



New Zealand Deer Farmers' Association



DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND

2006 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

Recognising excellence and innovation on sustainable, environmentally responsible deer farms.

The return of the deer industry's environmental awards for 2006 is welcome indeed. These awards have now become established as a biennial event and in this, their fifth year, there is ample proof that sound environmental principles are being adopted by New Zealand's deer farmers and are a critical part of an industry responsibility.

In his guest editorial in this month's Deer Industry News, MAF's ADG Paul Reynolds notes as many have, that "it isn't easy being green when you're in the red". I'm sure many deer farmers would agree. But he also points out that economic growth and environmental sustainability are complementary objectives – not in conflict.

It is heartening to see this illustrated so convincingly through the innovation, passion and achievements shown by this year's award winners with their focus on environmental and economic sustainability.

Our last environmental awards were held in 2004, the year we launched the SFF funded Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual. The manual has attracted much praise since then, capped off by a wider recognition in a Ministry for the Environment Green Ribbon Award to its convenor, John Paterson.

But we must not rest on our laurels, nor keep the manual sitting on the shelf. Sustainability is activity of constant application and improvement. The environmental and welfare standards expected of us are under constant scrutiny. Environmental practices once thought of as "nice to have" are becoming mainstream. Recent changes to Environment Waikato's regional plan illustrate this very well. Without a resource consent, farmers in the region are now required to keep livestock out of streams flowing into Lake Taupo, any stream within two kilometres of the coast, and the margins of significant wetlands.

We must not only keep pace with changes like these – we must strive to exceed environmental standards, and it is gratifying to see so many deer farmers using their own initiative to do this.

I urge farmers to continue using the wonderful resource we have in the Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual, and to continue contributing ideas which can be used to update it. This year's winners show how the advice can be successfully applied.

I extend my thanks to this year's award judges, who have done a sterling job assessing the environmental work of the 2006 entrants. Simon Stokes (Hawke's Bay Regional Council) returned as lead judge. He was ably assisted by John Paterson (NZDFA) and Bridget Pringle (Fish & Game New Zealand). Our partnership with the Regional Councils and Fish & Game is an important benefit of the awards judging process.

Our thanks also go to Fiona Lady Elworthy for agreeing to continue the association of her family's name with the Premier Award. This association gives prestige to the Deer Industry New Zealand funded award, and provides important continuity back to 2000, when the late Sir Peter Elworthy first mooted the concept at our 25th Anniversary conference. Our thanks too for the continuing support of Summit Quinphos for the production of this brochure, and Individual Excellence award sponsors Duncan & Co, Fish & Game and New Zealand Landcare Trust.

In this brochure you can read about the ideas and practices that our 2006 award winners have used. Once again they have set a fine example for our industry to follow.

Andrew Mitchell,
Executive Committee Chairman, NZDFA

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Balance between farming and nature key for success

Murray Neutze and Keith Nattrass, Wierton

Winners of the Premier Sir Peter and Fiona Lady Elworthy Environmental Award

A balanced approach to farming by Geraldine deer farmers Murray Neutze and Keith Nattrass impressed this year's judges of the Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards.

The judges were most impressed with the way Murray and Keith had used the environment to support, rather than working against the farm and its business. Judges also commended the pair on the extent to which they carried out planning and analysis prior to placing infrastructure on the farm.

The land at *Wierton* features a combination of rolling ridges framed by woodlots, shelterbelts and fenced plantings. The judges particularly liked the curves of the environment and the way the farm fitted into the landscape.

In terms of watercourse management, Murray and Keith have de-stocked fenced areas and ameliorated surface runoff issues. The movement of contaminants in groundwater is also being managed with the mixture of shallow and deep rooting species in the fenced areas.

The judges also noted the high production levels coming off the farm and the targeting of feed utilisation specifically geared around spring growth.

Overall the judges chose *Wierton* as the Premier Award winner because of Murray and Keith's commitment to business, environment and personal achievements, balanced with a triple bottom line approach. *Wierton*



Murray Neutze, Bridget Pringle (Judge), Keith Nattrass and Simon Stokes (Lead Judge) look over one of the many mature plantings at Wierton.

has positioned itself well as a high-producing, flexible, pastoral farm capable of meeting growing environmental requirements.

A field day will be held at *Wierton*, in association with NZDFA, so that other deer farmers can see first hand the environmental enhancements made on the property.



Paddy Boyd, Haldon Station, Mackenzie Country

Duncan & Company Environment Award for excellence and innovation in a demanding environment

Farming in an area of environmental extremes presents unique challenges. When the judges arrived at Haldon Station in Fairlie they found the property in severe drought.

Despite the conditions, the judges found the stock to be in good health and the use of water enabled areas to be kept 'green'. What impressed the judges was that despite



the necessary shift in farm management, the situation was being managed carefully and calmly.

The judges commended the recent fencing and planting efforts, and a strong indigenous revegetation plantings of areas near a large swamp.

Haldon Station also has a sediment control process with water going through two to three dams before being reused for the irrigation system. Judges commented on the innovative use of rock armouring for border dyke channels.

They noted the development of land into high quality pastures. Other areas that impressed were the continued use of the pest plants rose hip briar and hieracium to feed stock, ferret control programmes and a high quality deer shed.

The judges said the current management excelled in rising to the business challenges posed by environmental extremes.

Good use of water resources during a drought enabled areas to be kept green despite the conditions.



Ken and Kathy Swainson, Wheogo Downs, Sanson

New Zealand Landcare Trust Environment Award for excellence and commitment to sustainable deer farming

Ken and Kathy Swainson have a passion for sustainable farming which has developed over many years.

The judges praised the Swainsons' continuing programme of fencing, in particular extensive new fencing and wetland/dam building on the last remaining watercourse.



Ken Swainson (left) and Lead Judge Simon Stokes look over one of the well-tended tree blocks developed at Wheogo.

The Swainsons are dedicated to returning birdlife to the area and impressed the judges with their biodiversity focus.

The farm is starting to show the benefits of a wide range of vegetation and paddocks are split by growing blocks of trees which will take on a majestic look in years to come, the judges said.

The Swainsons have recently sold their deer transport operation, allowing more time to focus on the farm business. In terms of new growth, Wheogo Downs has developed its Fallow trophy market to supplement the traditional Fallow venison and live sales deer markets.

Innovations such as a solar-powered electric fence caught the judges' eyes as did the couple's involvement with, and commitment to, education and community involvement.

In summary, the judges said Wheogo Downs is a well presented farm which reflects the Swainsons' dedication and personal attachment. They commended the couple's ongoing commitment to the business, environment and personal achievements, and passion for returning bird life to the area.



John and Dorothy Carter, Raroa Red Deer Stud, Cambridge

Fish & Game New Zealand Environment Award for excellence in riparian management

John and Dorothy Carter's emphasis on environmental issues has seen the development of an inspiring property which is fast becoming a model for modern farming.

A strong belief in riparian management coupled with an emphasis on sediment control has led to the development of watercourses being fenced and planted. Constructing sediment ponds has helped prevent sediment and other material reaching the farm's watercourse boundaries.

Judges praised the low-level impact of the farm business and the emphasis on indigenous species. They also noted the beautiful amenity tree planting.

On the deer farming business side, the judges commended the couple's focus on deer genetics and foetal ageing as an advanced management tool, and their innovative work in using minerals to overcome deficiencies. The excellent rapport between the Carters and their manager (Bill Robinson) also shone through, with the current manager displaying excellent knowledge and expertise while bringing in outside expertise where necessary.

In summary, the judges said that in the challenging Waikato environment, this farm is achieving superb riparian management and sediment control, at the same time weaving exotic and indigenous flora across the landscape, in such a way that it really is a model to be inspired by.



Lead judge Simon Stokes, Raroa farm manager Bill Robinson (partially obscured) and owner John Carter look over one of the fenced-off dams at Raroa.

Looking ahead:

Suggestions for further enhancements

Improving the performance of sustainable, environmentally responsible deer farms is a dynamic process. Every award-winning farm has an ongoing programme for environmental enhancement, and the following is a summary of judges' suggestions for future improvements. These tips are useful not only for the award-winning farms, but for all deer farms.

- Gathering further information on the state of the farm's resources (e.g. soil and water) means programmes can be fine tuned and better targeted. Use the Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual
- A soil-monitoring programme in place using the Visual Soil Assessment technique or a biennial programme of macroporosity testing can help with monitoring compaction or pugging. Monitoring can also help with understanding of any potential soil health/groundwater issues related to land use.
- Nutrient budgeting can improve knowledge of soil and fertiliser requirements. This would provide the framework for an annual nutrient budget. "Overseer", which is free from AgResearch over the internet is one such budgeting tool (www.agresearch.co.nz/overseerweb/download.aspx).



A fenced and planted watercourse at Raroa. Good use of indigenous species was commended by the judges.

- A focus on biodiversity will improve understanding of indigenous ecology and identify regeneration in fenced-off afforested areas. This would help with future planning, identifying what can be regrown on site after harvest of woodlots.
- Woodlots should be maintained to meet market requirements in future. (With smaller blocks it is important to ensure they are profitable on a per-tree basis.)

- When choosing tree species for planting, consider trees which could cope with the environmental conditions, contribute to biodiversity and also provide useful timber resources in the future.
- Siting of silage pits should be done to minimise risk from leachate entering watercourses.



Fenced-off waterway at Haldon.

- During the roar, location of stags away from steep land will help increase sediment control.
- In dryland areas, groundwater monitoring could include an irrigation efficiency audit and the expert use of lysimeters to measure groundwater quality and movement. This short-term investment can be repaid by more certainty about long-term water use.



The pleasing contours of Whego Downs. Note fenced-off dam and use of boulders to prevent deer from damaging the wet outflow area. Ridge-line planting with deciduous trees for shade and shelter can be seen in foreground.

Further information:

The Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards are part of the deer industry's environmental awareness programme, and help with the dissemination of practical knowledge to others in the industry. The awards entrants demonstrate the principles found in the industry's major information resource on environmental matters: the Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual, published in 2004. For further information on the awards or the Landcare Manual contact:

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Acknowledgements:

Cover photo: Chris Petersen, Te Anau; All other photos: John Paterson; Judges' notes: Simon Stokes, Hawke's Bay Regional Council; Editing, design and production: Words & Pictures