

Weaner Early Finishing

Group experiences

Targets: All gone by Christmas

Autumn growth >170gpd

70kg weaner 1 June

Mixed genetics

Shed wintering - extra rotation in grass, good results but lots of work

Group discussions and advise on integrated livestock classes

Heavier weaning weight

Summer dry Canterbury - started weaning at 62kg average on 14 March, now target 70kg average. Next step to move earlier (20th Feb)

Hawkes Bay. Weaner weights @ 1 March gone from 52kg to 60kg

Feed available after fawning

Simplify system - less velvetting stags

Specialist feeds for action and early fawn intake - plantain/clover/chicory/lucerne

Summer rape or summer/winter double grazing rape

Early fawning. Fatal age and cull late (Fawning after X date in December)

Sourcing weaners

Finishing farms are finding it difficult to source good weaners. Breeders keeping and finishing on their own properties and selling smaller/poorer animals.

Contract relationships between breeders-finishers-processors

Work out price of weaner on a fair basis related the predictable schedule price and cost of growing the animals.

Finishers could offer to supply or go shares in a good terminal stag. Offer a premium for heavier weaner or cross bred weaner etc. Premium for weaner weaned before transport, good animal health, pre-movement drenching etc.

Weaning management

Integrate feed system for easy transition both within and between farms (breeder to finisher) if possible
Manage feed changes gradually

Don't put straight onto high quality feed if not used to it

Always change feeds on a full stomach

Weather, stress. Consider pre-weaning yarding.

Try to get breeders to wean 2 weeks prior to transport to finishing farm.

Minimum weight agreements when going to finishing farm. E.g. 50kg minimum.

Terminal genetics

Elk/Wapiti terminals

Elk stud taken 10 years to get to where they are. Weaned last week of Feb 80kg

Deer Improvement/high BV red stags

Trade-off between venison growth and velvet genetics. Velvet animals traditionally smaller. Is it possible to breed dual purpose animal

Autumn growth rates (March to June)

20-25kg over Autumn

Pasture renewal for better quality feed

Integrated grazing

Terminal wapiti / B11 (1/4 wapiti)

New pastures with good clover content.

Legume content important. Very good growth rates on red clover, lucerne and chicory.

Herbs. High growth rates on chicory. Plantain maintains better quality through Autumn than ryegrass.

Winter growth rates

Annual ryegrass

Fodder beet

Winter brassica crops (rape)

Winter wet - weaner deer not so bad on pugging. Need a fast rotation (mud and fence pacing) stand-off areas or wintering shed

Spring growth rates

Challenge to provide enough low cost, high ME high Protein feed early enough (from mid-August)

Killing dates

It may not be most profitable and efficient to simply target the peak price schedule

Need to consider when low cost, high quality feed is available and utilise it to its maximum potential on the farm. This may mean quitting deer earlier and lighter weights and finishing lambs or may mean keeping weaner on for longer and killing at heavier weights and lower prices.

With the changing markets, the fluctuations in the market prices should reduce with a more evenly spread demand for numbers.

Animal grow most efficiently (put the highest % of feed intake into weight gain) in their first year of life.

This is both because the maintenance requirements are lower for a smaller animal and because young animals are programmed for growth and muscle deposition.

Profitability

Keep fastest growth rate animals for longer

DNA profile hinds

kill those with lower growth rates

\$/ha - aim for \$3000/ha

Need to look at cost and return of the whole feeding period. E.g. might be more cost efficient to put high cost supplements in when deer are likely to grow at faster growth rates (e.g. autumn) rather than winter when you get marginal increase in growth rates for the same amount of supplement going in.

Drop in schedule

8 November drop in schedule

Proportion into chilled market - 50% is pretty good but are you compromising carcass weight

Animal Health

Parasites

Drench programme - where to next + sustainability
Prophylactic drenching approach, regular weighing for targeted drenching
Parasitism can cause missed opportunity for growth
FEC, is there any other way
WHTs 42 days with BZ + Moxidectin

Copper

Is it needed?
Clinical evidence - lameness and swayback
Liver biopsy

Post rut weaning

From 58kg to 72.8kg when changed to post rut weaning in mid-April, 75.8kg on 1 June
Stags joined in January.
Effects on conception rate and date - pregnancy testing and fetal ageing a good tool

Wintering options

Fodder beet
70-80days. 130g/day. Averaged 80g/day last year
Protein + low phosphorus theory
FB + lucerne + baleage
FB + Maize + Silage, 6kg DM/hd/day offered, mob of 200, velvet and kill.
Lucerne and barley
Regrowth rape and barley
Hinds on crop so weaners have more room on pasture.

Shed

Good for grass and get an extra rotation on grass
Get some early spring growth
Lots of work
Deer do well

Mean birth date

Scanning a great tool
Foetal age and take out latest
Calve early and late separately and manage/feed separately.
Know when last fawn in going to be born (E.g. aim for 1 Dec)