



Deer Industry News

WILD TIMES

WILD DEER

The plan in progress to tame a growing problem

DIVERSIFICATION

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WILD WEATHER

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Deer Industry News

OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF DEER INDUSTRY
NEW ZEALAND AND THE NEW ZEALAND
DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION

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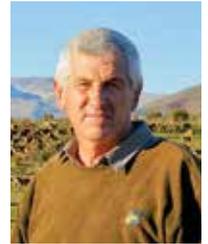
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Cover photo: Gerald Fluerty

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Message from the Chair

First off, I want to say that I completely understand the disappointment and frustration many velvet producers may be feeling this season. For those of us who've been around this industry a long time, we know the velvet market, despite the steady growth of the past decade or so, had always had its ups and downs — but that doesn't make the current situation any easier.



At the heart of the issue are the conflicting market signals we've seen over recent years. Buyers have repeatedly said they want shorter, rounder, better quality velvet that's easier to process. Yet at the same time, those same buyers continued paying good money for NT grades, so as farmers, we naturally chased the returns.

That meant quantity over quality, because financially, it made sense. Until now.

The reality is that we've now produced too much of the wrong type of velvet. It's uncomfortable, but we as farmers need to take some accountability for the situation we're in. This didn't happen overnight; production has been steadily building over the years.

Right now, we need to stop and understand clearly how we got here, then work out what needs to change.

That's why, at the Board level, we've been focusing on developing a more controlled and disciplined system for how New Zealand velvet gets into international markets. By tightening up what leaves our shores, ensuring consistency of quality and type, we will rebuild confidence with customers who want high-quality New Zealand velvet. This is the export licensing system you should have seen mentioned previously.

Rhys and his team have been working extremely hard to promote what we all know: New Zealand produces the best velvet in the world.

His relationships across the markets have taken years to build, and his view, which I agree with, is simple and sound:

The market isn't broken. The future for velvet looks to be very strong, but we're at a crossroads right now due to excess volume in one particular category.

The changes in the pre-season addendum to the guidelines weren't guesses. They came from years of buyer and exporter feedback, and they clearly point to where velvet's future growth lies.

The timing of the addendum's release may not have been perfect, but it would have been wrong to not communicate what was being relayed to us from the market. It has been suggested that it could have waited until later in the year, but with stag sales coming up, the opportunity is now for culling those older stags producing low-value velvet and to align ourselves with market demand.

Fortunately, cull stag values at a premium have allowed many to capture some good returns on low value-producing velvet stags. This culling opportunity could have a dramatic effect on velvet quality produced going forward and go a long way toward fixing the present oversupply of low-value velvet into the market.

This is farming. Markets move. Supply and demand always correct themselves — but only if we do our part.

Don't shoot the messenger. Look within your own breeding and production systems. Every one of us can play a role in restoring strong returns for our unique product.

This year has brought a mix of progress and pressure across the industry, yet the commitment and pride you show on farm continue to drive us all forward. Wishing you and your families a safe, restful Christmas and a positive start to the New Year. ■

Paddy Boyd, DINZ Board Chair

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Velvet: The most emotive word in the deer industry?

By Evan Potter

The only words more emotive than “velvet” might be “pricing” or “grading” when coupled with velvet. To be perfectly frank, this season is looking like utter s###. As I write this, some buyers are offering prices that are completely unacceptable. That being said, some farmers are taking them! The current situation has many factors at play, and we may need to consider outside-the-box solutions to avoid repeating the same situation down the line.

While I personally agree with most of what our board chair has said, I do feel for those severely impacted by the current situation, particularly those new to the industry. As an industry, it is critical for our industry’s future to both support and mentor those who are just starting out and ensure they survive, as without them, our industry won’t have a future. It is important to us as an executive that farmers retain their business autonomy, but it is equally important that they are aware of the effects their decisions can have on the wider industry.

That old saying “Information is king” is so true when trying to make timely and measured business decisions. The executive believes that better timed information, at more regular intervals and of improved quality, is critical in helping farmers make informed decisions. It is a fair question to ask, as some levy payers have, if this function has been performed to a satisfactory level to date. We will continue to advocate for improvement in this area on deer farmers’ behalf.

The first step might be to place a more formal process around the forming of industry velvet grading guidelines. DINZ’s plan to review the grading guidelines in March would ideally involve representation from all stakeholders; however, we are intrigued as to why velvet growers think they can influence how a commercial entity grades and buys our product. We get no say in how our venison or beef is graded, so we can only assume it is passion that evokes this thought. That said, owning any decisions made, coupled with clarity through photo examples, consistency between buyers, and clear lead-in times, would make for a smoother transition. Is there potential for the development of a 3D scanner that works similar to the apps they use within the kiwi fruit industry?

Oversupply is something that has been occurring for a few years, but in my opinion, has been misread - by farmers, by buyers and by DINZ. My on-farm average velvet price has decreased over the past six years as production has increased nationally. As farmers, we have responded to commercial opportunities by producing heavier and greater volumes of NT. This is not what the Chinese market wants, and we have ended up oversupplying the Korean market

that takes these grades. Buyers have paid limited differentiation between SAT and NT, thus creating the commercial opportunities previously mentioned, while DINZ has promoted messaging that has been overly positive at times rather than conservative, which has further clouded the true market situation.

We can continue to be distracted by the symptoms, or we can choose to rectify the illness. Looking ahead, it will require an all-of-industry approach to ensure we avoid repeating the current situation as no one party can resolve this in isolation.

It is important to acknowledge the response farmers have instigated in response to the current market situation. The combination of cutting shorter, with the controlled reduction of velvetting stag numbers, will quickly reduce industry volume and increase the quality of velvet on offer. It is equally important to acknowledge the value of the messaging from buyers regarding market requirements, as we ignore this is at our peril, even when it is a bitter pill to swallow.

In addition to the export licencing initiative, it is now imperative that DINZ strongly conveys to our Korean partners how important it is for them to deal directly with New Zealand exporters to deliver the necessary returns for farmers to remain profitable. We all know they love the quality of our product, but to continue to buy from margin traders does little for the long-term sustainability of our industry. Margin trading is a race to the bottom, and farmers have plenty of viable financial choices farming alternative proteins. This messaging could complement DINZ’s continued development of emerging markets, per their strategic plan.

I have heard some compare the velvet industry with the wool industry, and while there are similarities in the current selling structure, I personally believe we have a high-quality premium product that is valued and sought after. By improved management of supply against demand, maintaining quality and reputation of product, and ensuring enforceable behaviour around the purchasing, distribution and selling of velvet, we are far better placed to succeed where wool has failed. ■

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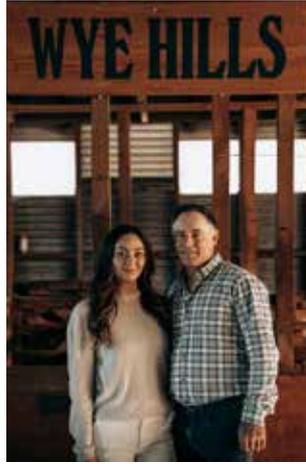
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Elk Wapiti Society Velvet and Hard antler competition
Cromwell, 7th February 2026

Winner

Congratulations to Jason Rentoul and Chelsea Hudson of Wye Hills Station, winners of the Westpac Osgro Seeds Marlborough Farmer of the Year. Competition judges were impressed by the couple's strategic use of land classes, entrepreneurial thinking, good governance and sound financial performance from a diverse range of income streams from sheep, beef, deer and winegrowing, spread across 1363 ha. The deer side of the business comprises 320 breeding hinds and 300 velvet stags run in a 215 ha unit. Wye Hills was the first port of call for this year's Next Generation crowd, who enjoyed viewing the spick-and-span deer shed. A field day will be held at Wye Hills in autumn 2026.



Wild deer a growing problem



Credit: Gerald Fluerty

There's an estimated one million wild deer wandering New Zealand's public and privately owned land. They're outnumbering the farmed deer population, and indications are that growth will continue for the foreseeable future. "With annual reproduction at about 20 to 30 percent, that number will likely increase as the estimated number of deer controlled is less than the annual increase," Department of Conservation Wild Animals Manager Mike Perry says. Find out more about the challenges facing wild deer control and management on page 18.

Southland wild deer and....

In Southland's Makarewa Headwaters Catchment, comprising 41000 ha, wild deer and pigs are chomping their way through an estimated 8 million kilograms of drymatter of farm feed and crop. Their unwelcome intrusion is incurring an estimated financial cost of \$1.64 million a year through crop damage and GHG emissions, according



Credit: Gerald Fluerty

to 'Feral animal management in our catchment', a Makarewa Headwaters Revival Project. The report estimates that wild deer help themselves to an estimated \$1.37 million of pasture and crop per year. The average consumption per wild deer is equivalent to almost four bales of baleage (at 280kgDM per bale). Victoria Bishop, co-author of the report, talked about the research and what it all means at a DINZ/OSPRI pest management workshop, see page 10.

Wild winds



This hundreds-of-years-old matai (black pine) was blasted out of the ground in a matter of minutes by the 170 – 180km/hour winds that ripped through John and Mel Somerville's Pine Bush, Southland farm, 50 kilometres east of Invercargill. The velocity and intensity of the wind over about 30 minutes was unbelievable, John says. But they got off lightly in comparison to a nearby district, where more than 1000 plantation trees were decimated. "We lost a lot of trees, and more will have to come down, but most of our plant and machinery remained unscathed," he says. Read more about the increasing frequency of natural disasters on page 22.

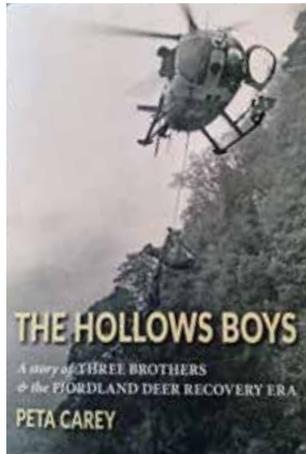
Goat hunt success



The 2025 National Wild Goat Hunting Competition was a huge success. The annual Department of Conservation competition attracted almost 400 entries, collectively submitting almost 4000 wild goat tails and 20 heads. In the landowner category, offering landowners a low-cost option for wild goat control, 19 landowners took part, surpassing last year's total of 11. Since the competition started in 2023, hunters have removed over 23,000 wild goats. They occupy about 14 percent of New Zealand — about half of this on public conservation land. Total population size is unknown but is estimated to be several hundred thousand, DOC Wild Animals Manager Mike Perry says. "Targeting wild goats helps reduce their numbers and gives future forests a chance to grow," he says.

Recommended Xmas reading

Those with a thing for deer will enjoy *'The Hollows Boys: A story of three brothers and the Fiordland deer recovery era,'* by Peta Carey. Many *Deer Industry News* readers have their own connections and first-hand experience of deer recovery, a unique and extraordinary time in New Zealand's history. The book is a bitter-sweet story of adventure and tragedy experienced by the Hollows brothers – Gary, Mark and Kim. It's a recommended Xmas present and read for hard-to-buy-for deer farmers.



Ozempic-era food a US\$190 million opportunity

A key take home message for DINZ Market Activation Manager Virginia Connell from a recent European market visit was the impact that weight loss and hunger suppressant GLP-1 drugs like Ozempic [and Wegovy here in New Zealand] will have on the food industry. Her observation is backed by recent KPMG reports that say these medications are 'fuelling a global weight loss revolution' reducing calorie intake by up to 30 percent'. GLP-1 users are a 'new kind of consumer' who eat and drink fewer calories and spend less on groceries, while looking for new food products that agree with their changed eating habits. Whether appetite suppressant drugs will become an entrenched dietary tool or fizzle like many fads remains to be seen, but in the meantime, KPMG says there is a US\$190 million opportunity to produce nutrient-dense, functional, and medically aligned food products for this evolving consumer group. Our farm-raised venison is perfectly placed given its protein and trace element profile; the challenge will be to reimagine it into new and compelling food products to satiate GLP-1 appetites.



Seeka

Seek and you shall find Seeka, the deer industry's soon-to-be-released AI assistant to help deer farmers get the most out of deer industry-verified sources.

Seeka, similar to Beef + Lamb New Zealand's Bella, will have access to thousands of pages of information, as well as podcasts and videos. Look out for the release of Seeka in early 2026.

Farmer input needed for pest survey

Beef + Lamb New Zealand wants feedback from sheep and beef farmers on pest-related issues they are facing on their farms. The 15-minute survey is designed to get a clearer picture on changes in pest patterns, particularly as a result of afforestation. The survey asks what farmers are dealing with in terms of feral pigs, deer, goats, possums, and wilding pines, and whether this has increased over time. "Some farmers tell us that, where their farms are surrounded by increasing afforestation, they're seeing an increase in animal pests and in wilding pines," B+LNZ says. In addition to building an understanding of the issue, the survey will support B+LNZ advocacy on issues like carbon farming, the government's approach to pest control, and forestry management regulations. Have your say: beeflambnz.typeform.com/to/uclpUuCy



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Let's tell and sell our venison and velvet story

The deer industry has a great story to tell and sell, which could become a global bestseller, newly appointed DINZ Markets Manager Terry Meikle says. His opinion is based on 20 years of experience in international agricultural marketing and trade roles across the Americas. He's also worked for Beef + Lamb New Zealand and New Zealand Apples & Pears, giving him valuable insights into the collective power (and challenges) of 'one industry voice'. Representing New Zealand farmers and food producers abroad is an honour and a hugely fulfilling career, which he looks forward to continuing in his DINZ role.

What for you was the drawcard of the Markets Manager role?

There are a number: the uniqueness of both velvet and venison and the relative lack of global competition for farmed deer; the underrated qualities of venison and the scope for it to become the 'go-to' red meat protein on menus around the world; and a fascination for the opportunities to innovate with velvet and take products from traditional Chinese and Korean medicine stores to western pharmacies and functional foods through science and innovation. There's also the Hollywood blockbuster story behind the beginnings of the industry. Who wouldn't want to work in an industry with this much going for it?



Prior to taking up the role, what has been your prior experience with New Zealand's deer industry?

I grew up in Clyde (Central Otago). My very earliest experience was working for Fleur Sullivan at Oliver's restaurant during the early nineties. I will always remember the German head chef at the time and his sensational sous chef, who created a "Cervena Plate Award" venison dish with local yabbies (freshwater crayfish), walnuts and a cherry, pinot noir jus. That was my introduction to farmed venison.

I first worked on deer velvet through the Taiwan desk at MAF (Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, before becoming MPI) back in 2008, where I was fortunate to have a very knowledgeable DINZ Velvet Marketing Manager show me the ropes.

What are your initial impressions of the deer industry?

I have always been hugely impressed by the origin story and pioneers of New Zealand's deer industry. Although, I must admit, I only recently learned of the wapiti gifted to the New Zealand Tourism Board by President Theodore Roosevelt!

It is exciting to see the entrepreneurial spirit is still well and truly alive in the industry – both on-farm and in-market. This was a major attraction to the role. There is also crystal-clear alignment between the industry's strategic goals and the work programmes that sit beneath them.

As with any industry attempting to speak with one voice, there will always be differences of opinion between the large and small farmers, the various processing companies, and those with velvet versus venison systems. When talking trade, one of my mentors would often caution us that "Anyone can sell a house; it's the price you get for it that counts". The one thing I firmly believe is the New Zealand deer industry has a sensational story to tell and sell. If we get it right, there is no doubt we have a bestseller.

What's on your immediate to-do list?

I'm really looking forward to meeting with – and learning from – farmers and processing company representatives. I'll be getting around as many as possible in the lead up to Christmas. We are also hosting several inbound velvet-related companies from Korea and China, so that represents a golden opportunity to start to learn about the exciting research potential and product innovation, as well as how New Zealand velvet partnerships can help solve various health challenges across the globe.

What's life outside of work hours?

I live across the Wellington harbour with my wife Carolina, our three teenage kids (Siena, Enzo and Tiago) and our dog, Zico. When I'm not working, I'm a member of the Shandon golf club in Petone, a long-suffering supporter of all Otago sports teams, and a Manchester City fan (before they were rich). I also try to get out for a run, go the gym, enjoy gardening and reading.

What's on the agenda over Xmas/New Year?

Christmas will be very quiet this year, as we are planning a family holiday back to Bogotá, Colombia (Carolina's hometown) in July 2026. I've promised Rhys I will find time to see if I can convert some Colombians from beef to venison! ■

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STAG SALES DATES 2025/26

DECEMBER 2025

DATE	TIME	CLIENT	WHERE	REGION
10th	11:00 am	Fairlight Station Stag Sale	485 Cainard Road, Garston	Southland
10th	1.30 pm	Ruapehu Red Deer	37 Pukenaua Road, Taihape	Rangitikei
12th	1:00 pm	Peel Forest (Forresters) Stag Sale	1 Brake Road, RD22, Geraldine	South Canterbury
16th	1.30 pm	Forest Road Farm Deer	902 Gwavas Road, Tikokino	Hawkes Bay

JANUARY 2026

DATE	TIME	CLIENT	WHERE	REGION
7th	1:00 pm	Clachanburn Elk	316 Puketoi Run Road, Ranfurly	Central Otago
9th	2.30 pm	Edendale Deer	1573 Ashburton Gorge Road, Mt Somers	Canterbury
9th	6.30 pm	Rothsay Deer/Diamond Point Deer Park	185 Darts Road, RD12, Rakaia	Canterbury
10th	1:00 pm	Peel Forest Estate	1 Brake Road, RD22, Geraldine	South Canterbury
12th	12.30 pm	Arawata Deer	95 Titiroa Pine Bush Road RD1, Wyndham	Southland
12th	5.30 pm	Altrive Deer	25 Waipounamu Road RD6, Riverdale, Gore	Southland
13th	2:00 pm	Wilkins Farming Stag Sale	65 Harvey Road, Athol	Southland
14th	10-11.30am	Ryenna Wapiti Ltd (Open Day)	134 Transmission Line Rd, Winton	Southland
14th	1:00 pm	Littlebourne Wapiti	321 Devereaux Road, Winton	Southland

FEBRUARY 2026

DATE	TIME	CLIENT	WHERE	REGION
13th	3:00 pm	Clachanburn Elk (Trophy Bulls Sale)	316 Puketoi Run Road Ranfurly	Central Otago

Workshops

Velvet workshops

While not all farmers agree with the addendum to the velvet grading guidelines, most now know what the new grades look like thanks to a series of nationwide workshops hosted by DFA branches. At the six workshops, attended by around 350 farmers, velvet buyers explained the grading guidelines using velvet examples and gave advice on how and when to cut. Farmers had the opportunity to ask questions and bring along some of their own velvet for grading under the new guidelines.

“The workshops were a real team effort led by the DFA and supported by velvet buyers, and it shows the value of the branches,” NZDFA chair Mark McCoard said.

“We’re aware a lot of farmers are frustrated with the changes, but now most understand the updated guidelines at a practical level, even if they don’t necessarily agree with them.”

Feedback from the the workshops was that it was interesting to see the different interpretations and how grader discretion could play a key role.

The lowdown



PGG’s Steve Annan explained the changes to the velvet grading guidelines to about 30 farmers at the McIntyre family’s McDunhaven Deer Park in Ohingaiti. He brought along a selection of velvet, grading it according to the guidelines. “It was a basic overview of what the changes to the guidelines mean,” he said. “It was an open forum and a positive day.”

IFP workshops

It’s the final push for the deer industry’s integrated farm planning (IFP) projects. The workshops have been funded by a \$700,000 Ministry for Primary Industries grant, which expires in March 2026. Farmers are encouraged to let DINZ know of any other farm planning topics for an event or workshop. Farm planning topics could be, although are not limited to, animal health management, pest and disease management, business strategy planning, soil and pasture management, and more.

Email ifp@deernz.org with ideas or questions.

Pest management workshops

As part of the IFP project, DINZ, in conjunction with OSPRI, held a pest management workshop in Geraldine in July. The pilot module followed farmer feedback on pest management in recent DINZ surveys. The day, facilitated by Danette McKeown, covered the introduction and integration of new and existing livestock on farm; disease prevention and control; the management of people/vehicles and equipment; weeds and feed; pests, vermin and wild animals; and disposal of animal waste and carcass management. These topics were itemised on a template on which farmers noted actions they take, and what might be worthwhile implementing to manage the various pest management-related issues.



WORTHWHILE: An inaugural DINZ-OSPRI pest management workshop covered a range of topics related to pest management, facilitator Danette McKeown says.

“The template was largely a tick-list action plan as we know that farmers don’t like being presented with blank pages to fill in,” Danette says.

“There was plenty of room for specific farm details, and it was designed so that at end of the workshop, there were three or four self-identified priority actions that could be taken on farm to increase biosecurity.”

The completed template is able to be incorporated into a farm environment plan or integrated farm plan.

FWFP workshops

Several IFP freshwater farm plan development workshops are scheduled for early 2026. Run in conjunction with Ballance, they are a FREE and ideal opportunity for farmers to start their development of a compliant electronic freshwater farm plan, bearing in mind that new government rules require all pastoral farms over 50 ha to have a freshwater farm plan.

Region / Location	Part 1	Part 2
Southland	21 Jan	4 Feb
Ranfurly	3 Feb	17 Feb
Cromwell	4 Feb	18 Feb
Taranaki	5 Feb	
Geraldine	9 Feb	23 Feb
Amberley	10 Feb	24 Feb
Feilding	17 Feb	3 Mar
Turangi	18 Feb	5 Mar
Waikato	19 Feb	4 Mar
South Otago	25 Feb	11 Mar

To register go to: www.deernz.org/home/events ■

International Deer Biology Congress 2026



Deer farmers and others involved in the local deer industry can sign up for two-day registration at the International Deer Biology Congress 2026, taking place in Dunedin from 10 – 13 February.

The event, themed ‘Your Deer Here’, brings together biologists, ecologists, veterinarians, geneticists, wildlife managers, conservationists, and food, health and production researchers to discuss the diverse aspects of deer management and biology from various perspectives globally. The two-day registration, at a reduced rate of \$375 until the end of 2025, includes two field trips and is a great opportunity to hear from some of the world’s experts on all things deer.

Registrations are being coordinated through DINZ and DFA. To register, look out for the sign-up link in eNews or on the DINZ website. ■

Trucking along

A reminder that an updated Transport QA Standard is on the DINZ website at: deernz.org/assets/Deer-Hub/Handling-and-welfare/DeerQA_Transport-STANDARDS_2025-web-v2.pdf

It is important to note is that the standard is applicable to the transporting of stags to slaughter. Trophy and sire stags have their own separate standard.

4.8 TRANSPORT OF STAGS

Standard

- **4.8.1** Stags (3yrs +) MUST NOT be sent to slaughter after 14 February or before 14 July.
- **4.8.2** 2-yr stags may move to slaughter between 14 February and 1 March.
- **4.8.3** Only stags under 2 years of age can be transported to DSPs during the roar.

Recommendation: With consideration to the changes above, allowance has been made for 2026 to allow stags (3-yr+) to move to slaughter up to and including 21 February 2026.

Note: Mixed age stags can show the effects of the roar through to button drop. The greatest care must be exercised when transporting this type of animal.

A deer’s birth date is recognised as 1 December. ■

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A fraught space

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News Editor*

A velvet price that represents fair value to growers and stability for buyers that have stock on hand is what's needed but is not happening, DINZ Board Velvet Representative and PGG Wrightson National Deer and Velvet Manager Tony Cochrane says.

"The few prices being offered in the field at present are ridiculously low and play into the hands of traders that do not value the product – just the transaction," he says.

"The timing of sales and cash flow for farmers may not be in sync right now, but giving away velvet for lower returns to opportunistic buyers will not help us to recover quickly."

His comments echo similar messages over recent months from DINZ and the NZDFA about the need to support reputable buyers.

In a November *Stagline* story, NZDFA executive member Evan Potter reminded deer farmers to consider who they sold their velvet to and when (within reason), and to deal with reputable buyers with 'skin in the game' rather than a plane ticket in their back pocket. The story raised a concern about some buyers paying deposits for velvet, pointing to a \$30/kg deposit offered by three companies, which was, in the NZDFA's view, unacceptable when unaccompanied by competitive pricing.

"What would be very concerning is if the rumours are true about product going on the water without a price. That puts us in a very weak position," Evan says.

Speaking on behalf of Provelco, one of the three companies that has paid suppliers a deposit, director and Southland deer farmer Bruce Allan says the part-payment upfront model is not flawed and isn't uncommon in other primary product businesses.



WHAT MAKES A 'GOOD BUYER'? "My view is that it's a buyer that has the scale and ambition to steer us out of the commodity trade," Bruce Allan says.

A wider conversation is needed about what defines a 'good buyer' and a 'good deal', both from an individual farmer and wider industry perspective.

"Fonterra, Alliance Group, Zespri and Provelco; all these companies pay their suppliers an advance or offer early season payments or make deposits for product supplied – and have done so for many years."

Provelco, since its inception in 2003, has offered farmers competitive returns and a good service along with their early season deposit, he says.

"The reality is that velvet farmers sell to and through many different companies, buyers or market channels, and they do so because there has never been consensus on, or support for, one perfect model."

He says a wider conversation is needed about what defines a 'good buyer' and a 'good deal,' both from an individual farmer and wider industry perspective.

"My view is that it's a buyer that has the scale and ambition to steer us out of the commodity trade."

He says now is the time for buyers to state clearly their business model, the reason for it, and how it can benefit both individual farmers and the industry, now and into the future. ■

Stand firm

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News Editor*

When *Deer Industry News* went to print, the 2025/2026 baseline price for velvet was still in limbo.

It is a protracted Mexican standoff, where rumours and potential manipulation are adding to a pressure cooker situation. But one of the largest velvet producers is urging deer farmers throughout the country to stand firm.

"We must hold out from commodity traders. We produce a quality product, and we need to be paid for it accordingly," Peel Forest Estate's Mark Tapley says.

"Last season's prices were bad enough, and as producers, we simply can't afford anything lower."

Peel Forest Estate produces about 30 tonnes of velvet a year. So far this season, 18 tonnes have been cut, and it's staying put in freezers on-farm until a realistic price is hit.

The low-ball offers of opportunistic, commodity buyers have been resisted, but Mark understands that not all farmers can do so.

"For all of us, cashflow is a serious problem, so we either take the offer on the day or stretch ourselves further financially by extending the overdraft."

He too is frustrated about the protracted standoff in price and revised grading guidelines but cuts to the crux of the price issue – an oversupply of heavy and untidy velvet.



CLEAR PRICING SIGNALS: If there was a bigger price differential between tidy velvet and heavy ugly velvet, we wouldn't find ourselves in the position we are in, with a lot of the wrong grades being produced, Mark Tapley says.

“That’s why we’re in the situation we’re in. There has been a substantial increase in not only velvet stags around the country but also in the weight cut,” he says.

“In my opinion, if there was a bigger price differential between tidy velvet and heavy, ugly velvet, we wouldn’t find ourselves in the position we are in, with a lot of the wrong grades being produced.

“Weight still pays the day. We are not being rewarded enough for the desired top grades. Until this happens, sire selections, culling decisions and breeding strategy won’t change.”

While not opposed to the new velvet grading guidelines addendum, which will in part help reset New Zealand’s velvet production profile, he says the addendum’s emphasis of cutting earlier needs to be reflected in the prices paid.

“As a farmer, I’m happy to cut earlier to provide the velvet that’s demanded, but I need to be rewarded for it.”

Like some other velvet growers, he’s annoyed that more farmers weren’t consulted in the development of the new velvet guidelines. He believes it was a rash decision that has brought pushback rather than buy in from producers.

The timing of the new guidelines, given the oversupply situation, didn’t help, and implementation – once the season started – has further fueled grower frustration.

DFA branches tried their best to keep farmers in the loop with a series of velvet grading guideline workshops throughout the country, but they were too late, with most farmers already into velvet harvest.

“Even now, we don’t have diagrams or pictures to guide us.

“In my view, the guidelines should have been introduced next year to give growers time to understand and prepare.”

Destocking is the only way out of the oversupply situation and is happening throughout the country. At Peel Forest Estate, 800 stags will be culled and replaced with venison animals.

Mark is a member of the Export Licensing Working Group and says the end goal – of a more structured, transparent and credible deer velvet export system – is progressing, but it is a slow process.

“But it’s not a pricing system,” he says.

“It will create a more level playing field and disciplined export framework, and by the time it comes into play, there will be fewer stags and less velvet, so in that respect, we’ll be in a better position.” ■

Same same but different

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News Editor*

Twenty-five years ago, the velvet industry was grappling with oversupply issues. While the industry has almost tripled in volume produced since, evolving markets have raised the issue of oversupply once more.

In the early 2000s, the problem of how to moderate velvet supply, demand and price came to a head.

There had been industry warnings of the need to peg back velvet stag numbers to keep supply at 450 tonnes rather than the 500 tonnes produced, which from experience was the tipping point for the Korean market. Farmers didn’t listen, holding onto velvet stags rather than offloading them to processors, where the meat value they’d get was less than the money from cutting the velvet.

Farmers were also unhappy with the pool selling system – the dominant selling platform at the time – saying it was failing to regulate the volume and quality of velvet offered.

At the same time, the local velvet processing industry, of which there were about 15 businesses in 2005, fell apart. Changing rules allowing the export of green velvet, along with economic growth in China driving the establishment of factories that could process velvet more cheaply than in New Zealand, led to an increase in frozen velvet exports. These shifting dynamics changed buyer behaviour at the dwindling number of pool sales. Large Chinese and Korean players dominated, preventing fair competition, and the net result was a plummet in price from the 2002 – 2004 average of \$99/kg to below \$60/kg.

Fast forward almost 25 years, and the industry is in the same situation but significantly larger at 1200 tonnes. We can argue and nit-pick about the details, but the here-and-now is an oversupply of NT velvet, some buyers behaving badly, lots of finger-pointing, and a bit of tetchiness throughout the industry.

The velvet saga of the early 2000s led to a shake-up, consolidation and change to the way velvet was traded and sold.

Now we find ourselves in a similar reset chapter. Steps are being taken to improve regulation, behaviour and transparency along the velvet chain. The new velvet addendum and the work-in-progress licensing system are both examples of change-making steps. Neither action alone solves the situation we’re in, but inaction is not an option. ■

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New cuts broaden appeal

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

New cuts and a growing awareness of New Zealand venison as a superfood have been some of the year's highlights for Europe-based DINZ-contracted chef Shannon Campbell.

New Zealand venison is moving from the commodity to the high-quality protein space, he says.

Proof of this evolution in the food service sector are the companies taking more time to create special cuts that are chef-friendly and interesting for chefs to use.

"I am pleased to see some move away from the classic four-piece Denver leg, for example. Importers and wholesalers have been saying for years that it's hard to sell in this format," Shannon says.

"Generally speaking, chefs only want to take the venison pieces that are interesting to them, which are mostly topside and rump, and that leaves them holding on to silversides and knuckles."

Breaking up venison into pieces for chefs to use in specific ways increases its attractiveness, widens the scope of how it can be used, and adds value to the product by making it accessible and clear in its utilisation.

"Increasing the range of cuts also broadens the price range and creates wider appeal to both high-end and more budget-conscious operators," he says.

Superfood status

The evolving 'superfood' status of New Zealand venison is another positive trend.

"The perception of the product is starting to shift a little towards that superfood, high-quality bracket, which is where we want it positioned in the market," he says.

Although there have been efforts by some importers to communicate New Zealand's venison's superfood qualities by

highlighting its high nutritional values on retail packaging, there's a lot more that could be done.

"I think we could and should devise a long-term programme to create clear messaging and material to support importers in relaying that superfood message."

The shortage of product is the dampener in the European market.

"The negative feedback is simply that importers can't get enough of our product to sell.

"Companies are telling me that they could and would sell more product, and that they see real potential in it."

The world is craving honest, high-quality food products. New Zealand venison fits that bill.

The supply shortage is not ideal, but it is an opportunity to identify and work with importers motivated to accentuate the quality of the product.

"That means placing it with clients who can successfully market and sell New Zealand venison under the 'premium quality' banner and create a strong base of demand at the firm prices the product deserves."

As usual, when people sample New Zealand venison, the feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

"I was particularly pleased this year to have the chance to get the product in front of so many importers running high-volume and high-value businesses importing New Zealand produce. "



PREDICTABLY TASTY: When people sample New Zealand venison, the feedback is overwhelmingly positive, Shannon Campbell says.



CAN'T GET ENOUGH: The big negative for New Zealand venison this year was shortage of product to satisfy the demand of European importers and wholesalers.

Feast of opportunity - ANUGA 2025

This year's ANUGA — the world's largest food fair — was as always, a global feast of opportunity.

“It gives attendees over a few days the chance to get an overview of where the global food industry is headed, what is and is becoming important in-market.

“It's inspirational and also hits home what food businesses – wherever they sit along the supply chain – need to be aware of and to do to remain relevant in world markets.”

He was in the thick of the five-day event, held from 4 – 8 October in Cologne, Germany, flying the flag for New Zealand venison.

But Shannon tempted the appetite of some importers of New Zealand venison the day before ANUGA, cranking up the BBQ at a Silver Fern Farms-hosted event. The 60 guests savoured venison on the outdoor terrace pre-dinner, and later, on the evening menu, curated by Grubers Restaurant.

The next day, German meat specialist Klughardt hosted an event in the central city, once again for their major customers.

“I curated a five-course menu, including two dishes featuring New Zealand venison.

“It was a chance to explain the wonders of the product to Klughardt clients.”

New Zealand venison was well represented at ANUGA by Luiten Foods, Schoondewoerd, and BIMPEX/Van Aerde. Shannon worked at the BIMPEX stand, serving restaurant-quality venison, including carpaccio and steaks, to their existing and potential customers.

Other supporters of the New Zealand venison in attendance at ANUGA in a visitor capacity were Taurus, Klughardt, Mountain River Sweden, Casic Switzerland, Chefs Culinar and Delta Fleisch. ■



THE FINE-PRINT: People want proof their food has high nutritional values and a low environmental footprint.



COOKING UP A STORM: Shannon Campbell, at ANUGA, says increasing the range of venison cuts will broaden appeal and price points to satisfy both high-end and budget-conscious operators.

Flavours of the future

ANUGA is an event where the trends that are shaping the global food market are a hot topic of conversation. The big market trends this year were:

- Sustainable products – People are looking beyond taste and nutrition to consider the environmental impact of their food.
- Alternative meat products – There's growing demand for cultivated proteins, such as lab-grown meat, and microbial fermentation.
- Naturalness – Food made with natural, recognisable ingredients, 'clean recipes,' and transparent sourcing.
- Convenience/snacking food - Tasty, smaller, portion-controlled health-conscious offerings.
- Gut and digestive health – Prebiotic and probiotic ingredients and functional nutrition products that promote digestive balance and overall wellness.
- Personalised nutrition – High-quality ingredients with proven benefits that people can choose and tailor to their personal health goals.

"I'm sure that New Zealand exporters will have identified these strong market trends," Shannon says.

"New Zealand venison can slot into several of these categories by tapping into venison's sustainable farming, clean sourcing, and nutritional value credentials."

He predicts a move away from lab-grown meat as people become more aware of the problems around processed foods.

"I sense a desire for clean, straightforward food, with as little tampering as possible."

"With clear messaging and a steady course, a concerted effort to refuse commodification of New Zealand venison as a product, and targeted selection of overseas clients to achieve these goals, I truly believe we can enter the next phase for New Zealand venison."



SUPERFOOD: New Zealand venison is starting to be perceived as a high-quality, high-protein superfood.

Savouring the flavour

Venison tri-tip was a revelation for an initially sceptical Central Otago restaurateur, Merchant of Venison's James Petrie said when asked by *Deer Industry News* about his 2025 highlights.

The restaurateur and owner of The Stoaker Room, which has eateries in Cromwell and Wanaka, took a bit of persuading to swap out wild venison for farm-raised venison rump cap - a similar style of product to the traditional South American Picanha cut.

But the power of persuasion won through, James said. "It was barrel cooked, and the chef described it as 'unbelievably good,' which is the best feedback we could hope for." James credits the chef's five-star rating to the layer of fat covering the rump cap. "It's the only cut we sell with a covering of fat, and that's for good reason – the flavour."

Reflecting on the year that's been, James said it's still hard work to get New Zealand farmed venison on the menu of South Island eateries. "Restaurants are nervous about costs versus quality, and it's been difficult for us over winter with the quieter restaurant trade and the reduced kill, but it's coming right."

A bright spot for the business, which wholesales and retails online and in South Island outlets, was chef appetite for rump, flat iron and bolar cuts.

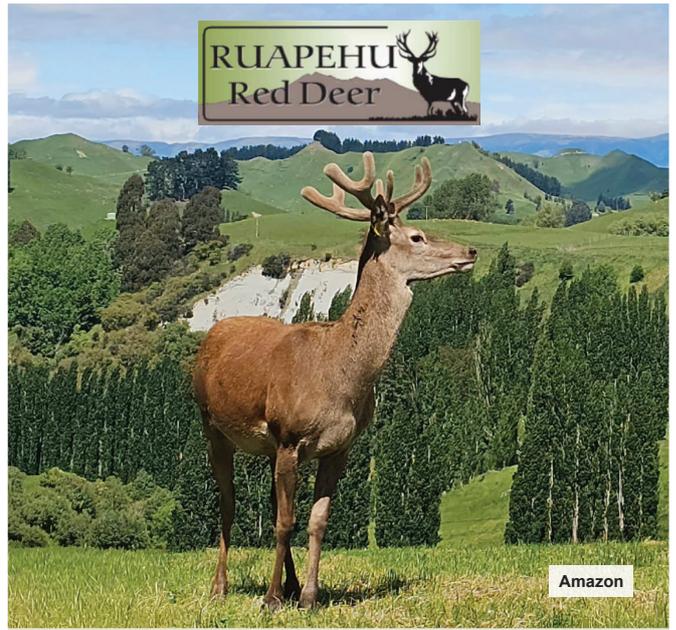


CHALLENGING YEAR: It's still hard work to get New Zealand farmed venison on the menu of South Island eateries, but chef appetite for rump, flat iron and bolar cuts is good, Merchant of Venison co-owner James Petrie says.

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Editorial supplied by Melior.

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Velvet export licensing work continues ahead of election year

DINZ and the Export Licensing Working Group (ELWG) continue to advance the export licensing work programme in direct response to what farmers and processors have asked us to explore: a more disciplined, transparent, and market-aligned system that strengthens New Zealand's position in Asia and supports long-term value creation for velvet.

The industry originally asked DINZ to look at a single-desk model similar to Zespri. After careful assessment, export licensing emerged as the more practical, proportionate, and realistic pathway — one that maintains commercial autonomy while lifting industry-wide standards for velvet at the point of export.

Engagement with government agencies continues, and discussions remain constructive. However, early ambitions to move faster have proven challenging. There is now a much clearer recognition that the legislative pathway will take more time than originally hoped.

DINZ expects to have a better read on Ministerial thinking early in the New Year once officials have completed their internal work and provided advice. This timing matters: intervention via export licensing for the 2026/27 velvet season was the original ambitious target, but there is a significant pipeline of legislation to go through the system before next year's general election.

Although timing is challenging, the fundamentals remain sound, says DINZ Trade and Strategy Manager Damon Paling.

"The industry's position is being laid out clearly with officials, and the work completed has set up a bipartisan foundation so the next stage of the process — whether before or after the election — has

political coverage across both sides of the House. This groundwork is critical to ensure that no matter which government is in place, the industry's objectives are understood and supported."

Export licensing remains a valuable, low-complexity tool that strengthens the industry's value proposition without creating new burdens on-farm.

VelTrak and export licensing work together but serve different roles: VelTrak ensures domestic discipline; export licensing ensures export discipline. Collectively, they help strengthen trust, confidence, and transparency across the entire value chain.

While the pathway could be longer than first hoped, the direction remains positive and industry-led. DINZ and the ELWG will continue progressing the work in a measured, realistic way — consistent with what farmers and exporters have asked us to pursue.

The focus remains on securing a framework that supports sustainable value, stronger market confidence, and a more unified New Zealand presence offshore. An update will be provided early in the new year once Ministerial and MPI signals are clearer. ■

This article originally appeared in DINZ eNews.

Taming the wild deer problem

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News Editor*

Steps are being taken to tackle the wild deer problem in New Zealand, but exactly how to plan and implement a national strategy is complex and tricky.

The thorny issue of wild deer control is covered in a recent report *Guardians or executioners – navigating the ethics of deer control* by Kellogg scholar and Federated Farmers policy adviser Phil Holland. The report looks at the growing wild deer population across New Zealand and their ecological and economic impacts; the limitations of current management; the ethical tensions around control; cultural values; and decision-making in wild deer management strategies.

Since their introduction in the 19th century, deer have moved from a protected game species to pervasive pest status in a short space of time, Holland says. Today wild deer have a destructive foothold on 44 percent of the country's land area, wreaking havoc across native forests and farmland.

"Although successive governments and agencies have undertaken control efforts, reinvasion, fragmented governance, and inconsistent investment have allowed deer populations to persist or expand in many regions," he says.

The report concludes that a "paradigm shift in how wild deer management is conceptualised and enacted" is needed.

A similar view is held by the Department of Conservation (DOC), which led them to establish the Wild Animals Management National Coordination Group in November 2023. The group includes conservation, hunting, iwi, government, primary industry, and research organisations, all with an interest in the management of introduced wild deer, goats, pigs, tahr, and chamois. The goal of the group is to manage the damaging effects and values of wild animals across all land tenures, so biodiversity is protected, kaitiakitanga (guardianship of the natural environment) is upheld, primary production remains resilient, and outdoor recreation is accessible, safe, and enjoyable.

Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) is a group member, and representative Environmental Stewardship Manager Luka Jansen says it's proving to be a valuable forum for building strong relationships with a wide range of stakeholders.

"Many deer farmers are passionate conservationists, and our industry was founded on reducing wild deer numbers on public land.

"It is a privilege to work alongside a group of stakeholders that are committed to managing wild animals on public land — not only to reduce biosecurity risks for deer farmers but also to play our part in protecting the natural environment we all depend on."



NEW APPROACH NEEDED: For deer control to maintain public legitimacy and long-term support, it must be conducted in ways that are humane, transparent, and culturally appropriate, Phil Holland says.

Bringing diverse stakeholders together in the same room is a significant achievement in itself, Luka says

"Many deer farmers are passionate conservationists, and our industry was founded on reducing wild deer numbers on public land."

Luka Jansen

"Open and transparent conversations foster relationships and build trust, which is key for better decision-making.

"Currently, too many organisations operate in silos while pursuing similar objectives.

"By sharing our initiatives, work goals and exploring better ways of working together, we can create efficiencies and deliver more sustainable outcomes.

"The group is motivated to keep the balling rolling at pace."

The National Action Plan is still under development, says DOC Wild Animals Manager Mike Perry.

"(It) will remain a working draft for some time as we incorporate input from multiple organisations," he says.

"At this stage, there is no confirmed completion date; however, finalising the plan remains a high priority for DOC."

Wild deer – a deer farmer's perspective

Across the deer industry, there are differing views and opinions about wild deer. It is also an area that DINZ has no mandate over, though the effects of a growing wild deer population impact our deer farmers.

New Zealand Deer Farmers Association (NZDFA) members have voiced concerns about the growing population, a problem that is



TB risk: The growing number of wild deer could increase the likelihood of TB spreading, which has serious implications for deer farmers. Credit: John Neilson

getting worse with reduced pest control and an increase in 'lock up and leave' carbon credit-generating pine forests, creating the perfect environment for wild deer and other pest species to thrive.

"More wild deer could increase the likelihood of TB establishing in these herds, and that has serious implications for deer farmers," NZDFA Chair Mark McCoard says.

On-farm, they leave a trail of destruction after breaking and entering through boundary fences. Wild stags fight and, in some instances kill, farmed deer, he says. They can also derail breeding programmes worth thousands of dollars.

"Many deer farmers also have sheep and cattle, and, in these areas, wild deer get easy access to crops and saved pastures. Some farmers are now perimeter fencing to keep wild deer out."

He encourages deer farmers to be wary and cautious if they notice an untagged deer on their farm.

"There's always the question of 'is it wild or is it simply untagged?'" If in doubt, it's important to withhold it from slaughter for at least 91 days."

And yet, wild harvested deer play an important role in the overall venison processing industry, as highlighted by Duncan NZ's Rob Kidd in an October DINZ market update webinar. Wild deer (mainly harvested by helicopter) and farmed deer were sourced and processed separately for different venison supply chains. Wild deer helps meet overseas demand and supports processing throughput and staff employment, he says.

Wild deer: The upside and downside

A huge neighbouring population of wild deer are both troublesome and beneficial to Darren Clifford's trophy and farming businesses. His Upper Avon Valley farm and trophy hunting businesses in Marlborough were a stop at this year's Next Generation event. In a post-lunch talk at Avon Valley Lodge, the base of the hunting operation, Darren said since buying the land in 2017, the number of wild deer on the neighbouring DOC land had steadily increased. Over the last couple of years, the deer had trashed fences and helped themselves to crop and pasture on the farm. The last six months have seen between 400 to 600 wild deer removed. The trophy park land provides an opportunity for overseas hunting clients to appreciate and hunt 100% free range deer bred in and roaming New Zealand's unique natural landscape" Darren said.



RISKY: The use of poison is problematic and not the answer to the wild deer problem, Darren Clifford says.



In another season where uncertainty is the norm, the farmer owned deer velvet export option is exactly what industry commentators are asking for; an exporter that has always had a vision for industry success and is the epitome of a trusted sustainable buyer.

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“There’s a shortage of high-end, nutritious protein globally, and as marketers, we want clients to stick with New Zealand venison rather than substitute it for another red meat or high-end protein.”

“Supplying them with wild deer products from New Zealand is a good option.”

The harvest, delivery and processing of wild deer for the wild venison market is rigorously monitored and controlled to ensure a traceable and quality product.

“It’s a huge amount of time and effort compliance-wise, but right now, with the demand we have, it’s worth it.”

From a processing plant perspective, the supply of wild deer could be timed, weather permitting, around the throughput of farmed animals. Consistent supply kept employees – many of whom were employed under minimum hour contracts for 12 months – in work.

“In that respect, the processing of wild deer helps reduce our overheads.”

Darren Clifford has a unique perspective of wild deer control and management due to his three-way involvement in a Marlborough sheep, cattle and deer farm, along with a trophy hunting business in the Upper Avon Valley, and Premium Game in Blenheim, which harvests, processes and markets wild deer, tahr, sheep, goat, pig, wallaby, hare and rabbit.

Darren believes that successful and financially viable wild deer control and management hinges on collaboration between landowners, processors and harvesters, and access to a signed poison declaration.

“The number one challenge harvesting deer from publicly owned land is surrounding landowners providing the appropriate paperwork, which needs to be updated every twelve weeks,” Darren says.

There are robust processes in place to ensure that the risk of residues in products or in cross-contamination is safeguarded against.

“Eliminating the risk of poison is critical for all those who utilise and benefit from deer,” says Luka Jansen.

DINZ has argued that records of commercial poison use on land should be publicly accessible to improve information sharing and prevent unnecessary restrictions on commercial harvesting on private land. However, Luka emphasised that Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) represents deer farmers and processors only.

“Our legislation does not permit us to represent the hunting industry or promote wild venison, but we understand there are mutual benefits. Farmed venison is a premium product that customers can rely on for quality and consistency. This is what makes our product so popular, particularly to chefs in the high-end restaurants. Our overseas customers associate New Zealand primary products with that environmentally responsible image so being good stewards of the land is paramount to us.

“The Wild Animals Management National Coordination Group is a start to controlling and managing problem-pest populations, and commercial harvesting is one of many possible solutions.” ■



PEST, PROBLEM OR RESOURCE? There are multiple views and opinions on the value and status of wild deer in New Zealand. Credit: Chris Parker

Wild and wicked problem

Guardians or executioners? Navigating the ethics of deer control author Phil Holland describes wild deer management in New Zealand as a ‘wild and wicked’ problem because of the competing interests and views that have become entrenched over many years.

“Some see them as pests, some think they’re cute, others a resource, and some people live off them. Then there are others, such as farmers, who’ve put them behind fences and built an industry,” Phil says in the report.

National coordination is needed to curb the problem, but there is no one-size-fits all solution. An effective control model needs to reflect the location and the size of the problem, he says.

“For areas where iwi-owned land dominates, an iwi-led approach makes sense, but in other places, it could be more catchment-based. That’s the first step [deciding on the model], but then the questions to answer are ‘How many wild deer do you want?’ How will you get them to that stage?’ and ‘How will you keep numbers at that level?’”

An iwi-led example that could be adapted for deer management was the Raukumara Pae Maunga Restoration Project, a large-scale collaboration between the Te Whānau-ā-Apanui and Ngāti Porou iwi and DOC, aimed at reversing the forest’s ecological decline and strengthening cultural connections. The project focuses on pest control, native species recovery, and creating local employment and training opportunities.

A successful catchment-based model could be along the lines of the Makarewa Headwaters Group, a group of landowners, DOC and community groups who work together in overcoming environmental challenges in the catchment.

‘Dual-track’ harvest and ecological zoning was another option, where multiple agencies shared funding and data platforms to solve an issue; Predator Free 2050 partnerships were cited in the report as examples.

DOC deer control achievements 2024/25

- 214,366 ha of deer management
- DOC’s Tier 1 monitoring shows that ungulates occur at 83 percent of sites on public conservation land, up from 63 percent in 2013.
- Worked to prevent wild sika deer from establishing in the Hauturu area in Waikato
- Development of a deer management plan for Ruahine Forest Park
- Increased wild deer management in Fiordland
- Adaptive deer management and research programme in the Kaimanawa and Kaweka forest parks with the Central North Island Sika Foundation
- Worked on the potential wapiti and sika deer Herds of Special Interest on behalf of the Minister for Hunting and Fishing

Source: ‘Managing introduced wild animals: Annual Summary’ 2024/25

EWSNZ Update

The venison industry is humming along with venison prices starting to lift a little to a point where it feels financially sustainable to be involved.

It's pleasing to see the lift in the market being reflected in a growing number of elk wapiti supply contracts which shows the industry is starting to appreciate the elk advantage in the venison supply chain.

Over the next year EWSNZ plans to highlight the elk/wapiti genetics advantage through the introduction of an accredited venison sire producers register, guaranteeing the provenance of elk/wapiti venison sires. We believe that maintaining and assuring the genetic integrity of New Zealand's elk/wapiti animals is crucial for our ongoing success.

Weather has been a dominant factor for farming in most regions of the country. However, it's pleasing to see that after a slow spring where growth refused to get going, our members' elk/wapiti herds have recovered and are enjoying good feed resulting in some stunning elk velvet.

At the time of writing there have been no significant elk velvet sales and that's not unusual for this time of year. In the meantime, we reflect on the damage that uninformed sellers can create through weak selling. Possibly the biggest message learned is the

danger of public social media, especially around speculation about supply or pricing. Unfortunately, some people are slow to catch on to the reach of the World Wide Web!

On the sales front, we were very happy with the interest in our inaugural BIDR elk sale held mid-year and will likely repeat the sale in 2026.

Looking ahead to the 2026 selling season there will be a gap in bull supply with the exit of Dave Lawrence and Donna Day who held their final bull sale last season. However, terminal venison producers can be assured of a quality offering of elk/wapiti sires from EWSNZ members.

If you're contemplating buying terminal elk/wapiti sires keep a look out on the EWSNZ website for venues and contact details.

Finally, a reminder about our annual EWSNZ velvet competition in Cromwell, 6 – 7 February. It's a great central location and an excuse for a weekend in Central Otago. We welcome anyone keen to view some of the best quality, big and beautiful velvet - proudly grown in New Zealand.

Glen Whyte, President EWSNZ ■

Editorial supplied by EWSNZ.



Edendale Deer Wapiti Terminal Sire sale 2:30pm Friday 9 January 2026

Glen Whyte 027 484 1841 | glen@edendalefarming.com | www.whytefarming.com/edendaledeer

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Edendale Farming Limited

Wild weather

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

How to keep insurance affordable and accessible in the face of increasing climate change-related wild weather events is a pressing and thorny issue for the food and fibre sector.

The October mega-winds that ripped across parts of rural Southland, Otago and Canterbury again puts the spotlight on the financial damage and chaos natural disasters are causing farming businesses.

Recovery claims are expected to total about \$14 million (rnz.co.nz) according to lead rural insurer FMG, which holds almost 60 percent of the rural market. It's a lot but significantly less than the \$260 million FMG dispersed in claims relating to Cyclone Gabrielle, the Auckland Anniversary Weekend floods, and Nelson floods. The hefty payouts were reflected in FMG's loss of \$15.7 million after tax in the 12 months to 31 March 2023. Acknowledging the loss in the 2022/2023 Annual Report, FMG chair Tony Cleland said the increasing regularity of extreme weather events, alongside cost increases and greater regulation, was putting the insurance industry under pressure.

Several reports following Cyclone Gabrielle have pondered the financial and insurance implications of climate change and more severe floods, drought and coastal erosion.

A Reserve Bank report (May 2023) concluded that insurance premiums would increase in locations with high flood or landslide risks, and some high risk locations would become uninsurable. The hike in premiums is anecdotally confirmed by increases of 15 percent post-Gabrielle. In *Farmers Weekly* ('Huge insurance cost increases hit farmers' 24 Aug 2023) increases of 30 percent are mentioned.

'Premiums Under Pressure, how climate change is reshaping residential property insurance and what to do about it', a Helen Clark Foundation report, starts the conversation of how to keep

insurance accessible and affordable in the face of increasing climate-related challenges. Although focused on residential insurance, its many conclusions are applicable to the rural sector and include: the vital role insurance plays in maintaining resilience in the face of increasing climate change-related risks; the need to invest in climate risk mitigation and adaptation to keep insurance accessible and affordable; and development of a public insurance scheme/s to fill current and future gaps in insurance caused by climate change, especially for flood prone areas.

Rethinking insurance

The future of insurance for farmers is a big topic that FMG is investigating. FMG Head of Client Strategy and Advice Lucie Douma said in a *Countrywide Podcast* (Episode 54 'Is your farm insurance keeping up with changes')

"We are going to see more of these events and pressure on insurance.

"Insurance companies are trying to evolve and develop alternative insurance methods," she said.

Over the past two years, FMG has been exploring the potential use of parametric insurance—a non-traditional model that pays out automatically when specific, pre-agreed events like heavy rainfall or earthquakes occur.

The primary difference between traditional insurance (indemnity-based) and parametric insurance (index-based) is the payment mechanism. Whereas indemnity insurance requires damage assessment and claims processes to align payout with actual



PHOTO: [wikimedia.org](https://www.wikimedia.org/)



PHOTO: wikimedia.org

losses incurred, parametric insurance uses third-party data (such as weather reports or satellite readings) to trigger a pre-agreed payment.

The trigger for a payout can be based on natural hazard parameters, such as heavy rain, flood, drought, wind, hail and even wave height. An example used was a crop about to be harvested blasted by 100ml of rain in a day – as soon as that trigger was hit the grower would receive a payout.

The tricky part, leading to FMG's mid-November announcement on pausing parametric insurance development, is how to accurately capture and pinpoint relevant data to define a trigger level.

“We collaborated with industry partners to explore a prototype heavy rainfall insurance product for New Zealand's rural sector. Our work aimed to calibrate satellite data with on-farm measurements to confirm we could pinpoint accurate and fair triggers for payouts,” FMG said.

However, data challenges meant the best trigger accuracy achieved was only 67 percent.

“In some cases, we were only achieving 18 percent trigger accuracy – a figure that doesn't instil much confidence.

“Through our explorative work, we also identified the significant cost of purchasing high-quality third-party data was prohibitive for both FMG and our clients.”

But the roadblock doesn't mean the end of parametric insurance investigations, FMG said.

“While we won't continue to pursue a New Zealand wide heavy rainfall parametric insurance product, we will take our learnings and apply them against other perils and other data sets and potentially target defined areas where it can trigger more accurately.”

Self-insurance

Indemnity insurance is the go-to for protecting against financial losses, however self-insurance is another financial safety-net that New Zealand farmers and the agriculture industry should consider, Professor Hamish Gow, Lincoln University says.

Government self-insurance-type schemes operate in some overseas countries, setting aside funds to pay food producers for losses and expenses incurred from extreme weather, he says.

Southern wind damage

A generator is high on the 'to buy' list for southern deer farmers John Somerville and Richard Currie.

At John and wife Mel's Pine Bush farm, 50 kilometres east of Invercargill, the pre-Labour Weekend fast and furious winds flattened fences, yards and the workshop. Also in the firing line were several tree blocks and shelter belts including 500-year-plus matai (black pine) trees around their home.



SHORT & SHARP: Most of the destruction on John Somerville's Pine Bush farm happened in less than an hour.

“It happened so quickly; trees that have been there all my life were down in a few seconds,” John says.

The winds struck during the midst of velveting, and outside help was called on to help get through. Although John had a power generator, he didn't have a three-phase one to drive the crush. Fortunately, he was able to hire one.

“It was stressful and I'm grateful that my vet was able to help me out with velveting.

“PGG Wrightson also came to the rescue, providing freezer space for our velvet.”

While insurance will cover plant damage, it won't cover the replacement and repair of fences.

At Richard and Sarah Currie's Clinton farm in South Otago, around two kilometres of deer fencing was wrecked along with tree shelter belts and smallish pine plantations that were almost ready for harvest. The load out ramp and implement shed were flattened, but the deer shed was spared.

“We had the power back on within 24 hours, which saved us a lot of potential hassle with velveting,” Richard says.

When contacted by *Deer Industry News* in mid-November, he was waiting on logging crews to clean up.

The replanting of trees and replacement of fences is on the recovery plan but is not a financial focus in the meantime.

“It will be costly, and it's hard to justify on current returns.”



FLATTENED: The winds levelled in minutes this barn on Richard Currie's farm.

Behaviour change



Hamish Gow has observed over recent years how people directly affected by an extreme weather event recover, adapt and take practical steps to mitigate future natural disasters. He uses the recent wind storms in the lower South Island as proof. North Canterbury farmers have endured drought and earthquakes in recent years and were prepared for the devastating winds.

“They were ready. All of them. They had lots of generators and house and shed power systems were wired to take a generator.”



PHOTO: wikimedia.org

“Elsewhere in the world, governments provide support to farmers for food security reasons. That doesn’t hold in New Zealand as our agricultural system isn’t focused on food security – providing safe affordable food for domestic consumers. Our systems are focused on maximising export returns. Hence the industry needs to explore how it self-insures itself.”

But whether the government can afford to support, and how, and who is the issue.

“The general salary and wage earner is already maxed out on tax so there isn’t a lot of additionally capacity to support”

Climate change is going to push the issue, he says. ■

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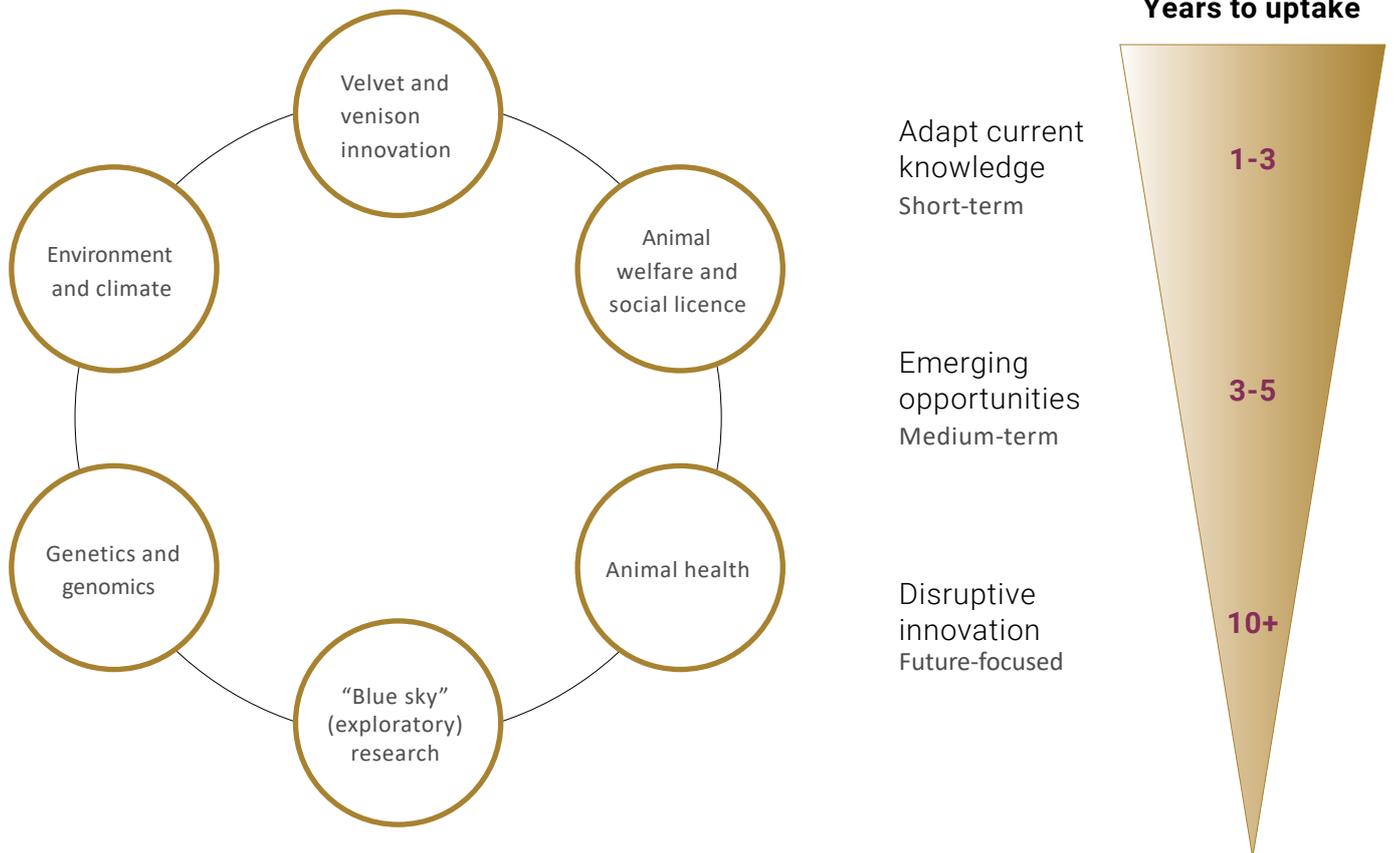
OUTCOME

Credible, practicable results that can lead to improved outcomes in welfare, economics, time, productivity

Research is a tool to support the delivery of the overall ambitions of the industry. The DINZ Research Strategy must be interpreted with DINZ’s Thrive35 strategy in mind.

The deer industry aims to maintain a balanced portfolio of research across topic areas and research horizons. In practical terms, this means over the medium-term, the industry is targeting the indicative splits.

- Research spend should target an **equal split between venison and velvet** areas.
- Approximately **40% should be focused on short-term research** (adapt current knowledge), **40% should be focused on medium-term research** (emerging opportunities) and **20% should be focused on future research (disruptive innovation)**. ■



Deer present a compelling diversification option for sheep-beef systems

Tony Leggett, *Deer Industry News* writer

Year-round consistency in the venison schedule is strengthening the case for introducing a deer component to sheep-beef properties, Manawatu farm consultant and deer farmer Matt Carroll says.

He delivered a compelling case for diversification into farming deer at two field days, one on his family's property in the Pohangina Valley in early November and another late in the previous month at the Burden family's property at Te Pohue, Hawke's Bay.

The Deer Industry New Zealand and New Zealand Deer Farmers Association field days were organised in conjunction with Beef + Lamb New Zealand to highlight the financial and operational benefits of running deer on sheep-beef farms.



DEER COMPARES FAVOURABLY: A high-performing deer operation could do \$170/deer stock unit on an elk-cross, venison-only, no velvet system, Matt says.

Matt says his aim was to encourage sheep and beef farmers, particularly those with existing deer infrastructure in place, to take a fresh look at farming deer to capitalise on the many benefits that modern deer genetics and proven farming systems offer.

Over the past 20 years, the quality of deer genetics has improved significantly in both temperament and productivity.

They stack up well financially too, largely because of the more consistent venison schedule, which is less focused on the European game season. It allows farmers to slaughter their animals at heavier weights through the year, rather than the small European market window from June to October.

"Of course, the benefit of diversification is that when one product is down, the others are up, so there is more consistency of income because of it," Matt says.

He's tracked farmgate returns using the advertised schedule prices for lamb, beef and venison since 2004, and it shows the increasing price trend line for venison matches lamb and is ahead of the trend line for beef.

"The in-season schedule for venison is flatter, so there's more consistency emerging, and we've got the ability to grow animals out for longer, so they are heavier also," he says.

His analysis does not include over-schedule payments for venison when stock and farms meet the various quality assurance, breed, animal welfare and slaughter requirements.

"For lamb, if you include NZFAP Plus at 10c/kg and other top-ups,

it's possible to get up to 30c/kg, depending on the company, over schedule at times in the year. For venison, it's substantially better, at up towards \$2/kg," he says.

The in-season schedule for venison is flatter, so there's more consistency emerging, and we've got the ability to grow animals out for longer, so they are heavier also.

Matt Carroll

Sourcing deer

Several deer farmers at the field day suggested there are good quality breeding hinds available for expansion into deer farming and advised contacting specialist deer agents to source them.

The high number of hinds slaughtered over the past decade was in response to weaker schedule prices following the Covid pandemic, retirement of deer farmers and partly due to the lack of support from rural professionals to help farmers grow hind numbers.

Sourcing weaner deer for a straight finishing operation would be more challenging, they say.

Longtime Manawatu deer farmer, Michael Humphrey, says eight deer farms in the region had been sold in the past two years and only two new owners have continued to farm deer. Many of those hinds could have been sold to new operations instead of being slaughtered, he says.



CHALLENGING: Sourcing weaners for a straight finishing operation could be difficult.

“So that’s a key point to remember when you are comparing the various options. For venison, that extra nearly \$2/kg is not widely recognised and that sometimes plays against deer when farmers are considering their diversification options,” Matt says.

The right livestock mix

He investigated the financial impact of three deer system options compared with a standard 80/20% sheep and beef hill country property, based on 1000 stock units, breeding and finishing all stock within the farm system.

The three options considered were 65:20:15 mix of sheep, cattle and deer, a 50:25:25 mix and a 33:33:33 mix. The balanced option produces the best financial result at 9 percent above the return of the base 80:20 sheep-beef operation.

Matt says being highly exposed to one stock class is also risky because the whole business could be impacted if there is a longer-term downturn in prices.

“I’m not anti-sheep, but diversification allows you to roll with the punches more easily,” he says.

Choosing the best sheep-beef-deer system will depend on feed supply and its seasonality.

“Store weaner producers will be looking after their breeding stock, finishers are just working on a margin, and breeder/finishers are sitting in the middle. But with every option, feed supply is key to what you’re able to achieve.”

Matt says farms with capacity to run up to 200 hinds are generally better off with a terminal system, capitalising on hybrid vigour — provided they can source replacement hinds of sufficient quality.

Farmgate returns using the advertised schedule prices for lamb, beef and venison since 2004 shows the increasing price trend line for venison matches lamb and is ahead of the trend line for beef.

Workload spread is another benefit from diversification, though he concedes more classes of stock can add to complexity.

“Here at Westview (his family’s property), we operate a higher staff-to-stock unit ratio, but it still works out better for us in financial terms. Our staff don’t have any downtime at all, and spring is mad, but it’s the same for most farm businesses.”

Matching feed supply and demand

A common conversation he and his BakerAg colleagues have with mixed livestock farm owners and managers is how to match spring growth to demand to achieve the best outcomes.

In some cases, that involves a discussion about ways to manipulate the feed supply, including use of strategic nitrogen applications, changing lambing dates, splitting lambing to de-risk weather events, or grazing stock off the farm to prepare lambing country before set stocking.

But Matt says the conversation changes when breeding hinds are present in the mix because in spring, they are pregnant and can be ‘parked’ while ewes then beef cows are given priority leading into lambing and calving.

Financial analysis

Using the BakerAg Financial Analysis Bureau (FAB) database to investigate what is possible, Matt says high-performing sheep systems are producing revenue of \$150-\$160/sheep stock unit, while a high-performing cattle system is about \$110-\$130/cattle stock unit, consisting of mostly beef cows finishing weaners and maybe bulls on the side.

“But a high-performing deer operation could do \$170/deer stock unit on a venison-only system, no velvet, from a farm finishing elk-cross deer.”

“A breeder producing 68 kg stag weaners and 62 kg hind weaners and selling them store at weaning generates \$145/deer stock unit,” he says.

“The key thing is that deer compare favourably with beef cattle, and that’s why the other considerations have a big impact, like better matching feed to ewes, beef cows and hinds, the workload component, and how you link these livestock options together, especially with drench resistance being so prevalent in sheep systems,” he says.

The financial benefits are more compelling when farms already have deer infrastructure in place, but provided there is a deer netting perimeter fence, topping up internal fences and converting cattle yards to handle deer is a workable option.

A deer farmer could expand their operation by topping sheep and cattle fences for as little as \$8/metre.

Matt says a reluctance by banks and rural professionals to support deer farming appears to be easing now the venison schedule has become more consistent through the year.

“It’s partly the reason for this field day today, to showcase diversification with a deer component for sheep and beef farmers who are heavily exposed to sheep meat and beef markets,” he says.



FEED SUPPLY: Nicola Shadbolt and farm consultant Garry Massicks, knee-dip in pasture. Deer fit well with seasonal feed production on sheep-beef farms.

“They still need maintenance feed, but you don’t have that pressure in early spring. You’re feeding hinds in November, December and January.”

“And you’re not needing to maintain feed quantity. You’re going to be focused more on maintaining feed quality for them into the summer so that’s when having these three classes of stock really links in quite well.”

“You don’t want to be limiting feed supply in summer if you are wanting to sell good weaners in March, and the workload is no different to beef cows.”

“You’re really spreading that risk of weather, and arguably, if you’re really having to bring in nitrogen to manipulate spring covers, by having beef cows and hinds it is possible to save on the fertiliser cost and spread that feed out further.”

Westview deer expansion

When the partners in Westview Farming Partnership made the decision to increase deer numbers, they quickly found there were limitations to expanding the existing deer-fenced area on the home farm.

In some cases, expansion was restricted by woodlots and blocks of regenerating native bush, or that soil types outside the deer unit were less suited to deer.

They also had to consider which existing enterprises would miss out. For example, dairy cows from Westview’s dairy unit, which adjoins the sheep-beef area, are grazed on the middle and upper country after being dried off.

“Without the scope to run all our dairy cattle at home, they would have to be grazed off-farm at a cash cost to the business,” Matt says.

They originally planned on buying more to expand their velvet production operation, but after considering the high labour demand when velvet is being harvested, they decided it had to remain at home.

“We changed our minds and said no, that needs to be here on our doorstep. But hinds can be elsewhere so we started looking for farms that already had deer infrastructure in place so we could choose what we ran behind those fences.”

“We’re not against more deer at home, but the numbers we have work well at the moment. If we had a paddock right next door to the deer area that had stuffed fences, then we’d have that conversation again,” he says.

They successfully negotiated to buy a 265ha (effective) property 30 minutes away at Apiti called Kinross, in April 2025, and also purchased the deer herd. At the same time, the vendors, Tony and Lynda Gray, became new partners in Westview Farming Partnership. ■



GOOD FIT: Deer fit well with seasonal feed production on sheep and beef farms.



COMPLEMENTARY: Matt and Shane Carroll say deer adds a complementary grazing option for sheep systems.

Key points to consider for diversifying into farming deer*

- Existing deer fencing and handling facilities lowers the re-entry cost for deer.
- Topping up internal fences is sufficient if there is a fully deer-fenced perimeter.
- Cattle yards can be cheaply switched to handling both deer and cattle in a breeding system.
- Deer temperament has improved significantly.
- Deer fit well with seasonal feed production on sheep-beef farms.
- Deer are strongly seasonal in their voluntary feed intake.
- November fawning takes pressure off the early spring feed demand.
- Deer adds a complementary grazing option for sheep systems where drench resistance is present.
- Schedule consistency has emerged since the Covid pandemic highlighted the over-exposure to the European game season market.
- Quality assurance and market premiums can add up to an extra \$2/kg above the advertised schedule.
- Deer returns can match high-performing sheep or cattle systems.
- Deer will often outperform high performing sheep systems on farms in later, colder regions or on extensive country.
- High weaner deer prices have closed the gap in income per stock unit between breeder-store deer properties on extensive country and breeder-finishers on better country.

*Source: AgLetter, August 9, 2025

Introducing Ryenna Wapiti

We're pleased to welcome Jesse and Tracey Saunders, Ryenna Wapiti, a progressive stud built on hard work and quality genetics.

Jesse and Tracey began their deer farming journey in 2012, buying into a commercial wapiti operation in Tuatapere, achieving farm ownership in 2015. The Saunders have always had a keen interest in genetics, regularly attending wapiti bull sales and investing in quality sires, which have delivered clear on-farm gains. With increased velvet quality and weight gain, the Saunders introduced a structured breeding programme.

For Jesse, the long-term dream had always been to return to his family farm in Winton, Southland. In 2021 that opportunity arose with the Saunders and their deer relocating to the property with a 116-year family connection. They're fourth-generation custodians of the land, proud of the history and committed to a deer farming future and Ryenna Wapiti. The Saunders will continue are pushing progress through DNA testing, eye-muscle scanning, and detailed data recording.

We're proud to support their continued growth and are looking forward to presenting their first open day on 14 January 2026 from 10:00 - 11:30am at 134 Transmission Line Rd, Winton.

You can follow them on Facebook: Ryenna Wapiti or contact Jesse on 027 276 8700 or any PGW deer agent. ■

Editorial supplied by PGG Wrightson.



Raincliff Station

AGRICULTURE
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ELK/WAPITI TERMINAL SIRE SALE

RAINCLIFF STATION, RD12 Pleasant Point

“CONSISTENT QUALITY AND RELIABILITY”



Friday 9th January 2026 from 10:30am

Owner / Operator: DAVID MORGAN 027 230 3375 | Deer agent: SAM MARTIN 027 561 0000

DECEMBER 2025

DATE	TIME	CLIENT	WHERE	REGION
10th	11:00 am	Fairlight Station Stag Sale	485 Cainard Road, Garston	Southland
10th	1.30 pm	Ruapehu Red Deer	37 Pukenaua Road, Taihape	Rangitikei
12th	1:00 pm	Peel Forest (Forresters) Stag Sale	1 Brake Road, RD22, Geraldine	South Canterbury
16th	1.30 pm	Forest Road Farm Deer	902 Gwavas Road, Tikokino	Hawkes Bay

JANUARY 2026

DATE	TIME	CLIENT	WHERE	REGION
7th	1:00 pm	Clachanburn Elk	316 Puketoi Run Road, Ranfurly	Central Otago
9th	2.30 pm	Edendale Deer	1573 Ashburton Gorge Road, Mt Somers	Canterbury
9th	6.30 pm	Rothsay Deer/Diamond Point Deer Park	185 Darts Road, RD12, Rakaia	Canterbury
10th	1:00 pm	Peel Forest Estate	1 Brake Road, RD22, Geraldine	South Canterbury
12th	12.30 pm	Arawata Deer	95 Titiroa Pine Bush Road RD1, Wyndham	Southland
12th	5.30 pm	Altrive Deer	25 Waipounamu Road RD6, Riverdale, Gore	Southland
13th	2:00 pm	Wilkins Farming Stag Sale	65 Harvey Road, Athol	Southland
14th	10-11.30am	Ryenna Wapiti Ltd (Open Day)	134 Transmission Line Rd, Winton	Southland
14th	1:00 pm	Littlebourne Wapiti	321 Devereaux Road, Winton	Southland

FEBRUARY 2026

DATE	TIME	CLIENT	WHERE	REGION
13th	3:00 pm	Clachanburn Elk (Trophy Bulls Sale)	316 Puketoi Run Road Ranfurly	Central Otago

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Counter-trend strategy pays off for Manawatu partnership

Tony Leggett, *Deer Industry News* writer

Westview Farming Partnership has been diversifying since its inception nearly 38 years ago.



DAIRYING DETAIL: Shane Carroll explains how the dairy operation, run on the lower country of Westview, provides a diversification option to the sheep-beef-deer operations.

Its joint managing directors, Nicola Shadbolt and Shane Carroll (Matt Carroll's parents), moved from Canterbury in 1987 to establish the equity partnership as one of five equal-share partners in the original property in the Pohangina Valley, Manawatu.

Over time, the partnership has transformed from a moderately-sized sheep-beef store stock operation to a larger, integrated red meat and dairy farming enterprise, with additional income from timber forestry and carbon credits from poplar and willow plantings, along with reverting bush.

Some of the founding partners, including Nicola and Shane, remain as shareholders, but others have recently left, and new partners have joined the evolving business.

Income diversity has always been a key strategy for the partnership, which has never made an operating loss.

The equity partnership structure has endured, with some minor tweaks. It owns the stock and plant, and each partner has an equal share in a separate company that owns the land, buildings, Fonterra shares, and carries the debt.

Westview Farming Partnership also has a 37.5 percent stake in another equity partnership that owns a 590-cow dairy farm at nearby Ashhurst.

Nicola and Shane's son Matt was full-time at Westview until March 2024 and now splits his time between the partnership for one day

a week and the rest with agribusiness consultancy BakerAg, where he works in its sheep-beef-deer team, based in Feilding.

Westview has a total farmed area of 2117 ha, comprising 1954 ha freehold and 163 ha of lease. The sheep and beef graze 1180 ha, the deer graze 235 ha and their adjoining dairy unit runs on 168 ha of river flats. There is also another 71 ha of forestry planted for timber production, plus large areas of native and regenerating bush.

Velvet is not great at present, but we're in it for the long-term as another string to our bow. It will have its day again."

At the start of the current year (July 1), the sheep, beef and deer grazing area was running 44 percent sheep, 37 percent cattle and 19 percent deer.

Westview's breeding hind herd comprised 500 hinds bred to venison genetics and 100 bred to velvet genetics, all based at the new property at Apiti, along with some sheep and beef cattle. Replacement hinds for both herds are run on two small lease blocks close to the home property, which also runs the velvet herd of 250 mixed-age stags and replacements.

There were about 4800 breeding ewes, 1250 ewe hoggets, and 100 beef cows, 58 rising two-year heifers and 256 rising one-year heifers, plus 84 rising two-year cattle and 398 rising one-year cattle.

Westview Farming Partnership is forecasting gross farm revenue (GFR) of \$1374/ha for the 2025-26 year from its sheep, beef and deer farming enterprises.

Standardised total farm expenditure is forecast at \$889/ha (63% of GFR), leaving an economic farm surplus (EFS) of \$505/ha.

Looking back over the past four years, GFR has averaged \$1400/ha, while expenses are 72% of GFR and the EFS is \$394/ha. This includes the 2023/24 financial year, which was impacted by low product prices and rapidly rising farm working expenses.

Revenue for each stock class in the current year is forecast at \$130/sheep stock unit, \$158/cattle stock unit and \$118/deer stock unit. Carroll says all three incomes streams are rising, and deer compare favourably to the other enterprises.

Income diversity has always been a key strategy for the partnership, which has never made an operating loss.

When wool was generating 85% of GFR in the first few years of operation, some of the partners became increasingly concerned about the level of exposure to sheep-driven income.

Rather than expand the sheep flock to cash in on high wool returns at the time, they bought a neighbouring dairy unit instead.

“Operating profit is the key driver for us, and that’s why the partners were saying we’re overexposed to wool.”

“It was their counter-cyclical approach to investing and their experience in finance that drove the move to dairying at the time, instead of jumping in deeper with more sheep,” Matt Carroll says.

After adding a second dairy unit, the partners sought to balance out the income streams by adding a beef finishing block.

Matt says before the partnership bought the new farm Kinross, deer were only about 9% of total stock units.

“By buying Kinross, we’ve gone from 250 hinds and finishing all weaners to 600 hinds, and we are into velvet, too. Velvet is not great at present, but we’re in it for the long-term as another string to our bow. It will have its day again.”

“It is rare to have years when everything is up, so that’s the power of being diversified. When something is not having a great time, then other areas of the business can prop it up,” he says. ■



TRANSORMED: Westview has evolved from a moderately-sized sheep-beef-store stock operation to an integrated red meat, dairy enterprise with income from forestry and carbon credits, Matt Carroll says.



FOUNDING PARTNERS: Shane Carroll (foreground) and Nicola Shadbolt (left) are Matt’s parents and the founding partners of the Westview Farming Partnership.

Deer Industry News

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Why wouldn't you?

If ever there was a year to be using elk/wapiti genetics, this is it.

“There are premium prices for elk/wapiti venison contracts, and the fast-growing hybrid progeny are in high demand,” John Falconer, Clachanburn Elk says.

“If you add to that the elk velvet, which is holding strong in an uncertain velvet market, the decision to use elk bulls is a no brainer”

Clachanburn Elk has been breeding elk/wapiti sires for over 35-years, investing in top-quality genetics to meet market demand. They take pride in breeding big, strong sire bulls with a good velvet head and trophy potential.

Clachanburn elk’s breeding legacy is proven, income-generating progeny. They’re big, fast-growing animals for the venison market, the bulls grow quality velvet and can exit the herd as a trophy head prospect.

Over the last few years, Clachanburn has been building the trophy side of the business retaining a number of Clachanburn-bred bulls and purchasing both Connemara and Montalto studs. The first of this trophy line-up will be offered at an inaugural trophy bull sale on 13th February.

Clachanburn Elk genetics is your opportunity for three-way deer income diversification. Start reaping the rewards and buy Clachanburn Elk genetics this sales season – why wouldn't you? ■

Editorial supplied by Clachanburn.



nProve another selection tool for velvet growers

The introduction of nProve as part of Deer Select 2 has been well received by many stud breeders, but velvet producers could benefit from adding the tech to their selection toolbox, DINZ Deer Select Manager Sharon McIntyre says.

nProve, a platform integrated with Deer Select 2, lets deer farmers interact with their own data on Deer Select.

“You can select which animals you want, whenever you want,” Sharon says.

She adds there is a great opportunity for commercial breeders with an interest in genetics to use nProve.

“A lot of velvet growers DNA test or match fawns to dams and sires and record velvet information. They have it in paper form or on Excel, and it gets hard to manage once you have several years of data, but nProve can help streamline all of that. It’s a cool way of managing your own data or getting breed values on your deer – particularly females.”



Keeping track of pedigree and performance can be done quickly using nProve.

A 20-minute Teams nProve demo for *Deer Industry News* proved how it could be customised for selection and rankings using indexes, breed values and raw data.

The nProve system is based closely on the nProve sheep system.

“A lot of deer farmers who run sheep are familiar with nProve for sheep and the indexes and sub-indexes, so I deliberately made it very similar to that system to make it familiar for them.”

Farmers wanting a demo on nProve can contact Sharon: sharon.mcintyre@deernz.org

Updated features in Deer Select 2

Buyers at this season’s sire sales may notice new data on which to base buying decisions.

There are new fertility breed values FERT2 (fertility at two-years-old) and FERTMA (mixed-age fertility)

Some breeders may also include indices and sub-indexes to give buyers an indication of the overall economic value of an individual and its offspring.

The main indices are Red Maternal Index (RedMATN) which includes reproduction, growth, hind weight and meat sub-indices to guide selection for both venison production and female replacements. Both the Red Terminal Index (RTERM) and the Wapiti Terminal Index (WTERM) include respective breed growth

and meat sub-indices. It is important to note that the Red and Wapiti indices are based on separate evaluations, and therefore cannot be directly compared. ■

For a more detailed explanation of the index traits and weightings go to: deernz.org.nz/assets/Deer-Hub/Breeding

One-on-one tech talk

Lynda Gray, *Deer Industry News* Editor

Deer Industry New Zealand, in conjunction with Ravensdown, is offering one-on-one farmer and consultant sessions to understand and practically apply HawkeEye Pro and CarbonCrop tech tools.



Group workshops have been the standard forum for explaining and demonstrating a lot of farm technology and developments, but DINZ and Ravensdown have teamed up to provide individual consultations for the dual and complementary technologies.

“Deer farmers are generally motivated and forward-thinking, and while workshops are useful, we see one-on-one formats as a chance for farmers to further move their business forward,” Ravensdown Environmental Consultant Colin Tyler says.

Selection tool

“I used to rely on a bureau to generate the report, but now I can do it, ranking sires and hinds to what I choose. It’s a huge improvement.”

He’s planning to use nProve for the selection of replacement hinds.

“I’ll be looking at the two-year-old and mixed-age velvet weights of the progeny from hinds.

“I see it as another tool to use in deciding on whether to keep or sell my young hinds.”

He’s been DNA testing all progeny for three generations.

“It’s not a long time, and it’s only now that I’m getting a better idea of our best performing genetics, but as we get more data over time, the information I get will improve in accuracy.”



HUGE STEP FORWARD: Being able to access and use nProve in “his own time and his own way” is the big advantage of the tech tool, Canterbury velvet producer Henry Pearse says.

Funded under the Integrated Farm Planning project, the consultations, available to North Island deer farmers, will explain how HawkeEye Pro and CarbonCrop could be applied to a particular farming system to drive profit.

"The ETS and many precision-farming tools are still unfamiliar areas for a lot of farmers," DINZ Special Projects Lead Amy Wills says.

"These one-on-one sessions give farmers the chance to explore both in a practical, personalised way. By combining HawkeEye Pro and CarbonCrop, we can show exactly how these tools translate into real opportunities on their own farm.

"It's a great learning opportunity that's also free!"

As well as a free two-to-three-hour consultation, farmers have the opportunity to take up subscriptions for both HawkeEye Pro and CarbonCrop.

HawkeEye Pro, developed by Ravensdown, is a precision nutrient placement tool. Many farmers are familiar with the original HawkeEye platform, which integrates nutrient ordering and application. It's proved to be a great logistics and mapping system, but HawkeEye Pro goes to that next level, Ravensdown Head of Product and Service Development Mike White explains.

"With input from our agri-manager team, HawkeEye Pro develops a bespoke nutrient on-farm prescription.

"It's all about better decision making and precision nutrient management, with the end result being the right fertiliser in the right form, in the right place, and at the right time.

"It is precision level, down to 100 square metres, so it is a huge advancement."

CarbonCrop is another online tool that helps farmers identify spaces and places for tree planting to provide shelter, shade and/or carbon credits, Colin says.

"We see there are synergies from using both HawkeEye Pro and CarbonCrop to ramp up both environmental gains and productive potential."

CarbonCrop generates plans to help farmers assess both shelter and cash-generating planting opportunities on retired or poorer quality land, and from existing plantings.

"A lot of farmers think carbon credits and the ETS means the blanket planting of pine, but that's not the case.

"There are opportunities for extra income from existing plantings," Colin says.

As an example, he mentions a pilot consultation trial with Hawke's Bay deer farmer Keith Burden, who has established areas of riparian and poplar pole plantings.



PRECISION-PLUS MANAGEMENT: *HawkeEye Pro ensures the right fertiliser in the right form, in the right place, and at the right time, Ravensdown's Mike White says.*

"Many of these areas could be included in the ETS and generate carbon credits that Keith wasn't aware of." ■

North Island deer farmers interested in a HawkeEye Pro and CarbonCrop consultation can email environmental@ravensdown.co.nz or phone Colin Tyler on 021 529 146.

Testing the tech

Keith and Josh Burden are the pilot trial deer farmers for the DINZ-Ravensdown project.

CarbonCrop could ultimately be helpful in identifying extra income potential from the carbon sequestered in regenerating native bush or planted areas on their Hawke's Bay farm, Keith says. The HawkeEye Pro mapping and nutrient management system also looks promising.

The Burden's Hawke's Bay farm is also part of a massive local regional council project to build detailed environmental farm plans.

Meanwhile, Keith and Josh, who farm in partnership, have been building venison production to create a more diverse farm system and boost income resilience.

"We love our sheep and cattle, and we're very passionate about velvet, but this is about spreading risk, matching stock to the right sort of country and also getting the animal health benefits that come with grazing mixed species," Keith says.

They are now deer-proofing more of their summer-safe, higher country so they can calve hinds up there.

"Our sheep are lambing at 150% on average over all our steeper, higher country, but it comes with huge risks from storms over lambing because most of it is between 600 to 700 metres above sea level, and it rises up to 980 metres at the top," he says.

Instead, hinds will be quite at home up there, and their feed demand will fit better with the feed supply curve than lambing ewes.

"Because our current herd of 350 hinds is fully recorded, we know which ones will be mated to velvet sires for our velvet herd replacements, and the rest will go to terminal sires, most likely a wapiti, for venison production," he says.

At present, cattle generate about 17 percent of their gross farm income, while deer and sheep contribute 50 percent each of the balance.



NEW TOOLS: *Keith Burden, pictured at last year's Hawke's Bay Velvet Competition, along with son Josh are testing out new tech tools on their Hawke's Bay farm.*

Herd and host: The ongoing ecology of yersinia in deer

Jack Rust

Many deer farmers will be familiar with yersiniosis. It's a common disease of weaners, typically 4- to 8-months-old, caused by *Yersinia pseudotuberculosis*, a bacteria ingested from contaminated pasture, feed, water systems, or through faecal contamination. The bacteria produce toxins that damage the young animal's intestine, leading to scouring, bleeding, dehydration and death. Outbreaks are triggered by stress, particularly around weaning time. Stressful conditions include cold, wet, and windy weather; poor nutrition; high parasite burdens; and excessive/rough handling. There is also social stress caused by weaning and mixing unfamiliar mobs. These stress triggers can suppress the appetite and lower the body temperature of young deer while slowing gastrointestinal movement, allowing the yersinia bacteria to multiply.

The true impact of the disease often becomes apparent in autumn, when 10 – 30 percent of weaner mobs can become infected. Reducing stress during this period is key. Practical management steps include:

- Providing adequate shelter during cold and wet conditions.
- Minimising yarding, movement, or transport of weaners.
- Ensuring high-quality nutrition and controlling parasite burdens.
- Running older, calm hinds with weaners to reduce group stress.

Vaccination is another valuable tool in controlling yersiniosis. Extensive 2- and 3-year trials have shown that vaccination can reduce weaner losses by up to 65% in affected herds. However, effective protection requires following the manufacturer's guidelines.

Ideally, weaners should receive their first vaccination after 12 weeks of age, followed by a booster 3 to 4 weeks later. In practice, this may be difficult to achieve, and a more likely programme could be based around:

- **Pre-rut weaning:** Administer the first dose at weaning, normally in late February/early March, when fawns are 12 to 15 weeks old. If fawns will be transported soon after, consider giving the first dose before 12 weeks of age but before weaning. The purchaser should be told that a second dose will be needed 3 to 4 weeks later.
- **Post-rut weaning:** Give the first dose in late February/early March when hinds and fawns are put in mating groups. The second dose should be administered in early April when mobs are yarded for the changeover of stags.

If vaccination is required before 12 weeks of age, a third dose given 3 to 4 weeks after the second is recommended for optimal immunity.

Discuss and develop with your veterinarian a schedule suited to your management system.

For further guidance, I recommend reading Colin Macintosh's article "*Yersiniavax – A Recipe for Disaster*", which outlines common vaccination pitfalls, such as:

- Leaving the vaccines in direct sunlight for days
- Not washing out the gun between doses
- Reusing old, dirty, or blunt needles
- Vaccinating wet animals
- Combining vaccination with other stressful procedures, such as tagging or weighing
- Failing to administer a second, booster dose of the vaccine

Any of these mistakes can compromise vaccine efficacy and result in wasted effort and cost. Always consult your vet for the best administration protocols.

If clinical yersiniosis does occur, contact your veterinarian promptly. They may request faecal samples for culture or recommend post-mortem examination to confirm diagnosis. Once confirmed, treatment may involve antibiotics and fluid therapy, which should always be discussed and managed in consultation with your vet. ■

Jack Rust is a Southland vet

Yersinia key points

Clinical signs:

- Lethargy and reduced appetite
- Green or black watery diarrhoea, which may become bloody
- Sudden death, particularly in weaners aged four- to eight-months-old

Predisposing stressors:

- Weaning
- Cold, wet, or windy weather
- Poor nutritional status
- Heavy parasite burdens
- Excessive/stressful handling, movement, or transport
- Mixing of unfamiliar mobs

Prevention and control:

- Vaccination, according to manufacturer and veterinary guidance
- Providing adequate shelter and housing during bad weather
- Ensuring high-quality nutrition
- Monitoring and managing parasite loads
- Minimising handling, yarding, or transport during stressful periods

For more information refer to *Deer Facts Yersiniosis* deernz.org.nz/assets/Deer-Facts/DeerFact_Yersiniosis_2015-09.pdf

BBQ venison tri-tip with black bean, corn and kumara salad

Merchant of Venison and Graham Brown, DINZ Executive Chef



10
SERVES

Ingredients

Venison

10 venison tri-tips, approx. 200g each 5 g Cajun spice rub

Black bean roasted corn salsa

4 ears of corn	4 roasted garlic cloves, crushed	4 limes, juiced
100 g each of red, yellow and green capsicum	1 Chipotle chilli, crushed	50 ml olive oil
1 large red onion	400 g can black beans, drained	250 g kumara
	1 handful cilantro leaves, chopped	

Avocado cilantro cream

150 ml sour cream	1 handful washed cilantro leaves	½ tsp zest of lime
1 ripe avocado	2 limes, juiced	

Jack Daniels BBQ sauce

200 ml Jack Daniels	200 g tomatoes, finely chopped	10 g cornflour
500 ml venison brown stock	15 g tomato paste	50 ml double espresso coffee
50 g butter	60 ml Worcestershire sauce	50 g cold butter
80 g onion, finely chopped	15 g treacle or black strap molasses	1 Chipotle chilli, deseeded and finely chopped
50 g red capsicum	5 ml malt or Balsamic vinegar	
50 g yellow capsicum	5 g Cajun spice mix	

Method

Venison

Rub the Cajun spice rub into the venison and allow to stand for 20-30 mins. Season well with sea salt.

Black bean roasted corn salsa

BBQ the corn husk until lightly browned, shuck and set aside.

Blacken capsicum over a naked flame, place in a bowl for 10 minutes, remove blackened skins and dice flesh.

Dice red onion finely and sauté in oil until soft.

Dice kumara, blanch and refresh in cold water.

Mix all ingredients together about 10 minutes before using.

Avocado cilantro cream

Place ingredients in a blender and puree until smooth. Keep chilled.

Jack Daniels BBQ sauce

Melt butter and sauté the onions and garlic until light brown. Add the diced capsicum, tomato pieces, chilli, Jack Daniels, and the remaining ingredients. Reduce until the sauce thickens slightly, then add the cornflour. Allow to cook for three minutes, add the coffee and mix with the butter.

To serve

Grill venison for about 3-4 minutes each side until a good colour, then roast in oven until medium-rare. Rest and keep warm for approx eight minutes. Serve sliced across the grain and fan out on a plate. Pair with the black bean corn salad and the Jack Daniels BBQ sauce with the avocado cream on the side. ■



Clachanburn Resolute and Nasa. Outstanding young sires dominating at Clachanburn

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