

# WORKING WITH MAJESTIC ANIMALS LOVING THE LIFESTYLE

writer **PETER WHITE** // photographer **VIVIENNE LAURSEN**

For **RENEE WOOD**, working with deer and beef animals is like having the best of both worlds.

Renee, 24, works on the renowned Raincliff Station in Pleasant Point, South Canterbury. Originally a sheep station, it is now a mixed-stock business, mainly focused on deer farming for velvet and trophies.

She is primarily based on the 130 hectares of land that are across the road from the main station. Her main responsibility is looking after the wagyu and dairy grazers, fattening the bulls and working with deer.

"Once that is all organised on a day-to-day basis, I will help wherever I am required. Often that is in the deer shed helping with velveting or artificial insemination, shifting stock in and out of the shed, drenching fawns, on the tractor or fencing. It is quite a broad role really," says Renee.

"It is about 50–50 between working with deer and other animals. I love the variety and the awesome people I work with but most of all I just love the lifestyle farming brings – being outdoors every day with the stock [and] watching them grow from young to mature.

"Getting the bulls up to weight is always a good sense of achievement and just seeing them happy and healthy, doing what animals should do really."

Renee has enjoyed getting to know many aspects of the deer industry, organised by very welcoming industry groups. She had a tour of deer farms and marketers and processors in 2020 and has attended Next Generation deer farmers' conferences, meeting lots of enthusiastic young farmers with an interest in deer farming.

There are about 1,400 farms in New Zealand that run deer as part of their systems. Renee says they are majestic animals that require different handling than other farm animals.

"You have to be a lot more alert, calm and aware of where you are when you are working with them because they can be very responsive to sudden movements. I enjoy that because it is more of a challenge watching how they react but generally I have found them really great to work with."

Renee grew up on farms and has always wanted to work on the land. She lived in America for two years with family and finished her secondary education by home schooling.

"I decided at 15, school wasn't for me anymore, so I went and worked fulltime on two different pig farms for five years, before I first came down to South Canterbury and that was when I got introduced to deer farming."

Renee has proven herself academically since she started working with Primary ITO work-based training. She has achieved the New Zealand Certificate in Pork Production (Levels 2 and 3) and New Zealand Certificate in Agriculture (Levels 3 and 4). She is halfway through a Diploma in Agribusiness.

"I just love learning. Primary ITO really helped, and I learnt a lot from them on the more technical side of farming. Not necessarily real hands-on things but the reason things are done the way they are – like feed budgets, feeding values and why you need to be feeding certain amounts at different times of the year.

"The other part I really enjoyed about Primary ITO was getting off farm to attend class and networking, and my training advisor Sharon Watson was amazing."



“IT IS ABOUT 50–50 BETWEEN WORKING WITH DEER AND OTHER ANIMALS. I LOVE THE VARIETY AND THE AWESOME PEOPLE I WORK WITH BUT MOST OF ALL I JUST LOVE THE LIFESTYLE FARMING BRINGS.”

RENEE WOOD



**Deer Industry**  
New Zealand

## KEY FACTS



- **RENEE WOOD** WORKS AS A BEEF AND DEER FARMER ON **RAINCLIFF STATION** IN PLEASANT POINT, SOUTH CANTERBURY.
- SHE ALSO HAS **FIVE YEARS' EXPERIENCE** IN PIG FARMING BEFORE SHE MOVED TO SOUTH CANTERBURY AND DISCOVERED DEER FARMING.
- **RENEE** HAS COMPLETED A **NEW ZEALAND CERTIFICATE IN PORK PRODUCTION (LEVELS 2 AND 3)** AND A **NEW ZEALAND CERTIFICATE IN AGRICULTURE (LEVELS 3 AND 4)** THROUGH **PRIMARY ITO**. SHE IS ALSO **HALFWAY** THROUGH HER **DIPLOMA IN AGRIBUSINESS**.



For more information on career options within deer farming, visit [www.deernz.org](http://www.deernz.org)