

Welcome to the AUGUST 2000 edition of the Deer Farmers' Digest, a monthly electronic newsletter published by Deerfarmer.com - The Deer Farmers' Information Network. The Digest is distributed via e-mail to over 1,500 readers world-wide. A copy of ALL issues of this Digest can be found at <http://digest.deerfarmer.com>

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1. HUNTING BEHIND WIRE – A PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Next to abortion, I can't think of any more emotionally-charged topic than hunting farms or hunting behind wire! And yet, if you are a deer or elk farmer, the controversy over hunting preserves could have a profound impact on the future success and viability of your industry.

Along with velvet antler and venison sales, the hunting preserve market represents a significant source of revenue to deer and elk farmers. Also, the return on investment in selling a bull or buck to the hunt market is 10 to 20 times that of selling the same animal to the meat market. Yes, many deer and elk farmers are doing well on sale of breeding animals. However, this market (and prices) will soon collapse (as did the ostrich industry) unless there is a significant demand for the end products such as meat and trophies.

Approximately 26 states and provinces allow captive shooting operations for deer and elk. In Canada, these are Saskatchewan and Quebec. In the United States, Idaho, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado, North and South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, Missouri, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Florida, Wisconsin, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, Tennessee, West Virginia, Pennsylvania, and New York allow some sort of hunting preserves.

In Canada, Alberta and Ontario allow deer and elk farming, but not any hunting farms. The industry associations in both provinces are lobbying the provincial governments for a change in regulations, but the governments do not appear to be very receptive. In Manitoba, where elk

farming is permitted (but not deer), the government has come out and stated that it will NOT allow hunting behind wire. Overall, 20 of the states and provinces where elk farming is legal prohibit captive shooting.

In the USA, the laws and regulations vary significantly from state to state. In some states such as Michigan, the regulations are burdensome and complex. In other states, elk and deer are viewed as private property. They hold the same status as cattle. The owners of trophy bulls and bucks do not have any more restrictions than slaughtering hogs.

In New Zealand, the paid hunting industry has become a significant earner of overseas funds with substantial benefits to deer farming, the guiding and hunting fraternity and the tourism industry. Industry earnings are estimated to be \$NZ10 million annually. In 1997, the New Zealand Association for Game Estates was formed to promote hunting for big game in private reserves. The Association spends considerable time and resources lobbying the government. As well, it has drawn up agreed standards and codes of practice to enhance the image and reputation of the industry.

So let's take a look at some of the arguments for and against hunting preserves:

FOR:

1. *Economic development* – hunting ranches can bring in millions of dollars annually in increased tourism and spin-off benefits. (The Saskatchewan government reports that the 14 game ranches in that province earned \$14 million in revenues in 1999).
2. *Agricultural diversification* – according to IRS figures, more than two-thirds of American farms operate at a loss. Deer and elk farming, along with hunting operations, can help diversify/save the American/Canadian family farm.
3. *Use of marginal land* – hunt farms and ranches can be placed on agricultural land that has little value for other farming activities.
4. *Why not us* – since hunting preserves are legal, viable and profitable operations in other states and provinces, why shouldn't we benefit as well?
5. *Reduces pressures on wildlife* – the availability of hunting preserves can reduce hunting pressures on native species in the wild.
6. *Other wildlife benefits* – the deer and elk farming industry has encouraged and supported much research in the health and wellness of these animals. Some of this knowledge can be used to better manage and look after cervids in the wild.
7. *Convenience* – as in many other aspects of life, busy people are short of time. Corporate types can only get a few days off, and thus want a meaningful hunting experience with guaranteed results, and are willing to pay for it. Also, hunting preserves offer greater flexibility as to when to hunt, compared to very limited public hunting seasons.
8. *Quality* – the quality of hunting at preserves is often greater than public hunting. You have a choice of trophy animals, you have a guide, and are generally very well looked after.

9. *Safety* – because of the limited number of hunters and the controlled environment, the odds of not getting shot at are much greater than on opening hunting day in highly populated areas.
10. *Access* – more and more private lands are posted, and public lands are becoming over-crowded. Paid hunting eliminates the hassle of finding a good place to hunt.
11. *Market for older animals* – hunting ranches are a good place to sell older bucks and bulls, and get a good return on animals that are no longer useful for breeding nor for meat.
12. *Ethics* – shooting a deer or elk behind wire is no different than shooting a deer or elk in the wild, nor much different than shooting a steer for meat.
13. *Support for wildlife* – hunters have contributed more money and support to conservation groups and programs than anyone else.

AGAINST:

1. *Ethics* – it is morally wrong for humans to domesticate a wild animal so it can be shot for fun and profit.
2. *Threatens wild deer and elk* – wild populations of native species will be negatively affected due to possible spread of disease, fencing off of large areas of wildlife habitat, and because it cheapens and commercializes the idea of wildlife.
3. *Reduces support for conservation* – turning native animals into domesticated, privately-owned livestock will reduce public interest and support for wildlife conservation programs.
4. *Access* – if paid hunt farms become prevalent, this will negatively affect the access to “free” or public hunting areas and opportunities.
5. *Violence* – any kind of hunting encourages gun ownership. Guns are used in domestic violence and other crimes.

Hunting in general is declining. In Alberta, the number of hunters between 1980 and 1997 dropped by 42%. In Canada, the number of licensed waterfowl hunters dropped from 525,000 in 1978 to 197,000 in 1999, a drop of 62%. A lot of reasons are given for this decline - increased costs, decreased access to quality hunting areas, aging populations, increased restrictions to owning firearms (Canada), and the urbanization of populations.

So how do you resolve this conflict regarding hunting preserves? It will not be easy – if it was, it would have been resolved a long time ago. Let’s take a look at the causes of this conflict.

In my analysis, this conflict is due to two major factors: a) different goals or values and b) different information.

A values conflict is nearly impossible to resolve because people’s values are so ingrained and such a big part of them. There are three options in dealing with a values conflict:

1. Determine what portion of the population that is opposed to hunting preserves is against due to their values.
2. Accept their values – agree to disagree – as you are unlikely to change them. Don't belittle or try to discredit their values. It will only intensify the conflict and emotions.
3. Supersede this conflict by lobbying the law-makers directly, and getting favourable regulations in place. Then the opposition based on values does not matter anyway.

The other reason for opposition to hunting behind wire is lack of information, or prevalence of misinformation. This conflict is possible to resolve by providing accurate and timely information. Useful strategies for this type of conflict are:

1. Identify the misinformation, or lack of information out there regarding hunting behind wire.
2. Prepare a few key “messages” regarding the benefits of hunting preserves – these should appeal both to emotional and logical people.
3. Assemble facts and figures (from reliable and credible sources) to support your arguments.
4. Get believable, known people to support your position and fight for your cause. Bring in speakers from other provinces or states where hunting ranches are thriving.
5. Many people will be “sitting on the fence” (pardon the pun) regarding this issue. You should provide them with information to win their support at best, or at least keep them neutral.
6. Provide positive stories (see next article) to the media.
7. Have an on-going and regular communications programs to reach media and other key stakeholder groups. Be sure to have a website that provides information supporting your case.
8. Focus your attention on the government officials and elected politicians that can influence legislation. Be sure to provide them with information and arguments they can use with their colleagues.
9. Work on sub-objectives first if necessary. For example, it is much easier to change regulations if deer and elk farming fall under the jurisdiction of the agriculture department rather than wildlife.
10. Get your act together as an industry! Get an association that represents and polices its members, has standards and whose members follow an agreed-upon code of practice. One bad apple will spoil the case for everyone.

Properly run, commercial sport hunting fosters humane and ethical sportsmanship, enhances conservation of both animals and habitat, and provides hunters with a quality and satisfying experience, as well as providing significant economic benefits to the region. However, to keep, or introduce hunting preserves in your state or province, deer and elk farmers will have to work very hard to overcome the opposition.

2. A HUNT OF A LIFETIME FOR SPECIAL YOUTHS

[By Jim Severt, a deer farmer (The Buck Stop) and secretary for Whitetails of Wisconsin (USA). Jim can be reached at buckstop7@aol.com]

For several years now I have had the privilege to offer a Trophy Hunt to a handicapped youth in our area. These youth are handicapped by such debilitating diseases as Down's Syndrome and Multiple Sclerosis. I can't begin to express how personally satisfying this event is to myself and my family.

Let me describe how I've been doing my Handicap Hunts. This may give you some ideas on how you can put one together yourself.

I work with our local Whitetails Unlimited. They take care of the advertising and selecting the winner. Their method of selection has been to use a committee to review essays written by the youth, or with the help of their parents. The committee makes its selection and lets me know who the winner is. In addition, all contestants receive Whitetails Unlimited gifts of shirts, caps, buck knives, etc.

I then contact the winner and his family, and work out a weekend that will work for them. I check if they have any special needs. It may be necessary to make a few adjustments to accommodate the hunter such as a roomy blind rather than a tree stand. After that, it's just waiting for the day of the hunt. For me, it's like waiting for Christmas.

The actual hunt is not much different than those by paying hunters. Knowing this will be the only buck this youth will ever take, I encourage them to wait for a BIG one. The rest of the hunt pretty much takes care of itself. Depending on the youth's disability, it may end up being a TEAM shooting with dad helping hold and sight the gun. Now, that's a memory for both of them!

After the hunt, someone from the local Whitetails Chapter is on hand to help out, get some pictures, and congratulate the hunter. Then it's off to the meat processor. A local firm donates the processing. I am sure you can find someone in your area who will do the same.

It's a hunt of a lifetime and nothing preserves the memory like a beautiful head mount. A local taxidermist donates the head mount to the youth.

As you can see, it is a pretty neat package. Work with your local Whitetails Unlimited chapter or any hunting and sports clubs. There are plenty of groups and individuals anxious to get involved, but it's up to you to take the first step.

As a side benefit, this type of publicity can do nothing but good for your deer farm or shooting preserve. At a time when "high fence hunts" are coming under fire, we owe it to ourselves and the deer and elk farming industry to promote these types of hunts.

I am often told by friends that this Handicap Hunt is a nice thing to do, but isn't it a rather costly donation to give the value of a trophy buck? My response is simple. Every spring when the fawns are born, I'm blessed with a new batch of babies that will be the future of my herd. I have no control over how many fawns I get – God takes care of that. And I believe that He gives me a

least one extra every spring to take care of him for a few years. Then I get the fun of giving it to someone else. You see it wasn't really mine anyway. I was just looking after it!

I encourage all deer farmers who have suitable acreage to open your hearts and farms to less fortunate youth. If the size of your operation isn't adequate for a hunt, consider donating the deer and working together with someone with a larger area.

If you want more information or assistance in setting up similar events in your area, please e-mail me.

3. WHY YOUR ASSOCIATION MUST HAVE A BUSINESS PLAN

Groups of individuals, including deer and elk farmers, often get together and form an association to promote their common interests. More gets accomplished through the pooling of resources, skills and energy than any one individual can ever hope to achieve.

Deer and elk farming organizations are popular. We are in the process of compiling a list of these associations. So far we have identified 64 of them – mostly in Canada and the USA, but in several other countries as well. (We will be posting this list on Deerfarmer.com as soon as we verify we have the correct contact information for each association).

Although associations have many strengths, they often face challenges as well. These include reconciling the different needs of their members, having more to do than people, time and money allow, and setting a direction and priorities for their organization and membership.

One good way to address these challenges is to have a “business plan.” Business plans are a must for private sector organizations. Recently, public sector organizations have also begun to embrace regular on-going business planning. For example, here in Alberta, all provincial government departments, all colleges and universities, and all health authorities are required to prepare and submit annually a three-year business plan. However, not-for-profit and voluntary organizations have been slow to see the value of systematic and regular business planning. This is too bad, because a business plan is a very powerful tool and can help any organization to achieve its goals effectively and efficiently.

So what is a business plan? It is a document that describes what an organization is about, what its goals and priorities are, what activities it will undertake to achieve these goals, and what resources (people, money) it needs to get these things done. Some have compared a business plan to a road map – you need to know where you want to go, the route you will take to get there, and the resources you need for your trip. I also like to think of a business plan as a “to-do” list. It describes all the things you need to do for the benefit of your members and your industry.

So why does your association need a business plan? There are many good reasons why every deer and elk association should have one. These include:

1. It provides a clear written statement of what your association is about, where it is going, and how it plans to get there.

2. The process of developing a business plan is as valuable as the end document. During development of the plan, the board and executive are required to define and agree upon goals, objectives, priorities and strategies. This helps focus the limited resources and energy of the organization on doing the most important things first.

3. A business plan serves as a great to-do list. The association can assign responsibilities and tasks to individuals, committees and/or contractors. As each task gets done, it is checked off.

4. A business plan encourages accountability of the association and its board/executive. It is very easy at the annual general meeting to get a status/progress report of what tasks in the business plan were completed, and which objectives were met. (I believe the major reasons people don't like business plans is because they will be held accountable. If you don't promise to do anything, then it doesn't matter what you do).

5. A business plan is an essential communication tool. It lets existing and potential new members know who you are, what you plan to do to promote the industry, and why they should join. It also lets other stakeholders, such as government departments and other agencies, know what you are doing.

6. An association business plan is a critical document if you are applying for government grants or raising funds. It demonstrates that you have your act together, have a plan to use the funds, and can be held accountable.

7. An association business plan can be of great benefit to your members as well. If they are applying for financing, they should attach a copy of the Association business plan to their own. This is essential to convince lenders and/or investors that deer and elk farming is a viable industry, has a great future and is worth investing in.

8. It enhances the image and credibility of your association by showing others that you have a vision, a plan and are using modern management tools.

So how does your association go about developing a business plan? There are several ways and they all work.

One method (the more expensive one) is to hire a consultant to work with the association to develop and write the plan. The consultant would be responsible for gathering the information, holding workshops with the board/executive/members to determine the goals, strategies and activities, and write the final document.

The other option is to have an individual or group from the organization prepare the plan. (For an example of a well-done business plan, download a copy of the Alberta White-tail and Mule Deer Association plan from their website at <http://www.albertadeer.com/library/reports>). The committee will need to collect the relevant data, identify goals, priorities and strategies, and prepare a draft plan for the board and membership.

I find it very useful to hold a one or two-day retreat to do this type of thing. As well, the draft business plan should be distributed and approved by the membership at your annual general meeting. Once this is done, your association should have less problems with criticism from the members because everyone knows and has agreed upon the goals, priorities and activities.

Most deer and elk associations have access to planning expertise within their membership. Many professionals are involved in the industry. As an association, you should identify and take advantage of the knowledge, expertise and resources of these individuals. It will keep your costs down, and yet result in a quality product.

The business plan should reflect the needs of your membership. Otherwise, you will have difficulty in attracting and keeping your members. The best way to identify the needs of members is through some sort of survey. I recommend that you survey everyone – it gets you more returned questionnaires, and nobody can accuse you of not asking for their opinions and input. Developing a good survey instrument requires a professional. However, we (Deerfarmer.com) mailed a sample survey that we have successfully used to all the associations. Please feel free to modify this questionnaire and use it with your members.

What should be in an association business plan? Whatever is necessary to clearly outline the proposed directions, strategies and activities of your organization. Here are the types of things that I like to include:

1. An overview of the industry (deer or elk) in your jurisdiction. This should include such things as when deer/elk farming began in your state/province/country, how many farmers have how many animals behind wire, relevant legislations/regulations, the size (\$) and growth of the industry, etc. This puts the industry in perspective for the readers, many of whom may not be familiar with deer and elk farming.
2. Something about your association or organization. This can be such information as when and why it was founded, its legal and organizational structure, governance model, how many members it has had over the years of its existence, and its achievements and accomplishments to date.
3. A section called directions and environment. Here it is a good idea to outline the opportunities (and risks) associated with deer and elk farming. Also, if a survey of members was done, this is a good place to describe their needs and priorities.
4. The next section should contain your association's vision, mission statement and goals and objectives. The goals should be for a five-year period, and are the foundation of your business plan. They are what you want to accomplish and how you plan to do it. There are a finite number of goals in this industry. The more common ones that you need to consider are:
 - a) Promoting and advancing the industry in your jurisdiction
 - b) Increasing the number of deer (or elk) farmers
 - c) Expanding the markets for deer, elk and related products
 - d) Providing marketing services for members
 - e) Education and training of members, e.g., workshops
 - f) Increasing awareness and knowledge among consumers
 - g) Supporting research and development
 - h) Lobbying for changes in legislations and regulations
 - i) Providing value and services to members
 - j) Raising funds to support association activities
 - k) Implementing communication programs and strategies

1) Running the association effectively and efficiently

You can not do all of these. Set some priorities and a time table.

5. Once you have your goals, you need to identify the strategies, actions and expected results (outcomes) for each. This breaks the goals down into “doable” activities that will lead to the achievement of that goal. For example, if the goal is to expand the number of deer farmers, the strategy may be to “make potential deer farmers aware of the opportunities” and one action would be to “have an association booth at the local agricultural exhibition or fair.” It is very easy to come up with many actions so that setting priorities and taking on manageable chunks is important.

6. A hot topic in management these days is performance monitoring through use of indicators. Indicators are simply ways of measuring what you have accomplished. For example, the number of new deer/elk farmers (and/or new members in your association) is a measure of the growth in the industry in your jurisdiction. Try and develop some indicators for the goals you want to accomplish.

7. The final section is the resources chapter. In here, there should be a five-year budget of expected revenues and expenses. These are the projected funds that you will have available not only to run your association, but to undertake projects. Obviously, your resources will determine how fast you can implement your business plan. In this section, you should also describe any people resources (executive director, office staff) that are available (or will be hired) to do the things outlined in the plan.

Survey results, articles and other relevant information can be attached in the appendix of the business plan. Your final plan should be about 15 to 25 pages in length.

Once your plan is completed, it should become a working document. I recommend that it become an item for discussion at every board meeting. Use it to identify what needs to be done, who is going to do it (by when), and check it off when done. The plan should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Simply extend the time-frame by one year and have it reviewed at your annual meeting.

It may sound like a lot of work, but believe me, it is well worth it. Your association will be able to get a lot more done with your limited resources. If you are reading this article as a board member or executive, consider putting a business plan on the agenda of your next meeting. If you already have a business plan, congratulations – but have you updated it recently? And are you using it to guide the decision-making and management of your association?

If you are a member of an association, ask to see their business plan. After all, they are supposed to be working for you, and you should be aware of how they plan to protect and promote your interests as a deer or elk farmer. If your association does not have a business plan, encourage them to prepare one for the next annual general meeting, and even offer to help them put one together.

[If your association needs help with their business plan, I know a really good consultant who would be happy to help you out! ;-)]

4. HOW TO MARKET YOUR VENISON

[By Sidney and John Jones of J*ONE*S Ranch Inc, in Texas USA. Excerpts from their presentation at the NADeFA Conference 2000 in Oklahoma City]

Seven years ago, my husband John and I decided to put 400 acres behind high fence and raise fallow deer for venison production. Soon after getting the deer, we realized that there was no regular purchaser for them as venison animals. Consequently we had to start a marketing company to sell venison meat cuts, sausages and dried processed products for restaurants and markets.

We work with several other deer farming operations that provide additional slaughter bucks for use when needed. We strive to maintain a consistent quality and size in the animals taken to slaughter. Chefs need the size of cuts to be fairly consistent so they can calculate their food costs in relation to portion size. We have found that fallow deer weighing between 85-100 lbs HCW work best for our purposes.

When we first started, we made all the contacts and delivered our own product. However, we found that having a company with refrigerated trucks worked better for us since we carry on several other full time businesses as well. We still work with chefs in the area and help them understand the products that will work best for their particular establishments. (We have restaurants that feature everything from venison burgers and pizzas to racks and medallions.)

We also participate in demonstrations at markets and food shows. This is necessary to get the public familiar with the taste of farm raised venison. It is expensive and time consuming, but necessary to help build consumer acceptance for venison.

Marketing venison is not easy, but it can be done. We have found the following to be absolutely necessary when setting up a venison marketing plan.

1. A consistent supply of animals and product availability is critical. Nothing will kill a business faster than being unable to supply the customers you worked so hard to get.
2. A good processor with proper skill, equipment and packaging equipment for restaurant and retail sales is a must.
3. Decide on a legal entity and establish it before you start to do business. Accounting systems and product liability insurance of not less than \$1 million must be in place before any sales are made.
4. Allocate your total costs proportionately over all of your products in order to determine that you have a gross operating profit in each product based on its market value. Do NOT publish a price list until you have determined your costs vs. market value. Do not assume that your competitors are making a profit based on their prices.
5. The meat business is a commodity business. The venison business is a gourmet product business. You must be able to distinguish your venison from other meat products. Otherwise you will have to compete on price – and that won't work!

6. Watch your fixed overhead costs at all times. Even if you have a good gross profit, but don't have sufficient volume, your overhead may cause the business to fail. Have sufficient capital to allow you to develop market volumes that can support your overhead costs.
7. Every person or entity involved in your venison business must be satisfied or your business will eventually fail. Everyone must make a profit – restaurant, retailer, processor, distributor and deer farmer. Even if you perform each function yourself, you must make a profit at each level or you are just subsidizing your end product.
8. Remember that we are not New Zealand. We cannot compare our marketing methods and prices to theirs for many reasons.
9. You must be able to sell all parts of the animal on a consistent basis to avoid inventory build-up. It helps to have a couple of reliable purchases of your products online before you start to produce venison. Product storage and adequate inventory control must be considered.

These are a few of the factors we found necessary in successfully marketing venison. There are others that will be determined by your own vision, location and time commitment.

5. NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

The Alberta Elk Association (AEA) represents the interests of elk farmers in the province of Alberta, Canada. With 423 members and more than 25,000 elk behind wire, AEA is the largest regional association of its kind in North America.

The Alberta Elk Association is involved in a number of activities to protect and promote the elk farming industry. These include:

1. *Disease prevention* – there is still concern about CWD (Chronic Wasting Disease) and P.tenuis. Surveillance will be increased. A protocol is being developed to prevent high risk animals from being imported into the province.

The CFIA (Canadian Food Inspection Agency) has started slaughter of elk from a CWD source herd in Saskatchewan. A blood test is being developed to detect CWD. The AEA hopes that CFIA will draw blood on all the slaughtered animals, use the test and compare the results to post mortems to prove the reliability of the test.

It was confirmed that there was another case of TB in wild elk in Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba, Canada. The authorities may introduce a buffer zone around the park, and increase the number of hunting permits in the buffer zone. This will control the number of elk leaving the park.

2. *Quality assurance* – the AEA is encouraging precautions and procedures to minimize the risk of contaminating antler with pathogens and E.coli bacteria. Producers are being made aware of the importance of cleanliness, the proper handling of raw velvet and the freezing of antler as quickly as possible.

Another concern is with the use of drugs used to promote the growth of antler. The AEA is urging NAEBA (North American Elk Breeders Association) and EBC (Elk Breeders of Canada) to establish policies and rules to ensure that elk antler is produced in a wholesome, natural and humane manner resulting in a drug-free product.

3. Research – the AEA continues to support various research projects. These include research to develop test for P.tenuis and E.cervi; effectiveness of various options in antler removal; effects of EVA (elk velvet antler) on rowers; and effectiveness of EVA in the treatment of arthritis.

The Alberta Elk Association has updated their *Elk Farming Handbook*. It is available for \$50 from the Association office. For more information on the Association or any of their projects, visit the AEA website at <http://www.albertaelk.com> or info@albertaelk.com

[If you would like to profile your deer or elk association in upcoming issues of the Digest, please send a description of your association and your projects to editor@deerfarmer.com]

6. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

THE TEXAS DEER ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONFERENCE will be held on September 8 and 9, 2000 at the Sheraton Four Points Hotel at San Antonio, Texas USA. The theme of the conference is “TDA: Raising the Bar of Excellence.” For more information visit the TDA website at <http://www.texasdeerassociation.com>

WORKSHOPS AT MORGAN’S BIRCHWOOD DEER FARM in Pennsylvania. Artificial insemination of white-tailed deer on Oct. 19, 2000, Chemical immobilization of deer on Oct. 20, 2000 and Advanced Hoofstock Immobilization on Oct. 21, 2000. For more information contact tjdoe@aol.com or safecaptur@aol.com or phone (608) 767-3071.

A TWO-DAY WHITETAIL WORKSHOP will be held on Nov. 11-12, 2000 at Gibbons, Alberta Canada. This workshop is sponsored by Extreme Whitetail Genetics and will be taught by Dr. Harry Jacobson. For more information see <http://deerfarmer.net/Extreme> or e-mail bucks@telusplanet.net or phone (780) 942-4527.

7. ABOUT DEERFARMER.COM

Since we have so many new readers, it may be useful to review who we are, where we came from and where we are going.

Deerfarmer.com went on-line in the fall of 1998 as canvena.com, part of the Western Canadian White-tailed Deer Corporation initiative. Unfortunately, the major driving force behind this venture, Marvin Ference, died in March of 1999. Russell Sawchuk, his partner, renamed the site to Deerfarmer.com – the White-tailed Deer Farmers’ Network. The site was expanded and soon became one of the more popular on-line destinations for deer farmers.

In May of 2000, we changed our logo from “The White-tailed Deer Farmers’ Network” to “Deer Farmers’ Information Network”. We felt this change more accurately reflects what we do. Although white-tailed deer continue to be a primary focus of our websites and services, we also feel that the information applies to other deer farmers as well. Our new slogan is “Deerfarmer.com - A B2B (business to business) Knowledge Management Company Serving the Deer and Elk Industry.”

Currently we offer several information services including deerfarmer.com, deerfarmer.net (websites of deer and elk farmers), and deerforum.com (discussion forums). At deerfarmer.com we offer free classified ads (<http://ads.deerfarmer.com>) a farm and ranch directory, and lots of other information. We provide complete Internet services (hosting, web design and development, e-commerce) and consulting services such as business plans, market research and marketing assistance.

The Deer Farmers’ Digest newsletter (<http://digest.deerfarmer.com>) is currently distributed electronically to about 1,500 readers, most of whom are deer and elk farmers. Of the 1,500, about 75% are in the United States, 20% are in Canada and the remainder are scattered throughout the world. Australia and New Zealand have the most readers, but the Digest is also read in the United Kingdom, Chad, Sweden, Pakistan, the Netherlands, Malaysia, Mexico, Latvia, Hungary, and Argentina. Our articles have been reprinted in other deer and elk publications.

We plan to continuously improve and expand our services to the deer and elk farming industry. This will include new websites and new services. We always welcome your feedback, comments and suggestions as to ways we can support, assist and promote the industry. See contact information below on how to reach us.

8. LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hello!

I love your newsletter!! My husband and I started our deer farm this year, and I am still in the "starving for information" stages!

The June issue came at a perfect time with the article about white-whitetails vs. albinos, as my birthday present was a white-whitetail fawn! If I hadn't read the article, the cream/tan color of this fawn might have concerned me!

The July issue, that I have just found the time to re-read, contained an article about 'deer schooling'- and I thought you might enjoy the idea that I had to help when I first started bottle-feeding some fawns.

Well, prior to separating some of the fawns from the does, they were all in one large pen. I visited them all carrying an insulated cooler/warmer bag (the kind the hospital gives you nowadays when you bring home your newborn)- in the hopes that it would become apparent which of these fawns I would remove from the does. It was tedious, stressful, unsuccessful, and the deer didn't like it either! Finally, our fawn pen was ready and the bottle-babies were chosen.

I still had a hard time getting the little stinkers to take the bottle - I had to follow, corner, and catch each one. Once caught, they would all take the bottle and were almost as relieved as I was!

Anyway, I finally came up with the idea to tie a small bell onto the bucket that I used to carry the bottles into the pen. Before long, the fawns were greeting me at the gate! We have since opened the pens to each other, and though I was afraid that I would have to go hunting for my bottle-feeders, I am met at the gate by most of them, and I can hear the bleats, coming closer, of the ones that don't want to be late for supper!

Thanks again for a great newsletter!
Sincerely, Jane Fend

[We welcome your feedback and letters. Please send them to editor@deerfarmer.com]

9. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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10. CONTACT INFORMATION

We are always looking for articles and news about deer and elk farming that we can print in this newsletter. To suggest or submit articles, mail the editor at editor@deerfarmer.com

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