

Gisborne AP Regional Workshop Notes

Topics: Improving profit and productivity through better management in Animal Health and Velvet Antler production



Attending: Lorna Humm P2P Deer Health Project Manager, Tony Pearce Producer Manager, DINZ

Gisborne AP Facilitator: Andrew Cribb BVSc

Gisborne AP Chairman: Tom Sanson

15 farmers in attendance.

P2P Advance Party operating for 10 months and relatively late into the business. Poverty Bay area has most farmers with a keen interest in velvet antler production.

Most properties have been visited and days typically cover a farm tour featuring farming history, and production goals. The group identifies with host farmer project areas specifically that they think best will assist the common AP goals around better velvet production and optimising animal health across all ages and stock classes.

The group consists of a good number of younger people with most properties confidently actively expanding or about to. Some succession with farms is also occurring.

Animal Health Theme. Lorna Humm

Introduction to the new interactive pdf Deer Health Review.

Key aims that deer health plan will be cost effective, valuable, and record progressively your experiences and track an improvement in performance and animal health outcomes, be easy to implement and will sit well alongside the deer growth charts, and better reproductive and genetic improvement programmes.

Essentially a three part process.

- a) defining goals , and identifying areas of production that may be impacted by health issues
- b) defining and understanding disease risks and potential for impact
- c) developing an action plan both around routine preventative programmes and also response to outbreaks or new or novel risks (based on season, weather, associated stock risks etc)

These are a tool used as a property specific decision making process.

- Can be done as a saved electronic document or using a hard printed copy
- Online version lets you quickly link to other tools and look up further information about individual diseases and actions.
- Currently a quite public trial with Orari Gorge Station manager has been in the media. Features an animal health review across multispecies and farming systems and its integration into wider animal health management planning and strategies.
- Aimed at creating value for the investment (for example appropriate dealing with addressing Drench resistance)
- Living document including an action plan, appropriate information appendices
- <http://deernz.org/annual-health-review#.WXApboSGOpo> (needs Adobe Acrobat Reader <https://get.adobe.com/reader/>)

Workshop sessions: 3 questions

- 1) what are the issues re animal health on your farms, and what reaction or management plans are in place, both immediate and in future planning
- 2) What are the production or other issues that may be impacting on current or future production?
- 3) How would or do you measure the differences made in your decision making or how will you identify / record and value the cost benefit of your decisions.

Discussion group 1.

Background.

Poverty Bay is traditionally a breeding selling weaners plus specialist velvetting operation district. Country is predominately hill country and some of it hard hill, doesn't suit weaner finishing particularly well. Comments were that there would be considerable challenges in meeting the P2P growth rate targets for young stock, but weaners shift well with sale revenues are \$280-300/head. Dry periods in mid and late lactation don't make it any easier, but grass growth suits velvet production.

Reporting: Group1

- The group discussed that historic issues of underfeeding have led to health issues in the past. It was felt that people are using inaccurate stock unit definitions and underestimate the feed requirements of deer.
- The group looked at the Stock Unit calculator found on the Deer Hub on the DINZ website, and thought the definitions of stock units for each breed and class of deer were sound and helpful.
- **Yersiniosis** has always been a substantial risk and most vaccinate for it. View was if you don't sooner or later you'll get caught and it will be a major event
 - Rough winters can an issue
 - "it was a bad problem 35 years ago and I've never forgotten"
 - "Vaccination works"!
 - "Bad weather around autumn is a given so why wouldn't you!"
- **Ticks** can be an issue
- **Parasite** challenges are increasing usually culprit is ID' as **Ostertagia spp**, some draw a parallel with that challenge also being a precursor trigger to a Yersinia outbreak
- Drenching was usually at 2-3 times dose rates at intervals varying within group from 3-6 weekly (depended a little of differences in pre or post rut weaning and whether farms were on hill or lowland country and more intensive. Health risks to weaners prompted a discussion on birth dates and fawn age. Most felt birth peak dates weren't especially early with peak births at end of first cycle around 25th Nov to 5th December suggesting a slower start to mating than can be achieved /. Peak birth was defined as when fawns are seen running with hinds so reality may well be 5-7 days earlier
- Stags are generally taken out by 12th May, so there always a tail, but in part a consequence of terrain and management
- **MCF** is still reported as random events in late winter with generally good large stags affected. Not much understanding of why, although must have some associated with onset of lambing date and maybe still some susceptible strain lines.
- **Leptospirosis** was identified as a performance and animal health risk affecting weaners
 - Cases reported as losing condition rapidly and animals under clear pressure with deaths resulting

- Wild pigs in the area were thought to pose significant risk
- Many using 7:1 Vaccinations
- View it should be compulsory as part of a formal scheme given human health risk partially with down the chain side effects and human health risk
- At approximately \$2.00 per shot cost is not really an argument
- Suggested best practice would include an annual booster for all adult deer
- Noted that Yersiniosis vaccine programme should be completed first then leptospirosis (need a vet comment on that but certainly farmers felt they shouldn't be combined at the same time)
- It is important to stagger the timing of leptospirosis and Yersinia vaccine sensitiser shots, to avoid interfering with the development of immunity. The 7 in 1 sensitiser (first shot) can be given alongside the Yersiniavax booster (second shot).
- **Facial eczema FE.** Attendees adamant that it was a Gisborne disease risk not so much in hill country. If it's there it is a big issue especially for stags, and can considerable challenge and risk for exposure to other diseases
- **Copper deficiency.**
copper levels and supplementation have traditionally been a concern although mixed in impact and not universal
- Large debate re injections or bullets with most preferring injections (because of bullet wastage and difficulty with regurgitation).
 - Treatments July /August pre spring
 - Annual programme supported by Optigrow liver samples at slaughter
 - **Molybdenum** levels can be a confounding issue
 - Velvet stags usually get a balance of 7in1 Vaccine, copper via Multimin plus a liver fluke drench re velvet growth
- A few in the group thought they might look at giving copper to hinds pre-set stocking to ensure sufficient copper available for the developing fawn, as a way of addressing copper issues linking to fawn survival
- **JD and JML (Deer Pro)**
- Good support for concept of annual production reports and progress
- BCS important. Skinny hinds die.
- **Parasites**
- **Drenches** discussion on combination formulas and management of combination drenches
- *2x Moxxy X 4X ABm or Oxfen X2x Lev*
- Weight range issues noted especially a fatal reaction to overdosing with levamisole if you are dosing to heaviest weaner
- Issues of timing for lungworm vs GI parasites noted
- Some further discussion of refugia needed and commentary around getting if possible a good FEC or FLC test that can be a new diagnostics tool for deer

Reporting Group 2. Had similar thoughts related to the major health threats

- Common concern that there were issues creating stress and subsequent disease consequences.
- Biggest cause of loss was fawn death following birth for no apparent reason.
- Impact of Yersinia in early weaned fawns had been sufficient for a number of farmers to consider post rut wean or even later weaning
- With leptospirosis risk there was an awareness of the risk of water lying in paddocks as being a source risk
- Group practices monthly autumn pre-winter and spring monthly drenching programmes.

- For GI's common practices seemed to be based on only drenching weaners that were clearly not performing, but weren't drenching the top end. Routine drenching of adult deer is not done.
- Management of ticks was a challenge a preventative spray/application would be applied at time late spring fertilizer was applied (Batiycol). Ticks living on rushes was always an issue and very hard to avoid rank grass growth in hill country, velvet antler and regrowth are also affected.

Velvet growth. Second theme of regional workshop.

The session was introduced with a short presentation on velvet growth nutrition and management from Tony Pearce (see attached) covering the broad principles based on a 2012 paper presented at the last venison and velvet seminar at Stanfield, Bangor.

Attendees Summarised the velvet interests of the region.

Key objectives of most were to build numbers with herds targeted at 200-230 animals .a number of farms buy in younger stags for evaluation under local conditions and find at that size velvetting 1-2 days per week, was also an added bonus in workload balance.

Key points from group sessions and reporting on velvet production session

Goals and objectives

- Building numbers
- Buy and evaluate
- Retaining hinds with better velvet genetics
- Better genes to increase per head production
- Added focus on regrowth
- Feeding well critical
- Fawns fed well from birth and stags really fat in February
- Stags run at 10/ha in large paddocks with feed bank ahead of them
- Emphasis on post rut recovery in May and building condition from late July pre button drop
- People would rather invest in better genetics than additional supplements
- Reservations about using PKE but silage and maize used(some consider maize too 'hot' for young stock
- Maize \$600/tonne with tailor made pellets at \$700/tonne Reasonable investments if feed short
- Split into age groups in September
- Strong weight for age selection pressure
- Adults culled on teeth wear at 9-12yo

Genetics and Selection

- You must commit to good clean velvet or move into trophy, Both don't fit in a velvet production herd goal
- Single sire mating and DNA test to confirm visual ID of fawn
- Pedigrees from good producers follow a strong family line
- At 2yo selection process weighs, score and selection on a consistent type. Nothing gets sold until fully evaluated
- 3yo commercial stags must lift a minimum of 0.6-0.7kg from 2yo weight (As a rough guide stag must cut its age in kg)
- Selection for simple clean heads
- All "prickle bush" heads are rejected. Must also have brow, bez, trez tines
- Final selection on temperament
- Spiker selection based on beam and strength over whole stick (length important in a heavy beam spiker)

Share farming Partnerships also exist. Practice of buying in spikers for evaluation is widespread, some farmers swap well-bred hinds for young stags.

Good genetics are actively sought, with the added value of regrowth also part of the selection process.

Commentary related to how to feed for good production "next year's results start now based on how well you do from the day you cut this year's head".

Views included that velvet potential has a significant set-back if feeding through lactation/drought etc or just poor feeding is something that can never be caught up. There is a strong emphasis on maximising spiker growth and pedicle development is a critical period. Alongside body size, view is that any compromise in supplementary feeding has a further life time impact.

Nutrition.

- Mostly feeding grass based plus silage as staple diet
- Supplements at key times , post rut and pre casting
- Some interest in advantage feeders for maize
- Mobs split on age , 2, 3, 4, and Ma or can include 4yo into MA, with anything picked on herded out and maintained in hospital mob
- Some trials with kale and fodder beet(issues with dry rot reported)
- There was commentary n the future use of PKE with most feeling it had a limited future place in the industry
- The use of salt/mineral blocks was discussed, with a general feeling making salt available was beneficial

Increasing use of plantain, as a hard seed was ideal to be mixed into fertilizer and spread on top of pastures (can suit clover seed too) Persistence issues with set stocking and hard grazing