

Nutting it out

CountryWide

Lynda Gray June 2016

Although Geoff Pullar can't claim the 60kg increase in cut velvet from his Wapiti stags is because of solely nut feeding, he's sure it's helped.

This season 310kg-plus regrowth was cut from 59 animals compared with 250kg-plus regrowth the previous season.

"We've only done it for one year so it's hard to say what the biggest contributing factor is.

"I'm hoping it's a combination of nuts, genetics and improved grasses," Geoff says.

Until joining the Southland elk and Wapiti Advance Party a mixture of barley and nuts was fed in the lead-up to button drop.

But time and time again the stags would vacuum up the whole barley and leave the nuts.

Advance Party members suggested feeding only nuts, which he did for the 2015 button drop.

All the velvetting stags got a 1kg allowance from just before button drop until harvest.

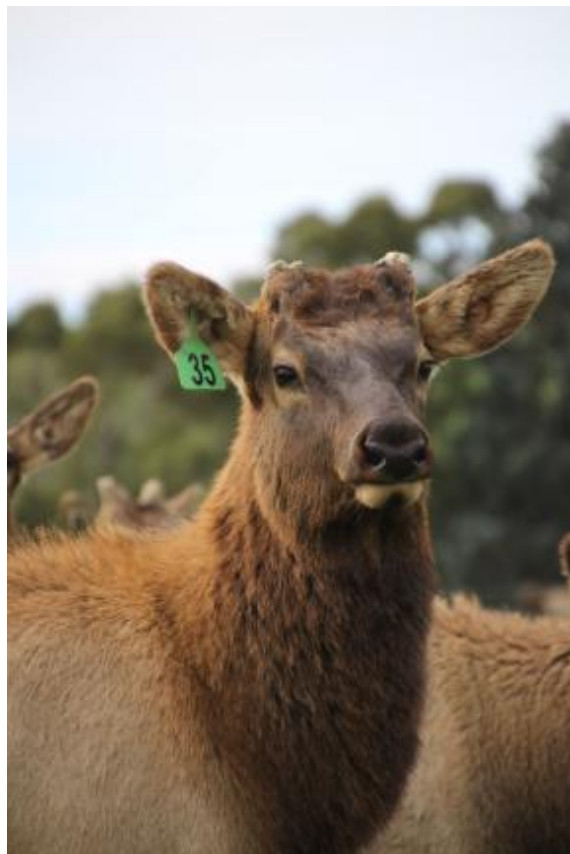
The 20 rising-three-year-olds made the biggest velvet weight gain, cutting a 5.7kg average that was 1kg up on the previous season.

The 25 rising-two-year-olds cut a 4.3kg average, 600g ahead of the previous season.

Geoff estimates the \$10,000 expense of nuts was cancelled out by the saving on barley.

The payback of the all nut feeding works out at about \$7800 based on a velvet price average of \$130/kg for the extra 60kg of velvet.

The nuts cost \$880/tonne, more than twice the price of barley at \$400/tonne, but the high metabolisable of 12.9 and crude protein of 19% plus the mineral supplements make them a much more efficient and effective supplementary feed.





The 60kg increase in this season's cut velvet from Littlebourne wapiti isn't just because of nut feeding but has probably been a contributor, Geoff Pullar says.

Although Geoff's stopped feeding barley to the velveters he still feeds it to the indoor-wintered weaners and ewes when feed is tight during winter.

The cereal used to be grown onfarm but, for the first time, was bought-in last season.

The change freed up a couple of paddocks on the deer unit for an Aber Magic ryegrass, Quest white clover, Tuscan red clover and plantain-chicory mix pasture.

The only downside of not growing barley is the absence of stubble that came in handy during winter as a feeding pad for balage.

Geoff says the likely solution will be putting deer on the lime quarry feeding pads earlier.

Two quarries, one used for the R2 stags and the other for the R3 stags, are an important component of the wintering programme.

They're fed balage on the limestone from the start of May until spring growth starts, which can be any time from mid-August.

When they move out, the hinds move in staying on the platform until the balage runs out or more grass starts growing, whichever happens first.

Another Advance Party-initiated project Geoff has completed is replacement of the reticulated stock water system.

The rain-fed system had fallen into disrepair because of years of poking and prodding by newly velveted bulls with itchy heads.



Sam Pullar with Billy the Kid, a hand-reared eight-week-old Wapiti fawn.

Delivery efficiency had reduced to the point where Sam or Jack, Geoff's dad, were spending one to two hours a day in peak summer carting bought-in water.

The new 19-trough and 1.8km-piped system, installed in two stages over June and October, cost \$13,000. It has twice the water storage (40,000 litres) because of the addition of another tank.

Geoff bought the tank from a neighbour's clearing sale for \$40 but had to spend \$500 to get it trucked across the road and installed.

A change in grazing management, again after discussion with Advance Party members, has sorted the problem of *Cryptosporidium* that affected late-calving cows in 2014.

Local elk breeder and vet Dave Lawrence advised the Pullars to identify and graze the late fawners separately, spread out all the hinds over a wider area in the lead-up to calving, and stop supplementing them with silage to reduce the likelihood of

spreading the parasitic infection.

Aiming for a pasture cover of at least 2000kg/drymatter/ha at fawning was another recommendation.

Another animal health change made was adoption of the industry-recommended treatment of a triple combination for internal parasite control.

A Cydecton injection and Oxfen C Plus and Oxfen C mixed in equal parts is administered to hinds and fawns one month before weaning.

After weaning the fawns are drenched monthly until moving inside for wintering. All R2 deer get a couple of drenches, as required, through summer.

On par

Chances are that if Geoff Pullar isn't onfarm he's on par at a golf course.

He's been hooked on the game since a teenager and is a past Southland representative player.

He's involved in the administration of the sport, fulfilling various roles at the Winton club and currently a board member of Southland Golf.

At this year's New Zealand Open at Sir Michael Hill's Arrowtown course Geoff caddied for NZ Golf board chairman Murray Ward. Four years ago he was caddie for pro Steve Jeffery.

"I've enjoyed playing and enjoy the organising side as well as caddying."



FARM FACTS

Geoff and Sam Pullar – Winton

- 160ha including 63ha of deer fencing

Littlebourne Wapiti stud – velvet production plus lamb finishing

- 160ha of which 63ha is deer fenced

Deer (Wapiti)

- 100 hinds
- 26 R2 hinds
- 25 R2 stags
- 25 R3 stags
- 80 mixed-sex weaners
- 9 mixed-age stags

Sheep (Coopworth-cross)

- 1000 ewes (including two-tooths)
- 400 hoggets

The wapiti stags are fed 1kg of nuts a day from the lead-up to button drop until velveting.