

Welcome to the DECEMBER 2001 edition of the *Deer Farmers' Digest*, a monthly electronic newsletter published for those interested in raising deer, elk and reindeer. This *Digest* (ISSN 1499-1357) is distributed via e-mail to over 2,600 readers in 27 countries.

A copy of ALL the issues of the *Deer Farmers' Digest* can be found at <http://digest.deerfarmer.com> and in the National Library of Canada at http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/deer_farmers_digest/.

Please forward this copy of the *Deer Farmers' Digest* to your friends and any other people who may be interested in deer, elk or reindeer.

To ADD or REMOVE your name from our mailing list, please see Subscription Services below.

IN THIS ISSUE

1. From the Editor	1
2. How Dirty Dick, the evil-eyed reindeer nearly ruined Christmas	2
3. Reflections of a deer farmer	6
4. Animal rights folks prey upon the gullible	9
5. Canadian Cervid Council annual report	10
6. Events calendar	14
7. Subscription services	15
8. Contact information	16

1. FROM THE EDITOR

This is the 24th issue of the *Deer Farmers' Digest*. We have now been publishing and electronically distributing the *Digest* for two years. Our subscriber list continues to grow (over 2,600 readers in 27 countries). Thousands of others read the *Digest* on the Deerfarmer.com web site. Many of our articles are reprinted in other deer and elk publications and newsletters. Only a handful of people have requested to be removed from our mailing list. I assume, therefore, that this *Digest* continues to be informative and useful.

The year 2001 has been particularly difficult for our industry. With CWD outbreaks and accompanying depopulations, Korea banning imports from North America, some of the lowest prices for breeding stock ever, it is understandable that many producers are discouraged and frustrated. Some farmers are considering getting out of the deer/elk business, and many newcomers are hesitating to get into it.

However, this adversity is not all bad. The shrinkage of traditional markets have made producers and their associations more open, and determined, to develop new markets for their products. I have been involved with several of these projects. Both the elk and deer producers have aggressively

pursued the venison markets. With the establishment of venison co-ops in Alberta (AWAPCO) and Michigan, we are going to see venison sales increase significantly.

I am involved in several initiatives to develop pet nutraceutical markets for elk velvet antler. Although these markets are going to take some time to establish in North America, they will contribute to the strengthening and profitability of the industry. Hopefully some of the research studies under way will provide the scientific evidence we need to support our marketing efforts.

Also, now is a very good time to buy top quality genetics at very affordable prices. It is a great time to enter the deer/elk farming business, and upgrade the quality and productivity of your herd.

My sincere thanks and appreciation to the people who have (directly or indirectly) provided articles and information for the Digest. My thanks to the various deer, elk and reindeer associations that have put me on their mailing lists, and thus have helped me keep informed about what is going on around the world. I thank the other newsletter editors who have shared information with me, and given me permission to reprint their articles. Finally, I would like to thank our readers. I wish all of you Happy Holidays and a healthy and prosperous 2002!

Russell Sawchuk, Editor

2. HOW DIRTY DICK, THE EVIL-EYED REINDEER NEARLY RUINED CHRISTMAS

[By Cindy Schaffer, Diamond Willow Reindeer, Whitecourt, Alberta, Canada]

Once upon a time in a faraway land lived Santa and Mrs. Claus. They led very busy lives, what with tending to the reindeer and making gifts all year to be ready for Christmas. But they had a good life. They lived way up at the North Pole where the air was fresh and the water was clean. Nature was an everyday miracle they were able to experience. They were happy to live such an isolated life.

The only problem they had was with a four year old reindeer named Dick. He was the meanest, dirtiest, most evil-eyed reindeer Santa had ever seen. It was late August when Dick and a female were brought onto Santa's farm. Since this was the time of year the reindeer were in the rut, Santa just figured he was a healthy male doing what comes naturally.

As the months went on, Santa got to know his two new reindeer better all the time. Dick was so dangerous that one day, with his massive antlers, he picked Santa up by his suspenders and dangled him in the air. Before he knew what was happening, he was being flung around and quickly ground into the dirt. Hooves and antlers everywhere, and if it hadn't been for the elves, Santa may have been killed.

The other reindeer was quite a different story. She was tamed right down, eating out of Santa's hand. Mrs. Claus was always asking Santa what he was going to name the other reindeer. Then the elves started in on him too. "What about the other reindeer, Santa? What are you going to call the other reindeer?" Santa finally decided on "Olive the other reindeer" for her. It was a good private joke for his wife and the elves too.

Santa and Mrs. Claus were nearing the end of making toys. It was almost Christmas. Finishing touches to the gifts and some extra food for the reindeer were Santa's priorities. Everything was

going along fine, or so Santa thought. It turned out that Dick and Olive the other reindeer were creating quite a bit of havoc in the deer pen. Dick was jumping from pen to pen, bullying the rest of the herd, and Olive the other reindeer was laughing and calling Rudolph names. When they got to go run and play in the big pen they wouldn't let Rudolph join in any reindeer games.

The elves ran into the house and told Santa all about the problems that the herd was having. Santa quickly grabbed his coat off the rack by the door and raced outside. It was very quiet, and dark! Santa couldn't see anything, so he went back to the house to get a flashlight. As he was rummaging around the porch looking for the flashlight, Mrs. Claus yelled from the workshop, "We still don't have a Christmas tree, Santa." He found the light and headed off into the darkness.

As he walked, he could hear nothing. He thought maybe the elves were over-reacting. He shone the light here and there. He called out to the reindeer but they didn't come. "That's odd," he thought. Then he heard a faint noise, a moan maybe, so he headed in the direction the sound came from. To his horror, he saw the unbelievable! There lay Rudolph, all bloodied and twisted! The way he laid there, it looked as though he was dead! "Oh no!" Santa gasped. He moved closer and knelt down beside him. Santa put his ear by Rudolph's mangled face and could hear him breathing ever so faintly. He scooped him up and placed him on a sled and dragged him back to the house. "Help me get him inside!" Santa cried.

Everyone helped get Rudolph into the house. Mrs. Claus got some warm water and started cleaning his wounds. "Oh my goodness!" she whispered to Santa. "Look at his nose and face! It's as if a wolf got a hold of him!" "No," Rudolph said as he gasped for air, "it was Dick and that other reindeer, Olive, that did this to me. They've been mean to me since they arrived here in August." "You just try and rest. I'll get to the bottom of this," Santa said.

That night after Rudolph finally fell asleep by the fire, Santa and Mrs. Claus were having a brandy, discussing all of the day's events. "There's still work to be done on the toys," Santa whispered softly. "We don't have a tree yet and I don't know that Rudolph is going to be well enough by Christmas Eve to help pull the sleigh!" Mrs. Claus sighed and said, "I suspect the damage is far worse than we even know. Broken ribs and a mangled face are just what we can see on the outside. It's going to take a miracle for him to be well enough by Christmas Eve!"

Rudolph only slept a little that night. Because of the Banomine Mrs. Claus gave him for the pain, he wasn't sure if he was dreaming or hallucinating. He could see a lot of bright lights, dancing around the room. It made him dizzy, so he closed his eyes. Soon he could hear little faint whispers. It sounded like he was surrounded, so he opened his eyes slowly. To his disbelief, there were little angels all around him. They were fluttering about, making little lights flash in their wings. They were the most beautiful things he had ever seen! "Maybe I'm in heaven now," Rudolph thought.

Just then, one of the angels spoke up and told Rudolph they had witnessed his assault that evening and felt very sorry for him. They wanted to know if there was anything they could do for him. "I would sure like to be well enough to fly this Christmas," Rudolph said. "But I know that's asking too much." The angels looked at one another and joined hands.

Soon the whole room was illuminated. It was the most beautiful thing Rudolph had ever seen. His eyes widened when they started fluttering around him in a circle. They were chanting something that he couldn't understand. "Maybe it's another language," he thought, "maybe it's their

language.” Nonetheless, it was as soothing as soft music. They circled him round and round, slowly at first, then faster and faster. Soon he felt that dizzy feeling again and he closed his eyes.

Next thing he knew, it was morning and Santa and Mrs. Claus were standing over him, wide-eyed in disbelief. Rudolph was already starting to heal! His sutures were almost ready to come out. “How can this be?” Mrs. Claus said, obviously bewildered. “All I know,” Santa squealed, “is that you, Rudolph, are going to go down in history!”

As Santa sat down to breakfast with his wife, she asked the dreaded question. “So what do you intend to do with that dirty, evil-eyed reindeer, Santa? Imagine, beating up everything you come into contact with! He’s still in the rut and it’s December. As far as I’m concerned, Dirty Dick should become sausage and pepperoni for all the hungry kids of the world!” “Now, now,” said Santa, “you’re absolutely right about him, but do you honestly want him dead?”

She thought for a moment, and looking over at Rudolph snuggled in his blanket by the fire, and said, “no, I guess you’re right. But he has to be punished. And how can you be sure that this sort of thing won’t happen again?” Santa replied. “I’ll figure something out, but right now I must go tend to the animals and polish up the sleigh. I’ll just make sure Dick is still in the barn so he won’t be able to hurt anything else.”

With that, Santa pulled on his coveralls and headed outside to tend to the animals. When he got out to the corral, he was happy to see that all was well. After last night’s fiasco, he didn’t need any other problems. He fed the reindeer and decided to go check on Dick in the barn. When he got close to the door, he could hear Dick pawing the wooden floor, all the while snorting and spitting. It sounded absolutely nasty inside that building. “What to do?” he thought. Hmmm. He stood on a wooden crate that was used as a salt feeder and peeked in the window. To his dismay, he’d forgotten that he had left the sleigh in the barn a few days earlier after he’d waxed it.

Dick had ruined the sleigh. It was scattered from one end of the barn to the other. Pieces of sleigh here and there - mangled skis twisted up like pretzels. Santa’s big red fancy chair was all ripped apart. Some of that soft velvety material was still dangling from Dick’s antlers. “Oh, how can all of this be happening to me? I’ve never had so many problems! Now what will I do?” Santa sighed, and turned toward the house, wondering all the way how he was going to explain this one to the missus.

As soon as she heard the door slam, Mrs. Claus rushed to the door and asked Santa how everything was outside. Santa just looked at her. He said nothing. She immediately knew something was wrong. “Are the reindeer O.K.?” she asked. Santa nodded, and told her the animals were all fine, but that there was a problem with the sleigh. As he was explaining to her what had gone on with Dick in the barn, she turned pale and had to sit and rest for a moment. As she sat there sipping her water, they discussed their options.

Santa called an emergency meeting with all the elves. He filled them in on the latest tragedy. They assured him that if they worked day and night, they could have a new sleigh built by Christmas Eve. He was ever so grateful for the elves’ loyalty to him.

Just then the doorbell rang. Santa got up from his easy chair to get the door. “Wonder who that could be?” Santa mumbled, as he opened the door. All he could see was a gigantic Christmas tree, maybe the most beautiful one he had ever seen. All of a sudden, out of the branches popped an

angel. "Hi Santa!" the angel beamed. "We heard you needed a tree, so we went out and got this one for you. This is the biggest, most beautiful one we could find!" "Well, Ho! Ho! Ho!" Santa roared. Suddenly Mrs. Claus knew everything was going to be all right. Somehow they would overcome all of the setbacks and Christmas cheer would be spread around the world.

Santa invited the angels inside to warm up and have some eggnog. As they were warming by the fire, the angels circled around Rudolph, who was still resting quietly. "How do you feel?" they asked. "I remember the pain I had last night," he said. "You mean you remember last night?" the angels asked. "Well, sort of," he replied. "I remember the lights and the music, but I think I was dreaming." "Oh no, you weren't!" the angels said. "We heard your cries for help and quickly came to your aid! You might not have lived at all, and certainly you wouldn't have been able to pull Santa's sleigh by Christmas! We combined all of our energies to make you well again. Your face was really damaged, and, in order to fix it completely, we had to give you one of our wing lights. It will shine red from now on to light up the nights for Santa." Wiping a tear from his big brown eye, Rudolph thanked each and every one of them and cuddled down in his blanket and drifted off to sleep.

The angels drank up their eggnog and were about ready to leave when Santa piped up and said, "How would you like to help us decorate our Christmas tree?" "Oh, could we?" the angels exclaimed merrily. They could string the beads of popcorn with the greatest of ease. They fluttered around the tree with their little lights flickering in their wings. It made the tree look so beautiful that Santa asked the angels if they would just stay in the tree and light it up. They happily agreed. It was much more comfortable in the house by the crackling fire than outside in the snow.

The next morning Santa and Mrs. Claus awoke to Rudolph's hooves clicking on the wooden floor in the kitchen. They could hear him rustling around in the beet pulp cookies. "Don't have too many of those, Rudolph," Mrs. Claus yelled from her bed. "You know what kind of tummy ache they give you if you have too many!" Rudolph remembered that time he had too many cookies. He was sick for two whole days. He wouldn't do that again, he thought to himself.

Christmas Eve was the busiest day of the year, so the whole farm was buzzing with activity. The elves were finishing up the sleigh and organizing all of the toys that were to be delivered. Santa was feeding the reindeer and checking them over from top to bottom. Everything needed to be perfect.

Santa wondered what Dick was up to, so he peeked into the barn and saw him laying there. His head was down on the floor between his hooves. If Santa didn't know any better, he'd swear that Dick was remorseful! He tapped on the window and Dick looked up. "I realize that what I've done is wrong. I'm sorry for all the trouble I've caused. I could hear the rest of the herd talking earlier and they said you're going to make sausage and pepperoni outta me! Is this true, Santa? I wasn't in this alone either, you know. Olive was helping me too!"

Santa did feel sorry for him and he had an idea. He quickly went to the house and called out for his wife. "I've got it!" he shouted. "You've got what?" she exclaimed as she came into the kitchen. "I know what to do with Dick and Olive the other reindeer!"

"Jerky comes to mind," she growled. "No, not that at all!" Santa replied. "If we let them go, then maybe they will survive and reproduce and start their own herd! They aren't the flying kind anyhow. The rest of the world should be able to share in the life of a reindeer. Dick is very

aggressive and that would make him a great protector of his herd. Who knows, maybe one day in the future, people will want to farm them like sheep or cattle!”

Mrs. Claus had a good laugh, then said “Yes, just imagine farming a reindeer like a cow or sheep. Now that’s a good one! You’re a dreamer, Santa Claus!”

Christmas Eve went off without a hitch. Everything went smoothly. The new sleigh was better than the old one. The reindeer were all feeling their best. It was especially handy this year with Rudolph’s nose lighting up, for it was an unusually foggy night. “Isn’t it strange,” Santa thought, “how things work out?” If it hadn’t have been for Dick the evil-eyed reindeer, he would not have met the angels who were lighting up his tree and Rudolph wouldn’t have had a nose that lit up the way in the fog. Olive the other reindeer probably wouldn’t have laughed and called Rudolph names in the first place.

Now Santa was going to repay Dick and Olive by setting them free. They could go forth and multiply. Who knew, in a few thousand years, maybe they would become a familiar word in the alternative livestock industry.

[Cindy told us that this is the first article she has ever written. We think she has a great future as an author. We look forward to seeing many more of her stories and articles. Ed.]

3. REFLECTIONS OF A DEER FARMER

[Special to Deerfarmer.com by Jim Stoltz]

Kandahar, the Taliban, al-Qaeda Network, war. We pause this Christmas season, but not for long. We are bound together by a love of nature, its beasts and our place within a system perhaps broader than we can truly imagine.

We are deer farmers! But we are also Americans and Canadians. We bled and spit the dust and stench of September 11 from both sides of our common border. And we cannot conceive of the act. As other towers dropped, steel and flesh became one. And we now reflect. We try to reflect during Christmas at a level that we can understand.

We are just people. Most of us farm whitetail deer! And as farmers we also are teachers, lawyers, doctors, laborers and perhaps candlestick makers. We raise deer for money. But many of us would raise deer if there were not profit to be had at all. Certainly, we would raise less deer, and there would be less of us. But the fascination would remain. And it will remain.

The “why” is not all about money

Some of us do “our thing” because... well, because there are many reasons. Most of all, we enjoy it. There are special times in the deer pasture. In the soon-to-arrive northern winters there are opportunities to do what others would not understand. There are occasions to walk among our animals on those really dreadful days of winter when nature strikes with moist fog and muddy earth that smears beneath our boots. But the animals do not truly seem to mind. They tolerate us. Sometimes – during the worst of times – they have died in our arms, or at least at our feet.

As a deer farmer, I have seen a grown man give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation to a doe who took a dart that found a wrong spot to split the hide. But I’ve also been blessed to spend one June

afternoon observing another doe give birth. She chose a portion of her wooded pasture within six feet of a building she was near daily. She thought she was isolated from others, but did not know about the full-length window. I had the opportunity to literally sit in my mother-in-law's home and watch that entire afternoon as she presented twin fawns to a new world. Certainly it is a renewing process of life, but it also gives meaning to life and is an experience few get to see very close up and personally. Not from an easy chair in a living room anyway!. The experience was magical! It renews the earth and it renewed my soul.

From the first time as a kid that I helped a beloved great-uncle "pull" a Holstein calf in the pasture a mile from the farmhouse, to many opportunities to observe "first arrivals" in the horse barns, the gift of observing life starting again has always renewed me. It is because of those experiences that I know for sure that there is a God! There must be a God!

"HE" sent whitetails

Sometimes the medium is the message. When Marshall McLuhan first wrote of his concept, he may not have known how literally he could be interpreted. Not long ago, my wife suffered a life-threatening health problem. Her body deteriorated for about two years. Several surgeons diagnosed her condition as fatal. But she would not give in! Instead she fought for her life, planned to live, and said they were wrong. But realistically time was running out. One day, before surgery, we cried and together repeated Psalm 23 from memory in the middle of the sleepless night.

When dawn came, I found myself standing in our backyard, and saw something I will never forget. About 100 yards away and at the foot of a huge tree stood two fawns watching me from the high ground, which was very much "open and unfenced." I believe they were waiting for me. They stood motionless, then moved only a few feet before starting a playful dance that could have taken not more than a 10-by-10 foot area. I watched for maybe 20 seconds, but it seemed like a lifetime.

Then I noticed, in the shoulder-high cover near them, a full-grown doe who seemed to be watching both her babies and me. The doe stood motionless. I saw (and I mean I saw) a whimsical, human-like expression on that animal's face. When her message was complete she withdrew into the bushes by backing away, but seemingly never moving her eyes or changing that expression. The two fawns played, stopped without seeing me and withdrew. None of the three were seen here before - or ever since.

I stood and wept quietly, asking the Lord if it was truly "His" message. Yet I knew it was. There were two fawns. Two. My wife experienced a successful medical procedure that saved her life. Several days later I told my recovering wife about another of God's message. He sent a whitetail doe - with two symbolic fawns - to reassure me of His plan. There were two fawns.

Returning to the deer pens

The inevitability of our own mortality on this earth is reason enough to treasure the opportunities we have as deer farmers. Most of us have come to understand that we are like most other people. But we are also profoundly individualistic. We do things that others perhaps would not choose to do. We could raise cattle or sheep, or we could get a job in a factory or clinic or perhaps a bank. Most of us do something else too. But we love the "specialness" of deer farming. Some are superior producers. Others like the sales and marketing aspects.

Many of us do battle with those who would, through regulatory efforts, attempt to limit our precious American freedoms to use our land as we see fit. We cooperate with state and federal legislators across this nation when “anti-game” farming interests act against us. And we learn again the need to be legislatively active, especially when there is no apparent “threat.” We participate because we understand that some would prevent all Americans from eating steak or venison. And should we should temporarily forget this lesson, we will be reminded.

Divide this man in thirds

But as for my own mortality, this deer farmer, now over 60, has made some decisions about his future. When I go, I will not leave the deer pasture. Instead my family knows of my belief in cremation and what my wishes are from there. My remains will be divided in thirds. One portion will remain with the most loving woman I have ever known. And she will do with me as she pleases - for heck, she has for decades anyway! Another equal portion will be scattered on the earth in the same graveyard where my parents rest and we will – because I have purchased the plots there by Mom and Dad – be shaded by the large oak tree that has stood for all of my memory. And that third portion will be given to my deer farming partner and his family, who now own the farm where I pulled that first Holstein calf. And they will deliver me back to the earth, over the acres where Holsteins once walked and where the whitetails have returned, but this time as farmed animals.

My wife and I have one foot in city life and another in the country. She knows the gleam in people’s eyes who are “deer nuts” and she has come to understand it. She knows that when the subject comes up at a business reception or gathering of friends that, “there he goes again!” And much of our time is devoted to “talking deer.” In the process, we’ve helped lots of new deer farmers over the years. Some are city people. Some are country folks who find a new joy in studying, producing and marketing what are one of God’s most intriguing creatures. We – most of us who love to live as near the heart of this industry as possible – are deer farmers. And that’s a special blessing for this holiday season.

Our livestock sales don’t always cover the cost of fence and feed. But most of the time, both now and in the future, I’m guessing the bounty we’ve experienced will continue in some form. For me it’s been a joy of nearly twenty years, and perhaps, it will be another twenty before they put this man – quite literally – out to pasture. May it also be for you and yours!

[Norma & Jim Stoltz own Stoltz Whitetails, Inc., located west of St. Louis, Missouri, USA. They are active members of the North American Deer Farmers Association (NADeFA) where they have served since 1986 in roles including teaching, fund raising and two terms as a director. They may be reached toll free at 1-888-Big Fawn (1-888-244-3296)].

4. ANIMAL RIGHTS FOLKS PREY UPON THE GULLIBLE

[By Connie Woodcock, reprinted with permission from the Toronto Sun, Dec. 3, 2001]

After reading my e-mail this week, I feel the urge to say it one more time. They (the rest of the world) hate us because we can afford to allow wrong-headed, self-indulgent organizations like People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) to dictate society's agenda and inflict their narrow-minded views on the rest of us.

These people (PETA) firmly believe cows are being tortured and nothing will change their minds. Don't mention farmers around PETA – you'll get an earful. I did last week and e-mail flooded in to me and the editor.

“I suggest that you get with the times, instead of keeping reactionary, closed-minded reports on your staff.”

“The Sun would do well to modernize its staff and fire people who spew such hatred for fellow animals.”

One reader accused me of being in favour of cow rape. Another suggested I didn't like pets. (Please don't tell my cats).

A lot of them didn't seem to know there's a difference between dairy cows and beef cattle. Some of them think milk is poison. None had ever been near a barn, as far as I could tell.

Fortunately, there are still lots of people who find these tactics abhorrent. I heard from a broad range of people, mostly American – veterinarians, animal welfare activists (who point out there's a big difference between animal welfare and animal rights); a broadcaster, even the Missouri Federation of Animal Owners.

As one Montana woman wrote to me, “Please remember that the animal rights movement is not about helping animals. It is about using animals to raise money and control and hurt people. Animal rights is a disease of affluence.”

She's right. Only in the rich, spoiled West can we afford to allow these people to dictate what people can grow, wear, eat and drink. In the rest of the world, there are millions who don't have enough of any kind of food. They must think PETA and similar groups are nuts. And who can blame them?

Some animal rights activists are nothing short of terrorists themselves. They cram themselves into fast food restaurants and destroy business – then brag they've gotten people to pay attention to the treatment of beef cattle. They break into and wreck labs that use animals for experiments – even when those experiments mean saving human life.

Hardly anyone meets PETA's standards for animal protection. The World Wildlife Foundation flunks, and the Sierra Club only gets a B-. Even Greenpeace fails to get perfect marks.

According to Daniel Oliver, a research associate with the Capital Research Centre, which studies non-profit organizations in the United States, animal rights groups “routinely use false and

unsubstantiated allegations of animal abuse to raise funds, attract media attention, and bring supporters into the movement.”

As well, they “have imposed significant costs on the individuals, businesses, and concerns they have targeted. Moreover, these costs are born by all society - for example, when raids on research laboratories destroy studies that seek to better understand fatal diseases.” The “reforms” they take credit for are often questionable.

Together, animal rights organizations raise \$100 million a year and have become, ironically, an obstacle to animal welfare, draining donations away from organizations like humane societies.

They prey upon the gullible – and they have found a huge audience ready to believe almost anything. Since this is a democracy, we have to put up with them. But we don’t have to believe them, or support them.

5. CANADIAN CERVID COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT

[By Serge Buy, Executive Director, buy@glen-net.ca. This report represents my opinion on the work being done and what was achieved. The opinions and views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the Canadian Cervid Council.]

A year ago, I became the Executive Director of the Canadian Cervid Council. My predecessor (Ian Thorleifson) left me with a good base to build upon. He and the Board had finalized the Chronic Wasting Disease Control Policy (signed with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency - CFIA) and the Tuberculosis Research Project (a contract which was also signed with the CFIA).

Ian also left me something that was not really measurable in terms of numbers or paperwork, but that nonetheless was priceless - we had a Board of Directors that showed great spirit, was devoted to their work and cooperated very well on all issues. At the same time, Board members represented the interests of their own associations.

Chronic Wasting Disease and public relations

The Chronic Wasting Disease story broke in mid-December with a report in the Globe & Mail. Other newspapers repeated the story, then television stations and finally the international media took some interest in the issue. Korea and then New Zealand proceeded to close their borders to Canadian deer and elk products.

Within Canada, as a report commissioned by the CCC and NAEBA and written by Government Policy Consultants International (GPC) confirmed, the CWD story first started as an issue affecting elk farmers, then became an issue of public health and now became a burden on taxpayers’ funds.

The CCC took the view that a targeted response to some articles’ stories was necessary. We wrote letters to the editor, provided information to provincial associations when they felt it became important and issued press releases.

Our main messages were the following:

- CWD is an important disease, and our producers are intent on eradicating this disease in Canada;

- CWD is under control in Canada; and
- Our products are safe, as ensured by our trace-back measures.

We stuck by these messages and tried to spread them. We have realized that our public relations techniques were certainly not the best and we this is why we retained (with NAEBA funding) GPC to provide us some support in terms of public relations strategy and implementation.

CWD eradication and surveillance

The CCC pressed CFIA to eradicate CWD as quickly as possible in Canada. This meant putting some additional resources in place, and making sure that tests from trace-outs would be available quickly to producers.

To say that we achieved this by ourselves would not be truthful. We cannot thank Dr. George Luterbach and Dr. Brian Peart enough for their hard work and their support of the industry.

Let us not forget the CFIA staff on the ground. These people worked hard and long to eradicate these herds. They sometimes did this to the detriment of their own health.

Finally, out of 6,500 cervids slaughtered and tested, only 190 (3%) were found to be positive. In total, 7,500 farmed cervids were slaughtered, and 38 farms were completely eradicated. I can only imagine the distress of the producers who lost all their animals in this process. We should spare a special thought for these people and their families.

Now that it seems that this CWD outbreak has been eradicated, we must turn towards surveillance. A crisis is passing (CWD). However we must not forget the effects of CWD, and should be diligent in making sure that surveillance programs are in place. This will ensure that if the disease is found again in farmed cervids in Canada, it will be found quickly and effectively eradicated.

This is why the CCC is involved in negotiations with the CFIA, as well as the provincial and now territorial governments to establish a satisfactory surveillance program that will be recognized by our trading partners.

Chronic Wasting Disease was found in farmed elk only in Canada; however, the perception of the public touched all sectors of the cervid industry. I heard from whitetail producers frustrated to hear that CWD was found in deer in Canada. I also heard from red deer producers who have had to face clients asking questions about CWD. We should not forget this too quickly. CWD is a cervid issue, and should be dealt as such. All efforts made by the CCC in this regard were undertaken for the benefit of all cervids in Canada.

On-farm food safety and quality assurance

A Committee of the Canadian Cervid Council has been formed and has spent hours developing an On-Farm Food Safety Program for the Cervid Industry, combined with a Quality Assurance Program.

This is to make sure that the cervid industry in Canada is first in terms of food safety and quality assurance. QA will become a marketing tool.

This program is designed for both velvet antler production and meat production. It will be a most important tool for all breeds of cervids. I am pleased to report that on our Committee we have representative from elk, red deer, whitetail and (hopefully soon) fallow deer producers. We should thank the Alberta and Saskatchewan governments for providing resources to support our efforts on food safety. Both Mr. Jayson Galbraith (Alberta) and Mr. Ray Nixdorf (Saskatchewan) are active participants at our meetings.

Lobbying

The Canadian Cervid Council increased its lobbying efforts this year with two Health for Cervids Meetings (in Victoria and Ottawa), a reception in Ottawa for Members of Parliament, briefings of the different political parties and a presentation to the House of Commons Permanent Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

This has resulted in increased access to government support and programs for our industry.

Delegation to Korea and New Zealand

The CCC is going to Korea and New Zealand. The first stop will deal more with velvet antler and the ban imposed by Korea on Canadian velvet. The CCC will not be able to announce that Korea will open the doors as a result of this trip. However, the CCC will start forging long-term relationships with Korean associations and buyers to start lobbying within Korea for the reopening of the borders. This would certainly be welcomed by both elk and red deer producers.

The New Zealand portion of the trip will be partly to discuss the issues of cheap New Zealand venison arriving in Canada and driving the price down. It will also serve to establish a working relationship with the New Zealand industry. Again the results of these discussions will be useful for all breeds of cervids producing meat.

Public relations cervid hunt parks

Hunt parks are allowed in a number of provinces for boar and other farmed animals. The “Bambi” syndrome (well-illustrated by the title of the recent National Post article: “Bambi in a Barrel”), seems to hinder the process of changing regulations in order to allow cervid hunt parks in different provinces.

We must change that. The CCC has been involved in giving advice to different proponents of these parks in several provinces (Alberta, Ontario and Québec).

The work done by the public relations firm hired by the CCC will help us in the future regarding this issue.

Velvet identification and livestock identification

The CCC has organized a velvet identification system to allow for a trace-back system for velvet, as requested by our trading partners. Now CFIA has made it mandatory for velvet to be exported to be part of a velvet identification system. CFIA has recognized the CCC system and the Manitoba, Saskatchewan, the Alberta and Yukon programs for velvet identification.

We have also started to discuss a national livestock identification system (to replace CFIA’s Health of Animals tags). This will not be a duplication, but rather a useful tool for the cervid industry. It is difficult to think of trace-back, quality assurance and registries without an efficient livestock identification system.

Reopening of US borders for hard-antlered cervids

In the fall of last year, US Fish & Wildlife Service closed the US border to hard-antlered cervids from Canada. The Cervid Council was successful in getting them reopened.

We would like to especially thank Mr. John Masswoughl of the Canadian Embassy in Washington for the work he did on our behalf for this issue. Without his persistence, the borders might still be closed.

Funding

The Canadian Cervid Council was successful in accessing several funding programs.

We should thank Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) for their funding of our delegation to Korea and New Zealand, a brochure for that mission and a cervid industry profile. The Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, the Honourable Lyle Vanclief, supported our Council through this funding process.

We should not forget to thank Mr. Andy Dagenais, Livestock Specialist with AAFC, for his support and advice.

The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs also funded CCC's activities through their support of the velvet tagging and the CWD surveillance programs. This would not have been possible without Mr. Brian Tapscott, Livestock Specialist with OMAFRA, Sally Mabon (OMAFRA Healthy Future Program Specialist); and Dr. Bob Wright, Veterinarian with OMAFRA.

Québec is also participating to fund this velvet identification system through funding of CCC's program. Claude Fournier (MAPAQ) has been very helpful to provide us with guidance.

These programs have made CCC's budget bigger than it has ever been, and therefore a nightmare to manage. The job of Secretary-Treasurer of the CCC used to be relatively easy, now our actual Secretary-Treasurer (Mr. Dennis Schmidt) sometimes wonders if we did not dump another full-time job upon him!

Relations with NAEBA

I am pleased with the support we are receiving from the North American Elk Breeders Association. Their funding of the public relations study undertaken by GPC at our request is certainly appreciated.

The CCC has organized a Committee to discuss the issue of the TB quarantine affecting imports of US cervids to Canada. Discussions and negotiations with CFIA should bring a satisfactory agreement very soon.

Finally, we should thank Lisa Villela for her efforts at cooperation with the Canadian industry. While the NAEBA office was closed in Regina, we have to understand that the financial state of our industry is forcing us to make some difficult choices and to not blame NAEBA for that decision.

Other

The CCC has been involved in other issues (TB Research Project, Support Programs for Cervid Farmers, etc.). Most were met with some success, or at least resolution of the issues has progressed.

There are presently discussions on a rationalization of the efforts of the industry in terms of who does what and where at the national level for the overall cervid industry.

Most importantly

It should be remembered that this Board of Directors has been extremely active. Without their participation, it would have been very difficult to achieve any success. I would like to recognize especially the participation of Dr. Terry Church, who as the CCC President has worked closely with me on all of the above-mentioned issues. I am on the phone regularly with him and he has been kind enough to spend long periods of time for discussions to provide me with the benefit of his experience. I know he is well-respected by this Board and by the government. His hard work has earned him the respect of this industry.

Dennis Schmidt, Denise Smith, Marc Hébert and Jason Marsland also must be thanked for their hard work, advice and also long periods of time spent on the phone discussing important issues.

Len Shandruk, Jacques St. Jacques, Raymond Desjardins, Edwin Harms, Lloyd Spencer, Al Morhart, Lloyd Lee and Vibeke Coates should also be recognized for their work on Committees or directly on the CCC.

Many others, who are not Board Members, but sit on our committees are making a personal commitment to the industry. This is wonderful.

6. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

WHITETAILS OF WISCONSIN meeting will be held on Jan 5, 2002 at the Holiday Inn, Stevens Point, WI. For more information see <http://www.whitetailsofwisconsin.com> or e-mail info@whitetailsofwisconsin.com

MINNESOTA ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION Annual Conference will be held on Jan. 12, 2002 at the Holiday Inn and Conference Center, Willmar, MN USA. For more information contact Brenda at phone 320-543-3664 or bhartkopf@cmgate.com

ALBERTA ELK ASSOCIATION Annual Conference will be held from Jan. 24 to 26, 2002 at the Capri Inn in Red Deer, Alberta Canada. For more information, contact the AEA office at info@albertaelk.com or phone 1-780-980-7582.

WORLD DEER CONGRESS III and NADEFA 2002 annual conference will be held on Feb. 20 to 23, 2002 in Austin Texas USA. For more information, call 301-459-7708 or info@nadefa.org or visit their website at <http://www.nadefa.org>

TRANQUILIZATION AND REMOTE ANESTHESIA OF DEER AND ELK workshop will be offered by Dr. Keith Amass and Dr. Mark Drew for Safe-Capture International on Feb. 23-24, 2002

at the Doubletree Hotel, in Austin Texas (a post-conference workshop held in conjunction with the World Deer Congress). For more information and/or to register contact Safe-Capture International at safecaptur@aol.com or phone 1-608-767-3071, fax: 1-608-767-3071 or visit their website at <http://www.safecapture.com>

REINDEER OWNER'S AND BREEDER'S ASSOCIATION Annual Meeting and Conference will be held on Feb. 22-24, 2002 at Frankenmuth, MI USA. For more information phone Gordon at 616-772-2584 or gpoest@novagate.com

SASKATCHEWAN WHITE TAIL AND MULE DEER PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION will hold their 2002 annual convention on March 15-17, 2002 at the Delta Hotel in Regina. For more information contact Lisa at info@saskdeer.com

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION 12th Annual Convention will be held on March 21-24, 2002 at the Riviera, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. For more information contact info@naelk.org or phone 816-431-3605.

ALBERTA WHITETAIL AND MULE DEER ASSOCIATION Annual Convention will be held at the Capri (Red Deer, Alberta, Canada) April 5 to 7, 2001. For more information contact AWMDA at info@albertadeer.com or visit their web site at <http://www.albertadeer.com>

WHITETAILS OF WISCONSIN ANNUAL MEETING will be held on April 6, 2002 at the Stoney Creek Inn, Wausau, WI. For more information see <http://www.whitetailsofwisconsin.com> or e-mail info@whitetailsofwisconsin.com

Many more events, including deer/elk sales, trade shows and workshops, are listed in the Calendar section of [Deerfarmer.com](http://events.deerfarmer.com) at <http://events.deerfarmer.com>. Take advantage of this free service to list your upcoming events.

7. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

We respect your right to privacy. If you wish to be removed from our mailing list at any time, simply send an e-mail to editor@deerfarmer.com with REMOVE in the Subject line.

If you want your name ADDED to our mailing list, please sign our Guest Book form at <http://www.deerfarmer.com/forms/guest.htm>

The *Digest* is also available in a print format (ISSN 1499-1349). A \$3 per issue (\$36 per year) fee applies to cover postage, paper and handling costs.

As per our Privacy Policy, your name, e-mail address and any other information you provide us will only be used by [Deerfarmer.com](http://www.deerfarmer.com). This information will not be shared with any third party unless we get your permission first!

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:

Russell Sawchuk
Editor and Webmaster
The *Deer Farmers' Digest* and Deerfarmer.com
Box 8220, Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6H 4P1

E-mail: editor@deerfarmer.com
Phone: 1-780-430-8245 or 1-800-267-9997 (Toll-free in USA & Canada)
Fax: 1-780-434-0412 or 1-800-267-9993 (Toll-free in USA & Canada)
Webs: <http://www.deerfarmer.com> <http://www.deerfarmer.net>
<http://www.deerforum.com> and <http://www.globaldeer.com>

DISCLAIMER: This newsletter is for general information only. It should not be relied upon to make business or farming decisions without first obtaining professional advice. Accordingly, we cannot accept liability for loss or damage arising directly or indirectly from any advice, opinion, representation or omission, whether negligent or otherwise, contained in this newsletter.

©2001 Deerfarmer.com. The *Deer Farmers' Digest* may only be redistributed in its unedited form. Permission from the editor must be obtained to reprint or cite the information contained within this newsletter. All articles are written by Russell Sawchuk (Editor) unless otherwise noted. Deerfarmer.com is a division of Steppingstones Partnership, Inc. (<http://www.steppingstones.ca>).

ISSN 1499-1349 *Deer Farmers' Digest* (Print). 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/.