

Ken Drew wins deer industry award 433

DR KEN Drew of Invermay AgResearch received the Deer Industry Award at this year's NZDFA conference for his 20 years' work in deer production and health research.

In presenting the award, committee member Piers Hunt described Dr Drew as having a unique blend of personal vision and application, combined with drive, knowledge and enthusiasm.

Ken heads deer research at Invermay, and the award acknowledges his "quiet leadership" of a large and motivated team.

In typically modest fashion, Dr Drew shared the credit with his Invermay colleagues.

"It's recognition of the efforts made by a dedicated team of scientists to the whole deer industry," he said. "And it's also recognition that this New Zealand team of scientists is far ahead of the rest of the world in understanding deer biology and farm management."

Dr Drew's interest in



Dr Ken Drew accepts his award

deer was first sparked while he was studying at the then Lincoln College in the early 1960s, completing an honours degree in animal nutrition under the renowned Professor Ian Coop. The latter had begun a small Red deer

project, but concluded that the beast could probably not be farmed.

Following doctoral studies at Cornell University in New York, it was back at Invermay in the early 1970s that Dr Drew first became involved with

deer, when he borrowed 90 Red deer hinds to form the Invermay experimental deer farm.

Ken admits that at first he had doubts about the viability of the project until his team learned how to handle the animals. It was another five years before it became clear that deer farming was a viable commercial enterprise.

The programme then expanded rapidly and research moved into the biology of deer and the physiology of the velvet. Studies included Fallow and Wapiti as well as Red deer.

Dr Drew served a four year term as founding president of the New Zealand Wapiti Society (now The Elk and Wapiti Society of NZ).

While he sees a very positive future for deer, he believes research into the processing and presentation of venison is now a priority.

Over the years Dr Drew has gained an international reputation as a scientist. Significantly, he has also gained the respect of deer farmers.

The deer industry award tops off a watershed year for Ken. A few months ago he was awarded the Bledisloe Medal by his old alma mater Lincoln University.

The citation noted that under Ken Invermay had become the foremost deer research station in the southern hemisphere — others would say the world.

—Peter Owens