

Feeding Velvet Stags

Current issues and projects

Feeding spikers with maize (450g/day) this year, will add urea on at end of July.
Started feeding/raising velvet stags on hill country. All grass, moved to add kale behind the wire on flat parts.
Learned timing of feeding and greater emphasis on feeding
Ideas: Supplement with maize leading up to roar, baleage in rack when on kale
What to feed and when to feed them
When to feed for most bang for buck
Given ideas to trial against status quo
Tried multinuts from button drop until velveting, PK from Mid-May N75kg as urea flour on baleage ad lib ~ 700g/day to start, finished at 1.3kg/day Control mob versus trial mob. Age based, corrected for increase for age and for year. Results: No real velvet weight gain but cut earlier/
Feeding spiker with maize this year. Will add urea at end of July
Strategic use of urea breakthrough but timing problematic. Grass fed system still outperformed everything else.
In drought for second year. All stags on baleage and barley and PK - no grass Young stags PK and MF, older stags started feeding with grain feeder (June) - calm feeding Barley and PK runs through grain feeder no problem - individual piles important. Older stags find very palatable.
Dry environment. Can't guarantee brassica crop. Risk of snow. 120 days winter. Breaking in tussock country with rye corn. Good feed on shoulders of winter. Spray out in April for January sown - only way to guarantee good crop in dry environment. Feed ad lib. Late May, early June. Good early spring crop. Cheap.
Flat land, irrigated, regressed. Kale last year, fodder beet this year, animals are better and good utilisation. Trying PK ad lib and ad lib baleage. For 2 year have also tried barley which gave much improved velvet yields. Beginning of May, onto winter crop. Can buy lucerne cheap therefore not worth growing own. 200m break for 120 stags, no fighting.
Wairarapa coastal hill, no covers Feb-March-April. Spray out and sow plantain, chicory and clover. Using PK for the last year. Deer look very good. PK gives immediate benefits. Want superb feeding all the time in a simple system.

Group discussions and advice on feeding velvet stags

Chinese recognise post-rut recovery as important for growth. Start at least 3 weeks before button drop. High energy and high protein.

Experiences with Palm Kernel

Many farmers are now using palm kernel with success for velvet stags.

Ken - no increase in velvet weight per stag compared to stags on good grass

Craig - Increased stocking rate, increased per ha velvet weight. Still have reasonable pasture covers. Increased velvet weight compared to expected weight for age increase. But no control mob in the same year.

Craig - Feeding in bins caused some damage to the troy tyne and minor damage to the brow tyne from stags scratching on the bins.

Use tractor tyres cut out at the top with a knife instead of bins. Less damage to antlers.

Craig: Wonders if feeding hinds fed on PK has a flushing effect. Seen two sets of twins this year after feeding hinds on PKE.

Moody, immediate benefits seen when started feeding

Only use pelletised PKE mixed with maize for velvet stags - fed in piles on the paddock.

When to start feeding

If fed earlier will it just go into fat instead of velvet growth?

Strategic use of Nitrogen

Good option but timing problematic

Ken - No increase in per head velvet in stags fed Autumn fed (Urea) pastures with higher pasture covers than stags fed lower pasture covers during the winter. Higher feed allowance mob looked better but no real difference in liveweight at the end of winter.

Winter crops for velvet stags

Hill country, good contractors operating at the contour.

Kale and swedes *ad lib*

Go on in May to build back body reserves - as soon as settled from the roar

Palatable stem varieties gives better utilisation of kale as well as better growth on swedes.

Saved grass in next paddock - use as run off. Stags still eat plenty of kale and grass

paddock is good clean paddock for feeding supplements such as maize.

Fodder beet good, useful either in situ or harvested bulks fed on a pad area. Need to be careful to have balanced diet, especially after 60 days. Also need to manage transition onto spring feed.

Lucerne

Great transition feed either Autumn or spring

Good for baleage with crops during winter and early spring

Deer Nuts

Ken, no increase per head compared to high quality pasture. But more grass grown and potential to increase stocking rate. When taking account for increased grass, no financial benefit in feeding nuts.

Southland. Deer nuts from button drop for 30 days. \$4000 costs, \$8000 return. 2:1 return in velvet nuts.

Cost \$875/T bulk

Feeding after the rut

Post rut - from 20 April.

As soon as stags settle down

Quality and preference. E.g. Spitfire and Oats

Grain feeding in May could cause stags to rut again (Farmer comment)

Feeding during velvet growth

Ad lib

Start 2-3 weeks prior to button drop

Need to allow for rapid weight gain as well as antler growth

Any deficits likely to affect antler growth first

Plenty of high quality feed

What works and fits with the system

Protein 18% +, ME 11+, balanced for sugars and fibre.

Early heading ryegrasses or early growth pasture species such as cocksfoot or tall fescue.

Legumes important with grasses

PKE/barley/maize. PKE safe and good for velvet growth. Maize risk of acidosis and lameness.

Limiting weight loss over winter

Increased weight going into winter.

Theory - less loss over winter correlates with velvet weight

Carbs and ME versus protein

Some information is available

More research required in New Zealand environment and genetics.

Timings

January	Grass	On hills after regrowth	
February	Grass		
March	Grass with access to some high quality feed		
April			
May		Post rut from around 20th May or when stags settle down.	
June	Grass or crops, on hills		
July			
August		From 3 weeks pre button drop	Increase protein from 15 August. 18%
September - Dec			