

# Focus on Deer: have the deer focus farms made a difference?

**T. Payne**

AgResearch Ruakura Research Centre,  
Hamilton, New Zealand

[tracy.payne@agresearch.co.nz](mailto:tracy.payne@agresearch.co.nz)



**D. Stevens**

AgResearch Invermay Agricultural Centre,  
Mosgiel, New Zealand



The **Focus on Deer** project was developed to help farmers address the concerns of:

- environmental sustainability
- implement productivity and financial improvements
- demonstrate that focus farms could make a difference in the wider deer industry.



This research aimed to understand how farmers viewed the **Focus on Deer** technology extension project and document the changes made to their farming systems as a direct result of the project.

- Thirty farmers from Southland and Otago were interviewed in 2006 and 2008 on:

general views of focus farm days  
new fence pacing strategies  
new pugging strategies  
number of new trees  
new wallowing strategies  
strategies towards waterway fencing  
improvements in productivity  
social aspect of the focus farm days.

- 70% visited a focus farm at least once.
- 93% valued the information from the focus farm.



## Summary of changes made since 2006

	Regularly attend field days	Occasionally attend field days	Do not attend field days (read the newsletter)	Total (%)
<b>Soil changes</b>				
Fence pacing	2	4	0	6 (20%)
Pugging	4	1	0	5 (17%)
Trees	6	4	4	14 (47%)
<b>Total soil changes</b> <i>(avg number changes / farmer)</i>	<b>12 (1.5)</b>	<b>9 (0.7)</b>	<b>4 (0.6)</b>	
<b>Water changes</b>				
Wallowing	5	8	0	13 (43%)
Waterway fencing	7	10	5	22 (73%)
<b>Total water changes</b> <i>(avg number changes / farmer)</i>	<b>13 (1.6)</b>	<b>18 (1.4)</b>	<b>5 (0.7)</b>	
<b>Productivity</b>				
Wintering management	4	6	3	13 (43%)
Feed management	4	6	1	11 (37%)
Stock management	4	3	1	8 (27%)
<b>Total productivity changes</b> <i>(avg number changes / farmer)</i>	<b>12 (1.5)</b>	<b>15 (1.2)</b>	<b>5 (0.7)</b>	
<b>Total changes</b> <i>(avg number changes / farmer)</i>	<b>37 (4.6)</b>	<b>42 (3.2)</b>	<b>14 (2.0)</b>	
No changes	0	1	2	3 (10%)

## Number of changes made as a result of attending the field days

- Regularly attended - 4.6 changes per farm.
- Occasional attendees - 3.2 changes per farm.
- Only read the focus farm newsletters - 2 changes per farm.

## Farmers suggested improvements

- Be at the forefront of new ideas.
- Teach basic skills.
- Should not always be at the host farm.
- Make the focus farm more geographically central.
- Range of speakers needed.

## Highlights for the attendees

- Social aspects of the days (100%).
- Seeing changes on the host farm (91%).
- Assessing if experts' ideas worked (71%).
- Learning new ideas and practices (67%).

agresearch

Farming, Food and Health. **First**

*Te Ahuwhenua, Te Kai me te Whai Ora. Tuatahi*

Thanks to the farmers and MAF SFF.

