

"Making the Difference"

DEER INDUSTRY FOCUS FARMS PROJECT

Issue 14
March 2011

Canterbury/North Canterbury – MENDIP HILLS

NOTICE OF FINAL COMMUNITY FIELD DAY FRIDAY 1ST APRIL 2011, 11.00AM

THEME:

**Progress compared to the targets set 3 years ago.
Have we achieved the focus for the Deer Industry Focus Farm Project?
"Making the Difference"**

This is our last community field day at Mendip. The plan is to view as much of the property as is practical including the tour of the front of the mountain that had to be cancelled last public field day due to the weather. There will be four stops. Each one focusing on one of the four major topics that have been focused on at Mendip over the last three years: animal health (John's), breeding gains, development, and integration of varying livestock classes. This will include a full analysis on actual and financial progress that has been made over the last three years.

**Start Time 11.00am - BYO Lunch
Finish at 4.30pm followed by BBQ and drinks
A full agenda will be emailed out next week**

Weather wise, the last twelve months has been of two extremes. A very wet winter, followed by an average spring and then November through to March someone turned the tap off with Mendip progressing into one of its typical hot dry North Canterbury summers, receiving no relief as was the case with most of the rest of the South Island just before the New Year with only the odd shower late February early March. The place is still green but Simon is still looking for a lot more rain in the next month or so to set things up for the winter.

There is an old saying that "*an early decision is a good decision*" which has been the case with stocks sales at Mendip this season. Coupled with this and the new stock water scheme put in last autumn, in Simon words, stock have fared well.

The top deer farm feed wise is looking good. Following the winter rotation with the hinds in two mobs, hinds were set stocked for fawning at about 1.5 hinds to the hectare (total area) slightly back on the last two years and is due to the extra 220 hectares been deer fenced. This allowed for about 140 early calving cows to be calved also with the deer unit. They were introduced early spring pre calving and taken out early November as to not interfere with fawning and were replaced mid-February with 210 R3 bull heifers. The focus being on feed quality for hinds especially in that January/February period. Simon is confident that it has worked but the proof will be at fawn weaning that is penciled in to start about 15th March. This year the plan is to wean about 250 hinds per day rather than the lot in two days that has been the case in the past making it easier on man and weaners and giving Simon more time for weighing and recording weights. The individual weights back to sire stags will not be possible this year with all hinds having been rotational mobbed in two mobs for the winter and the first and second calvers being fawned together this year but average fawn weights for reds and terminals we be achievable. The plan is to try and keep 300 weaner hinds this year.

The R2 hinds have again been summered down on the front deer block this year. With the dry conditions they have been grazed on summer rape for January and most of February with the focus over the next few months to try and keep them off the high endophyte paddock over the mating period. They have been John's tested with the results due back any time now and will receive their first lipto shot this week when they are weighed. Four new R3 breeding stags were put out with them at the end of February.

The MA breeding stags were mouthed and culled at velvetting. Four new stags have been purchased, three reds from Remarkables; one red from Peel Forest and one B11. This year's breeding program for the hinds on the hill is currently being finalized and will report at our next field day.

The breeding ewes have performed very well again this year with lambing at 125% overall. This is a rise of 15% on last year's lambing. Given the weather and this year's store prices Simon made the decision to have a lamb sale this year rather than sell to lamb plan as has been the policy for the last two years. A summary of current lamb sales for the year is below:



Early lambing mob	800 killed of mothers	18.3kgCW	
	1,300 sold to finishing farm	29.5kgLW	
Main Mob	4,500 sold at on farm sale	29.0kgLW	
	700 sold to finishing farm	26.0kgLW	
	Average price		\$78 net
Smaller lambs	1,000 retained	24.0LkgLW	
	<i>Of which</i>		
	760 to be sold to finishing farm	32.0kgLW	
	340 sold store	28.0KgLW	
	Estimated overall price		\$84 net
Ewe lambs	4,000 retained		
	With 1000 surplus to be sold before the winter		

All cull ewes were also sold at the sale @ \$112 net plus. 178 15 month heifers were also sold at the sale.

Although cow numbers have remained around the 900 cows to calve this year, initial calf numbers are slightly back on last year with one mob to still mark. Simon though is pleased with calf condition and believes it is forward on last year. There also seems to be very few late calvers.

All winter feed paddocks are on target for average yields with 3.7ha of fodder beet again being sown for the weaner hinds this year. Similar amount of kale and turnips also sown again this year. The lucerne has performed well with a large amount of lucerne silage/baleage being made but grass silage take is back on previous years.

The development has continued on the hill with the last of the water troughs being connected up to the new stock water scheme this summer. The Road block was finally burnt in early February after the first try failed and further spray of glypophate was necessary. The plan is to over-sow this autumn with a clover cocksfoot/grass mix. Two ton of Lime and 500kg/ha of Super 10 has already been applied by plane and the grass will also be flown on by plane when moisture levels are adequate.

As the three year period draws to a close, I look back on a very successful DINZ Focus Farm project at Mendip Hills.

The theme "Making the Difference" really captures the overall project. The final field day will summarize these differences.

For further enquiries please contact

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Well late winter got even wetter. The front flats around the houses and the woolshed turned into paddy fields. 1st September somebody turned off the tap and, like most areas, the nor' west arrived and turned the ground rock hard. Most stock had had enough of the wet weather and were more than ready to be set stocked.

Simon is more than happy with how the deer have wintered. A decision was made not to pregnancy test the MA Hinds on the hill this year given scanning and fawning results for the last two years and an extra 250 hectare block deer fenced. Also all low mouthed hinds and poorer constitution types were culled at weaning. Therefore as soon as the Rut had finished and TB testing undertaken, all the hinds were put into two mobs (Reds and Terminals) and have been rotational grazed. This has been extremely successful with a mob of 200 R2 heifers following behind. The plan is to run all hinds back through the shed again in the next 10 days. Take out the very poor constitutional ones and the stragglers that have been picked up and set stock with some cattle in each block. Visually however there is no obvious signs in a fall off in the hinds and a lot of the roughage that has been there for the last few seasons has been tidied up.

The first calvers have wintered down on the lower deer block on Rape and are currently cleaning up the last of the fodder beet. Scanning and Johne's testing results were very pleasing as already reported. Blood results for Leptospirosis were high and a vaccination programme started. The 2 year olds will head up the hill in the next fortnight and set stocked.

R1 have wintered well and are out on grass since the 1st September with only half the fodder beet eaten. Simon was pleased with the fodder beet and their weight gain and killing stats from the finishing farm will be reported at our next field day.

The R2 finishing cattle have caused a few headaches this year with ground conditions being so wet. They had to be taken off the Kale and pad fed. The finishing farm has not been able to take them early also due to the ground condition so therefore have been costly wintering. The rest of the cattle are looking well with calving well through. The 900 plus young cattle (R1) are however putting the pressure on feed. Some breeding cows and late lambing ewes have again been set stocked on the lower mountain area to take some pressure off the middle country.

The ewes wintered well. Shearing was a bit drawn out but having the 2 tooth shorn took some pressure off. Lambing has gone well with hardly a drop of rain. Early lambs to be tailed next week but Simon is feeling confident.

Finally, for all you fire bugs out there, Simon is still focused on burning the Road Block. With 4 litres of Glosophate sprayed over the whole block last week Simon aims to burn around the field day so don't miss out on one big bonfire!

The joint field day at David and Hilary Wards was a very successful day and thoroughly enjoyed by those who attended.

This is the last public field day and everyone is welcome. The plan is to head out to the Gelt and have lunch out on the lower mountain looking back into the property. An area we have not visited in the past. Be there by 11am as we plan to be gone by 11.15am. You are welcome to bring a friend along with you.

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