

SIR ARTHUR WARD AWARD 1994

J.A.H. Guild

As Chairman of the New Zealand Deer Farmers Association over the last 5 years until his retirement late last year, as a current member of the Game Industry Board and as a practicing progressive deer farmer, James Alastair Hay Guild has made a major contribution in consolidating the New Zealand deer industry in its current position of strength for the future.

James rather reluctantly took over the Chairmanship of NZDFA in late 1988, after the untimely death of the late Ian Spiers. His Chairmanship has covered a very buoyant period which saw farmed deer numbers rise by 100%, to 1.3m and export receipts for deer products rise from below \$50m to over \$180m. However, this period has also seen the partial collapse of both venison and velvet prices, albeit not in the same year and has spawned a number of rather contentious issues among deer farmers. As chairman of the NZDFA, James had to not only be involved in arguing the case of deer farmers in many quarters but has had to convince deer farmers that the outcome of various issues has been in their long term interests.

For example, immediately after assuming his responsibilities as Chairman on NZDFA, James had to enter the ongoing 3 year discussion to convince Government that the incidence of tuberculosis in deer was of a magnitude which warranted a compulsory national testing and slaughter program. He then had to turn round and explain to deer farmers that their commitment to, and therefore success in, eradicating Tb in deer herds would be greater if there was no compensation for reactors, when the natural response to such a programme was to seek compensation.

We are all aware that animal welfare is playing an increasingly important role in the husbandry of domestic animals. There is no species where this is more so than deer. The sensitive issues of handling, transport and antler removal have had to be addressed. James quickly grasped the potential importance of, and need for solution to, these animal welfare issues if the longterm viability and market access of the NZ deer industry was to be assured. But he was still able to lobby hard on behalf of his membership for sensible solutions which would protect the interests of individual deer farmers.

In 1989, a sub-committee of the Animal Welfare Advisory Committee, under the Chairmanship of Professor David Blackmore was established to develop a code of practice for antler removal. The eventual outcome in 1992 of the precedent setting consensus of members of the veterinary profession, deer farmers represented by James Guild and Tom Williams, Chairman GIB, was the promulgation of the Code of Recommendations and Minimum Standards for the Removal of Antlers and establishment of the National Velvet Training Board.

Though all these protracted and delicate negotiations James had to report back to the many strong minded individuals, who have always been a welcome feature of the deer industry, but some of whom were difficult to convince that compromises had to be made and procedures put in place

which would ensure the long term viability of deer farming.

A person with less commitment to, and vision of the deer industry than James Guild may not have been able to carry through some of these less popular remits. He realised he could not please all of the people all of the time. It must be rewarding to James and all those involved in developing the program that as farmer and veterinarian experience of the velvetting certification scheme grows, the antagonism to the system is waning and the original aim of maintaining the access by deer farmers to Prescription Animal Remedy I drugs to allow the continuation and improvement of farmer velvetting is being achieved.

James has also been intimately involved with the Inland Revenue Department, on behalf of deer farmers, in arguing for more logical valuation system and has been a major contributor to many aspects of the deer industry quality assurance developments

James also steered the NZDFA through conflict over the sponsorship by New Zealand of an International Congress on Deer Production. He countered the argument by some that such an event would result in New Zealand technology being freely available to the rest of the world, by the strong argument that communication and contact between producers and scientists must be fostered if New Zealand deer farmers are to maintain access to advances and improvements in deer technology.

After graduating with a Lincoln College Diploma in Agriculture in the early 1970's, James along with his brother Colin and under the watchful eye of their father, demonstrated the capability to develop a large block of hard SI hill country in the Rakaia Gorge. The property was transformed from carrying 11000 stock units over (which was immediately decimated to 6000 by a severe snowstorm) to a productive sheep and cattle property running 28000 SU. Deer were added in 1977. Sometime later, now farming on his own account at High Peak, James became involved in a group which set out to systematically compare the original Rakaia red deer with other strains.

Nobody makes the contribution to an industry that James has done without some personal cost to family and home commitments. James would be the first to recognise the contribution of his wife Anna, whether it be in holding the fort over his frequent absences or in hosting the innumerable local and overseas visitors to High Peak over the last 5 years. The unobtrusive, watchful brotherly eye of Colin from over the fence must also have been supportive.

Mr President, James Guild through his logical grasp and understanding, articulate and firm espousal of animal health and welfare issues which have profoundly affected New Zealand deer farmers over the last 5 years and into the foreseeable future has made a major contribution to the deer industry and is a worthy recipient of the Sir Arthur Ward Award for 1994.

Alastair Nicol
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