

# 2025 Deer Farmers Environmental Awards



Ministry for Primary Industries  
Manatū Ahu Matua



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# 2025 Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards Judging Panel

## Environment Time to Shine

I have been privileged to have been asked to be lead judge for the bi-annual Deer Farmers' Environmental Award once again, having been involved in judging the awards since 2008.

It has been heartening to see how deer farmers and the industry supporters have continued to support this programme, that celebrates and showcases how deer farmers are actively protecting and enhancing the environment on which their business' are based, but also the innovation shared with us, which is a typical stand out feature of the sector. This was evident by the some of the actions taken on farm to meet challenges but also in the business operations that entered this year.

Farm succession has been a focus of the sector for a number of recent years with discussions lead by the Next Generation programme and it was great to see entrants involved in this process, and we acknowledge the time and circumstances that enable this to happen. We also acknowledge this is an important step in retaining deer farmers as deer farmers!

At a time of economic challenges and regularity change it is important to recognise and celebrate the good things that deer farmers are doing well and looking after the environment that you farm within and the passion you have for that land and deer farming was evident throughout the judging,

## Our entrants

This year we had five entrants spread from South Canterbury to Poverty Bay, with a mix of deer breeding, finishing, breeding for velvet, and for the first time a deer milking operation. The mix of land class, climates, and operations showcased the versatility of deer and the passion that each of the landowners have for deer farming.

Some common themes included:

- Reviewing and restructuring a business was critical for economic sustainability
- Farm succession from one generation of deer farmers to the next is key to retaining deer farmers and farms running deer.
- Involvement in industry groups and catchment groups can bring multiple benefits to the farm business including sharing of ideas, mentoring, funding or working together on common issues.



- Deer farmers are retiring 'at risk' areas to protect soils, biodiversity and water quality with many areas having QEII covenants that provide long term protection.
- Innovation was evident on all farms to overcome different challenges.

## Thanks

A huge thanks to each of the landowners for entering and sharing your success stories and challenges with us so openly, and the hospitality you provided made for a great couple of weeks. It was beneficial to hear the stories behind many of the situations you are in and how that has also influenced your decisions but you have still put yourselves out there to share what you are doing with fellow farmers and provides everyone an opportunity to learn from each other.

A big thanks to our sponsors (**NZDFA, DINZ, NZ Landcare Trust, Gallagher, Duncan NZ, Streamlands Export NZ, MPI**) which allows this programme to continue, especially in times when budgets are tight. This engagement and support from business and other organisations is vital in showing commitment to the sector.

*Janet Gregory*

## 2025 Environment Awards judges:

- Janet Gregory, Lead Judge and Regional Advisor, Ministry for Primary Industries
- Luka Jansen, Environmental Stewardship Manager, Deer Industry New Zealand
- Richard Burdon, Winner of 2023 Deer Farmers' Premier Elworthy Award
- Lindsay Fung, Producer Manager, Deer Industry New Zealand

## 2025 Environment Award sponsors:

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# Premier Elworthy Environmental Award

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## David and Jan Morgan and family

Raincliff Station, South Canterbury

David and Jan Morgan lead the Morgan Family business on the 755ha Raincliff Station with an adjacent lease block of 150ha. The main farm business of deer includes 650-800 red breeding hinds for velvet and trophy stag production, 200 Elk/Wapiti cows to produce terminal venison sires for an annual on-farm sale, approximately 10 tonne velvet per year, and a trophy stag business.



Additional livestock includes calf rearing, finishing beef cattle and dairy heifer grazing.

The Morgan family have a clear vision of being profitable, sustainable and enjoyable, and strive to do that by a focus on people and building on the strengths of the team.

Son Brychan, is fully immersed in managing the farm with a transition underway from David to Brychan which is also allowing for Brychan to run a wedding venues business during the 'wedding season.'

Farm planning has enabled 'risk' areas for the property to be identified with many areas retired, fenced from stock and planted including riparian areas and erodible slopes. Further sediment traps are planned.

### What impressed the judges

- Passionate farmers who have done well to balance economic and environmental development. A diverse range of income is generated off this farm and the family is a strong unit with a long-term vision for environmental sustainability. The family was open about their challenges to achieve their goals and kept each other on their toes.
- Excellent stock management and fit for land type, and actively protecting risk areas.



# The Streamlands Export Ltd Award

For leading, environmentally sustainable velvet farming

- Excellent deer facilities catering for stock management, velvetting, semen collection and staff.
- Passionate about community involvement and allows urban people to experience life on the farm through a number of avenues including planting sunflowers near the road for people to take photos, hosting weddings, and have rock climbing activities.



## Judges' suggestions

- Actively plan time away from the farm for both David and Brychan so they have time to focus on personal goals and family life.
- Continue with succession plan and involve expert advice to ensure economic planning is sound for the next generation.
- Consider reducing scale of change on western gully to make it more manageable over a number of years.



# NZ Landcare Trust Award

For excellence in sustainable deer farming through actions on the ground

## Kim and Judith Rowe

Brookfields, Nelson



Kim and Judith Rowe run a red deer breeding and finishing operation on 503ha (386ha effective) in the Motueka Valley with a mix of easy hill country and flat terraces. It also includes some beef finishing. Many of the steeper slopes have been planted in trees which have helped to protect soil and water.

Native beech-podocarp forest alongside the Stanley Brook Stream is a feature on the property and protected through QEII Covenants and are the largest areas of this habitat type in the upper South Island. Judith and Kim have been successful in getting a range of funding to support management of these areas over a number of years with a focus on managing weed and animal pests.

### What impressed the judges

- Deep commitment to environmental progress by passionate farmers who have done well at budgeting for environmental work over decades, with considerable success in gaining external support.
- Excellent farm planning that reinforces knowledge and management of the farm with appropriate land use to land class evident.
- Excellent management of risk areas, with retirement, constructed wetlands, and plantings to protect soil and water.
- Extensive willow management, planting of 6 kms of riparian areas with native trees, and have designed and constructed effective tree guards to protect newly planted trees from deer.
- Social responsibility was also a stand out on this farm with many people in the community being given an opportunity to learn about deer farming and how to protect and enhance the significant ecological areas.

### Judges' suggestions

- Work with trusted advisers to identify opportunities for you to share how you have managed environmental issues on your farm, with other farmers in the region.
- Consider opportunities to include interested local community members in the activities you undertake to protect the QEII covenants.





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# Duncan New Zealand Ltd Award

For vision and management whilst mastering a demanding environment

## Jane and Charles Rau

Matawai Deer Park Ltd, Gisborne



Matawai Deer Park was originally established by Charles' parents, Laurence and Liz Rau, and is located inland from Gisborne on SH2, Waioeka Gorge. It comprises 400ha of rolling hill country with some river flats adjacent to the Motu River. The soils are Taupo ash and pumice and are well suited to the Red deer breeding and finishing operation with an emphasis on velvet production. With approx. 8,000 stock units, this farm is run well and has great systems in place to ensure it is resilient and sustainable long-term.

### What impressed the judges

- Exemplary teamwork lies at the heart of this farm's environmental success. They actively share environmental goals, encourage new ideas and solutions, including new technology that can make the farm more efficient and sustainable.
- The property features well-maintained QEII covenant areas, preserving the native ecological bush areas. The family are thankful for the legacy of their parents' enhancement work and are enthusiastic about continuing the legacy into the future.
- Newly planted and thriving wetland areas demonstrate a strong commitment to enhancing biodiversity and improving nutrient management on the farm.
- Beyond the farm gate, the team at Matawai Deer Farm Park have organised planting days on the deer farm with the local school. They set up a greenhouse at the school, giving children the opportunity to learn how to care for and grow trees.
- Charles and Jane Rau are founding members of the Motu Catchment Group and have worked hard to secure funding that benefits the wider rural community. These environmental actions create good relationships, community collaboration and environmental education within their community.

### Judges' suggestions

- Continue to retire the full length of the stream behind the yard paddock and include a culvert at the stock crossing that will reduce sediment loss and maintain water quality from this area of the farm.
- Continue to be part of the catchment group as it is an opportunity to share your farm environmental progress and goals with others, in addition to providing leadership to the group.





- It was great to see the success of the recently planted wetland areas. Consider further planting of flax and other low maintenance plants in these areas.
- Consider more single tree planting or small group plantings with protection barriers in areas prone to erosion as well as shade for deer.



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# NZDFA Next Generation Award

For excellent performance across environmental, financial, and social aspects of the business

## Dwight Adlam

Mangahao Deer Company, Shannon



Mangahao Deer Company specialises in red deer finishing, velvet production and trophy and is managed by Dwight Adlam, a second-generation deer farmer. The operation encompasses rolling hill country located east of Shannon and supports 750 mixed-aged stags. A stand out feature of the property is its deer wintering barn, which accommodates 250 mixed-aged stags. The barn is a crucial tool used to manage pasture and protect soils during the wettest months of the year delivering impressive results.

### What impressed the judges

- The farm presented significant landscape challenges including high winds, 2000mm of annual rainfall and has clay soils prone to pugging and drying out. The well-designed barn provides effective environmental solutions.
- The farm features well-maintained deer sheds and laneways.
- Dwight's willingness to stretch himself outside his comfort zone and take opportunities like entering the DFEA awards, hosting deer farmer field days, preparing a Freshwater Farm Plan, and starting on the FAP+ journey will reap benefits.
- Great involvement in Next Gen activities and sharing of good farm management practices and other information that benefits and encourages other farmers.

### Judges' suggestions

- Look at health and safety, particularly when he is working alone undertaking velvetting. Look at what apps are available where he can record what he's doing, and times he expects to finish.
- Get advice from other deer farmers and investigate what apps he can use to record data that can be easily accessed and transferred to different plans.
- Plan and prioritise sediment traps for gullies where they leave the property and fence those areas from stock.





# Gallagher Technology and Innovation Award

For excellent utilisation of farming technologies to improve farm productivity and manage resources

## Rebecca Davidson

Deer Milking NZ/Peel Forest Estate,  
South Canterbury



The Deer Milking NZ team comprising Rebecca Davidson (Commercial and Operations), Simon Wakefield (Head deer milker since 2018), Mark Faulks (Co-founder and farming and deer manager), and Graham Carr (Co-founder and shareholder) have been instrumental in developing one of the world's first commercial scale red deer milking operations.

They have adopted a pasture-to-plate quality assurance approach that ensures not only the health and happiness of the deer but also the long-term sustainability of the land. Over the past decade, the team has introduced more than 180 new ideas into their shed, leading to steady improvements to their milking operation. Their commitment to environmental stewardship is reflected in their share farming system, which allows fawns to remain with their mothers strategically throughout the milking season in the new shed and milking facility built in 2024, supporting natural behaviours while maximising milk production.

Milking efficiency has increased throughput from 30 hinds per hour to 110, a critical step in proving the commercial viability of deer milk production. Through selective breeding and genetic refinement, they have improved milk yield per hind from an initial 475ml to 1.5 litres per day, demonstrating their focus on enhancing productivity without compromising animal welfare.

Their ongoing investment in research, commercial development, genetics, and infrastructure reflects their commitment to continuous improvement and knowledge-sharing within the wider deer industry.

## What impressed the judges

- Excellent passion and dedicated commitment to create a new industry of milking deer while working hard to push new ideas and create new opportunities for the industry.
- Good genetic progress and using technology to improve deer farming systems to be more efficient and effective.
- Excellent focus on animal nutrition, health and welfare and meeting animal behavioural needs that are critical in a new venture.
- Strong team with a range of skills and expertise that fit the deer system and new venture.





### Judges' suggestions

- Consider hosting an open day for other deer farmers to share some of the information gained that will benefit the wider sector e.g. feeding, deer fecundity, and share farming of hinds and weaners.
- Consider hosting a session or developing a short video to share with stakeholders and supporters on lessons learned so the industry may grow without having to reinvent the wheel.
- Document how the hinds are managed for the rest of the year so you have the full story to share with your markets and other deer farmers.



## Further information

The Deer Industry Environmental Management Code of Practice 2018 is a comprehensive guide to good management practices at farm level. The code is available free to all deer farmers. To request a copy, email [info@deernz.org](mailto:info@deernz.org) or call the Deer Industry New Zealand office on 04 473 4500. Alternatively the code and other general resources are available and can be downloaded from the DINZ website: [www.deernz.org/deerhub/farm-environment](http://www.deernz.org/deerhub/farm-environment).

Several Deer Fact information sheets focus on the environment. Titles include:

- Fence pacing
- Farm environment plans
- Protecting waterways
- Nutrient management
- Intensive winter feeding
- Making native bush sing
- Trees for deer farms
- Planning for winter

These can be downloaded from [www.deernz.org/deer-facts](http://www.deernz.org/deer-facts)

For further information on the Deer Farmers' Environmental Awards, contact Deer Industry NZ, [info@deernz.org](mailto:info@deernz.org)

## Elworthy Award: Previous winners

- 2001: Victor and Margaret Clark, Reporoa
- 2002: Brian and Brigitte Richards, Kaipara
- 2003: Wayne and Tricia Aspin, Manukau
- 2004: George and Mary Scott, Southland
- 2006: Murray Neutz and Keith Natrass, Geraldine
- 2008: Grant and Andrea Cochrane, Balclutha
- 2010: Tim and Trish Smith, Te Anau
- 2012: Brian and Jacquie Wellington, Te Awamutu
- 2014/15: George Williams and Laura Billings, Hawke's Bay
- 2017: Steve, Judy and Chris Borland, and Bob Sharp, Oparau
- 2019: Evan and Linda Potter, Hawke's Bay
- 2021: Grant and Sally Charteris, Hawkes Bay
- 2023: Richard and Sarah Burdon, Wanaka





**Thank you to the entrants and sponsors for their involvement and support  
of the 2025 Deer Industry Environment Awards.**

[www.deernz.org](http://www.deernz.org) | [info@deernz.org](mailto:info@deernz.org) | 04 473 4500  
PO Box 10702, The Terrace, Wellington 6143