

Reproduction

Facilitator: Dave Lawrence

Recorder: Andrew Rose

Participants: Campbell, Donald, William, Ian, Liam James, Geoff, John,

Q: What had participants done to improve one area of reproduction?

- 1) Campbell: Increased fertility of recently purchased block to increase grass growth (applied a lot of fertiliser). Also PK supplement fed to hinds pre-mating. This resulted in good BCs and good conception rate (first year on the farm so doesn't have anything to compare it with yet). He is planning on doing early scanning this year.
- 2) Donald: CRs in Elk been a challenge which improved (into the 90% now) after started feeding PK in mid-January (summer dry conditions).
- 3) William Oliver: Spikers were used to mate with R2 hinds, but changes to using MA Stags. This lifted scanning % from 60-70% into the 90s. (Mates mid Feb to mid-May).

Donald commented it's important to be on a rising plane of nutrition around early March (R2s). Geoff agreed – common for R2s to do really well and then stop growing mid Jan (but they are capable of putting on 15kg KWT from January to mating).

- 4) Ian: R2 Scanning % was 65-70%. The reason was they weren't well grown, not fed well enough. This year they have been fed much better. He is about to scan so will soon know how much improvement has been made. He fed maize and PKE. He also shortened the mating period (stags went out before the end of April) to prevent late born calves. Feed quality is a challenge on his property – there is a lot of Kikuyu pasture.
- 5) Liam James: R2 hinds is also an area this farm has targeted recently. They were fed a summer crop and baleage. The stags were put out early for socialisation (they use R3 stags at 1:12 ratio), multi sire mating. Have noticed that if an older stag accidentally gets in there will be a drop in CR for a period due to disruption of social hierarchy. (Mated in mobs of 80 in 14-45ha paddocks).

Geoff commented that it was good that Liam was using large enough paddocks for multi sire mating. Achieved 98% CR last year. He suggested that it's a good idea to spend time observing mating so if there is a problem it will be picked up. Mating finished mid-May.

Question to Geoff: What is the ideal ratio for single sire mating?

A: 1:40 for mature stags and hinds (Donald suggested 1:50 for Wapiti over reds).

- 6) John – Set stock based on calving date. Takes early hinds out early November and set stock them on their own. Target feed to appropriate stage of pregnancy. This year only 30 out of 300 didn't have udder development – so these run together. If there were more he would have repeated the exercise later and further subdivided the ones. John does uddering also to identify those that lost pregnancy since scanning (instead of doing a second, late scan). Mating is 8th of March.

Geoff commented that he finds uddering unreliable in R2s (some don't form an udder until a day or two before calving). John agreed – he only does his MA hinds.

Dave commented on length of time members of group leaving stag out for with R2 hinds. If stags are going to be left in for that long it is beneficial to divide into fawning date mobs (improves fawn survival).

Donald asked is there a difference in mean conception date depending on the part of NZ you're in? Geoff A: No as oestry determined by photoperiod (the equinox).

Dave said he believed there was no evidence on need to socialise stags with R2s 0 he puts his stags with R2s on March 20 – only out until April 20, still got 87% CR this year.

Remember efforts made I getting good early CRs can be lost if hinds are not fed well over winter – because their gestation length increases if poorly fed.

John grain fed his R3s this year to improve conception dates for this group. As a result they had the same mean conception date as his MZ hinds (usually a bit later).

Birth to Weaning Factors

Donald – tries to calve the same animals on the same blocks each year (so they are familiar with that environment). He also has a policy that if certain blocks are repeated and there is poor fawn survival he will stop calving in them.

Geoff – Loss between birth and weaning is one of his biggest areas of loss and most farmers underestimate those losses. He believes the highest cause of loss is the “disturbance effect”. For example - stocking rate too high.

Invermay keep stocking rate at calving to 7/ha or lower.

There was general agreement in the group to the benefit of calving in age groups. Most members calve in three groups: R2, R3 and MA.

Ian observed that ticks are a major problem for young fawn survival. He has found using pesticide via ear tags has improved his weaning rates.

Campbell monitors tick levels by looking at infection on velvet.