

Deer Farmers Environmental Awards

To reward deer farmers for implementing and practising perpetual and profitable deer farming practices.
To promote the adoption of sustainable deer farming practices on all deer farms via the Deer Farmers Landcare Manual.

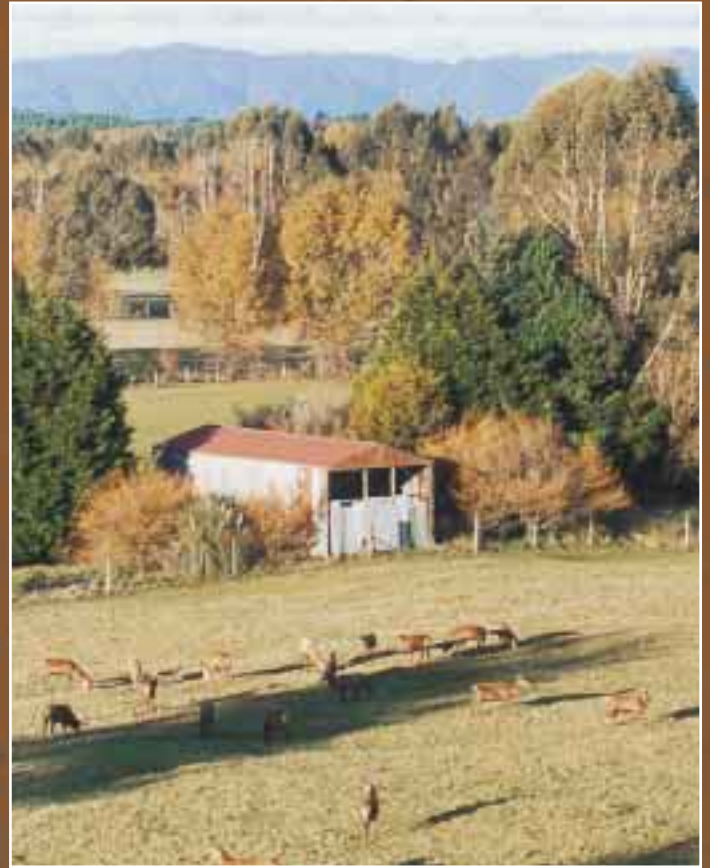
The future of New Zealand's \$280 million venison and velvet exports lies with consumer assurances of safe food which can be traced back to healthy deer on sustainably-farmed properties. Consumers' concerns about environmentally and animal friendly production are gathering pace, particularly in Europe following outbreaks of BSE and FMD.

It was a great endorsement that these inaugural awards have been supported by the deer industry, and that the awards were objectively judged, with two of the three judges from regional councils and the Department of Conservation, providing an outside perspective.

A solid number of entries were received, and all were of a high standard in upholding New Zealand's 'clean and green' image.

The winners of the premier award are an outstanding example of a typical family-owned deer farm achieving both production and environmental goals with careful planning and keeping their goals in sight.

*Sir Peter Elworthy
'Pioneer of New Zealand's deer farming industry'*



Principal sponsors:

The Sustainable Farming Fund, The New Zealand Deer Farmers Association, The New Zealand Game Industry Board, Mair Venison, Sir Peter and Fiona Lady Elworthy



Congratulations

Mair Venison and PPCS are proud to recognise the environmentally friendly and sustainable farm practices undertaken by many of our farmers.

These efforts ensure the sustainability of our environment and ability to continue being...

...suppliers of quality to the world.



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Victor and Margaret Clark with their totara and plaque prize.



Barriers along fencelines and keeping deer content prevent deer from pacing.

Below: Trees prevent erosion, and provide shade, shelter and visual screens for deer.

Upholding New Zealand's clean and green image

***Victor and Margaret Clark, Reporoa
Winner of the premier 'Sir Peter and Fiona Lady Elworthy
Environmental Award'***

Deer farming can be environmentally sustainable, friendly to animals and economically viable according to Central North Island deer farmers Victor and Margaret Clark, who received the premier award for their integrated ecosystem approach to sustainable farm management and quality production on 170ha of steep, potentially erodible, volcanic plateau land near Reporoa.

Taking over a former sheep farm 11 years ago the couple carried out a farm survey with regional council Environment Waikato before building their deer farm around their property's conservation plan. Barriers along fencelines prevent deer from pacing and damaging the weak soil structure. Trees were planted on steep land and alongside waterways to prevent erosion, with deciduous trees in paddocks providing shade, shelter and visual screens to keep deer calm and relaxed.

"Like most deer farmers, we understand the close relationship between deer and trees, so we wanted to let deer feed on pasture, but rest serenely among trees," says Victor Clark.

Slow-release fertilizers to lessen nutrient leaching are applied on the farm, and the Clarks use biological controls (including grazing sheep) rather than chemicals on weeds such as ragwort and nodding thistle.

When in Europe the Clarks saw that the environment would become the single biggest issue affecting New Zealand's deer industry. "It's not an encumbrance to have an environmentally-friendly farm," says Clark. "It's good for the deer, the land, and it's what our buyers in Europe want."

The Clarks will use the \$2000 prize to buy more trees to plant alongside the totara and plaque given by the Elworthys. "The process of entering the awards and being judged was very stimulating, because we've been working away at it with our heads down. We got to see things through the judges' eyes, giving us a chance to reflect on what we've done. It's nice to be acknowledged and rewarded for our efforts, but there is still a lot of work to do. We hope, like others, we can contribute to ideas about managing a deer farm in an environmentally-friendly way. The awards are a positive thing for the industry, but we have to be pro-active in showing that we are clean and green."



**Ken and Kathy Swainson, Sanson
The Fish and Game 'Environment Merit Award'
for excellence in riparian management**

In his lifetime, Manawatu fallow deer farmer Ken Swainson would like to be startled by the swosh of plump native wood pigeons flying overhead, and to be kept awake at night by the cries of moreporks. To help make this come true, Ken and wife Kathy have undertaken riparian and woodlot plantings on their 116ha 'Wheogo Downs' property on flat to rolling country near Sanson in the Manawatu.

The former dairy, sheep and cattle farm, has been in the family for the past four decades. Ken has created dams to hold water and attract aquatic birds, subsurface drainage in grassed gullies to recharge ponds, and 6ha of tree plantings has lessened erosion. Now 42 bird species have been identified on the property, and nesting boxes have attracted starlings to help with the biological control of grass grub.

Ken doesn't use chemicals, slow-release fertilizers are applied, deer get only one drench in their lifetimes, and weeds are controlled by fallow deer and by hand.



Riparian plantings by Ken Swainson have helped attract more than 40 different bird species.



A dam which has been fenced and planted attracts aquatic birds to the Swainson's fallow deer farm.

**Bruce and Alison Simmonds, Rerewhakaaitu, Kaingaroa
Summit Quinphos 'Environment Merit Award'
for excellence in improving the deer farm environment**

Farming at 500m above sea level on black ash from the 1860 Tawawera eruption isn't easy, but over the last three decades Bruce and Alison Simmonds have developed their 283ha sheep and cattle farm into an integrated stocking system, converting part of the farm to high production deer farming in 1978.

Chinese poplars have been planted to shelter the exposed land, help retain soil moisture, and provide forage in times of drought, while stock have been excluded from gullies and steep land, with oaks, flax, pampas grass and lupins planted to stabilize the soil and provide barriers. "You may lose 10% of your farm in shelter belts," says Bruce, "but it does significantly increase pasture and livestock production."

The shade and shelter means deer maintain their body temperature and use high quality food for growth – Bruce's velvet stags average an impressive 5.26kg.

Their 190 cattle and 540 sheep control pasture surpluses and weeds, and the Simmonds aim to have easy stock movements and provide plenty of high quality food and water so the stock are content. "It's not an either/or thing – you can provide quality profitably and sustainably."



Bruce Simmonds shows the Judges Andrew Fenemore and George Hadler an 'experiment area' using 'hot wire' and 'lupins' to re-establish ground cover.





Clive Jermy (centre) outlining his vision for his coastal Otago property to Denis Bush-King and George Hadler.

**Clive and Elsie Jermy, Palmerston
The Velpool 'Environment Merit Award'
for excellence in planning an
environmentally sustainable deer farm**

Coastal Otago's Stanfield's Bushy Park is a large scale operation of 4000 red deer on 950ha which has put an equally large effort in integrating environmental programmes into its overall farm operation. In just one year a badly rundown sheep farm has been developed into an impressive stud, and venison and velvet producer.

The biggest challenges on the coastal land and downs are erosion and shelter. Owners Clive and Elsie Jermy are also working with local iwi and the QEII National Trust to protect the archeological

remains of an adjacent 14th century Maori historic village, and fragile dune and tidal flat environments, as well as providing public access to the local river coastline.

The new owners have made a major commitment to new plantings and retiring erosion-prone land, with 10% of the farm being targeted for non-pastoral use, including 15ha of rehabilitating native bush, and an additional 6km of shelter belts this winter.

The judges noted, 'these entrants were exceptional in their environmental forethought in designing the layout of the farm for deer.'

**Richard Hilson and Karen Middelberg of Jedburgh Farm,
Takapau, central Hawke's Bay
The ANZ 'Environment Merit Award'
for environment sensitivity in deer farm development**

Starting with a blank canvas three years ago, Richard Hilson and Karen Middelberg have developed 78ha of flat land in the central Hawke's Bay into an attractive and functional breeding and finishing farm. Aware that much of the farm was once a low-lying swamp before European settlement, the young couple planted a retired boggy area in the middle of the former sheep farm, using regional council subsidies for riparian retirement and windbreaks. Along with 'permeable' poplar windbreaks and flaxes for birdlife, Hilson and Middelberg have planted woodlots with firewood, aesthetic and commercial species, and established visual screenings and shade to cater for the 250 breeding hinds and 14 stags. Since the 1998 drought they have planted around 3000 trees.

The pair are careful with chemical and fertilizer use, and have made lanes wide to prevent damage from vehicles and animals. The property has a high stocking rate, but as the judges noted 'is sensitively managed'.



Richard Hilson explains the benefits of permeable shelterbelts on his Hawke's Bay deer farm.

Hawkes Bay deer farmers Peter and Penny Warren with Deer Farming Environmental Awards judges George Hadler and Andrew Fenemor in front of a kahikatea now protected in a major native forest remnant under a QEII Trust covenant. The Warrens at Tikokino were highly commended in the inaugural awards successfully applying sustainable practices for managing the property for the long term, by thoughtful shelter plantings, fencing, waterflow management and animal husbandry.

John and Eileen Hammonds at Karapiro were also highly commended for putting into practice environmental measures on their small unit in the Waikato.

Tips

Happy and healthy deer result in sustainable and profitable deer farming

- Have a farm plan and set an achievable annual budget for environmental work
- Environmentally-friendly farming is good for deer and the land, and a good place to live and work
- Quality production is better than quantity production
- QA accreditation is a good start towards environmentally-friendly production
- Markets demand safe and clean meat produced in humane and environmentally-friendly conditions
- Protect waterways - riparian areas add value to the farm and increase the diversity of wildlife
- Significant land areas (10%) can be planted without any production loss
- Use biological controls for weeds, and slow-release fertilisers (RPR)
- Clean, reticulated water is best for animal health
- Shade, shelter and visual screens keep deer relaxed

