

2023 Deer Farmers Environmental Awards



Ministry for Primary Industries
Manatū Ahu Matua



2023 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards Judging Panel

Well, another two years have flown by, and I have just had the pleasure of being part of the 4-person judging crew for the 13th year of the Deer Farmers Environmental Awards. These awards started in 2001 as a yearly event, then moved to a biennial event in 2006.

Grant Charteris

Awards Judge and winner of the 2021 Premier Elworthy Award

Judging:

First of all, what a daunting task! Judging six very different and complex farming operations covering a large part of New Zealand was never going to be an easy task. The variation of these businesses makes this job hard, but it is also what makes it an absolute pleasure. Years of fine tuning has bought about a robust and detailed line of questioning that extracts the appropriate details that enable these businesses to be judged on an even keel. I was extremely impressed by the level of time and debate after visiting each entrant to ensure that all areas were covered and no stone was left unturned.

Our journey started in the south heading from Christchurch to the rolling hills of Pleasant Point, from there we travelled to Hurunui, North Canterbury. Our next leg was down to Wanaka to the shores of Lake Hawea. With the South Island leg complete we travelled to Palmerston North, and from there to the outskirts of Feilding. A big drive with great company and banter (I'm pretty sure the crew were pleased to hop out of a vehicle after 4.5 hours with me), we found ourselves in the Cambridge area to finish off an amazing trip that had left us with breathtaking views, great foresight, innovation, outstanding production results and an overwhelming feeling that we work within an industry of amazing leaders with a strong focus on positive environmental outcomes as a major driver of their farming businesses.

Our Entrants:

This year we had six entrants that covered most aspects of the Deer Industry along with other enterprises that complemented their strengths and overall business performance. They varied in size, production systems, ownership structures, topography and environmental challenges. However, all entrants were extremely passionate and proud of what they were achieving. All entrants had a strong environmental focus to all aspects of their business which molded seamlessly with their production results and animal health and welfare.

As I've said before: There is no such thing as a completed plan when it comes to these awards as we work with an ever-changing environment. Our entrants this year clearly understood and demonstrated the various and unique environmental challenges they faced and what they had done, were doing, but equally important, what their ongoing plan was to mitigate and optimize the impact they were having as a result of their footprint on their land.

It was a privilege to view varying stages of environmental enhancement, tailored to their properties and resources. The level of innovation and willingness to try something new was to be commended and I have to admit I spent a large part of the time considering how I would implement some of these ideas into my own system! This is why I love our industry, as we are generally not only innovators, but we are also willing to share that knowledge with our peers and that's a pretty special thing to be a part of.

Not surprisingly there were a few themes that evolved with all six entrants:

- High level of stock performance
- A strong customer focus
- High level of engagement with other deer farmers
- A practical approach when mitigating environmental outcomes
- A realisation that there was still work to be done but have a plan to achieve this
- Environmental sustainability was a key driver in all decisions
- A huge sense of pride in their journey to date

Thanks to the entrants and sponsors:

Congratulations to all of the entrants, thank you for allowing us inside your farming business. Irrespective of the outcomes, we thank you for putting your names forward. It takes leaders such as yourselves to allow our whole industry to learn and be inspired to strive to do the best we can. The high calibre of the entrants made our job hard, and the points difference was miniscule. All entrants were extremely interested in the judges' feedback. This to me portrays the passion and willingness to improve even more. With four judges with different areas of expertise, it allows four fresh sets of eyes to critic your business, so hopefully we can deliver some helpful advice and guidance, although I have to admit this was the toughest area in some respects due to the entrants' in-depth knowledge of not only their production systems but also the challenges that they have already recognized and have a plan for moving forward.

Thank you to our continued support from our sponsors that allow these awards to grow and progress, it has been an absolute pleasure to be a part of.



From left to right:

Sara Elmes

Environmental Stewardship Manager, Deer Industry New Zealand

Janet Gregory (Lead Judge)

Project Lead South Island, Extension Services, MPI

Grant Charteris

Owner of Forest Road Farm and winner of 2021 Deer Farmers' Premier Elworthy Award

Lindsay Fung

Producer Manager, Deer Industry New Zealand

Richard and Sarah Burdon

Glen Dene Station, Otago



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Premier Award: The Elworthy Environmental Award



Glen Dene is a 2,989 hectare high-country station on the shores of Lake Hawea. It comprises three integrated businesses: A camping ground; a sheep, beef and deer farm; and trophy hunting. It has a typical central Otago climate – hot, dry summers and cold winters and lies between 360 m above sea level on its Lake Hawea boundary, rising to 1,386 m above sea level.

Generally the land consists of moderate to very steep hill country although the southern 200 ha is comprised of flat to undulating terraces. Annual rainfall ranges from 700 mm at low altitudes with the higher points of the property receiving up to 1,750 mm per annum.

Richard and Sarah are third generation farmers, taking over management of the station in 2001. The station has over 220 km of deer fencing and shelterbelts, pine blocks, extensive amenity plantings around the house block, and large areas of native vegetation in the hill country, including regenerating beech forest. Stream health assessments across the station indicate that the water quality of streams flowing through Glen Dene Station operational area is generally of good or excellent standard.

What impressed the judges

- A well-integrated, complex operation of three businesses.
- Customer focus and sustainability are central values throughout all the businesses.
- High levels of contribution to, and interaction with the local community.
- Early adoption of carbon credits in the voluntary market.
- A well-run farming operation that is constantly in the public gaze.
- A commercial business with a high standard of biosecurity and abundant native biodiversity.

Judges' suggestions

- Fine tune policies to allow better feeding of hinds and mating management to increase reproductive performance.
- Have a plan for adverse events.
- Look at upgrading shed and yard facilities if increasing velvet production.



First LightTM



First Light Award

For total commitment to farming sustainably with a strong customer focus





Lyal Cullen and Marion Neill

Springdale, South Canterbury



NZ Landcare Trust Award

For excellence in sustainable deer farming through actions on the ground



What impressed the judges

- Extensive shelterbelts, woodlots and retired riparian (native) areas – willing to trial a range of species to see what works best.
- In-depth knowledge of deer wintering systems and what works on the farm.
- The use of rocks to fill in wallow sites, sediment barriers and wide buffers fenced off.
- Long-term water quality testing showing minimal impact from the farm and using results to inform actions.

Judges' suggestions

- Document tree plantings in the farm plan.
- Possible tweaks in cattle trading system to minimise priority classes of stock at pinch periods.
- Back your own knowledge and put a sediment dam at the front!





Scott Hassall
Iffley, North Canterbury



Duncan New Zealand Ltd Award

For vision and innovation whilst mastering a demanding environment



What impressed the judges

- High level of innovation.
- Prioritisation of environmental projects with practical outcomes (and managing environmental impacts accordingly).
- In-depth knowledge of the whole farming system.
- Silage waste was distributed over paddocks.
- Cut and carry of kale crops to maximise feed utilisation/amount of stock being fed, while minimising paddock damage from high stock density.

Judges' suggestions

- Consider using plant protectors around new native plantings.
- Consider an action plan with timelines for future projects
- Regular water testing to show trends over time.





Mike Humphrey
Green Hill, Manawatu



NZDFA Next Generation Award

*For outstanding performance across environmental, financial,
and social aspects of the business*



What impressed the judges

- The balance of retired native gullies and production forestry blocks – a good fit for the land.
- Well thought-out plan and business objectives.
- Commitment to education, community and outreach.
- Looking for an equity partner of the right fit, with a view to succession.
- Great knowledge of trading systems to utilise the feed curve.

Judges' suggestions

- Review and update the Farm Environment Plan.
- Consider retiring some critical source areas from deer.



Simone Hoskin

Five Hawks Farm, Manawatu



Gallagher Technology and Innovation Award

For excellent utilisation of farming technologies to improve farm productivity and manage resources



What impressed the judges

- Pasture feed management allowing the deer to express their genetic potential.
- Added biosecurity benefit with the boundary lane.
- Relaxed, healthy deer due to sound stock management of multiple stock classes in small paddocks.

Judges' suggestions

- Look at bringing in another person to help with velvetting as the herd grows to provide flexibility in timing.
- Use of DNA to maximise hind performance for velvet replacements.





Ross and Monique Moore

The Abarta Company Ltd, Waikato



The Streamlands Export Ltd Award

For leading, environmentally sustainable velvet farming



The Moore family left to right: 15 yr old Aengus, Ross, Monique and 12 yr old Oscar with their dogs.

What impressed the judges

- Willing to think outside the box regarding feed and nutrient inputs.
- Use of sediment traps to capture and mitigate critical source areas through native plantings and detention dams.
- Established network of native tree plantings on steeper faces adding to biodiversity habitat.
- Trialing tree lucerne and Japanese willow as fodder crops to utilise less productive area after pine removal.
- Excellent facilities (shed) with great consideration of animal welfare/stock-flow and hygiene.

Judges' suggestions

- Continue to review stock numbers and classes as more areas are retired from grazing, particularly look at paddock size vs mob size.
- Consider undertaking stream and soil health assessments.



Further information

The Deer Industry Environmental Management Code of Practice 2018 is a comprehensive guide to good management practices at farm level. The code is available free to all deer farmers. To request a copy, email info@deernz.org or call the Deer Industry New Zealand office on 04 473 4500. Alternatively the code and other general resources are available and can be downloaded from the DINZ website: www.deernz.org/deerhub/farm-environment.

Several Deer Fact information sheets focus on the environment. Titles include:

- Fence pacing
- Farm environment plans
- Protecting waterways
- Nutrient management
- Intensive winter feeding
- Making native bush sing
- Trees for deer farms
- Planning for winter.

These can be downloaded from www.deernz.org/deer-facts

For further information on the Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards contact Rebecca Norling: rebecca.norling@deernz.org

Elworthy Award: Previous winners

2001: Victor and Margaret Clark, Reporoa

2002: Brian and Brigitte Richards, Kaipara

2003: Wayne and Tricia Aspin, Manukau

2004: George and Mary Scott, Southland

2006: Murray Neutz and Keith Natrass, Geraldine

2008: Grant and Andrea Cochrane, Balclutha

2010: Tim and Trish Smith, Te Anau

2012: Brian and Jacquie Wellington, Te Awamutu

2014/15: George Williams and Laura Billings, Hawke's Bay

2017: Steve, Judy and Chris Borland, and Bob Sharp, Oparau

2019: Evan and Linda Potter, Hawke's Bay

2021: Grant and Sally Charteris, Hawkes Bay

A big thank you to the 2023 Environmental Award sponsors:



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