

Getting steamy in Oamaru

Quirky and fun times were had by all attending the Elk & Wapiti Society's (EWSNZ) annual velvet and hard antler competition in Oamaru during the last weekend of January.



Tony Pearce with the Open Supreme winner, a massive 27.53 kg head from Tikana's Nepia.

EWSNZ velvet competition results

Place	Bull	Owner	Weight (kg)	NZCWI Score
Open Supreme				
1	Nepia	Tikana	27.53	222.64
2	Yotam	Tikana	22.47	190.08
3	Prophecy	Tikana	21.29	176.12
Two-year-old				
1	Pretty Boy	Mayfield Elk	10.43	126.24
2	Hawk	Tikana	9.83	116.34
Three-year-old				
1	Nasa	Tikana	13.86	145.36
2	Senator	Tikana	11.38	132.93

For full competition results: elkwapitisociety.co.nz

THE NORTH OTAGO town, with its Victorian precinct and “Steam Punk” vibe, was the perfect place for the 35 who gathered to celebrate the past, present and future.

A nod to the past was marked by the attendance of three notable EWSNZ forefathers: John Barber, an EWSNZ life member, elk importer and breeder; Neville Cunningham, a former president; and Tony Pearce, also a life member.

The line-up of competition velvet – including the Supreme winner, a whopping 27.5kg head from Tikana's Nepia, the heaviest ever in an officially recognised New Zealand competition – was a snapshot of the here-and-now. A visit to the Steam Punk Museum, an add-on activity, ticked boxes for the past and future as well as the quirky. The curious artefacts, installations, contraptions and a “Dr Who” light fantastic portal, helped explain the Victorian steam-powered and future-inspired theme.

The evening kicked off with antler viewing and awarding of the Open Supreme top three, all of which went to Tikana (see table). Pre-dinner drinks were supplemented by tasters of Red Berry Tea cold smoked venison and a salami from James Petrie, a.k.a The Merchant of Venison.

Adding to the fun was an EWSNZ version of “The Chase”, including questions such as “to the closest 1/8th of an inch, how tall is Tony Pearce?”*

The Society recognised Tony's recent retirement, paying

tribute to his contribution to the advancement of farmed elk and wapiti. He was presented with a cobalt blue “Elkaholic” sash, the colour harking back to Tony's jaw-dropping “Speedo” stunt at the Society's 30th Anniversary celebrations in 2017.

Lead organiser and EWSNZ President Grant Hasse was relieved and pleased at the conclusion of the competition given the widescale cancellation of many events in the Covid climate. It had created extra work and the uncertain environment meant that some who would normally have exhibited velvet had instead sold it to avoid the possible delay of export and income.

“It was successful given the many constraints we had to work around, and we're pleased we went ahead with it.”

*64 and 4/8” if you must know. ■



Three founding fathers, from left: John Barber, Tony Pearce and Neville Cunningham.



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