



New Zealand Deer Farmers Association  
Otago Branch

## July Newsletter 2003

### In this issue

CWD  
Presidents Report  
Coming Events - Seminar  
Snippets  
ACC  
Belch tax  
Weaner weighing

Have your say - contact the Editor  
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## CWD

### Chronic Wasting disease

It is not enough to tell the world that we do not have it, we have to be able to prove it. We can only do that by testing a significant number. According to international protocols we must submit three hundred fresh brains for testing from NZ farms. The year for review ends in September and we have sampled just 14 throughout New Zealand.

**Do you have a wasting animal, if so: Call your vet -**

**The vet gets paid and you get \$100 for the animal.**

### What to look for:

#### Animals that are;

- wasting,
- constantly salivating,
- acting irrationally

What if we don't do it ? Well those countries that are monitoring, because they have the disease, will lobby regulators and ask them to stop our market access (no more venison to Europe perhaps) because our monitoring program does not stack up. Please help with this if you can. We need at least ten to fifteen deer from each branch of the NZDFA to be submitted immediately.

## **Deer Farmers Seminar**

**Monday 1st September**

Details page 2

**Otago Branch NZDFA Field day**  
**Invermay**  
**1 September 2003**

**Step into Spring**  
**DINZ presentation plus velveting and venison**

**Where:** Cullen Conference Centre, Block B, Invermay Agricultural Centre,  
Puddle Alley, Mosgiel

**When:** 12.30pm sharp

**Cost:** \$ 10.00

**Format:** The velvet industry update at 12.30pm is by invitation to farmers only.  
Other interested deer industry participants are very welcome to attend  
from 1.45pm.

**Registration:** Contact Mandy Bell on 03 4434250 or Craig North on 0272414179

**Programme**

**12.30 pm:** DINZ executive team *MJ Loza , J Tacon, R Gregory, T Pearse*  
Velvet antler industry - prospects and issues in 2003 and beyond.  
Removal, compliance, drug registration, research work, welfare and the  
development of the velveting code.  
Velvet removal - question / answer session.

**1.45 pm:** DINZ industry review, based on the annual FGM. This will cover  
industry issues and the latest in velvet research.

*Clive Jermy, Chairman DINZ*  
*MJ Loza, CEO DINZ*  
*Tony Pearse, Producer Executive*  
*Jimmy Suttie, Scientist*

**3.00 pm:** Afternoon Tea

**3.30 pm:** Finishing for a spring schedule.  
David Stevens – Growing and utilizing the grass.  
PPCS delegate - venison for the market:  
What the consumer is looking for in the product, animal presentation at  
the slaughterhouse and comment on the market for the season.

**4.30 pm:** Discussion on industry issues *Clive Jermy*

**5.00 pm:** The afternoon will finish with an opportunity for informal discussion.  
Bar opens – drinks at your own cost.

## **Presidents Comment**

The last 3 months have been particularly busy for the NZDFA and DINZ. There have been a large number of issues requiring discussion and comment including GMO's, fart tax, indoor wintering, the landcare manual, Welfare Code, CWD testing... Hopefully this will slow up soon and we can get back to the basics of growing the grass and the animals for sale at a decent schedule.

### **Velveting, venison and DINZ presentation – 1 September, Invermay.**

If you are velveting any stags this season (all of us!), you need attend this meeting.

Letters have been sent to all deer farmers inviting them to the velvet session at 12.30pm at Invermay and the seminar that follows at 1.45pm for all. MJ Loza, J Tacon, R Gregory, and Tony Pearse will look at the velvet antler industry considering prospects and issues in 2003 and beyond. Topics include removal, compliance, drug registration, research work, welfare and the development of the velveting code.

*There will be a second session on velveting at the Dunstan Boat Club, McNulty Inlet in Cromwell on Wednesday 3 September at 7pm.*

### **Invermay Field Day 1 September 1.45pm**

This will include a DINZ industry review, based on the annual FGM. Clive Jermy, Chairman of DINZ, MJ Loza, and Tony Pearse will be speaking. Jimmy Suttie will

be giving as an update on some very exciting developments from his velvet research team. Following this we have a session on finishing for a spring venison schedule. David Stevens will talk about growing and utilizing the grass. Either Stewart Barnett or Glen Tyrell from PPCS will then discuss venison for the market and the market as it is panning out for the coming season.

### **AG ITO**

David Curd from Timaru is the first qualifier for the modern apprentices scheme in agriculture and David has a focus on deer. Clive Jermy will be making a presentation to him at the Invermay day. Encouragement for young people to enter the deer industry has been quietly worked on throughout the year. There are several groups offering training schemes and Invermay has a project looking at how to increase the technology transfer to the farming community. The Branch is looking to have a day for 18 to 26 year olds or thereabouts! Any one interested or with thoughts on content please contact me.

## **Snippets**

### **NZ Society of animal production seminar, Queenstown, June.**

The Society had a full day dedicated to deer with some excellent topics covered including genetics and feeding. Copies of the proceedings can be obtained from Geoff Asher at Invermay.

## **Submissions on GM in the deer industry.**

The branch at its AGM in May proposed a remit to extend the moratorium. This was taken to the NZDFA AGM and passed with a small amendment. Subsequently there was consultation with DINZ's position being reinforced, in summary that: policies relating to GM must be driven foremost by market and consumer needs, based on sound science and at this stage the industry does not support the introduction of GM or GM organisms into the environment or the foodchain. DINZ does support the use of GM in laboratories.

## **Indoor wintering**

The DINZ paper on indoor wintering, which relayed market concerns from Europe, has again been discussed by the Board following feedback from the branches.

The Otago branch put in a submission coordinated by Craig North. The gist of this was to ask for more info on the market demands. We suggested that the existing deer QA system could cover the indoor systems by increasing the details and could consider separate audits of indoor wintering. We also asked for clarity on the class of animal and systems covered by the DINZ paper.

## **Landcare manual**

This comprehensive document has been sent to branch chairmen and various other parties such as regional councils in draft form. It is a tremendous resource for farmers to take ideas from, to incorporate where practical, into their own farming practices. The document is based on 95

plus farmer surveys and has been led by John Patterson. Despite the good information within it, I have concerns that councils and other authorities could take it as a guide on resource management issues and use it as a base for their policies. Here in Otago and particularly in the Queenstown Lakes District, we are well aware of the time taken in dealing with resource management issues. The manual is a beginning from which we can develop the ideas presented. Contact Mandy Bell for more info.

## **Johnes Research Group**

There has been a lot of progress with the DINZ Board confirming their support for Johnes Disease epidemiology work through DEEResearch for the years 2004/05 to 2007/08. This support is dependent on acceptable proposals and milestones being reached plus financial support from the Branches each year.

We are hoping that Massey will have a full research proposal ready shortly. They will be looking for up to 80 farms with JD and 80 without JD to become involved in the study. The first dilemma will be deciding what farms fall into which category. A lot of the initial work will be collating data so it will not be too onerous on the farmers. Anyone interested please contact Peter Aitken on 03 614 7482.

## **Welfare Code**

A committee working on a draft of the deer welfare code is seeking feedback on their proposals. The Animal Welfare Act 1999 requires specific codes of welfare to be developed and then put out for public consultation. The code sets standards for

deer welfare based on “good practice and scientific knowledge”. The code also cross references to our QA programmes. Contact Janice Attrill 04 3816014 for a code. Submissions close at the end of the month.

## **RAHC**

There have been some changes with Assure gaining the contract to do the Tb testing in cattle and movement control/animal ID compliance monitoring. At the RAHC meeting next week Hamish Dobbie, Assure manager will be present. A number of farmers have been in touch with concerns and we will take these to the meeting.

With any change there will be some short-term disruptions in return for efficiencies down the track. What we need to do is to minimize any disruptions by preempting them where we can. Please keep in touch with Peter Foster or Mandy Bell so that we are aware of any issues and can sort them out.

## **TB and Testing enquiries now to 0800 4 TBINFO**

Agriqual remains responsible for all disease control management which includes Tb test allocation, M/C restrictions, herd status changes, overdue test management and Brent Paterson remains as our district disease control Manager.

The number of infected herds is static at about 22 as any herds moving off movement control has been balanced with a recent increase in infected herds in Teviot. Brent is putting in place a

comprehensive programme for those that have infections again at the first test as an infected farm. He will also be keeping in closer contact with those farms so that help is more readily available from the experts. Nationally there are approx. 70 Tb infected deer farms. This gives us 35% of the infections and only about 15% of the total deer farms. With the closer contact with Brent and the other Tb experts (vector control and Frank Griffins’ team at DRL when necessary), we hope the number of infected farms should move down more rapidly.

## **Otago Branch Steering Committee update**

New committee members - We are very pleased to welcome on board Invermay represented at each meeting by Geoff Asher, David Stevens or Jason Archer. Mike Smith from Remarkables Park in Queenstown has also agreed to help us out. The branch due to the high number of issues coming through is very pleased to have the extra input. The high workload has also seen everyone taking on issues to co-ordinate.

*Newsletter editor - Peter Foster*

*Craig North – Secretary, coordinating response on indoor wintering*

*Ken Harrex and Craig North - running the weaner survey.*

*Peter Foster and Mandy Bell - RAHC*

*Mandy Bell – Johnes Research Group*

*Mike Scurr - Treasurer*

*Paul Mutch – Balance Environmental awards*

*Mike Smith - Database , Welfare Code.*

## **NZDFA membership**

Please support your Branch - An invoice was posted out with Deer Industry news 5 which I know has slipped through some people's piles of paper. The Otago Branch has increased its activities substantially and there is increasingly more to gain from belonging to the Branch and your financial support is essential to help this.

Please find attached a questionnaire, to help us help you.

To provide the best possible service to deer farmers of Otago, we need to gain a better understanding of the nature of our members' operations. This will enable us to focus our resources appropriately, and support research and develop a schedule of seminars that will be of interest and benefit to you. Therefore, we would greatly appreciate it if you would complete the attached questionnaire.

Details will be collated for statistical purposes only and cannot be traced back to respondents. The original copies will be destroyed, and all information will remain completely confidential.

Every survey returned goes into the hat with a chance to win a bottle of fine whisky and a bottle of pinot noir!!! If this doesn't tempt you let us know what will. Thank you for your time and assistance.

## **East Otago Deer Discussion Group**

This is a group of farmers that have visited nearly a dozen deer farms in the last year with a view to picking up ideas from other farmers.

The July visit was to Clive Jermy's Bushy Park stud farm. In June the group visited Ditmar Berhens near Oamaru & George Stevens place near Timaru. Ditmar believes the best feed for fawns is mothers milk and provides supplementary feed (nuts) for hinds in February/March rather than weaning early. As he has 78kg fawns by 1st March and the heaviest calves by mid September were 130kg. One of the reasons for weaning early is to give the hinds a chance to put on weight before the rut, but by feeding out in Feb/March, when grass quality is normally poor, Ditmar gets a scanned pregnancy rate of 95%. Worth thinking about !

George Steven uses electric fencing to break up his large paddocks into 12 smaller ones and cycles his hinds / stags around these. A very interesting and intensive multifaceted operation, the downside is providing supplementary feed to some stock for most of the year.

## **Weaner Survey Fundraiser Update**

Things now seem to be back on track after 3 of the weaners dying on 3 separate properties, from what appears to be Yersina, I guess this highlights the importance of Yersina Vaxing weaners particularly in this case where there was the additional stress of adding just 3 animals from the same peer group into a completely new environment and mob. The farmers where the losses have occurred have generously offered to supply one of their own weaners to replace the death so a big thank goes to those farmers plus all 10 properties involved.

The variation in the weights from property

to property has been quite interesting with the bulk of the animals gaining 4-8 kg from April to June and the best of them doing 14kg.

A reminder to those farmers involved that the early spring weight is due on the 1st of September but as you will be at the fieldday at Invermay the next day will be fine.

We would also like to once again thank Otago Deer Transport and Big River Deer for their support in this project.

## **ACC For Deer Farmers**

If your taxable income last year was \$36,000 then you would have paid some \$1300 to ACC and been eligible for some \$550 per week if you had an accident. To have the same cover this year will cost you \$1980. A 51% increase. Rumour has it that a similar increase is on the way next year. ACC has for a long time now charged each industry on its accident rate. When this increase was queried with ACC their comment was that the accident rate had gone up last year and that they had to recover costs. - 1½ times as many accidents? Are we having more accidents or is this the result of creative accounting?

## **Flatulence tax**

Report on "Consultation" meeting on the Belch tax, DINZ submission plus other thoughts.

The "Consultation" meeting was supposed to be on how to levy the flatulence tax. Farmers were having none of that, they only wanted to debate the basis for a such a tax, not how to collect it. The organizers

opened the meeting with a bitch session to try and get all the anger out of the way before they started on their prepared presentation. Didn't really work as their presentation could be described as a mixture of dubious data and opinion dressed up as fact which farmers got stuck into all along the way. After that they tried, unsuccessfully, to talk about methods of collecting the tax.

While the farming press has been full of the tax and Kyoto, there are a few points, some of which came out of the meeting, that you might find interesting.

1. The unreliability of the data used.

Little has been made in the media on how unreliable or questionable the data is. Scientists say they have only 40% confidence in the accuracy of their measurements, this became obvious when the figure for methane emissions from cattle were put at 350 kg/year at the meeting, but a scientist on TV a few days later claimed each cattle beast produced only 90 kg/year. One also has to question whether the techniques used today are the same as those used in 1990, if not then how can you be sure that there is an increase in methane emissions. The O'Hara report (the report to Government on agricultural emissions - the bible for the tax) states (p24) *Measurements of emissions from agricultural land and farm animals is technically difficult and subject to uncertainty.*

Data as questionable as this should not be used as a basis for taxation.

2. Kyoto requires that emissions be held to 1990 levels, so the tax is based on the supposed increase of methane and nitrous

oxide since then. According to the Government, agricultural emissions have increased since 1990 and that is the basis for the tax. However, as several speakers pointed out, the number of stock on NZ farms has declined by 7.7% since 1990 so how can we have an increase in methane emissions. According to the Hodgson's disciples we are feeding our animals better, but according to the O'Hara report methane levels decrease from 35 g/kg dry matter to 26 g/kg when animals are given higher quality feed.

The report also says (p33), *Compared to 1990, methane emissions were 6.17% less, a fall largely attributable to the fall in sheep numbers.* Then they say that by rejigging the figures to take account of productivity as well as numbers, that methane emissions will rise 16% by 2010, compared to 1990 levels. Now how do you figure that out !

The boffins answer to this was to say that productivity was up so that the sheep killed in 2000 exceeded that killed in 1990, but omitted to point out that the national sheep flock declined considerably and that a significant proportion of that kill would be capital stock. They also point out that the number of lambs raised has increased but lambs spend most of their time drinking milk and only in the last few months digest a significant amount of grass, so methane emissions from lambs cannot be rated as equivalent to ewes. The supposed increase in methane is very questionable. The assumptions made appear to be enormous.

3. The DINZ submission makes the following points (there were a total of 129

points made in the DINZ submission but they repeatedly went back to these 6 points.

10. *The Pastoral Greenhouse Gases Research Consortium (PGGRC) already has a programme in place to research practical and cost-effective ways to reduce agricultural emissions.*

11. *The PGGRC programme was developed after an analysis of farmers' needs, realistic targets, and funding priorities.*

12. *The PGGRC has already successfully dealt with the issues raised in the Discussion Document regarding role, corporate structure, governance, IP management and ownership and the commercialization of IP.*

13. *Funding for agricultural emissions research should be funded by agricultural organizations as it is today – voluntarily by the PGGRC with input from funders and users and a focus on sensible, practical and cost effective mitigation options for the following reasons:*

- *It is already supported by industry*
- *Avoids costs of establishing a new additional bureaucracy and ongoing operating and compliance costs*
- *Analysis of needs, identification of realistic targets and establishment of funding priorities has already been carried out.*
- *Focus is on practical and cost-effective solutions – more likely to be implemented, thereby better achieving emissions targets.*
- *This allows a rational cost/benefit approach to research investment decisions.*

- *It removes the inefficiency and distortionary effect of funding research compulsorily under Regulations.*
- *Removes the arbitrariness of decisions made on such things as the level of emissions over which an industry will be levied.*
- *Any additional research required by government to be undertaken for New Zealand's benefit could still be funded by government through general taxation.*

14. *For these reasons Deer Industry New Zealand is strongly opposed to the establishment of the proposed AER Body and its associated bureaucracy and costs.*

15. *Deer Industry New Zealand submits that the proposed AER levy and AER body should be abandoned in favour of continuing with an industry-driven research programme through the PGGRC.*

4. 75% of the world is covered by ocean - all of which contains algae or phytoplankton that carry out photosynthesis and in addition make little calcium carbonate shells for themselves (also made from CO<sub>2</sub>). As they die the shells fall to the sea bed to form limestone and so lock up the CO<sub>2</sub>.

The remaining 25% is land of which about 60% is desert, ice (Antarctica, Greenland etc), arctic tundra or high mountain ranges that grow virtually nothing. That leaves only 40% of the land, i.e. 10% of the earth's surface, to grow anything significant in the way of plants and in much of that 10%, growth is restricted for considerable parts of the year by cold, drought or mineral deficiencies/excesses.

In contrast, the production of organic matter in a column of sea water is of the order of 300,000 Tonnes / Ha / year and where nutrients are high can be 6 times that figure.

A slight increase in ocean temperatures would probably increase CO<sub>2</sub> absorption considerably.

Do you start to get the feeling that the amount of forest you might grow is insignificant? In fact the whole of New Zealand is utterly insignificant. That is not to say that we should not do our bit along with the rest of the world, but if the rest of the world does nothing then we would be pretty stupid to indulge in self flagellation. Kyoto, for the Labour Government is about political posturing, not about saving the world.

It is also of interest to note that analysis of Antarctic ice cores has shown that atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> frequently peaked immediately prior to previous ice ages !!!

In addition the concentration of atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> 90 million years ago was 24 times higher than today.

## **Weaner Weighing**

Current practice is for stock to be paid for on weight. This weight is usually determined by weighing the truck loaded and empty. This poses a number of problems and generally results in the seller losing significant income.

What is the weight of an animal.

Ideally it would be the weight of the animal as it is in the paddock under normal grazing conditions. However, to stop farmers stoking animals prior to sale and

to allow some emptying of urine and faeces it has been considered that 4 hours off feed at time of weighing gives a good reliable weight for the animal.

In that four hours a fawn will lose about 1 kg.

Weight losses after that are mainly due to water loss from panting and increased urine flow, both of which are increased significantly when under stress. If the animal is trucked any distance from the sellers farm before weighing then the animal will be losing water at over 300 g per hour.

This weight is made up again within a few days once back on feed.

There are also other significant losses quite independent of the loss in water from the animal. These relate to the problems of weighing the trucks.

After 4 hours any urine or faeces that are now deposited in the truck constitute weight loss that was part of the animal at four hours off feed but may be still on the truck when it is weighed empty. To avoid this the tare weight of the truck should be obtained prior to picking up the stock, not after.

The scales used to weigh trucks can vary considerably. Weighing, empty and full, on the same scales does not guarantee accuracy. A 3% error in these scales will produce a 200kg error on a truck and trailer load of fawns (3% of the full load is more than 3% of the empty weight).

Scales used for gravel/sand/lime etc get clogged with dirt very quickly with effects on accuracy.

Trucks drive onto scales, an operator presses the button to get the weight, was

that done before or after the driver got out ?

Did the truck refuel immediately prior to weighing both for empty and full weights or did the driver just use the stated tare weight of the truck ?

Even with the most conscientious driver, considerable errors can occur which are difficult to explain. This was shown when a farmer with certified scales weighed stock immediately prior to loading on the truck and trailer. When the truck was weighed an hour later there was a 200kg difference.

Some breeders who have a good relationship with the buyer come to agreement about use of the sellers scales, most are not so fortunate. A remit that was put to the AGM to set out conditions for use of farm scales was not carried but passed on to QA and Transport operators to consider.

There are two solutions that may be practical, one is for the breeder to have their scales certified and to use those under conditions agreed by buyer and seller. Another would be to have a truck weighing pad built on the property and use scales, like those used by police, to weigh the truck on arrival and departure from sellers farm. In the latter case it would be more sensible for the scales to be owned by the trucking company. The expense of building a concrete pad for weighing would be minimal compared to the annual loss from the above problems.

**Otago Branch, NZDFA, SURVEY**  
**August 2003**

Name : \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

a. Property location: District \_\_\_\_\_ Nearest town/settlement: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Land location (please circle): Coastal \_\_\_\_\_ Inland Mountainous \_\_\_\_\_  
(0 - 20 km) (High Country)

c. Main land topography (please circle):

flat / flat & rolling hills / rolling hills / rolling hills & steep / steep  
/ other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

d. Number of breeding hinds (please circle):

<100 / 100 - 400 / 400 - 800 / >800

e. Number of velveting stags: \_\_\_\_\_

f. Main species (please circle):

red / red x wapiti / elk - wapiti  
/ fallow

g. Main production system (please circle):

breeding/weaner sales / breeding/venison / venison / trophy / tourism

breeding/velvet antler / venison/velvet / other

Please write your approximate farm area in hectares \_\_\_\_\_ or acres \_\_\_\_\_ .

h. What proportion of your farming operation is deer?

20% / 40% / 60% / 80% / 100%

**Survey**

*Please return to Mandy Bell  
Criffel Station, Box 36,  
Wanaka*

*Or take to seminar on  
September 1st.*

*Entries returned go into  
draw for bottle of fine  
whisky and a bottle of  
Pinot noir.*

i. Circle other enterprises: beef / sheep / cropping / tourism

j. What would you like to see in seminars organized by the branch?  
(Please circle):

Nutrition / Velveting / Fertilizers / Feed Conservation /

Venison Production / Reproduction / Pastures

Other \_\_\_\_\_

k. Branch Newsletter – Is it of interest? Yes / No

What would you like to see more of / less of? \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in as much as able or comfortable. Add any other comments on another sheet if you wish. Please return to Mandy Bell, Box 361, Wanaka

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