

DFA STAGLINE



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Congratulations to Top Deck Trading ...Again!



Michelle, Tony and Kate Roberts on the night

NZDFA congratulates Tony, Michelle and Kate Roberts and Mark Lieshout (aka Top Deck Trading) who are this year's winners of the Gordon Stephenson Trophy and become the 2026 National Ambassadors for Sustainable Farming and Growing.

The National Sustainability Showcase event held on 2 July at Christchurch's Te Pae Convention Centre celebrated each of the 11 Ballance Farm Environment Awards Regional Supreme Winners from across the country. We previously reported on the Roberts taking out the Southland Supreme Winner award in April.

The Roberts weren't the only deer farmers present with fellow deer farmers Paul and Kerry Harmer (Castle Ridge Station) flying the flag as Canterbury Supreme Winners.

This is the fourth time that deer farms have been attending the National Sustainability Showcase and the third time that deer farmers have been awarded the Gordon Stephenson Trophy and become the National Ambassadors for Sustainable Farming and Growing.



There were a few supporters! (L to R) Evan and Linda Potter, Cam Nelson, Christina Vaughan, Emil Murphy, Luka Jansen, Jane Campbell, Lindsay Fung



Top Deck Trading in more familiar surroundings

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Exec Update - Tom MacFarlane

Winter has finally arrived in the South Island in time for the school holidays. Snow and flooding are causing some logistical issues as we speak. However, ski fields will be rapt to get open and underway for the second week of holidays. The weather is also a timely reminder that although El Nino is now locked in, that doesn't necessarily mean it won't rain at all.

As we build toward another season with commodity prices looking solid, I believe farmers need to focus on how they can use the positive times to embed longer term production, profitability and resilience into their businesses. At DFA we are continuing to advocate for farmers to make sure they can just worry about the farming part.

As for most, the autumn and early winter have been fantastic in South Canterbury with farmers still reporting grass growth through the South Island. Fears of going into a dry spring/summer with low moisture levels have now been alleviated across most of the country.

All the venison companies now have a contract out, ranging from 6-12 months in duration. The levels represent another welcome increase over last year's contracts peaking around \$12/kg and also giving a high degree of certainty with their length.

Velvet is still a work-on, but positive conversations have been had between NZDFA,

DINZ and some exporters around improvements for the coming season.

The Executive committee would like to welcome Paddy Boyd back to the DINZ Board after the Selection and Appointments Panel process in June. The industry is lucky to have such an experienced, skilled individual keen to continue contributing to the industry for another 3 years.

I would also like to thank Karen Middleberg and Mark Mcoard for the knowledge and skills they've passed on over the previous year I've sat with them on the committee. Also welcome to Grant and Richard as new members on the exec.

On July 22nd July there is a special general meeting being held at the Commodore Hotel in Christchurch to consider the suspension of Mr Barry Cuttance from the organisation. We encourage all members to attend, to understand and have their say.

There are still a few spots available for the DFA Next generation programme being held in Waikato and Bay of Plenty on the 6th and 7th of August. More details follow in this issue of stagline, however this should be another great event.

Finally congratulations to the Roberts family on taking out the Gordon Stephenson Trophy and becoming the 2026 National Ambassadors for Sustainable Farming and Growing. It's fantastic to have such great ambassadors for our small industry.

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The Return of DEER101 – South Canterbury

Farming in the South Canterbury area will come under more scrutiny next winter as winter grazing regulations become operational. This season Environment Canterbury (ECan) have been conducting flyovers to get a feel for winter grazing practices and identify any areas of concern. The South Canterbury/North Otago branch of the NZDFA has been active in helping deer farmers prepare winter grazing plans through workshops and in June hosted ECan and MPI (animal welfare) staff onto two farms to view and discuss winter grazing good management practices for deer.



Deer on kale, with leaves browsed first and room to move.

Eighteen hardy souls braved a biting southerly to see deer grazing and ask the farmers on hand about all things deer. The main take home messages were that deer behave and feed very differently to cattle and sheep and when given enough room to spread out (both in the break and in neighbouring paddocks), there is very

little environmental impact or animal welfare issues.

The day finished up with a welcome venison BBQ (thanks to Duncan NZ). Our thanks go to Angie Blair and David Earl for hosting the visitors and Danette McKeown for organising the day.



Bay of Plenty NZDFA Enjoys Successful Farm Day



The Bay of Plenty Branch of the New Zealand Deer Farmers Association recently hosted a

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highly successful farm day at Matt and Emma Krs' property on Paradise Valley Road, bringing together local deer farmers for a day of learning, discussion and networking.

Members enjoyed excellent hospitality, with morning tea, a hearty soup and barbecue lunch and afternoon tea providing plenty of opportunities to catch up with fellow deer farmers. The farm tour was a particular highlight, showcasing the couple's innovative approach to pasture growth and management.

Attendees gained valuable insights into successful grass and herb species, deer feed options and practical techniques for establishing and growing productive pastures. Matt Krs, Chair of the branch, shared how a strong focus on soil health has been a key driver of their farming success, demonstrating the close link between healthy soils, quality feed and farm performance.

Luka Jansen from DINZ provided an industry update and answered environmental questions, while discussions also covered key topics from the recent NZDFA Conference and wider industry developments.

The day was well attended, informative and enjoyable, highlighting the Branch's commitment to supporting deer farmers and staying connected.

Next Generation



Artisan deer shed at Wye Hills (Next Gen 2025)

We are now four weeks out from this year's Next Generation programme and it is shaping up to be a jam packed two days. It will cover on-farm technologies with Gallagher Animal Management and then red and Wapiti studs on day 1, followed by visits to two venison processors and velvet and co-product retail and finishing up with presentations on deer product markets, banking and animal health.

The finalised programme is here:

Thursday 6 August 2026

Time	Activity	Location
	Minivan available to collect people from Hamilton Airport	Hamilton
10:00	Gallagher Animal Management	Hamilton
12:30	Raroa Red Deer Stud (+ lunch)	Karapiro
15:00	Oraka Wapiti (+ afternoon tea)	Tirau
18:00	Rotorua accommodation	Rotorua
19:00	Dinner (venue tbd)	Rotorua

Friday 9 August 2026

Time	Activity	Location
08:00	Duncan Venison and Silver Fern Farms (venison processing)	Rotorua
10:00	Morning tea, NZ Deer Supreme (velvet and co-products retail)	NZ Deer Supreme, Rotorua
11:00	Presentations (markets, banking, veterinarian)	
12:30	Lunch	
13:15	Wrap up	
13:30	Finish (minivan to Rotorua and Hamilton airport)	

There are still a few places available, register here: [Next Generation Programme 2026 - Deer NZ](#)



Ben Morven Farm (Next Gen 2025)

Social Media Profile



With the widespread use of social media and the enduring nature of online content, the NZDFA Executive wishes to remind all members to be mindful of what they post and comment online. It is important to remember that your audience may extend far beyond your intended recipients and can include scammers, stalkers, or individuals with strongly opposing views who may seek to misuse or misrepresent your words.

Branch Chairs and other NZDFA office holders, particularly those whose contact details are publicly available, should exercise additional caution. Online posts differ significantly from conversations with trusted friends or colleagues, as they can be copied, shared, and interpreted by anyone, often without the benefit of context.

Even posts that seem harmless or well-intentioned can be taken out of context, manipulated, or used for purposes never

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intended by the author. Social media has no geographic boundaries, and content can quickly be distributed across multiple platforms and audiences.

Members are encouraged to consider the potential consequences of expressing personal views or sharing images online. Thoughtful use of social media helps protect not only individual members but also the reputation of the deer industry and the NZDFA as a whole.

Noticeboard

NZDFA Subscriptions for 2026/27



Thanks to all NZDFA members who have renewed their membership for 2026/27. Reminder notices will be sent out in early August.

The NZDFA relies on this subscription to function effectively while continuing to deliver a strong, independent view for the producer at all levels of industry engagement. The NZDFA extends thanks to all those who have shown support through the past year.

Special General Meeting

NZDFA Members should have received email notification on or around 23 June 2026 of a Special General Meeting to be held on Wednesday 22 July 2026 at 7 pm. The venue is the Commodore Airport Hotel, 449 Memorial Avenue, Christchurch.

The purpose is consideration of the following motion: *That the suspension of Barry Cuttance, imposed by the Executive Committee under Rule 10.3. is confirmed.*

Please see the email notification for more detail.

Calling Any Deer Farmers!

Summer student job

Jack Ramsey here, for the last couple of summers I have worked on my family deer, sheep and beef farm for my dad (Kevin Ramsey) in the north Waikato and am looking to work on a different deer farm this summer. I am currently studying a BCom Ag at Lincoln and farm placements are a part of my course requirement.

Preference is for Waikato but happy to consider any deer farm.

Jack Ramsey: 021 048-9915 or jackramsey210@gmail.com

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Calling Northland Deer Farmers!



Kia ora, Isaac Lovatt from Bay of Islands College here.

I am the Senior Agriculture and Horticulture teacher at Bay of Islands College in Kawakawa and am currently teaching a unit on Venison farming in NZ.

I have been trying to find out if there are any Deer Farms in the Northland region to explore the possibility of bringing my students to visit one to see the operation and how it works.

Would you be able to let me know if in fact there are any deer farms in Northland and if so, whether there would be a possibility of a School class visit?

Thanks very much in advance.

Isaac Lovatt

Teacher of Biology, Science and TIC AgHort

Bay of Islands College

ilt@boic.school.nz

Jokes of the month

I spent this morning swanning around the town centre, I hissed at people and broke a man's arm.

Is it OK that I start drinking as soon as the kids are at school? Or does that make me a bad teacher?

My Uncle's a lion tamer, when he went bankrupt they took nearly everything, but at least he's still got his pride