



What were the lessons from the Focus Farm programme? - some key practices that every deer farmer should consider.

KEY ISSUES: water quality – sediment, nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P) and *E.coli* (an indicator of bacteria bugs from faeces) entering streams.

MAIN CONTRIBUTORS: fence line pacing, wallowing and wintering management.

KEY PRACTICES TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Planning: FAIL TO PLAN, PLAN TO FAIL! Identify your vision for the farm.

- Identify your different soils and main management units.
- Put in place a timeline for action - even if you can't afford to do much fencing to start with - have a plan of action for the next 10 - 20 years so you know you can gradually get it done.
- Be strategic - start fencing at the bottom of your property first. Focus on stock management if you can't afford to fence first.
- An aerial photo with a plan of environmental enhancements to be undertaken is an invaluable tool. Try your local Regional Council or Google earth for an aerial photo of your farm.

Fence and plant riparian (streamside) areas.

- a buffer of at least 3m on flat ground, with long



Coleraine Farm: QEII tussock covenant filters runoff from deer paddocks

grass as a buffer works well. Wider buffer strips are needed on steeper slopes.

- fencing is expensive - fence the bottom end of your property first, to ensure water quality is improved leaving your property.
- OR, fence a large area at the bottom of a gully where water can pond, sediment settles and P can be filtered out. (ie Southland farm).

Ponds (fenced and planted) can significantly improve water quality - capturing sediment and allowing *E. coli* to be killed by UV light from the sun.

- Use ponds as sediment traps at the bottom end of paddocks that are too difficult to fence.
- Remember that establishing a pond may require resource consent - so check this before you start.
- Check with the local DOC office or Fish and Game to see whether there are fish that use your stream for passage before building a dam.

Wallows - Provide wallows in areas where runoff will not enter waterways. Avoid wallows in streams if possible by fencing to exclude stock.

Fertiliser use: - Do a nutrient budget and target efficient fertiliser use. Overseer now has a deer nutrient budget.

- minimise excessive Olsen P levels in the soil and save \$\$\$ and minimise the risk of P runoff into waterways.

Good winter management is key to avoiding soil compaction and subsequent runoff - both over the paddocks or through mole and tile drains. Consider these practices:

- Sacrifice paddock/wintering block to protect the rest of farm from compaction.
- Winter crops - if stock are grazed intensively on crop or pasture - choose paddocks away from watercourses, keep plough line back at least 3 metres from the top of banks, break feed toward the watercourse.
- Wintering pads need to be located well away from watercourses.
- Check with your Regional Council if a consent is required to discharge the effluent generated from the wintering block/pad.

Animal behaviour management is key to avoid fence line pacing and associated runoff: - strategies for different areas of the farm, mobs, shelter, design of paddocks.

Tracks and stream crossings can be significant hotspots. Establish culverts and divert drainage from tracks and culverts to divert runoff away from streams.

Shelterbelts have been shown to be very effective at reducing fence line pacing, improving biodiversity as well as stock health and welfare.

Chemicals and pest management - have chemicals under lock and key, on a concrete floor. Keep a record of chemicals stored and when and where used.

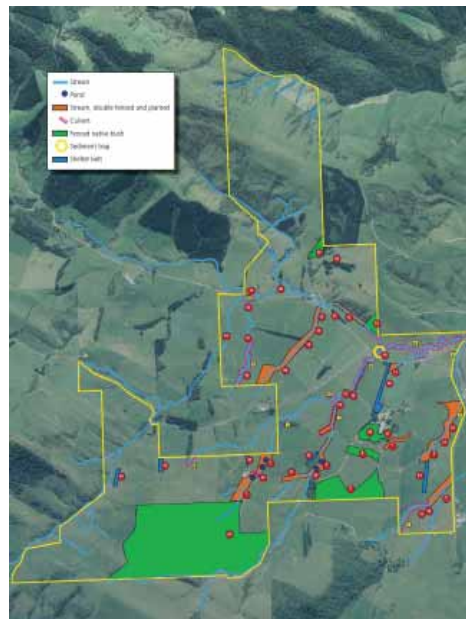
Pest management: - have a plan for dealing with animal and weed pests.

Disposal of waste: - DO NOT burn silage wrap - unless you have an incinerator you will not be able to burn the wrap cleanly. If you are in an area with a recycle scheme for wrap, make use of it. If not, store it and dispose of it at your nearest public landfill.

Biodiversity: - it's amazing what can be found on farms. It's worth having a professional do an assessment on farm. The most interesting finds may come from a scrubby patch of bush, tussock block, or wet area which may have herb fields. The QEII National Trust and some Regional Council's can provide funding for fencing and protecting areas of native biodiversity.

Ongoing monitoring - Tools to check how sustainable your farming practices are:

- Visual assessment - have a look at your streams when it is raining - Is there any runoff and where is the runoff coming from?
- Stream Health Monitoring Assessment Kit - do you own assessment of the stream - visually look to see if it is cloudy or brown from sediment.
- Soil - use VSA - visual soil health assessment.
- Look up Regional Council websites, and get results from the Council on nearest stream or waterways. Talk to Fish and Game or DOC about what they know lives in the stream.



Totara Hills: Environmental Farm Plan Works Programme.

WHERE TO GO TO FOR INFORMATION AND HELP?

- Attend the closest Deer Focus Farm field day or community group day.
- Use a consultant and make use of your accounts analysis of annual finances.
- Publications like The Deer Farmer and Deer Industry News have technical updates.
- www.deernz.org.nz - look under Publications for the Focus farm newsletters.
- www.deerresearch.org.nz has technical updates and many previous articles.