

Deer Industry News

Joint promotions gain momentum

Rural Professionals

DIVERSE GROUP OF PROFESSIONALS GET DOWN TO DEER FARMING BUSINESS

Supplementary Questions

THINK ABOUT THE END USE FOR YOUR SUPPLEMENT WHEN PLANNING FEED NEEDS

Southland on Show

SOUTHLAND ENVIRONMENT AP SHOWS OFF FARM PROJECTS AND WINTER HOUSING SYSTEMS



FOREST ROAD FARM
— NZ RED DEER —



THREE YEAR OLD VELVET SIRE AND YEARLING HIND SALE — Fourth on Farm Auction —

Friday 11 December 2020 | 12.30pm | Viewing from 11.30am

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Forbes 8.6kg @ 3yr • Brexit 10.7kg @ 4yr • Omar 10.0kg @ 5yr • Halo 8.0kg SAP @ 4yr (early)

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These are out of Cruse hinds by all the top Cruse sires.

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Deer Industry News

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND AND THE NEW ZEALAND
DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

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Cover: Duncan New Zealand's new brand ambassador Dougal Allen fires up the barbie, with venison, for a video shoot in West Wanaka. See joint promotion article, p4.

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EDITOR Phil Stewart, Words & Pictures

LAYOUT Rory Stewart

Opportunity to be part of a great team

How time flies. At our most recent meeting I was surprised to realise that after five years on the DINZ board, I'm currently the longest-serving director. It's been a privilege and as my second three-year term enters the home straight it is timely to reflect on the role and what it offers.



William Oliver.

I HIT THE ground running in August 2015 with farmer meetings, then signing off on P2P budgets and steering group appointments. Our job now was to drive the strategy.

The farm side of P2P focused on Advance Parties and farmers learning from farmers about day-to-day issues as well as longer-term strategic decisions informed by farm data, breeding values and DeerPRO information among much else.

Groups were also set up to develop Farm Environment Plans, reflecting the growing importance of farm environmental performance, public perceptions, protecting our right to farm and the impact of future legislation. The board acknowledged the risks and the need to be proactive, leading a reasoned response.

Velvet has been another focus. With production growing by nearly 60 percent to 850 tonnes over the past 5 years, we have had to not only protect our market, but also to grow New Zealand deer velvet's reputation for safety, quality and welfare. The Regulated Control Scheme and new VelTrak system are central parts of this.

The P2P venison programmes for North America and Europe were having great success until the Covid-19 crisis compromised the strategy of silver service restaurants and high-end retail. Our marketers have been working hard to find new channels to connect to the ultimate consumer, while at DINZ we have had to make decisions in an environment full of unknowns. Could processing plants operate and how? Which markets could we access? DINZ has developed a new initiative to support companies growing new market strategies.

Our DINZ executive team are working hard with agencies such as MFAT and MPI in our export markets on issues like market access and food safety. It has been stressful but satisfying to be part of meeting these challenges and I congratulate the processor/marketers for their ability to adapt to our new reality. Venison schedules are not where we need them to be, but I am confident in the work being done for the future.

R&D has been another big priority for the board. Work in areas such as greenhouse gas mitigation, food safety and traceability are investments in our long-term future. It isn't always very visible, but R&D accounts for a large part of our budget and we get the leverage of AgResearch funding. We have a new agreement on how our relationship functions so we can make quicker, more agile decisions on research, concentrating on better outcomes.

The best part of being a DINZ director is the teamwork. I cannot speak highly enough of our executive team – their dedication and passion is remarkable.

The DINZ board is a highly functional and skilled team, passionate and engaged.

I've enjoyed my time on the board immensely, but won't stand again when my term ends in 2021. Renewal is always healthy and I have other goals to achieve. There is great talent amongst the next generation of deer farmers – people who can bring insight from the front lines to help navigate our industry's future. It's one of the best jobs in industry-good governance. Next year it could be you in the role! ■

- William Oliver, DINZ Board

- For more information about the DINZ board appointment process see p19

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Venison joint promotion helping in Covid-affected markets

by Ali Spencer, Deer Industry News writer

The investment of \$500,000 into new joint promotion activities helping venison marketers respond to Covid-19 (reported in the August/September 2020 *Deer Industry News*) came to a close for this year at the end of September.

TRADITIONALLY, IN A normal trading environment, the joint promotion (JP) funding has encouraged activity offshore with partners in a three-way split, with DINZ reimbursing costs to the venison exporter and its import partner, DINZ venison market services manager Nick Taylor explains.

“But, it’s challenging times for everyone this year, so it was decided to forgo the three-way split and just share the costs 50:50 with the New Zealand exporter.”

Rules were also relaxed around the usual focus on innovative activity, enabling venison companies to be more flexible in providing tactical support for their in-market partners. Applications, however, still needed to meet the criteria for premium positioning and/or market diversification, says Taylor.

The funding was drawn on by all five venison exporters for a wide range of sales and promotion activities including social media video development, online promotion, attendance at foodservice fairs and new product development.

Deer Industry News has been talking to the five venison exporters to find out what they have been using JP funding for. They say that while it’s too early for results, the joint promotion fund has been helping them to target their customers in markets around the world.

Mountain River Venison: Focus on foodservice

Mountain River Venison (MRV) has used JP funding to continue its focus on the foodservice sector.

Alongside DINZ, MRV has continued its support for Swedish Instagram influencer Henning Kvick, who has a large following and works for the exporter’s distributor Menigo. Kvick’s new book, *Meat Cravings – Less is More*, includes a chapter on New Zealand venison production, following up his visit two years ago.

“These things are quite expensive and hard to quantify, but

continued on page 6

Forrester ‘spikers’ add value to schedule

IN TODAY’S COVID-19 climate it’s more important than ever to achieve the maximin monetary potential out of your yearlings before they are sent to the works.

- Add \$1.50 to your venison schedule through early/heavy spiker velvet
- High-yielding carcass weights 58% LW-Carcass
- Replacement hinds carry the essential traits for an ideal breeding herd

What a change we have seen from the previous season’s venison schedule prices to this season. We now find ourselves back in a very short killing window in order to achieve a half decent price with the tail falling away very quickly. We must do everything in our control as farmers to get these yearlings away as early as possible to get the best price for them. The question is, what is the perfect equation for getting maximum returns? One very important factor to consider is spiker velvet. SP1 is worth approx. \$180/kg. If you can average a modest 0.5kg of SP1 velvet, this equates to \$90 before he even leaves the farm. Put simply, \$90 of velvet divided by 60kg carcass = \$1.50 to your venison schedule price. Wow! Now that makes a difference.*

Peel Forest Estate identified the importance of having heavy

spiker velvet as one of their breeding objectives and now these Forresters are as good as any top velvettors in the country. It’s fair to say they have achieved their objectives by getting 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th at the SCNO competition and 2nd and 3rd at the Nationals in 2019.

The key take-home message that Peel Forest is receiving from clients using the Forresters are they are getting very high yielding LW-carcass statistics from their abattoir of 58% (industry average is 55%) with the R1 stags averaging over 60kg on the hook all before Christmas. They have increased their spiker velvet yield substantially, averaging \$91/head before they even leave the farm; their FORRESTER sires are cutting up to 11kg as older stags; the sire stags are extremely easy to handle in the yards with the temperament passing on to their progeny; the offspring have deep, muscular body structure; replacement hinds are highly productive and very hardy, and are continually getting in calf early.

*To download a simple spreadsheet showing the impact of spiker velvet and different slaughter dates on returns:

<https://bit.ly/3d9FAjp> ■

- Article supplied



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- VENISON GENETICS -

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Viewing 12pm, Auction 1pm

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Joint promotion: continued



In a long-standing collaboration, Kvick's Instagram account regularly showcases recipes featuring Mountain River Venison.



Swedish meat enthusiast Henning Kvick's new book, *Meat Cravings – Less is More* includes a section on Mountain River Venison. You can follow him on Instagram @kvicken71.

to reach such a huge audience, it is actually quite effective," says MRV marketing manager John Sadler, adding the JP funding is important for this type of targeted activity for a niche product.

"It raises the profile of New Zealand venison, alongside our other activity, with people coming to ask if they can use our products because they've seen it on Instagram. The investment is tied to sales and that's what we're looking for in the end."

For the United States, MRV has jointly funded a new video introducing a New Zealand deer farmer and his investment in animal welfare and environmental matters. This year it's David Morgan of Raincliff Station (see <http://bit.ly/MRV-Raincliff>). This will be shown to foodservice distributor D'Artagnan's 50-strong sales force, opening customers' doors in the new season campaign. It replaces the annual visit from a MRV farmer to the market, which cannot take place this year for obvious reasons.

"The story is enduring," says Sadler, noting the benefits will last for years. "We can't expect results immediately. It's about investing

in the development of the brand, imagery and philosophy around our business."

JP funding is also supporting ongoing work to develop the MRV brand in China by in-market partner Hunter McGregor, who is introducing NZ venison to high-end chefs there.

But the foodservice market is getting smaller as Covid takes it down, Sadler warns.

"The retail sector is growing as the product is cheaper, currently. But we need to keep our eye on the ball, as the industry targets higher value. Foodservice will go back up again, post-Covid, which we have to keep in mind in our marketing development as well."

Local market for Duncan NZ

Duncan Venison has been using JP funding to support its focus on the home market for New Zealand venison, explains the company's market & logistics manager, Jared Sandri.

The company's diversification into the online retail market in the wake of the Covid pandemic is off to a great start, he says. "Covid-19 meant we had to take a different tack and swiftly develop retail supply capability, along with effective direct-to-consumer channels."

DINZ has played an important part in this process by re-aligning JP funding criteria with these new market development initiatives.

"Support from the JP funding gave us the confidence to have a go and explore new opportunities, which has been very successful. Quick reaction from DINZ certainly helped the marketing sector with exploration and development of these new opportunities," he says.

The funding supported Duncan NZ's strategy to explore the domestic market through e-commerce and home delivery, and also appoint a new brand ambassador, he explains.

Chris Duncan, Duncan NZ's e-commerce and digital marketing coordinator, says the company's entrance into the domestic market had an early boost through its newly developed relationships with local online retailers. This enabled access to wider databases with increased sales through those platforms.

Duncan NZ's overlying goal is to "capture demand for venison as a delicious, healthy protein option, for individuals and families alike".

The exporter has experienced good engagement on social media, but discovered email promotion campaigns are its most effective form of promotion – particularly with its customers in the 35–70 age bracket.

"We also found the single-source nature of venison is a strong selling point, particularly in the health and wellness sector, so that was where we came up with the idea of bringing on board a new brand ambassador, Dougal Allan, which has been made possible via the co-funding," he says.

Allan will bring a focus on the importance of good nutrition to other athletes, but as a father with two young children, also to other young families, says Duncan. A video was shot in mid-September, with snippets to be used in social media campaigns – particularly over the next few months as New Zealand moves into the summer barbecue season – and will remain relevant over the next couple of years.



Duncan NZ's new venison ambassador, adventure athlete Dougal Allan.

"We are showing consumers it's not just a high-end foodservice item: it's a good protein source and a genuine option for families who want a weekly or fortnightly venison meal."

Perfectly timed for Alliance

The shift in JP funding has come at a perfect time for Alliance Group. It has been able to support two projects, says venison sales manager Katrina Allan.

"Furthermore, when the market is challenging, this sort of collaboration and support is vital. It's a perfect time for us to support chefs and focus on one of our products."

"It's allowed us to build on a different market sector in a year where it's really important to diversify. Refocusing our attention on New Zealand consumers was important this year."

Allan says she is encouraged with the results to date.

First up was a chefs' Instagram competition in North America for Pure South Venison and Te Mana Lamb. Coordinated by Chefs Roll, with over 700,000 followers worldwide, the competition asked executive chefs languishing in Covid-19 lockdown to come up with new venison dishes. There were over 500 entries, with the top 40 venison entrants sent a sample of Pure South Venison to transform their vision into a completed dish. The winning venison dish, from Florida chef Tristen Epps, featured tenderloin.

Another jointly funded project was a series of "NZ Venison Surprise" videos for Alliance's German in-market partner Alexander Eyckeler GMBH. Filmed in stop-motion to make the recipes seem simple and easy to prepare for the home cook, the videos highlight different, lighter dishes for venison consumers, during the traditional game season, explains Allan.

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Or visit: www.alliance.co.nz
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for more information.

Joint promotion: continued



One of Pure South's new lighter venison recipes for the German game season: venison teriyaki with sesame, served with sushi rice and mango salad.



Best Venison Dish for the Chefs Roll competition: Inspired by a deer foraging, Florida chef Tristen Epps' winning dish paired NZ Venison tenderloin crepinette with suya boar sausage, "hangi" roasted roots and wild shoots and thistles, wild shoots and herbs emulsion. Epps won a custom blade from @NoraKnives. @eppsandflows. Competition results can be viewed on Instagram at hashtags #pure_south_north_america, #chefs roll and #PureSouthNZ Chefcontest.

"This is especially important this coming season. Covid-19 is making dining out less appealing for some, so they will be looking to prepare their usual game season dishes at home."

The videos focus on light dishes with fresh, readily available ingredients bringing the summer campaign into winter. They will be supported with postcards instore, including QR codes, to take consumers straight to recipes. All will be launched soon in a campaign running from October through to December.

Consumers will also be invited to post photos of their created dishes. "It will be interesting to see what they come up with," says Allan.

SFF: Ongoing support to grow venison awareness at retail crucial

The United States is one market where Silver Fern Farms (SFF) has also been promoting the key attributes of New Zealand's naturally lean, pasture-raised venison. The exporter has used JP funding to support one of its key projects, the US east coast launch of two new venison products in its retail-ready range of six, grass-fed red meat products.

Promotions have included in-store tastings, public relations, mailers and social media posts on both of SFF's US-specific

Instagram and Facebook pages, which has created further interest with "conscious consumers". These people are looking for quality meat and want to understand where it has come from and ensure it has been raised sustainably and humanely.

In-store sales have gone better than expected, the company's country manager USA/North America, Matt Luxton reports: "We are looking at expanding the number of stores the range is available in on the east coast and launching on the west coast," he says.

For SFF, having the JP funds available has enabled a faster activation of retail expansion into large US chains.

"We have been able to promote a niche protein through to a targeted end consumer who we know is interested in venison. By actively promoting this range, we have been able to get further chains interested," he says, adding that currently one customer – a very large retailer – wants the venison category to rival the substantial bison category in their stores.



Packs of SFF's retail-ready New Zealand venison is on US retail shelves, with help from the joint promotion fund.

Ongoing support to ensure increasing awareness of venison for the targeted consumer is crucial in making sure SFF has a long-term, viable product in the United States, says Luxton.

"Relationships are built with large retailers by ensuring the products we sell in their markets are successful and that we bring innovation to the category buyer with whom we are dealing. Future funding will ensure that these important markets are serviced to a level that will ensure success."

First Light: Bringing consumers closer to the product

First Light Foods has been continuing its focus to bring consumers closer to its online and retail products, in three projects helped by the JP fund.

For First Light general manager venison sales and supply Toni Frost, the JP fund is no different from how it's been all along: "It's a pool of money, over and above business as usual, which enables companies to ask 'what is the next step for venison; where do we need to go that's different?' These types of funds are very helpful to grow venison markets."

The company has seen good traction from its JP activity, she says.

The direct-to-market and online model has always been key for the company, she explains. Last November, it started on the first jointly funded project focusing on its New Zealand website and online sales.

"Our Steak Club already exists in the United States, selling Wagyu beef and venison to a select group of members, and this year, we've introduced a version here in New Zealand. We were fortunate enough to have done that pre-Covid."

Starting in November, it took until March to fine tune and have it running well, which fortunately was good timing for Covid-19 lockdowns.

"Uptake has increased significantly and it has been really positive."

The company also used JP funding to launch its added-value retail range in November last year, supported with instore demos with farmers and a promotional campaign. More new products are in the pipeline to be added later this year.

"That's been really successful too and complements everything else First Light is doing around retail," says Frost. "It's a good way of introducing venison in a non-threatening way, making it less of a risk by starting at the lower end, and aligning with familiar products consumers know how to cook on a daily basis. We're seeing some good traction and growth through that," says Frost.

In the United States, the company is working along the same lines as previously with staff on the west coast and a new

retail product range is planned to be launched there, including meatballs. It is a work in progress, with a new meatball machine bought and ready to start work before the end of this year. It will be underpinned with a solid marketing campaign, supported by the JP fund.

"It's not the converted we want to get eating venison, it's a wider customer base. We want to convert people who aren't used to eating venison and saying, hey look at this really good healthy, nutritious, tender and mild product." ■



New venison products are to join First Light Foods' added-value range in supermarkets later this year.

Attention North Island Velvet Growers

North Island Velvet Competition 2020 going ahead!

Napier Sailing Club – Saturday 21 November 2020

It is with great excitement the NIVC committee has decided to proceed with the 2020 NIVC. We all need something to look forward to after the ups and downs of late!

We have a new class this year: **Class 8 Heavy Weight 10+kg Non Traditional** sponsored by Tradedeer so hold on to that big head and enter to win. Guidelines and rules to follow.

Rest assured we have a "Plan B" if COVID-19 dictates we cannot host a large event. The venue is designed for social distancing and worst case we will still run the competition with less than 10 people (judges and NIVC committee) and do an online presentation.

As you begin to cut this season's velvet, please consider keeping back your best heads to support and enter them in this year's North Island Velvet and Hard Antler Competition. The awards dinner is on **Saturday 21 November**.

Viewing is from 5.00 – 5.45pm at the Napier Sailing Club with the Awards Dinner commencing at 6.45pm. More details to follow closer to this date.

Velvet and hard antler needs to be in your local collector's hands for delivery to the competition by **Wednesday 18 November 2020** no later than 5.00pm. See local collection contacts below.

Make sure you put aside some velvet to enter. Entry forms and details to follow. Entry forms will be posted to all previous entrants.

Contacts

If you haven't entered before and would like an entry form or other details, please contact Craig Hocken or look on the DINZ webpage and download a pdf for printing or a Word document for emailing to enter.

Craig Hocken: 06 328 7702 or email c.hocken@farmside.co.nz

Local coordinators for velvet and hard antler collection

Central Regions (Wellington, Manawatu, Wanganui, Taihape and Taranaki)

Craig Hocken: 06 328 7702, 0274 576 388,
c.hocken@farmside.co.nz

Hawke's Bay, Gisborne, Wairarapa

Grant Charteris: 06 856 5747, 027 230 8531,
grantcharteris@gmail.com

Te Awamutu/Waikato-King Country

Ross Moore: 07 888 1449, 022 0599 005,
rmmoore@farmside.co.nz

Sponsors

Thank you to **PGG Wrightson, Provelco and CK Imports** for being our main sponsors again this year. Good luck to all entrants and we hope you can make the awards dinner for a great entertaining night out. Dinner tickets are \$65.00 per person and can only be booked via an entry form or directly with Craig Hocken email: c.hocken@farmside.co.nz ■

Free trades training opportunities

The Government's new Free Trades Training package will pay the fees of all Primary ITO apprenticeships and training across the majority of its other programmes. Primary ITO is encouraging farmers to take advantage of the opportunities this offers.

ADDITIONALLY, THE GOVERNMENT has announced an Apprenticeship Boost, which promises to pay employers up to \$16,000 to either employ or retain apprentices across two years.

Free Trades Training is open until the end of 2022 and all of Primary ITO's broad sectors are covered – agriculture, horticulture, primary services and others.

Primary ITO says industries have been crying out for skilled people and these initiatives provide an opportunity to bring in those people and train them, without having to pay fees.

"At a time when we all want to see people transitioning from other industries to primary sector careers, this should be an enormous incentive," says Nigel Philpott, CEO of Primary ITO.

Where you or your staff are enrolled in one of Primary ITO's programmes, the Government will pay any training and assessment fees that would previously have been payable to Primary ITO. This may also cover where you've already paid for training that started as far back as July 2019 – Free Trades Training will pay for the part of the programme that takes place after 1 July 2020.

Primary ITO is strongly encouraging employers to take advantage of Free Trades Training and to look into how to access money from Work and Income for the Apprenticeship Boost. That

will pay employers \$1,000/month for first-year apprentices and \$500/month for apprentices for most of their second year.

For further information visit: www.primaryito.ac.nz/grow-your-career/government-support-programme, call 0800 20 80 20, or email info@primaryito.ac.nz

- Article supplied

Tick advice

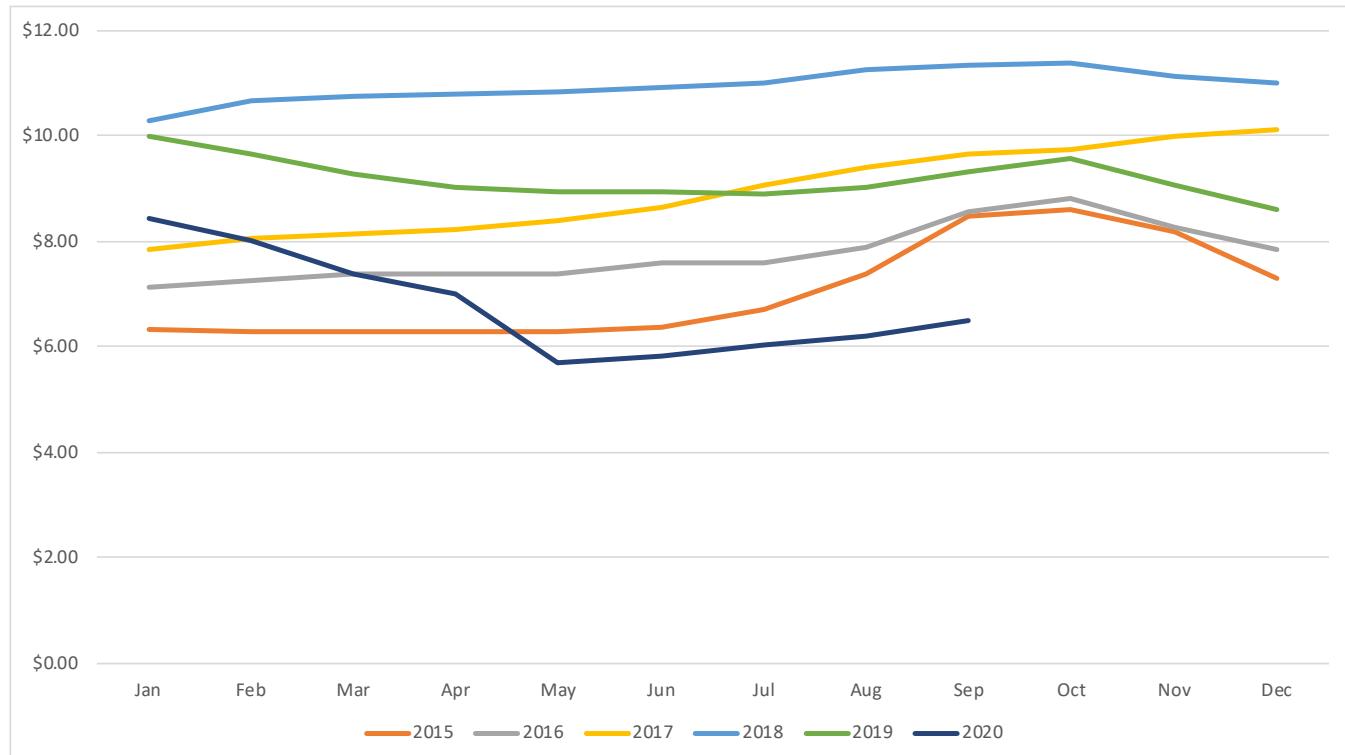
A P2P REGIONAL workshop on tick control hosted by the Waikato DFA on 1 October attracted good numbers of farmers.

AgResearch parasitologist Dave Leathwick, recently retired scientist Geoff Asher and deer farmer and vet Ian Scott gave an excellent overview of the tick issue. Gut parasites and facial eczema – another big animal health challenge in warmer areas such as Waikato – were also covered.

See the December *Deer Industry News* for more (not in this issue as reported in the 9 October DINZ eNews).

If you're keen for information on tick control in the meantime, see the Deer Fact on:
www.deernz.org/sites/dinz/files/DeerFact_Ticks_Web.pdf

Venison market update



National published schedule: 2015–2020 (monthly average) (2020 – company adjustments still to be made).



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Taiwan catches Korean velvet wave

The time may have come for New Zealand velvet producers to pay more attention to the affluent island nation of Taiwan, writes **Seamus Harris**, DINZ contracted China representative.

A PANDEMIC RESPONSE plan drawn up after the SARS outbreak of 2002–2004 has seen Taiwan weather Covid-19 far better than most. With few Covid cases and minimal lockdown measures, the glitzy malls of Taipei's East District remain bustling – though with plenty of facemasks being worn. Actually, by highlighting health, Covid-19 may have opened new opportunities for New Zealand velvet in this market of nearly 24 million consumers.

Taiwanese will pay a premium for well-marketed, high-quality products with strong provenance. While not exactly a health product, Scotch whisky offers an example. Taiwan passes over the cheaper blends to lead the world in per-capita consumption of premium single malts. Given the right promotion, deer products could one day enjoy similar success.

Taiwanese are familiar with the health benefits of deer. Gelatin slabs made from hard antler and medicinal herbs are a popular traditional health food. Velvet remains more niche, with more enthusiastic consumers buying fresh from the farm, while others buy dried and sliced velvet from traditional pharmacies. Given a lack of modern retail offerings from major brands, there is room for innovative velvet formats with premium positioning to do well.

The Korea Ginseng Corporation (KGC) clearly sees potential in Taiwan. In late August, KGC held a Taiwan launch event for Cheon-Nok Everytime. Already successful in Korea, Cheon-Nok Everytime is a convenient “tear-and-go” health drink based on Korean ginseng and New Zealand velvet. The official launch was held in Taipei's newest high-end mall, the Far Eastern Department Store Sinyi. A representative from KGC introduced Cheon-Nok Everytime to media, then a high-profile doctor from a chain of oriental medicine clinics gave further detail on the health functions of ginseng and deer velvet.

I spoke briefly about the special characteristics of New Zealand deer velvet, and fielded media questions on quality standards, traceability and animal welfare. Plenty of journalists attended, with Taiwan's major newspapers and television channels all covering the story.

KGC is supporting the launch with a major advertising campaign featuring Korean actor Lee Min-Ho. Most famous as the star of various action movies, Lee is also a singer and model. To give a gauge of Lee's fame for those unfamiliar with Korean cinema, Lee is also the first Korean celebrity to be modelled in wax by Madame Tussauds. Clearly, KGC is pushing hard to capitalise on Taiwan's appetite for the latest Korean trends. The endorsement from Lee is sure to draw attention from younger consumers – women and men.

The product launch was preceded by several weeks of seeding local media with non-branded stories on the health benefits and provenance of both Korean ginseng and New Zealand velvet.

Informative in tone, these stories positioned velvet as an immunity booster (topical given Covid) and as suited to both females and males. New Zealand origin was associated with free-range farming, high quality and regulatory protections for animal welfare. The subsequent branded advertisements, targeting affluent middle-aged executive types, suggest that Cheon-Nok Everytime can provide an energy boost, maintain health, regulate sleep and enhance immune function.

Much is made of New Zealand and Korea's strict regulatory standards – hence the provenance and superior quality of the velvet and ginseng ingredients. This includes detail on how New Zealand velvet enters a cold chain immediately after harvest to ensure maximum freshness. Traditional beliefs about velvet also feature, with an emphasis on how the product uses the entire velvet stick and hence includes the prized tip slices.

Cheon-Nok Everytime is the first premium velvet product to be launched in Taiwan by a major international health food brand. KGC has 30 dedicated stores around Taiwan, in addition to online channels, seasonal promotional displays in convenience stores, and so on. At around TWD4600 (NZD240) for 30 single-dose packs, KGC is targeting the premium end of the health food market. The initial response seems enthusiastic and Taiwan may be entering an era where new groups of consumers are persuaded to give New Zealand velvet a try. ■



Korean actor Lee Min-Ho features in the marketing material for Cheon-Nok Everytime.

Velvet season uncertain, but positives remain

by Ali Spencer, Deer Industry News writer

While consumption in Asia is looking stable for velvet, it won't all be plain sailing. Exporters will be planning their next moves carefully, weighing all the facts.



Rhys Griffiths: "The Covid world is a very uncertain place."

"All while our production and industry continues to steadily grow," he says.

He urged the exporters to look at the facts, pointing to current trends. These include the launch of 20 new health products containing velvet – some from new companies – already in South Korea this year alone.

"Seventeen are actively promoting their New Zealand velvet content because of our high reputation for safety," he says, adding they build on the sizeable suite of contemporary food products containing velvet launched over recent years.

According to New Zealand government reports in the market, New Zealand health food products are doing really well, says Griffiths.

"One of the comments I've heard from officials is not to underestimate New Zealand's standing in this crazy Covid world. People are looking to us as doing really well with Covid to date, and as a nice healthy place and environment."

Velvet's main use is for anti-fatigue and immune function and it has been in good demand. Business for retail and for Oriental Medicine Doctors' practices is now rebounding and adding to online sales, which continues to do really well, Griffiths reports.

"I haven't seen any evidence to suggest velvet consumption will be down; in fact the signs are it will probably increase," he says.

THIS TIME OF year always sees a certain amount of posturing in market, notes DINZ market manager Rhys Griffiths.

"While some commodity traders profit from volatility, our key partners for New Zealand velvet want stability," he says.

Speaking to New Zealand velvet exporters recently, he reprised the daunting challenges ahead for the sector's 2021 planning. These include: the economic impact of Covid-19; the new rules imposed on processing and exporting both here in New Zealand and overseas as a consequence of the viral disease; and logistics, particularly with air-freight.

This will be helped by the Korea–NZ free trade agreement (FTA), which will see tariffs for New Zealand processed velvet to that market reduce to 10.6 percent from 1 January 2021 and drop further to 9.3 percent from 1 January 2022.

"This is nearly half what frozen is and what other countries need to pay, which means New Zealand has a pretty unique situation in that market, thanks to the favourable conditions negotiated in the FTA."

In addition, as far as Griffiths was aware at the time of writing, Russian velvet is not yet formally permitted to enter China. However, thanks to the efforts put in by New Zealand producers ensuring compliance with the Regulated Control Scheme (RCS), New Zealand velvet is giving it a favourable position.

Another market with significant potential is Taiwan, where KGC has just launched a new velvet product (see page 12).

While Griffiths can confidently say consumption might be up, he cautions that importer confidence could be an issue this year, which may possibly reflect in the prices received.

"Producing velvet here is all very well, but getting it into our consumers' hands via different processors and distributors will be tricky.

"There's no doubt about it, the Covid world is a very uncertain place and there's a bit of a confidence issue in terms of our supply chain. That affects our ability to predict where the prices will go this season," he says. ■



The premium zone at one of New Origin's stores in Korea. The facts show Korean retail store sales have rebounded, along with OMD practice sales.

New marketing material ready for China

by Ali Spencer, Deer Industry News writer

A new Chinese language website, posters for the WeChat social media platform, new recipes and point-of-sale material are all ready for use to encourage chefs in China to try New Zealand venison.



Chef Shen was one of the six chefs working with DINZ on recipe development.

IT'S ALL PART of the Passion2Profit market diversification programme and is important support for venison exporters approaching chefs in China now that restaurants in the market have reopened for business, says DINZ venison marketing manager Nick Taylor.

The newly launched website – www.nzvenison.cn – targets chefs with appealing images, recipes and other information about how the farm-raised animals have been produced in New Zealand. The recipes and images have also been used in a series of six posters for WeChat, China's ubiquitous social media platform, rolling social media, personal web pages and financial transactions into one package.

"WeChat is where Chinese people do most of their business," explains Taylor. "You can post things on a wall, but also have a web page where you can post things of interest to you. It is the primary method of communication for businesses in China. The new WeChat posters, which incorporate a QR code to take you directly to a website for further information, have been developed to make it easier for people selling New Zealand venison to talk to chefs there."

The posters and website also include new recipes developed earlier this year after DINZ worked with six chefs in Shanghai. The recipes also translated into English, appeal to Chinese tastes and show how venison can be incorporated into traditional restaurant menus. As suggested by the exporters' import partners, the chefs focused on the shank, neck and rump cuts.

While venison is not traditionally used in any of China's eight culinary styles, the chefs saw two – the Sichuan and Shangdon-Lu cuisines – as the best match for New Zealand farm-raised venison.

The work is also well timed, with a recent report from Rabobank pointing to new niche opportunities for animal protein in China, despite African swine fever and Covid-19.

New opportunities for animal proteins in China points to the ways China's animal protein market is changing and the opportunities opening up for proteins like beef – and by extension, venison.

Niche markets will be expanding and this will provide animal protein companies the opportunity to differentiate themselves by offering specific products to targeted markets, Rabobank's report concludes. Despite the slowing economy, the bank also expects the premiumisation trend to continue, which can only further benefit premium meats like venison.

Having these new dishes and recipes to share with customers will be important to help the venison exporters promote it in the market, says Taylor.

Activity already carried out by the venison marketing companies means some high-end restaurants are already familiar with the product and carry premium venison on their menus. There is also demand for cuts like venison shanks and ribs that are ideally suited to the slow-cooking styles that are a part of traditional Chinese cuisine.

养殖的鹿肉 和野生的鹿肉 是完全不同的

在新西兰,我们的鹿肉来自饲养的鹿,它们是在新西兰干净的牧场上
在现代农业技术下被饲养长大的。

2020年时,中国取缔了非法销售
野生动物肉的行为,这使人们对鹿
肉产生了困惑。6月4日,中华人
民共和国颁布了《人类食用许可动物
物种目录》,其中包括来自农场养
殖的马鹿肉,以及其他很多传统的
农场养殖类动物和家禽。



New Zealand Venison
新西兰草饲鹿肉

Details about how New Zealand venison
is raised on farms in New Zealand can be
accessed from the new China website via QR
codes on the new WeChat posters.

Rural professionals get the good oil on deer

by Phil Stewart, Deer Industry News Editor

If someone new is coming up your driveway to talk about your farm business, it's increasingly likely they've already had a good grounding in the deer industry. That's thanks to a popular series of deer industry workshops for rural professionals under the Passion2Profit programme. *Deer Industry News* tagged along to a recent workshop in Balclutha to see what they're learning – and quickly discovered the attendees are both interested and engaged. They're also put to work during the two days.



Attendees on the first day of the Rural Professionals workshop.

SINCE THE WORKSHOPS began in 2017 more than 300 people have been through the courses and more are planned as interest remains high. Attendees are from a wide range of professional backgrounds, including banking, accounting, farm consultancy, local government, MPI, vet practices, Primary ITO and animal health companies, along with fertiliser, seed, nutrition and other rural service companies.

The 20 or so attendees at workshop I attended in Balclutha represented a similar professional mix. The workshop, initially hosted at Clutha Vets, had to be shifted to a new venue for the second day after New Zealand went back up to Covid alert levels 2/3 late on the first evening. Well done to facilitator Lorna Humm, who quickly arranged an alternative venue on day 2 that allowed for better social distancing and meant the show could go on.

Initial discussion showed the value of having fresh sets of professional eyes on the industry, with some pertinent questions asked up front. (A summary of the answers from the DINZ staff on hand is in brackets.)

Does the deer industry have a growth strategy?

(Yes, we're keen to grow and diversify the customer base but we're wary of shorting new markets. Also there's been a big demographic

change – fewer deer farmers and farms, but the rise of a new, strongly committed generation.)

What about co-products – the prices look great!

(Yes, it's a valuable market but can be variable, as the petfood bubble showed. Velvet has evolved from an undifferentiated by-product of the venison industry into a valuable high-value product with strong NZ branding. The growth of the Asian economies has helped underpin growth in the velvet sector. NZ velvet has supplanted Russian product in Asian markets partly because of its quality and integrity. Healthy food is the big growth area and NZ velvet is well represented in the sector.)

Is there any science behind claims for efficacy of velvet products?

(Yes! Velvet is extensively researched in Korea, where it's actually harder to qualify in Oriental Medicine than as a Western medicine doctor.)

It's expensive to set up a deer farm – where will the capital for growth come from?

(The growth will mainly be in existing enterprises, where the deer

continued on page 16

Rural professionals: continued

component of a mixed livestock business is being increased by many, so growth is “in house” and incremental. A typical change might see deer stock units lifted from 5 percent to 15 percent in a sheep, beef and deer business. The growth in velvet is partly fuelling this, with the introduction of the Regulated Control Scheme and better genetics adding both value and volume. Any rise in the number of deer farmers is likely to be small. Canterbury and further south have taken over as the centre of the deer industry. An increase in use of wintering barns in the South is another feature – see article on p12 for more on wintering indoors.)

Farm tour: The Ranch

Attendees were given a detailed look at a deer farming enterprise, both on paper and on the ground when they were taken for a visit to The Ranch at nearby Awamangu. The 1650 hectare rolling/hill property is managed by Maurice and Renee Judson (members of the South Otago Advance Party) for owners David and Wicheanee Ivory.



Maurice Judson (4th from left) talks to visitors during their visit to The Ranch.

The deer breeding and finishing operation is a relatively small proportion of the enterprise (there are also 10,000 ewes, 3,000 hoggets and 220 beef cows) but with 750 mixed age hinds, it's still a decent sized part of the business. There are five full-time staff on the property but at certain times there can be a squeeze on labour, especially at tailing which coincides with the best time for getting yearling deer off to slaughter.

The rural professionals were supplied with copious data showing performance of the deer unit at The Ranch, and were quick to spot issues and potential.

The deer unit is on hill country with steep gullies. Maurice Judson said some waterways are fenced but water quality issues might affect any plans to expand the deer fenced area if regional council standards are to be met (a sediment dam may be required).

Breeding performance has been a focus for the property and in particular that of first fawners. Judson said he aims to get R2 hinds to 75–80 percent of their mature weight in time for their first mating, but others commented that as a result of genetic improvement the mature hind weights could well be creeping up, so the absolute weight targets might be going up too. “Once the hinds start looking down at you they are probably getting too big!” Judson acknowledged.

Another suggestion was to use older stags (2yo) rather than spikers over the first fawners, and also to keep the R2 hinds well away from the mixed age hinds, both for mating and fawning.

Judson is working on genetic improvement in the hind base, introducing superior genetics via AI to a proportion of the herd. About 140 replacement females are retained each year. This is being rewarded with steadily increasing average and top weights for male yearlings over the past 10 years. While droughts have crimped performance over the past couple of seasons, the overall trend is up.

Wapiti terminal sires have been used, but size and growth are now also achieved using Eastern genetics.

Reducing the gap between scanning and fawning percent (usually between 5–10 percent) was discussed as a potential area for increased productivity. Fawning environment has a clear impact on reproductive success. Weaning percentages from paddocks with better natural cover in gullies can be up to 10 percent better than in other paddocks. Judson said shelter belts are a mixed blessing. While they do provide needed shelter in adverse weather they also provide an opportunity for fawn losses.

Fawning spread was also discussed, with agreement that late fawns never catch up and are not worth the effort. Lorna Humm said the marginal cost of fetal ageing when hinds are scanned is quite small (about \$4 versus \$3.00–\$3.50) and is well worth the investment.

Health in the deer herd at The Ranch is generally good. Johne's has been an issue but good feeding and avoidance of stress have helped keep it at bay. That's also been the case with yersiniosis, although there was agreement that vaccination can still be prudent as a backup and Judson does vaccinate because the animals are in fairly big mobs.

Humm said all vaccinations are an insurance policy and noted that subclinical disease can still sap production even if there isn't an obvious outbreak with animal deaths. She added that for yersinia vaccination, it's important not to give the first of the two shots before 12 weeks of age, otherwise a third shot might be needed to secure immunity.

Judson uses the widely recommended drench combination of all three drench families but reverts to a white (BZ) drench closer to spring to avoid any withholding period issues.

Winter crops are important for the deer herd, as pasture growth shuts down for about 100 days in this cool and elevated environment. Judson said he gives the deer access to up to a half of a crop paddock in one go, because unlike other stock classes they will browse over an extended time and not guts it all at once as other stock classes tend to do.

Looking ahead, Judson said they are still very committed to supplying venison and will concentrate on improving R2 breeding performance by growing them out better. The AI programme to keep improving the genetic base will continue (one suggestion was to also shop for a range of breeding values including eye muscle area, rather than just growth). He's also keen to spread the risk away from the European game season and follow newer markets such as China.

Doing the numbers

The workshop returned to the warmth of indoors for day two, with sessions led by farm consultants Jansen Travis and Luke Palmer of



Hinds were making short work of this winter crop at The Ranch.

Tambo New Zealand Ltd.

An initial question for the rural professionals was how best to evaluate the performance of a deer system alongside others: per stock unit? per hectare? cents per kgDM? return on capital? There are many yardsticks. Jim Johnston, accountant for Wistaria Company (owners of The Ranch) said he likes to look at outputs, so focuses on returns per kg of meat produced, which can be lined up against returns from other stock classes. He provides clients with district averages to benchmark against, but admitted that this can be difficult in the case of deer if there isn't enough meaningful data available.

Maurice Judson said it's important to understand how a deer enterprise dovetails with the other operations. This required teasing out things like labour inputs, feed demand patterns, capital requirements, environmental fit and risks.

The professionals were advised about the places they can get good information from sources such as kill sheets and DeerPRO, as well as some benchmarking resources from DINZ. The former MAF Monitor Farm programme had been suspended but MPI has apparently committed to replacing this, which should help provide better reference material for professionals on deer.

Producer manager Tony Pearse said the economics of breeding and finishing needed to be well understood. "It's uneconomic to carry animals through a second winter, so you need to use feed and genetics carefully to make sure you hit that window in spring." Pearse said the December–January period is crucial to reaching these targets and in some cases a specialist finishing block might be needed. The cost of supplements at crucial times was another key part of the equation, he said.

Tambo's Luke Palmer took the attendees through a stock reconciliation exercise, something that is meat and drink to them but can be surprisingly tricky (for this agricultural journalist anyway). Palmer said there were many common errors made with reconciliations such as not ageing up properly or getting the wrong balance between opening and closing numbers. A visual timeline can help with the process, he said (see illustration).

A good stock reconciliation can also help with planning numbers of replacement hinds needed (see DINZ's Mate Allocation Calculator for a useful tool here: www.deernz.org/deer-hub/tools/genetics/mate-allocation-calculator).

continued on page 18

39th Annual National Velvet & Trophy Antler Awards

Tuesday 8 December 2020, Ascot Park, Invercargill



MC: Gerry Forde

Local identity and former Southland Spirit of the Nation Brand Manager



Entertainment:

"The Southern Man"
Denis Henderson
*Free bird, Glory Days, American Pie,
Moondance, Me & Bobby McGee + more*



Guest Speaker:

Rhys Griffiths
DINZ Manager, Markets
"New velvet products"

For entries & tickets:

Jane Campbell 027 347 8926 • Bruce Allan 027 824 5898

Rural professionals: continued

The rural professionals then moved into gross margin calculation, discussing their advantages (seeing the profitability of different enterprises) and also their limitations (they don't factor in fixed and indirect costs). Numbers were crunched for a deer enterprise, showing a reasonable margin.

For deer finishing there are a lot of factors at play, for example the extra income from spiker velvet and heavier carcass weights with later-killed stock to be balanced against extra feed costs. Also explored were some sensitivity analyses seeing what variations in weaner purchase and schedule prices do to returns. Again, deer returns stacked up pretty well against other stock classes.

Investing in deer

The group was taken through some of the cost implications of an investment in deer infrastructure and reminded that tighter requirements for waterway protection will mean more fencing than before and reticulated water if there's no access to streams. Fencing can cost between \$16–\$26/metre and a rule of thumb is for between 130m of fence per hectare for a 6ha paddock, up to 55m/ha for a 30ha paddock. A new deer shed could cost about \$180,000, with hydraulic crushes another big ticket item at about \$20,000. Requirements for high-quality rubber flooring, load bars and other technology should also be allowed for.

Prices for capital stock had come down recently, with in-fawn hinds

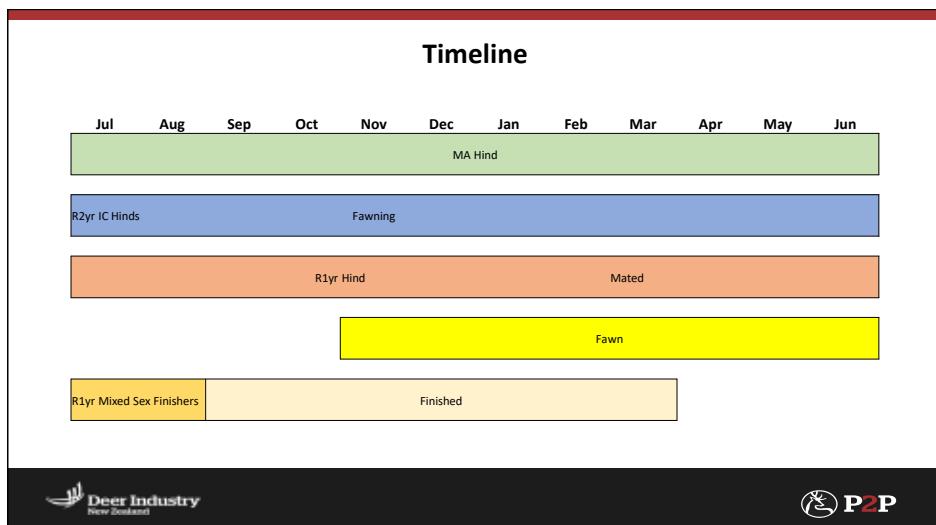
available this year for less than \$500. Farmers investing in deer need to include good genetics as part of the equation.

"Deer can be like their owners," Tony Pearse joked. "Both can be nervous, skittish and prone to injury."

The group finished with an exercise comparing the merits of breeding your own replacements and buying them in.

It was an intense and informative two days, with attendees curious and interested in the unique nature of the industry. And with every workshop there are a few more professionals who can understand how an investment in deer can complement and enhance any livestock enterprise – and just as importantly, give the farming family a more enjoyable way to earn their living.

- For a short video featuring comments from the workshop attendees: <https://bit.ly/36Go7h1>



A timeline like this can help with working out stock reconciliations.

Tree Guards NZ

Promoting biodiversity, erosion control and drought protection

The McVicar family started capturing deer in 1979 and like most other deer pioneers experienced numerous problems in the transition from wild to farmed animals.

Most of these problems were caused by the stress of moving deer from their natural habitat of forest and bush to a farm situation with little cover.

To overcome this we attempted to grow various varieties of trees and experimented with numerous ways of protecting them, including wrapping with heavy duty silver paper, netting, barbed wire, corrugated iron, steel mesh and Netlon and Dynex sleeves with very limited success.

The only way we were able to protect our plantings was by individually fencing the trees off or by double fencing an area. Both methods were extremely expensive and time consuming.

Last year, in conjunction with Hawke's Bay Regional Council, we trialled 25 Tree Guards with our willow and poplar plantings and wintered 300 stags in the same paddock. There was no damage to the poles or tree guards. We were thrilled and ultimately decided to take up the sole New Zealand agency and imported a container of Tree Guards from Spain where they are manufactured.

Tree Guards are a unique product and already proving to be very popular. They arrive in flat packs and are very easy to install. They can be used in numerous applications: customers use them to protect their ornamental trees and one dairy farmer is having great results planting oaks in a paddock while continuing with intensive dairy grazing. We have one client using them to protect their big bales while they are sitting in the paddock waiting to be fed out.

Our daughter in Canterbury has been using them on her deer farm and is finding them to be excellent, not only for keeping deer away from damaging the trees but also hares, with the added bonus of supporting new plantings from the howling Norwesterlies!

Having spent a huge amount of money and years of frustration with deer damaging or killing everything we planted it is very exciting for us to plant poles using Tree Guards knowing they are 100% fool proof.

With most of the first container being sold we are now looking at importing more.

- For further information please go to Facebook, [@treeguardsnz](https://www.facebook.com/treeguardsnz)
- Article supplied

DINZ board producer member appointments

The next appointment for a producer member to the DINZ board will be made by mid 2021. The following timeline shows the steps in the process (some dates can vary slightly from year to year depending on logistics such as conference/publication dates).

DINZ board selection timeline	
Time	Process
20 February – 1 March	Call for nominations published in <i>Deer Industry News</i> and <i>Stagline-Online</i>
31 March	Nominations close
20 April	Candidates publish brief outline of qualifications in April/May <i>Deer Industry News</i> (submitted by 31 March)
mid May	Candidates* invited to present credentials in person at annual deer industry conference
mid May to mid-June	Board chair (or deputy if chair is retiring by rotation) meets with NZDFA's Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) to discuss what skills would be valued in incoming board member/s Candidate CVs requested and any potential conflicts of interest on the part of the candidate/s or SAP member/s declared and discussed
mid May to mid-June	SAP formally interviews candidate/s*
	SAP members vote on candidate/s selection by secret ballot, overseen by NZDFA legal counsel; clear majority required
20 June	Candidate/s informed of outcome of ballot and selection
1 July	Appointment announced publicly, new board member/s take up position

* NZDFA arranges travel and covers costs for all candidates.

Interested in serving on the DINZ board?

While it is a few months until the nomination and selection process starts, it is not too soon to start thinking about making a contribution as a DINZ board member. For more about being on the board, see William Oliver's editorial on page 3 of this issue.

There is also a succinct dossier of information about DINZ and NZDFA, and the way the Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) appoints board members available through the DINZ office. ■

Protecting plants and trees from livestock, quarantining their natural growth.

"Trialing this product on our own Deer and Beef farm in Hawke's Bay last year, we were immediately sold. It is the first time we have had a product that kept both beef and deer from damaging our treeplantings. As this product couldn't be purchased in New Zealand we decided to take up the New Zealand agency". Anne & Garth McVicar



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SOUTH ISLAND:
Carla Pedler
(M) 027 920 7183
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Pricing

Per Guard: (standard not included)
1600 x 1000 \$44.00 ex. gst
1700 X 1200 \$49.00 ex. gst
*Delivery fees additionalPacks



Buy in Bulk

Packs of 10 – discount \$5.00 per guard
Packs of 100 – discount \$10.00 per guard.
*Delivery fees additional

@treeguardsnz

Making the right supplement for the job

by Phil Stewart, Deer Industry News Editor

It's not just the ingredients: it's what you do with them – and what you want them to do for you. That was one of the key take-home messages at a well-attended supplement workshop on 2 October at Russell Rudd's farm Mairoa Downs at Fernside, near Rangiora. The day was hosted by the North Canterbury and Central Canterbury Advance Parties, facilitated by Wayne Allan and supported by the Canterbury branch of NZDFA.

CONSULTANT NUTRITIONIST TRISH Lewis, who has been running a series of P2P workshops on making quality supplements was the subject matter expert. She told attendees that when planning for making supplement¹, you need to know first what it's going to be used for.

In broad terms, silage can be used either for maintenance (e.g. hinds during winter) or for growth (e.g. growing weaners through to killable weights or yearling hinds to target weights for mating). For maintenance, silage with a higher content of stem or seedheads and a lower ME can still be OK. Its main function is to fill the animal and stop it losing too much energy keeping itself warm.

But for growing animals, higher protein (more leafy material, less stem) is needed. Giving high-protein silage to animals on a maintenance diet is actually counter-productive because the

¹ For these purposes, "silage" refers to baleage, pit silage and stack silage.

animals will be sacrificing energy excreting the excess protein, Lewis explained. Likewise, growing animals on low-quality silage will lag behind their planned growth curves.

The fermentation process in making silage is the same for all storage methods. The key is ensuring the right kinds of anaerobic bacteria are doing the work. If aerobic bacteria are allowed to dominate you will end up with a nice batch of compost. As a crop ferments the pH levels come down and a quicker process is generally better for preserving quality (good silage can be used within a week or two).

Lewis warned that a hot fermentation process in overly dry silage risks caramelising the sugars and denaturing the proteins, giving it a "tobacco-like" smell. "The stock love it, but the protein is not so digestible."

Oral Mag: Nutraceutical nutritional supplement for deer

THERE ARE FEW studies in any monogastric animal species on the bioavailability of different types of nutrients. This article covers the use of **Oral Mag**, a magnesium liquid supplement for deer.

Every farm has different levels of pastures magnesium. Many factors come into play including, soil properties, fertiliser programme, pasture species and climate. Not every form of magnesium, and there are many available, is the same.

Oral Mag contains 25% Magnesium pidolate, an organic form of magnesium metabolised quicker and retained by the animal for up to 10–14 days.

The magnesium can be absorbed in different ways with the major process simply via passive diffusion. This process is where the magnesium moves from an area of high concentration to an area of lower concentration. In the case of intestinal absorption, when the concentration of magnesium in the gut is higher than in the intestinal cells the magnesium will move across membranes to enter the body. The form and concentration of magnesium drives the absorption in this situation so the more magnesium present, the higher the concentration and therefore the more will be absorbed.

Magnesium pidolate used in **Oral Mag** transfers quickly through the body more readily than other forms of magnesium and is absorbed effortlessly through cell membranes. Once present in the cells Magnesium pidolate is readily available for the animal and over a longer period.

Oral Mag is used extensively in grass-fed dairy cows to lift magnesium levels over the crucial "transitional" period. It is also used to lift magnesium levels to help calm a horse. This is where **Oral Mag** has a fit in deer farming. It will help calm stressed animals, especially yearlings and weaners.

Magnesium not only helps calm the animal – maintaining correct magnesium levels is also important as the "on/off" switch for the brain to function properly and send correct messages to the animal.

Oral Mag is a palatable, liquid oral drench and the only form of magnesium that lasts up to 10–14 days. Assuming that the animal has the ability to absorb magnesium pidolate (many factors are in play here) it will raise the magnesium levels by a factor of 4.

Oral Mag is manufactured for and distributed by AHD Ltd, available from your local rural and veterinary outlet or buy online at www.ahdltd.co.nz

Cutting

It depends to an extent on what you're growing but overall it can be a balance between quality and quantity. If you leave it too long you'll get more bulk but a lot more stem and seedhead rather than leaf. Crop harvested earlier and cut higher will regrow faster for another cut, and avoid contamination by soil or dead leaf material. This can be tricky when you're cutting a mixed crop where different species mature at different times.

Wilting

Again it's a question of balance. If the crop is ensiled too wet (say 25 percent dry matter) you risk nutrient loss and pollution through silage liquor leaching out of pits, or bales losing their shape. If it's over wilted and too dry it's harder to compact. (Chop length affects compaction and wilting.) Lewis said it's important to know your target dry matter percent. For pit silage 30–35 percent is about the sweet spot; it can be a bit drier for baleage, but once it gets to 50 percent or drier it won't compact so well and there's a greater risk of mould (deer are very sensitive to mouldy smells). Lucerne can be a bit drier than other crops thanks to pectins in the leaf, which make it easier to compact..



Attendees at the supplements workshop.

Additives

Fermentation inoculants encouraging lactic acid production are commonly used for grass and lucerne silage. They can be especially useful for silage containing chicory and plantain as these naturally harbour less in the way of naturally occurring fermenting bacteria. Stability inoculants are useful especially in maize or cereal silage to reduce mould growth and stop silage heating when fed out.

continued on page 22

AHD DEER FARM INTRO PRODUCTS



Supplement

Magnesium liquid supplement for deer.
Aids in helping calm stressed/worked-up yearlings and weaner deer.



Insect Control

Abamectin Pour-on for Deer to control and treat mature roundworms, lungworm and biting lice.
Low dose rate.
Oil rainfast formulation.



Hygiene

Prepare and maintain your designated velvetting clean zone with Virukill.
MPI APPROVED PRODUCT (C 41)
suitable for use in and around your velvetting operational area.

Available from your local rural outlet.



ONLINE BUNDLE DEAL

Only
\$345

- 1 x Virukill 1L
- 1 x Oral Mag 1L
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Silage: continued



Trish Lewis: Important to decide early what you'll be using supplement for.

Compaction

Poor compaction in pit or stack silage can be a real issue and it's a skilled job often mistakenly left to the least-skilled workers. Lewis said the key is to progressively compact the crop in thin layers. For baleage, knives in the baler can help with compaction. Tractors with wide tyres, duals or tracks don't compact as deeply, and thinner layers are needed.

Sealing

Good sealing is another important barrier between success and disaster with silage. Lewis said oxygen barrier films under a heavier cover are becoming more popular and several at the workshop use them. Achieving a good seal around the edges is vital with these. When tyres are used to weight down covers, they should be touching.

Lewis said it's worth doing an extra couple of layers of wrap on baleage if the crop is dry or stalky – perhaps up to eight layers. If bales have “popped” from gasses during fermentation these should be fed out first to minimise spoilage. Bales should be moved right away to storage or left for a few weeks for fermentation to happen. Lewis said they should not be jammed together. “Leave a small gap between them and don't stack more than two high – only one high if it's wet.”

Contractors

Most people at the workshop use contractors for at least part of the process. Lewis said it's important to communicate with the contractor about what you want, paying attention to details like cutting height and use of inoculants.

Pests

These can be a real ... pest. Birds, rodents, possums and domestic pets can all make holes in bales. This leads to mould forming and Lewis said the extent of mould in a bale is always much more than you can see with the naked eye. Moulds not only use up nutrients but also produce mycotoxins. Some of these affect digestive efficiency and some can cause health issues like abortion. Rodent control, bird netting and stock proof fences can all help protect the integrity of bales or covers.

Feeding out

As soon as silage is exposed to the air it starts to deteriorate, so keep the pit face tidy (ideally eaten back at least 30cm a day) and avoid too much loose silage lying around too long. As it goes off, the smell puts stock off feeding on fresher silage.

Analysing silage

Several farmers brought along samples of their silage and the contrasts were easy to see. Some were very wet and leafy, while others were dry and stalky. Lewis said dry matter percentage can be gauged by squeezing a sample from inside the stack or bale. If no juice runs out but your hand is moist and the squeezed ball keeps its shape, the DM will be about 30–35 percent, a good target.

Other indicators are visual: amount of leaf versus stem/seedhead and chop length. Heat and smell can indicate mould or yeast growth, and pH paper can be used to assess the pH of silage. (Take care when smelling silage, especially if it's mouldy. Also, wash hands thoroughly after handling it.)

One sample of older silage that had been analysed had an ME of only 6.9 (similar to straw). Lewis said the silage was likely to be more nutritious than that would indicate and would be okay for maintenance feeding. Other samples from the same farm had an ME of more than 11, which would be good for fattening stock.

Lewis said the crude protein levels in silage indicate how much nitrogen is on board, although some N is present “free”, as ammonia for example.

The pH levels indicated acid profiles and the types of acid in silage were important. A sweet or yoghurty smell indicated lactic acid, which is desirable. A sharp vinegary smell indicates acetic acid – less desirable but okay to a point. But a smell of vomit indicates butyric acid – a turnoff for human and animal alike. “If it smells like vomit, feed it out straight away – it's only going to get worse,” Lewis advised.

In conclusion she said the more efficiently a crop was fermented the lower the cost of your silage. ■



Workshop visitors checking out some of the silage samples.

Environment projects, winter housing showcased at Southland workshop

by Phil Stewart, Deer Industry News Editor

"We wanted to build something we could be proud of." That simple statement by Michelle Roberts resonated strongly with the nearly 50 visitors to a Southland Environment Advance Party (AP) P2P Regional Workshop at the Roberts family's Merino Downs farm on 13 August.

SOUTHLAND HAS ITS environmental challenges, especially protecting soils and water and keeping stock off pastures as much as possible during winter. While most of the winter season is manageable, there are several significant weather events each year and that's what environment planning needs to account for.

The AP's chair, John Somerville said the group wanted to reduce reliance on grazing winter crops, while considering biodiversity, carbon emissions, planting and options for housing deer during winter. "Even if you aren't punished for breaking rules, you can still be losing capital in the form of lost soil." (Figures provided by David Stevens of AgResearch showed annual soil losses of up to 5 tonnes/ha recorded in commercial situations, valued at \$140/tonne.)

The Southland AP, facilitated by Nicola McGrouther, showcased plenty of improved practices to help minimise losses like these.



Members of the Southland Environmental Advance Party on the Roberts farm, from left: Steve Collett, Pete McIntyre, Nic McGrouther (facilitator), Michelle Roberts, Tony Roberts, Kate Roberts, Bruce Allan, Cam Nelson, John Somerville (chair) and Doug McCall.

Environment projects showing real benefits

Keeping clear of the swale

Soon after buying the property in 2017, the **Roberts** family (**Tony, Michelle** and daughter **Kate**) learnt the value of protecting critical source areas. A rolling paddock bisected by a swale was badly affected by deer grazing a winter crop, despite their efforts to lure the animals away from the wettest area with supplement and shelter.

They quickly realised that watercourse areas needed more protection and when putting in subsequent crops they leave a generous margin either side of a swale, uncultivated and ungrazed to filter sediment. Crop is now grazed behind breaks heading downhill and two sets of square bales have been set up across the watercourse downstream as further barriers to catch remaining sediment.

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Southland AP: continued



Crop is now kept well back from the watercourse and grass left to grow long to help filter sediments.



These straw bales make a good sediment filter. They can be secured in place with waratahs and are best kept out of reach of deer.

"I can sleep better at night knowing we're doing this," Tony Roberts said.

The mitigations were praised by Environment Southland land sustainability officer David Moate, who attended the workshop: "Fantastic – well done," he said. He added that building a permanent bund from soil was also an option, as was using filter cloth to capture sediment.

Gully restoration

Restoring a previously grazed gully and wetland on their property has been another successful project on the **Roberts** farm and the workshop visitors were taken to look over progress. Michelle explained there was a slight hiccup as they started. "We thought we'd fence off the gully at the base of the hill and built a track at great expense but after we talked to other AP members we decided to retire a bigger area and fence at the top of the hill."

She said the excavation for two shallow dams with bunds had cost about \$1,500, with the biggest cost (\$10,000) devoted to fencing the area off. The work has been designed to help filter

overland water flow and create more biodiversity.

Water tests taken before the project and then 6 months after establishment have confirmed environmental benefits: nitrogen levels in water leaving the area are 13 percent lower than where it enters; phosphorus is down 50 percent and sediment down 70 percent in the water as it exits. *E. coli* levels are down by about one-third.

Native trees were more of a challenge to establish than pine would be, but the family wanted to take pride in what they created so opted for a mix of natives and introduced species including flax, cabbage trees, broadleafs, carex, oaks, birches and tortured willow. The rigid tree protectors used are working well and Michelle said they'll be reused on new plantings once trees are established.



Earthworks establishing the restored wetland (above) and the developing wetland as seen by workshop visitors in August (below).

Environment Southland land sustainability officer David Moate commented that the vegetation is hoovering up the pollutants and the Roberts will also be able to harvest the sediment.

Kale better on heavy soils

John Somerville said well-fed animals are less likely to cause soil damage, but admitted it can be a challenge providing stock with a dry area for lying down in some conditions. "Some days you might have to shift the break twice to achieve this."

Kale, with its fibrous roots was better than beet on wetter soils. He said deer were good at grazing back over kale and usually wasted less than other crops. Breaks were more efficient than block grazing and if working towards the prevailing weather, a crop of kale also provided some shelter.

Somerville stressed the importance of good paddock selection and omitting unsuitable steep and riparian areas from crop. "Environment Southland requires a consent for crops on slopes of more than 20° and some paddocks can be steeper than they



appear." Even a very gentle slope could provide a pathway for runoff and sediment loss.

He has also fenced off a wide area through a gully, which has recovered quickly. In three years it was already starting to form a natural wetland and the long grass was providing an excellent sediment filter. He noted that fencing off areas like this doesn't sacrifice as much grazing as you'd think.



Excluding steep and riparian areas helps keep soil in place and filter runoff.

Direct drilling a plus

Steve Collet said he'd had good success establishing a crop using direct drilling, which keeps the ground firmer, reduces runoff and helps prevent wallowing. He'd grazed 700 weaners along a single break: "Following the contour right to the end of the paddock was the key."

He had a difficult area on his farm where water constantly seeped out of a wet clay face. It was a tricky area to drain so he retired it. This had taken off the pressure and allowed slower runoff and drainage, he explained.

Dung beetles released; big sediment pond built

Sharon and Pete McIntyre updated the workshop on their experience introducing dung beetles to help reduce *E. coli* runoff, improve soil fertility and reduce parasite burdens. (See April/May 2019 *Deer Industry News* for additional detail.)

They've now had the beetles on farm for two summers and they have spread out about two or three paddocks from where they were released. Sharon said the beetles could fly and it was possible they were also helping seed neighbours' farms "at our expense!".

They leave a fibrous residue when "mining" fresh deer dung, a good sign that beetles are active. The European species used, *Onthophagus taurus*, evolved around deer, is frost and snow tolerant and used to cold, heavy soils. It is mainly active from summer to autumn and completes about three lifecycles in that time. Sharon said drenches may harm them if used during summer, and insecticides used on pasture could also affect them. Herbicides such as thistle sprays should not be a problem, however.

The McIntyres also reported on a big sediment pond they'd installed five years ago in the area of an ephemeral creek, servicing a catchment of about 70–80 hectares. Sharon said the pond sacrificed only about 3 percent of the catchment area but was

removing about 50 percent of the sediment being carried off in water flows.



Cleaner out than in: The clearer water in the jar at right shows the benefits of settling out sediments in the large pond created on the McIntyres' farm.

Sediment trap working well

Doug McCall has dug a sediment trap in a fenced-off area that captures the runoff from about 10–15 hectares of fairly steep land. He said the trap has been working well slowing down the flow in the 18 months since it was constructed, and allowing the tile drains to do their job. Water remains in there for 6–12 hours while dropping its sediment, before flowing out onto a couple of flat paddocks. McCall said managing the flow like this helped stop deer creating wallows.

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Southland AP: continued

Drainage to reduce surface water

Bruce Allan has critical source areas all over his property and uses an extensive networks of tile drains and some Novaflo to help reduce sediment loss from surface runoff in a 50-hectare area. Another issue on the farm is fence pacing, where deer have left a trench along the fenceline. Allan has dealt with this in some areas by fencing off the damaged area and planting it, or by filling the trenches with rocks, which has proven effective – although it's not cheap. (For more on the Allans' farm see *Deer Industry News*, February/March 2018, p18.)

Paddock selection key

Cam Nelson has been doing some water testing downstream of crop paddocks. Results were better than he'd expected but he said *E. coli* and nitrogen were still higher than he'd have liked, especially after rain. Spreading the load on crop paddocks and avoiding cleaning out the creek before winter had helped slow down flows and reduce losses of sediment, nitrogen and *E. coli*, he said. Four tests carried out over winter showed *E. coli* losses were highest when there was a combination of rain and deer grazing crop. Nicola McGrouther noted that taking care with paddock selection also helped reduce nutrient losses on this farm. (For more on the Nelsons' farm see *Deer Industry News*, February/March 2018, p7.)

Important lessons from Southland

- Slow water flows using sediment traps, bunds, straw bales etc
- Use drainage to take pressure off surface flows, but note these transfer contaminants straight into waterways
- Fence off critical source areas (CSAs) and sediment traps to stop them being turned into wallows
- Create buffer zones using wetlands and riparian strips
- Graze towards CSAs and graze steeper areas last in block grazing (leave steepest areas in grass)
- Grazing across slope can work but always have buffer zones below steep areas
- Choose crops and paddocks carefully
- Direct drilling or strip tillage can reduce soil damage/loss
- Plan well for wet weather events
- Sediment traps, buffer zones and new wetlands sacrifice less grazing than you'd think.

Winter Grazing Action Group

DINZ producer manager Tony Pearse explained the contents of the Winter Grazing Action Group's document, *Short-term expected outcomes for animal welfare*. (For detail on this see the report on the environment-focused Tech Webinar on page 28.) The action group's document can be seen online at: <https://bit.ly/3bowjJs>

He explained that the recommendations are mainly focused on dairy and calving in late winter in Otago and Southland, but noted the perspective of deer farming was taken into account. He said the action group looked at an annual calendar for key decisions such as planning crops and veterinary consultations. The guidelines are not compulsory but do give clear advice to inform planning, Pearse said.

Wintering barns

One way Southlanders tackle the challenges of wet and cold winters is through housing some deer over the winter months. The workshop saw several good examples from within the AP, several of whom are housing deer over winter.

Repurposing an existing shed

At the suggestion of other AP members, the **Roberts** family have done a simple conversion to an existing shed that was surplus to requirements to make a wintering barn. They used it for stags in their first year but it's been the winter residence for their hinds over the past two years.

Tony Roberts estimated the conversion cost about \$20,000 all up, including gates, plywood, timber and some engineering. The hinds are fed palm kernel (about 0.5kg/day) and baleage (about 1.3kg/day). He remarked that he will aim for a finer chop baleage next year so it's drier and more suited to the shed environment with less waste.

"We are just maintaining the hinds during winter. They'll start putting on condition when they get back onto grass," he said.

The sawdust bedding costs \$22/m³ (they used 85 m³). After just over two months it was still looking clean and dry and the hinds were due to go back out onto pasture within three weeks.

Tony said there was some bullying among the hinds and this year he took out four lighter ones that were being picked on, but overall the setup has worked very well.



Hinds in the Roberts' repurposed shed.

Settled stags in age groups

John Somerville has been wintering stags under shelter for decades in barns attached to the deer yards. Stags are fed silage through a grill and along a feeding face, which is in the open loafing area. He said the stags are put in age-group mobs after the rut to get used to each other and the silage diet, supplemented by a ration of nuts to help with digestion and keep up trace elements. He's resisted the temptation to use palm kernel, although it's cheap, and gave up supplementing with barley: "We were just feeding the birds."

Older stags are excluded from the barns because they get bullied by the younger (5-6 year-old) stags. Any that are looking a bit thin are pulled out of the mob, but it's usually only a handful.

He said that once they are confined they settle down and don't fight and are pretty relaxed in the winter quarters. Stags usually go indoors in early June (later if it's mild) and come out by the end of August. Somerville noted that the housed stags can drop their buttons earlier than those in the paddock.



Stags are settled and relaxed in John Somerville's wintering setup.

Getting silage right for weaners

Doug McCall puts his weaners straight off mum into one of two sheds in June. One of these is a new barn with a PVC roof and baleage fed by way of a tilted platform against a grill. He said fine-chop silage is better for the weaners as there is less waste from large chunks of silage being pulled from the bale and dropped. He said it's important to wilt the crop well before ensiling so it's not too wet.

He makes the silage from a mix of new grass and oats, planted after a crop and also acting as a catch crop. It's mown just before the oat heads emerge at day 60, giving good protein levels of 18 percent and an ME of 10.4. While the weaners favour straight grass silage, they are also fine with the oaty variety.

He uses a sawdust bedding (replenished annually) for the weaners and spreads the fine muck from the sheds onto baleage paddocks.

McCall advises against putting a bale in the shed with weaners: "They just spread it around." They're wintered not so much to increase liveweight gain but to keep them off pastures and reduce damage from fence pacing.



Doug McCall's new wintering barn for weaners.

New Redpath and Alpine sheds a big improvement

Bruce Allan "hated" wintering stags on concrete pads with a bit of roofing and two winters ago installed a new Redpath shed, which has a PVC roof and open sides with some wind cloth. It's split into three pens and he can shuttle stock around between them if necessary. Stags are kept in three age-group mobs (3–5, 6–8 and 9–13) with about 70 to a pen.

He's recently bought a smaller Alpine shed for the younger stags. Its sides are open but the shelter is still OK, Bruce said.

He's feeding silage this year, which was a bit wetter than the baleage used in 2019 and does leave a bit of residue on the floor. The silage pit is right next to the sheds.

Wood chips are used for bedding at a cost of about \$8,000 for the initial setup and then \$3,000 for topping up in the following year. Ground-up macrocarpa is also being used.

Allan said he also has the option of putting hinds into the shed in May for a period to take pressure off pasture in bad weather and before the stags are ready to come in.

The bigger Redpath shed was cheaper to build per square metre because of the scale, but the smaller Alpine shed is multi-purpose.

Doing the numbers on wintering barn costs

A big consideration for wintering systems is cost, and AgResearch scientist **David Stevens** provided some detailed numbers based on the experience of Southland Environment AP members. He told *Deer Industry News* that because no two farm situations are the same and wintering requires a new set of skills, "in the end you have to just get in there and do it yourself" to figure out what works best.

continued on page 28

Sowing the right seed for your success



There are a lot of right answers

We grow crops and grass for a variety of reasons. Like our diets there are many options – from a paddock of wheat for processing into bread through to grass-based pastures to feed deer.

Optimising the economical and sustainable production of a crop is a relevant factor that has to be taken into account before the choice of seed is made.

We actually need to start at the finish line. What do we need from the paddock?
Is it winter feed for deer?
Is it a summer crop for deer when things get dry and feed is short?
Is it a permanent pasture for your herd?

Paddock selection

Is there a paddock that is not performing – has the pasture run out, has it stopped delivering?
Or is there a paddock that has come out of an annual crop?
What are the fertility issues with the paddock and can they be addressed in time to maximise the next crop?
What influence will this have on the farm environmental plan or your overseer plan?
Are there potential water logging or erosion issues that may or may not influence the seed choice for the paddock?
What is the soil-moisture expectation during the growing season of the crop?

It is then that seed selection can be made

Mix design is about taking all factors into consideration knowing the place of each component of a mix.
The mix may require vast diversity to achieve these goals or little or no diversity for a crop.

A good mix designer understands the constituents of a mix what part each species plays in reaching a mix that gets you to the desired finish line.

Choosing the best mix designer is a good starting point for your next seed blend

Tech Webinar: Environmental stewardship

Updates on guidelines from the Winter Grazing Action Group and the high and hill country water quality monitoring study on 10 deer farms featured in the third of three Farmer Tech Webinars on 4 August, moderated by Nicola McGrouther.

Winter grazing tips

DINZ producer manager **Tony Pearse** is the sole deer industry representative on the 18-member Winter Grazing Action Group. In August, the group released, through the Ministry for Primary Industries (MPI), a set of welfare-focused guidelines for sheep, cattle and deer (*Winter grazing action group: Short term expected outcomes for animal welfare*, see <https://bit.ly/3bowjJs>). While not legally enforceable, the guidelines will help people doing intensive winter grazing do a better job.

These guidelines had in turn been informed by a list of seven “events” that should always occur with winter grazing; the list was created by the ministerial Winter Grazing Taskforce set up in

2019 in response to welfare concerns about wintering in Southland after a particularly bad season. (The deer industry had input to the taskforce’s findings.)

The seven “events” are:

1. Animals give birth in the right environment (mainly driven by calving for dairy herds in late winter, not so applicable for deer)
2. Being prepared for all weathers
3. Easy access for stock to acceptable drinking water
4. Planning for successful winter feeding
5. Animals can lie down comfortably
6. Working together to care for animals during winter
7. Finding opportunities to improve.

Southland AP: continued

He said **feeding costs** vary depending on set-ups, but self-feed situations requiring less labour input are cheaper. Bedding is another significant cost that can’t be avoided. Looking across a group of five AP members, combined wintering costs for feed and bedding varied from \$0.25/stock unit/day up to \$0.81.

In one case study involving wintering 122 hinds indoors on baleage, Stevens compared their costs with keeping them outdoors on crop (see link to costs paper at end of article). The indoor wintering stacked up well, at \$60.34 per head for the period. In comparison, wintering on a medium-yield crop of swedes or kale would cost \$68.53/head. If the yields on those crops were low, the per-head cost shot up to \$104.77. Only a high-yielding fodder beet crop could beat the indoor system, coming out at \$56.83/head. (The capital cost of the barn wasn’t considered in this comparison.)

Stevens noted that animals outdoors in cold, wet conditions require about 20 percent more feed than those indoors and factored that into his calculations.

Looking at **capital costs** for new sheds, Stevens considered both full cover sheds (capital cost \$210/m²) and the lighter PVC type barns (\$130/m²). Sheds were assumed to have a life of 20 years from new, with PVC roofs needing replacement after 10 years. Depending on stock class and shed type, the annual capital cost per head varied from \$19.77 (weaners in a PVC type barn) to \$50.06 (mature stags in a full cover barn).

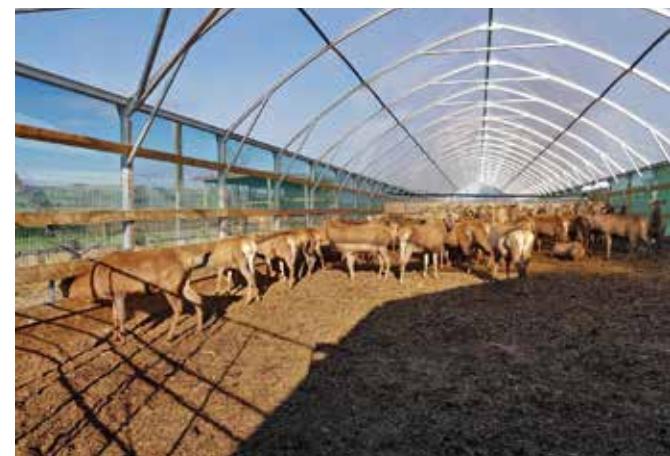
Stevens also examined, in both physical and economic terms, the potential **environmental cost** to farms of soil loss caused by feeding stock on winter crop. These varied widely depending on intensity/crop yields and whether the grazing was done using best

practice (e.g., buffer strips, protecting swales).

In the best case scenario (best practice, low yield/intensity) the potential sediment loss was just 80kg per hectare, at a cost of \$11/ha. For a high-yielding crop and just “average” management practices, then potential soil loss is an incredible 5 tonnes per hectare at a cost of \$700/ha.

Finally, Stevens cautioned those using winter housing to consider **diet** carefully, as silage or baleage alone would only achieve maintenance and may require some supplementation to ensure correct mineral balances, protein balances etc are achieved.

- For David Stevens’ wintering costs paper: deernz.org/regional-workshops or go to <https://bit.ly/3bJefnx> ■



Bruce Allan’s Redpath shed: PVC roof allows the sun to warm up the interior.

The MPI document fleshes out these seven areas into three areas under “Know” (things you need to know first), “Do” (actions to take) and “Check” (monitoring and planning).

“If it becomes really wet and the deer have nowhere to go, the welfare of the deer and the environment go hand in hand. If they wreck a paddock that you need for feed in spring, you are effectively increasing your stocking rate on what’s left. An environmental issue becomes and welfare and production issue – then it becomes financial.”

Cam Nelson, Southland

Pearse said following a few simple rules would help make for better winter feeding practices:

- plan well ahead
- budget to have more winter feed than you'll need
- involve all staff in your planning – no two farms or winters are the same
- ensure winter feeding is included in your Farm Environment Plan (this is a requirement for resource consenting in some areas)
- ensure you have a runoff paddock available and a “plan B” in case winter conditions deteriorate.

He said the big emphasis for deer farmers managing environmental risks from winter grazing was on identifying critical source areas (CSAs), creating buffer zones and managing the links between CSAs and waterways.

Pearse commented that while there had been eight animal welfare-based complaints lodged with MPI last year, none of these met the MPI threshold for prosecutions. However, public



Hinds on winter crop.

and MPI concerns were massively heightened, leading to the activities of the task force. On the environmental management front, Environment Southland had been pleased with what improvements they had seen on a flyover of the region this winter. That surveillance has continued “The message has definitely got through.”

He said that until this year the deer industry had enjoyed several strong seasons and was in a good position to invest in better environmental management. He complimented Southland farmers in particular, who had been investing heavily in shelter and off-farm wintering.

For practical advice in the Deer Fact on winter grazing:
bit.ly/3bcYPUh

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Which one's right for you? Start with a shopping list!

Breed	Trait
MWT	Good growth, moderate hind size
VW2	High merit for velvet antler
CD	Early fawning daughters
EMA	Larger eye muscle area and better eating quality
R-EK	Good venison breeding hinds
TERMINAL	High value per hind mated as terminal sire
W12	High-growth, fast-finishing weaners
CARLA	Internal parasite tolerance
WWT	Progeny have heavy weaning weights

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Tech webinar: continued



Stags spread out on kale over winter.

Hill and high country water quality

The five-year study looking into water quality associated with deer farming on hill and high country is being project managed by AgResearch research associate **Bryan Thompson**. The project is half-way through so it is still too early to get any definitive answers due to the variability of the data, he explained.

The work covers deer farms in 10 catchments (seven in the South Island and three in the North), with each farm being monitored 6-monthly by the researchers. Water quality and stream health are monitored in multiple sites and the extent of animal impacts is measured. Monthly water samples are taken on each property and records kept of animal management and stock movements that could affect water quality.



Examples of both good (left) and bad (right) stream health have been seen.

He told the webinar that water testing shows readings are quite variable, so it is the longer-term trends that are important. While readings for pollutants such as nitrogen or *E. coli* can jump around, indicators like invertebrates and periphytans (algae) give a better picture of water quality over time than individual readings, Thompson said.

Thompson said a stream health grading system developed at AgResearch uses a five-point scale from “pristine” to “catastrophic” with a matrix to describe damage (animal or otherwise) to the stream and banks that has the potential to contribute to contaminant loadings.

The work they’d done so far had shown the NNN (oxidised nitrogen) readings were generally higher on North Island farms, possibly in response to higher stocking rates. Thompson qualified that, saying it is the nutrient balances that are important – the



Examples of a good high country wetland environment (left) and a wetland affected by deer wallowing (right).

nitrogen levels in water as it enters and leaves a property. He said in an ideal world, water would be monitored continually on farms so fluctuations in loadings (e.g. of sediment or phosphorus) could be captured. And while councils tend to obsess over readings for *E. coli*, nitrogen, phosphorus and sediment, the stream health indicators like invertebrate life paint a more reliable picture. “Readings at a point in time are just a snapshot,” he said.

He said stream health measurement (through monitoring numbers of invertebrates, etc) is not expensive and it’s something farmers can do. (In fact the Waikato/Waipa branches of DFA used such stream health data to successfully argue against a regional council requirement for farms to fence waterways on slopes up to 25°.)

Thompson said farm environments are very dynamic, so it’s important to monitor well and use more than one tool to make decisions about management.

Q+A session

Some good points were teased out in a Q+A session, fielded by Tony Pearse and Bryan Thompson with DINZ manager, farm performance **Phil McKenzie** and environmental stewardship manager, **Lindsay Fung**. Highlights included:

- Many deer farmers are already taking steps required to protect water quality. The key will be to document this work properly. Taking plenty of before and after photos is a big help.
- P2P Deer Industry Environment Groups and catchment committees provide other good forums for learning and the committees can act on behalf of farmers dealing with regional councils.
- One of the most important priorities for deer farmers planning winter grazing is being prepared to act fast when adverse weather strikes. And don’t underestimate your deer’s ability to find their way back to a favoured crop if you’ve had to move them to shelter.
- Planning for winter grazing will be required in Farm Environment Plans under the latest freshwater regulations.
- Southland’s tough environment tests deer farming systems more than others. Indoor wintering of stags is one option to take pressure off pastures in winter there, but social groupings need to be managed carefully and they need pasture-based supplements while indoors.

To view this webinar and the first two in the series, visit:

<https://bit.ly/3jnqbx0>

Reminder: NAIT, ASDs and declaration to livestock transporter

The Ministry for Primary Industries requires all livestock to have their NAIT eartags up to date. The Animal Status Declaration (ASD) and Declaration to Livestock Transporter (DLT) must both be completed and given to the driver. These are available below for downloading and printing at home; it is also possible to get a book of these posted to you.

ENSURE ALL LIVESTOCK have correct NAIT eartags to avoid fines or prosecution.

Transporters will NOT carry any livestock without their correct NAIT eartags and necessary documentation (ASD and DLT Forms).

Links for forms

1. Standalone Declaration to Livestock Transporter (DLT) form: <https://bit.ly/3ltOds5>
2. ASD including Declaration to Livestock Transporter (DLT) form: <https://bit.ly/34xvsgp>
3. To request a book of ASD forms: <https://bit.ly/2GzvmNj>

Background: What is changing?

From 14 June 2020, it has been an offence to transport an untagged animal – except for animals that have an unsafe to tag exemption.

The offence does not apply to a transport operator carrying a paper or eASD declaration from the farmer that the animals being moved are tagged and registered in NAIT.

All farmers moving animals off-farm should be prepared to

provide their transport operator with a **paper or eASD declaration** that animals are NAIT compliant.

To avoid delays, OSPRI advises farmers to:

- Check all animals are tagged and registered in NAIT
- Declare any unsafe to tag animals in NAIT and ensure the animals are clearly marked
- Fill in the declaration (paper or eASD) ready for your transporter to collect

How do I request a transporter declaration form?

You can request a book of ASD forms using the link above or call OSPRI 0800 482 463.

The Declaration to Livestock Transporters (DLT) is included on the bottom of new ASD forms and can also be completed in the eASD application, but you can also request standalone Declaration to Livestock Transporters (DLT) forms if you're still using old ASD books: <https://bit.ly/3ltOds5>

continued on page 36

Essential freshwater reforms

The Government's Essential Freshwater reforms became law on 3 September. These reforms affect all land users. As of now, livestock farmers:

- Need to obtain a resource consent before intensifying land use, such as converting forests to farming, or grazing land to dairy.
- Must protect some wetlands and streams. This means they cannot drain or develop them, except in very limited circumstances.
- Apply best practice to winter grazing on forage crops. This means getting a resource consent to graze forage crops on more than 50 ha or 10 percent of a farm (whichever is the greater), or on paddocks with more than a 10-degree slope. Fodder crops sown this spring should be planted with these requirements in mind, to ensure compliance when they are grazed next winter.

Some changes to the regulations within the new National Environmental Standards for Freshwater were announced in late August, although the change announced so far is unlikely to make a practical difference for deer farmers:

- Definition of pugging changed to penetration of soil of more than 5cm
- Clarification that the 20cm pugging depth limit does not apply around fixed structures [water troughs, gateways].

Agriculture Minister Damien O'Connor said other regulations will need to be adjusted. "For example, Minister [David] Parker and I are aware of issues with the maps. Officials are working on making the mapping data more accurate."

DINZ environmental stewardship manager Lindsay Fung says the regulations take effect from 1 May next year, but under Sections 10, 10A and 20A of the Resource Management Act, it is possible to effect a delay of six months for the requirement to apply for a resource consent, under existing use rights.

Fung says where it can be proven that the regulations would change an existing use, then this could effectively delay the consent requirement until October next year.

- For the government fact sheet on the changes: <https://bit.ly/3mecELg>
- For a Beef+Lamb NZ assessment of the reforms: <https://bit.ly/2R7pDjr>
- Beef + Lamb NZ has further useful information here: <https://bit.ly/32cP4X6>

More obligations will come into force from next year. ■

Future farmers' dip into deer “a game-changer”

by Ali Spencer, Deer Industry News Writer

Being selected for the DINZ/NZDFA tour of the South Island last year was a “game-changer” for Chief Whakataue, one of four students selected for the second Future Deer Farmers Experience.

“FROM HAVING LITTLE to no understanding about deer and what the industry has to offer, to now receive invitations to multiple farm tours and discussion groups has opened up job offers and expanded my network,” he says.

Chief, 19, joined McKenzie Bird, Kate Goodson and Maddy Calder to travel with organiser DINZ Project Manager Rob Aloe visiting top deer producers at Mt Hutt Station in Methven, Rupert Red Deer in Peel Forest, Haldon Station in the Mackenzie district and The Kowhais near Fairlie. The group also met with UB Bio, Mountain River Venison’s Rakaia Plant, Downlands Deer Transport in Geraldine and Light Leathers Ltd in Timaru to learn about the processing and marketing side of the industry. They finished up at the DFA’s Next Generation conference where they mingled with young, inspiring deer farmers.

Chief Whakataue: “I love the thrill deer offer”

Chief comes from a Hawke’s Bay shearing family and was brought up in and around shearing sheds, alongside his mum. By the age of five, his passion for farming had been ignited, he says, with a strong desire to be out and about, chasing stock and doing anything practical.

“I really enjoyed the physical challenges and also the quick problem solving it required,” he says. Having experienced both, he much preferred the rural lifestyle to one in town.

Chief’s personal goal is to one day own a farm, where he will run deer, as well as sheep and cattle. “It is the diversity and lifestyle of farming that I love most,” he says.

It was at Smedley Station in Central Hawke’s Bay, where he’s now in the final year of his two-year cadetship, that he first came across deer, which he found “awesome”.

“I love the thrill deer offer, whether it’s out in the yards or



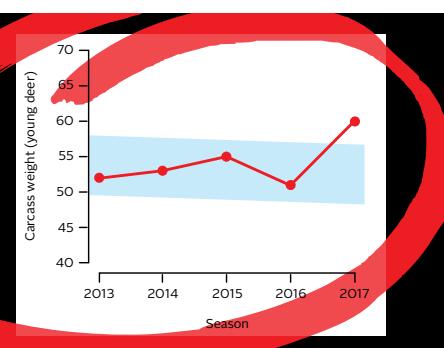
Sampling deer milk cheese at the Talbot Cheese shop are (from left) Maddy Calder, McKenzie Bird, Chief Whakate and Kate Goodson. McKenzie really enjoyed the cheese, which she described as “quite creamy – I will try it again”.

mustering in the paddock. They’ve got a mind of their own and you always have to keep your wits about you. Also, they offer so many selling points, whether it’s skin, velvet or venison.” As this industry grows, deer will only become more profitable, he believes.

The tour “really opened my eyes” to the opportunities offered by deer, and Chief was particularly inspired by the visit to Haldon Station.

Benchmarked production and Johne's disease info on your deer





Season	Carcass weight (young deer)
2013	51
2014	52
2015	55
2016	50
2017	60

Deer PRO

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"If I could apply for it again, I would," he says, adding the only challenge was soaking up all of the information on offer.

Described by Aloe as a "really impressive young man, destined for future leadership in the primary sector," Chief is also aiming at becoming an ambassador for agriculture, introducing those with fewer opportunities than he has had to the rural lifestyle.

"Having an understanding of the deer industry would be another way I could grab their attention and help them to develop a similar passion," says Chief, adding an eagerness to pursue your passion and being keen will open many opportunities to help further knowledge about any aspect of farming.

"As with anything, you only get out what you put in," he says.

McKenzie Bird: "I learned a lot about deer"

Not having any farming experience in her family background has not held 18-year-old McKenzie Bird back from her passion for agriculture, which she says she was drawn to from a young age, and in particular deer farming.

Born in Kaiapoi, McKenzie is now in her second year of study at Telford in Balclutha, South Otago, having attained her certificate in agriculture last year. She is now studying a one-year diploma in agriculture, before starting her farming career – preferably on a mixed-stocking farm with deer and some shepherding with her dogs.

Telford's Work Experience Coordinator Alan Roxburgh, who had been contacted by DINZ producer manager Tony Pearse, asked for those interested to apply for the Future Deer Farmer Experience.

"I put my hand up but, while I had a bit of an interest in deer, I was a lot greener than a few other people on the course," she says modestly.

Like Chief, McKenzie soaked up the experience and knowledge gained on the tour: "I found the experience really good. I learned a lot about deer and people skills in such a short amount of time. It also gave me a better understanding of the industry and of the opportunities within it," she says.

She really enjoyed the tour, but her personal highlights were the visit to Mountain River Venison in Ashburton and meeting deer farmers and locals. The tour around UB Bio and learning about velvet processing and grading was also "full on and a whole other world to learn about".

After the tour, McKenzie approached Black Forest Park deer farm near Clinton, impressing owner Richard Currie with her passion for deer and enthusiasm for work. In the middle of last year, he offered her a job at weekends and over the summer. She took to handling the animals like a duck to water.

"I really love working with deer," she says, adding she's been looking at places with a deer focus rather than a by-product that doesn't have much time put into it, and somewhere that will give her the opportunity to be extended working with them.

"I've really enjoyed the trophy stags and velvetting," says, adding she's particularly keen to learn more about genetics.

McKenzie is highly recommending the Future Deer Farmers Experience to any interested young people.

"I think it's sad there is a lack of young people in the industry. It's not that there isn't any publicity about it, it's that not many young people have the opportunity to gain experience with deer – it's such a niche thing," she says.

"If you have the patience and respect for deer – as you would do for any stock – there's no reason why you can't handle them, given the opportunity."

Interested in joining a tour?

The **Future Deer Farmers Experience** takes place annually in August or September. The initiative, organised by DINZ and NZDFA working closely with the Primary Industry Training Organisation and agricultural colleges and training farms, is in its third year. This offers several agricultural students each year the opportunity to get up close and personal with deer farming. Places are in hot demand with, typically, 25 applying for a handful of seats on the week-long tour.

The third tour, comprising five selected 2020 Future Farm students – Renee Wood (Gladwyn Partnership, Timaru), Carey Pawson-Edwards (Coleridge Downs, Rakaia), Erika Johnstone (Te Anau), William Bishop (Awakino Station, Kurow) and Jack Olsen (Smedley Station, Waipawa) completed their tour of the North Island in August, says Aloe.

Find out more at: <https://bit.ly/3npVb2V>

University students also have a chance to apply for their own experience of the deer industry on **The Big Deer Tour**. This tour takes place traditionally in April in the university first semester holidays. Applications for the 2021 Big Deer Tour will open early next year, when more information will be made available on the DINZ website, or contact Rob Aloe by email rob.aloe@deernz.org or phone 04 471 6021. ■

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Let's talk venison at home

by Ali Spencer, Deer Industry News Writer

A group of Kiwi food writers were hosted recently at DINZ Executive Chef Graham Brown's new home at Ashley Forest, North Canterbury.

IT WAS A way to engage with local food writers in the Canterbury area, with the hope they would talk more about venison to their audiences and to show them how venison mince and other cuts can be incorporated into family-friendly dishes," explains DINZ venison marketing manager Nick Taylor.

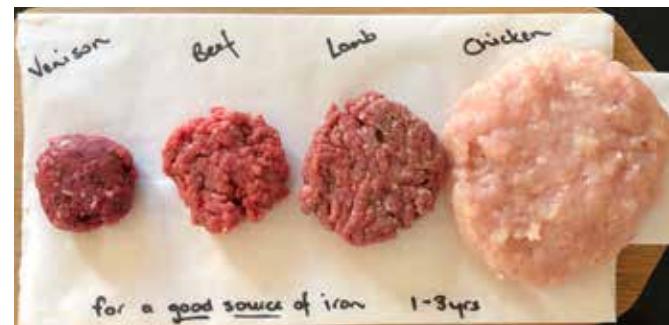
Boarding a mini-bus in Christchurch, the five writers were taken to Graham and Glenda Brown's new property, which includes a custom-built professional demonstration kitchen. On arrival, they met the Browns' immediate neighbour, deer farmer Jeff Wright, who had moved a mob of his red deer into the closest paddock and from whom they learned what was involved in raising farmed deer.

Moving into the house, Foodcom's Julie North gave a short nutritional overview of the benefits of including venison in the family's diet. She showed, by weighing out the respective quantities of venison, beef, lamb and chicken, how much a toddler would need to eat to obtain the recommended daily requirement of iron.

"Even for me that was really fascinating, seeing how little venison you need compared with the other proteins," reports Taylor.

Brown, ably assisted by Glenda, demonstrated seven dishes. Three focused on the versatility of mince with the product being turned by Brown into meat balls, meatloaf and an Asian dish San Choi Bao, featuring venison mince in lettuce cups (see this month's recipe on page 34). He also cooked venison daube – a classic Provençal dish – venison medallions, and showed how to successfully cook ribs and a venison rack on the barbecue.

After a long lunch, featuring the newly prepared dishes, the writers left mid-afternoon with handouts of nutritional information, the selection of recipes, a chiller bag of venison cuts from all the companies to try themselves at home and a favourable



Julie North showed the foodwriters how much mince is required to meet the daily iron requirement of a one-to-three year old.

impression of the sector. One additional writer, unable to attend because of illness, was thrilled to receive the information pack and meat too, he says.

The day was "hugely successful," says Taylor.

"All the dishes were superb and the guests really appreciated the opportunity to meet Jeff, see the deer, then learn the preparation skills before enjoying the delicious dishes made by Graham."

Chef and cooking tutor Alba Micheli remarked: "What a star ingredient, grown right on our doorstep! I left with so much information and inspiration for my next dishes."

Guest, nutritionist and book author Lea Stenning commented she was really surprised by how tender and lean the venison was. "The presentation on iron was super interesting and I will be sure to use the nutrition facts in my Instagrams, newsletters to clients and newsletter recipes."

Inspired by the day, positive posts about venison have since appeared online from all of the writers, particularly on Instagram. Micheli has subsequently used venison in her Riverdale Market cooking classes. There are also plans for other articles to appear in newsletters, magazines and in their other activity.

The day clearly succeeded in removing the food writers' barriers and preconceptions about venison, Taylor says.

"They remarked how tender and mild it really is, when farmed and prepared with care. Activity following the event has captured nutrition, health, farming and culinary aspects. The day also established some excellent relationships and solid grounding for DINZ to build on these."

No dates have been set as yet, but there are plans to repeat similar events around the country, he says. ■



A successful day for the Let's Talk Venison group, (from left), Glenda Brown, Alba Micheli, Lea Stenning, Nicola Fraher, Nick Taylor, Graham Brown, Sam Parish, Nicki Williams and Jeff Smith.

Meet the staff: John Tacon

Quality Assurance Manager John Tacon is one of DINZ's longest-serving staff by quite a stretch, having joined the former Game Industry Board (DINZ's predecessor) in 1992.

BEFORE THAT HE was part of the pioneer group of specialist deer transport operators transporting deer the length and breadth of New Zealand. He also owned and developed a small deer farm beginning in the late 1970s.

The vital role of helping New Zealand's deer farmers and associated industries understand and adhere to regulations and standards falls under John's purview. His responsibilities include animal welfare, the DeerQA Transport programme and facilitating driver training courses. (The On-Farm Deer QA programme is now covered under the New Zealand Farm Assurance Programme.)

In practical terms he's the keeper of standards and manages the NVSB programme including the Regulated Control Scheme. He also audits venison processors to the Industry Agreed Standards and is the deer industry representative liaising with MPI on animal welfare and compliance, as well as other pan-industry forums. And because this is natural territory for him, John is also responsible for DINZ health and safety.

"The job has evolved constantly since I first began," John says. "There are so many more regulations impacting on farmers and

transporters now. Having said that, I think there's a lot more awareness of current requirements across the farming and transport communities."

The thing he likes best about his role is working with a small dedicated team of colleagues while retaining links with transport operators and drivers and deer farmers, vets and auditors.

While his job involves a lot of travel to Wellington and other parts of the country, John lives "back home" on the West Coast between Hokitika and Greymouth. ■



John Tacon.

Meet the staff: Pam MacLeman

If you need to call DINZ on NVSB or QA matters or update your contact details, the chances are that Pam MacLeman is the one who'll help you out.

PAM IS QUALITY Systems Administrator, which involves administration of the NVSB programme and various Deer QA programmes such as the Venison Processors Technical Committee. She's the QA Transport committee administrator and also helps organise travel and meetings for the DINZ board and other committees.

Pam is one of the voices on the end of the phone for farmers and stakeholders, maintaining mailing lists and helping keep the DINZ database up to date to help provide the best service DINZ can to its many stakeholders.

After a period at Meat New Zealand (now Beef + Lamb) as front of house receptionist, Pam joined DINZ in July 2006.

As the NVSB administrator she works with and helps new entrants into the velvetting programme.

"It's a high priority in my job to ensure all velvetters' programmes are up to date and all requirements of the season are met before heading into the following season," Pam explains. "I arrange endorsements at the end of each season that are applied to certificates to show season requirements have been met. I am the administrative link between vets and velvetters, constantly supplying status updates to vets and ensuring the whole programme runs smoothly. This includes responsibility for distribution of velvet ID tags to vet clinics."

During her time at DINZ Pam's role with the NVSB has evolved to include covering more regulations, stricter compliance,

Regulated Control Scheme (RCS) audits, velvet removal audits and preparing for the new VelTrak system.

"Over the past 3 years nearly 1,200 velvetting sheds have had facilities audits added to the RCS audit process," Pam says. "It has been a massive task ensuring all velvetting facilities have the opportunity to take part in the RCS audit process while at the same time learning how to use a new database and keeping up with all my usual tasks."

"One of the main things I like about my role is working with the small and diverse team that we have here at DINZ, the interaction I have with stakeholders and being able to work with farmers, particularly in regard to velvetting."

Pam lives in Wellington's eastern suburbs near the airport where she enjoys fantastic views of the Kaikouras across Cook Strait. "It's a great view to go home to after a busy day in the office." ■



Pam MacLeman.

San Choi Bao

by Chef Sophie Wright

Sophie Wright's delicious recipe for Venison San Choi Bao, served up by Graham Brown recently to Kiwi foodwriters (see page 34), will have you salivating too! Here's how to make it...

Preparation: 10 minutes • Time to cook: 25 minutes

Ingredients

500g venison mince
1 tbsp rape seed oil
2 inches ginger, julienned
2 cloves garlic, grated
2 red chillies, chopped
50g brown sugar or cane sugar
1 carrot, julienned
2 whole spring onions, julienned
100g water chestnuts, chopped
handful of bean sprouts
2 Kaffir lime leaves, shredded
2 tbsp fish sauce
2 tbsp soy sauce
1 tsp sesame seed oil
juice 1 lime

To Serve

firm lettuce cups, chinese lettuce, baby gems, cos or iceberg
handful fresh mint, torn
50g toasted peanuts, chopped
wedges of lime



Dipping sauce

100mls chinese rice wine vinegar
1 hot red chilli, birdseye, finely sliced
1 tbsp sugar
1 inch ginger, julienned

Method

Put a wok or large frying pan over high heat. Add the oil followed by the ginger, chilli and garlic. Cook 1 minute before adding the minced venison. Stir until sealed and browned. Add the sugar.

Now add the carrot, water chestnuts and bean sprouts before adding the fish sauce, soy and sesame seed oil. Add the Kaffir lime leaf and lime juice. Turn off the heat. The venison can be slightly pink in the middle.

Prepare your lettuce cups on a platter and fill each one with the slightly cooled venison mix.

Top with torn mint, crushed and toasted peanuts and garnish with the lime wedges.

To make the dipping sauce, mix the vinegar with the sugar until the sugar has dissolved. Add the sliced chilli and ginger. Serve on the side so people can spoon a little over their lettuce cups for an extra kick.

Watch Graham Brown's new video demonstrating San Choi Bao: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1b2DAt0QpXM>

NAIT reminder: continued

Can I email my ASD declaration form to my transporter?

You can fill out an editable online ASD form, available at: <https://bit.ly/34xvsgp>

This must be sent or emailed to your transporter **in advance** of the animals leaving your farm. You must keep copies of all ASD forms that are sent or emailed.

Why is this necessary now?

This law has been introduced to reduce the number of untagged

animals being moved without any accountability. It also aims to drive incentives for the tagging and registering of animals.

What about the livestock transporters?

The transporters are united on the new legislation following extensive consultation throughout the country with members and farmers. The universal advice is not to transport animals unless they receive a completed paper ASD or eASD declaration from the farmer. ■



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