

“Making the DIFFerence”

DEER INDUSTRY FOCUS FARMS PROJECT

Region: Northern Regions Roundup

Date: July 2011.

Hosts: Wellington's

Speakers/facilitator: Mike Woods

We were delighted by the attendance and participation at the Northern Fieldday last month.

It is pleasing to see everyone keen to contribute their weigh data so we can gauge what growth is probable, and also what growth rates are possible in young deer.

Fawns at Wellington's are still on grass alone, but with a few frosts in July growth has slowed and some silage may have to be fed soon.

We will try and keep one mob on grass alone for a comparison.

Everyone tends to have slightly different circumstances, so we need a bigger number of farm weigh data to get the best indications of norms. If possible, we would like to try and record Wap X and Red fawns separately and also males and females for each breed group.

This means more numbers in the test weigh samples, but better comparisons. It would also be good to have noted what feed they have been getting between weighs, and also if they were post rut weaned.

It appears that most Wap crosses are doing 150-200 grams/day on grass from weaning until winter 1 June, with a small advantage to males. Reds are doing around 100 - 150 grams/day, but more variable, with genetics being a bigger factor than with Waps.

High growth rate Reds are growing at least as fast as the WapX, but as Brian has noted, their dams are considerably bigger than his 100 kg types so more maintenance. At some stage we could test the efficiency of venison production on these types of farm systems between 100 kg Red hinds and 160 kg European Reds using Farmax modeling.

There appears to be a catch-up by the smaller fawns from maidens if they are allowed to, by running in a separate mob and/or preferential feeding, even though they are 2-3 weeks younger on average than the fawns from MA hinds at weaning. We wondered if their lower milk intake from their dams meant they had to eat more grass and solid feed earlier, which develops their rumen faster leaving them better adapted to grow after weaning.

Obviously management and health eg FE, worms and Yersinia may override.

The weight gains achieved whilst on the dams appear to be around 400-500 gms/day for Reds, and 500-600 gms/day for WapX on Red Hinds.

“More calves, heavier and earlier... and better”



Weight gains after spring arrives in September appears to be 400 - 500 grams/day even on all grass, so why is it that the fawns are not doing this type of gain in autumn on similar quality grass? Is it lack of rumen development?

David Stevens highlighted that often autumn pasture is poorer quality (more dead %) than in spring, but this autumn with no drought, this wasn't the case so much on Brian's place.

We aim to test some theories around this area over the period of this project, but in the meantime we could do with more growth rate results from farmers who are adding grain or crops to the diet of weaners, and who also fed grain to hinds/fawns pre-weaning. These practices may result in earlier rumen development which may allow for better post weaning growth rates.

Meanwhile I am working on a reference article with some explanation for your Feed analysis, and a ready reckoner for feed quality analysis.

Latest weigh data from Wellington's indicate the early winter weight gains on all grass are 80 – 100 grams/day. The next drench is due soon, so a further test weigh will bring us up to date with growth through mid-winter. Our end of winter weigh is set for 1 September. If other farmers submitting weights could line up their weighing for this time it would give more valid comparisons thanks.

PS. Scan results just to hand indicate a higher empty % this year, but some variability between mobs.

The MA hinds group mated to Wap stags have a 10.5% empty rate, but the rising 3-year hinds mated to Waps had a 7% empty rate (last year 24%).

Some of the Red single sire mated groups had 10% empty as well, and the maidens were 15% empty this year.

At this stage we are blaming the Facial Eczema in late April, as there appears to be very few hinds in calf after 20 April. Brian noted the stags doing a lot of sitting around from mid April on – suspicious activity when still 12.5% of the hinds not in calf!

The odd deaths due to FE are continuing in all mobs that were not on sprayed pasture.

PSS. Another of the objectives of the DIFF North project is to work toward best practice environmental management. The wintering of the hinds in the trees allows for better feeding of weaners and less fence line pacing and less mud, but there is an issue with soil and faecal contamination of waterways from runoff from the tree wintering area, not helped by the very wet winter.

Brian has dug a small sediment pond initially, which has had some benefit, but further mitigation strategies are required - the first water test results from Brian's place, supported by Waikato Regional Council, have shown we have some way to go to fully mitigate this risk, and we will be seeking advice on further developments in this area.

Best wishes
Mike Woods
Facilitator
DIFF Northern regions

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