



Deer Industry News

Cyclone Gabrielle aftermath: the first steps of recovery

Gearing up for Winter
MANAGEMENT TIPS AND
ADVICE FOR A SMOOTH
TRANSITION TO WINTER

DINZ Vision 2022 - 2027
THE PRIORITIES, COSTS
AND BENEFITS OF THE NEW
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THE OPPORTUNITIES AND
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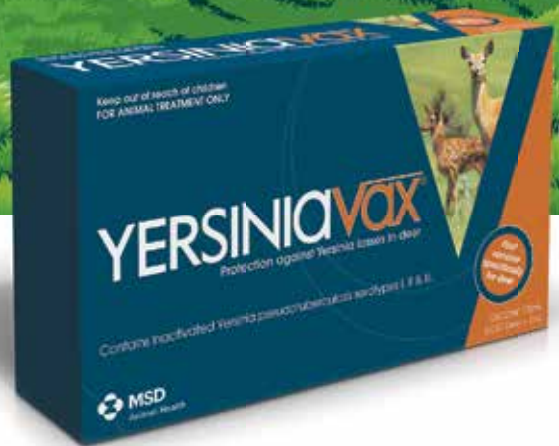
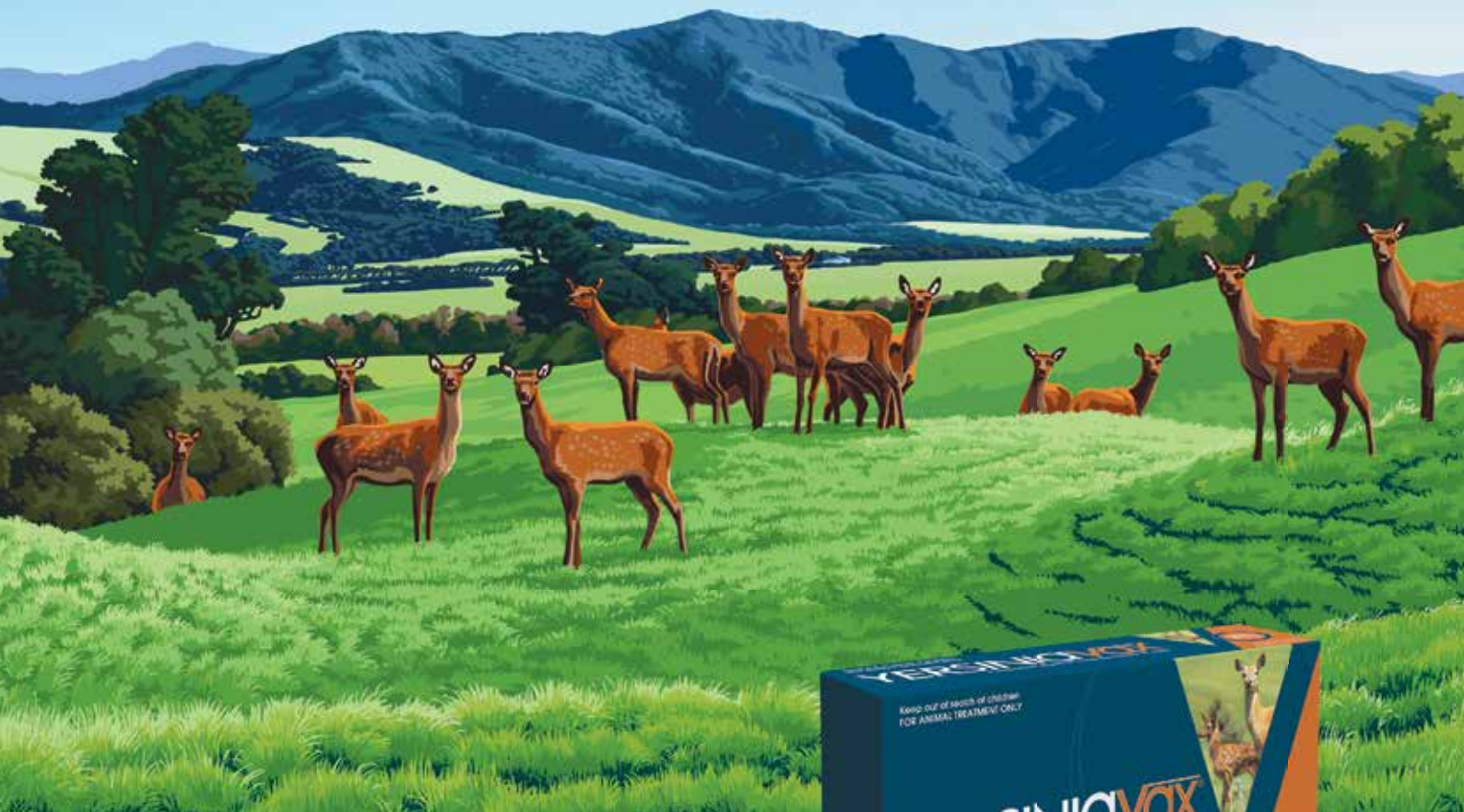


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Deer Industry News

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Contents

Editorial: Keeping it Real. 3

In Brief: What the Hell? and more. 4

Meet and Greet: Becks Smith. 6

Special Report: Cyclone Gabrielle 8

News

Stag sales have gone "extremely well". 10

Year of the Rabbit sees return of the Dragon for NZ velvet 10

Offal lot of potential. 11

Velvet: EWSNZ competition 12

NZDFA: elections, awards, competitions

Step Up. 13

Farm Systems

Venison prospects 2023 and beyond . 14

P2P: onwards and upwards. 16

On Farm

The feminine touch. 17

Eye on the prize 18

Insider knowledge 20

Environment: It's here: the Farm Environment Handbook. 23

Animal Health: Autumn management for optimal weaner growth 24

Science 4 Success: Invermay Update

Tomorrow's Deer progeny 25

Industry News

To Thrive with Passion. 26

DINZ: Intern Report - Meeting the future needs of deer farmers. 29

People: Obituaries. 30

Recipe: Easy venison stir-fry. 31

Cover photo: Cyclone carnage at Waipapa Station wiped out the deer boundary fence and led to the escape of 200 stags. See pg 8. Photo: Michael Humphrey.

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Keeping it real

Cyclone Gabrielle is the unanticipated disruptor whose fury has wrought havoc across the northern half of the North Island. Some deer farmers have been hit hard and as this issue went to print most were in the early stages of recovery.



NATURAL DISASTERS ARE 'levellers' in every sense of the word. There's the physical flattening of the landscape but also the pulling together of people, groups and organisations – regardless of politics, age, status or whatever – who collectively rally for the common good of getting things back on track. The deer industry has been quick to set up networks of support for affected farmers. In the first instance it was local branches of the DFA, followed by DINZ and the wider NZDFA which have built and centralised support. It will be a long road to recovery and a one-step-at-a-time exercise as pointed out by cyclone-affected and Hawke's Bay DFA chair Evan Potter. The aftermath coverage (page 8) in my first issue as editor brings home the raw realities of farming and the fact that the best planning in the world can't trump catastrophic weather. Also, it's been a timely reminder of keeping things real and relevant to readers. I think you'll agree that farm consultant Tom Ward's analyses on venison farming prospects certainly hits the mark. It's an objective no frills and realistic view and highly recommended reading on page 14.

A relevant read (page 26) is the DINZ Vision for the deer sector. It is a forward looking plan setting out the industry's vision, goals and objectives over the next five years. For some of us, the very mention of the words 'strategic' and 'plan' in a single sentence will bring on an involuntary eyeroll and mutterings about unnecessary navel gazing. Regardless of your views it's important that you take the time to take a look at what's being proposed and why.

In keeping things real, I've taken on board feedback from the recent deer farmer communication preference survey which asked for more practical on farm content. This issue has an overarching gearing up for winter theme and offers practical advice and tips on what could/should be considered. In the barn wintering story (page 20) Tony and Michelle Roberts have advice on how to go about indoor wintering based on their own experience, while Southland vet Samantha Elder gives useful tips on autumn weaner management and health (page 24). First Light Environmental Award winners Tim Bowron and Chris Smith of Pāmu's Goudies Station also have some tips on wintering well, and how to grow heavier weaners for the early spring premium paying market (page 18).

By the way, it's not too late to step up for industry good. The DFA – the voice of deer farmers – needs new blood to take on leadership and decision-making roles. These are 100% real and relevant jobs that need to be filled so that the voice of deer farmers is heard by local communities, as well as the regional and national decision makers whose thinking and policies shape the future of our industry. To paraphrase a famous John F Kennedy quote now is the time to 'ask not what your industry can do for you, but what you can do for your industry.'

I welcome constructive feedback on keeping the magazine real and relevant for you. Contact me at deerindustrynews@gmail.com ■

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What the Hell?

Deer blood is a key ingredient in Hell Pizza's To-Meat-O sauce. It's a classic Kiwi-style tomato sauce infused with beef stock and capsules of deer blood. The sauce is handmade in-store and packaged in a hospital-style blood bag to satisfy the taste buds of otherwise carnivore diners who opt for the occasional meat-free pizza. Hell Pizza developed the sauce as an optional add-on for their limited edition, meat-free steak and cheese pie pizza.

Hell's founder and director Callum Davies says the creation of the bloody good tomato sauce was a way to get stubborn meat eaters to try new plant-based proteins.



Waste Not



The average NZ farm produces 10 tonne of waste. That's according to research by Agrecovery, a not-for-profit charitable trust providing agrichemical container and chemical recovery for farmers and growers. Agrecovery recycles plastic containers, large drums and unwanted chemicals. It also runs a product stewardship

scheme for small seed, feed and fertilizer bags. Most of the containers are recycled into underground electrical cable cover and the drums are returned to brand owners for re-use or shredded for recycling. Agrecovery has 160 fixed collection sites throughout the country and arranges on farm collection for large items or large quantities of containers.

Since inception in mid-2007 it has recycled nearly 3.5 million kg of plastic containers and over 165 thousand kg of expired or unwanted agrichemicals.

Find out more about how you can safely clear and recycle on farm inorganic waste at agrecovery.co.nz.

Off the market



Pakatoa Island, the ultimate private, waterfront hideaway a 15 minute helicopter ride from downtown Auckland is off the market. Owner

and 2022 Open Red winner at the National Velvet competition John Ramsey (page 17) has had the Hauraki Gulf island listed with a price tag of around \$40 million since the mid-2000s. But he's pulled the pin for the meantime reasoning that his money is better tied up in land rather than a bank given the prevailing financial headwinds.

Tags on Tags

About 2,500 (less than one percent) of deer arrived at meat processors during 2021/22 minus a NAIT tag. That's an improvement from previous years but still a problem, especially for the farmers who are penalised for it. OSPRI has the following tips and reminders on now to keep tabs on tags:

- Tag the animal well into the centre of the ear, between the two veins to lessen the chance of the tag getting caught.
- Make sure the tag is clipped in the ear, the RFID/female portion of the tag needs to face forward and lock with the male part.
- Consider double tagging with a birth set, both RFID and panel tag. This can help identify the animal if one tag falls off.
- Tag at weaning when the fawn's ear is stronger, reducing the chance of tearing.
- If a deer has lost their tags, re-tag the animal several days before transport to avoid other deer biting the tags out during transport.
- Also, DINZ advice is to scan tagged deer on to the truck so you can prove the tags were intact at the time of loading.



Cheers to deer milk



A daily glass of deer milk could be the perfect liquid boost for older women. That's the high level findings of a Massey University trial that looked at how a 200ml daily dose of deer milk affected the bone health, strength and nutrition of 120 women over the age of 65. The older female demographic was chosen because of their increased

calcium, protein and nutritional needs post-menopause. Over the 10 weeks of the trial in mid-2021 half consumed deer milk and half consumed an oral nutritional supplement. None of the women gained weight from drinking deer milk but all gained muscle mass, without additional exercise. Grip strength also improved without additional exercise, which could be due to the growth in muscle mass and the added nutrition of deer milk which is higher in calcium than cow's milk. A chemical marker analysis showed that the milk had a protective effect on bones. The trial was carried out in collaboration with Pāmu who have been pursuing deer milk as a viable dairy product in recent years and were keen to scientifically prove its nutritional benefits. Pāmu deer milk business lead Hamish Glendinning (also this year's DINZ Board observer) says deer milk will be part of a growing aged nutrition space.

Source: *Stuff*

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Becks Smith

The Whole Story

THE WHOLE STORY of Becks Smith already fills several inspirational chapters. The 36-year-old mother of three young daughters as well as a part-time vet and sheep, beef and deer farmer alongside husband Jason has pushed beyond her comfort zone completing several leadership and governance courses.

In 2021 Becks was a finalist in the Zanda McDonald Award which recognises talented and passionate young professionals working in agriculture in NZ and Australia. Before that she completed several Agri-Women's Development Trust courses, the pinnacle achievement the completion of the Escalator programme which delved deep into leadership, governance and personal values. Escalator along with some reflection during Covid-19 lockdown motivated her to establish *The Whole Story* (www.thewholestory.co.nz) aimed at sharing inspirational and practical tips on driving holistic sustainability across agriculture. TWS includes a regular podcast in which Becks interviews agri-allied people who are working towards the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

Tell me about your involvement with deer farming.

How did it start and what does it involve now?

My first introduction to deer was as a veterinary student working at Mararoa Station as part of my practical work requirements in university holidays. I really enjoyed working with them and learnt a lot from the farm team. It prompted me to take deer as an elective topic at vet school which reinforced my passion for the industry. Fast forward to now I've had more than a decade of deer veterinary experience. Also, I'm involved in the deer research space, with a particular interest in leptospirosis. I've had further involvement at an Advance Party level. When a neighbouring property, a deer farm, came up for sale a few years ago I managed to convince my husband and his family to give deer farming a crack. We have around 450 red hinds, breeding for venison.

You launched The Whole Story (TWS) in June 2020 to inspire farmers and shift their mindset to a more positive one. Do you have any tips on how to stay upbeat and motivated based on the stories of the people you've interviewed?

- Take actions, even if they're only small ones, in the right direction.
- Be the hero of your own story, don't play the victim.

- Don't get bogged down in the negative narrative.
- Show leadership by reframing challenges as opportunities.
- Work with a community around you to achieve things together, catchment groups are key to this.
- Celebrate the successes of what you are already achieving, but don't sit on your laurels. Always strive to improve.

What have you learnt from TWS about:

Podcasting: LOTS!!!!

- Editing audio is hard work and transcribing to text is a game-changer and takes a lot of time.
- Everybody has their own unique filler words.
- You have to get used to hearing the sound of your own voice.

Holistic sustainability?

Sustainability is a journey not a destination, and what success looks like to one, is not the same as success to another. A lot of what I hear is about balance, resilience, legacy and responsibility. But, often it all boils down to people. They are at the heart of our sector and to be truly sustainable we must look after our people, engage the hearts and minds of our people and empower our people to find workable solutions on the ground which can be advocated for at all levels of our sector.

What's your must-have farming related app?

Instagram. I'm a visual person so I love this platform because it uses images to engage with an audience. I think it's so important to be willing and able to share our farming stories. If you're interested to see what I'm up to, follow along at [@willowglen_wildflowers](https://www.instagram.com/willowglen_wildflowers) or [@thewholestorynz](https://www.instagram.com/thewholestorynz).

What is a must-listen-to podcast (apart from TWS)?

Humans of Agriculture (with Oli le Lievre), another Zanda McDonald finalist. He is Australian and is my podcasting inspiration. He goes behind the scenes of the food and fibre system and uncovers the real stories, experiences and voices of modern agriculture in Australia.

You're clearly a 'life-long' learner. What's next?

I am doing a Charing Pathway course with Grounded Governance as part of my chair role with Quorum Sense to become a more effective chair and lift my governance skillset. But every day is a learning opportunity. I heard a wonderful quote recently: 'If I haven't learnt something today, it's time for a pulse check' which sums things up perfectly. ■



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Cyclone Gabrielle: mammoth clean up

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

THE AFRICAN PROVERB of eating an elephant one bite at a time is ringing true for Evan Potter in the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle.

“There’s the saying that when you’re served an elephant the only way to eat it is one bite at a time and that’s what we’re doing with the clean up,” he said.

Speaking to *‘Deer Industry News’* nine days after Gabrielle hit, the Hawke’s Bay DFA chair said there was lots of carnage on his family’s Waipapa Station.

“But it’s not apocalyptic, the house and family are fine and most of the infrastructure is in place...there’s nothing that’s not fixable, but it’s the years of work we’ve put in that’s hard to take.”

Evidence of the devastation and annihilation of the extensive farm forestry and native plantings and environmental enhancements are widespread.



Evan and Linda Potter are tackling the aftermath of Cyclone Gabrielle one bite at a time.

and substantial plantings of native shrubs and trees. Following Gabrielle some of the remaining native plant areas were set upon by free-ranging hinds.

It took over a week to gain access to the property, get running

Evan and wife Linda, winners of numerous awards and the 2021 National Ambassadors for Sustainable Farming and Growing, had managed a full farm assessment of the 720ha property. It wasn’t a pretty picture on what was once a ruggedly picturesque and productive although challenging landscape. There were huge slips on the Class 6 and 7 land, wipeout of about half of the production forestry,

water back on tap and plug holes in the boundary deer fences. A mob of stags was still on the run and Evan was hopeful they’d find their way home eventually. In the meantime a drone had been offered to help track them. The next steps in the clean up would be fixing fences within the boundaries and trying to improve access.

The initial clean up was exhausting and the long hours with little sleep caught up with Evan unexpectedly on the evening of the seventh day. He took the quad bike to check on digger progress in the clearing of a track and after inspection reversed out of a spot as he had hundreds of times before. However, a momentary lapse of attention and possibly slumped ground upturned the bike on Evan, resulting in three broken ribs. That brought a frustrating stop to his boots and all efforts but he was trying to stay philosophical.

Most deer farmers in the region had suffered damage to some degree and the Hawke’s Bay branch of the DFA had managed to connect with them, Evan said.

There had been excellent and practical examples of support and he made special mention of Richard Hilson, Karen Middelberg and Matt Gibson who had made a stellar effort of coordinating services and help for those who needed it. Another member Rick Graham, a helicopter pilot, was involved in flying missions for Search and Rescue in the immediate aftermath and then in the reconstruction of powerlines.

“Our branch members helped him out on farm where we could while he was busy with community-good activities.”

Deer farmers on the periphery had also been quick to help out such as Mike Humphries (Feilding) and Guy Laver (Dannevirke) who flew a fixed wing plane up the Esk Valley to deliver three generators.

“Guys like that have stepped up to help out other deer farmers,” Hawke’s Bay DFA member and First Light Foods general manager Matt Gibson said.





Wipeout: meters deep mud, slush and debris has decimated fences.

People were forthcoming with help in the immediate aftermath but Matt was aware of the limited window of opportunity for that help to continue. Also, much of the clean up on deer farms, such as the reinstating of deer fences and fixing of yards were complex tasks requiring specialist skills.

Messages of support received from deer farmers throughout the country have been much appreciated and will be welcome in the weeks and months to come.

There was an acute need for skilled labour, fencing gear and equipment and that would continue for months to come.

Getting back to normal will be no quick fix.

“That’s not the nature of eating an elephant,” Evan said.

He and Matt said that the coming weeks would be the time when



Extensive slumping and slips on the Silver Range which backdrops Waipapa Station.

the reality of the situation and the hard graft ahead would sink in.

“That’s when we as a branch will have to look at how we can help others. That’s when we’ll need to show resilience.”

He added that the messages of support received from deer farmers throughout the country had been much appreciated and would still be welcome in the weeks and months to come.

“Those phone calls are worth their weight in gold.”

Another casualty of Cyclone Gabrielle is the deer industry conference which has been moved from Napier to Ashburton. It will be hosted by the Canterbury and West Coast branch of the NZDFA on 10 May. ■

Donations

DINZ and the NZDFA continue to work with cyclone affected deer farmers in coordinating help and support. At the time of publication plans for a fundraising online auction were underway. Donations to help deer farmers in the affected areas can be made into the DINZ account:

02-0506-0234007-00

Code: Gabrielle

Ref: donation

Stag sales have gone “extremely well”

By Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer



PGG Wrightson's Graham Kinsman is pleased with the way this year's sales have gone.

THE 2022-2023 crop of stag sales were held in January and went “extremely well”, which bodes well for the future, according to PGG Wrightson (PGGW) deer specialist and stud coordinator Graham Kinsman.

Even taking into account Covid-19, world events and the fact “cash wasn't flowing from velvet buyers as well as it usually does,” the sales have

been largely “on a par with the previous year,” he said.

DINZ producer manager Lindsay Fung agrees: “Buyer confidence seemed to be high, despite a lot of this season's velvet being unsold at the time of the stag sales.” While prices were down a bit on last year, “most, if not all of the animals were sold.”

The usual numbers turned out at the 17 stag/hind and wapiti bull sales held between 7 and 18 January. All sales participated this year in PGGW's agOnline bidding system, introduced three years ago, and buyers were doing their homework beforehand.

“There was a lot of buying done online,” Kinsman said. “The deer industry have taken to it like a duck to water.”

The top price was for a velvet sire stag from David Stevens' Netherdale Deer Stud in Southland. Three-year-old Yellow 312 made \$80,000 at a sale where prices averaged \$13,804. Although Netherdale's average was “back a little bit” on last year, Kinsman said buyers were being “very, very fussy for looking at clean, tidy heads.”

Altrive Deer, near Gore, also had another “outstanding” result. It sold one of its velvet stags for the third highest price, \$46,000, and lifted its average sale price from \$13,300 to \$16,000.

For trophy, Deer Genetics had “an outstanding line up of 14 young animals, all with good heads,” selling its top velvet/trophy stag for \$52,000. At \$22,892, the stud achieved the highest average this year.

The highest price for a venison stag was \$14,000 for a maternal sire from Wilkins Farming, while the top wapiti price was \$15,000 for a Tikani bull called Hawk – winner of the three-year elk-wapiti section of the 40th National Velvet and Trophy Antler competition in Invercargill in December.

Reflecting on his 40 years career with the deer industry, Kinsman said there were “three strings to the bow. At the start it was the main one, venison, velvet and trophy as an offshoot. In latter times, it's been velvet and trophy that have been driving it.”

Venison prices have been back, “but I think on purely supply and demand those that are in the venison industry will get rewarded. We didn't see too much of a drop off in all the sales we had,” he said.

While Deer Select genetic data helps purchase decisions, many

buyers still seemed to be buying on looks, the size of the animals and temperament, rather than solely on the figures.

AgResearch has been surveying this year's stag buyers to find out what information they use to make their stag selections and to develop the best information and tools to help future breeders and buyers. This has just been completed with a good response and findings would be reported at the deer industry conference in May.

It never ceases to amaze Kinsman how positive and passionate deer industry people have been throughout, “even when the signals are a bit doom and gloom. The industry never takes its finger off the pulse,” he said.

“We have a bit of a trophy backlog at the moment, but people were still buying young animals, looking for that market five or six years out. Even the velvet, they were not going to stop and let their genetic base drop back.”



The top selling velvet stag this year was this three-year-old Yellow 312 from David Stevens' Netherdale Deer Stud.

“The industry is made up of some pretty dynamic personalities. There's only one way to go and that ain't going backwards.”

Year of the Rabbit sees return of the Dragon for New Zealand velvet

By Ali Spencer, *Deer Industry News* writer



Rhys Griffiths: expecting a strong rebound in China.

THE YEAR OF the Rabbit should see the return of the Dragon for NZ velvet, as China's economy recovers after the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions.

“We expect the Chinese economy to have a strong rebound,” DINZ markets manager Rhys Griffiths says. “On 31 January, the IMF forecasted a 5.2 percent GDP

growth for China for 2023 (up from an earlier prediction of 4.4 percent). There are significant opportunities in both China and Korea that we intend to be reaching out for.”

Despite the Covid-19 restrictions globally, he points to farmgate returns for velvet reaching an estimated \$123 million in the 2021-2022 season, up 25% from \$96 million the previous year.

“That’s four times the value achieved in 2010 and is off the back of improved prices and increased production.”

The newly released DINZ annual report for 2021-2022 notes some of that increase was down to strong demand and also the sector’s long term decision to target Korea’s healthy food market. The ability to reconnect with customers, once NZ and Korean borders re-opened, was also very helpful.

That has created a solid platform for the 2022-2023 season which was the most complicated start he had seen.

Nearly 100 tonnes more New Zealand velvet has been exported to Korea in 2022 compared to 2021, much of it via China and Chinese buyers, Griffiths says.

“Strong consumer demand led some of the bigger Korean health food companies to offer early season contracts to velvet farmers at similar prices to last year.”

Under the NZ-Korea free trade agreement NZ processed velvet has a 9.3 percent duty advantage compared to 20 percent for velvet from other countries.

Big Chinese commodity buyers had shown a “reluctance to commit amid the economic uncertainty at the start of the season,” he says.

This and transport issues led to the build-up of stocks in the market. However, product is now starting to flow again and prices have since firmed somewhat, as Chinese Covid-19 restrictions have lifted and the population is starting to return to normal life.

Griffiths has also been busy with incoming visits, and enquiry to visit, by both Korean and Chinese buyers, amid further signals of economic improvement in China.

“At the Lunar New Year, spending on entertainment was back to levels around those for the same time in a pre-Covid 2019.”

According to the *China Skinny* newsletter, despite the lockdowns which many thought would impede cross-border trade, 2023 cross-border sales actually climbed 2.5 times the rate of domestic commerce in 2022, rising 9.8 percent to ¥2.11 trillion (NZ\$490 billion). More products were launched – including 6,400 overseas brands entering China, just on Tmall Global over the year. Travel restrictions for Chinese consumers meant they opted to buy reliable cross-border ecommerce products instead.

In a reminder that it’s a fast-moving market, it also notes “Chinese consumers behaviour and preferences have changed since 2019, as have the cross-border platforms and ecommerce as a whole.”

All of this means the China Deer Velvet Coalition’s activities to develop New Zealand’s share of the Chinese health food market can now be better realised, says Griffiths.

Offal lot of potential

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

DEER CO-PRODUCTS are a high nutrient value food category with potential for a lot of value-add products. That’s the high level findings from an AgResearch project involving a detailed nutrient analysis of deer heart, kidney, liver, lung, spleen, tongue, sinew, tendon, blood, tail, and gelatine.

These co-products are known to be a good source of nutrients, but research was lacking on how they compared with other farmed livestock. However, the six month project led by Talia Hicks proved that the co-products from deer generally have a more nutrient dense profile than the same from sheep or cattle, especially the heart, kidney, and liver.

The nutritional analysis data will be loaded on the New Zealand Food Composition Database, a go-to resource frequently accessed by food technology companies.

“With this information now readily available, companies can get a better understanding on the composition of various co-products and how they could be used as an ingredient or in the development of new higher value products,” DINZ science and policy manager Emil Murphy says.

It could also lead to the use of specific co-products as ingredients in pre-prepared meals, smallgoods; in new food products; or in protein isolate or extract form.

The information will also help by backing up any health claims of a food product or food supplement that contains deer co-products.

The \$100,000 project funded 80% by The Bioresource Processing Alliance and 20% by DINZ is an important starting point from which to grow the range and value of co-product-based foods and supplements.

Offal and co-products can make up about 10 percent of the venison schedule. ■



The image is a promotional graphic for the Deer Industry Conference 2023. It features a blue background with a white circular logo in the top left corner containing a stylized deer head. To the right of the logo, the text "DEER INDUSTRY CONFERENCE 2023" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters. Below this, the text "Save the date: 10 May 2023" is written in a smaller white font. The bottom half of the graphic shows a photograph of three deer in a grassy field under a clear blue sky. At the very bottom, a green bar contains the website address "www.deernz.org/home/events/2023-deer-industry-conference" in white text.

Almost too hot to handle

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

That was the potential problem faced by organisers of the annual Elk & Wapiti Society's (EWSNZ) competition held during Waitangi weekend.



EWSNZ Junior Judge aka DINZ CEO Innes Moffatt (second from left) getting ready to measure up with EWSNZ president Grant Hasse (left), Tony Pearce and selfie photographer Rhys Griffiths.

THIRTY DEGREE-PLUS heat and a temperamental freezer loaded with competition antler and velvet threatened to derail proceedings at EWSNZ's annual event. But timely intervention sorted the potential problem and the velvet stayed at the required chill factor. EWSNZ president Grant Hasse said the lineup of velvet across the age groups was phenomenal. He said the society was now at the stage of looking to renew competition category guidelines to reflect the new genetics that were clearly influencing velvet heads.

The two day event started with judging at EWSNZ member Paul Waller's farm which was well set up with plenty of space for velvet inspection, and walk-in freezer facilities. Organisers were pleased that DINZ chief executive Innes Moffatt took up the invitation and stepped up for Junior Judge duties.

The second day was at Heritage Lake Resort, Pisa Moorings, about 10 kms up and off the Cromwell/Wanaka highway. After a Hawker Velvet sponsored lunch and AGM the gathering of 25 heard informal

presentations from NZDFA chair Justin Stevens, Deer Select manager Sharon McIntyre and long-time trophy hunting head buyer Murray McWhirter. Stevens encouraged EWSNZ to act collectively in the promotion and marketing of their venison. Sharon McIntyre covered off a number of genetic-related happenings. Of particular interest to elk and wapiti breeders was the across breed evaluation which McIntyre said was much more difficult to execute than expected because it required 'robust' connections across recorded red and elk/wapiti herds. She added that breeders should expect considerable cross over between high growth rate reds and elk/wapiti.

Murray McWhirter who has handled over 20,000 trophy deer over his 38 year career of supplying outfitters, predicted a good season for the hunting industry and said that a typical style 360 – 420 IOA elk/wapiti animal will be "easy as" to sell.

Innes Moffatt and Rhys Griffiths joined later, and both talked about some of the topical issues such as the frustrations of He Waka Eke Noa discussions, the new DINZ strategy and velvet and venison market priorities.

During questions from the floor, Justin Stevens asked how farmers could capture more value of the velvet and venison marketed overseas. There was no quick fix Griffiths said, apart from growing international markets for NZ velvet and venison. In the velvet situation the obvious target was China, especially for healthy food products.

The evening dinner was sponsored by Mountain River who supplied wapiti rump which was perfectly cooked and presented. The annual whiteboard auction concluded the evening. The sale of the night was the dozen free-range eggs bought by an obviously omelette-starved Innes Moffatt for well over \$1 each. The auctioned goods raised \$2,100 to go towards the NZDFA 2023 Next Generation event at which the second day will be co-hosted by EWSNZ and the Canterbury West Coast DFA. ■

EWSNZ velvet competition results

| | Place | Bull | Owner | Weight (kg) | NZCWI |
|----------------|-------|------------|-----------------|-------------|--------|
| Open Supreme | 1 | Nepia | Tikana | 29.99 | 218.89 |
| | 2 | Yotam | Tikana | 26.99 | 194.26 |
| Two-year-old | 1 | LB20/366 | Clachanburn Elk | 6.13 | 110.28 |
| | 2 | Patriarch | Tikana | 8.64 | 105.1 |
| | 3 | Protégé | Tikana | 7.96 | 102.6 |
| Three-year-old | 1 | Hawk | Tikana | 14.97 | 145.01 |
| | 2 | Pretty Boy | Mayfield Elk | 14.9 | 140.2 |
| | 3 | Bruno | Tikana | 10.19 | 129.43 |



Grant Hasse and Dave Lawrence, Tikana, with various silverware and the 29.99kg head of Open Supreme winner Nepia



NZDFA Executive Committee: Chair Justin Stevens, Jamie Ward, Mark McCoard, Karen Middelberg

Step Up

It's not too late to step up and put your name forward for NZDFA representative and leadership positions.

The roles are important in helping the NZDFA maintain an effective voice for farmers at the industry and pan-agricultural sector levels and with regional and central government. It's a chance to help shape the association's future and contribute to industry discussions.

Nominations are open for five positions:

- Two Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) members .
- Two NZDFA Executive Committee (EC) members.
- One producer-appointed position to the DINZ Board due to the retirement by rotation of Kris Orange.

The following members are up for re-election:

- Donald Whyte (SAP, appointed 2021)
- Justin Stevens (EC, appointed, 2021)
- Mark McCoard (EC, appointed 2021)

All nominees will have an opportunity to address the AGM in May, and in June will be interviewed by the SAP to decide on the best candidate.

Further information

For more information on these positions, and nomination forms, visit: www.deernz.org/industry-positions.

You can get a first-hand account of what the positions involve by talking to an incumbent EC or SAP member. Contact the NZDFA office, email: info@deernz.org or phone 04 473 4500 for help in connecting with a member. Alternatively, call Lindsay Fung to talk in confidence, or register your interest, email: lindsay.fung@deernz.org or phone: 027 668 0141.

Nominations close 4pm Friday 31 March 2023.



2022 Photo competition winner: 'Content' by Ella Hole

2023 Awards and competitions

Picture this



Once again, MSD Animal Health and Allflex are sponsoring the deer industry photography awards. Last year's competition attracted some spectacular entries making the job of judging a very difficult one.

There are some great prizes on offer, including:

- \$500 cash for the first-place winner
- cash prizes for category winners
- a premium gift pack for the 'People's choice' award
- framed photos of the winning photographs

Only the digital photos and entry/form fee are required, not hard copy prints.

The entry fee is \$5 per photo entered, and there is no limit on the number of entries per person. Entries close on Wednesday 12 April 2023. For more information visit deernz.org/msd-allflex-photo-comp or contact rebecca.norling@deernz.org .

A couple of reminders:

Professional photographers, who derive income from photography, are not eligible to enter.

Deer photographed for this competition must be farmed deer in a farmed environment.

Deer Industry Award

This award is presented to the person/persons or organisation who, in the opinion of the judges, has made the most outstanding contribution to the New Zealand deer industry, either in the previous year, or over a period of years.

Nominations close 5pm Tuesday 11 April. Please visit deernz.org/deer-industry-award for more information and nomination forms.

NZDFA Matuschka Award

This award recognises the grass-roots and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and the core spirit of deer farming.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate NZDFA branch, then submitted to the NZDFA no later than 5pm Tuesday 11 April 2023. More information can be found at deernz.org/matuschka-award.

Venison prospects 2023 and beyond

By Tom Ward

Figured thinking from Canterbury farm consultant Tom Ward proves that venison farming on a \$9.50/kgCW schedule stacks up well alongside other livestock enterprises.

FARMER ATTITUDE TO venison farming varies from pessimism to optimism. Low prices for hinds are an opportunity to buy good genetics, although this may be tempered by the capital cost of new deer fencing. But on the plus side deer are considered less labour intensive. They are easier on pastures and result in more grass being grown than under sheep, although it's difficult to quantify.

Venison reached \$9.25/kgCW this spring and in late February was \$8.75. Meat companies have recently talked up venison prospects for 2023, although this optimism is yet to be shown in improved pricing. The market has reduced its exposure to Germany, with more going to the USA and to a lesser extent China. This has kept the schedule close to its peak, beyond the traditional October window. In addition, the meat companies are giving better guidance, which will help with confidence.

Covid-19 had thrashed the international demand for venison, and drought conditions in 2020-21 further reduced venison farmers' profitability. The demise of Covid-19 encouraged people to return to restaurants and buy venison again.

Despite a much improved carcass schedule, last autumn's weaner prices, particularly for lighter hinds, were disappointing. The low price reflected a lack of demand both for breeding hinds and venison finishing. But those who did buy weaner hinds for finishing have actually done very well. At the same time there was a price increase for both dairy heifer grazing and dairy cow wintering, while this season both beef and sheep returns have declined.

So, what is my opinion on the future for venison farming?

Firstly, the class of country generally defines the livestock enterprise whether it be deer, beef or sheep, with extensive hill country generally limited to breeding. There is little point comparing deer trading and/or finishing which is typically on



Photo: Kerry Walker

lower lying country whereas breeding is usually on medium to steep hill country. There will be some exceptions of course, where subdivision can be intensified, or specialist crops grown.

Production systems with breeding hinds are well established and successful in the tussock country where blocks are usually large and there is plenty of browsing, cover and seclusion. These farms are often large scale, and the margins made are small. Many of these hind breeding properties also have good levels of rainfall, a necessity in a summer feed demanding business. Nevertheless, this tough country often produces disappointing weaners (smaller and later), prompting farmers to develop irrigation systems where possible for faster finishing, or to free up easier country to improve hind and weaner performance. This latter plan displaces other livestock and is an opportunity cost. The other cost which is impacting on the attractiveness of hill country for lower intensity deer grazing is the fencing of both banks of waterways required under environmental regulations.

There remain some breeding herds on easy, better fenced country although they are not competitive with other livestock trading enterprises. However, they persist because environmental regulations prevent change to a more profitable option, or the farmer wants to control the cost, quality and genetics of finishing deer. Some farms which are breeding and finishing have the breeding operation on steeper country, and the finishing side on the easier, improved pasture and crop country. This system requires production to be analysed as two separate enterprises.

The table of breeding gross margins (Table 1, next page) uses estimated prices for the season ahead and shows that the profitability of breeding hinds is ahead of crossbred ewes. Breeding and selling moderate growth 57kgLW red weaners at \$5.50/kgLW (the average across hinds and stags) gives a gross margin of 15.9 cents per kilogram of dry matter consumed. There will be up to a five percent variation either side of this margin depending on the size, scale and scope of individual properties. The margin for selling high growth weaners is also modelled. It assumes a sale date in April at 65kgLW and a higher average selling price of \$6.50/kgLW given the ability to finish these animals sooner. This produces a gross margin of 21.2 cents per kilogram of dry matter consumed.

Table 2 (next page) compares the gross margins for sheep/beef/ deer and dairy support trading/fattening enterprises. Running an eye over the weaner deer finishing margins suggests venison stacks up well. Buying moderate growth rate 57kgLW weaners in April and getting them all off farm before the end of December may be ambitious. However, the results are compelling given a margin

of 38.4 cents per kilogram of dry matter consumed, assuming an average carcass weight of 58kgs and schedule price of \$9.50. Another finishing scenario is buying 65kgLW weaners with the goal of finishing them all before the end of October at an average carcass weight of 60kgs and schedule price of \$10/kg, producing a margin of 36 cents per kilogram of dry matter consumed.

There are plenty of challenges in bringing whole mobs through to these weights and off farm in time to capture the higher schedule. A long tail of lighter animals will certainly affect returns, and this will be reflected in the buy-in price. However, at the projected venison schedule prices weaner finishing stacks up where infrastructure and feed conditions allow.

Velvet antler production is worth discussing. This enterprise is very sensitive to stag size with a wapiti based stag herd (270 kgLW) showing a gross margin of only 32 c/kgDM. This compares to 170 kgLW red stags, where replacement stags are purchased, returning a gross margin of 50 c/kgDM. Breeding your own replacement stags for velvet gives a gross margin of 40 c/kgDM assuming a 170 kgLW.

What's not included in the gross margin analyses is the complementary relationship of cattle and deer. Most deer finishing

operations graze cattle of some description, either breeding cows, dairy grazers, or young cattle for finishing. In a hind breeding system, cattle help control surplus spring feed, and with weaner finishing, cattle control surplus summer feed.

We are in a state of flux and unsure whether the recent decline in sheep meat and beef prices has ended. Making predictions given this volatility has to be a fool's game.

However, the money for velvet has remained high, and with the return of tourists the trophy head market will improve.

In summary: if the infrastructure is already in place, farming deer for venison looks a good option. Finishers have a great opportunity currently; however, an improving schedule could lead to an increase in the price of weaner hinds which could reduce that margin. Also, remember that venison's current difficulties, compared to other enterprises, are due in part to improved sheep and beef prices brought about by Covid-19 and the Ukraine war. Costs are a big concern to venison farmers, and volatility is also worrying some. However, deer farming has complementarity with other livestock enterprises, especially cattle. Also, velvet is expected to retain superior profitability. ■

TABLE 1 - BREEDING GROSS MARGINS (2022-2023)

| | Ewes (Xbd (store)) | Red hinds (sell moderate weaners @ \$9.50/kgCW) | Red hinds (sell high growth weaners @ \$10/kgCW) | Breeding cows sell weaners |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---|--|-------------------------------|
| Dam liveweight | 63 kg | 120 kg | 120 kg | 500 kg |
| Lamb/fawn/calf percent | 131% | 89% | 89% | 89% |
| Sale weight LW | 30.4 kg | 57 kg | 65 kg | 254 kg |
| Sale price/kgLW | \$3.04 | \$5.50 | \$6.50 | \$3.92 |
| Gross Margin | 13.7 c/kgDM | 16.60 c/kgDM | 21.2 c/kgDM | 12.90 c/kgDM |

TABLE 2 - TRADING/FINISHING GROSS MARGINS (2022-2023)

| | Buy date | Buy kgLW | Buy price \$/kgLW | Sell weight kgCW | Sell date | Sell price \$/ kgCW | Gross Margin c/kgDM | |
|--------------------------------|------------|----------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|----|
| Beef weaner steer | Mar-23 | 245 | 3.52 | 270 | Dec-22 | 6.10 | 32.8 | *1 |
| Beef R1 steer | May-23 | 310 | 3.04 | 310 | Oct - Dec 2022 | 6.35 | 38.2 | |
| Summer lamb trading | Jan-23 | 30 | 3.21 | 19.8 | Mar-April 2023 | 6.50 | 23.7 | |
| Winter lamb trading | Mar-23 | 25 | 2.98 | 24.8 | Oct-23 | 7.00 | 31.7 | |
| Bull calf | Mar-23 | 200 | 3.27 | 307 | Jan - May 2023 | 5.61 | 31.2 | |
| 18-month bull | Mar-23 | 400 | 2.74 | 312 | Oct -22 to Jan -23 | 5.67 | 29.8 | |
| Weaner deer | | | | | | | | |
| Moderate growth weaners | | 57 | 5.50 | 58 | By end Dec | 9.50 | 38.4 | |
| High growth weaners | Apr-23 | 65 | 6.50 | 60 | By end Dec | 10.00 | 36.1 | |
| Dairy heifer gzg | 1 Nov 2022 | 100 | | 404 kgLW | 31 April 2023 | \$15.50 p/wk | 39.8 | *2 |
| Dairy cow gzg | 1 Jun 2022 | 525 | | 546 kgLW | 15 Aug 2023 | \$22.00 p/wk | 31.8 | |

*1 Trading year July 2022 to June 2023. Steers sold at 15 months (Dec 2022)

*2 Grazing rates: \$9.50/week to 31 April (calves), and \$15.50/week from 1 May to 28 April following

P2P: onwards and upwards

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor



Phil McKenzie: Advance Parties and Environment Groups will continue under the farm performance programme

MPI CO-FUNDING AND Passion2Profit (P2P) wound up late last year. But Advance Parties (AP), Environment Groups (DIEG) will live on and develop further as part of the revised DINZ strategy.

During the course of the seven year P2P programme, 30 AP groups and 15 DIEGs were established around the country.

“Farmers told us they weren’t

prepared to give up the knowledge and support they gained from these groups, and they want to keep them going,” DINZ farm performance manager Phil McKenzie says.

Recognising the importance of these groups the DINZ board have agreed to partly fund APs and DIEGs so that farmers can keep drawing on the extensive resources and networks established to further drive farm productivity. Most groups have elected to carry on meeting, McKenzie says.

Advance Parties will continue to strengthen the businesses of deer farmers through the sharing of knowledge and support of members.

“That’s a real positive for the future, and a demonstration of the success of what has been achieved.”

Another successful P2P forum, the Rural Professional workshops, will continue as will the development of Deer Facts and Deer Hub online resources.

“We have a raft of good resources developed under P2P which will stand farmers in good stead for the future.”

The annual Big Deer Tour, a P2P initiative designed to showcase to a small group of final year tertiary students the workings and opportunities of the industry, will no longer run. However, DINZ is building on the strong links with Massey and Lincoln universities to encourage graduates into the deer industry.

Independent P2P chair Bruce Wills said at conclusion of the seven year P2P programme that a lot had been achieved but it didn’t have a perfect run.

“We did not have a perfect run. No one could have foreseen the entire global foodservice sector’s shutdown in 2020 as a result of Covid-19. The venison marketers have done a fabulous job pivoting to retail channels and prices are well on the way to recovery. The journey is still underway, and I hope the team approach continues.”

“I’m a huge supporter of Advance Parties, I’ve been in one for a number of years now, and I think the camaraderie and the common problems we work together to cure are a strength. I think for our mental well-being and that, I hope they carry on and get stronger as they grow.”

– Stu Stokes, Canterbury deer farmer ■

DEER FACTS

Thinking of becoming a certified velvetter?

The NVSB velvetter certification programme is the focus of the latest *Deer Fact* sheet, inserted into this edition of *Deer Industry News*.

It explains that by law, velvetting must be carried out under veterinary supervision.

If you are thinking about becoming certified to velvet your deer, now is a good time to apply. The programme, which is open only to deer farmers and deer farm staff, is quite rigorous, taking about six months to complete.

DEER FACTS

Velvet antler removal
Safe, humane, hygienic harvest of a prized health ingredient

Looking after our animals and an amazing product
Health food products based on NZ velvet enjoy strong demand among consumers of all ages in South Korea, New Zealand's largest velvet market. There is also growing demand from China for NZ velvet, alongside other premium ingredients like red ginseng, for use in herbal medicines and modern health products.

Many modern velvet-based products are marketed under major consumer brands by highly reputable companies. These companies prefer to buy NZ velvet because of its quality and the integrity of all aspects of its supply: our free-range farms, high standards of animal welfare and environmental care, food hygiene and safety, as well as electronic traceability.

Velvet has great cultural importance in Korea, China and elsewhere in Asia. It is a highly prized traditional medicine ingredient, with health-giving properties that are being confirmed by a growing body of research.

Velvet is removed from stags at a stage of growth when it contains nerves and a blood supply. Because of this, NZ law requires that velvetting must be carried out under veterinary supervision, safely, with pain relief and with minimal stress to the stag.

These legal requirements are taken extremely seriously by the deer industry, the veterinary profession, MPI and the

Key Points

- By law, velvetting must be carried out under veterinary supervision, safely, with pain relief and with minimal stress to the stag.
- Deer farm owners or deer farm employees are permitted to velvet deer under veterinary supervision if they meet the requirements of a certification programme run by the National Venison Standards Body (NVSB). The premises they use to remove velvet must comply with MPI hygiene and food safety standards.
- To become certified, you must pass an exam that shows you have a good understanding of all aspects of velvet growth and removal. You must also demonstrate that you can remove velvet from stags safely, hygienically and with effective pain relief.
- As a certified velvetter you must pay an annual fee to NVSB.
- NVSB and MPI carry out random audits each year to ensure that everyone is complying with the NVSB and DCB rules.

Best Practice

NZ deer velvet is in high demand in Asia for its quality and – equally importantly – for our free range farming systems, and high standards of animal welfare, food hygiene and safety.

BEST PRACTICE 03 / February 2023

By applying now, you will – if you successfully complete the training and assessments – be able to velvet your stags next season.

Read the 'Velvet antler removal' *Deer Fact* now. Then insert it in the Best Practice section of your black *Deer Fact* ring binder for future reference.



Deer Facts are produced by DINZ as part of the P2P strategy. P2P aims to assist farmers to run profitable management systems that are recognised for their high standards of animal welfare and environmental performance.

The feminine touch

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

THE BREEDER OF the Open Red winner at the 2022 National Velvet and Antler competition is drawing on the female touch to further push velvet quality.

“I haven’t bought a stag in five years, instead we’ve been concentrating on female lines,” John Ramsey says.

Over the last three years John and his Rotorua deer manager Gus Schischka have bought in 70 two-year-old hinds from Netherdale, Altrive, Brock Deer and Arawhata. As well as buying in elite hinds there’s been investment in artificial breeding to fast track velvet genetics. Straws of semen from some of the southern breeders have been used and last year embryo transfers to 55 hinds resulted in 53 live births.

Proof of the female influence will filter through in next year’s two-year-old stags.

“We believe we’ve got some of the best possible stag genetics so we’re now looking for some of the best (velvet) genetics in hinds.”

John, who owns a large scale commercial venison and velvet operation spread over three farms in Rotorua and south of Auckland, was back in the money at both the 2022 National and North Island velvet competitions.

He scooped the champion Red Velvet category, the top five places in the three-year, and third in the four-year categories of the North Island competition. At the National competition in Invercargill, he won the Open Red category with 13.52 kg from BR16/255, and the three-year section with 9.56kg from G19/397. Another two Ramsey bred stags featured in the top 10 of the three-year section.

“We were very pleased with what we got in the North Island. We took fewer south but everything we entered got a place.”

Most of the 2022 three year place getters were from home-bred stags.

“We believe we’ve got some of the best possible stag genetics so we’re now looking for some of the best (velvet) genetics in hinds.”

Ramsey is a relative newcomer to the competition scene starting out with success at the 2017 North Island event followed by the 2018 National competition in several categories. He took a break from competition in 2020 because of the time commitment required and Covid-19.

“We’re different from stud breeders who use competitions as a form of advertising. We don’t need to be entering every year.”

The regular podium exposure has brought interest in Ramsey’s stags with numerous requests from would-be buyers. A couple of years ago he turned down a \$100,000 offer for Green 296. However, he’s had a rethink about sire selling due to the growing pool of stags which has increased since 2019 from 700 to about 900. That’s created a surplus of three-year-olds, a handful of which were sold this year. There’s also been talk with agents about the possibility of delving deeper into the stud market.

“We’ve realised that you have to grow a lot of velvet to recoup what you could get for a good three-year-old stag. We now have surplus stags and we’re trying to mix what we do a bit more.”

Selection of the right genetics is something John enjoys but he says feeding is equally important for top quality velvet production.

“If you haven’t got one, you haven’t got the other.”

The velvet stags are fed on an all grass system, pastures typically are a ryegrass base with plantain, chicory, and clovers to satisfy the browsing nature of deer. They’re supplemented with silage and in dry years maize and palm kernel.

“We feed them all they can eat from after the rut until we velvet them.”

This year’s nine tonne crop of velvet was tendered in two lines of regrowth and spiker (about two tonnes), and mostly Super A. ■



John Ramsey and Gus Schischka at a 2019 velvet competition.

At a glance

John Ramsey and Gus Schischka (farm manager)

Venison and velvet production. About 60% of income is from venison and 40% from velvet.

Venison

1000 weaners finished from September – December, supplied to Silver Fern Farms.

Velvet

9 tonnes (incl regrowth) from 900 stags.

Three farms

Rerewhakaaitu, south of Rotorua

- 300 ha, 5351 stock units
- Velvet stags and breeding hinds

Great West Road, west of Rotorua

- 243ha, 2782 stock units.
- Velvet stags and breeding hinds (terminal)

Glenbrooke, south of Auckland

- 70 ha, 1500 stock units
- Velvet stags
- 14 ha kiwifruit

Eye on the prize

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

CHRIS SMITH HAS his eye fixed on growing a 100kg weaner by 1 June. It's a moving target when the unknowns of seasonal conditions are thrown in, but the strike rate has improved judging by the average liveweight at drenching in early June which has consistently exceeded 101kg since 2018.



Chris, with wife Deb, has managed the deer at Goudies since their introduction in the early 2000s.

processed by 31 October including cull red weaner replacements.

It's a stellar result for an all-grass and no silage weaner wintering system. The hinds are still wintered on swedes and kale, but the plan is to get them off crop for all grass wintering by 2027.

The move is environmentally driven explains farm manager Tim Bowron.

"We're looking closely at the wintering of hinds and are considering new winter feeding options so we can get rid of swedes and kale."

The future could include the feeding of maize silage and feeding of ryecorn as a green crop.

Deer manager Chris Smith takes pride in the result and says carcass weights have been increasing by half to one kilogram each year.

Deer have been his responsibility since the introduction of 2500 breeding hinds in the early 2000s. Chris has reliably kept the deer operation on track, Tim says.

"He's a hell of a defender of the deer (enterprise) and understands the importance of expressing their genetic potential through feeding and management."

He also has direction and a focus for heavier weaners sooner. Since starting out with deer the time to slaughter for weaners has reduced by six months while the carcass weight average has increased 15 kilograms. Chris attributes the success to a combination of management such as the culling of late fawning hinds, priority feeding of hinds and fawns at key times, and feed planning and budgeting especially for the late winter and early spring period.

He's always looking for ways to improve performance and over the last six years there's been a focus on cattle and deer integration along with replacing and developing pasture quality on the 280

The early winter target is assurance that weaners are fully fed and on track for maximum early season processing performance. For the 2022/23 season the first line of 127 hybrids averaged 74.1kgCW with GRs up to 14. The best tipped the scales at 90kgCW.

The 506 processed at Duncan NZ's Mamaku plant during September achieved a carcass weight average of 71.26kg.

All Goudie weaners were

hectares of fawning country. On about 132ha early heading Base tetraploid ryegrass AR1 ryegrass and clover has been developed or replaced eight to 10 year pastures.

On the areas where cultivation and development aren't possible due to slope and soil, browntop production is being boosted with cattle grazing and nutrient application.

The number of Angus-Hereford beef cattle has almost doubled over the last six years and the extra mouths have been put to good use controlling pastures on the deer country.

"Apart from winter, it's very rare that we don't have cattle following up the deer to groom and open up pastures and generally cleaning up what the deer don't," Tim says.

Quality feed from lactation until weaning is crucial in growing heavier weaners earlier, Chris says.

"I like to get them off the fawning country by mid- December so that they have a good two-and-a-half months on saved pasture."

He got a feel of how quality feeding impacts growth through an on farm grazing trial where the tagging and weaning weights of deer and fawns grazed on old and new pasture were compared. At weaning the weight of hinds was unchanged but fawns on the new improved pastures were 6kg heavier than those on the unimproved pasture.

Aside from feeding Chris has been looking closely at temperament and culling those that don't make the grade.

"Happy and content animals put on weight whereas those that are stressed and run the fences don't, it's as simple as that."

It's a three strikes and you're out policy for deer who cause strife when being shifted or in the yards.

"I always have binoculars in the farm truck so I can record the tag numbers of trouble makers."



Duncan NZ Mamaku plant manager Troy Allison alongside a Goudies Station's fully dressed early spring carcass.

Pāmu Goudies Station:

Central North Island, near Reporoa. **Size** 1983 ha (1779 ha effective). **Rainfall** five-year average 2350 mm. **Altitude** 408 – 525 masl. **Farm** flat to rolling hill country. Romney sheep breeding with secondary income from beef and deer breeding/finishing. **Staff** seven including farm manager Tim Bowron,

and deer manager Chris Smith. **Stock Units wintered** 20,000 (Sheep 6200 | Cattle 9500 | Deer 4500)

Deer: 750ha of deer fencing. 1500 hinds (60 percent mated to red, 40% to wapiti). Fawning: 94%, from 25 Oct – 30 Nov. Weaning: 22 Feb – 8 March. Deer contributes about 20% of total income

Pre-winter management tips:

1. Feed weaned fawns quality feed with good covers from weaning through until late autumn.
2. Keep up with monthly parasite management and drench program until June/July.
3. Have pasture cover of about 2000-2500 kgDM and a 20-25 day grazing rotation going into late autumn/early winter through until early spring.

Award winners

Goudies Station is the winner of the 2021 First Light Deer Industry Environmental Award. It took two years to organise a field day to celebrate the win due to the interruption of Covid-19. It was held on 1 February and attended by 40 people all keen to hear what makes this high performing deer unit tick both production and sustainability boxes.

Steady rain put a literal dampener on proceedings but fortunately vehicle access on the gently contoured pumice soil land was good. However, the pumice land does present management issues, Goudies farm manager Tim Bowron said including soil movement. It's an ever present problem and he said that on the pumice country wire deer fences were a better option than netting as sediment tends to collect more with the netting, requiring more maintenance and replacement. The pumice soils are fragile, but brown top under careful management had helped control soil erosion and was particularly useful in the fawning blocks.

A deer management challenge was fence pacing which, if left unchecked, led on to more deep seated erosion. The problem was discussed at length at one of the stops where channelling and the antics of weaners had further opened up erosion across a slope face. There were few options other than retiring the face which then would require consideration of how that might impact on deer movements. Filling in the channel was one other option

although the wider face still presented a challenge.

Goudies was originally a firebreak for Kaingaroa forest so growing pines is easy and they have been established on the farm. However, the areas of pine have been broken up with plantings of native species where possible. The growing and maintenance of the natives is not without challenge, especially in the fawning blocks where they are susceptible to frost.

Ensuring that the deer have good access to shade and shelter through the use of trees and plants is something that is on Tim's list of things to do.

The take home message for this sheep, beef and deer system was 'deer done well complement the sheep,' and as a result, 'happy deer equal settled deer and reduced environmental impacts'

One game-changing factor contributing to happy deer was lucerne silage fed to the hinds on crop.

The field day concluded back at the (dry) woolshed where Matt Gibson from First Light Foods presented the award for "total commitment to farming sustainably with a strong customer focus". The presentation was followed by a venison BBQ served up by the Bay of Plenty branch of the DFA.

Lindsay Fung, DINZ producer manager ■



Busy on the BBQ: David Dewar, Bay of Plenty DFA.



Award winners: Goudies Station's Chris Smith (far right) and Tim Bowron (middle) accept the award from Firstlight Foods' Matt Gibson.

Insider knowledge

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

With four seasons behind them West Otago farmers Tony and Michelle Roberts are well versed in the barn wintering of deer.



Barn wintering means happier people and happier deer Michelle and Tony say.

Tony and Michelle Roberts

Merino Downs, near Gore

Barn wintering of red deer. 1 June to late September. 250 stags, 142 hinds, 115 weaners. Sawdust flooring 120 – 150mm depth. Balage feeding, aiming for ME of 10-plus and crude protein of 18.5%

THE BIG MUST-HAVES for a successful winter indoors are sorted well in advance. By early February there are several mountains of sawdust inside or close by the three wintering barns, and 400 bales of balage lined up nearby.

Getting the deer set for barn wintering starts in mid-May. That's when the hinds and stags are boxed up to graze out paddocks

and balage is progressively introduced. After a fortnight the deer have adjusted to a predominantly balage diet and grazing in close proximity to paddock mates. The transition indoors is made mob by mob, giving each a day or so to adjust. The 142 hinds will move to a converted 684m² shed, and the 115 weaner weaners to a single pen adjoining the deer shed on 1 June. The 250 stags get extra time to settle after the rut and will start the transition mid-June. They'll winter in a purpose built, five-bay 918sqm shed and will make the move indoors by age group from youngest to oldest.

This will be the fifth season of barn wintering which started off on a small scale following the makeover of a vacant corrugate shed in 2018. The update included the division of the shed into three bays, each with a removable feeding rack that comfortably fits two bales of balage.

The weaners winter in a pen at the back of the deer shed. There's internal access from the pen into the shed which is where they go when balage is brought in every two or three days. The regular moving gets them used to the shed which is a big help when it comes to future shed-based handling.

The main driver for barn wintering was to minimise soil damage, runoff and protect the pastures on the predominantly rolling hill farm.

“With deer always on the move we realized there was always potential for sediment and nutrient loss during winter,” Tony says.

Feed quality is the most important component of a barn wintering system.

“We didn't get the balage right in the first year, it was too dry, and the ME wasn't high enough.”

The feed quality deficit was filled with grain and PKE and since



Their advice to farmers considering barn wintering is to ease into it and design a system to suit what you have rather than what you don't have.

Stags feeding in the Roberts purpose-built wintering barn.

Table 1: Feed Costs

| | Group Results 2020 | | | Group Results 2022 | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|---------|---------|--------------------|---------|---------|
| | Low | Average | High | Low | Average | High |
| Feed cost (c/kgDM) | 15 | 23 | 24 | 17.4 | 31.3 | 49.6 |
| Days fed | 67 | 83 | 94 | 37 | 85 | 105 |
| Feed cost (\$/SU) | \$10.64 | \$22.36 | \$38.69 | \$2.99 | \$10.59 | \$26.81 |
| Feed out costs (\$/SU) 4 | \$2.60 | \$7.00 | \$22.80 | \$2.04 | \$5.83 | \$17.50 |
| Bedding costs (\$/SU) | \$3.60 | \$10.00 | \$15.00 | \$3.07 | \$7.63 | \$13.12 |
| Total Costs (\$/SU) | \$16.80 | \$34.40 | \$76.50 | \$12.95 | \$34.28 | \$58.33 |
| Cost (\$/SU/d) | \$0.25 | \$0.41 | \$0.81 | \$0.17 | \$0.42 | \$0.69 |

Labour is valued at \$30/hr and tractor time at \$55/hr.

then they've got by largely on balage alone. About 400 bales is fed of what Tony, a former dairy farmer, describes as "milking quality" balage. It's spring cut and ideally has metabolisable energy (ME) of 10-plus as well as good crude protein levels of around 18.5%. The balage is tested in April so that any nutritional shortfall can be planned for with extra supplements.

The balage is stored within easy access of the sheds to minimise tractor and fuel use.

In retrospect there are a few 'could have/should have' changes, but nothing major. A higher roof on the new barn would have made tractor access easier for example. There's also been tweaks to make a more efficient system such as changing from woodchips to sawdust flooring. The woodchips weren't particularly absorbent and were replaced with locally sourced sawdust bought over summer when the price is cheaper.

Another change is the space allowance for stags which was increased from the industry recommendation of about 3m² per animal to 4m².

Despite some of the niggles, the Roberts says they've never regretted the move to barn wintering, and everyone is happier.

"We're not shifting breaks and we know the deer will be where they're supposed to be the next day," Michelle says.

"We also know that they're sheltered during bad weather. It ticks all the boxes, and we see it as a long term and sustainable system."

Their advice to farmers considering barn wintering is to ease into it, and design a system to suit what you have rather than what you don't have.

"If you've got an existing shed look at how you could use that as a starting point," Tony says.

Also, think beyond the actual structure to the important inputs such as feed (sourcing, storage and feeding to maximise utilisation), and bedding.

Table 1 (below) expresses costs on a per stock unit basis for easier comparison according to the number of days wintered inside and the class of deer wintered (see Table 2 for comparative stock units).

The lowest cost feed systems have self-feeding facilities such as easily accessed self-feed silage pits or multiple feeders that only need topped up every two or three days.

Bedding costs are significant and from an animal welfare standard need to be of a high standard, for two reasons. One is for comfort and the other is that warm, dry and comfortable deer eat less, fight less, are more settled therefore lessening the potential cost and risk of animal health problems.

In Table 2 (next page) the indicative capital costs of two sheds are analysed. The first is fully enclosed, like a set of covered yards and a permanent structure. The other is a PVC tunnel-house style.



The sawdust for winter barn bedding is bought in summer when its cheaper.

Barn wintering – what does it cost?

"Wintering Barns and Forage Crops" (June 2022) by AgResearch scientist David Stevens summarises the feed costs and capital costs of indoor wintering incurred by five members of the Southland Environment Advance Party.

Table 2: Capital Costs

| | Weaners | Hinds | <R4 Stags | >R4 Stags |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Stock Units | 1.7 | 2.2 | 3.5 | 4 |
| Minimum Area required/animal (m2) | 1.8 | 2.1 | 2.8 | 3.2 |
| Full cover Capital (\$210/m2) | 378 | 441 | 588 | 672 |
| Interest (6%) | 22.68 | 26.46 | 35.28 | 40.32 |
| Maintenance (1% capital value) | 3.78 | 4.41 | 5.88 | 6.72 |
| Insurance (\$4.50/\$1000) | 1.70 | 1.98 | 2.65 | 3.02 |
| Total Annual costs (per head) | 28.16 | 32.85 | 43.81 | 50.06 |
| PVC barn type Capital (\$130/m2) | 234 | 273 | 364 | 416 |
| Interest (6%) | 14.04 | 16.38 | 21.84 | 24.96 |
| Maintenance (1% capital value) | 4.68 | 5.46 | 7.28 | 8.32 |
| Insurance (\$4.50/\$1000) | 1.05 | 1.23 | 1.64 | 1.87 |
| Total Annual costs (per head) | 19.77 | 23.07 | 30.76 | 35.15 |

The working life of the sheds is estimated at 20 years, although the PVC shed would probably need recovered after 10 years.

The minimum area required is based on the Animal Welfare Guide for deer. However, Stevens recommends that sheds are built with flexibility in mind, and at least 3m².

For a copy of 'Wintering Barns and Forage Crops', email: david.stevens@agresearch.co.nz ■

Barn wintering is helping meet the long term goal of reducing the area of winter crop grown therefore reducing the risk of pugging and run-off and leaving the pastures in better shape for spring. There's been a lot of pasture replacement – about 10% of the area annually - since the Roberts bought the farm five years ago. Run-out sheep pastures have been replaced with higher performing mixes more suited to cattle and deer. There's been an emphasis on high clover content to reduce synthetic nitrogen requirements and increase the protein content of cut balage. Last year 26ha of brassicas was grown for dairy heifers and deer. This year the brassicas were swapped out for 18ha of fodder beet which will comfortably produce the same amount of drymatter. The stags will get the first graze of the beet in late autumn to help speed up post-rut weight gain before moving indoors.

"It's something new that we've decided to try because we have the fodder beet," Tony says.

Barn wintering has reduced pressure on vulnerable paddocks over winter. So too has moving away from dairy-beef to dairy heifer grazing two years ago. This year 230 heifers sourced through a PGGWrightson agent arrived at 100kgLW in early December, they'll leave in calf on 1 May next year.

"It works better for us and has removed the uncertainty from our system. We don't have the cash outlay, we know when they're arriving and leaving, and know the price we're getting."

The Roberts also have fallow deer (190 bucks and 70 does) supplying trophy bucks to outfitters.



Barn wintering has minimised winter soil damage and run-off on the predominantly rolling hill farm.

It's here: the environment management handbook

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

AFTER MUCH ANTICIPATION and a year of work the *Deer Industry Environmental Management Handbook* is complete and ready for takeoff. It's an online-only companion to the 2018 *Deer Industry Environmental Code of Practice*, and can be accessed on the Deer Hub.

The handbook is designed as a series of practical deer focused modules to help farmers complete or update parts of their Farm Environment Plan (FEP), DINZ manager of farm performance Phil McKenzie says.

"We haven't cut across or re-invented the work of other industries. Instead, we've tried to break it down to bite-sized activities and provide as many deer-specific examples as possible."

The modules are in two parts. The first is a set of tool boxes with a step-by-step process to work through.

The second part comprises a series of modules, each with specific areas of activity to address on farm, most with before and after photos.

There has been lots of farmer feedback during development of the toolboxes and modules, mostly positive, McKenzie says.

"We haven't cut across or re-invented the work of other industries. Instead, we've tried to break it down to bite-sized activities and provide as many deer-specific examples as possible."

In late 2022 DINZ ran an online course of 90 minute sessions over eight weeks with a group of farmers to help them complete their plans.

"While the course was a bit challenging at a busy time of the year the feedback was good."

"I would definitely recommend it to others"

"The resources were easy to follow"

"Was good with the resources being online, so can save and work on later. Can also add to them"


The participating farmers were widely spread around the country and

enjoyed hearing and seeing photos of the challenges on other farms.

"They have asked if they can keep meeting to see how some of these challenges can be solved."

Aside from this new online resource farmers can access help to update their FEP by contacting a Deer Industry Environment Group, Megan McCall mmccall@abacusbio.co.nz or Phil McKenzie phil.mckenzie@deernz.org

ACTION PLAN | Waterways and wetlands 2


 **02 Goals**

Start by setting simple overall goals on waterways. **Here are some examples:**

My goals for protecting waterways and wetlands are:

1. I want to exclude deer from all waterways and wetlands on my farm
2. I want the quality of the water leaving my farm to measurably improve over time
3. I want to protect mahinga kai in the waterways that flow through my farm
4. I want to be able to show how my waterways are improving


⇒ Go to the template at the end of this document to fill in your goals and the other parts of your Action Plan.

 **03 What are the risks to your waterways and wetlands?**


EXAMPLES

Deer love playing in water and can damage banks and beds, release sediment and pollute waterways with faeces. Have you got any of these common risks? A farm drive or drone flight is a good way to find problem sites.

Sediment erosion along the streambank or lake edge



Pugging in or along the creek-bed, bank or drain




Together we are better

Contact Ross Chambers General Manager ph: 03 348 5080 or email: ross@provelco.co.nz

www.provelco.co.nz

Autumn management for optimal weaner growth

BY SAMANTHA ELDER

NO MATTER YOUR production objectives, growing weaners well is one of the key ways to achieve good productivity on deer farms. An important time for weaner management is early autumn to make the most of the potential for good growth rates. However, on many farms the growth of weaners leading into their first winter of life is below par, averaging only 150grams/day when there's opportunity for well over 250grams and up to 400grams on high performing farms. For optimal growth performance you need to have planned and well managed weaning to prevent any chronic stress, the right tucker on hand, and a good animal health plan.

Consider specialist feeds such as herb mixes and red and white clovers or lucerne which deliver high energy per mouthful of about 11.5 - 12MJME/Kg DM. How to manage these feeds depends on what you're feeding so consult your agronomist as to ideal pre and post grazing residuals for pasture longevity and optimal animal performance. If ryegrass/clover is used, choose newer paddocks with higher ME content and avoid grazing lower than 1600-1800kg DM/ha or above 2500kgDM/ha. Weaners will struggle to maximise intake on low pasture covers and feed quality declines with higher covers.

Don't forget the old saying 'you can't manage what you don't measure'. Remember to schedule regular weight checks and compare them to the DINZ Replacement Hind Growth Curve or the Venison Growth Curve to help you keep on track or indicate when management change is needed if growth reductions occur unexpectedly.

With autumn comes the potential for high parasite burdens due to the immature immune system of young deer in conjunction with seasonal increases in larvae on pasture. Don't get me wrong, drenching does play an important role in reducing the effects of worm burdens on growth rates, but this is only part of the solution. The best parasite management plan has to take into account farm factors (location, topography, seasonal conditions); animal breed and management; farm management decisions (paddock selection, pasture/herb/crop species, pre and post grazing residuals) and many other details. It's a complex exercise and I can't stress enough the importance of working with your animal health professional so the ins and outs of refugia, quarantine drenching, cross grazing, low parasite risk feeds, pasture residuals, genetics (utilising CARLA) and good drenching protocols can be strategically planned.

The gold standard treatment is Cervidae Oral. It's a triple oral drench and the only one on the market specifically for deer. We are often asked whether it's capable of killing lungworm; the answer is 'yes,' the moxidectin component does this well. The likelihood of a new drench for deer is slim, so we need to protect the efficacy of what we have. That means avoiding the use of pour-on or single active drenches, drenching according to the liveweight of the animal, ensuring the drench gun is primed to deliver the correct dose, avoiding both the drenching of adult deer and over drenching of young deer.

Consider the trace element levels of your young deer, of particular

importance is copper. Testing can prevent unnecessary and costly supplementation. I prefer to test copper levels in late winter or early spring as naturally they are at their lowest and this is the best time to see whether animals are deficient. The alternative is to test in the autumn when levels are at their best. Liver testing is usually done with either an Optigrow carried out at the time of slaughter, or a liver biopsy of sedated live animals. Blood sampling is only useful to prove an animal with clinical signs is copper deficient. Your veterinarian will interpret the results, taking into account any clinical signs of deficiency such as swayback in hinds or osteochondrosis in fawns/yearlings seen on farm to determine whether changes in your current supplementation is required.

Don't forget the old saying 'you can't manage what you don't measure'. Remember to schedule regular weight checks and compare them to the DINZ Replacement Hind Growth Curve or the Venison Growth Curve

In general, deer do not seem as susceptible as other livestock species to deficiencies in cobalt and selenium. Supplementation can usually be managed by fertiliser application, but for specific farm advice consult your veterinarian.

Yersiniosis, Leptospirosis, Johne's Disease, Fusobacteriosis and heavy parasite burdens can cause weaner deaths during the late summer and autumn. Don't undervalue the importance of getting these animals autopsied to determine the cause of death, and if swift action is necessary to prevent the further spread of disease.

Samantha Elder is a Southland vet. ■



Tomorrow's Deer progeny

By Jamie Ward, AgResearch scientist – AgSystems and Reproduction

The deer breeding herd at Invermay is fully recorded on DEERSelect and called Tomorrow's Deer herd. They are also a 'science' deer herd, and as such our intention is that our breeding programme and management will help breeders, farmers and the industry produce better deer and products for tomorrow.

THROUGHOUT 2021 AND 2022 we have been regularly updating a group of directly connected breeders involved in the Across-breed Connectedness (ABC) 2021-born progeny trial, updating them on activities and measurements of the herd. We are also looking to share this information regularly with *Deer Industry News* readers to keep the wider industry up with what's happening.

For 2022 the core of the herd - R3 and mixed age (MA) hinds - were artificially inseminated (AI), and the R2 hinds naturally mated with red stags. Red stags were also joined 10 days post-AI to back up (BU) mate those not conceiving to AI. The sires used were from a diverse range across red deer, wapiti, historic and modern genetics to provide industry connections. This genetic diversity will allow study of the adaptability of the progeny to help understand influences of stressors in the farm system.

At Invermay we traditionally pre-rut wean, and in mid-January undertake a 'pre-wean', where we ear punch for DNA, tag and vaccinate with Ultravac. At pre-wean, we also weigh and temperament score all of the calves, and we check the body condition score (BCS) of the hinds. This makes weaning time much simpler and less stressful and gives us a good measure of calving and lactational performance. It also allows us to plan for the next five to six weeks of lactation, especially this year as we are very dry.

Overall, of the 509 calves tagged, 313 belonged to the AI mobs. Our set-stocking rates to calves tagged rates were about usual for R3 and MA hinds, but lower than usual for R2 hinds. You will see in the numbers below, that we could do better in our calving rates,



Some of the 2022 born Invermay progeny, pre-weaning

and we are working on ways to improve this especially ways to reduce the disturbances of deer that we typically experience at Invermay. ■

Calving rates (hinds set stocked to calves tagged)

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------|
| R3 (AI, NM & BU): | 95% |
| MA (AI): | 90% average |
| MA (BU): | 93% |
| R2 (NM early): | 79% |
| R2 (NM mid + late combined): | 80% |

The calf liveweights were about what we would expect for our pre-weaning. With our AI progeny though it is hard to say for certain how the weights look until we get pedigree information confirmed, as most years we have a very genetically diverse group of sires.

Sex adjusted calf pre-wean liveweights from all Invermay hind groups (mid-January)

| Calving group | Mean | Min | Max |
|-----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| R3 (AI + BU) | 42.6 kg | 24.0 kg | 55.0 kg |
| MA AI | 45.9 kg | 28.8 kg | 59.0 kg |
| BU | 40.0 kg | 24.8 kg | 53.0 kg |
| R2 early | 38.9 kg | 23.4 kg | 53.0 kg |
| R2 mid and late | 36.2 kg | 24.6 kg | 47.4 kg |

Our pre-rut weaning is just around the corner, and we will have data on that and mating in the next update.

To Thrive with Passion

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor



DEER INDUSTRY NEW ZEALAND (DINZ) has set a positive goal for the NZ deer farming sector: To ‘thrive with Passion’. Links to a summary of the vision were sent out to all involved in the sector to get feedback on the priorities for the sector. Staff and board members are now working with farmers and marketers to shape the detail to achieve this aim.

Feedback is clear: the venison side of the business is not thriving and producers need more certainty that their passion for the deer sector will be rewarded with improved prices in the near future, and sustained improvement in the years to come.

The burden of compliance and regulation means that deer farmers face challenges across different landscapes and producers want certainty that their levy dollars are being spent effectively to ensure that they get a return.

The strategic priorities and details are now being worked on by DINZ staff, with outside expertise, to confirm DINZ projects and ensure that the focus is on the activities that will add the most value to the sector. If that value is not clear, then we need to question if we do them, DINZ CEO Innes Moffat says.

He says the jobs that DINZ has been asked to do have expanded over the past decade and examples include environmental management, productivity improvement, and enhanced digital traceability.

“It’s increased the scope of what we’re dealing with on the behalf of farmers. The roles we’re charged with are important, and with the likely reduction in DINZ income in the next phase of the venison cycle we need to look at all aspects of our work and focus on those that provide levy payers the most value. We also need to be clear on the actions that DINZ will be responsible for to achieve the outcomes, and those that belong with commercial players or community groups.”

The strategy identifies the priority issues, how to address them and how much it will cost, and the benefits the actions will deliver to levy payers.

DINZ Vision 2022 – 2027

Identifies the four groups who comprise the farmed deer sector:

- The communities in which we live and operate
- Our land, people and animals producing deer products
- Our value chain partners, taking deer and producing valued consumer goods
- Our consumers – benefiting from enjoying deer products

Across these four groups the deer industry participants need to work together to deliver the profitability needed for the industry to thrive, and for the community and our consumers to value farmed deer production.

The strategy focuses on demand creation, adding value and managing risks to deliver a thriving industry in the future.

‘The roles we’re charged with are important, and with the likely reduction in DINZ income in the next phase of the venison cycle we need to look at all aspects of our work and focus on those that provide levy payers the most value.’

Innes Moffat, DINZ CEO

The strategy identifies five key projects that will deliver higher returns and more confidence in deer farming and proposes the funding from DINZ, industry and third parties that may be needed for implementation.

1. Venison and Co-products – Market and Channel Development:

- **Stage 1. North American Retail Acceleration:** The key collaborative market diversification project that all five venison marketing companies have committed to. This will increase demand for venison in a new market segment for New Zealand, increasing the average export price for trim and reducing reliance on the frozen European market. DINZ and marketing companies are working on securing co-funding for a three year programme and estimated budget of \$3.2M.
- **Stage 2.** Building on the initial success of established retail distribution further processed leg cuts will be developed.
- **Stage 3.** Increasing returns to the carcass will come from the nutraceutical market for venison and deer co-products.

2. Velvet Health Product

Aim: More NZ velvet sold for higher prices through health food and functional food channels in China and Korea will expand demand for velvet.

Consumer promotion will mainly be undertaken by the brand owners, with DINZ support. Market reputation will be enhanced by research confirming velvet efficacy as a health and medical products. DINZ will fund some of this work, but greater expenditure will be made by brand owners to boost demand for their products using NZ velvet.

What will happen when?

- **2023:** Launch of healthy functional food extract (HFF) with Korean partners and commitment by Chinese firms for NZ velvet as a health food ingredient
- **2024 – 27:** Global leverage off Korea’s HFF extract
- **End Goal:** NZ velvet recognised as a highly valued health ingredient in contemporary health foods, creating profitable growth along the NZ velvet supply chain

3. Animal Welfare/Velvet Harvest

For a confident industry maintaining social support it is essential that farmers maintain and advance best practice methods to remove velvet. To stay ahead of evolving social expectation research into velvet removal practises and animal welfare is needed, and potential changes to velvet removal techniques adopted. A holistic approach to stag welfare is needed and this will involve a multi-year programme to deliver the best result for commercial farmers.

End Goal: Develop a practical, safe, and effective suite of haemostasis/pain relief options for farmers to use.

4. Innovation and Knowledge to Thrive

To adapt deer farming to changing conditions the industry should have a best in class innovation pipeline delivering the knowledge that allows producers and marketers to thrive.

A review will be undertaken of the current research approach DINZ has with AgResearch in early 2023 to ensure the system works to deliver the science that farmers and value chain partners will use to boost the profitability of deer farming.

5. Community Engagement

Communities are increasingly pushing for greater levels of trust and transparency from farmers. The participants in the deer industry can build social license with members of their community through communicating what we do at the local level.

End Goal: Community supports deer farmers

In order to focus on the priority projects and rebalance the other services for the industry DINZ is conducting a review of activities and resources as a priority project in early 2023.

A review of how DINZ assists with the achievement of industry profitability and confidence will determine the activities the organisation pursues, Moffat says. A new operation plan will be presented to the DINZ Board in April.

Vision development



The starting point for the new plan was early post-Covid-19, DINZ chair Mandy Bell says.

“It was a logical time for a review and what dropped out of that process was the need for formalised planning given the broad ranging changes affecting the industry.”

The board drew on the previous DINZ strategic plan as well as up-to-

date industry figures and projections in developing the new strategy. It took four months to collate a high level consultation-ready document. The consultation process started pre-Xmas with Bell and Innes Moffat meeting with the NZDFA executive for feedback. Since then DINZ staff and directors had attended 16 meetings with stakeholder groups including numerous kitchen table meetings with small groups of farmers well as emails and phone calls. The feedback and comment had been constructive, Bell says.

“The feedback from farmers has been strong and raised many good questions. Once we have had the opportunity of talking about the detail it has given people confidence the priorities are front of mind...a large number are supportive of the strategic investment and direction, and, taking onboard feedback, in some areas, there will be changes made.”

She says the board is aware of the current challenges to profitability, something reinforced by the meetings, and saw the need to keep moving ahead to tackle sooner rather than later both the opportunities and challenges.

The consultation period had reinforced the importance of the six focus areas of the strategy, Moffat says.

At its broadest level the strategy was about how best to look after the land, the deer and the people who farmed them in a rapidly changing local and global environment.

“We need to keep proving with science, research and practice that we have the best animal welfare, water quality and land management systems.”

DINZ also wanted to ensure support of everyone along the paddock to end market supply chain.

“We’re a niche industry and it’s important we maintain strong connections.”

The reoccurring questions and issues raised during consultation were focussed on actions being taken to lift returns, and environmental-related and GHG regulation.

“Farmers want to know what is being done to increase demand for venison and stabilise returns. They also want to know how we will advocate on their behalf, and what we will provide in resources to help with environmental and GHG management.”

Operationally that will mean focusing on what will make the most difference, he says.

An external contractor, Ingrid Harder, has been engaged to work on an operational plan for the DINZ board meeting in April. The DINZ executive team will present detailed budgets and time frames for each of the six strategic focus areas.

Bang for bucks spent



Is the levy spend on venison marketing generating an acceptable return on investment?

That’s the question deer farmers want answered, NZDFA chair Justin Stevens says.

“Are we getting good value for the money spent, and could we be spending it more effectively. We want to know how the money will be spent and how the return on that investment will be measured, monitored and sustained”

He acknowledged that the payback from marketing efforts took time to filter through but said there was a need to better quantify the return for the effort.

Deer farmers support the investment in science, so long as it wasn’t ‘re-inventing the wheel’.

“We hope that some of the past research can be picked up and built on.”

'We want to know how the money will be spent and how the return on investment will be measured, monitored and sustained.'

Justin Stevens, NZDFA chair

The investment in science and technology during the P2P had produced many practical applications and tools that farmers were now using on farm to help mitigate rising costs. The industry backing of the deer specific drench Cervidae Oral was another good example of applied science.

The cost of implementing the strategy was a concern, especially with increasing on-farm costs. According to Beef + Lamb NZ the cost of farm inputs increased by more than 10 per cent between March 2021 and March 2022 (more than consumer price inflation), and almost 15 per cent in the last five years. Deer farmers wanted to cut costs wherever possible and were looking for assurance that venison and velvet levies were earning them maximum return.

The NZDFA was not in disagreement about the strategy but had a number of related questions that had been forwarded to DINZ for feedback.

“We all want the same things and the best possible outcome for the industry.” ■

Bayonet: new fast and efficient fencing solutions

New Bayonet Fastlink Wire Joiners provide a high quality, long lasting joining solution that can be tensioned using the Bayonet Fastlink Tensioning Tool, re-tensioned at a later date, or re-used with a release key supplied in every pack. The joiners have stainless steel corrosion resistant internal springs and galvanised steel rollers which grip 1.8mm - 3.2mm wire, providing plenty of versatility.

Another new Bayonet fencing solution, the Fastlink Fence Ender solves the challenge of tying off wire at a strainer. They're versatile and time saving, especially in hard to tie off situations such as under stays or the lower sections of a prefabricated fence. They are made with a durable galvanised body and galvanised internal steel roller, and a stainless steel spring clip mechanism. The fence enders also have the same unlock functionality of the wire joiners with an easy to use release key supplied in every pack.

Fastlink Wire Joiners are available in packs of either 20 or 300, and Fastlink Fence Enders are available in packs of 20.

To discuss your fencing project or Bayonet Fastlink products, call Bayonet on 0800 330 320 ■



Tie off fencing wire with Bayonet Fastlink Fence Enders.



Join and tension fencing wire with Bayonet Fastlink Wire Joiners and the Fastlink Tensioning Tool.

Meeting the future needs of deer farmers

By Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor



Katie Preston, an Otago University BSc microbiology student worked closely with Megan McCall of Abacus Bio, DINZ DeerPRO manager Solis Norton and deer farmers on the 10 week project.

DEER FARMERS ARE unsure about the need for an outreach type of service but believe the concept is probably worthy of further investigation.

That's the bottom line of 'Meeting the future needs of deer farmers', a 10 week project by Katie Preston. The University of Otago student prepared the report for DINZ as part of her summer internship with Abacus Bio.

For the project 20 farmers were quizzed on the need for a support service plus a number of deer farming related issues in a semi-structured interview. The report suggested that

such a service could be provided by a DINZ-employed person who would work directly with individual farmers, helping them work through issues and direct them to appropriate channels of help where necessary.

The farmers interviewed ranged in age from early-20s to near retirement and were geographically spread from north Canterbury, the Catlins, south Otago, Queenstown and Te Anau. They were from a mix of deer and multi-species systems ranging in size from a breeding base of 200 hinds to 2000 hinds.

The topics covered were the positive aspects of deer farming; resources employed and sources of information used; challenges; future hopes and aspirations for the industry; feedback for DINZ and opinion on whether an outreach service would be of value.

There were several reoccurring themes and concerns. Velvetting was a common topic, with a few farmers planning to move away from venison production in preference of velvet. However, some farmers had concerns about velvetting because of public perception around the harvesting procedure.

As expected, the impact of government regulations was a topic mentioned by all the farmers interviewed. Most had concerns about how impending compliance might impact farming practice and costs.

The disconnect between farmers and DINZ was mentioned, as was the disconnect between suburban and agricultural communities.

"This topic came up when discussing the government regulations and it was felt by a few farmers that there was a lack of education in suburban communities about farming and the agricultural sector," Preston said in her report.

Opinion was varied on whether there would be value in an outreach service. Those that strongly disagreed argued that the majority of farmers would prefer to be left alone and have money put to better use such as the marketing of deer products.

The report said that an outreach service could be valuable in getting the next generation involved in the deer industry.

"Young people joining or planning to join this industry is the key to future success, and it is important that this is considered when thinking about implementing a service."

'An outreach service could be valuable in getting the next generation involved in the deer industry'

The report noted that the Ministry of Primary Industries (MPI) was looking at establishing a similar service. Whether MPI could cater to the specific needs of deer farmers was discussed by some interviewees who felt that they were not the right organisation to deliver such a service.

An alternative idea to an on farm meeting type service might be industry staff making phone calls to less engaged farmers to check in on deer related matters.

"A service like this addresses the issue of farmers feeling disconnected from the industry body and would be a lot more cost and time effective. Industry staff also have the knowledge and connections to direct a farmer to appropriate help."

In answering 'where to next' the report said it was important to acknowledge that the results included opinions from only 20 farmers and if more individuals were included the results could change.

"Over all, there is feeling that there is possibly value in an outreach service, but there needs to be more work done to conclude a definite answer. Once discussed with a wider pool of people it will become clearer whether or not to go ahead with the service." ■

2023 Photo Competition
\$500 cash for the first place winner

For more information, visit deernz.org/msd-allflex-photo-comp

2022 photo competition: 'Curiosity' by Iryna Uriupina

Obituaries

Dave McNeile: life-long contributor to the deer industry

David “Dave” John McNeile’s contribution to the deer industry spanned over six decades. He grew up in Opiki, near Shannon, where his lifelong passion for farming began. After attending New Plymouth Boys High School, he headed to Gisborne to shepherd on Mungahaye Station. Until the day he died he would regale stories of catching wekas and wild pigs etc. This was the beginning of his lifelong passion of hunting and gathering.

Returning home from Mungahaye in the mid-1960’s he started sheep and cattle farming in Shannon. To supplement his larder and income he started shooting deer, pigs and possums but it wasn’t long before his fascination of deer meant a few of them ended up behind the fences.

In the late 1960’s Dave and Merlyn Craw (who’d been farming Deer pre- WWII) exchanged stags using nothing other than a dart gun and a bit of rope.

Dave loved nothing more than travelling the country buying or selling deer for his clients/ friends. He always had time for a Coke, a rollie and a yarn, with his trusty foxie by his side.

In the early 1970’s Dave married Jo Girling-Butcher with whom he had three beautiful daughters. The 1970s was a difficult farming decade and he grew potatoes alongside the sheep and beef. His interest in deer was growing but there was still little commercial interest in farming them. But by the early 1980’s that all changed. In 1982/1983 Dave built a deer selling rostrum and had the first deer sale in the Manawatu. The idea was no doubt sparked by a good friend, the late Denis Hazlett who was a Wrightson NMA stock agent. The few local deer on offer at the first two sales were supplemented by a unit load of deer sent all the way from Southland by another pioneer farmer, Herby White.

Not long after, Dave became a deer agent for a Feilding company but after a while he decided to go out on his own. In the mid-1980’s he started McNeile Deer Ltd and by the early 1990’s, after the failing of Venison NZ, he became an agent for Andrew Duncan. He bought velvet for National Deer Horn, and when they went out of business he picked up with Colin Stevenson of CK Import Export with whom he forged a long business relationship.

In 1988 Dave bought another farm at Ashurst, Siberia, previously owned by Tom Kebbell. He slowly wound up his two sheep and beef properties at Shannon to focus solely on deer and his deer business.

Dave loved nothing more than travelling the country buying or selling deer for his clients/friends. He always had time for a Coke, a rollie and a yarn, with his trusty foxie by his side.

About ten years ago he built his dream retirement home in Taupo. But he missed farming and still loved doing the velvet run completing a 17 hour day three days before he died.

He was loyal to his clients and deer business colleagues.

Dave died on 1 November 2022, aged 80. He was a larger than life character who had a life well lived.

Contributed by Mick Humphrey

“Duncan NZ was established in 1990 and Dave started supplying deer to us in the early 90’s – he was one of our first procurement agents, and a key part of our supply network in the Manawatu/ Rangatikei region.

Deer procurement is a very specialised skill and as one of the early deer pioneers Dave understood handling deer very well.

He was also a great relationship guy, and showed great loyalty during what were some very challenging times in the industry.

Always great company, and as authentic as they come, Dave was one of the real characters of the deer industry.

We will remember him very well”.

Contributed by Andrew Duncan, Duncan NZ executive chairman.

Rich Flocchini: US pioneer distributor and champion of NZ venison



Rich Flocchini was a joint winner of the 2017 Deer Industry Award.

Rich Flocchini, a pioneer US distributor and champion of NZ farmed venison passed away on 2 December 2022. He was a trailblazer in the development of the US market which in recent times has consistently outperformed the European market in terms of volume, price and stability. His ongoing efforts made a huge difference

to the viability of the NZ deer industry, by reducing the over reliance on Europe.

His company, Durham Meat Co was one of the earliest distributors of NZ venison. Imports began in the mid-1980’s and the venison was sold alongside American buffalo raised on the Flocchini family’s Wyoming ranch. Over the next 40 years, during which the company rebranded to Sierra Meat and Seafood, Rich helped grow US demand from a standing start to the world’s largest single market for our farmed venison. His involvement and commitment to NZ venison endured with Rich only recently retiring from the day to day business.

In a country fixated on beef it would be easy for companies like Sierra Meat to take the less complicated path and focus on sure sellers. But Rich chose to take the road less travelled, picking up

and running with NZ venison and his efforts and passion helped create a stronger, better, and more sustainable market.

One of the keys to his business success was the way he treated suppliers and customers alike. He saw both as partners in the long term growth of the business, so their success was always of great concern to him. He constantly sought win-win outcomes in the day-to-day trading operations.

Rich helped grow US demand from a standing start to the world's largest single market for our farmed venison.

He led the involvement of Sierra Meat in expanding the market for NZ venison. This was achieved by further processing imported cuts into market-ready items such as burger patties, portion steaks, roasts, stew, jerky then packaging and branding them, so they had broader appeal and uptake across US retail and food service sectors. At the same time, he spearheaded programs to educate chefs on the unique qualities of farm-raised venison, committed considerable resources to establishing and maintaining specialist sales teams, as well as developing sophisticated marketing and branding campaigns.

Rich and his company were particularly loyal to Cervena when it was introduced in 1994.

He also helped pioneer chilled sea freight deliveries to the US by innovatively combining chilled and frozen shipments in the same container. This was an alternative to costly airfreight and assisted in reducing freight costs to achieve viable volume sales.

DINZ Executive Chef Graham Brown noted that the Flocchini clan has always valued and nurtured family. Family members ran the business, and they regard customers and suppliers as part of their extended family.

Rich Flocchini's dedication was formally acknowledged in the winning of the prestigious Deer Industry Award in 2017. He, along with two other US industry nominees Mark Mitchell and Dale Beier, were the first overseas winners of the award. At the time, DINZ US Market Promotion Consultant Nigel Morris said Rich had shown remarkable commitment to developing a niche market in a fiercely competitive commercial environment, largely focused on the traditional proteins of beef and chicken.

Rich's legacy lives on with the family business reaching far and wide.

Sierra Meat is still a major player in the US venison market and the NZ deer industry is very fortunate to have had the dedicated input of them and Rich Flocchini.

Contributed by Andrew Duncan, Duncan NZ executive chairman.

Recipe

Easy venison stir-fry Parai mīti-tia

Four new Māori language mīti-tia (New Zealand venison) recipe videos, created by well-known former Māori TV presenter and Great Kiwi Bake Off contestant Naomi Toilalo, have been added to DINZ's recipe library and can now be shared on social media. Te reo versions of New Zealand Venison Stir-Fry, New Zealand Venison Bolognese, New Zealand Venison Kiwi Burger and New Zealand Venison Ragu can now be found at the @NewZealandGrassFedVenison YouTube channel.

Try Naomi's quick, easy and delicious Venison Stir Fry (Parai mīti-tia). The stir-fry meat can be bought from a store, or if using leg cuts, the trim works really well too. Watch the video at <https://youtu.be/AEtw5xo1Eos>.

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Hey everyone, most of the time we are busy and want to make things that are fast. Well, use this farm-raised venison to make a super delicious and simple meal of grass-fed venison stir-fry.

Tēnā koutou e hoa mā, i te nuinga o te wā e pukumahi katoa ana tātou, ā, kei te hiahia kia tunu i ngā kai tere nē. Ā kāti, whakamahia tēnei mīti tia paamu mō tētahi tina tino tere, tino reka hoki arā te parai mīti tia nei.

Prep time: 10 mins | Cook time: 10 mins | Serves: 3

See next page for recipe...



continued from previous page...

Ingredients:

For the vegetables:

- 2 tbsp oil
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- 1 tsp ginger, finely chopped
- 1 onion, sliced
- ½ red capsicum, deseeded and sliced
- ½ orange capsicum, deseeded and sliced
- 2 cups broccoli florets
- 1 courgette, sliced
- ¼ cup water

Ngā hua whenua:

- Kia rua kokonui noni
- Kia kotahi wāhanga kāriki, kua kopenuhia
- Kia kotahi kokoiti tinitia, kua tapatapahia
- Kia kotahi aniana, kua kōripitia
- Kia haurua kapikama whero, kua kōripitia
- Kia haurua kapikama karaka, kua kōripitia
- Kia rua kapu porokari
- Kia kotahi kamoriki, kua kōripitia
- Kia hauwhā kapu wai

For the venison:

- 1 tbsp oil
- 1 tsp finely chopped ginger
- 3 spring onions, finely sliced
- 250g stir fry farm-raised venison
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tsp sugar
- 2 tbsp water

Te mīti tia:

- Kia kotahi kokonui noni
- Kia kotahi kokoiti tinitia, kua tapatapahia
- Kia toru puna riki, kua tapatapahia
- Kia 250 karamu mīti tia paamu o Aotearoa
- Kia haurua kokoiti tote
- Kia kotahi kokonui ranu pīni
- Kia kotahi kokoiti huka
- Kia rua kokonui wai

Method:

For the vegetables:

1. Heat 2 tablespoons of oil in a wok until steaming hot.
2. Add garlic and ginger and stir fry for 1 minute.
3. Add onion, red and orange capsicum, broccoli and courgette. Stir fry for 1 minute.
4. Add water, cover and leave to steam for 2 minutes. Remove from the wok and keep warm.

For the venison:

1. Heat the second measure of oil in the wok with the ginger and spring onions. Add venison and stir fry for 2 minutes. Add salt, soy sauce, sugar and water. Cover and cook for 2 minutes.
2. To serve, spoon vegetables onto a serving tray and arrange the venison on top.

Heat the oil until very hot.

Add the garlic and ginger.

Fry for 1 minute.

Add onion, capsicum, broccoli, courgette.

Fry for 1 minute.

Add the water, cover.

Steam for 2 mins.

Add to a bowl

Heat the remaining oil.

Fry the onions and garlic.

Add the venison, fry for two minutes.

Add salt, soy sauce, sugar and water.

Cover. Cook for two minutes.

Spoon veg on serving bowl

Arrange venison on top.

Whakawerahia te noni kia tino wera rawa atu.

Raua atu te kāriki me te tinitia.

Paraitia mō tētahi miniti.

Tukua te aniana, kapikama, porokari me te Kapikamo.

Paraitia mō tētahi miniti.

Riringihia atu te wai. Tūpokina.

Whakamamaoatia mō te 2 miniti.

Tāhorotia ki te oko anō.

Whakawerahia te toenga o te noni.

Paraitia ngā aniana me te kāriki.

Raua atu te miti tia, paraitia mō te 2 miniti.

Tukua te tote, ranu pīni, huka me te wai.

Tūpokina. Tunua mō te 2 miniti.

Kokongia ngā hua whenua ki runga i te kumete.

Whakarite te mīti tia ki runga.

