

# Ruakura's Pere David hybrids doing well



The two Pere David x Red deer hybrids (foreground) in May (5 months) with their Red deer herdsmates.

THE TWO hybrids, a male and a female born on Ruakura in January of this year, appear to be doing very well. Scientists Geoff Asher and Mike Adam are pleased with their growth and temperament.

Already, at seven months of age, the male weighs 78 kg and the female weighs 71 kg, or about 30 per cent larger than their Red deer herdsmates (which are about one month older). Particularly pleasing, however, is the fact that they have integrated well with their herdsmates and behave well when yarded. The two hybrids are even better behaved than the Red deer — their flight distance in the paddock is less than their herdsmates (being about five to 10 metres) and they are generally easier to handle in the yards.

The appearance of the hybrid fawns at birth was quite distinctive — especially their facial features and long tail. Even now, they are readily distinguishable from Red deer. Their fine, pointed faces and short ears give them away. When they trot, their tails are invariably held upright, a feature particularly noticeable with Pere David's deer.

The next step in the Ruakura Pere David programme is to obtain more first cross (F1) hybrids. About 40 Red hinds were artificially inseminated with Pere David semen in April this year but

the outcome will not be known until calving in December and January. Last year only two of 21 hinds produced hybrids. Hopefully Ruakura can do even better this year. □



Close-up profile (stag on left/hind on right).