

Welcome to the APRIL 2003 edition of the *Deer Farmers' Digest*, a monthly electronic newsletter published for those interested in raising deer, elk and reindeer. This *Digest* is distributed via e-mail to over 2,500 readers in 32 countries.

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**** A D V E R T I S E M E N T * * * * ***

Visit our newly opened Dog-Mall.com where we sell velvet antler, elk meat treats and other natural health products for dogs. Safe, secure on-line shopping at <http://www.dog-mall.com>

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1. CREATING AN ON-LINE STORE

[By Russell Sawchuk, Webmaster at Deerfarmer.com and Dog-Mall.com]

It all seems so simple. Build a store on the Internet with exposure to millions of buyers. Sell tons of velvet antler and make lots of money for myself and the deer/elk farming industry. However, experience with my latest venture – the Dog-Mall.com – clearly shows that much more is involved in having a successful and profitable on-line store.

Looking back at my experiences in setting up the Dog-Mall.com, I have concluded that there are 12 essential components to an on-line store. These all have to be done right if you want to be successful.

1. *Domain name.* This is the name your customers will type into their web browser to get to your site. A domain name is the most important factor used by search engines in determining ranking. For example, our arthritis-in-dogs.com name was selected to ensure high search engine placement when people were looking for information and/or products for their arthritic dogs. It works – anyone typing those two words is likely to find our site listed near the top of most search engines.

The hyphen or dash in the name is very important as it allows the search engine to recognize a unique word. If we used “arthritisindogs” instead, this domain name is meaningless to search engines and thus our name would not rank very high.

I recommend sticking to “.com” domain names even though many other choices are now available. The “dot com” is the grand daddy of domain names and has a certain credibility to it. It also is anonymous as far as country of origin is concerned, and thus more suitable for international marketing.

Finally, manage your own domain name. Don’t rely on your hosting service or Internet Service Provider (ISP) to do so. Managing your own domain name enables you to switch Internet providers quickly and allows you to always keep control of it. There are many domain name companies out there. I have used <http://www.directnic.com> for many years and am very happy with them. DirectNic allows me to register other domain names and point them to existing websites, e.g., www.deer-digest.com goes to digest.deerfarmer.com. DirectNic allows you to set up e-mail forwarders for these redirected domain names – very handy. You can register for a free account on their website. You only pay for name registrations - US\$15 per name per year.

2. *Hosting service.* This is the most critical component of your on-line store. If your hosting service is down a lot, or can’t be reached when there are problems, it will cost you big time! Even though there are thousands of hosting companies out there, finding a good one can be a challenge. I have personally switched hosting companies several times because of poor performance and service. Each time you do so disrupts your e-mail service and takes much work and effort to transfer your information to the new site.

Here are some of the things you should look for when evaluating a web hosting company:

- a. They should offer a 99.9% uptime guarantee.
- b. They should be available when something goes wrong. Call their technical support line (be sure they have one) and see if someone answers within a reasonable time. Support must be available 7 x 24.
- c. Your site should have an easy to use control panel where you can do many administrative duties yourself, e.g., setting up e-mail.
- d. If you are running an on-line store, you will need access to a secure server (SSL). Most companies provide these as part of your package.

e. Expect to pay US\$20 to \$35 per month for a basic hosting package.

I am currently using ValueWeb – <http://www.valueweb.com> – for the Dog-Mall and have been satisfied so far with their performance and service.

3. *Shopping cart.* This is the software program that takes and processes the orders from your on-line store. Many hosting services offer a shopping cart as part of their e-commerce package. Prices range from free to several thousand dollars.

I have evaluated dozens of shopping carts and probably tried five or six. I have yet to find the “perfect” one. Some carts try and make it easy for you to use. Unfortunately, these tend to have very little flexibility in customizing them to fit into the “look and feel” of your website.

The other big challenge with shopping carts is their ability to integrate with your credit card payment processor. The cart has to collect all the necessary information, and then be able to pass it on for payment processing. Not all carts do this, and those that do, some programming may be required.

If you are using a third-party cart, you will have to install it on your website. This means using a program to ftp it from your computer to the server and then make all the necessary adjustments. This should be done by someone who knows what they are doing.

I can't recommend a good shopping cart. I use MOF – <http://www.merchantorderform.com> – for the Dog-Mall and the Deer Farmers' Store. It is one of the best I have been able to find. It is cheap - \$US29 and very flexible. BUT, it requires that all customization be done at the code level. So unless you know something about Perl programming, this shopping cart is NOT for you!

4. *Payment options.* The more options for people to pay the better. Credit cards are a must! If you don't accept credit cards, you will lose many potential sales.

Another option is PayPal – <http://www.PayPal.com> We have PayPal and their service is very good and easy to use. However, we have found that not many customers use it – most prefer payment by credit card.

Be sure to accept checks. We have customers that prefer to pay by check. So you need include this as a payment option.

5. *Merchant accounts.* You will need a merchant account in order to accept credit cards. The preferred place to get merchant accounts is through your financial institution. However, be aware that traditional banks look at on-line sales as high risk and will have additional requirements for their merchant accounts. Some of these requirements may be unreasonable or unaffordable.

Shop around. There are many third-party companies that provide these services. However, check them out carefully. Compare their rates, their customer support services, their withholding reserves and payment schedules. Also ask whether they allow you to process telephone credit card sales on their system. See how long they have been in business. After all, they will be collecting your money and you want some assurance that you can collect from them.

Find a company that offers a range of credit cards. You will want Visa and MasterCard at the very least, but you should also accept AMEX, Diners and Discover credit cards.

If you are a Canadian company, you may want both American and Canadian dollar merchant accounts. These are available from some companies as well.

We have been using a company called 2Checkout.com from Ohio – <http://www.2Checkout.com> – and have been reasonably satisfied with their services so far. Their service is available to non-US companies. You can sign up on-line and be approved within minutes. Currently all processing is done in \$US dollars, but they are expected to be able to handle multiple currencies shortly. 2CO charges 5.5% of sales but has no fixed or minimum fees. Therefore, if you have no sales, there are no fees to pay!

6. *Payment processing.* If you accept credit card orders, you can process payments manually or have them done in real time. In the manual mode, your shopping cart sends you the order and credit card information (encrypted) via e-mail. You then use a terminal, computer or phone to get approval for the credit card payment. If approved, you ship the order. If you are doing a high volume of orders, manual processing will involve considerable work.

Real-time credit card processing has the shopping cart transfer the order and information to the payment processor which approves or declines the payment in real time. You are notified of approval and can proceed to ship your order.

The advantages of real-time payment processing are that:

- a. It is much less work for you.
- b. Better safety and security for customers as you never have access to their credit card information. Banks prefer real-time processing for this reason.
- c. Customer knows right away if their payment has been approved.

There are some downsides to real-time processing as well:

- a. Computers don't have any common sense – they won't correct any obvious errors. Unless all information is perfect, payment is rejected. We have a much higher rejection rate using real-time processing than when we processed manually.
- b. You need to ship product immediately. Visa requires that products be shipped within 7 days of charging the credit card. With manual processing, you can delay processing the credit card until you are ready to ship.
- c. There are delays in you receiving payments as many processors don't deposit your money on the same day.

Some companies, such as the one we use – 2Checkout.com – offer both merchant accounts and processing services. Two other well known companies that provide this service are Authorize.Net and PlanetPay. As with merchant accounts, carefully evaluate the range of fees, monthly minimums and any hidden charges.

7. *Website store.* As with a “brick and mortar” store, your on-line store must be laid out in a convenient and easy-to-use manner. Because you don’t have a live sales person to answer questions, you must provide all the necessary information a potential customer needs to make a purchase. In addition to the prices for your products, you will need to provide information on guarantees, refunds, return policies, shipping, delivery, privacy and security. Navigation should be easy. The purchasing process must be simple.

8. *Suppliers.* If you don’t make your own products, you will have to develop an arrangement with suppliers. The preferred arrangement is to have a “drop-ship” agreement – you sell, and the supplier ships directly to the customer. This prevents you from having to manage inventories and do all the shipping work.

However, in order to do this, you will need reliable, dependable suppliers. You will also need to implement systems to notify the supplier of the order, and to track when orders are shipped.

9. *Shipping and delivery.* For many on-line stores, this is one of their largest headaches. Here are some of the problems we have encountered:

- a. Supplier never receives or loses the order and it never gets shipped.
- b. Orders take a long time to get to the customers (especially around Christmas time).
- c. Orders get lost in the mail.
- d. Orders are delayed or returned by US border customs.
- e. Courier costs for small value items can exceed the cost of item.
- f. Using regular postal parcel services is the least expensive, but does not offer any method of tracking delivery.
- g. 2Checkout.com audits our delivery to customers; if customers don’t receive their orders, payment to us may be delayed.

Research has shown that customers prefer to have shipping and delivery included in the price of the product. It also makes setting up the shopping cart much easier. However, customers should be willing to pay extra for rush courier service.

10. *Credibility and security.* Anybody can set up an on-line business to take your money. Therefore, it is understandable that many people are still uneasy about doing business on-line. Here are some of the things we have done to reassure customers:

- a. We purchased and display a Thawte Secure Site certificate. This Seal certifies that we are who we say we are. In order to obtain the certificate, we had to send proof of incorporation and other documents.
- b. We have applied for the Better Business Bureau Seal of Reliability. Our site and our company is checked by the BBB before such a Seal is issued and allowed to be displayed on

our website. As a condition of displaying this seal, we have to agree to arbitration if we cannot resolve a problem with a customer.

- c. We mention our membership with the local Chamber of Commerce and display our city business license.
- d. We provide a mailing address and telephone number for people to contact us.
- e. We guarantee all our products and issue a refund immediately if a customer is not satisfied with any of our products for any reason. This reduces the risk to our customers when trying our products.

11. *Customer support.* At one time, I thought having an on-line store meant that all I had to do was check my bank balance at the end of each month. Was I wrong! Having a successful on-line store means being available to respond to customer inquiries and complaints. Even with our small volumes, we get lots of e-mails and telephone calls about our products, lost shipments, etc. And the telephone calls come at all hours! So be prepared to offer a reasonable level of support – otherwise people will not be prepared to do business with you.

12. *Marketing and promotion.* Even if you have the best on-line store with the best systems in place as described above, your business still will be a failure if people don't know about it. The Internet has grown so rapidly and is so huge, that it is difficult to be found. So marketing and promotion of your store, both on-line and through off-line channels is critical. Here are some promotion suggestions:

- a. Most people find sites and products through search engines. Although there are supposedly thousands of search engines out there, only a small handful really count, e.g., Google, MSN, Altavista, Excite, etc. These major search engines account for over 95% of the searches. Getting listed with these is important. Unfortunately, the rules are constantly changing and some search engines are now charging to be listed. Regardless, be sure to submit your site to the major search engines.
- b. There are free classified ads on many sites. Select those that your potential customers may be visiting and post an ad about your site and products.
- c. Mentioning your new store on appropriate discussion forums or user groups is another way to get the word out. However, provide information only, not hard sell, on these forums.
- d. We use our own newsletter – the Dog Business Digest at <http://www.dog-digest.com> - to let our readers know about our Dog-Mall. Newsletters are a great promotional tool, but they are require a lot of work and commitment.
- e. There are thousands of electronic newsletters (e-zines) being published and distributed over the Internet. Most of these accept advertising. Rates are reasonable and very specific target audiences can be reached.
- f. We also do cross-promotion across our various websites. Since we operate 5 different dog-related websites, we have a great opportunity to cross promote.

- g. E-mail notices, perhaps with discount coupons, are a great way to let your past and existing customers know about your new store. Be careful not to spam! Always provide a way for people to get off your mailing list.
- h. Free samples are a good way to get yourself known on the Internet. There are sites that just let their subscriber know of free offers. However, you need to balance the costs of free samples with the actual purchases.
- i. Sending press releases to appropriate publications is another way of letting the world know that you are now open for business. However, unless you have something news worthy, most media will not pick up the story.
- j. Off-line advertising and promotion will depend on what you can afford. However, it can include newspaper, magazine, radio and television advertising. Remember that unless you have a very large advertising budget, these media will tend to do local promotion only. The Internet is global.

If you are planning an on-line store, hopefully you can learn from our experiences. Then, along with some good luck, you will be able to create a successful and profitable Internet business.

2. EHD IN DEER

[Compiled from various postings on this topic on our Discussion Forums located at <http://www.deer-forums.com>]

EHD stands for Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease. It is related to Blue Tongue with the same symptoms. It is an insect-borne infectious disease of some big game species. EHD will kill most of your deer if it gets started. It is most common in the southern United States.

EHD is a viral infection. There are 4 predominant strains of virus, two of EHD and two Bluetongue. These are designated EHD1, EHD2, BTV1 and BTV10. There is no known cross-protection from one virus to another and that includes the same families i.e., overcoming an infection with EHD 1 doesn't cross-protect against EHD 2 or BTV. There have been outbreaks involving other strains but these are the predominant. It was thought for many years that recovery for EHD2 was more common and that EHD1 was the main culprit, but more recent result show that it may be equal. Infections hit the wild whitetail populations with much the same veracity that they do farmed whitetails. Native animals are just as susceptible as farmed deer if the strain is different than what is common to the geographic area.

EHD signs and symptoms

Pyrexia is the first visible sign. As the disease progresses the animal will lose its appetite and wariness. Edema or swelling of the head and neck will occur. The victim becomes dehydrated and weakens with increased respiration, heartbeat, and salivates excessively. As the disease progresses further, ulceration of the dental pad and tongue occurs and will eventually pass blood from both ends. In prolonged cases or those surviving, sloughing of the hooves may occur. In most cases, whitetails die within 48-72 hours after being infected.

Solutions

It appears there is little hope for a cure and curtailment of the disease comes only after a hard freeze, killing the biting insect. Deer surviving the virus build up antibodies, insulating them from another outbreak.

There are some “anti-viral” drugs that might be tried in hemorrhagic disease infections such as interferon, interleukins and other immune stimulants. There is conjecture that some of the same class drugs as those used to combat and shorten human flu like virus infections may have merit in HD infections. Anything that could help limit the weakening of host defense mechanisms (such as parasite prevention, good nutrition and stress minimization) should help reduce impact of outbreaks. Also, limiting the total exposure may have real merit i.e., there is evidence that total viral exposure is very important in mortality and even morbidity of the disease.

It makes little sense that antibiotics would have effect on a viral disease, however, they can't hurt and may reduce deadly secondary infection in recovering animals! Try LA200 as well and probably B vitamins and anti-inflammatory drugs. Fluid therapy with colloidal products would likely be lifesaving if administered at the appropriate time. Ultimately, this is a vascular disease that causes widespread hemorrhage and disseminated intravascular coagulation (DIC). The DIC is most often the cause of death.

Vector control may be the most neglected form of control. It has been determined that salinity of standing puddles may reduce the reproduction rate of the black fly (*culicoides varipennis* is the main culprit, although others may be more involved in BTV) thus reducing the intensity of outbreaks. Remember there may be relationship between total viral particle exposure and death rate. Spraying stock and even standing puddles in the August to November period may have merit.

In the long run, this disease takes no prisoners. It may spare you this year, next year, or even several years in a row. But if you're in black fly country, eventually it's going hit. When it does, it is capable of causing many deaths, no matter what you do.

Ultimately, we need a vaccine. In order to produce a multivalent (multiple viral strain) vaccine, we have to attract the attention of a major biological producer such as Pfizer or Ft Dodge. To give you some understanding, it would likely cost upwards of \$25M to produce a vaccine according to my sources, and that's if it can be produced. We don't want a vaccine that isn't proven. Pharmaceutical companies won't produce vaccines until they are sure they have a market to recover the development and testing costs. Maybe it's time to show them that this market exists.

3. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN FARMED VENISON

[Adapted from an article by Clive Dibben that was published in the BDFFA Deer Farming, No. 71, Winter 2002]

I have never met a farmer who asked for quality assurance or said he liked it – in fact most would probably say they hate assurance and can't see the point in it. So why do it? After all, producers are the ones who pay for it, both through inspection costs and the cost of complying with what are often seen as silly or petty rules. It adds to the workload, whether through day-to-day requirements, or giving up the time for an inspection.

And at the end of it all, what does it do for the producer? There's no guarantee of a premium and it's often questionable how much it really matters to the buyers.

All in all, many farmers reckon that assurance does nothing to help them at all. And as nobody else does it, why should they?

Bureaucracy and paperwork

A common complaint is that assurance programs add to the bureaucracy of farming. Certainly, there is a lot more paperwork involved in farming than there used to be. (And much more in cervid farming than in other livestock sectors). If you are in "food" production, you are already required to follow many laws and regulations.

Bureaucracy comes down to one thing – can you prove you have done what you are supposed to have done? Or, in some case such as medicine withdrawals, can you prove you haven't done things you are not allowed to?

Bureaucracy is usually viewed as being negative. But it does have some positive aspects. For example, it can help protect you and your business by demonstrating that you have complied with all relevant regulations. This can reduce your exposure to risks and potential liability. (This is the "cover your butt" approach already being used by many other sectors of our society).

Record keeping does not have to be unnecessarily difficult or complicated. It can be done using a notebook or a computer, whichever is most appropriate to the size of the enterprise.

There is one sad conclusion to be drawn from all this – whether you choose to become involved in an assurance program or not, bureaucracy on farms is increasing.

No guaranteed premium

Another common complaint is that being on a quality assurance program does not guarantee a premium for your venison products. But then again, there are few guarantees in the farming business.

Being able to differentiate your product is essential to survival unless you can survive as the lowest-cost producer. Assurance is one very good way of differentiating and segmenting markets.

It doesn't help

Another common view held by farmers is that, despite all the fine words, assurance really doesn't help. Supermarkets are so big, they do as they please. If supplies are short they'll buy anything – assured or not.

Other producers believe they are safe because they have a secure local market selling direct to consumers who know them and trust their products. That may be so, but if venison becomes a nameless commodity on supermarket shelves, how long will it be before prices are eroded even for those at the top end of the market? It is a mistake to think any of us operate in isolation to other meat markets and suppliers.

Some farmers believe they are too big to need assurance or too small to be bothered. But on an international market, the biggest will need to be very big to compete on price with those for whom the factors of production may cost a fraction of what it costs us.

On price, smaller producers have no chance of matching bigger producers at home or abroad. So they must sell on other attributes and assurance is the one way they can prove the added benefits that their particular systems deliver.

With the globalization of the food supply, consumers are rightly concerned about the quality and safety of the food they buy and eat. It is inevitable that, in order to compete with other meat sectors, farmed venison will have to adopt and accept a credible quality assurance program. So despite all the hassles, the deer and elk farming industry better get on the assurance wagon.

4. MAKING MONEY FROM REINDEER RAISINS

[By Kyle Wilson, reprinted with some hesitation from the ROBA Review, March/April 2003. ROBA – <http://www.reindeer.ws>]

After one season of keeping the nursery pen clean of reindeer poop, I found myself with a surplus. Running out of places to put it, I started using it in our vegetable garden and on bare spots on the lawn. Our garden had never produced so much, and the bare spots on the lawn were greening nicely.

The local ladies garden club host an annual spring plant sale that over the years has grown to a sizable event with plenty of local news coverage. We thought it would be fun to see if we could sell the extra excreta as plant and garden fertilizer. After a lengthy search to find the people in charge, we were able to contact them. The organizers were happy to have us sign up for the event.

The packaging and processing of the reindeer poop was next on the agenda. Collection was already part of the daily routine to keep the barn and pens clean. Packaging proved not to be much of a problem either. We bought #8 paper bags for the smaller size (5 lbs). For the 25 pound packages, we used empty feedbags turned inside out and tied on top with twine. I was able to make labels easily with my computer. The total cost, including labour, came to less than ten cents a pound.

We were set to take our “Reindeer Raisins” to market! The local TV news decided to run a live feature that day. Unfortunately the camera cable was not long enough to reach our display. However, I did manage to get the president of the garden club to talk about the reindeer manure as one of the new features. The reporter and president talked about it for a little while during the TV segment.

All went well with the plant sale. We managed to sell out at 60 cents per pound. Even after production costs, that is still far more than what goes in the other end. We also gained exposure for our display business.

We are now looking at future retail and wholesale business. If we continue with only the large size bags, we can reduce our expenses by half. However, the smaller bags make very good Christmas gifts. I have increased the price of the smaller packages to \$1 per pound. It is still selling well! I hope to recoup at least part of the feed bill with this venture.

This activity has filled in part of the gap of what can be done with reindeer in the off season. Also, it is important to point out that reindeer raisins are a renewable resource!

[Hmm, I don't see why deer and elk farmers can't do the same thing. As Kyle mentions it does have some publicity and promotional value. It's a great way to keep the kids busy and out of trouble. Ed.]

5. INDUSTRY NEWS

Happy Birthday NADeFA

On March 19, 2003, the North American Deer Farmers Association celebrated its twentieth anniversary at its annual conference held in Jefferson City, Missouri.

NADeFA is dedicated to the promotion of deer farming and ranching as an agricultural pursuit. The Association serves its members through educational programs and publications, and by providing leadership in setting and maintaining quality standards.

Phyllis Menden was hired in September 18, 2001 as Executive Director. She moved the NADeFA office from Maryland to Appleton, Wisconsin. Dave Griffith is the new President and 10 out of the 13 Board members are whitetail producers. NADeFA has about 550 members.

For more information about NADeFA and its programs/services, please contact Phyllis at <mailto:info@nadefa.org> or phone her at 920-734-0934 or visit their website at <http://www.nadefa.org>

Success in West Virginia

After months of hard work, WV Deer Farmers were rewarded with the reversal of the DNR's emergency rule that prohibited intrastate and interstate transport of domestic deer in West Virginia. The rule was overwhelmingly reversed in four separate committees. The senators and delegates ruled that producers can now transport deer within WV and may export deer to other states. Deer may also be imported once a state or federal CWD monitoring policy is in place.

The WV Deer Farming Booth at the Ag-Business Day was impressive with a wealth of information, antler art and large sheds. The venison served at the "Taste of Charleston" was so popular that senators and delegates were taking the leftovers home with them. Governor Wise even sat with the deer farmers.

Iowa Elk Breeders

The Iowa Elk Breeders have a new website located at <http://www.iowaelkbreeders.org>

CANADIAN CERVID COUNCIL

CCC Annual General Meeting

The Canadian Cervid Council held its Annual General Meeting on April 13 2003. The meeting saw the election of a new Executive Committee with Dr. Terry Church as President, Mark Hébert as Past President, Al Morhart as First Vice-President, Lloyd Spencer as Second Vice-President, and Dr. Mike Bringans as Secretary-Treasurer.

Dr. Church thanked the outgoing Board members such as Len Shandruk, Harvey Granatier, John Kerkvliet and Barry Haubrich.

The next face-to-face Board meeting will be October 5 2003 in Ottawa.

Health for Cervids Meeting

The CCC held its semi-annual Health for Cervids Meeting with participation from several provincial veterinarians and officials, CFIA officials and CCC Board members. The meeting allowed a frank and direct discussion on the CWD herd certification program and issues raised by producers. The CCC will be writing a letter to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to argue several changes for the program.

Other issues were also discussed, including a new tuberculosis program that would allow some herds with a large number of slaughter animals to avoid the mandatory three-year testing of the whole herd. The CCC will provide comments on the proposed program.

The next Health for Cervids Meeting will be October 6, 2003 in Ottawa.

CWD update

There have been no new cases of CWD in farmed elk for more than a year. Surveillance and certification programs are underway and the absence of CWD cases in elk for the last 12 months suggests that we have turned an important corner in our fight against this disease.

Eradication of the farm where the first whitetail case was reported last year was completed. Testing has shown that one more case of CWD existed on that premise. Traceouts are still being eradicated and tested. Another farm with whitetail will also be destroyed due to its close relationship to the herd where the diseased whitetail was found.

Velvet antler capsules

More promotion was done for velvet antler capsules in the past few weeks. On top of helping attending a show in Toronto in January, the CCC also supported the presence of one of our distributors at an outdoors show in Calgary recently. These efforts are part of our strategy to promote the product by focusing on people active and involved in outdoor activities.

A report on the market for velvet antler capsules in North America is now available through the CCC office. The report is comprehensive and provides information on the actual market, market prospects, trends and ways to access the market.

Meat promotion

We have seen an important increase in promotional effort for meat recently.

The Ottawa Citizen recently published a very good article on deer and elk meat and, due to a CCC news release for the nutrition month (March) sent to the Canadian Community Newspapers Association. Other publications are also calling to do similar stories.

The Good Food Festival in May (2 to 4), will be the launch of our meat promotion campaign with a strong industry participation in the show and publicity surrounding the show. Furthermore, we will also have information on the meat sent to Chefs throughout the country.

We will need a list of all the Canadian deer and elk meat distributors in the country. This list will be attached to the documents sent to the Chefs.

A report on the US meat market has also been prepared and is also available. It also provides trends, numbers, information, etc.

International velvet promotion

Our recent mission to Asia went well. The Hong Kong part was exciting as we met with new velvet buyers that are keen to come to Canada to purchase velvet this coming season. These buyers should be present at the velvet competitions in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

The Canadian Cervid Council reviewed proposals at our annual general meeting to help facilitate the purchase of our velvet by these new buyers. An announcement will soon be made.

China is an interesting market. However signals regarding regulations are mixed and further review of the process needs to be made.

In Thailand we have met with several distributors of products, pharmaceuticals and natural health. We believe that there is a market in that country. We got interest from several of these companies and are in the process of providing that information to Canadian distributors of velvet antler products. We will also investigate probable cooperation with the Thai Deer Farmers Cooperative.

Dr. Terry Church

Congratulations to Dr. Terry Church who received the annual award of distinction from the Alberta Animal Farm Care Association (AFAC). Dr. Church received this third annual distinction in the category of Innovation. Dr. Church has been President of the Canadian Cervid Council since March of 2001 and commends a great deal of respect both within the industry and outside of the industry.

He spends a lot of time working on behalf of the Council, representing the industry in international conferences, meetings with provincial, territorial and federal government officials, numerous conference calls and review of documents.

6. EVENTS CALENDAR

Here is a list of upcoming events of interest to deer, elk and reindeer farmers.

PENSNSYLVANIA DEER FARMERS' spring meeting will be held on May 10, 2003 at Belleville, PA. Phone 814-797-1230 or visit <http://www.padfa.com> for more information.

REINDEER OWNER'S & BREEDER'S ASSOCIATION 2003 ANNUAL MEETING will be held in Pendleton Oregon USA on June 20-22, 2003. For more information contact Carol at mailto:roba_association@hotmail.com or visit their web site at <http://www.reindeer.ws>

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION (NAEBA) Convention and International Antler Competition will be held July 30 – August 3, 2003 at Kansas City, Missouri USA. Contact the NAEBA office at <mailto:info@naelk.org> or visit <http://www.naelk.org> for more information.

SECOND ANTLER SCIENCE AND PRODUCT TECHNOLOGY SYMPOSIUM will be held in February 25 to 27, 2004 in Queenstown, New Zealand. For more information contact Mark O'Connor at <mailto:mark.oconnor@nzgib.org.nz> or phone +64 4 473 4500.

***** **AD** *****

If you are thinking of starting a deer or elk farm, please visit the Deerfarmer Store located at <http://store.deerfarmer.com> There you will find model business plans that you can use to plan and finance your dream farm.

7. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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8. CONTACT INFORMATION

We are always looking for articles and news about deer and elk farming that we can print in this newsletter. E-mail, fax or mail your ideas and articles to the Editor as per below.

For more general information, comments and suggestions, please contact:

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Deer Farmers' Digest: ISSN 1499 -1347 – print and ISSN 1499-1357 – on-line. All issues of the *Deer Farmers' Digest* (print and electronic) are archived and catalogued at the National Library of Canada. On-line copies can be found at http://collection.nlc.bnc.ca/100/201/300/deer_farmers_digest/.