

Executive Committee Report

We're past the shortest day and much of the country is seeing some sun finally. I know this is doing wonders for the mindset of those around South Canterbury, me included.

Our thoughts are with those at the top of the South Island who've been inundated with rain and flooding twice now. The local NZDFA branches are good support networks for anyone needing help or just a listening ear.

Venison contracts are out and at good levels for the coming season, beef and lamb schedules are at record levels. It's nice to have some positivity again after a couple of tough years. Yes, buying store stock is expensive and feels risky, but margins still look solid in the near to medium term.

There are also lots of rumours flying around about the upcoming velvet season. As an industry we need to carefully negotiate this season to preserve the value we have built and need.

It is also good to see that breeders (across sheep, beef and deer) are finally getting some reward with a general shortage of stock. It definitely feels a better time to be farming than the past couple of years. There is still a lot of work going on at the coalface to ensure we can continue to farm in a sustainable, profitable manner.

And it's a good time to remember to keep in touch with your networks and make educated decisions that best benefit you. A focus for the Executive Committee is constant, clear

communication with the DINZ board, farmers and markets so we can get consistent, clear messages back to you, the branches and farmers, to give you the best ability to make decisions.

It is also with great pleasure we welcome Hamish Fraser back to the DINZ board for another term along with new appointee Simone Hoskin. Personally, and as an Executive Committee we are looking forward to working with both Hamish and Simone to continue to better our industry and utilise the skills and experience they both bring to the table.

The Selection and Appointments Panel was spoilt for choice with candidates seeking to add to our industry this year. We would like to thank the unsuccessful candidates, especially Jacqueline Rowarth for her skills, passion, knowledge and perspective, she has brought to the industry over her term as a director.

Keep an eye out later in this issue of Stagline for Executive Committee messages around things you as farmers can control for the upcoming velvet season.

Also details on the upcoming mixed species workshops in the North Island in collaboration with Beef and Lamb and DFA branches. In May we were lucky enough to host one of these workshops in South Canterbury at our property, with input of other multispecies farmers Charlie Johns and Hamish Orbell and subject matter experts Ginny Dodunski and Wayne Allan. There were really good lessons and reminders for identifying areas where we

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can improve our efficiency, sustainability and profitability across the species.

Finally, I would encourage everyone again to stay well connected leading into the new season. Feel free to reach out to myself, other exec members or branches to seek information to allow you to make the best decisions possible. If we can't directly help, we'll make sure to find someone who can.

Tom MacFarlane

NZDFA Executive Committee

Top of the South Storm Recovery

The damage caused by storms that have lashed the Tasman and Marlborough regions has been substantial for some deer farms. Our best wishes go to all our farmers and their communities. Recovery is now underway but as with previous storms and cyclones this will be long-term. A major issue (apart from getting hold of a digger and fencing material) is feed for the stock.

Please get in touch with the Nelson or Marlborough Branch Chairs: Amanda Brooks (020 4116 6201) or Geoff Hayes (027 241 3633) if you would like to offer any assistance.

Greenhouse Gas Advocacy

Update from Luka Jansen (Deer Industry New Zealand Environmental Stewardship Manager)

DINZ Leading the ETS Forestry Conversion Bill debate

Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) has recently lodged a submission on the Climate Change Response (ETS – Forestry Conversion) Amendment Bill, a new piece of legislation before Parliament aimed at addressing the rapid conversion of farmland into permanent pine forests for carbon credits.

DINZ has warned that while the Bill attempts to limit whole-farm conversions, it fails to address the root causes of land-use change and could leave New Zealand with long-term, irreversible consequences.

At its core, the Bill does not prevent entire farms from being converted into permanent exotic forests purely for carbon offsetting. It relies on the Land Use Capability (LUC) system (a tool used in New Zealand since the 1950s), to determine where forestry eligible for ETS registration can occur. DINZ, the Forest Owners Association, and the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment have all highlighted to the government the flaws in using the Land Use Capability (LUC) system as a regulatory tool at the farm level.

Another concern raised was that the current settings of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) allows fossil fuel emitters to offset their emissions without reducing them—while biological emissions from livestock farming, such as deer farming, cannot be offset, even when there are no other mitigation options available. I believe this imbalance is putting

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deer farmers on the back foot. It's particularly concerning that the government still intends to price agricultural emissions by 2030.



Kim Rowe shows the Environment judges his tree protection designs that are low cost and provide effective erosion control

DINZ highlighted in the submission that the ETS is distorting land markets, encouraging the spread of permanent pine forests across New Zealand in pursuit of carbon targets under the Paris Agreement. In the process, it is disproportionately impacting sheep, beef, and deer farmers - those who actively manage and protect landscapes, including the hill and high country.

DINZ's submission also highlights the volatility of the carbon market. Once carbon revenues dry up, these permanent (carbon) pine forests could become liabilities—leaving landowners and local councils without the resources to manage them responsibly for

fire risk, pests and other risks. Since 2017, over 350,000 hectares of drystock land have been converted into forestry. If this trend continues, up to 1 million hectares could be lost by 2050. DINZ told members of parliament on Monday at the Environment Select LUC Class 7, soils that the proposed Bill encourages to be planted for carbon farming. Kim and Judith Rowe in the Tasman region, who farm LUC Class 7, recently were awarded the NZ Landcare Trust Award for environmental actions on the ground.

The Rowes shared their experience during the recent severe weather events, witnessing pine plantations topple like matchsticks, taking the soil with them.



Judith's natives as shown in this photo stayed in the ground during recent severe wind and rain events in the Tasman region.

In contrast, their own farm — where they've planted thousands of native trees and actively protect a 23-hectare QEII covenant forest — remained intact. Notably, they received no incentives for these efforts.

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Judith told me that they will be able to continue farming this week, although they face a significant cleanup that will take time to recover from. Their story is a powerful testament to the resilience of integrated, sustainable land management practiced by deer farmers.

Drystock farmers are not receiving the recognition they deserve for their role in protecting New Zealand's landscapes. I urge the government to adopt a more integrated approach to land management—one that ensures climate action supports, rather than undermines, farming communities and the many benefits they provide to the country.



Judith and Kim's son flying over their catchment to see the damage caused by severe weather this month

Our best wishes to Kim and Judith who suffered significant damage from the recent storm.

Velvetting Season 2025/26

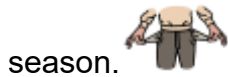
Cowboys, fly-by-nighters, geezers... or stability?



The coming season could be challenging, with rumours of underhanded tactics and misinformation currently filtering back to the Executive Committee. Any decrease in prices from last season would be unacceptable, while greater transparency and an improvement in some buyers' behaviour and attitude is needed to ensure the longevity of our industry. While DINZ is aware of this information and is actively working on solutions, it got me thinking about what we can control or do as farmers. Obviously, we have no say in price, but we do get to influence the following;

- The quantity and quality of velvet produced, both individually and as an industry
- Supply of OG1 and HV1 (minimise where possible) – Get an understanding of what the company you supply wants.
- Cut NT heads shorter; don't push the tops!
- **Get informed!!** Talk to a range of farmers regarding prices being paid

rather than trusting what a buyer tells you. There was evidence of different pricing structures and payment timings between clients of certain buyers last



season.

- Be aware that once you have taken a deposit, you no longer have control and could be left with empty promises.



- The choice of who you sell to and when (within reason), so deal with reputable buyers: Who has skin in the game versus a plane ticket in their back pocket?
- Industry grading specifications are only guidelines, and each company grades according to their individual market's needs. If you aren't happy, consider changing.
- Diversification – Reliance on velvet income alone is high risk.



- Timing and dispersal of surplus velveting stags – Space is tight post-velvetting, with growing numbers of stags and limited capacity due to the trucking window and processing limitations. What would be the effects on your business if those stags can't be killed??

While each business will make its own choices based on its unique set of circumstances, it is timely to point out that **the choices we make as individuals not only**

directly affect ourselves but have a cumulative effect on the whole industry.

The choice is yours; the time is now.

VelTrak Terms of Use strengthened, export licensing advanced

The industry has taken another step forward in preparing for a more structured, transparent and credible deer velvet export system. At its 16 July 2025 meeting in Cambridge, the DINZ Board confirmed several key decisions, acting on behalf of the sector in response to growing calls for change.

As part of this progression, proposed changes to VelTrak Terms of Use, affecting buyers and exporters, were formally accepted — reinforcing the system's role in supporting levy compliance, traceability and commercial integrity. These changes, developed with input from the Export Licensing Working Group (ELWG) and legal advisers, will take effect from 1 September 2025.

DINZ also confirmed a clear commitment to the HEAA legislative pathway for export licensing and has allocated additional resourcing to support audit and compliance functions linked to VelTrak and the registered users therein.

Collectively, these changes reflect industry expectations — from farmers and processors — for a level playing field and mark another step toward a disciplined export framework aligned with future licensing.

Export licensing and the HEAA

The Horticultural Export Authority Act (HEAA) has emerged as the preferred legislative vehicle for velvet export licensing. It offers a light-touch, proven model that enables industry-defined standards and oversight.

Following a favourable statutory review, the HEAA is, in principle, open for expansion into new primary sectors — but industry alignment and early positioning are critical.

“Licensing isn’t about centralised control — it’s about giving compliant operators a trusted platform and putting New Zealand velvet on a stronger footing globally,” says DINZ CEO Rhys Griffiths. “We’re ensuring a high-integrity system as we continue to grow as an industry.”

New VelTrak Terms of Use

VelTrak remains under DINZ oversight and will evolve to reflect the maturing nature of the velvet industry. The agreed changes are targeted and fair: those already adhering to the rules, including filing returns and paying levies accurately, will see little impact. However, users who fail to comply will face consequences.

Changes include:

- **Eligibility for the 2025/26 Season:** Velvet buyers and exporters must file 2024/25 returns and pay any outstanding levies in full by 31 August 2025. Routine audits must be satisfactorily completed. A re-certification process of velvet buyers, involving submission of standard

business documentation, will be required. Non-compliant parties will be ineligible to access VelTrak.

- **Publication of approved VelTrak users:** DINZ will publish a list of accredited users – entities and independent agents – to enhance transparency and build confidence.
- **Suspension triggers:** Late filings, unpaid levies, obstructed audits, material discrepancies, or breaches of the Animal Products Act will trigger suspension from VelTrak.
- **Graduated suspension framework:** A graduated framework will be adopted, with indefinite suspension a possible scenario. Reinstatement requires resolution of the non-compliant behaviour and completion of the suspension period.
- **Public transparency:** DINZ will publish suspension details, including the entity name, suspension dates, and reasons. This ensures visibility and protects market credibility.

“These updates protect good-faith participants and give regulators confidence in our systems,” Griffiths adds. “We’re setting a higher standard — and backing it with action.”

Looking ahead

DINZ is acting at the behest of the industry. The direction is clear: transparency, compliance, and accountability. These are not barriers — they are the building blocks of a professional, high-value export sector. More information will follow in August, including

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guidance on re-certification, audit protocols, and implementation.

For questions or feedback, contact DINZ at info@deernz.org

Next Generation 2025 - Marlborough

In two weeks' time, the Marlborough branch will host our next generation of deer farmers and industry partners.

There are still some places available, [so please register here >>](#)

In the meantime, here is what is in store for attendees:

Thursday 31 July

- Wye Hills Farm: Farm tour and two separate workshops (BNZ Bank and Velvet shed)
- Avon Valley Safaris: Lunch, farm tour with a hard antler scoring demonstration.
- Evening dinner at Raupo Café (Sponsors: Duncan NZ, Saint Clair, Yealands, Stevens Family.

Friday 1 August

- Mardene Farm: Farm tour, Plasback and Gallagher demonstrations
- Duncan NZ Venison Market Update
- Ben Morven Farm: Farm tour and Marlborough District Council water habitation workshop

Topics covered over the two days will include:

- Farm Succession how they did it?

- Copping with drought?
- Environmental challenges?

New Branch Chairs

Rachael Inch (Canterbury/West Coast)



I bring over 20 years of experience in rural Canterbury, supporting local communities and serving in various governance roles. As Chair of the NZDFA Canterbury-West Coast branch, I am excited to work with the committee, and we are eager to connect with both new and existing members across the region.

The branch's main goals going forward are to encourage more people to get involved in deer farming and to help farmers succeed by building strong networks and relationships, while sharing practical, relevant information in a transparent manner. As the largest branch (by area) in the South Island, we are focused on providing credible advocacy and influence for farmers, consumers and the industry.

Together with my husband, Rodney, I run a deer farm specialising in velvet production. This hands-on experience gives me important

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insight into the everyday challenges and opportunities faced by deer farmers.

Beyond farming, I hold a national leadership role with Flying New Zealand (Royal New Zealand Aero Club), where I work with the executive team to support and grow general aviation for over 4,000 members nationwide. I was also commissioned to write the Essential Freshwater Social Impact Report, ensuring the real impacts of policy changes on rural communities are understood.

With a focus on teamwork and open communication, the Canterbury-West Coast branch is committed to building a strong, supportive community for all deer farmers in the region.

Colin Jordan (South Canterbury/North Otago)



My wife, Kim, and I own a deer and cattle breeding and finishing operation, with some velvet, on a property about 15 minutes from Fairlie. We have been here since 2008.

We have also had experience in an off-farm role in the live export industry.

We have three sons, with the older two currently studying at university and the youngest at secondary school

While it will be something of a new challenge, taking over as Chair of the South Canterbury-North Otago branch, we have a strong supportive committee that includes numerous members with past or present experience on national governance bodies within the deer industry, including the DINZ Board, NZDFA Executive Committee, Selections and Appointments Panel, Research Advisory Panel, National Velvetting Standards Body and the Velvet Export Licensing Working Group.

The Branch Committee aims to be at the forefront of the industry, to tackle any issues as they arise.

Matt Krs (Bay of Plenty)



I have been farming deer for four years, over which time I have built my deer farm to 150 velvet stags. During that time, I have been a part of the Bay of Plenty DFA and have been guided by the people within this group to help me improve

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my farm more than I ever could have on my own.

This support from local deer farmers has been indispensable to me, and so I would like to see our branch continue to provide a solid base for people to learn and thrive from.

I would like to see the next generation of deer farmers talk to one another more often, possibly utilising basic technology to create some form of local deer farmer group chat, so that local farmers could ask for help at any stage when they are farming, not just at the occasional local and/or regional meeting. This way, we can help the industry and each other to farm better and grow towards a more sustainable future.

Beef + Lamb NZ, DINZ, NZDFA Diversified Farm Field Days

A couple of months ago Beef + Lamb NZ (BLNZ) and DINZ ran a field day in Canterbury looking at mixed species farming. The field day was well attended and now planning is underway for similar events in the North Island.

This topic has been on the radar for many in the industry – encouraging new entrants to deer farming and those that might have farms with deer infrastructure but unsure of what is involved.

Confirmed dates and farms

- Hawkes Bay: 7 October 2025, Keith and Josh Burden – Te Pohue

- Manawatu: 11 November 2025, Westview Farming Partnership – Pohangina Valley

Key points of the workshops:

Come along to see how a diversified farming business manages multiple livestock species, manages drench resistance, and reduces financial risk.

- *Farming with multiple livestock species (Sheep, Beef and Deer).* An on-farm look at the practicalities of managing sheep, beef and deer. Their feed demands and how they integrate and complement each other.
- *Combating drench resilience through multi species grazing* - a key tool in combating drench resilience. Talk to those who are aspiring to utilise this opportunity available to them in their businesses.
- *A look at the historical financials of a diversified farming business.* How multiple income streams can reduce market risk to the bottom line and how business reliance is generated.

The target attendees are:

- Non deer farmers
- Rural professionals (bankers, accountants etc)
- People who are currently mixed species and looking at system changes.
- Local NZDFA representatives to offer assistance and someone to talk to for those looking into deer.

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More information will be on the DINZ events page in the next few weeks.

Noticeboard

Deer parasite webinars

Recently DINZ held a webinar for deer parasites, it was part of a series of webinars that will be held every two months. A recording is available here: <https://deernz.org.nz/deer-hub/support-services/podcasts-and-webinars/deer-health-webinars/>. Look out for the next webinar on the events page.

NZDFA Life Members

Although the industry conference has been and gone, we would like to acknowledge the new life members that were announced at the NZDFA AGM and the Awards Dinner. Congratulations to: Ian Bristow, Hub Hall, Edmund Noonan and Bill Taylor. [You can see a full list of national life members here >>](#)

New DINZ Board Members and NZDFA Branch Chairs

The DINZ Board met on 16 July with two new members: Dr Simone Hoskin (Producer appointed) and Rob Kidd (Processor appointed). They join Paddy Boyd (Chair), Tony Cochrane (Vice Chair), Dave Courtney, Hamish Fraser, Nigel Jones and John Tacon. [See Board member details here >>](#)

Since April several new Branch Chairs have been appointed. Rachael Inch

(Canterbury/West Coast), Colin Jordan (South Canterbury/North Otago) and Matt Krs (Bay of Plenty). See the earlier article for more information.

Joke of the month

Dad jokes

I'm so upset—my barber said he can't cut my hair any longer. He can only cut it shorter.

I was going to tell a joke about the layoffs, but sadly none of them work.

Why did the employee at the calendar company get fired? He took a day off.

I'd love to have kids one day. But that's as long as I can handle them.

I haven't spoken to my wife in years. I thought it would be rude to interrupt her.

The other day I bought a thesaurus, but when I got home and opened it, all the pages were blank. I have no word to describe how angry I am.

Events

- [Wormwise for deer - Taupo, 30 July >>](#)
- [Next Generation Programme - Marlborough, 31 July 2025 >>](#)
- [Elk/Wapiti Zoom Discussion Group \(Financial Analysis\) - Online, 5 August >>](#)
- [Wormwise for deer - Cambridge, 8 August >>](#)
- [Wormwise for deer - Tikokino, 12 August >>](#)

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- [Wormwise for deer - Napier, 14 August >>](#)
- [Getting to Know the NZ Farm Assurance Plan - Greymouth, 20 August >>](#)
- [Getting to Know the NZ Farm Assurance Plan - Hokitika, 21 August >>](#)
- [Elk/Wapiti Zoom Discussion Group \(Achieving Young Stock Growth Targets\) - Online, 9 September >>](#)
- [National Velvet Competition and Awards Night >>](#)

If you have an event that would be of interest to the deer farming industry, please email info@deernz.org with details.