



2012 Deer Farmers' Biennial Environmental Awards

2012 Deer Farmers' Biennial Environmental Awards

Recognising excellence and innovation on sustainable, environmentally responsible deer farms

On behalf of the NZDFA, I congratulate all the entries and winners of this year's Deer Industry Environmental Awards, particularly Jacqui and Brian Wellington as the Premier Award winners and recipients of the Elworthy Award. As one of a panel of judges from within and outside the industry It has been a privilege to be invited onto all the contestants' properties. As in other years, standards on all farms were of the highest level.

The Awards recognise excellence in environmental leadership and sustainable land management. They are a showcase not only to fellow deer farmers, but to the wider community. All contestants' have demonstrated this leadership, by designing and implementing farming systems which are not only economically successful but also mitigate against potential negative environmental outcomes associated with their farming systems.



A highlight of the Environmental awards are the field days which are held at all the winning properties. The field days allow for the successful category winners to share their experiences with the wider Industry. In particular, these events showcase how the winning properties have modified their farming systems, demonstrating best practice and solving issues in a practical cost-effective manner. All the properties are characterised by a proactive management approach. Most visibly, these often include amenity and riparian plantings in conjunction with establishing filtering zones, ensuring water leaving the property is of the highest possible standard. These plantings typically have been carried out as part of a long-term plan, often over several generations.

This year's Awards coincided with the launch of the Deer Industry's revised Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual. This provides a modern practical tool to help farmers with their land care challenges. The revised Manual is a collaborative approach directed by leading environmental agencies, Industry representatives and farmers to illustrate and recommend best environmental practice to help farmers develop and implement their own sustainable systems. The adoption of the principles of these Landcare by the Deer Industry as a whole is also illustrated by our Environmental Award winners helping to ensure the long-term profitability and sustainability of our industry.

I would like to once again congratulate all the winners of this year's Awards, and thank all the entrants, judges and sponsors for their skills, commitment and involvement.

Edmund Noonan
Chairman , 2012 Biennial Environmental Awards programme for the NZDFA



Sponsors of the 2012 Biennial Environmental Awards

2012 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

The vision of developing a balanced system that ensures long term protection of the environment and supports sustainable production is clearly evident upon viewing *Te Awamutu Station*, where commitment to best practice is a way of life for the Wellington farming family.

Brian & Jacqui Wellington farm *Te Awamutu Station*, 621ha of undulating hill country in the Owairaka Valley, south east of Te Awamutu in the Waikato. Brian's grandfather bought the original 200ha in 1921 to which his father added 136ha to in the 1970's. Brian & Jacqui added a further 285ha in 2002. They started farming deer in 1978, which now comprise 71% of the livestock (17% sheep and 12% dairy grazers, totalling 10,800su).

The Wellingtons run both a straight Red hind breeding herd to produce velvet with 497 mixed aged velvetting stags and a red venison herd mated to Wapiti Cross stags to meet the venison market. Wintered hinds number 1276 mixed age and 1529 R1/R2 hinds along with 245 R2 stags.

Brian regularly uses and updates their farm map in planning operations on the farm, whether it is to identify the key areas to go into deer blocks, define riparian fencing and planting areas or identifying risk areas that need to be retired.. Along with a good lane system and planting of gully systems into pine trees, the land is divided into country suitable for deer and flatter areas that are used for dairy grazing. All decisions are with documented to support this planning. The sheep graze the smaller paddocks and laneways and wean ~150%.

The 15ha stands of *Pinus radiata* are now 18 years old and provide winter cover in the gully systems and are interspersed with sediment ponds filtering any run off. Self feeding silage stacks are located at the top of these gullies and provide efficient feeding for 1000 hinds for 120 days during winter.

Regular soil tests and nutrient budgets are part of the routine monitoring of farm systems, with an aim of improving farm productivity and efficiencies. Recent extensions to the deer shed and yards will enable improved stock management during the regular weighing and monitoring of stock. These activities are incorporated as part of the regional *Making the DIFFerence* Focus Farm programme with an aim of lifting stock weights by analysing different feeding regimes and refining the management based on these results. This also includes the use of RFID (NAIT compliant) to improve the efficiency of weighing and recording animals.

Brian & Jacqui have a good work-life balance and always aim to have a holiday in front of them to look forward to. This may include a hunting trip for Brian, which is one of his passions and he is a keen member of the local Deerstalkers Association. Jacqui is also busy in the local community being a Justice of the Peace and President of her local branch of Rural Women New Zealand.



Brian and Jacqui Wellington *Te Awamutu Station, Waipa*

Premier Award: The Elworthy Environmental Award sponsored by Deer Industry New Zealand



Recognising leadership in environmental sustainability and excellence in land management

NZ Landcare Trust Award: For excellence in sustainable deer farming through action on the ground



Fish and Game New Zealand Award: For excellence in riparian management- for long term excellence and understanding of riparian management.



**2012 Deer Farmers'
Environmental Awards**

Brian & Jacqui Wellington

**NZ Landcare Trust Award
For excellence in sustainable deer farming
through action on the ground**



Showing identification of risk areas, implementation of mitigation tools and adaption of farming systems to ensure long term sustainability.

A clear understanding of farm environmental risks and the implementation of mitigation tools is evident on the Wellington property. Susceptible steep wet faces have been retired to protect soil and water quality with additional plantings undertaken in some of these areas. This strategic approach to protect biodiversity values enables at risk areas to be fenced off and protected before damage is done and protect biodiversity values.

Further initiatives include constructing sediment ponds within the forest blocks to trap any runoff from higher in the catchment as well as providing habitat for bird life. Monitoring of these areas is part of the ongoing programme.



Above: Deer are wintered in the Pine trees for 120 days reducing damage to pastures at susceptible times

Left: Self feed silage pits are used in tandem with the forest blocks to feed over 1000 hinds in the winter time



**Brian & Jacqui Wellington
Fish and Game NZ Award
For excellence in riparian
management**



For long term excellence and understanding of riparian management

A strategy of matching livestock type to land class allows for re-grassing of flatter pastures that are then grazed by high producing stock resulting in improved efficiencies.

Brian's father started fencing off the waterways and planting of amenity trees and this has been continued by Brian and Jacqui with approx 6ha now in riparian plantings. Jacqui has sourced most of the trees from the Taupo Native Plant Nursery. These plantings provide a mosaic of habitat throughout the property, providing autumn colour and areas for a range of birds along with protecting water quality in streams. A clear understanding of the need to mitigate any impacts on water quality before it leaves the farm is evident on the property.

The *Puniu River* at the back of the property is fenced and planted with poplar, willows and pines.

Springs located throughout the property are utilised to provide a reticulated water system for most of the property.



2012 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

**Robert & Alex Peacock
Orari Gorge Station,
Geraldine, South Canterbury**



QEII National Trust
Open Space New Zealand
Ngā Hānauhi Pae

**QEII National Trust Award
for Demonstrating Outstanding Stewardship**

Orari Gorge Station: A large scale intergenerational property incorporating environmental ethics into the day to day farming activities, matching the land class capabilities with the appropriate stock class while maintaining and fostering long term conservation values.

Orari Gorge Station is 4300 ha extensive property 15km from Geraldine, first settled in 1855 by the Tripp and Acland families. Approximately 4000ha effective, the Station comprises 75% steep tussock country, 10% rolling downs and 10% fertile river flats.

Protection of the significant native forest areas has been a long and gradual process with the original ~75 hectares fenced off from stock by Robert's great, great, grandfather, Charles Tripp in the early 1860's. He placed a bounty of 100 pounds on anyone entering without strict permission. A large area of bush around the homestead was fenced off at the same time. The main area



Extensive areas of tussock country provide natural terrain for the deer unit.

of approx 300ha of native forest was fenced off in the early 1980's and a further 75ha in the 1990's. The forest is of podocarp-hardwood mix with Kahikatea, Matai and Totara common along with broadleaf, lancewood, lowland ribbonwood and narrow-leaf lacebark. Robert has also worked on controlling sycamore and wattle trees that are spreading in the bush.

The forest area also helps to protect water quality. There are 3 creeks flowing through the property and two of these creeks flow within the forest areas with the last 3km of the third also flowing through the forest.

Four of the five gecko species found in South Canterbury can be found on the property and this reflects careful grazing management allowing retention of extensive areas of tussock and shrub habitats necessary for their survival.

The property is running 22,867 stock units on 4000ha. The deer operation comprises 26.2% of total stock units. The remaining stock units are made up of 48% sheep and 25.8% cattle. Orari Gorge Station operates multiple studs including Hereford cattle and Romney and RomTex sheep. The recording, management, robust selection policies and diligent performance recording with intelligent use of EID allows for continual improvement of stock. Robert is continually innovating and incorporating sought after traits in his stud stock.

Approx 700 cows including a Hereford Stud are run for beef production and pasture control. All stock are finished on the property and they follow lambs and fawns on the downlands.

The 1500 MA English Red hinds are run on 1000ha extensive tussock blocks on the hill with minimum handling. Robert prefers the English Reds for their good temperament and believes they are suited to the terrain at Orari Gorge. The hinds are brought in once a year to wean and take out the stags. The stags are sourced from Graham Carr at Peel Forest Estate and selected for Johnes resilience, growth and temperament.



Station Creek area showing extensive areas of podocarp-hardwood forest on Orari Gorge Station



2012 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

Approx 500ha of improved downlands allow all weaners (approx 1400) to be retained and finished including replacement weaner hinds. All adult stock are run on the higher tussock blocks while younger stock are grown out and finished on the improved lower country.

This policy allows the most appropriate stock classes to be run on the most suitable land type ensuring the protection of soil and water values along with maximising animal production.

The Peacocks continue to innovate. When their Internet connection did not meet their needs Robert established his own Internet connection, now supplying broadband not only for the station but also the neighbouring districts. This attitude is typical of the management of the Station; after acknowledging an issue, solutions are found.

The pride that the Peacock family have for their land is obvious. This extends also to their staff who are very loyal and passionate about the property. Overall the judges were impressed by the approach the family took to looking after *Orari Gorge Station* for the next generation emphasising not only its environmental state but also ensuring it is profitable and therefore sustainable for future Peacock family members.



Developed downlands provide high quality feed for finishing weaners and lambs while forested gullies provide natural shelter and protect water quality

Willie & Michelle Coates Haupiri, West Coast



DUNCAN & COMPANY
LIMITED

Duncan & Company Award *For Innovation and Vision in a Demanding Environment*

An intergenerational farming family with a high level of understanding of how farming impacts on their environment, with a willingness to protect the environment through modification of their farming system.

Willie & Michelle Coates run 330ha effective deer farm at Haupiri, an hour drive east of Greymouth on the West Coast. With 40 ha of native bush and creeks fenced off, the property runs 600hinds, 40 stags, 380 fawns and 300 dairy heifers. Willie and his father John converted the property from sheep and beef to deer in 1990, with Willie taking over total control in 2000.

On driving around the property it is obvious that the Coates family has a genuine understanding of the environmental issues that affect the business. Willie is actively doing positive things to improve the environmental outcomes on his property. For example, the recently installed winter feed pad with silage and baleage that provides flexibility for wet periods in winter and spring. Protecting the soils from pugging was Willy's main focus for establishing this feeding system, as over winter they have a good number of stock on still and the damage they can do during this period can hinder progress required at crucial stock finishing times.



Willie demonstrates how his Electronic Identification system operates in his deer shed

The cold easterly wind is another major challenge of the Coate's West Coast property. A good amount of tree planting has been done with windbreaks to minimise wind damage and protect stock with more planned over the next few years.

Both Willie and Michelle are clearly innovative individuals, having utilised EID technology for years now in all their stock, self designed deer shed, impressive laneways and paddock design, feed-pad systems and in the last year further

investigation of a possible hydro system from a waterfall on their property. They are constantly looking at ways to improve the profitability of their business and overall the sustainability for the next generation.



2012 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards

The high producing property is farming to its strength, utilising pasture species most adapted to dry land farming conditions, matching animal demand and feed supply ensuring a high producing sustainable and profitable system.

Lyndon and Millie Matthews run a 267ha (200ha effective) deer breeding and finishing property near Waikari with an emphasis on high production through utilization of high quality pastures that suit their challenging traditionally dry environment.

The focus of this intergenerational family property is on farming sustainably, while producing red meat in an efficient manner by concentrating on high quality feeding through a mix of pasture species while ensuring appropriate covers to cope with the dry seasons they regularly get.

While Lyndon and Millie are based in Christchurch at present to meet family needs, they have used this opportunity to grow their business. During this time they employ a local person as farm manager and go back to the property as often as they can.

They grow all the feed on the property and are investigating different feeding operations for the winter, matching animal demands with pasture production. They have been flexible with animal numbers when the need has risen, to meet climate and or budgetary needs, which has put them on a good platform to grow their business when it is suitable.

The Matthews have staggered the establishment of shelterbelts, again adapting to the climate and budget with the shelterbelts providing excellent shade and shelter as well as adding to the aesthetic values on the property. They have recently fenced off a wetland and are looking to undertake further fencing and planting. They have strong community involvement and look for opportunities where everyone benefits. "where you have winners and losers you don't have an enduring business"



Lyndon & Millie Matthews **Puketira Deer, Waikari, North** **Canterbury**



Firstlight Foods Ltd Award
for Total Commitment to farming sustainably
with a strong customer focus



Summing up

The 2012 NZ Deer Farmers Environmental Awards again showcased the high calibre of farmers that exist within the Deer Industry. All eight entrants effectively conveyed their sustainable farming beliefs and actions to the judges and all identified that the principle of being 'sustainable' was not a one off event, but rather a long term commitment. A commitment to do the best they can in an effort to preserve their land and enhance it for the next generation.

The 2012 Supreme winners Brian and Jacqui Wellington of Te Awamutu, clearly displayed they have what it takes to be profitable and sustainable guardians of their natural resources.

Major features and programmes will be displayed and discussed at field days on the winning properties, to be held later this year in association with the award sponsors.



2012 Awards Assessment Team

Janet Gregory	(NZ Landcare Trust)
Edmund Noonan	(Chairman NZDFA 2011-12)
Tim Smith	(Mararoa Station, Previous Winner of the Premier Elworthy award 2010)
Amy Wills	(DINZ)
James Hoban	(ECan)
Zella Smith	(Fish & Game NZ)
Colin Helem	(West Coast Regional Council)

Further Information

The NZ Deer Farmers Environmental Awards are part of the Deer Industry's Environmental awareness programme and help with the dissemination of practical knowledge. The entrants demonstrate best practise principles as displayed in the recently released Deer Farmers' Landcare Manual May 2012.

For further information on the awards or the Manual contact Amy Wills, DINZ Producer Coordinator on 04 471 6110 or amy.wills@deernz.org

