

Executive Committee Report

Greetings from an unseasonably green Hawkes Bay. After what was a very dry six months Mother Nature has decided to bless us with some precipitation: over 150 mm in January. We finished the calendar year about 350 mm short, the worst rainfall number since the horrendous 1998 drought. The grass, crops and lucerne have taken off, which is great timing for lactating hinds and fawns, and the normal February feeding out is on hold for the moment.

I have just returned from a successful “Deer 2 Succeed” field day run in conjunction with Invermay (Bioeconomy Science Institute – AgResearch Group!). The afternoon started with a barbecue lunch with the venison patties kindly supplied and cooked by the team at Duncan NZ. We then had an update on feeding nutrition for velvet stags and velvet haemostasis by Dr David Stevens and Bryan Thompson before heading out on a farm tour of Invermay and further discussing the projects they are currently running. The knowledge held by those working at Invermay is a massive resource and it would be good if we could find more ways of enabling farmers to interact with them and the science they are doing.

In this month's Stagline we have the annual advertisement for industry positions. It is my turn to retire by rotation and after six years I will not be seeking re-election. I would like to take this opportunity to promote the role and encourage DFA members to put their names

forward. We are a small industry and the NZDFA has an important job in ensuring the producers' perspective is understood and considered.

However, apart from being an advocate for farmers, being on the NZDFA Executive Committee has enabled me to learn a lot more about our industry and connect with many different primary industry people. Our network around New Zealand is full of great people and interesting stories that this role enables you to experience first-hand. If you are interested in any future governance roles the NZDFA Executive provides a great introduction and you get to work with a great team, so don't be shy and take this opportunity to get involved.

As usual, the NZDFA Executive Committee has been busy in the background ensuring farmers have representation on the Velvet Grading Guidelines panel as well as continuing to support DINZ in the endeavour to create a Velvet Export Licensing system. Planning for this year's Next Generation programme is well underway; it's going to be in the Bay of Plenty/ Waikato region. The registration opening date and event date are in this Stagline and the itinerary will follow.

The next thing for us on farm is weaning and setting hinds up for mating, we have pastures to resow after summer crops and so the year rolls around. And as many are now considering their parasite management in

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their weaners, DINZ, Wormwise and Beef & Lamb have produced an excellent parasite management calendar which is designed to be an educational tool and now includes specific information for deer. This can be downloaded from the Deerhub on the DINZ website (see [Parasites - Deer NZ](#)).

I hope that weaning and the autumn goes well for you and your deer.

Karen Middelberg

NZDFA Executive Committee

NZDFA Vacancies – Your Association Needs You!

Positions on the NZDFA Executive Committee and Selection and Appointments Panel, and the Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) Board are now open for nominations.

We encourage anyone who would like to be involved in the industry, or knows of someone who would be a great representative of the industry, to consider nomination for these roles.

Nominations for the 2026/27 year

NZDFA positions

There are four NZDFA elected positions up for nomination as they become available by rotation (appointment by nomination and election, if necessary). A further elected position is open for nomination due to a mid-term retirement – this position will have a term of one year.

The following members are up for re-election or retirement:

- William Oliver (SAP, elected 2024) – intends to seek re-election
- Dave Lawrence (SAP, elected 2024) – intends to seek re-election
- Karen Middelberg (Executive Committee, elected 2024) – not seeking re-election
- Evan Potter (Executive Committee, elected 2024) – intends to seek re-election
- Mark McCoard (Executive Committee, elected 2025) – not seeking re-election

This is a chance to shape the association's future and have a say in the industry as well with all positions responsible for appointing our four producer representatives to the Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) board.

Deer Industry New Zealand – NZDFA appointed board member

The DINZ board guides the actions that DINZ is taking to accelerate the industry recovery and give confidence that we have a sustainable and profitable future.

There is **one Producer**

Representative position vacancy due to retirement by rotation from the DINZ Board:

- Patrick Boyd (DINZ Board Producer Rep, appointed 2023) – intends to seek re-appointment

Nominees will have an opportunity to address the NZDFA AGM on 13 May 2026 and will be interviewed in June by the NZDFA SAP to decide on the best candidate.

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Interviews for the DINZ board position will be held on Tuesday 9 or Wednesday 10 June (this will be confirmed as soon as possible).

Have your say in the industry's future and consider a nomination for the Deer Industry New Zealand board.

Nominations

All nominations must be received at the DINZ office (email: lindsay.fung@deernz.org) by 5pm, Friday 3 April 2026.

Nomination forms and further information are [available here >>](#)

If you would like to indicate your interest, or talk to someone in confidence about these positions, please get in touch with Lindsay Fung (lindsay.fung@deernz.org or 027 333-6551).

If you would like to discuss the positions with a current Executive Committee or SAP member to get an understanding of first-hand experience, please get in touch.

Deer2Succeed – Otago style, Monday 9 February 2026

Another Deer2Succeed DFA field day was held at the beginning of this week in glorious Otago sunshine at the AgResearch Invermay Research Centre (now known as the Bioeconomy Science Institute, or BSI).

About 30 people attended including a class of senior agriculture students from Taieri College. The day started off with a BBQ lunch kindly sponsored by Duncan Venison. This was followed by a classroom session

covering feeding nutrition for velvet stags and updates on the research on haemostasis.

The group then jumped into 4WDs and headed into the research farm for an introduction to the deer herd and Tomorrow's Deer breeding hind herd – the industry-funded research programme that underpins advances in deer genetic improvement. This was followed by a stop at a research site examining water quality impacts from four different catchment treatments (fully-fenced waterways, partially fenced, temporary-fenced and no fencing). This led on to findings from the long-term hill and high-country water quality project (water quality on ten deer farms monitored for five years).

Both generated lots of discussion but the bottom line was that each farm has its own environmental conditions and stocking regimes so environmental management has to be tailored to those circumstances. There is no single solution or silver bullet.

The group then visited the Disease Research Limited lab and deer CT scanner and heard updates on parasitology diagnostics and Johne's disease.

Our thanks to all the staff at BSI AgResearch Group and Duncan Venison. In particular Bryan Thompson for putting together the day and Sam Earle for his BBQ prowess (and the burgers!).

Keep an eye out for more on the day in the next issue of Deer Industry News.

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Archie White (left, AgResearch) talks about Tomorrow's Deer



Richard Muirhead (right) talking about retirement options for waterways.



Bryan Thompson and Archie White (right) with hopefully the next generation of deer farmers (from Taieri College) Photo: Lynda Gray



"It is easier for a deer to pass through the eye of a CT scanner..." Photo: Lynda Gray

Next Generation 2026

The NZDFA Next Generation Programme is in its 14th year of running and this year it's the North Island's turn to host our young farmers and industry professionals. Bay of Plenty and Waikato DFA branches will be jointly hosting the two-day programme that combines farm visits with exposure to the deer industry beyond the farm gate.

While the venues are still being confirmed, the draft programme* is as follows:



Thu 6 August

- Agribusiness in Hamilton (likely to be mid-morning to allow flights into Hamilton airport)
- Visit two deer farms east of Hamilton (heading towards Rotorua)
- Dinner and accommodation in Rotorua

Fri 7 August

- Venison Processor
- Co-products
- Deer farm
- Workshop session – finishing mid-afternoon to allow flying out of Rotorua airport

*(*subject to change depending on availability and capacity of venues. A final programme will be published as soon as possible)*

[Registrations are now open here >>](#)

This year attendance will require a registration fee of \$75 (inc GST). This helps cover costs for running the programme (alongside sponsorship). The registration fee will also provide NZDFA membership for the 2026-27 financial year (ending 31 March 2027) – that's almost eight months membership for half the annual subscription.

Velvet Grading Guidelines panel – DFA reps

With the current velvetting season coming to an end, DINZ will be facilitating a Velvet Grading Guidelines panel with a view to the next season. The panel will be comprised of velvet buyers, velvet processors, DINZ and NZDFA representatives.

DFA branches were asked to nominate farmers to fill two positions on the panel in addition to Evan Potter from the NZDFA Executive Committee. Branches were also invited to provide their top five priorities for grading guidelines.

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A total of nine nominations were received covering most of the country (Southland up to Waikato). The Executive Committee have appointed Bruce Paterson (Southland) and Mark Tapley (SCNO) as the NZDFA representatives.

As noted, feedback from branches has been received but farmers should also feel free to contact any of the farmer reps to let them know of any concerns or suggestions.

- Evan Potter: 027 352-8874
- Bruce Patterson: 027 344-3629
- Mark Tapley: 027 779-9008

No date has been set yet for the panel, but we will keep farmers informed of any developments.

Noticeboard

NZDFA Matuschka Award



The NZDFA Matuschka Award recognises the grass roots farmer and unsung contributor to local area activities, functions and core spirit of deer farming.

Nominations should be made through the appropriate Branch or can be direct to the convenor. There is no set format or form to nominate someone. The nominations can be informal, from individuals or Branch nominations or industry groups, or have a nomination endorsed by the branch or other individuals and it's not necessary to advise a candidate of the nomination.

For more information, [click here >>](#)

Nominations must be submitted to the NZDFA via lindsay.fung@deernz.org by 5 pm, Friday 3 April 2026.

Deer Industry Award



The Deer Industry Award is an annual award presented each year to the person, persons jointly, or organisation who, in the opinion of the judges, has made the most outstanding contribution to the New Zealand deer industry, either in the previous year, or over a period of years.

The selection panel is made up of three judges who are the nominees of the following

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organisations: Countrywide Magazine (NZ Farm Life Media), The NZ Deer Farmers' Association (Inc) and Porter Holdings Ltd.

[An nomination form for 2026 can be downloaded here >>](#)

MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition



2025 winner: Leeza-Marie Pratt - Sunset roar

It's time to get snapping again! Gather up those great shots you have buried, or head out on the farm with your camera and enter the MSD Animal Health/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition.

Entries close 5:00pm, 28 April 2026

[See the event page for more details >>](#)

Industry Conference 2026: 13 and 14 May - save the dates

Following on from this year's Queenstown conference, planning is underway for the 2026 conference with the North Island's turn to host.

The venue is the Awapuni Racecourse, Palmerston North – the same venue that hosted the DINZ Tech Expo a few years ago.

Registration will open in March. The conference format will follow:

Tuesday 12 May:

- NZDFA Branch Chairs meeting

Wednesday 13 May:

- NZDFA AGM
- Industry Conference
- Awards Dinner (Photo competition, Matuschka and Deer Industry awards)

Thursday 14 May:

- Central Regions DFA Field Trip

[Find out more information here >>](#)

Joke of the month

Rookie cop pulls over an old biker...

A rookie police officer pulls an old biker over for speeding:

Officer: May I see your driver's license?

Biker: I don't have one. I had it suspended when I got my 5th DUI.

Officer: May I see the owner's card for this vehicle?

Biker: It's not my bike. I stole it.

Officer: The motorcycle is stolen?

Biker: That's right. But come to think of it, I think I saw the owner's card in the tool bag when I was putting my gun in there.

Officer: There's a gun in the tool bag?

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Biker: Yes sir. That's where I put it after I shot and killed the dude who owns this bike and stuffed his dope in the saddle bags.

Officer: There's drugs in the saddle bags too?!?!?

Biker: Yes, sir. Hearing this, the rookie immediately called his captain. The biker was quickly surrounded by police, and the captain approached the biker to handle the tense situation:

Captain: Sir, can I see your license?

Biker: Sure. Here it is. It was valid.

Captain: Who's motorcycle is this?

Biker: It's mine, officer. Here's the registration.

Captain: Could you slowly open your tool bag so I can see if there's a gun in it?

Biker: Yes, sir, but there's no gun in it. Sure enough, there was nothing in the tool bag.

Captain: Would you mind opening your saddle bags? I was told you said there's drugs in them.

Biker: No problem. The saddle bags were opened; no drugs.

Captain: I don't understand it. The officer who stopped you said you told him you didn't have a license, stole this motorcycle, had a gun in the tool bag, and that there were drugs in the saddle bags.

Biker: Yeah, I'll bet he told you I was speeding, too.

- [MSD/Allflex Deer Industry Photo Competition](#) - Entries close 28 April
- [Wormwise for Deer](#) - 25 February, Geraldine
- [Bayonet Rising Stars 2026 National Hard Antler and Velvet Competition](#) - 7 March, Te Awamutu
- [Freshwater Farm Planning workshop](#) - 25 February and 11 March, Balclutha
- [Deer Industry Conference 2026](#) - 13 May, Palmerston North

If you have an event that would be of interest to the deer farming industry, please email info@deernz.org with details.

Visit the deernz.org website to view information about these events.

Events