

The Deer Farming Environmental Plan

26 November 2019

Purpose:

The wellbeing of people, the ecosystem, the farming system and all livestock on deer farms.

Vision:

The New Zealand deer industry is recognised by its customers and community as demonstrating sound environmental stewardship and sustainable land management.

There are recognised exemplars of people who care and can demonstrate results.

Background and Context:

The Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) Regulations, 2004 state that a function of DINZ is “to promote and assist the development of the deer industry in New Zealand”. This broad ambit has since been more clearly enunciated within the DINZ 2015-2020 Strategy that includes two key goals:

- *Premium positioning of NZ deer products:* A common theme for positioning of products is the “natural” and “clean” New Zealand farming system. While not directly identifying good environmental management as a core component of this farming system, there is a need to provide some justification or definition of “natural” and “clean”.
- *Sustainable on-farm value creation:* Improving productivity is highly dependent upon maintaining costs of production at acceptable levels and the ability to do this on an ongoing basis while operating within societal expectations (with respect to environmental impact).

A third goal of the current five-year strategy, “a cohesive and respected industry” will evolve as a consequence of both regulatory environmental compliance, and deer farming generally operating to, or exceeding, societal expectations.

External to the deer industry, widespread land use change over the last 20-30 years has seen an increase in intensive farming (particularly dairy and associated dairy support) as well as a concurrent deterioration in water quality in many of the country’s waterways (as identified by the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment in 2013). This has resulted in both central government and regional councils focusing on regulatory measures to maintain or improve waterways.

More broadly, other environmental issues that have potential to impact on pastoral farming include adaptation to climate change and minimising greenhouse gas emissions, and consideration of protection and enhancement of indigenous biodiversity on private land.

Within the primary sector and specifically amongst the pastoral industries, the deer industry has been an early advocate for good environmental management through the provision of information and recognition of farmers that show high levels of environmental stewardship. However increasing regulatory pressure and potential value in the promotion of good environmental management within the industry now provides an opportunity to develop a strategic approach to help achieve the above industry goals and leverage off the earlier and prescient industry activity.

This Environmental Plan is focused at the farm level and has little connection to other industry areas such as transport, processing and marketing. The Environmental Plan should be reviewed periodically to determine if progress towards the goals is satisfactory, or if the goals should be changed and if the scope should extend beyond the farm gate.

Environmental Issues In-Scope:

Policy advocacy and on-farm management that contributes to:

- Catchment-scale freshwater quality outcomes (as determined by community values);
- Resilient and durable deer farming that seeks to minimise greenhouse gas emissions and adapts to climate change impacts;
- Maintaining or enhancing indigenous biodiversity.
- Soil health and conservation.

Environmental Issues Not Currently In-Scope:

Off-farm management that contributes to:

- Catchment-scale freshwater quality outcomes (as determined by community values);
- An adaptable and durable New Zealand deer industry that seeks to minimise greenhouse gas emissions and adapts to climate change impacts.

Goals:

1. *Doing the right thing:*

Deer farmers understand and demonstrate continuous improvement in their environmental stewardship activity that supports people, the ecosystem and livestock wellbeing.

2. *People recognise we are doing the right thing:*

The deer industry is recognised and respected by stakeholders because of the evidence it provides that it is doing the right thing for people, the ecosystem and livestock wellbeing, to generate new opportunities valued by the industry.

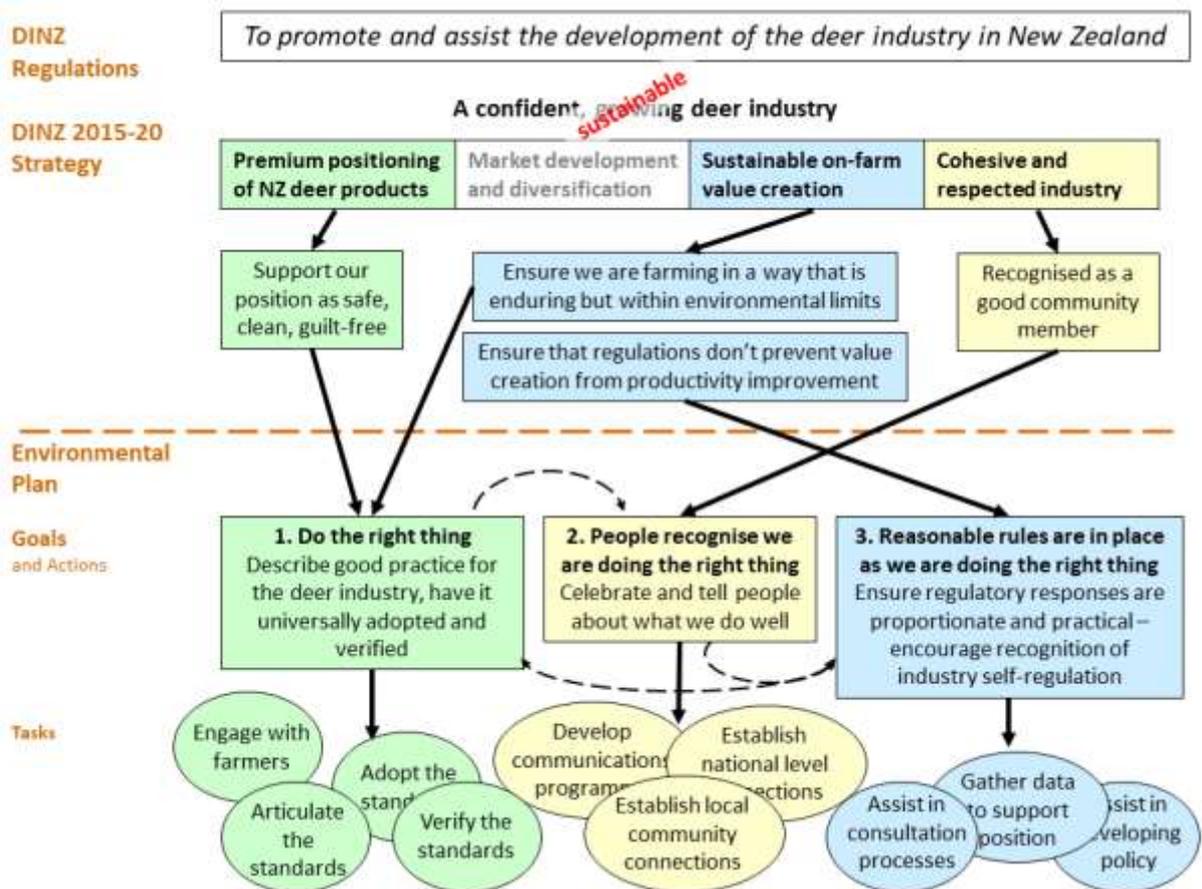
3. *Reasonable rules are in place as we are doing the right thing:*

Societal rules relating to people, the ecosystem and livestock wellbeing fairly reflect practicality, affordability and efficacy for the deer industry, and support the industry's continuous improvement.

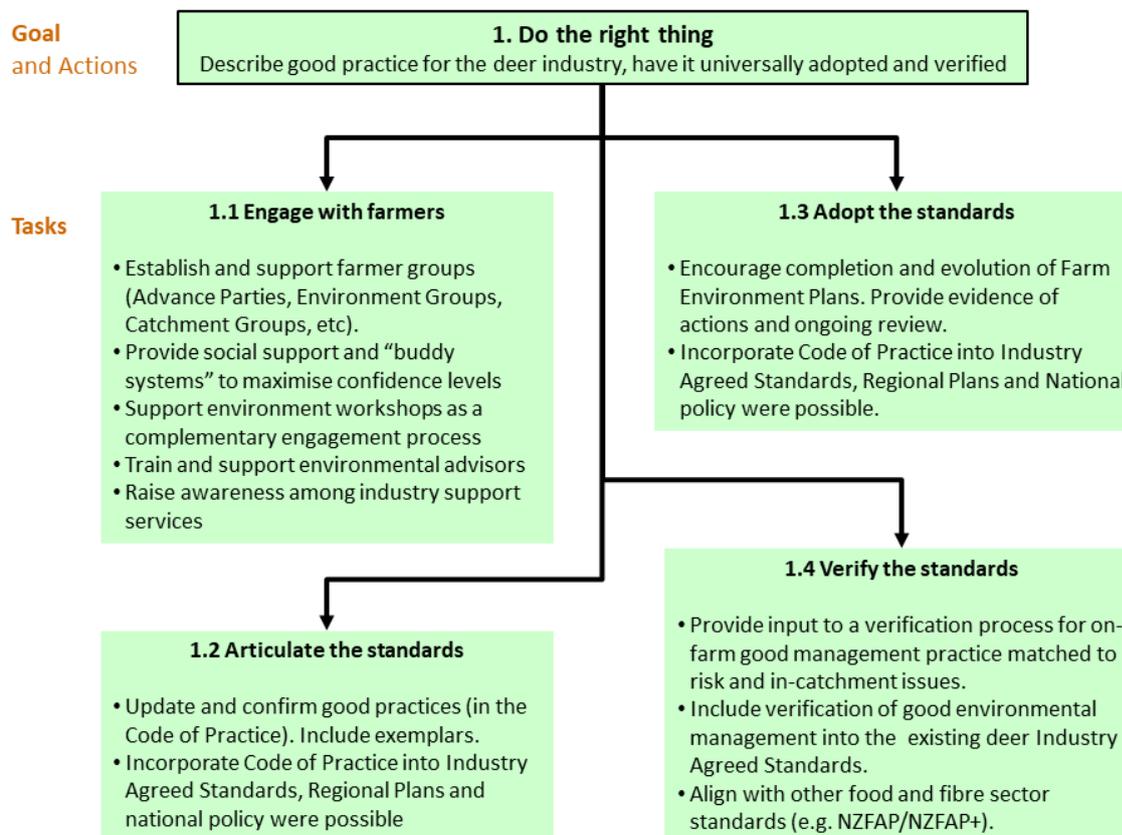
An operating principle of this plan to help achieve these goals is that the deer industry where possible supports through investment in research and extension:

- Development/implementation of new technology that aids environmental management.
- New deer farming systems that provide practical, affordable and effective options for deer farmers to meet environmental regulations (e.g. stock exclusion from waterways).

How these goals are achieved is described in more detail below. A diagram of the proposed plan showing its relationship with the DINZ 2015-2020 Strategy and actions to achieve the goals of the Environmental Plan is provided:



Goal 1: Do the right thing



What does this mean for deer farmers?

Deer farmers develop a culture for innovation and understand and demonstrate continuous improvement in their stewardship activity that supports people, the ecosystem and livestock wellbeing.

How will this be achieved?

Describe good practice for the deer industry, have it universally adopted and verified (on-farm practice change).

Support deer farmers to meet environmental obligations as set by regional councils or central government through provision of tools, advisory services and peer-to-peer activities.

Encourage simple verification methods such as photographs.

Outcomes from doing the right thing

- Deer farmers retain control over decision making and prioritising of on-farm activity but are equally aware of catchment limitations.
- Past and ongoing good management practices are acknowledged by regulators and the wider community.

This is important because:

- Because we care! And it is important to our reputation and responsibility to maintain and enhance the natural environment as custodians for future generations.
- Unless farmers have direct experience of understanding catchment issues and prioritising actions within their control, meeting policy requirements will be viewed as a compliance exercise with limited uptake and risk of increasingly stringent regulation.
- Shared experiences and extension activity reduces barriers to adoption (more peer learning and pressure).

DINZ responsibilities:

- Ongoing support for Beef + Lamb New Zealand (B+LNZ) workshops for farm planning and/or nutrient management.
- Continue and enhance the strong relationship the industry has with NZ Landcare Trust. Develop relationships with other support services
- Increased resourcing and undertaking extension activities that target deer farmer groups or support deer farmers in catchment community groups. Identification and support for key regional deer industry “leaders” that can maintain local community momentum.
- Increased support to help develop environmental capability for deer farm consultants, nutrient management advisors.
- Validating current good practices and developing measurement tools that are fit for purpose (e.g. refinement of OVERSEER to reflect deer behaviour and management techniques).
- Raising awareness among industry support services (such as financiers and rural contractors) to ensure access to funds and provision of services that are in line with good management practice (e.g. Spreadmark certified fertiliser operators).
- Identification of technology or information gaps that could be filled through further work and investment.
- Provide industry input to, or ownership of, a verification process for on-farm (environmental) good management practice matched to on-farm environmental risk and in-catchment issue.

Farmer/NZDFA responsibilities:

- Complete a Farm Environment Plan (FEP) and be able to demonstrate ongoing activity and review described in the FEP.
- Share experiences and extension activity to reduce barriers to adoption (more peer learning and pressure).
- Identification of technology or information gaps that could be filled through further work and investment. .

Success will look like:

- All deer farmers have completed farm plans to the level required by regional councils with clear indicators of efficacy or improvements in environmental impacts and evidence of ongoing review.
- Completed FEPs provide marketing benefits to our consumers and premium product claims with assurance of ethical and responsible production systems.
- Deer farmers have active local support networks to support environmentally good practice, with key people as contacts and advocates for local activity.

Goal 2: People recognise we are doing the right thing

Goal and Actions

2. People recognise we are doing the right thing
Celebrate and tell people about what we do well

Tasks

2.1 Develop communications programme

- Identify target audiences and what they want to understand about deer farming.
- Use P2P material; mainstream media; social media

2.2 Establish local community connections

- Community groups and NGO relationships.
- Regional Councils / zone committees

2.3 Establish national level connections

- Central government, Environment Interest Groups

What does this mean for deer farmers?

- Deer farmers are **recognised** and, where possible, **rewarded** for demonstrating good environmental management practices.
- Farmers are happy to continue to do the right thing through ongoing investment and growth of the business.

How will this be achieved?

- Understanding target audience segments and prioritising efforts required for each segment.
- Proactive industry communication to **external** outlets – both traditional and social media. Marketers are equipped with stories that resonate with clients – consumers and/or the New Zealand general public.
- Farmers establishing local community connections and opening their farms to community activities.
- Industry engagement with government, business and environmental interests at the national level, including farm visits and co-design/collaboration with ongoing good farming practice identification and promotion.

Outcomes from recognition of doing the right thing

- Deer farmers retain control over decision making and prioritising of on-farm activity but are equally aware of catchment limitations.
- Past and ongoing good management practices are acknowledged by regulators and the wider community.
- Premium product positioning is enhanced.

This is important because:

- Demonstration of good practice will be a significant benefit for deer farming to continue to have “freedom to operate” conditions both through regulatory frameworks (regional plans or national regulations/accords) as well as social/community expectations. In the absence of any verification the industry may be subject to increased public or advocacy group scrutiny.
- The ability to verify practice change towards good management practice allows continuous improvement to be recognised and incorporated into farm planning.
- Over and above a licence for “freedom to operate” there may be additional value for deer farmers through:
 - Identification of increased efficiencies;
 - access to finance to undertake good management practice improvements due to recognition of resilience and low risk to business.

DINZ responsibilities:

- Develop capability in deer farm systems knowledge for verifiers, tools and processes to report on progress on actions and outcomes.
- Seek acceptance by regulators of the robustness and transparency of the verification process. Ideally there would also be acceptance by non-farming stakeholders.
- Develop a communications plan.

Farmer/NZDFA responsibilities:

- Be willing to demonstrate on-farm practices to non-industry interests and discuss environmental risks and concerns.
- Support farmer actions and provide farmer support if required, but also be committed to identifying poor environmental practices

Success will look like:

- Deer farming is accepted as a permitted activity due to high levels of compliance for good management practice and demonstrated low environmental impact.
- A confident industry that people want to be associated with (e.g. trainees, new farmers, more customers).
- More people take an interest in the deer industry and farmer environmental stewardship activity. Deer farmers have public pride and are willing to share their

responses to societal and legislative expectations.

- Ongoing policy development for environmental management has sufficient evidence from deer farming to form policy that is proportionate in impact and does not unfairly penalise deer farming relative to other land uses.
- Customers of New Zealand deer products recognise the industry standard and value the actions taken by farmers.

Goal 3: Reasonable rules are in place as we are doing the right thing

Goal and Actions

3. Reasonable rules are in place as we are doing the right thing
Ensure regulatory responses are proportionate and practical – encourage recognition of industry self-regulation

Tasks

3.1 Assist in consultation processes

- Regional Plans
- National Policy Statements
- Industry Agreed Standards
- Environmental Agreements

3.2 Gather data to support position

- DEEResearch funded work.
- Sustainable Food and Fibre Futures Community Projects
- KPIs from DIEGs and APs

3.3 Assist in policy development

- Central government
- Regional councils

What does this mean for deer farmers?

Policy development has incorporated feedback from the deer industry and recognises and understands what can be reasonably and cost-effectively done on-farm to help achieve desired environmental policy outcomes.

Deer farmers are therefore encouraged to engage with regulators and the wider community to collaboratively work towards a shared set of outcomes. They also continue to invest in farming and the industry in general.

How will this be achieved?

- Farmer/NZDFA and DINZ coordinated response to regional policy development and national issues.
- Collaboration with other groups with shared interests or concerns (such as B+LNZ, farmer action groups, processors and marketers) in response to current and proposed policy
- NZDFA and DINZ establish ongoing relationships and dialogue with regulators to inform them of industry practices and contribute to early development of intended environmental policy.

Outcomes from having reasonable rules

- Deer farming remains as a sustainable and legitimate land use and is not disadvantaged in access to natural resources or constraints to farm.
- Deer farmers accept their role as contributors to improved environmental outcomes, regional economy revenue and a healthy, thriving community.

This is important because:

- Workable policies will help maintain deer farming as a viable land use, while costly policies will encourage farmers to exit the industry and alternative land uses will make it harder for new entrants.
- If policies are viewed as fair and reasonable there is less focus on efforts to redress balance and more on implementation of policies (i.e. more on-farm action).

DINZ responsibilities:

- Continuation of current DINZ resourcing to review regional and national policy development and inform affected NZDFA branches.
- Continuation of collaboration and information sharing with other primary industry organisations.
- Increased activity to provide information that allows policy development to reflect the realities of deer farming (such as additional research, farm case studies, and trialling new technologies).
- Increased resourcing to allow policy makers and planners to speak directly to deer farmers and observe deer farming first hand.

Farmer/NZDFA responsibilities:

- Proactively inform DINZ of regional or local policy planning activities and contribute to feedback and involvement in planning processes.
- Identify local deer farmers to engage in regional council processes (such as catchment groups, pest control, zone committees, biodiversity, civil defence and emergency response).
- Invite regional council planning staff to industry/farmer activities (such as Advance Party regional workshops, Environment Group field days).

Success will look like:

- Rules are relevant and achievable.
- Deer farming remains as a viable, complementary land use in all catchments that are suitable for pastoral farming.
- Deer farmers recognise the role of NZDFA and DINZ in achieving workable environmental policies.
- Deer farmers are actively involved in regional council initiatives and are sought out by

council planners for advice.

- Regulators (central and regional) are engaged with farmers, *on farm*, and seek industry input and advice.