



Assessing the Performance of Newly Fenced Hill Block

Project Report
Canterbury Advance Party



Background

Quartz Hill Station (Farm Details)

Location	Windwhistle, Rakaia Gorge
Total Farm	3000 ha sheep beef and deer farm, Total 17000 SU
Deer Unit	830 ha deer fenced, Total 3800 Deer Stock Units
Deer Enterprises	Deer Breeding, Finishing and Velveting
Deer Numbers	920 hinds, 860 weaners, 340 Stags (R2 and older)
Performance	98% survival in Reds, 91% survival in Wapiti 4.4 kg/hd Velvet (1 st Cut) Hybrid Weaners – 66.5 kg weaning wt (10 April), up from 62 kg.

Programme Targets

- Target 1: Increase fawn weaning wts – Reds to 55 kg, Hybrid to 72 kg
(at 10th April)
- Target 2: Increase first cut velvet from 4.4 – 5.2 kg per head in MA Stags

Process:

The block was already fenced and fertilised prior to the group meeting

The group discussed how the block could be managed to best achieve:

- Increased weaning weights while maintaining or improving reproductive rates

Discussion Areas included:

- Stocking Rate, stock conservatively in first year (1.2 hinds/ha), and reassess
- Set stock early so hinds can get familiar with to the block (early October)
- Assess pasture covers/quality and hind condition over the period (1 November, 10th January, 20th January)
- Bringing hinds and hybrid fawns off the hill around 20th January if feed conditions are better on the flats
- Potential use of nitrogen to enhance growth (not pursued)
- Consider use of Advantage Feeder on the hill before weaning (not pursued – moved to better feed)
- Weigh fawns at weaning and condition score hinds
- Suggested that there was an opportunity to winter hinds on the hill, reducing costly supplements.

Actions:

Year 1

- Stocked conservatively in year 1, 250 hinds fawned on the block
- Pasture quality, covera and hind condition assessed over summer, hinds and fawns moved off 25th Feb, just prior to weaning.
- Fawns weighed at 10 April
- Hinds wintered on the block (15 May – 1st week August), then moved to silage and grain on flats

Year 2 Adjustments

- Lifted stocking rate to 330 hinds fawned on block
- Hinds and Fawns moved off earlier - 15th Jan to Fescue and Clover
- Hinds wintered on block longer (1st week in May - 1st week Sept)

Outcomes and Future



- Fawn Survival maintained
- Moving to specialist feed from mid January is nicely balancing survival and early lactation growth achieved on the hill.
- Weaner weights improved by 4 kg to 66.5 kg by 10 April.
- Use of the hill over winter has reduced winter feed costs significantly (less time on silage and grain)
- Gaining confidence in stocking rates and annual management has been critical
- Monitor points have added to confidence with increasing stocking rates (pasture covers and hind condition scores).

Future Improvements

- Scan out and remove late hinds, to get hinds and fawns off the hill earlier and onto specialist feeds