

## **Deer Science Restructure Update**

As many of you are aware DINZ decided to undertake a restructure of how deer science priorities are gathered and delivered. This resulted in the dissolution of the Innovation Steering Groups (ISGs) and a change in the connection and relationship of deer science delivery with AgResearch. The Southland branch tabled a remit at this year's conference in Napier to seek further clarity on the rationale of the changes. A formal response from the DINZ board written by Jacqueline Rowarth is included in this edition of DFAStagline, as is the corresponding response from the Southland branch.

The NZDFA Executive Committee have also been addressing the issues raised in the Southland branches remit with DINZ, so we can provide deer farmers with accurate answers to their concerns or questions. Deer science has been a key pillar in the success of the deer industry. Therefore clearly understanding the reasons for change is important for ensuring that the replacement structure continues to support key science priorities for deer farmers into the future.

Since the dissolution of the ISGs a new Research Advisory Panel (RAP) has been established. This six-person panel includes two NZDFA selected members, two DINZ representatives and two members from the wider deer or science community. The two NZDFA representatives are Danette McKeown (SCNO Branch and RAP Chair) and Richard Hilson (Hawkes Bay Branch). The two wider industry science representatives are Dave Lawrence and Alastair Nicol. The panel had their first meeting in February and are responsible for recommending deer research priorities to the DINZ board. There is also an AgResearch representative (currently Megan Skiffington) that attends the meetings, but sits outside of the formal group composition.

The NZDFA is working towards providing a structure to support a well-coordinated flow of research priorities through to the RAP for further consideration. This is an opportunity for all the individual branches and the farmers within their region to have their priorities highlighted, as the wide geographical spread of deer farming creates a variety of differing issues. While these can be directly passed on to the RAP group, the NZDFA Executive Committee will be looking to formalise the aforementioned structure with all parties involved, after consultation at the October Branch Chairs meeting in Wellington. If farmers have any points they would like raised in this area please pass them on to your branch chair.

Given this is a new and evolving structure for the delivery of deer science research, there will no doubt be continuing questions or concerns that need addressing. Jacqueline Rowarth has confirmed she will be attending the October Branch Chairs meeting in Wellington and available to provide an update of progress and clarity for any points raised. Additionally, if you have any points you would like addressed, please contact your branch chair or any member of the Executive Committee so we can seek answers on your behalf.

Mark McCoard

NZDFA Chair