gerald Amos will leave to us who remain a legacy of a man who had great morals, an inventor, an artist and above all, a great worker and ambassador to our industry. 🇺🇲

■ Murray Matuschka
"Kitenui", Taupo

Photo: Vanessa Crowley

Velvet: a tough season but room for optimism

Lower prices, falling volumes, a continued increase in overall quality and less spot market business all appear to have been features of the 2008/09 velvet season. Deer Industry News talked to three key players in New Zealand's deer velvet industry about the season just ended, what drives the markets and their assessment of future prospects. While no-one's denying conditions have been tough and times are still uncertain, we found some cautious optimism among those responsible for getting our velvet to market.

Ross Chambers of Velexco Co-operative says velvet prices to date are still well down on 2007/08, but with volumes falling, an improvement is expected. Production of smaller sizes such as E, D and C grades has decreased, while A and SA grades have increased as deer farmers seek to lift production per head to compensate for lower per-kilogram prices.

"The Chinese buyers have set the pace, chasing the smallest sizes first before moving up to B, A and Super, with the price differential between grades becoming reduced. The demand for large, heavy grades has been much reduced and similarly the demand for New Zealand Elk has diminished sharply.

NZ brand recognition still lacking?

"The move to contracts is becoming better accepted by buyers while spread sales and the averaging of returns to growers, started by Velexco, is gaining traction," he said. "While the expansion of Chinese demand is very favourable for New Zealand, the Korean market remains important." Ross believes that despite years of attempts to build the profile of New Zealand velvet, there is still no brand recognition. Beyond the importer level he believes there is very limited understanding of New Zealand as a supplying country. "Rectifying this will require a concerted effort to position our velvet effectively. Traceability, quality control and stable pricing will assist.

"Achieving stable, sustainable prices is the number one priority for the New Zealand velvet industry. Until this is achieved we will see more stags going for meat production and velvet production will continue falling. As the supply-and-demand balance improves, a price increase can be expected but can't be taken for granted. The challenge will be to remove price volatility and achieve 'fair value'."

Growers holding out for higher prices?

Colin Stevenson of CK Import Export Co is more optimistic. His company has sold all the velvet it bought, although he's aware there are still people out there with product hoping for the market to lift over the next month or so. Supply has been more than adequate, but he predicts lower production next season.

The effect of this on the longer-term supply should be short lived, he says, because if the velvet price spikes upwards again, the breeding response to that could be quick. "We could see 20,000 more stags out there in one season if the velvet price goes up around \$120 per kilogram again and the farmers have the will to meet the demand."

If anything has been unusual this season, he says, it's a lower than normal volume of spiker and regrowth velvet, probably because so many spikers were killed earlier owing to firmer meat prices.

"Bank" role switched to farmers

However, he's talked to a lot of farmers who aren't happy with the situation. "If you look at all the variables, the velvet supply management scheme has only taught the Asians that the farmers are the bank – they can just come and buy it when they want. This suits them particularly well in the present uncertain economic climate. There used to be more than 20 factories processing 20 tonnes plus per week and they banked the industry; now that role's been moved back to the New Zealand farmer."

Both quality and quantity have made dramatic gains over the years, he says. "There's been a very definite increase in

yields per animal over the past five years owing to improved genetics. Two kilograms off two-year-old stags used to be good, but nowadays it's more like two-and-a-half to three, and 4-year-olds are producing up to 6 kg. One of our suppliers with a herd of 2,000 stags averaged 5 kg per animal.

"Not only that, but the quality is up. Around 50 to 60 percent of our lines has been Super A this season, while a few years ago most was B, and there's been very little E grade in the whole season."

Collective action the key: PGG Wrightson

Tony Cochrane, National Velvet Manager for PGG Wrightson, is an ardent believer in the advantages of collective marketing.

"The days of farmer pools and Koreans with suitcases full of cash are now gone. Buyers are acting more collectively so we should do so too – this was the thinking behind setting up VSM.

"Early predictions by DINZ were for 420 tonnes of velvet this season and I think the actual yield will be just slightly less. We hope to get about 60 percent of that, which would see us level pegging in terms of market share compared to last year when we did 273 tonnes, from 1,700 farmers throughout New Zealand. Of this, about 75 percent comes from the South Island; 96 percent is Red and 4 percent Elk/Wapiti, with negligible offerings from other deer species."

He is a lot more upbeat about Elk/Wapiti: "There's historically been a \$10–15 premium on Elk/Wapiti, reflecting the Korean view that 'bigger is better'. We have sold Wapiti Supreme at up to \$91/kg which is one of the highest prices of the season, and that's been good news. This or even higher is where we aim to get our best Red grades, and I firmly believe this will come about next season. Farmers have to remain confident that things are improving, but not hold stored velvet over until next season."

Season average to beat predictions

Early in the season an average price of \$40–50/kg was predicted by other industry participants but it's now looking to be more in the seventies, he says. "This has come about through a commitment to acting collectively through VSM. Overall the result is better than expected." He also agrees there has been an overall increase in market size.

He says 55 percent of PGG Wrightson's velvet was sold to China last year and that share could increase to 75 percent. The Korean market suffered a 30 percent currency devaluation and has been more affected generally by the economic crisis, whereas China has been more resilient. To a large degree the variance in relative size of Chinese and Korean markets was "swings and roundabouts" because Chinese-made product ended up on the Korean market anyway. There had nevertheless been an increase in the use of velvet products by the Chinese, owing to that country's continuing economic growth and development.

"But we need to focus on how we partition those markets to keep competition alive and well between buyers."


Tony says variations in price were not mainly due to the exchange rate but more to confidence in market stability, and that was backed up by supply and demand.

New system has benefited all sellers

"With lower stocks and supply next season, we hope buyers will gain confidence in buying earlier. However, with high numbers of stags killed this summer, if we have a hard winter and meat prices stay around the \$10 per kg mark, velvet production tonnage could be in the low 300 tonnes next season and then it will really bite.

"Traditionally, New Zealand has sold velvet non-cooperatively, and this has had its problems. We have managed to negotiate a change this season and get the advantages of selling velvet from a large group of suppliers. Velvet suppliers should now start to see that the VSM system has benefited all sellers of New Zealand velvet and that relying on the open market would not have achieved the same results.

"PGG Wrightson and Tasman, operating as NZ Velvet Marketing Co (NZVM), is about taking velvet off the spot market and combining strengths at the selling end to ensure increased returns to the suppliers. We've changed selling dates and are taking stock over a longer period and holding it in stock for longer to harden prices."

The China market prefers the top tip wax or jelly tip velvet which is very good in second-cut velvet from New Zealand, he says, because it closely resembles the most highly regarded velvet of all, from flower deer or Chinese Sika. This rare deer only produces one or two tines a side, so it looks like New Zealand re-growth velvet. 

VELEXCO CO-OPERATIVE GROUP LTD

Velexco was created by deer farmers to improve profitability and stability within the velvet industry.

With 5 years trading Velexco is now established in the marketplace with a reputation for quality velvet and has consistently delivered price premiums to shareholders.

Every kilogram traded through Velexco strengthens velvet producers' ability to influence change; every kilo sold elsewhere delays reform.

Features:

- All grades handled
- Nationwide collection service
- Returns averaged by grade, eliminating seasonal fluctuations
- Entry level now \$2.00/kg to a first year maximum of \$1000
- No cash required, contributions can be deducted from payments



VELEXCO
Serious About Velvet

For further details and a copy of the Velexco Prospectus contact
General Manager Ross Chambers:

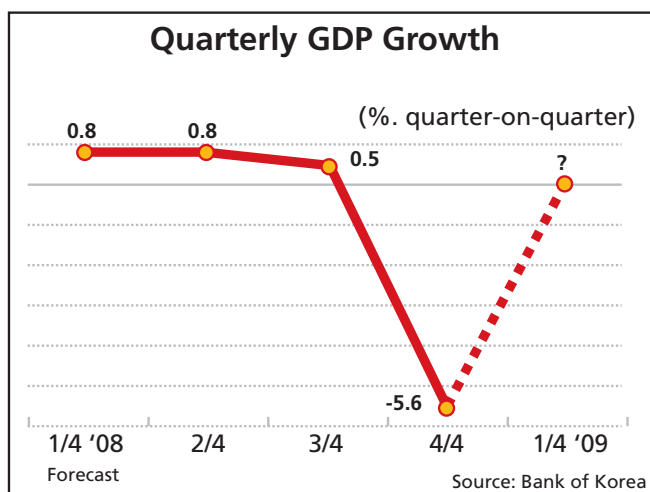
Ph **03 377 0203**
Mob **027 280 5586**
Email **ross@velexco.co.nz**
Web **www.velexco.co.nz**

Velvet

Some exporters have suggested positive signs of recovery in velvet prices since the season began. They note a market realisation of the potential for a tightening of supply. This realisation is filtering through, and market interest in securing product is beginning to intensify. Weakening of the New Zealand dollar against the US dollar has assisted. While any increases in price could be small, the trend is a positive signal for the next season. (See also *Velvet: a tough season but room for optimism* on page 16.)

Korean economy

While the Korean economy weakened early in 2008 due to weakness in its key export markets, the full global financial crisis didn't hit Korea until late last year. The Korean Government is forecasting a two percent contraction in its economy (measured by GDP); however the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is suggesting it could be closer to four percent, which would result in the steepest decline among the G20 nations. Currently, however, there have been few job cuts, a sign of hope by businesses that the economy will soon turn. If this does happen and the Korean labour force holds firm, they will be in a better position for a faster recover than other nations. Some economists suggest that Korea may realise a "U" or even "V" shaped recovery path instead of the "L" shaped predicted by some other countries. Korea was very fast to recover after the Asian crisis in 1997, and recent indicators have been positive. The Won has rallied against the USD and, at the time of writing, the stock market had also rebounded. Some economists caution that if there are larger job cuts (as in other markets), the economy could weaken further.



Korea market activity

Korean/New Zealand Free Trade Agreement

Deer Industry New Zealand lodged its submission supporting a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Korea, emphasising the importance of including New Zealand deer products. DINZ anticipates there would be good benefits for the Korean consumer as well as to the New Zealand industry.

Signs of a speedy FTA between New Zealand and Korea are encouraging, with reports suggesting that the agreement could be completed by mid to late next year.

Trade Minister, Tim Groser confirmed this recently at a Chamber of Commerce meeting indicating that New Zealand hoped to achieve a high-quality, comprehensive FTA in record time.

There is a caution, however, that agricultural items may prove challenging and that the traditional nature of velvet could also be an issue.

Velvet features at "NZ Unlimited"

The New Zealand deer industry was represented at the largest-ever showcase of New Zealand to Korea. NZ Trade & Enterprise invited ten prominent organisations to take part in the event, including Meat and Wool New Zealand, Fonterra, ENZA, Zespri,



The DINZ stand set up and ready for the hordes to arrive on the first morning of the VIP event.



Executive Chef, Kenny Chan and PR Director, Esther display a signature dish of sinews.

Aquaculture New Zealand, Comvita and DINZ. The three-day event attracted more than 15,000 Koreans.

Chinese economy

There are some indications that China is lifting its consumption of deer velvet and may even possibly rival that of Korea in time. The key for New Zealand is to maximise any opportunities this could offer. Western economists are predicting that China may slow to 6.5 percent growth, which would be significant in developed countries during “boom” years. However, after China’s continued double digit growth, achieving less than 8 percent could lead to other social issues. Prominent government and industry leaders from Heilongjiang Province met with DINZ to discuss potential for possible opportunities between the two countries.

Co-products

A campaign kicked off late in January, timed with Chinese New Year, to promote deer sinews and tails. The promotion ran into March and was designed to stimulate a market for functional foods from the traditional medicine segment. The campaign included cooking classes, a month-long focused event at two five-star restaurants and significant media coverage stemming from a VIP media dinner. (See *New role for tails and sinews as functional food in Hong Kong* on page 14.)



Deer and other sinews at a market in China.

Draft Velvet Industry Strategic Intent 2009 – 2014

The industry strategy’s goal is to create sustainable, profitable businesses in the New Zealand velvet industry through the efficient production of quality deer velvet and successful marketing of it by 2014.

New Zealand is a large supplier of an unfinished commodity into a small, single market which continues to result in volatile returns to the New Zealand velvet industry. The strategy acknowledges the declining state of the velvet industry through long-term diminishing returns. While returns in the short to medium term may improve through decreased supply, history dictates that this will change as soon as the demand:supply equilibrium is met.

However, gains have been made over the past five years. Velvet is being sold in a more coordinated way, rather than by straight auction. More velvet is being sold in China, taking some pressure off the Korean market. New Zealand velvet can be sold in a finished form in South Korea (rather than as an unfinished product).

Commercial companies will continue to pursue their own commercial strategies. However, there are elements which the industry agrees are best done in a coordinated way. These are:

- maintaining industry capability in terms of quality standards, velvet removal and freedom to operate generally
- gaining better access to markets and assisting development of those markets as required by commercial participants (primarily China, South Korea and Taiwan)
- protection of the core Korean oriental medicine market (Korean oriental medicine)
- availability of base marketing materials for marketers in Western markets, but otherwise limited activity
- on a small scale, continuing to grow base knowledge around the benefits of New Zealand deer velvet including maintaining the wound healing project.

Based on these preferences, Deer Industry New Zealand recommends that a change in tactic is implemented for the next five years. The Velvet Industry Strategy 2005 – 2010 sought new markets and positioning for New Zealand deer velvet, while maintaining the traditional markets.

The core priorities of this industry strategy are based on industry views of what “industry good” functions are required, which are narrower than work required in the previous strategy. It is based on comments by a range of participants in the New Zealand velvet industry. Further consultation occurred in April and this draft will be amended. 

Venison

Production

Production for the 12 months ending December 2008 was 591,000 deer, which was 6% down on 2007. Processors report a sharp fall-off in production in the past two months.

Schedule

At the time of writing, the national average published schedule was \$8.42 (week ending 10 April. Source: Agrifax). This was 26% above the same week last year, and 66% above the 10-year average. Recent currency appreciation may have slowed the early-season schedule rise.

Currency

Volatile international financial conditions have kept the NZ\$ bouncing around in recent weeks. Expectations of improvements in US economic conditions increased investors' appetite for risk and increased demand for the New Zealand dollar. The dollar appreciated 14% against the US\$ and 10% against the Euro through March and the first week of April. It has been estimated that every 1% increase in the value of the NZ\$ equates to about 10–15 cents off the schedule. It is not inconceivable that the NZ\$ could be back to above long-term averages by the time of the peak chilled season. If the NZ\$ does appreciate by another 10–20% against the main trading currencies, this will have an impact on the prices exporters can pay for livestock.

Exports

Venison exports in 2008 were worth \$316 million, up \$95 million, or 42%, on 2007. The volume of exports, at 19,793 tonnes was on a par with exports in 2007. The higher return was a result of higher market prices, and a depreciation of the NZ\$ against major trading currencies. Germany remains New Zealand's most important market, earning the industry NZ\$114

million in direct exports (36% of total, down from 40% in 2006). Exports to Europe accounted for 91% of exports. The United States declined in importance in 2009, accounting for 6% of export receipts, down from 8% in 2005.

Market conditions

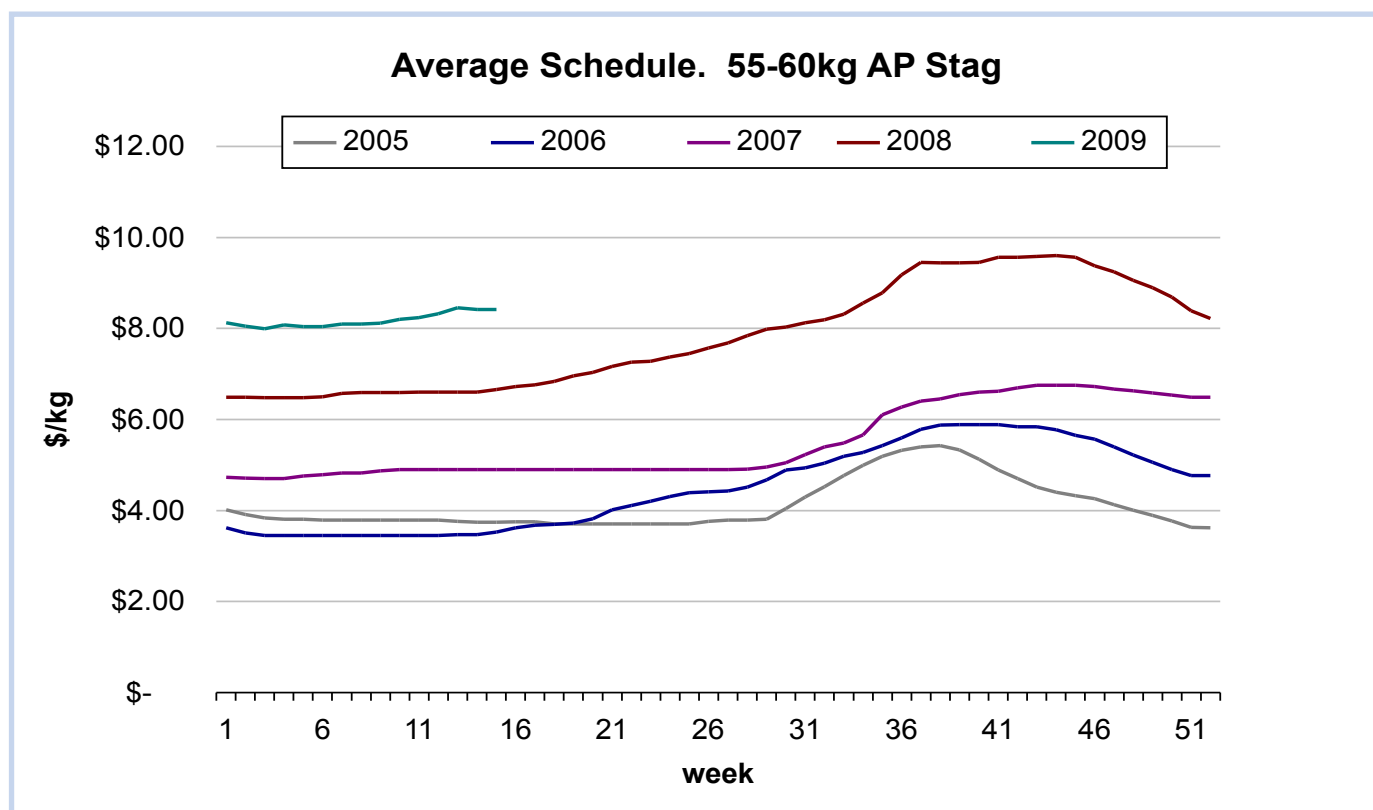
Europe

Exporters report that while sales to their importing and distributing customers have been progressing well, importers are cautious about buying, due to the uncertain prospects for the year ahead. With increasing unemployment, increasing debt, falling house values and uncertainty about the future, consumers are avoiding restaurants and non-essential expenditure. Despite increases in year-round sales made in recent years, venison is still predominantly a seasonal item. Therefore, at time of writing, the slow-down in economic activity has not yet affected the main venison sales period. Importers continue to order New Zealand venison for sale later in the year.

They hope demand from customers will be sufficient to sustain the price gap that New Zealand venison has opened up over other proteins in recent years, and they expect New Zealand production to be much lower than previous years. If this delicate balance can be found, then the prices being discussed will be attained.

United States

Consumption in the United States is not as seasonal as in Europe, and New Zealand venison is perhaps more reliant on the restaurant sector, which is being hit very severely by the downturn. Sales continue, but at lower volumes than previously as consumers cut non-essential expenditure, and chefs look for cheaper options to entice customers.



Reducing the risks:

Part 1: Avoid introducing Johne's disease onto your deer farm

■ By Jaimie Hunnam, Johne's Management Limited

If you want to effectively manage Johne's disease risk (or MAP – *Mycobacterium avium* subspecies *paratuberculosis* infection) in your deer herd, work towards achieving these three aims and begin as soon as possible:

1. Minimise the risk of introducing Johne's bacteria (MAP) onto your deer farm.
2. Minimise the transmission of Johne's bacteria to and between your deer.
3. Maximise the herd health of your deer, keep good records and investigate health issues or any unexplained losses.

In this article, we'll expand on the first aim. The second and third aims will be discussed in detail in future articles.

A deer infected with the Johne's bacteria, particularly if it is showing clinical signs of disease such as weight loss and diarrhoea, can infect other deer largely through contact with faecal contamination from the infected animals.

Consequently, a major source of Johne's bacteria onto your deer farm could be through purchase of infected deer.

There is no formal herd classification scheme for Johne's disease in the New Zealand deer industry. However, the industry, supported by a remit at the 2006 NZDFA annual general meeting, would like to develop one and it is included as a milestone in the current Johne's Research Group2 (JRG2) project. The responsibility to determine the likelihood that sale stock may be infected is dependent on the buyer-seller relationship and willingness to discuss herd history.

The most effective way to prevent introduction of infected deer is to maintain a completely "closed" herd. A closed herd is one where no new deer are brought into the herd, including sire stags. Alternative methods to introduce new genetics into your herd are artificial insemination (AI) or embryonic transfer (ET).

However being risk effective and efficient are not necessarily convenient in practice. If new deer, including sire stags, are required, consider using the following pre-purchase methods to decrease the likelihood of introducing infected stock:

Visual examination

Do a careful visual examination of deer prior to purchase. Do not purchase sale animals if one or more are scouring and/or wasting.

Deer with developing or advanced clinical Johne's disease may have a low body condition score, diarrhoea and a light, poor quality coat. Even one deer with Johne's disease in a sale group indicates the likely presence of other infected deer that are yet to demonstrate clinical signs of disease. Even if the clinical animal is removed prior to purchase, a proportion of the remaining deer will be infected with MAP and may develop Johne's disease.



Johne's testing

Only purchase deer that are negative to an appropriate test for Johne's, such as the Paralisa.

There is no test that will identify every animal infected with Johne's bacteria. Furthermore, test reports are also just one snapshot of disease prevalence in time. However, purchasing only test-negative deer will decrease the risk of introducing the bacteria into your deer herd and having to deal with clinical cases of disease months or even years after purchase.

Purchase deer from "low-risk" herds

There are a number of questions you can ask to determine whether a herd is at low risk of Johne's disease. These include:

- Does the owner/manager consider Johne's disease to be a problem in the deer industry?
- What is the Johne's disease management programme used in the deer herd?
- Have the sale deer or any other deer in the herd been tested for Johne's disease and what were the results?
- Has there been any scouring and/or wasting in deer in the purchased herd that did not respond to treatment, such as a drench or antibiotics, or was not explained by poor nutrition?
- Was there additional veterinary or other expertise involved in the diagnosis or treatment of the problem, and what was their view on cause and treatment?
- Have there been non-specific reactors to Tb skin testing in these deer or any deer in the herd and was further testing done to determine the cause?

Avoid deer of unknown herd origin

Do not purchase deer if the herd of origin is unknown, such as through saleyards, without considering the risk and cost benefit should these animals subsequently break down with disease.

If one or more purchased animals have diarrhoea and/or lose weight after purchase and you lose animals, particularly weaners or yearlings, emerging from winter, record their ear tag numbers and herd of origin code, cross reference to that herd of origin and consider buying deer somewhere else in future. 📄

Wealth of farm-friendly information at Hawke's Bay field day

Deer Industry News, in the form of editor Phil Stewart, pulled on its boots and ventured beyond the urban motorway on 11 February to attend the Central Regions Focus Farm field day.

More than 100 attended the day at *The Steyning* – the Deer Industry Focus Farm property of Tim Aitken and Lucy Robertshawe. Farmers were there from as far afield as Wanganui and the Bay of Plenty – a sure sign of the value placed on the information coming out of this programme, “The Making the DIFFerence project” funded by DINZ as part of the productivity strategy and run through the associated regional NZDFA Branches.

As well as updating visitors on the season's progress, the day was built around two issues: use of summer crops to boost lactation and thus weaning weights; and the farm's strategy for dealing with the arrival of Johne's disease on the property.

The day started with a quick look at a 1.5 hectare wetland being constructed below the homestead. The \$12,000 project has attracted funding from the Hawkes Bay Regional Council, also a major sponsor of the Focus Farm, and Tim urged all those considering environmental projects to approach their regional council first. An area below the self feeding silage stack is also being fenced and a large sediment trap built, also with regional council assistance.

He noted that new natives can need protection while getting established – having lost about 90 percent of their first planting – and recommended a quick-growing cover such as tree lucerne.

Crop programme

Looking at pasture cover over the season, the farm suffered a severe reduction in growth during December, due to the dry conditions. Growth was down to 14.5 kg DM/hectare versus the budgeted 35 kg.

They've been learning a lot, and getting some good results, from the summer crop programme.

A crop of Winifred rape for the R2 hinds needed redrilling after the first seeding pass was too shallow, but worked well the second time around.

A mixed crop of chicory and rape got off to a very good start. With no plantain in the mix there are more spraying options for weed control. Tim noted that the rape can be topped, and should not be allowed to get too “stemmy”. He said grazing pressure is needed to stop the chicory growing too fast during the summer, and going to seed.

Lucerne, which is regaining popularity in the district, grew well during the spring. Twenty-seven bales of quality baleage (450kg) were taken off four hectares in October and more was cut in January. This will be ad-lib fed to the weaners over winter.

A pugged paddock that had a winter oats crop was sown in summer feed rape which finally came away well. It will be sown in Samson AR1 in autumn.

Tim said chicory sales in Central Hawke's Bay had shot



*Richard Hilson (left) and Tim Aitken (right) bring visitors up to date on recent developments at a well-attended Focus Farm field day on *The Steyning* in Central Hawke's Bay.*

up last spring (up 400 percent on the usual sales!) – an indication that visiting deer farmers are taking heed of the Focus Farm messages.

Four hundred tons of silage are in the bank, filling the self-feed stack to the brim.

Mating programme

There is an interesting and strategic mating programme at *The Steyning*.

This year the yearling hinds have been split into two mating mobs for ease of management. Fifteen spikers went to a hundred of them, with five two-year-old stags going to the other seventy. Among these five stags is a small “fall guy” animal that will act as a diversion to stop the remaining four from beating each other up.

About 150 selected top mixed age hinds are being artificially inseminated with semen from Deer Improvement, including 25 straws donated to the project.



*The rapelchicory crop at *The Steyning*.*

The remaining 350 MA hinds are being naturally mated. Sires include two of Peel Forest Estate's specialist B11 terminal sires, which incorporate Elk and Eastern genes with a focus on growth rates, early calving, hardiness and disease resilience. These will run with 100 of the hinds. A further 95 R3 hinds are going to four home-bred Deer Improvement two-year-old stags, with the balance to be single-sire mated by selected good growth rate EBV European sires.

Veterinarian Richard Hilson, who facilitates the Focus Farm programme at *The Steyning*, said faecal egg count monitoring was helping Tim and Lucy cut down the amount of drenching required for both the cattle and deer on the property.

Financially, things have been progressing quite well. The 2008/09 budget is for an economic farm surplus of around \$183,000, well up on last year's \$67,500. Deer contribute about 86 percent of the gross farm income this year. The budgeted per hectare gross income for 2008/09 is \$1,132.20, and \$121 per stock unit underpinned by the strong venison outlook and marketing programme supporting Firstlight Foods Ltd.

Johne's makes presence felt

The unwelcome guest at *The Steyning* recently has been Johne's disease. And some very welcome guests came to the field day to talk about it, including Frank Griffin (Disease Research Laboratory) and Jaimie Hunnam (Johne's Management Ltd).

Richard Hilson said the first sign of trouble was a letter among the first batch sent out by JML, identifying suspect lesions in one animal in April last year. This turned out to be the classic Johne's "tip of the iceberg". Five R2 stags started doing very poorly and scouring during winter. All were blood tested and the sickest animal post mortemed. Four of the five tests came back strongly positive, including the animal killed.

Suddenly the iceberg was getting bigger, and with bought-in animals also involved, it was obviously on at least two other properties as well. Two more icebergs!

Richard Hilson said young animals infected with Johne's in Hawke's Bay often don't seem to start suffering problems until their second winter. "When they start rutting as spikers and go into their second winter or go through their first pregnancy and lactation as yearling hinds, that's when the pressure can go on and we start seeing disease."

He noted that even though Johne's is active on the property, the Tb skin tests of 600 animals only showed up three positives. High Tb test skin test positive rates often go hand-in-hand with serious Johne's problems – the low rate suggests that Johne's isn't rampant here and that the iceberg isn't too huge!

A blood test (the *Paralisa* test from the Disease Research Laboratory, Otago University) of the remaining 30 R2 stags showed up another two positive for Johne's, plus some positives among the tail enders.

Richard said the likely sources were either bought-in deer or dairy beef bulls. The dairy industry tended to underestimate the impact of Johne's, he said.

"There's a serious warning in there for deer farmers grazing cattle."



Tim Aitken discussing the new wetland being developed on the property as earthmoving work continues.

Tim and Lucy have confronted the issue head on and blood tested the whole herd. Fifteen out of 106 R2 hinds were positive and 42 out of 515 MA hinds were positive. The animals that were positive over an agreed and defined cut point on the test were culled, and the "suspicious" hinds below that threshold were to be culled at weaning.

Interestingly, they also found a stag factor. One of two light sires was found to be lowly positive and was culled, and because he had been used as a single sire, it was possible to trace all of his progeny. Of these, 40 percent were positive or suspicious for Johne's, indicating a strong genetic link. Those that were negative have been tagged and will be excluded from the breeding herd and eventually culled. "That was a lucky break, but it shows the value of recording," Richard said.

Testing continues

Tim and Lucy are carrying on testing animals coming onto or leaving the property. Only two out of 100 R2 hinds recently sold had tested positive. "The farmer who bought those tested animals is a lot better off than someone buying untested animals off another property where the Johne's status isn't known," Richard said.

Eight local Central Hawke's Bay herds have since been tested, and five had clinical cases discovered. Richard said it's hard to say whether the disease is getting worse. "Perhaps we're just looking harder. But we certainly can't say Johne's isn't a problem in Hawke's Bay any more."

He highlighted grazing of cattle with deer, bought-in cattle and the failure of animals to respond to drench as clear risk indicators for Johne's.

The cost for the testing regime on *The Steyning* has been about \$15,000 to date, and testing going forward will focus on R2 hinds post scanning.

Following presentations by Frank Griffin and Jaimie Hunnam, three packages of *Paralisa* blood tests, including technical advice from DRL and collection services and advice from Vet Services Hawke's Bay, were auctioned to raise funds for local DFA Branches to assist with Focus Farm projects. With the able assistance of PGG Wrightson auctioneer Vern Wiggins, \$2,500 was raised. The testing packages were snapped up by John Spiers and Mike McCormick. 📺

Timber at heart of Stanfield's new complex

Clive Jermy's new deer-selling complex at Stanfield's European Red Deer Stud, Darfield, has one of the most innovative buildings in the business, featuring wide-span laminated timber beam construction.

Timber deserves to make a comeback for this kind of structure, says builder Kevin Barron, of Wide Span Sheds South Island. He told *Deer Industry News* that the 1400-square-metre shed has a 27-metre freespan with the main load-bearing structure constructed from laminated radiata pine, while the building is clad with cedar veneer strips and has a Coloursteel roof.

The contract was to build a replica of Clive's existing deer complex at Bushey Park. It had to be built within a tight ten-week time frame to allow for interior fit-out in time for his sire sale on 11 January.


Kevin cites a number of benefits to this style of construction, starting with his view that since farming is "of the land", and farmers work and produce natural products, "why would you not support your own and build from timber?"

He also pointed out that timber stands for sustainability and energy efficiency as it takes a tenth the energy needed to make alternatives such as steel or concrete. Timber also offers a softer, quieter, and warmer environment for both animals and humans.



The laminated radiata beams give a 27-metre freespan.

"The only competing material is structural steel and when this is superseded with timber it gives 100 percent import substitution. Furthermore, timber has a better fire rating than steel, as it does not bend and collapse under heat, so insurance premiums can be lower, user-safety is enhanced, and neighbouring properties are at a reduced risk."

Further benefits he cited were that most laminated timber structures are less expensive than steel-based structures, and timber has an equivalent strength to steel for a less weight, reducing transport and construction costs. "Carpenters can handle the construction from start to finish, with no specialists required, and since nails are used throughout, assembly is simple and additions and alterations are not a problem." 

Deer on the net

Information, photographs and video clips about deer and deer farming have been recently posted on the on-line encyclopaedia of New Zealand, 'Explore Te Ara' (www.teara.govt.nz).

Featuring text written by former Invermay scientist Ken Drew and vetted by the DINZ, the encyclopaedia entry starts with the introduction and impact of deer, then moves to the development of sport and commercial hunting and deer farming. It then examines deer management in more detail, including venison, velvet and other products.

Ken Drew told *Deer Industry News* that compiling the material had been a pretty interesting job: "I never imagined I would end up working for the Ministry of Culture and Heritage!"

However, he voiced concerns about the editorial process and had some strong reservations about the presentation of his material, which he said had been "dumbed down a bit and sensationalised, which was not



helpful as I felt I knew the level at which people would want to read it."

On a more positive note, he said that the Te Ara editorial team had been able to obtain some material he did not have access to, including photos and video clips. "I thought, good on them for putting this material on the web."

Te Ara in Maori means "the pathway" and the Te Ara encyclopaedia is intended to offer "many pathways to understanding New Zealand. When complete, it will be a comprehensive guide to the country's peoples, natural environment, history, culture, economy, institutions and society."

Information on the site is Crown copyright but may be used for personal and non-commercial purposes. 

■ See: www.teara.govt.nz/TheSettledLandscape/AnimalFarming/DeerAndDeerFarming/4/en

100 % Pure NZ (velvet)

Question: *When is New Zealand velvet not New Zealand velvet?*

Answer: *No idea... at the moment.*

Country of origin verification is increasingly feasible due to a range of modern technologies that are becoming more cost effective. One such technology is the use of isotopes, which are different forms of a chemical element. Isotopes occur naturally and are non-radioactive. Isotope measurements are used in ecological studies and forensics to trace origins of plants, animals or biological products.

Last year, Velvet Antler Research New Zealand (VARNZ) commissioned a proof-of-concept trial to determine if isotopes would be an appropriate way to identify country of origin for velvet.

This work has recently concluded and a final report has been presented to VARNZ. The study examined a number of velvet samples from across New Zealand and a handful of samples from China, Korea and Russia. Isotopes of five elements were measured: carbon, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen and sulphur.

Carbon reflects the type of diet (e.g. pasture-based diet versus maize or palm kernel). Oxygen is also related to diet but reflects local environmental factors such as rainfall and temperature while hydrogen is related to rainfall or water availability. Sulphur can give an indication of distance from the coast and nitrogen can indicate fertiliser use. Combined, this package of isotope measurements for a sample of velvet should produce a distinct profile or signature that enables definitive identification of country of origin and possibly even regions within a country.

This certainly appears to be the case with regards to the range of New Zealand velvet samples tested: There is a clear separation between New Zealand velvet and other countries

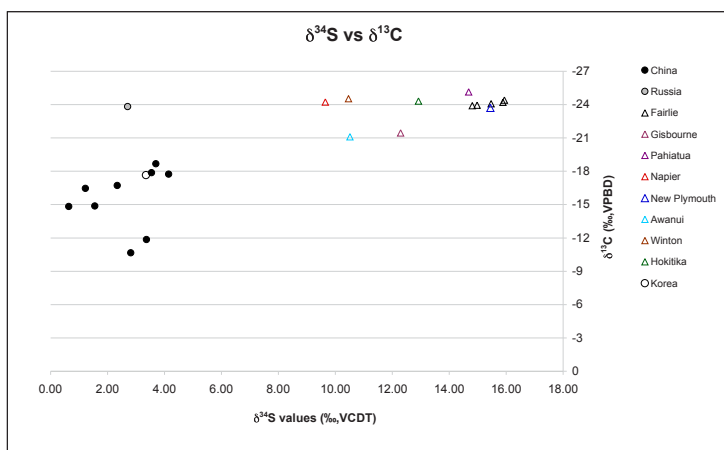



Figure 1. Sulphur and carbon isotope values (GNS, 2009, unpublished)

(Figure 1), and further, within New Zealand there do appear to be detectable regional differences.

The next steps to develop this technique into a useable tool will be to expand the number of samples for New Zealand regions to build up a robust data set that would comprise the “New Zealand profile” and also source overseas velvet from areas that may have similar climate or diet conditions to New Zealand velvet stags, or from areas that have previously been mislabelled as New Zealand velvet (or vice versa).

This will be done in a staged manner. Acceptance of the methodology will be sought from South Korean regulatory authorities that would wish to require robust country of origin validation and from the New Zealand Velvet Processors’ Association. 

COMING EVENTS: 2009

Date	Event	Time/Location	Contact for further details
24 April	NAIT electronics in deer farming	Landcorp's Rangitaiki Station, Matea Road, RD 3, Taupo	Craig Purcell on 027 278 5404 or Tony Pearse on 021 719 038
30 April	NAIT electronics in deer farming	1:00pm, Deer Improvement, Balfour Research Farm, Southland	Craig Purcell on 027 278 5404 or Tony Pearse on 021 719 038
4 May	Bay of Plenty Branch AGM	103 White Pine Bush Road, RD2, Whakatane, 7.30 pm	
5 May	Central Regions AGM	Rangitikei Club, Feilding, 7.00 pm	
6 May	Wairoa Branch AGM	Ferry Hotel, Wairoa, meal from 6.00 pm, AGM 8.00 pm	
6 May	Waikato Branch AGM	Morrinsville, 5.00 pm	
7 May	Canterbury Branch AGM	Sudima Hotel, 7.30 pm	
7 May	Marlborough Branch AGM	Combined Clubs, Alfred Street, Blenheim, 7.30 pm	
8 May	Waipa Branch AGM	Otorohanga Club, meeting followed by meal, time TBC	
11 May	Wairarapa Branch AGM	Gladstone Inn, 7.30 pm	
12 May	Taranaki Branch AGM	Inkpot Café, Stratford, 6.00 pm	
12 May	South Canterbury/North Otago Branch AGM	The Poplars, Pleasant Point, 5.00 pm	
13 May	Southland Branch AGM	Central Southland Lodge, Winton. 7.00 for 7.30 pm	
14 May	Otago Branch AGM	TBC	
19 May	Hawke's Bay Branch AGM	Waipukurau Club, 7.00 pm	
20 May	Taihape supplementary weaner sale	Waiouru Deer Sale Yards, 12:00pm	Andrew Peters, 06 388 0929
20 May	SCNO Focus Farm, public field day at Whiterock Station	12:00pm, Whiterock Station, Rangitata Gorge, Geraldine	Facilitator Nicky Hyslop, 027 474 4149
21 May	Canterbury Focus Farm field day, Mendip Hills	Time TBC, Mendip Hills Station, Parnassus	Facilitator Peter Bradley, 027 649 1107
26–28 May	Deer Industry Conference	Travelodge Hotel, Palmerston North	Conference Organiser: Pat Johnston, pat@dcms.co.nz or Natalie Fraser, natalie.fraser@deernz.org
3 June	Northern Regions Focus Farm field day	Landcorp's Rangitaiki Station, Matea Road, RD 3, Taupo	Facilitator Mark Macintosh, 027 449 1077
13–15 July	Deer Industry Technical Conference	Millennium Hotel, Christchurch	Peter Wilson, 06 356 9099 ext. 7619, P.R.Wilson@massey.ac.nz

Research/university amalgamation

The proposed merger between the nation's biggest research organisation and smallest university has been generally welcomed by the research, academic and primary industry community.

Agreement in principle to the merger of AgResearch and Lincoln University was announced in early March and they will now undertake consultation before taking a recommendation to the Government.

Dr Alastair Nicol of the Department of Agricultural Sciences at Lincoln University said he would expect the merger to strengthen deer research at Lincoln by reinforcing the university's links with Invermay, which he described as "the world's leading deer research organisation". Strengthening these links would hopefully provide Lincoln better access to research funding and provide the opportunity for Invermay staff to contribute to teaching. He said there was already some co-operative research, exemplified by Graham Barrell's work on deer lactation and calf growth, which was being carried out in association with Geoff Asher of AgResearch, but such opportunities had not always borne fruit in the past.

AgResearch Chief Scientist Dr Stephen Goldson echoed this view more generally, and listed benefits including easier and freer integration of work by postgraduate students, better coordination of research and educational needs, and greater overseas interest in purchasing education services and providing funding.

"It's also about providing broader and more general training in the land-based professions – not only research, but also technology transfer and learning about management and directorship," he said. "And as far as our levy-funded groups like Meat and Wool and Deer Industry New Zealand are concerned, there will be no diminution of our commitment to them."

The danger of one organisation "gobbling up the other" is not an issue, he said: "We are determined this won't happen: the two organisations have a history of complementary types of activity and the merger is about combining strengths and producing an unprecedented depth of ability. For example, many very capable researchers have not in the past had the opportunity to take part in teaching, and often for students there is real value added by hearing about their major discoveries directly from them."

Asked why a formal merger was desirable rather than a less formal co-operative arrangement, Dr Goldson said that existing cooperative effort between Lincoln University and AgResearch was sometimes hampered and complicated by the constitutional arrangements of the two parties.

An interesting aspect of the merger would be that the name AgResearch would probably disappear, with the name Lincoln University subsuming it to create what the heads of the two organisations describe in a press release as "a substantially enhanced university with a specific and deep focus on land utilisation and associated environmental and social integrity throughout New Zealand".

AgResearch has about a thousand full-time staff including 640 research staff at four campuses: Hamilton (Ruakura), Palmerston North (Grasslands and the Hopkirk Research Institute), Christchurch (Lincoln) and Dunedin (Invermay). As well as research in pastoral farming and associated food and textiles sciences, AgResearch has a strong overlap

with the core focus area of Lincoln University. It operates 15 research farms throughout New Zealand and receives research funding of \$150 million a year.

Lincoln University, founded in 1878 as Lincoln College, is the oldest school of agriculture in the southern hemisphere and describes itself as "New Zealand's only specialised university", concentrating on research and teaching directly associated with land-based industries. It has 610 staff including 219 academic staff, and more than 2,500 equivalent full time students including international students from more than 60 countries. The university says it "takes an applied and interdisciplinary approach to teaching and research in agriculture, the physical and biological sciences, commerce, the environment and their social dimensions – all of which are strategically aligned with the major areas of expertise and focus for AgResearch." It receives external research funding of \$17 million a year, which it says is the highest per staff member of all New Zealand universities (excluding the medical schools). Lincoln University owns and operates several farms, and has additional land holdings.

Labour Agricultural spokesman Ashraf Choudhary said the scuttling of the *Fast Forward* fund by the National Government was causing serious concerns and the merger could lead to redundancies among the scientific community. The Public Service Association has also voiced concern for the security of its members. 🇳🇿

Popular conference entertainer dies

Those who attended the 2003 deer industry conference in Timaru will be saddened to hear of the death of Kevin Lynch, alias "Len the Loser". Kevin's hilarious performance was one of the most popular awards-night acts in many years.



Kevin Lynch described himself as "a small-town non-achiever" who provided stand-up comedy and musical entertainment for corporate events and conferences. "We were so privileged to have him," says conference organiser, Pat Johnston. "He was a larger-than-life character, inspiring and entertaining. His musical talent was incredible, and between songs he wove the story of Len the Loser, a country character in bush shirt, gumboots, torn trousers tied up with string, sporting a guitar and singing with this incredible voice."

One of his many admirers described him as "Victor Borge rubbing shoulders with Fred Dagg and Eric Clapton".

Kevin Lynch was also well known as an entertainer in the Queenstown area and as the composer of *Rush!*, a musical about the gold rushes. He had a band with other members of his family, appropriately called The Lynch Mob.

Deer Industry New Zealand and the NZDFA extend their sympathy to Kevin's family. 🇳🇿

SIRE SUMMARIES:


1 April 2009



DEERSelect

These sire summaries list sire breeding values calculated from a single analysis of information from herds located around New Zealand. This analysis enables the genetic performance of the sires used in these herds to be compared on the same basis, after differences in environment have been removed.

To appear on the list, a stag must have a minimum of five progeny recorded, have a minimum accuracy for 12-month weight breeding value of 75%, and have progeny born in the last two years. The breeding values for the English stags and for the European/composite stags are directly comparable (providing both lists have the same analysis date recorded).

The information presented is for growth only, with the traits reported being weight at 12 months (W12) and mature weight of hinds (MWT). Both breeding values (BV) and accuracy of each breeding value (acc%) are reported. Number of progeny are reported as “number born in the last two years/total number of progeny” where the two numbers differ. The lists are ranked in descending order based on the breeding value for 12-month weight (W12BV). The list for English stags includes the top 10 of 33 stags listed, based on W12BV. The list for European and Composite stags includes the top 30 of 322 stags listed, based on W12BV. 

DISCLAIMER: While every endeavour has been made to ensure the accuracy of information in this report, SIL and AgResearch expressly disclaim any and all liabilities that may arise from the use of the information.

ENGLISH TOP 10

Rank (W12BV)	Birth herd	Current tag	No Progeny	W12BV	W12Acc	MWTBV	MWTAcc	Current flock prefix
1	Pelorus Deer	TOBY	71/169	11.9	97%	4.8	84%	Peel Forest Estate
2	Pelorus Deer	BENTLEY	25/91	7.9	94%	5.7	78%	Foveran Deer Stud
3	Stanfield English	DARTAGNION	45	7.9	90%	4.3	77%	Stanfield English
4	Windermere Red Deer Farm	295/90	1/28	5.5	88%	1.4	72%	Windermere Red Deer Farm
5	Canterbury Imp Red Deer	96053	12/219	5.4	96%	4.4	88%	Canterbury Imp Red Deer
6	Stanfield English	ARAGORN	115/190	5.3	97%	1.5	81%	Stanfield English
7	Canterbury Imp Red Deer	02758	110/114	5.2	79%	3	66%	Leamington
8	Pelorus Deer	45	25/71	5.1	92%	2.1	72%	Foveran Deer Stud
9	Stanfield English	WILLIAM JOHN	160/428	4.4	98%	2.3	84%	Foveran Deer Stud
10	Stanfield English	04106	6	3.8	79%	2.1	67%	Stanfield English

EUROPEAN AND COMPOSITE TOP 30

Rank (W12BV)	Birth Herd	Current Tag	No Progeny	W12BV	W12Acc	MWTBV	MWTAcc	Current Flock Prefix
1	Canterbury Imp Red Deer	31/04	13	25.7	85%	26.3	73%	Canterbury Imp Red Deer
2	Doncaster Deer Partnership	CORLEONE	25	25.5	83%	17.7	66%	Deer Improvement
3	Peel Forest Estate	ATLAS	60	25.1	94%	22.2	79%	Peel Forest Estate
4	Stanfield Eastern	03152	252	24.8	98%	24.3	84%	Wilkins Farming
5	Doncaster Deer Partnership	06583	29	24.4	83%	19.5	67%	Deer Improvement
6	Black Forest Park	KURGAN	50/98	23.5	95%	24.0	85%	Black Forest Park
7	Doncaster Deer Partnership	06549	26	23.5	84%	19.8	66%	Deer Improvement
8	Deer Improvement	COMMODORE	63	22.2	85%	14.6	68%	Deer Improvement
9	Peel Forest Estate	04052	7	22.2	83%	21.6	72%	Peel Forest Estate
10	Deer Improvement	CZAR	81	22.1	85%	17.4	67%	Deer Improvement
11	Stanfield Eastern	MAXIMILIAN	71/439	22.1	98%	26.2	94%	Stanfield Eastern
12	Remarkables Park Deer Farm	LUCIANO	94	21.9	94%	14.9	73%	Deer Improvement
13	Canterbury Imp Red Deer	COSSAR	252/266	21.4	98%	21.2	82%	Deer Improvement
14	Deer Improvement	06260	36	20.9	84%	14.5	67%	Deer Improvement
15	Fairlight	STALLONE	129	20.8	93%	13.2	74%	Deer Improvement
16	Black Forest Park	KABUL	2/291	20.7	98%	20.7	93%	Black Forest Park
17	Doncaster Deer Partnership	05073	5	20.6	81%	13.8	67%	Doncaster Deer Partnership
18	Peel Forest Estate	ADMIRAL	306/356	20.6	98%	13.0	85%	Deer Improvement
19	Remarkables Park Deer Farm	06055	54	20.4	84%	13.8	63%	Deer Improvement
20	Doncaster Deer Partnership	WAIPAHI	34	20.1	89%	17.0	73%	Deer Improvement
21	Peel Forest Estate	03315	36	20.1	91%	14.3	75%	Peel Forest Estate
22	Fairlight	063179	50	20.0	83%	16.6	64%	Deer Improvement
23	Stanfield Eastern	COLOSSUS	99/131	20.0	97%	18.4	83%	Deer Improvement
24	Stanfield Eastern	MOSSIMO	47/89	19.9	96%	19.8	83%	Deer Improvement
25	Deer Improvement	ARDLUSSA	42	19.5	83%	13.5	64%	Deer Improvement
26	Sunny Downs	CROATIA	32/46	19.4	90%	10.2	69%	Sunny Downs
27	Black Forest Park	SUPER NOVA	11/36	19.3	90%	16.7	79%	Black Forest Park
28	Black Forest Park	04Y522	6	19.3	80%	12.6	68%	Black Forest Park
29	Black Forest Park	02P185	5	18.9	79%	15.3	67%	Black Forest Park
30	Black Forest Park	04Y068	19	18.8	80%	18.3	68%	Black Forest Park