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Executive Committee Update- Grant Hasse



Deer Education

I may not be a wordsmith or scholar, however, a believer in Karma, I am.

All of what we have today stems from the educational investments of those who shared their knowledge and experiences, giving us the opportunity to make informed decisions.

Last month we completed our 14th annual Next Generation event. Thank you to the Waikato and Bay of Plenty Branches of the NZDFA for hosting an excellent event and helping attendees better understand the NZ deer industry and its opportunities.

Closer to home, I have continued supporting Lincoln University through guest speaking and organizing a mid-winter field trip for students. The day includes a visit to a local deer farm, dairy beef integration, and many thanks to Mountain River Processors, PGG Wrightson and Farm Source for the sponsored lunch,

which is possibly the highlight of the trip for some (see Lincoln University article)!

Many deer farmers around the country have taken up the education mantle, their work with local high schools and providing student placements, is greatly appreciated.

One of the main concerns holding people back from farming deer is animal handling, which relies on educating both handlers and animals. We know what works on our own farms may not work for others; we understand the difference good yard design makes, and we know how to read animal body language and respond appropriately.

We have all learnt from the people we have interacted with throughout our lives. If we want the deer industry to keep thriving, my challenge to you is to invest in passing on the skills and knowledge you have gained by educating others. Without the next generation of farmers, our deer assets will eventually have no value.

I understand that not everyone sees themselves as a teacher. However, through honest conversations and providing opportunities to learn, every farmer can help others see the benefits of farming deer. We are best placed to offer practical, hands-on learning to anyone interested in the industry.

Thanks

Grant Hasse

The Big Tick Day Out – Top of the South Style - Ginny Dodunski

On a day threatening snow at St Aranud, where one would have imagined tick nymphs on pasture to be turning up their toes, 27 deer farmers from across Tasman and Nelson met at the Alpine Lodge for the second edition of the 'Big Tick Day Out' to look at ways of getting ahead of tick challenge on their farms, both this year, and into the future.

The afternoon integrated on-farm experience, tick life cycle basics (know your enemy!) science, regulation, and possible future control options, both on the animals and on pasture.

Background work

In an initial 'what were you hoping?' session, farmers indicated they were after a clearer understanding of the tick life cycle, whether they were currently using the most effective prevention plan, managing residues, and hearing what's working on farms facing heavy pressure.

It appeared there is wide variation in tick challenge across the region. Some had never seen ticks on their deer, others reported seeing nymphs from late winter, and on the worst farms, fawns and velvet suffered high adult tick burdens in late spring if animals were left untreated.

Current control methods ranged from regular Flumethrin, use of tick tags, avoiding rank pasture, and using other species on the farms

(sheep and cattle) as 'tick vacuum cleaners' prior to grazing susceptible deer in paddocks.

Colin McKay (Elanco Animal Health, and NZ's ectoparasite 'guru') helped farmers work through a tick life cycle exercise. Ticks have 3 life stages (larvae, nymphs and adults), each stage spending a short time on an animal to get a blood feed before dropping off into the pasture. Ticks spend long periods off-host and have the ability to cycle multiple times per year. In addition, female ticks can produce eggs without a male in sight. Thus, numbers can build very quickly!

While in the pasture, ticks prefer lots of cover, and high humidity. Areas with rushes have particularly high numbers. They jump onto the host in response to movement, and CO₂ from the animals' breath. Ticks have no eyes! Dragging a pale-coloured towel across the pasture is a method that researchers use to estimate tick pressure.

The key message was simple - Ticks are only on deer for about four weeks of their year, so effective control must target both the animal and the environment.

Current control options – strengths and limitations

The room explored all available tools: flumethrin pour-ons, older sheep dip and environmental fly control chemicals that have some tick activity, tick tags, pasture management, grazing strategies, and quarantine practices.

For Flumethrin, correct application technique and retreatment intervals were emphasised. It is common for the interval between Flumethrin treatments to be too long. The original published work on this method of control was limited but indicated that 3-4 week intervals gave best control. No animal treatment method can remove every single tick.

Pasture treatment was discussed – in the ‘bad old days’ DDT and Diazinon were highly effective against ticks but are no longer an option for safety reasons. Positive experience using ammonium sulphate on pasture from one Northland farm has been shared in Stagline previously. Further work to validate this approach would be very useful.

Practical farmer experience

Ian Bristow beamed into the meeting from Kaipara, described living with ticks his entire farming career in Northland. His farm was part of the original tick-tag registration trials, and he has used tags on breeding hinds ever since. Tags protect fawns through grooming and mothering behaviour, reducing early-life losses. Ian recalled early days of extreme pressure, including applying insecticide directly to newborn fawns.

Kim Rowe, farming locally, explained how he uses tick tags on his velvetting stags. Tags reduce yarding and handling, avoiding multiple pour-on treatments and risk of velvet damage. They are removed in February. His

stag block can develop longer, ranker pasture – a known risk factor for higher tick numbers – so any animals leaving that block are treated before moving elsewhere on the farm.

Both emphasised that effective treatment early in the season (prior to seeing lots of adults) was key to limiting a population explosion later.

Research and regulation – what’s coming?

Emil Murphy from DINZ, and Luis Carvallo, parasitologist from BSI, outlined ongoing work on tick ecology and future control options. Biocontrol research by BSI is focussing on treatments that may be applied to pasture. There is also initial work investigating possible vaccine options, through better understanding of local tick genetics and their microbiome.

Meg Moffat from MPI provided an update on flumethrin residue detections in the North Island. Reassessment of the withholding periods for Flumethrin is currently underway; it is likely that the nil meat withholding period will be changed. This will require extra planning if using Flumethrin on velvetting stags, or on yearlings that are close to slaughter weight.

While the Big Tick Day out was not able to provide a ‘silver bullet’ for on-farm tick control, farmers left with a better understanding of the biology of ticks and more effective use of available control options.

For more information about on-farm tick management, see

https://www.deernz.org/assets/Deer-Facts/DeerFact_Ticks_Web.pdf

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Lincoln University Students Visit **Lincoln University students connect with** **New Zealand's Deer Industry**

Lincoln University Diploma in Farm Management students recently had the opportunity to connect with and learn from the deer industry first-hand during a field visit to Riverside Elk, as part of their Beef and Deer Production course.

Hosted by Grant Hasse, deer farmer and NZDFA Executive Committee member, the students explored practical aspects of deer farming, including genetics, feeding, pasture management, deer handling and velvet production. This experience enabled students to link their classroom learning with real-world deer management in a commercial setting.



A key part of the day was engaging people from various sectors of the deer industry. Rob Millar from Mountain River Venison Ltd and Luke Thompson, a deer specialist with PGG Wrightson Livestock, along with James Petrie

from Merchant of Venison Ltd and Holly Stokes, an extension agronomist at Agricom Nz, all gathered at the field day. Together with Grant Hasse, they shared insights and discussed the deer markets, including current opportunities and challenges facing the industry. This gave students a broader perspective on the deer value chain beyond the farm gate.

After visiting the deer farm, the group proceeded to Omana Dairy farm, hosted by Andrew Slater, who, besides showing the students his beautiful dairy-beef calf-rearing setup, also organised a fantastic BBQ (courtesy of FarmSource) featuring venison and refreshments supplied by Mountain River Venison and PGG Wrightson. The informal environment allowed students to engage directly with farmers and industry representatives, ask questions, and learn from their experiences.



This is the second time Lincoln University has collaborated with Riverside Elk on this field visit. It is increasingly becoming a valuable

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component of the Beef and Deer Production course, offering students practical experience in deer farming and fostering connections among students, farmers, and the broader industry.

The course coordinators greatly appreciate Grant Hasse and all industry partners for their time, knowledge sharing, and for creating a valuable learning experience for our students.

Getting paddocks ready for next season's winter grazing

Next winter starts this spring

Preparing for successful winter grazing begins long before stock enter a crop. Careful paddock selection, strategic crop placement, identifying critical source areas early, maintaining grass buffers, and establishing catch crops following grazing can all contribute to better environmental outcomes and improved farm performance.

Deer Industry New Zealand would like to acknowledge the effort that deer farmers have put into winter grazing management this season. Environmental Stewardship Manager Luka Jansen said it is encouraging to see the continued adoption of good management practices across the region and encouraged farmers to continue building on that progress as they plan for next winter.

With this year's winter grazing period drawing to a close, now is the time to start planning for next season.

Recently, the deer industry received feedback from Environment Canterbury relating to winter grazing activities across South Canterbury. The Council highlighted the good progress farmers continue to make in managing winter forage systems, with good paddock selection, strategic grazing management and effective use of runoff paddocks noted across the region.

The Winter Grazing Stakeholder Group, which includes representation from Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) and the South Canterbury North Otago Deer Farmers' Association, has been encouraged by the ongoing improvements being made by deer farmers throughout the region.

As spring approaches, deer farmers across New Zealand have an opportunity to build on this positive progress by preparing paddocks for next winter. Jansen highlights that we need to be always thinking ahead. For example, where soil and weather conditions allow, establishing catch crops and ground cover as soon as practical can help protect soils, support paddock recovery and reduce the risk of erosion. These good practices play an important role in taking up residual nitrogen, helping reduce nutrient losses to groundwater and waterways.

Many grazed paddocks may already have been oversown, but any bare or heavily-grazed areas

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should be assessed and, where appropriate, re-established with suitable winter-tolerant species to improve soil stability and ground cover.



Critical Source Areas remain a key focus

One area identified for continued improvement is the management of Critical Source Areas (CSAs). CSAs are the wetter, lower-lying portions of paddocks where water naturally accumulates or flows following rainfall. While they often make up only a small percentage of a paddock, they can contribute disproportionately to soil and nutrient losses if not identified and managed appropriately.

Mrs Jansen encourages deer farmers to take note of where water ponds or runoff regularly occurs after rain, as these areas are likely to be critical source areas. For winter crops that are still to be grazed this season, deer farmers should, where practical, leave CSAs until last or avoid grazing them altogether if conditions become wet. This can help minimise sediment and nutrient movement from paddocks into waterways.

When planning for next season, identifying CSAs early and retaining them in permanent grass remains one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce environmental risk while maintaining productive farming systems.

Well-established grass areas act as natural filters, helping to trap sediment, nutrients and runoff before they reach waterways.



National winter grazing requirements

Farmers are reminded that the two national winter grazing requirements that remain:

- Maintaining a minimum 5-metre setback from waterways.
- Keeping Critical Source Areas in grass rather than cultivating them or planting them in winter forage crops.

Previous regulations relating to slope limits, pugging depths and pasture resowing dates have been removed.

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Other areas worth monitoring

In addition to CSAs, farmers should continue to pay attention to other parts of the farm that may be vulnerable to runoff, soil disturbance and nutrient loss, particularly where stock movement is concentrated. These can include:

- Laneways / races and gateways
- Feeding or water trough areas
- Stock camping sites, fencelines

Managing these areas proactively can improve paddock resilience and help reduce the risk of sediment and nutrient losses during periods of wet weather.

Jansen is happy with the progress being made – We must keep up the good work!

Otago Branch Re-sprouts!

NZDFA Branch reinvigoration continues around the country. On 3 September the Otago Branch held its Annual General meeting after a pause of several years.

Richard Currie stepped down as (the long-standing) Chair and William Benson was elected as the new Chair. He is supported by a committee of considerable expertise and influence: Grant Cochrane, Ray Coombes, Richard Currie, Sam Earl, Austin Garden, Maurice Judson, James Oliver and Adam Whaanga.



Willy Benson – our newest Chair!

This signals a promising re-start for the branch with youthful leadership backed by extensive industry wisdom and connections. Their first task will be to meet in October and plan upcoming activities and events for the branch.

Terry Meikle (DINZ Markets Manager) also attended and gave an update on venison and velvet market activities.

William will attend the Branch Chairs Meeting in Wellington next week (16 & 17 September).

El Niño is here!

And according to the weather people, it ain't going away anytime soon.

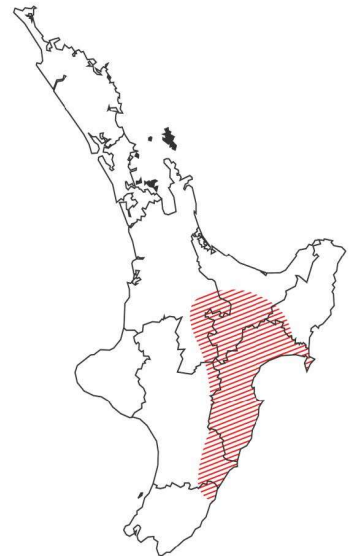
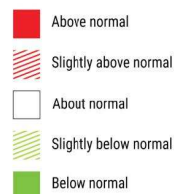
At a recent meeting of primary industry bodies and government agencies, Fire Emergency NZ and Earth Sciences NZ (aka NIWA) provided analysis of the strengthening El Niño conditions around the world and in NZ as well as their forecasts for the next few months.

Key messages from Fire Emergency NZ were:

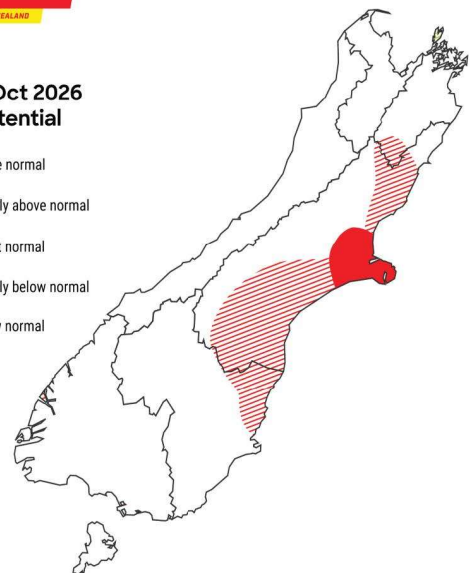
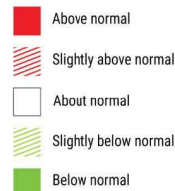
- Key driver for the coming season is El Niño is expected to be strengthening over the coming months. The first influence of El Niño is that throughout September there will be more frequent westerly winds.
- Potential areas to monitor in the August to October period includes lightly above normal fire potential in the eastern North Island (Manawatū-Whanganui, Hawkes Bay areas), and eastern South Island (above normal in central-north Canterbury, and slightly above normal in north and south Canterbury).



**Aug—Oct 2026
Fire potential**



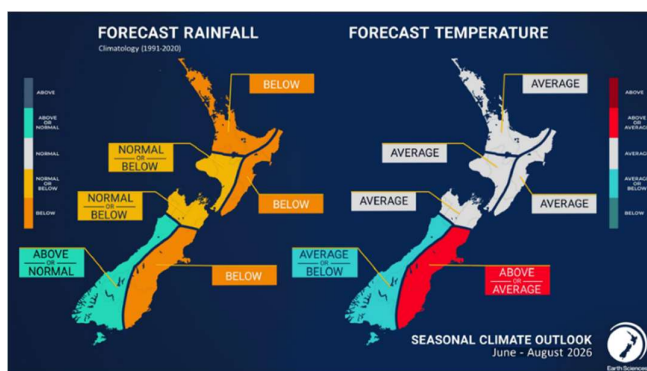
**Aug—Oct 2026
Fire potential**



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Key messages from Earth Sciences NZ were:

- Dryness is going to develop quickly in the north/east: dry westerlies, and occasionally warm temperatures. Could line up well (with Australia warming up) for high temperatures occur.
- Cold snaps deep into spring – possibly beyond – expect volatile temperatures at times. Open to cold from the south. Some of the cold snaps still lead to drying.
- Forecast rainfall outlook Sept to Nov: below for upper NI and east coast, normal or below for Taranaki/western LNI, Top of South and eastern coast SI, above west coast and Southland. Similar pattern for temperature.



Noticeboard

NZDFA Subscriptions for 2026/27



Thanks to all NZDFA members who have renewed their membership for 2026/27. Reminder notices were sent out last month.

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.

State of the Industry: Mid-Year Update 2026 released



Deer Industry New Zealand has released its State of the Industry: Mid-Year Update 2026 report, providing a snapshot of the key trends, opportunities and challenges shaping New Zealand's deer industry.

The report highlights encouraging signs that the national herd has stabilised following several years of decline, with increases in hinds mated and fawns weaned providing a positive signal for future growth. It also examines venison market performance, developments in the velvet sector, progress in key export markets, farm cost pressures, and more. Based on the latest industry, market, and economic data, the report is designed to support informed decision-making across the sector.

To view the State of the Industry report, [click here >>](#)

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Preparing for dry conditions as El Niño risk grows

With El Niño conditions set to strengthen over the coming season, MPI's On Farm Support team has now released its practical checklist for preparing for dry conditions to provide farmers with a useful guide to reviewing feed budgets, water infrastructure, contingency plans and animal management decisions, helping build resilience and reduce risk as seasonal conditions evolve.

[Farm checklist – Preparing for dry weather >>](#)

If you missed it last month, the On Farm Support team has also released a checklist for prolonged wet weather, most likely to affect western and southern regions.

[Farm checklist – Preparing for prolonged wet weather >>](#)

You can also check out the relevant Deer Facts fact sheet below:

[Deer Facts – Drought feeding and management >>](#)

DINZ in-depth podcast series

Complex issues rarely fit into a soundbite. That's what makes The Weekly Hotwire's annual podcast series on the deer industry worth a listen. These 25-minute conversations provide the time and space to explore the opportunities, challenges, and strategic decisions facing our industry.

Episode 1: Rhys Griffiths, DINZ CEO

What is the current state of New Zealand's deer industry, and where are the opportunities and challenges ahead? In this in-depth conversation, DINZ Chief Executive Rhys Griffiths discusses strong venison returns, signs of herd stabilisation, market diversification, the outlook for velvet, and the industry's ambitions for future growth and value creation.

Listen here: [Deer sector rebuilding confidence as markets strengthen | interest.co.nz](#)

Episode 2: Evan Potter, NZDFA Chair

From profitability and competing land uses to product differentiation and attracting the next generation, NZDFA Chair Evan Potter shares a farmer's perspective on the future of deer farming. This wide-ranging discussion explores the opportunities, pressures, and practical realities facing deer farmers, and why innovation remains central to the industry's success.

Listen here: [Deer industry looks to differentiation as farmers weigh the future | interest.co.nz](#)

Episodes 3 and 4 in the series will be recorded and released in the coming month, so keep an eye out for those.

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EVENTS>>

Young Deer Farmer Competition>>

- South Canterbury
- Date: Friday 9 October 2026

Raincliff Station field day>>

- Location: Pleasant Point
- Date: Tuesday 27 October 2026
- Time: 12:30pm - 4:30pm

North Island Velvet Competition>>

- Location: Feilding
- Date: Saturday 28 November 2026
- Time: 4:30pm - 10:00pm

Hawke's Bay Velvet Competition

- Date: Thursday 19 November 2026
- Details to follow

South Canterbury North Otago Velvet Competition

- Date: Friday 27 November 2026
- Details to follow

Kaipara Velvet Competition

- Date : Sunday 6 December 2026
- Details to follow

National Velvet Competition

- Date: Monday 7 December 2026
- Details to follow

JOKES

Good news: I get to work at home today!

Bad news: I'm a fireman.

Why did the deer have to get braces? he had buck teeth!

I've now gone over a week without making any cheap innuendos. Touch wood.

Why is rabbit farming a terrifying profession?
Every day is a hare-raising experience!