

# ForageMaster® workshops for deer farmers

DEEResearch was generously given access to the sheep and beef ForageMaster program and funded a specific adaptation for deer.

*A consistent message received during consultation with farmers has been the need for independent information on pasture and forage crop species and cultivars. There are over 40 species and 250 cultivars and a large amount of competing claims in promotional material for a farmer to sort through. In response, Meat & Wool New Zealand contracted AgResearch to produce a decision support tool to provide them with independent advice.*

What does *ForageMaster* do? It asks the user to:

- identify, from lists of options, the climatic region, soil fertility and moisture conditions and pest threats for their particular situation
- define, again from lists of options, what they want of the pasture or crop – its longevity, ease of establishment, grazing management during each season etc; and
- rank the importance of seasonal forage yields, forage quality, resistance to pests, diseases and droughts, and ease of establishment and maintenance.

*ForageMaster* uses this information to identify the most suitable plant types from its list of 40 species and 250 cultivars. With the click of the mouse the user can find out


why one plant type is preferred over another, and why other species were unsuitable. This is backed up by information sheets about each forage type and supplementary information about their use.

If the user is dissatisfied with the selections he or she can review the conditions and priorities set at the start, and produce a new list of recommended plant types. This is a useful learning exercise, finding out why favourite plants may not be ranked as highly as expected, and why others ranked higher than expected.

When satisfied with the main species and cultivar selected, the user is informed of suitable companion species from which they can compile a seed mix of his choosing. This should be used as a basis for discussion with people with local experience – seed merchants, contractors, other farmers – before the final selection is made.

*ForageMaster* workshops have been presented to over 1500 sheep and beef farmers in the past 12 months.

In addition to the *ForageMaster* selection tool, the workshops cover other topics, including.

- cost-benefit analysis of sowing forage crops and regrassing
- best practice establishment methods, and management of pastures for persistence. 

## Trophy measuring course for SCI members

Safari Club International's New Zealand Chapter will host a trophy measuring course on Monday 25 September 2006 to follow the Sika Show at the Taupo Events Centre, Spa Road, Taupo. This seminar will be conducted by Michael Roqueni – Official Measurers' Coordinator and a colleague from SCI Trophy Records Department in Tucson, Arizona.

Costs are scheduled at \$US100.00 for the Official Measurers' course, and \$US125.00 for the advanced Master Measurers' certification. The course is open for Official Measurers to sit the Masters course, providing they held an Official certification prior to 1 April 2006. New International memberships may be purchased for \$US80.00 enabling new SCI members to sit the Official course. However new members cannot advance to the Masters course the same day.

To aid in planning the seminar, applications should be in as soon as possible.

**For further information, and an application form, contact: Glen Steen, SCI-NZ Seminar Convenor, 71B Beach Road, Castor Bay, Auckland, ph 09 410 4913, sknman@pl.net**

### ForageMaster for deer farmers

Meat & Wool New Zealand along with DEEResearch is now offering the deer industry the opportunity to provide workshops tailored to deer farmers' needs, during winter 2006. The tool has been rewritten to accommodate deer farmer requirements. Dates and venues for these workshops will be notified through local NZDFA Branches.

### Special reminder

There will be a *ForageMaster* session at 1.00 pm on Thursday 25 May during the post-conference field day at Lincoln University.

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