

DARE TO WORK WITH DEER

A DIFFERENT WAY TO FARM

writer **PETER WHITE** // photo **BEV BELL (SIMPLY INSPIRED)**

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ELLIOT SYME



ELLIOT SYME loves working with deer as they have their own unique character and are intelligent animals.

The 20-year-old went to St Andrew's College in Christchurch and has ended up farming deer at Mount Peel Station in South Canterbury.

Mount Peel is an iconic 5500-hectare sheep, cattle and deer property that is farmed today by the descendants of John Acland, who began farming the property in 1855.

Elliot says to be successful working with deer, the most important things are that you need to love what you are doing, love the outdoors, love the animals and learn some good stock sense.

“Deer can be temperamental animals, so you need to be able to read them, but you learn that along the way.”

“It is good fun mustering where the deer live. I also like working with the dogs, maintaining animal health and the breeding work we are doing.”

In Year 12 at St Andrew's College, Elliot took AgriScience, Metal Technology, English, Maths and a transition course that included outdoor education.

He always wanted to go farming during his school years. The kick-start he needed to get into the industry was doing the one-year Diploma in Agriculture at Lincoln University.

“I had to work on two different farms for a paper I was doing as part of the course. I worked at a place in Tekapo in the summer and the winter at Mount Peel, where I am working fulltime now.”

Elliot recommends the course at Lincoln for school leavers wanting to get an introduction to a career in farming.

“You learn a lot that you wouldn't learn on the farm, like the stuff that goes on in the background. They take you right through from the basics at the start – so anyone can learn it, from a townie to someone who has been on a farm.”

The future prospects look good for Elliot. His goal is to work his way up to be head shepherd, then stock manager and to manage his own place. “My end goal is to own a farm.”

Deer Industry New Zealand (DINZ) CEO Innes Moffat says working with deer offers school leavers another career choice in agriculture.

“Deer are majestic animals that bring diversity and a little bit of excitement to the farming day. We've got about 1400 farms across the country that run deer as part of their systems. Deer are run for venison, velvet and for some safari and hunting operations,” he says.

“There is lots of variety to the work. These farms also need advice and assistance from rural professionals, so knowing a little about deer can be a real advantage to service providers and adds some diversity to their jobs too.”

“You don't have to be a deer specialist in order to get a job working with deer. There are a very enthusiastic bunch of farmers who will be keen to share what they know to help look after their deer and they look after their staff well.”



**Deer Industry
New Zealand**

KEY FACTS



- **ELLIOT SYME** HAS A DIPLOMA IN AGRICULTURE FROM **LINCOLN UNIVERSITY**.
- HE WORKS AS A **SHEPHERD** AT **MOUNT PEEL STATION** IN **SOUTH CANTERBURY**, WHICH IS A 5500-HECTARE SHEEP, CATTLE AND DEER PROPERTY.
- **ELLIOT** HAS GOALS FOR HIS CAREER IN **DEER FARMING**, WITH HIS FIRST AIM BEING TO PROGRESS TO **HEAD SHEPHERD**. HIS ULTIMATE GOAL IS TO OWN HIS OWN FARM.



For more information on careers in deer farming, visit www.deernz.org

For more information on studying at Lincoln University, visit www.lincoln.ac.nz