

Executive Committee Report

Autumn is certainly a game of two halves for deer farmers with velvet operations largely under control, apart from keeping stags fed, watered and wrecking as little infrastructure as possible. Conversely breeding programmes and weaning have been in full swing with long days in the deer shed for many.

After the disappointment of this year's velvet season, it is heartening to see the steady improvement in the venison prices now flowing through to weaner pricing, rewarding those who have kept the faith in venison focused breeding operations. As we have seen in the sheep and beef sector this has resulted in a realignment of how much extra capital is required by finishers to secure trading stock. In some instances, this has caused some difficulty establishing an agreed price, although well grown and presented animals are reported to be selling well. The value of longer-term business relationships has also been highlighted as a positive in this environment, particularly with the reduction in breeding hinds in recent times.

As the velvet sales draw to a close, the preparation for the season ahead begins, both on and off farm. The NZDFA Executive Committee has canvassed the branches for the leading issues velvet farmers would like addressed which has been provided to our three representatives, who are Evan Potter, Mark Tapley and Bruce Patterson. At this stage an agreed meeting date has not been established, but the sooner all parties can

engage and work though the concerns raised so everyone is on the same page, the better. Any further concerns you may have please share them either through your branch chairs or alternatively contact our representatives directly.

Wild deer continue to be flagged as an issue given the massive growth in numbers around the country. Growing numbers of these are animals are being sent to processors as either feral (via helicopter operations) or increasingly in the category of Feral Now Farmed (FNF), which need to be on farm for a minimum of 90 days. Each of these categories supply distinctly different markets to our premium farmed venison, so as farmers please be clear and transparent about each line of animals you are sending and importantly for animals of unknown origins tick the other feeds box on your ASD.

The Executive Committee has also been working with DINZ to ensure more industry statistical data is available to farmers. This is intended to support stocking policies and financial planning decisions on farm. There is a raft of data available that can be collated, so feedback on what has been provided to date or would be of value ahead to keep deer farmers up to date and informed is valuable. Events such as what has unfolded in the Middle East is just another example of the increased volatility we are now facing as farmers in recent times, so ensuring we have information available that assists driving value for money spent, both on farm and within the deer industry, is essential. The old adage of "control what you can control"

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certainly ringing true in this current environment.

Finally, I would encourage you all to engage and take part in upcoming elections for the NZDFA Executive Committee. Strong farmer representation has never been more important and has a significant bearing on the direction our industry takes and voting is that starting point. I will be stepping down following this year's conference and would like to wish the successful candidates well in their governance endeavours representing deer farmers ahead.

Mark McCoard

NZDFA Chair

Top Deck Trading Are the Top Cats

For a second year in a row at the Southland Ballance Farm Environment Awards, a deer farming family has taken out top honours with Top Deck Trading (Tony, Michelle and Kate Roberts and Mark Lieshout) being crowned this year's Southland Regional Supreme Winners.

In 2025 fellow deer farmers Cam Nelson and Christin Vaughan won the same award.

The award evening was held on 1 April and featured four finalists (covering dairying, dairy grazing, sheep, beef and deer) - all with stunning looking farms and impressive production and environmental management.

Early in the evening the signs were promising with the Roberts collecting a swag of "minor" awards: The Hill Labs Agri-Science Award, Beef + Lamb New Zealand Livestock Farm Award, FMG Risk Management Award, and WaterForce Safe Water Recognition Award. While other finalists also performed well it wasn't a total surprise when the family was announced as the Regional Supreme winners.

The Roberts are active members of the Southland Environment Group (as are Cam and Christina) and of course Tony is the current Chair of the Southland Branch. They often host visits from other deer farmers and advance parties with a big drawcard being their impressive winter barns and winter grazing management.

The Roberts now go on to the New Zealand Farm Environment Trust's National Showcase in Christchurch on 2 July, where regional supreme winners from across the country will compete for the Gordon Stephenson Trophy and the title of 2026 National Ambassador for Sustainable Farming and Growing.

Congratulations Top Deck Trading! A well-deserved award.

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- Richard Greer, Southland (nominated by Tony Roberts, seconded by Bruce Allan)
- Grant Hasse, Canterbury/West Coast (nominated by Tracey Maclean, seconded by Stuart Stokes)
- Evan Potter, Hawkes Bay (nominated by Grant Charteris, seconded by Miles Hellberg)

An election is now required. The three nominees with the highest number of votes will join sitting member Tom MacFarlane as the 2026/27 Executive Committee.

Voting

Voting will be conducted online, with those eligible sent a link via email (or post if there is no email on file). These will be sent out via ElectionNZ on Tuesday 21 April 2026, with the closing date of 12 noon Tuesday 5 May 2026.

Eligible voters are:

- Those that own deer and have paid a subscription to NZDFA (Full or Life member);
- Those who are an elected member of NZDFA; or
- Those who have paid venison or velvet levies to Deer Industry New Zealand.

Please check your spam folder if you believe you are eligible and haven't received an email. If you do not receive voting papers, it is because we don't have the above information on file for you, or the email address we have

Nomination Results for the 2026 Industry Leadership Positions

NZDFA Executive Committee Positions

Four nominations were received for the two vacancies created by the retirement by rotation of current members, Evan Potter and Karen Middelberg, and one vacancy created by mid-term retirement of Mark McCoard. The nominees are:

- Austin Garden, Otago (nominated by Glen Harrex, seconded by John Scurr)

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for you is outdated. [Contact us](#) if you wish to update your eligibility.

NZDFA Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) Positions

Two nominations were received for the two vacancies created by the retirement by rotation of current members, Dave Lawrence and William Oliver. Those nominations are now declared elected unopposed:

- Dave Lawrence, Southland (nominated by John Somerville, seconded by Cam Nelson)
- William Oliver, Waipa (nominated by Ian Walker, seconded by John Acland)

The two nominees will join sitting members Andrew Peters and Donald Whyte, alongside the Executive Committee, as the 2026/27 Selection and Appointments Panel.

NZDFA-Appointed DINZ Board Director Positions

One nomination was received for the vacancy created by the retirement by rotation of current member, Patrick Boyd. The nominee is:

- Patrick Boyd, South Canterbury/North Otago (nominated by David Stevens, seconded by Kelly Bennett)

The nominee will be interviewed by the Selections and Appointment Panel on 9 or 10 June (date to be confirmed), and if selected will join the DINZ Board on 1 July 2025.

NZDFA Executive Committee Candidate Statements

Austin Garden

My name is Austin Garden, and I am seeking election to the New Zealand Deer Farmers Association Executive Committee. The NZDFA plays an essential role in advocating for and representing deer farmers and I would like to help support this. I would like to promote and a resilient, profitable, and sustainable industry and build on the fantastic work that has been done over the last few years. The NZDFA has a clear vision and goals which I support and would like to contribute towards advancing these for the benefit of the industry.

Richard Greer

My name is Richard Greer, along with my wife Kylie and two sons we farm Sunnyside Station in Western Southland. We operate a large-scale and diverse farming business, wintering around 3,000 deer, 7,000 sheep, and 550 cattle. We also run an on-farm fishing and hunting lodge, combining agriculture with tourism.

I am passionate about the deer industry, which plays a significant role in our farming operation. I was a founding member of the original Southland Advance Party and have recently completed a term on the board of the Alliance Group cooperative. Through this role, I gained valuable governance, strategic, and industry-level experience, which I am keen to give back to the sector.

The deer industry is a small but vital part of New Zealand agriculture. To remain strong,

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we must retain existing farmers while actively encouraging new entrants. Ongoing upskilling, from grassroots farming through to governance, is essential for the future success of our industry.

Grant Hasse

Grant Hasse, passionate deer farmer and Canterbury West Coast NZDFA member.

I am standing as candidate for the NZDFA Executive Committee, where all farmers can utilize my skills and know I will advocate for them with the future viability and direction of the industry.

I have built a results-based reputation working with DINZ and NZDFA on industry initiatives, while also challenging the status quo, providing solutions with alternative views to consider. I have also organised Next Generation 2023 and assist Lincoln University and Ag ITO in providing a greater understanding of deer farming.

Pre-agricultural employment includes financial, credit, and casino management, an agricultural career change provided me with an amazing opportunity to work with and learn from farmers, veterinarians, and other agricultural specialists.

Cheers, Grant

Evan Potter

It has been a privilege serving on the NZDFA Executive Committee for the past two years and upholding its core value of grassroots advocacy. The NZDFA champions, the farmers' voice, ensuring those perspectives help shape industry decisions and initiatives

that support the success of deer farming for all stakeholders.

Alongside my wife Linda, we run a mixed livestock operation in Central Hawkes Bay with a focus on velvet production. We are committed for the long term and continue to invest in an innovative, nimble and forward-thinking industry.

Remaining connected to the grassroots ensures awareness of current concerns and aspirations. While my collaborative nature and ability to think critically allow clear and direct communication of key messaging.

I remain committed to the NZDFA's core values, and passionate about the industry creating opportunities for farmers to thrive. By strengthening communication and representation, we can ensure a resilient, forward-looking future for all.

Cheers, Evan

NZDFA Selection and Appointments Panel Candidate Statements

Dave Lawrence

I have served one term on SAP: That has made me aware of the importance of continuity and stability in the SAP, hence my seeking a second term.

My involvement in the industry extends over 40 years. The industry has always held appeal for innovative people who have created an industry that punches well above its weight.

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A lifetime of involvement in the industry has been based on what is good for the industry - not “what is in it for me”.

My involvement across a broad spectrum of the industry positions me well to represent you on the SAP:

- Deer veterinary practice and deer farming;
- Auditor of the velvet removal programme since its inception;
- Development of the first deer specific parasite drench registered for deer;
- Facilitating an AP and being a farmer member of one;
- Life member and past President of the NZ Elk & Wapiti Society;
- Long standing member of the DEERSelect Reference Group;
- Industry appointment on the Research Advisory Panel.

William Oliver

I am William Oliver; I have served four years on the SAP and ask for your support for another term. I farm 2500 deer: velvet and venison.

I bring experience in appointment and review of directors and understand from serving on the DINZ board, the balance, and capabilities important to the success of our industry. Farmer voice vs specific skills.

The deer industry needs DINZ to be a high performing Industry Good Body. From experience I believe the SAP is a key component of this performance.

NZ agriculture and farmers are facing more challenges than ever before, Government policy, access to markets, credible food safety standards and sustainable production.

It is important for DINZ’s future success to have directors with capability and experience to Govern our industry giving purpose and vision for the DINZ team.

I bring both experience and capability which will add value to the SAP.

A useful refresher on deer parasites

If you’re looking to revisit parasite management to protect weaners at a time when they are most susceptible, there’s a valuable deer health webinar recording worth keeping on hand. Recorded last July, this session remains highly relevant, with practical discussion that directly reflects the questions and challenges farmers are dealing with on farm.

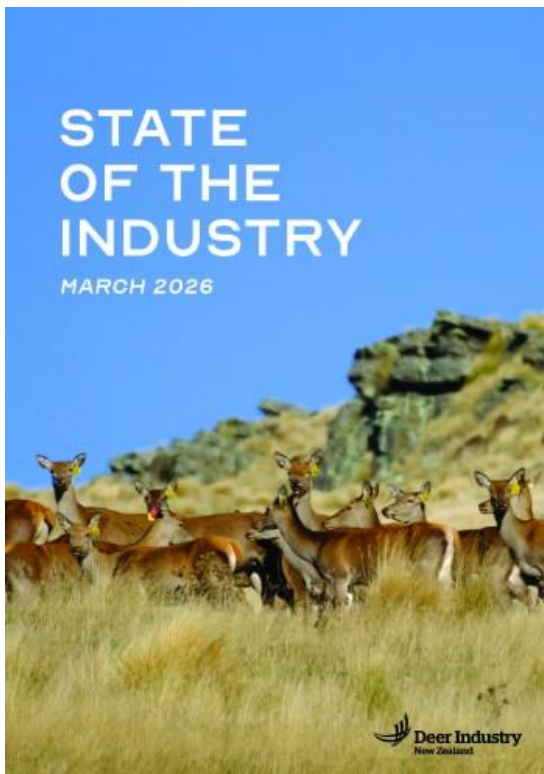
The webinar features Wormwise programme lead and vet Ginny Dodunski, joined by South Island vet Lorna Humm, and includes a strong farmer Q&A component. Topics covered include parasite lifecycles and seasonal risk periods through to drench use, resistance, and management tools that can be applied across different deer systems. The live questions from farmers help ground the discussion in real-world experience, with clear answers and explanation from the experts.

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If you're reviewing your parasite programme, managing weaners through autumn, or wanting to sense check current practices, this recording is a useful, practical resource.

[Watch the webinar recording here >>](#)

State of the Industry report: Checking the pulse of the deer sector



If you missed our inaugural State of the Industry report in the March DINZ eNews, now's a good time to catch up. Developed to give farmers a clear, practical snapshot of where the New Zealand deer industry stands today, the report pulls together market signals, on-farm trends, and

wider industry insights to help inform planning and decision-making.

The report covers key developments in venison and velvet markets, productivity indicators, cost pressures, and offshore demand, while focusing on what these trends mean at the farmgate. Rather than just presenting data, it puts the numbers into context, highlighting the opportunities and challenges facing deer farmers.

[Read the report here >>](#)

This is the first report of its kind produced by DINZ and marks the start of biannual updates designed to support better on-farm conversations and business decisions. As the format evolves, we're keen to ensure it reflects what farmers find most useful.

DINZ welcomes feedback on the report, including suggestions for future data or topics you'd like to see included. Feedback can be sent to the DINZ Communications Manager

at cameron.frecklington@deernz.org.

Noticeboard

Farm plan clock ticking in Southland

Certified Farm Environmental Management Plans (FEMPs) are required in Southland, by the end of May, as part of the Southland Water and Land Plan. These plans are based on government freshwater requirements, plus some rules that are specific to the region. The

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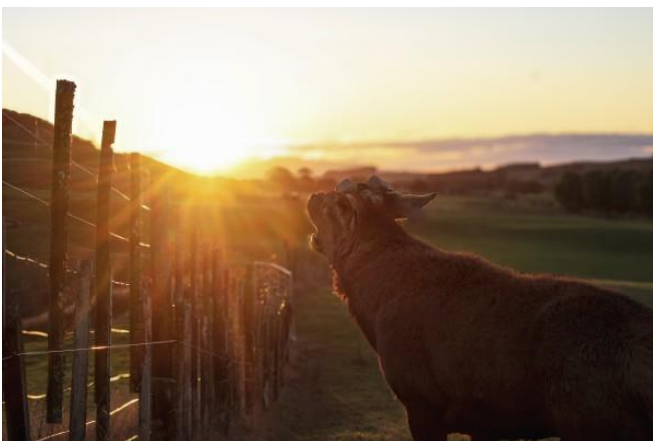
rules apply to all livestock farms over 20 hectares.

If your farm in Southland it is your responsibility to finalise your plan and engage a farm plan certifier to 'certify' your plan before it is submitted to Environment Southland (ES).

ES has developed a number of resources to help farmers create and update their own plan. These can be found on www.es.govt.nz (search for "farm plans").

Alternatively, you can engage a consultant to help you draw-up a plan. A list of approved certifiers can be found on the ES website.

MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition



2025 winner: Leeza-Marie Pratt - Sunset roar

It's time to get snapping again! Gather up those great shots you have buried, or head out on the farm with your camera and enter the MSD Animal Health/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition.

Entries close 5:00pm, 28 April 2026

[See the event page for more details >>](#)

Job interest

Enora

Enora is based in Winton and looking for work on a deer or elk farm. Enora has a BTS in Animal Production from France, with good knowledge in animal health, nutrition and farm management (cattle, sheep and pigs), along with hands-on experience from farm work and internships.

Enora also has practical experience working with animals, including sled dogs in different countries where I was responsible for their daily care and management.

Since arriving in New Zealand, Enora has been working on farms to gain local experience:

- beef farm in Bruce Bay (stock handling, fencing, calf care)
- sheep farm during harvest (auger work, animal care, fencing)

I'm hard-working, used to physical outdoor work, and very keen to get into the deer industry.

Enora has a vehicle, a Working Holiday visa, IRD number and NZ bank account and is happy to send through a more detailed CV.

Contact Enora on enora.pascault@gmail.com

Sachet Nepali

Sachet is from Nepal and is interested in learning deer farming and modern agriculture in New Zealand. Sachet is keen know if there

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is any volunteer or training opportunities for international learners.

After learning, Sachet and team plan to shoot videos and share knowledge with local farmers in Nepal to support agricultural development.

Contact Sachet
on sachetnepali70@gmail.com

Dane Brewer, Sussex, England

I am looking for work as part of a working holiday, with deer farming in mind. I currently work as a Maintenance Manager managing a small team for a contractor providing landscape and facilities maintenance services to the UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), with my role being aimed at the rural estate. My works include track and access works, tree safety and forestry works, firing range maintenance, estate inspections, and project management when required. I am engaged daily with a wide range of stakeholders from members of the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (DIO) soldiers, members of the public, and local authorities.

I have experience working with livestock, mainly cattle, particularly during my time working in Austria, and sheep at my family's smallholding. I have some limited experience with park deer, having assisted in a small number of culls on deer parks, and a deer move, capturing a small herd of fallow bucks to be removed from the park.

I have good work ethic and enjoy very much working with animals, I have done a fair bit of

fencing, mainly stock fencing in a previous role, and like to keep my hand in when the opportunity arises. I have experience in vegetation control, manually, chemically and with machinery as well as tractor driving. I would consider myself very much part of whatever team I find myself part of, and I am easy to get along with, according to feedback from people I have worked with.

In my personal life, I am a keen outdoorsman, having been bought my first air rifle at 13, and continuing shotgun and rifle sports, including pest and predator control through lamping foxes and rabbits to decoying pigeons and deer stalking. I have also completed two nationally recognised deer stalking qualifications. I ski in the winter in Austria, and enjoy taking myself on motorcycle trips, both camping and longer travels across Europe, I aim this year to ride down to the toe of Italy and back.

Contact Dane Brewer
on danebrewer@hotmail.com

Taofeek Lawal

Hello,

I am an experienced Farm Manager and Plant Science professional currently seeking a sponsorship opportunity with an Accredited Employer in New Zealand's primary sector. With a WES-Certified degree and a career built on sustainable crop and livestock management, I am eager to contribute to the New Zealand agricultural industry.

Key Qualifications for your vacancies:

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Technical Expertise: I hold a B.Agric in Plant Science and have extensive experience in crop health, animal breeding, and sustainable farm planning.

Leadership & Supervision: I have spent years managing commercial farm operations, overseeing production cycles for livestock and arable crops while managing local labour teams.

Logistics & Supply Chain: My current role as a Logistics Officer has sharpened my skills in stock level management, quality control, and transport efficiency.

I am specifically seeking an Accredited Employer to facilitate a work visa and am prepared to relocate to New Zealand immediately upon securing a role. I am looking for a partner organization that values long-term growth and technical expertise.

Contact Taofeek
on kenneylawal25@gmail.com | +234-8142380022

Joke of the month

Two Aussies were standing at the base of a flagpole, looking up.

A blonde walks by and asked them what they were doing and Gazza replied, "We're supposed to be finding the height of this flagpole, but we don't have a ladder."

The blonde took out an adjustable spanner from her bag, loosened a few bolts and laid the flagpole down.

She got a tape measure out of her pocket, took a few measurements, and announced that it was 18 feet 6 inches.

Then, she walked off.

Gazza said to Bazza, "Isn't that just like a blonde! We need the bloody height, and she gives us the length."

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Don't miss this opportunity to get noticed. Contact us today to book your spot!

Events

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

- [Your Farm. Your Power.](#) - 13 April, Southland
- [Maximizing Deer Farming](#) - CWC - 13 April, Canterbury
- [Matawai Deer Park Field Day](#) - 22 April, Gisborne
- [Freshwater Farm Planning workshop](#) - 22 April, Canterbury
- [The Big Tick Day Out](#) - 24 April, Cambridge
- [MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition](#) - Entries close 28 April

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- [Deer Industry Conference 2026](#) - 13 May, Palmerston North
- [Next Generation Programme 2026](#) - 6/7 August, Waikato

Visit the deernz.org website to view information about these events.