

Removing Stags Early to Increase Profit.

Stags out on 1 April to condense mating results in earlier finishing.

Killing more deer during the chilled season is the result of a project that Simon Wright has worked on at Fairlight Station. Simon is part of the Southland Advance Party.

By mating more hinds than he intends to fawn, and removing the stags early, Simon moves average conception date forward, resulting in more deer heavier, earlier.

The manager of the northern Southland farm has had his sights set on producing a 65kg average pre-Xmas carcass. Joining the Southland Advance Party has given further impetus to make it happen.

"It's probably more about condensing our fawning rather than fawning earlier, but I'm keen to explore the relationship between weaning date and conception date because I want to avoid that tail-end of fawns. I'm aiming for a 1 April removal of stags but that will be a year-to-year decision based on seasonal conditions."

It's been a steady and gradual process that's brought forward fawning by 5 – 10 days. The starting benchmark was a 25 February/1 March until 20 April joining period; but last year the stags came out on 10th April whereas this year (2016) it was 15 April. Shifting forward by 10 days the date of stag removal reduced pregnancy scanning results from 97% to 94% but Simon says that was a small price to pay.

"To me that is immaterial and we culled those hinds from the herd."

Simon admits he's found it difficult at times to bite the bullet and take the stag out earlier than in previous years which is part of the reason why he has an over-mating policy.

"I've allowed for extra dries by mating more hinds than I plan to winter. We scan early and if there are dries they're sent away immediately and any surplus in-fawn hinds are sold."

In another management move aimed at producing earlier and heavier weaners, hinds and fawns are strategically fed pre and/or post-weaning or in spring with supplements and grain if feed conditions are tight.

"This year the spring has been great so we haven't bothered."

So what about the results to date?

Stag fawns

2014-15:	80% were killed pre-Xmas @ 62kg (1 st kill Oct 22 nd)
2015- 16:	96% killed pre-Xmas @ 58kg (1 st kill Sept 15th)
2016-17:	52% killed by 1 Nov @ 61kg (1 st kill Sept 22th)

The kill date moved forward one month from 2014 to 2015, although the carcase weight average was under 60kg reflecting the dry summer and autumn & cold spring.

“It proves that you can calve earlier and condense it but to capitalise on earlier fawning with heavier weaning weights feeding cannot be compromised; we had a dry summer at Fairlight last season which was reflected in lower weaning weights. The good news is that this year’s weaners are on track to be about 4kg heavier.”

Simon will continue to condense the mating period and work towards the 1 April goal. And in another move to move fawning forward he’s started selecting for earlier fawners from Fairlight Station’s elite mob of 400 hinds.

“When I consistently kill 65kgCW animals in October I’ll be happy.”

At a glance:

Fairlight Station

Northern Southland

Manager: Simon and Lou Wright

Owners Doug and Mari Harpur

2400 ha (effective) mostly deer fenced

500ha flats, remainder hill country rising to 900 m asl

Stock

Deer: 1950 Red-based hinds

Focus is weaner breeding and finishing for pre-Xmas market

Sheep: 3500 Perendale-base ewes plus 1000 mated hoggets

Beef cows: 470 breeding cows plus replacement heifers

For more information on hind mating management [click here](#).