DFA STAGLINE

NZDFA
NZ Deer Farmers Association
Your voice, our future

Issue 226 | November 2026

Executive Committee Report



As I begin to make my way around the country visiting farmers, it's good to see a genuinely positive mood. In general, all product prices are good and so far, spring has been pretty good for most. Southland/Otago had a rough time earlier but is coming right now from most accounts.

While climate has limited some weaners from Southland/Otago being killed early, anecdotally I am hearing others are being retained to add weight and price, given what looks to be a flatter schedule this year. With the improved velvet prices, I'm also hearing people are holding stags to cut regrowth prior to killing. While I understand this approach from both a personal farm point of view and industry point of view with more meat production, I would just urge farmers to consider scenarios that if it does go dry and given the stag kill cut off is a week earlier this year (mid Feb) there could be a crunch point where animals can't be killed exactly when we want them killed. If you do decide to hold animals make sure you have a backup plan for extra feed if they can't be killed exactly when you want.

On the velvet front, as the note from NZDFA two weeks ago said; prices have improved so far this year. As always, make sure you're fully aware of both conditions and grading when committing to supplying a certain buyer. We are hearing that while pricing is similar in some cases, the velvet is being graded to different specifications which may suit individual farmers differently. Please also remember our responsibilities and obligations as velvetters.

Next week on 17 November between 7 – 8pm Canterbury/West Coast branch DFA supported by DINZ is hosting a webinar on Deer Select and understanding breeding values and what is presented in sale catalogues. Sharon McInytre and David Stevens will present and then answer questions on how to utilise and interpret the information to benefit your farm goals. The webinar is available for anyone.

Wishing everyone a lush and positive run into Christmas.

Thanks

Tom Macfarlane
NZDFA Executive Committee

Raincliff Reigns the Roost

Over 120 people converged on Raincliff Station in South Canterbury on Tuesday 27 October. The occasion was to celebrate the Morgan family winning the 2025 Deer Industry (supreme) Elworthy Award and the Streamlands Export NZ Velvet Award for leading, environmentally sustainable velvet farming.

Danette McKeown expertly facilitated the day that started off with a brief overview of the farm and its development since the family moved from Wales to Raincliff in 2002, buying it

outright in 2010. Currently the farm is 915 ha (800 ha effective and 760 ha deer fenced) producing velvet and venison, beef, dairy grazing and 200 head of MA sheep and 150-300 Fallow deer.

The weather was severe reminder that spring can be fickle and while the rain stayed away, the biting southerly was keenly felt out on the farm tour.



Stop 1, top paddock. David Morgan, Wayne Allan, Danette McKeown and Janet Gregory talk fencing and the farm in overview.



Stop 2. Wetlands and waterways (and a long convoy)

The scale and speed at what the family have done to minimise their farming environmental footprint while maintaining profitability was impressive. Environmental stewardship was motivated more by personal values and a consumer focus as much as (if not more than) keeping in front of government regulations. Although David wished that this was reflected in a genuine price premium and not just entry to the market.

Ending back at the deer shed and out of the wind, presentations from Wayne Allan, John Sadler and Brad Olsen rounded out the day. And of course, finishing up with venison buns from Mountain River and refreshments from Westpac allowed people to catch up and socialise.



Photo credit: J. Gregory

Congratulations to the Morgan family and thanks to Raincliff and the SCNO branch for an inspiring, informative and fun day out in an impressive farm.

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Tree planting "ceremony": David Morgan, Paddy Boyd (DINZ), Colin Jordan (SCNO Chair), Janet Gregory (lead judge for the awards). Photo credit: J. Gregory



Three generations of the Morgan Family Photo credit: J Gregory

NZDFA Subs

Have you paid your NZDFA membership for 2026/27?

Invoices were sent by email to members on 28 April and 23 August this year. However, a large number remain unpaid with many emails being unopened. This could be due to email messages being sent to the spam folder or if email addresses have changed (please let us know if this is the case so we can update your records).

Please **check your spam folder or unopened messages** – if you have not received an invoice, please email NZDFA@deernz.org and an invoice will be re-issued to you.

We have sent out the **final reminder notices by post**. If you receive one and you have already paid, please contact us so we can update our records.

Thanks to all NZDFA members who have renewed their membership for 2026/27. The NZDFA relies on this subscription to function effectively while continuing to deliver a strong, independent view for the producer at all levels of industry engagement.

Stag Sales and Deer Genetics Webinar

Buying deer this sale season? Make sense of the catalogues before you bid

As stag sale season approaches, understanding the breeding information behind the animals on offer can help you make more informed purchasing and breeding decisions.

The NZDFA Canterbury/West Coast Branch, with support from DINZ, is hosting a practical webinar to help deer farmers get more value from Deer Select and better understand the information presented in sale catalogues.

Whether you're completely new to breeding values or already use genetic information in your decision-making, this session will provide practical insights you can apply on farm.

You'll learn:

- What Deer Select is, who it is for, and how farmers can use it
- How to interpret breeding values and common catalogue measures such as EMA and CARLA
- How to balance catalogue figures with physical animal assessment when selecting breeding stock
- Why sale prices don't always reflect genetic rankings, and what different buyers look for
- How commercial farmers are using genetic information to improve results
- What new developments are on the horizon, including updated indexes, nProve, and genomic evaluation

The webinar will feature presentations from Sharon McIntyre, DINZ Deer Select Manager, and David Stevens, Southland deer farmer and stud breeder, followed by an audience Q&A session.

Whether you're buying your first stag or refining a long-term breeding programme, this webinar will help you better understand the information available and how to use it to support your farm's breeding goals.

Webinar details:

🗓️ Tuesday 17 November 2026

🕖 7:00pm to 8:00pm (NZDT)

👉 Register now: https://events.teams.microsoft.com/event/722bbde3-c6f3-4bdb-b603-1313ca2d3320@eaa4e65d-2ab2-4637-ba8b-b9e935ebf724

The webinar is hosted and organised by the NZDFA Canterbury/West Coast Branch and is open to all deer farmers, regardless of NZDFA membership. No prior knowledge of Deer Select is required.

Velvet Competitions

Branch velvet competitions are just around the corner. Please go to the events page for more details or to register.

Hawkes Bay

4pm Thursday 19 Nov, Te Maire, Matheson Road, Waipawa

hbdeerfarmers@gmail.com
Dinner from 6 pm at Onga Tiko Clubrooms, Highway 50, Tikokino

Central Regions & Taihape-Ruapehu

Saturday 21 Nov (Judging Day), 276 Colyton Road, Feilding, at North Island competition

Craig Hocken: 027 457-6388 or chocken@inspire.net.nz
Robbie Bruce: 021 370-300 or Rw.bruce@xtra.co.nz

SCNO

6pm Friday 27 Nov, Phar Lap Racecourse, Timaru

Brad Travers: 021 244-2265 or btravers@hotmail.co.nz

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North Island

5pm Saturday 28 Nov, Manfield Stadium, Feilding

Craig Hocken: 027 457-6388 or chocken@inspire.net.nz

Marlborough Tasman

11am Sunday 29 Nov, "Wye Hills", 4603 State Highway 63, Wairau Valley

Justin Stevens: 027 403-7131 or jrstevens@actrix.co.nz

Kaipara

Sunday 6 Dec, “Sheerwater”, 32 Donohue Road, Helensville, 11 am

Dave Chisholm: 021 0251-9600 or davechis369@gmail.com

National

Sat 5 - Mon 7 Dec, Ascot Park Hotel, Invercargill, 5pm Mon 7 Dec

Cam Nelson: 027 823 5672 or camnelson86@gmail.com

Elk Wapiti Society

Sat 30 - Sun 31 Jan 2027, Croydon Lodge Hotel, Gore

elkwapitinz@gmail.com
Tracey McLean tracey@sockworks.co.nz
Alan Clarke frontrowwapiti@gmail.com

Reminders!

⚠️ **Reminder to velvet farmers:**

- Book your supervisory visit before 15 December
- Only sell velvet to a VelTrak accredited account owner
- Hold your buyers to account
  - State your terms of engagement before your velvet leaves the property.
  - Many buyers want your velvet this season- while it is in your possession you have the right to dictate your expectations before transfer of ownership.
  - If you want grading to occur on farm you dictate that expectation.
- Check your VSDs after the velvet leaves your property
  - VSDs must be created within 48hrs of velvet leaving property.
  - Two separate VSDs are required for whole stick and spiker/ regrowth that leaves a property on the same day.
  - Weight must be correctly recorded on ALL VSDs.

⚠️ **Reminder to venison farmers:**

- Correctly complete your ASD.
- Ensure that your deer are correctly NAIT tagged and registered.

- For "Feral to Farmed" ensure that NAIT registration information is correct.

Noticeboard

2026 Elections and Appointments

Next year several NZDFA positions will be vacant by rotation:

- Two Executive Committee members
- Two Selection and Appointments Panel (SAP) members
- One DINZ Board director

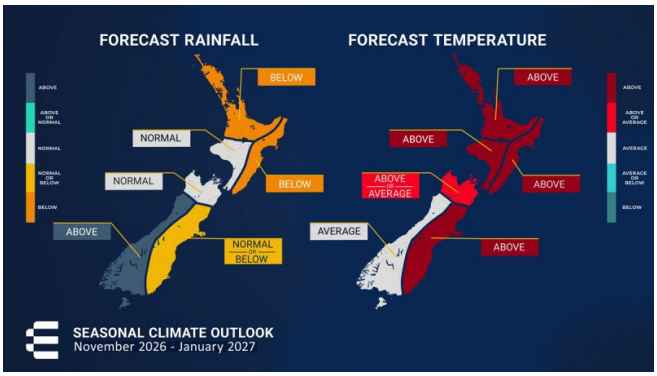
Key dates are as follows:

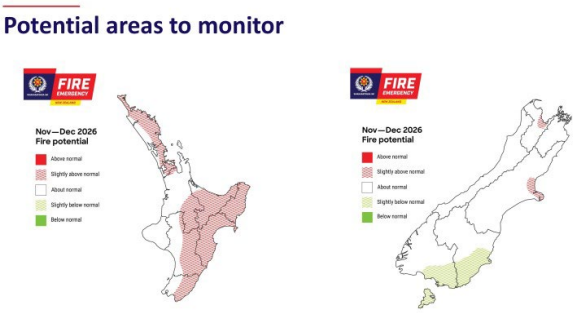
- 11 February
  Nominations for positions open (published in DFA Stagline, eNews, Deer Industry News)
- 1 April
  Nominations close
- 13 – 27 April
  Voting period for Executive Committee and SAP positions
- 5 May
  Election results announced, DINZ Board candidates address the NZDFA AGM (5 minutes each)
- 8 and/or 9 June
  DINZ Board candidate interviews. Successful candidate informed
- 21 July
  Successful appointee attends DINZ Board meeting

More information will be available in 2027.

Seasonal Climate Outlook November - December 2026

Very strong El Niño conditions are now present in the tropical Pacific and are expected to strengthen further. More details here>>>.





From our friends at Beef + Lamb New Zealand

About 75-80% of our farmers run mixed species farms. Here are a couple of initiatives from Beef +Lamb New Zealand that we hope is of interest and use for all of our deer farmers.

Have your say: Good Employer 2040 survey

What does a good job on a sheep and beef farm look like today, and what should it look like in 2040? Beef +Lamb New Zealand wants to hear from both employers and employees about what's happening on farm now, what's working

well, what's challenging, and what might need to change. The survey takes around 10 minutes, and your responses will help shape the next stage of the Good Employer 2040 project and future levy-funded investment in people and capability, helping ensure sheep and beef farming remains an attractive and rewarding career into the future. Complete the survey here and go in the draw to win a $100 voucher to a supermarket of your choice. The survey closes at midday on 16 November. Any questions can be directed to: olivia.weatherburn@beeflambnz.com

Did you also know about the Beef + Lamb New Zealand Employment Hub?

B+LNZ's Employment Hub brings together practical tools, templates and guidance to help you attract the right people, set them up well, and support them to thrive on farm. Check it out at www.beeflambnz.com/employment-hub

The hub keeps growing, with new resources added based on farmer feedback. Used a template, checklist or tool that's made managing staff easier? Think it belongs in the hub? Let them know at peopleandcapability@beeflambnz.com

Contacts for a UK deer farm visit

I moved to the UK, West Sussex in May for a working holiday. Currently working on a NZ Romney stud.

I would love to meet a deer farmer and have a farm tour and get an understanding of what different challenges they might face to what we do at home in NZ and to see how differently they run their farm systems.

I have been heavily involved in the Next Gen deer conferences and was lucky to be a part of the deer tour. And I have worked most of my farming career on sheep beef and deer farms.

If anyone can help William Bishop, contact him on william.bishop@outlook.co.nz

Jokes of the month

I was raised by two cans of lager…

They were my Foster parents.

Someone asked me to name two structures that hold water? 😳

…I was like well, dam

The talking parrot

A lady went to a pet shop and immediately spotted a large, beautiful parrot. There was a sign on the cage that said $50.

"Why so little?" she asked the pet store owner.

The owner replied, "Look, I should tell you first that this bird used to live in a house of ill repute, and sometimes it says some pretty vulgar stuff."

The woman thought about this but decided she had to have the bird. She took it home and hung the bird's cage up in her living room and

waited for it to say something. The bird looked around the room, then at her, and said, “New house, new madam.”

The woman was a bit shocked at the implication but then thought “that’s not so bad.”

When her two teenage daughters returned from school, the bird saw them and said, “New house, new madam, new girls.”

The girls and the woman were a bit offended but then began to laugh about the situation.

Moments later, the woman’s husband came home from work.

The bird looked at him and said, “Hi, Keith!”

Events

- Make sense of the catalogues before you bid webinar - Online, 17 Nov >>
- Hawke's Bay Velvet Competition - Hawke's Bay, 19 Nov >>
- South Canterbury/North Otago Velvet Competition, Timaru, 27 Nov >>
- North Island Velvet Competition, Feilding, 28 Nov >>
- Central Regions and Taihape Velvet and Hard Antler Competition - Feilding, 28 Nov >>
- Marlborough Tasman Velvet Competition - Marlborough, 29 Nov >>
- Kaipara Velvet Competition - Kaipara, 6 Dec >>
- National Velvet Competition - Invercargill, 7 Dec>>
- Elk Wapiti Society Velvet Competition - Gore, 30-31 Jan 2027 >>
- Bayonet 2027 Rising Stars National Hard Antler and Velvet Competition - Te Awamutu, 6 Mar 2027 >>
- Deer Industry Conference - Christchurch, 5-6 May 2027 >>

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

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