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**** ADVERTISEMENT ****

Velvet Antler – A Gift From Nature, 2nd Edition by Cindy Ewashkiw, D.T. and Marion Allen, PhD., R.N. is now available. This 28-page booklet is perfect to give to potential customers and distributors. Only \$3.00 USD with quantity discounts available. To order, phone 780-789-2331 or *mailto:strawberrycreek@myexcel.ca*

1. ELK VELVET HELPS DOGS WITH ARTHRITIS

[By Russell Sawchuk, President of Steppingstones Partnership, Inc.]

Dogs suffering from arthritis and other joint-problems show significant improvement after taking elk velvet antler (EVA).

This was the major finding of a sixteen-month-long research project to determine the best strategies for the marketing and promotion of dog health products to North American consumers. The study was done by Qeva Corp., a Calgary-based EVA marketing company, Steppingstones Partnership, Inc. (operator of Deerfarmer.com and Arthritis-in-dogs.com websites) and the Canadian Cervid Council, who provided financial support for the initiative.

Free samples of Qeva Joint Mobility for Dogs, an elk velvet antler- based product, were made available to dog owners through the arthritis-in-dogs.com website. In return for their free sample, dog owners provided data about their dogs, the results of using EVA and their buying preferences.

The project ran from the beginning of September 2001 to the end of December 2002. During that period of time, we received over 3,700 requests for free samples from dog owners in more than a dozen countries. Most of the requests came from the United States (92%) and Canada (5%). In the United States, dog owners from Florida, California, Texas and Pennsylvania were at the top of the list. Some 1,272 free samples were sent out. Two follow-up studies (post- treatment) on the effectiveness of the product were carried out – a pilot with 112 respondents and a second major evaluation with 159 respondents.

The number of requests for free samples from the United States was correlated with the US 2000 census data for each state. This analysis found very high correlations (~.90) between requests (interpreted as interest in dog health products) and number of households, number of families, number of single-dwelling homes, number of employed and state population. There was NO relationship between “interest” and median household or family income. The number of households and families in a region are the best predictors of interest in dog health products.

We used the US 2000 census data for each state to identify the areas of greatest geographical interest in dog health products. The analysis showed that 20% of the requests came from the Southeast, even though the region has 17% of the households. The Mid-Atlantic states had 20% of the requests but 17.5% of the households. In contrast, the Northeast states and the Western states were under-represented in the number of requests for free samples relative to their households and families. The Southeast and Mid-Atlantic states appear to represent the best markets for EVA pet products.

Friends or relatives were the leading source of information about the Qeva free offer initiative. Various components of the Internet – websites, search engines and e-mail –were also mentioned as a major source. Demand for free samples really skyrocketed when a couple of “freebie” websites such as ArcaMax (2 million subscribers) and Freaky Freddie's (200,000 readers) made their members aware of our offer. A small group of dog owners were informed about the free offers by their veterinarians.

Data from dog owners requesting free samples provided a profile of arthritic dogs in need of treatment. The largest proportion of the dogs were mixed breed, although Labradors, German Shepherds, Rottweilers, Greyhounds, Golden Retrievers, Cocker Spaniels, Chihuahuas and

Dachshunds were common. We believe this represents the distribution of dog ownership rather than identifying the breeds more prone to joint mobility problems.

The dogs in need of treatment for arthritis were most likely to be over 9 years of age. The largest weight category was 61 to 80 lbs, although there were dogs from 2 lbs to over 200 lbs. Some 59% of the 3,585 dogs in the pre-treatment survey had been diagnosed as having arthritis by a veterinarian.

Twelve measures (rating scales) were used to obtain data about the dog's arthritis and joint mobility problems. These were: levels of pain, energy and endurance; ability to get up after a long rest; ability to sit down; ability to climb into a car or over objects; ability to go up and down stairs; problems with walking for 15 minutes; gait after walking for 15 minutes; ability to run for ten minutes; and gait after running for ten minutes. These measures were taken before and after treatment with Qeva EVA.

The first pilot evaluation of 112 dogs that had tried EVA found that there was some observed improvements in 46% of the cases and no change in 42% of the dogs. Most changes were noticed within 10 days (68%). Over 38% of the dogs in the pilot were on other medications, mostly glucosamine.

The pre/post treatment rating scores were analyzed for the dogs that were on EVA only versus those on other medications as well. We found statistically significant improvements in the dogs ONLY on EVA, but NO differences in the group of dogs on other medications. There were no statistical differences between the pre scores of these groups of dogs. This suggests that EVA does not work when used with other medications such as glucosamine (and vice versa).

Of the dog owners who tried Qeva in the pilot evaluation, 22% said they would continue using the product, 35% were not sure and 37% said no. The reasons given for NOT continuing to use Qeva were that it did not work, it was too expensive and other treatments work as well.

Using the findings from the pilot evaluation, the post-treatment questionnaire was improved and expanded. A reminder notice was sent out and another 159 dog owners completed the post-treatment survey.

In this study, there was an observed improvement after taking EVA in 70% of the dogs and no change in 21% of the cases. Using pre-post treatment score changes, the greatest improvements were seen in energy, endurance and reduction of pain. Even in the dogs where the owners did not notice any changes, pre-post scores were statistically higher in energy and endurance levels.

In 72% of the cases, improvements were noticed within ten days. In this group of dogs, only 22% were on other medications with only four dogs on glucosamine. Based on the findings in the pilot, a lower use of other medications probably explains the higher success rate experienced in this study.

In the main evaluation study, some 29% of the dog owners said they will continue to use Qeva, while 35% were unsure and 32% said no. The main reasons for NOT continuing to use were that Qeva was too expensive, it did not work and other reasons. When asked about mode of administration, most respondents did not have an opinion. Of those who did, they said the present form of capsules is fine.

When asked where they like to buy their dog health products, 37% said mass retailers, 29% said local pet stores, 21% said the Internet and 4% said at their vet's office.

Dog owners said their main source of information about dog health products was their vet (68%), the Internet (60%) and other dog owners (30%). Sources low on the list included dog magazines (17%), sales people at the pet store (11%), sales people at retail stores (4%) and dog clubs (2%). These findings have significant implications for marketing and promotion of pet health products.

An analysis of the on-line sales of Qeva during the project period was done. These findings show that sales are slowly increasing, but are not yet very significant. Some 94% of sales were made to the United States mostly to Florida, California, Massachusetts, Ohio, Pennsylvania and North Carolina. Most orders to date are for two bottles (usually one-month's supply). Only 25% of the customers have made more than one purchase. The sales data generally confirm the conclusions and predictions made as a result of the research study.

A number of recommendations were made based on the findings from this project. These include disseminating the results of this research as broadly as possible – to dog owners, to vets and to retailers. The Internet is a significant source of information about dog health products. Therefore, Qeva and Arthritis-in-dogs.com should continue their efforts to use the Internet to increase awareness and factual information about these natural products for arthritis.

It is important to get information about EVA products to the veterinarians. Many have shown interest and support for natural products. They are the key "information gatekeepers" when it comes to dog health products.

Further research needs to be undertaken immediately to find out more about the possible interference between elk velvet antler and other medications such as glucosamine. In the meantime, vets and consumers should be made aware of these possible conflicts.

Non-Internet marketing and promotion activities should focus on the United States, especially on Florida, California, Pennsylvania and Ohio. Dog owners in these states have shown interest, and placed orders. Forget about Canada – 6% of sales is not worth the effort!

Getting mass retailers such as Wal-Mart and the pet stores to carry EVA products is critical to growing sales of velvet antler products. Only 20% of our respondents said they prefer buying on-line.

[If you want a copy of the entire 100-page technical report on this project, please contact Russell Sawchuk at 800-267-9997 or at <mailto:info@steppingstones.ca>]

2. PROUD TO BE A DEER FARMER

[By Tara-Lynn Barks, a deer farmer in Saskatchewan Canada and co-editor of Deer Tracking magazine – <http://www.deertracking.com>]

I am a little disheartened with the many negative comments directed at my industry of late. Yes, we have been faced with many problems lately in the game farm industry. However, our problems are no more or less than those of any other livestock/grain farming sector.

Every livestock farmer deals with the threat of herd disease and sickness. Grain farmers handle new strains of hard-to-kill weeds and low grain prices as a regular part of farming life. But neither grain farmers nor traditional livestock farmers are misrepresented as badly or their problems overemphasized as much as those in our industry. Why is that? I would like to challenge those in the media industry to rise above the perceived negatives and begin representing the our industry in a positive, accurate fashion.

Why did we become deer farmers?

We became deer farmers because of our interest and obvious appreciation of the animal. For us, whitetail deer are an enigma and an enjoyment to farm. They are low maintenance, and require less labour and feed than the traditional cattle herd.

Pastures can normally carry 6-8 mature does and their offspring for each beef cow/calf pair. They are browsers, not grazers, and their feed consumption decreases in winter months. They are hardy, intelligent and adaptable to our weather. They are highly productive and generally have twins and often triplets, making deer a good investment with an above-average rate of return. This investment can be maintained on less acreage and poor quality land unsuitable for other types of farming.

Money can be made in this industry. Good! Finally, a section of agriculture that can be self-sustaining, that may see some profit in a well-run farming operation. Is there money to be made in cattle? You bet, in a well-run farming operation. In a province such as Saskatchewan, which is facing farm crisis, the economic benefits of diversification are a necessary and valuable source of salvation for the family farm.

Whether farmers raise cattle, pigs, goats, chickens, deer or elk, if the farming operation is ethically run and legal, it is all agriculture. I am proud to be a deer farmer!

Trophy ranching - positive for our industry

Trophy ranching serves a great purpose in our fine province. Not only does it bring new money to Saskatchewan, but it also provides a final destination for those animals that have outlived their breeding potential. Slaughter on a harvest preserve or trophy ranch is a viable alternative to the traditional slaughterhouse idea. It is a humane and efficient method of slaughtering of our commercially-raised, domestic livestock.

On-farm slaughter occurs regularly in rural Saskatchewan. Who hasn't helped a neighbour kill and eviscerate chickens? Hogs are often killed on-farm and added to the freezer in the form of chops or sausage. Goats are a sacred meat in some cultures and are often killed on-farm in a special ceremony with prayers said over the carcass. Consider the usefulness of a cow that has passed her productive prime. Has that usefulness been outlived? No. She becomes beef in that farmer's freezer. Where

does the slaughter and processing occur? Usually on-farm. It is convenient and humane, and eliminates the long trip to a slaughter plant.

The deer that we raise are sheltered, well-fed, and given veterinary care. Then, having lived a long and productive life, they are killed by hunters willing to pay the price for the meat, antlers and experience. Why not? Many creative farmers have incorporated the value-added benefits of pheasants, bison or wild boar to their agricultural game plan. As with all livestock, the purpose is to strive for quality production, which ensures a quality end-market slaughter.

In today's agriculture crisis, I applaud those who can develop new and creative diversification and investment value in their agricultural enterprise. Some might call it the ultimate evolution of the hunter/gatherer/farmer in the tradition of the North American native peoples. Although the media and opposing forces would have the public believe this is a new and unacceptable venture, it truly is a generations-old tradition - we kill and utilize what we have produced. Call it hunting, harvesting or slaughter... I call it academic agriculture. And I am proud to be a deer farmer!

Environmentally sustainable rural development

The raising of deer is not a new venture. Deer farms have existed in China since about 2000 B.C. Europe also has a long history of captive deer farming. Even QDM (Quality Deer Management), largely practiced in the US, is a form of raising quality deer - without the fences.

From an agricultural perspective, deer are some of the most "environmentally friendly" animals to raise. They do not contaminate the groundwater, they do not contaminate air quality, they don't require clear cutting or deforestation of farmland, and they don't require chemical sprays to encourage a higher than natural yield.

Studies have actually been done on alfalfa hay pastures where the introduction of deer to the hay pasture has increased the quality and growth of hay over that of vacant alfalfa plots. As browsers, unlike grazers, quality growth in deer pastures lasts longer, is not chewed to the ground and allows for continual fresh growth. Since deer naturally eat less than cattle and forage in a manner less devastating to the pasture, deer farming is up to three times as profitable as traditional livestock.

Virtually the entire animal has real value. Unlike traditional livestock raised specifically for the meat markets, deer have various uses. The creative deer farmer can find entrepreneurial merit in developing a variety of markets which may include the hide, urine, hooves, antler, pizzels, fly fishing products, and taxidermy as well as meat and more!

And then what about marketing the "experience"? That experience could mean a variety of things to different people. Perhaps it is an educational/interest tour, or a photo shoot, or a hunt. We truly believe that giving those impromptu interest tours is one of the best parts of deer farming. Few people have the chance for an up-close-and-personal look at a deer. The experience can be wrapped up in one word - tourism.

We cannot discount the value of a venison market as well. Venison has been the meat of choice for the gentry in Europe for centuries. Now venison is often the meat of choice for the health-conscious. It now graces the menu plans for such well-known health movements as Weight Watchers. Venison is low in cholesterol, fat and calories and high in protein. Many restaurants, even locally, are beginning to offer venison, bison and other specialty livestock meats on their menus. Even discounting our local markets, we in North America have not even begun to supply the demand for

export of venison. According to the North American Deer Farmer's Association, "North American deer farms currently supply only one-quarter of today's burgeoning North American venison market." Indeed, it has a very bright future. And I am proud to be a deer farmer!

A well-regulated industry

The deer farming industry in Saskatchewan is governed by the joint efforts of Saskatchewan Food and Agriculture (SAF) and Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). SERM plays a small part in the equation as well regarding the movement of animals.

So we answer not only provincially but federally as well, and we adhere to The Domestic Game Farm Animal Regulations Chapter A-20.2 Reg 10 of the Animal Products Act. These regulations outline requirements for enclosure, identification, import/export, transport, processing and penalties for non-adherence. For instance, as deer farmers, we are required to purchase a game farm license, TB test our entire herd every 3 years, have 2 unique forms of identification on every animal (ear-tags generally), apply for and file transport forms every time an animal moves on/off farm, and send in a yearly inventory of births and deaths for our stock.

The latest addition to the regulations is the Mandatory CWD Surveillance program. This program requires that we send in the heads of all deceased deer within 15 days for diagnostics testing, and do a yearly head count (bring all animals through for an approved inspector to record all ear tags).

We are also required to follow humane animal management as outlined in the Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Cervids (CARC). I would hazard to guess that the traditional sheep, cattle, or hog farmer would be shocked and appalled if this level of regulation were to be placed on their livestock industry.

Am I saying this level of regulation is bad? Well, it certainly is stringent...often too stringent. And that is where I believe we need to work with the regulating bodies to help improve and make workable this system of regulation. We CAN be thankful that here in Saskatchewan, because of regulations, we are largely supported by Sask Ag. who views our industry as a viable diversification model in the agricultural livestock industry. There are many states and provinces that do not have government support - generally the ones who disallow deer farming/trophy ranches. So, I can be proud to be a deer farmer!

Media hype and misinformation

We cannot begin to count the negative articles and publicity our industry has received of late. Why is that? Again it is generally a ploy by the media to sell papers, market radio shows, and attract viewers. They thrive on the emotional rhetoric that will attract the uninformed public.

Take CWD as one example. With all the publicity CWD has received, you would think it was Foot and Mouth or worse. Typically these types of headlines are reserved for diseases that have great consequence for human transmissibility. For example, by mid September 2002, 3 people have died due to West Nile Virus in Canada and another 17 people were being tested for the virus (a virus transmitted through mosquitoes). Oddly enough, very little has appeared in print.

Yet CWD has been a constant headline, even though experts have stated with fact from the Center for Disease Control, that "the models indicate that there is quite a barrier blocking this type of transmission" and "at this point in time, no human link has been found to CWD." (Dr. Beth Williams).

As well, on a local farm level, did any of these media outlets take the time to figure that out of 8,280 Saskatchewan-farmed cervids put down due to CWD, 7048 of them were tested (1199 were not - elk calves: too young to be tested); 230 were positive (3.2% - all elk and all in one single province); and there were to date 40 infected premises. (CFIA stats, Jan. 2003)

Now if you consider 38,000 farmed elk in the province (fall 2002 stats, SAF), and that 230 tested positive (not even necessarily clinical - only a total of 21 were clinical), that is less than 0.6% of the total farmed elk population in Saskatchewan! Add to that the total of farmed whitetail and mule deer and the total farmed cervids reaches 45,250 – only 0.5% CWD infected game farm animals in the province. Only because of the superior level of our (internationally-recognized) Saskatchewan mandatory CWD surveillance system are we able to track and monitor these numbers. Saskatchewan attacked this disease aggressively. So far this disease obviously is NOT the unbridled epidemic that the public has been led to believe.

What about the numerous domestic (traditional) livestock diseases that can be transferred to wildlife populations? For instance, Johne's, liver flukes, or lungworm or even calf scours are all more prevalent in domestic livestock farming than 0.5%. These can be found in farmed and wild populations. Deer (domestic and wild) can contract TB, but where does this form of BOVINE tuberculosis originate?

Without shutting down or double fencing the entire domestic livestock industry, there is always going to be the possibility of transmission to the wild. Or, I pose also the possibility of wild transmission to traditional livestock industries. Deer do not simply transfer deer diseases to deer, cattle to cattle, or sheep to sheep. It is not a unilateral sharing within one species. CWD appears to be species-specific or an exception, but many other domestic diseases can be shared reciprocally between species.

SOME disgruntled elk and deer farmers have, of late, begun a campaign to take the federal government to task for “allowing CWD into Canada” and encouraging the industry to flourish despite the odds against them. Basically the blame is being placed at the feet of the government for “governmental systemic negligence concerning disease and market problems with these animals,” as one lawyer for their cause stated.

However, this class action lawsuit is being launched on behalf of SOME elk and deer farmers in Alberta and Saskatchewan. This class action suit is not endorsed by the majority, as it holds more potential for devastation of an industry than for the good of the industry. Yes, CWD has affected the deer markets for a short time. Yes, the industry is very stringently regulated. Yes, the industry faces opposition from certain wildlife organizations federally and provincially. But the Saskatchewan/federal governments have largely supported the industry. As one CFIA employee stated, “We don't shut down industries because of disease, we deal with the disease, just like we do with any other livestock industry.”

Even so, the Canadian Wildlife Federation has called for a ban on game farming due to CWD and its potential effect on the wild populations of deer. However, in Colorado, where it was first discovered, they recently reported that their elk populations are at an all time high - despite CWD. Ironically, if we continue to look at the facts, the state with the highest incidence of CWD has been Wyoming. BUT Wyoming allows no game farming or high fenced operations.

In 2002, Whitesands, New Mexico reported a positive CWD wild mule deer - there are no captive cervidae facilities within 250 miles of the positive tested deer. Obviously, game farms are not a necessary factor in the transfer of CWD. There is regular discussion of the potential of disease transmission through nose to nose contact (through high fence). However, when you consider that Michigan has a positive TB problem in the wild, and yet the farmed cervid industry continues to maintain a TB free status, this theory of transmissibility remains only a theory - unproven at best.

And, yes, trophy ranching and game farming have economic spin-offs. Saskatchewan trophy ranches alone in 1999 (their first year in operation) took in over \$5 million in direct revenue. This is “new” money coming into a depleted farm economy every year, most often from non-resident hunters. It does not include the millions of “residual” dollars spent in the tourism sector (hotels, gasoline, restaurants, hunting equipment, etc.) Trophy ranches continue to grow and increase their clientele each year.

Game farming has traditionally been considered a “small” insignificant industry, but game farms in Saskatchewan outnumber dairy farms (an established traditional industry) by 2 to 1. There are 311 dairy farms presently in Saskatchewan and there are 604 elk, whitetail and mule deer farms.

The Canadian game farming industry on the whole has a total farm capital market value of over \$1.35 billion. In 2000, Canada-wide, deer and elk farms spent around \$140 million through the purchases of fencing, veterinary supplies, and machinery. Gross farm receipts show that individual farms averaged \$80,000, according to the latest agricultural census taken by Statistics Canada.

Deer farming obviously has a place in rural/farm diversification and in many cases has allowed the family farm to sustain and prosper despite low grain or domestic livestock prices. Despite opposition, the benefits and enjoyment to be had from this industry remain...and that is why I am STILL proud to be a deer farmer!

3. TSEs IN ANIMALS

[Reprinted from the Canadian Hemophilia Society Website]

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathy of captive wild ruminants is thought to be a new disease. It was first reported in a British zoo in 1986. Since then, the disease has affected the eland, the Arabian oryx, the greater kudu, the gemsbok, the nyala, the scimitar-horned oryx, the ankole and the bison. Four ostriches in a zoo in Germany also developed a similar condition.

It is believed that these animals were infected in the same way as British cattle - through eating BSE-infected feed.

Feline spongiform Encephalopathy (FSE)

In 1990, a Siamese cat in the U.K. was diagnosed with a TSE. Since then, a large number of other cats have been affected. No evidence of a similar condition can be found in felines before that time.

Other felines now known to be affected are the puma, cheetah, ocelot and tiger. Again, the most likely explanation for the outbreak is that these animals were given BSE-infected feed.

Strangely, there is one case from Italy of a domestic cat and his human master both coming down with CJD at the same time. Research has shown that the agent responsible was the same for both cat and man. At the moment, there is no explanation for this.

Scrapie

Scrapie is a disease that mainly affects sheep. It is called "scrapie" because one of its early symptoms is restlessness in the sheep, leading to scratching, biting and scraping of the skin. The disease has been known to sheep farmers for more than 200 years.

Scrapie is believed to have originated in Spain and then spread to other parts of Europe. The widespread export of British sheep in the 19th century is thought to have spread the disease worldwide. Australia and New Zealand somehow escaped. Now, they employ strict quarantine measures for imported animals.

In areas where scrapie is already present, eradication measures have not been successful. This could be because the agent responsible for scrapie can live for many years on the grazing land. As a result, killing infected animals is not sufficient to wipe out the infection. Veterinarians do not know how scrapie is transmitted from one animal to another. Usually, only a small number of sheep in a herd are affected.

As with most TSE's, scrapie affects older animals, usually 4 years of age or more. Sheep with scrapie are irritable. They lose weight and tremble, then lose control of their hindquarters. The disease is always fatal. There have been no reported cases of human TSE caused by eating sheep.

Transmissible Mink Encephalopathy

Transmissible mink encephalopathy (TME) was first seen in 1947. Cases have turned up in Canada, the U.S. and Finland. The outbreaks occurred on mink farms where animals were fed meal made from the meat (muscle), bones and often the brains of other animals, including cattle and sheep (so-called offal). Some of the cases are blamed on ingestion of contaminated meal.

However, young mink fight among themselves and eat each other. The ingestion of a contaminated animal could be the cause of the epidemics seen on certain farms.

Chronic Wasting Disease of Deer and Elk

Deer and elk in the western U.S. and Canada suffer from another TSE called Chronic Wasting Disease of deer and elk (CWD). In parts of Colorado and Wyoming, 2 to 3 animals out of 100 are affected.

The abnormal prion in CWD is different from that in other TSE's. However, one theory is that the disease originated in the 1960's when deer were held in captivity in the same enclosure that had held scrapie-infected sheep. The infectious agent was present on the grazing land and crossed the species barrier to deer and elk.

As with scrapie, no cases of human TSE have been linked to eating deer and elk with CWD.

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (Mad Cow Disease)

Bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), also called Mad Cow Disease, was first identified in 1986 in the United Kingdom. The disease quickly spread through British herds. By 1993, when the

disease peaked at 1000 new cases per week, 168,000 British cattle had died. Whole herds were slaughtered in an attempt to slow the spread.

A much smaller number of cases was also observed in Switzerland, France, Germany, Denmark, Portugal, Italy and Canada (1 animal). These cases were believed to be to be the result of the export of infected animals or infected cattle feed.

In 1988, the U.K. banned the feeding of offal to animals. As a result, by 1994 the number of cases had started to decrease.

There are two theories as to how this epidemic happened.

1. One theory is that the agent responsible for scrapie in sheep was found in the offal made from sheep remains and then ingested by bovines in their cattle feed. The abnormal prion responsible for scrapie was then altered in the bovines. Although the practice of feeding offal made from sheep had been around since the 1940's, there was a change in the meat rendering practices in the U.K. around 1980. Organic solvents were no longer used, nor was the high degree of heat needed to remove the solvents. As a result, the theory suggests that the infectious prions were no longer being removed.

2. The second theory is that BSE is not a new disease in cattle but, in fact, a very old disease. Until 1980 it was extremely rare, affecting perhaps 1 cow in 20,000. Because it was so rare, it was not diagnosed as a distinct disease. Then in 1980, when the meat rendering practices no longer eliminated the infectious agent, it required only a few infected animals to infect the cattle feed and pass on the disease to thousands of animals.

In late 1995, doctors in the U.K. recognized a number of cases of human TSE that did not fit the description of classical Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease. The victims were much younger, the disease's incubation period (development of the disease) was shorter, symptoms were different and people survived with the disease for a longer time. Eventually, it was proven that the abnormal prion in BSE was identical to the abnormal prion in this new human TSE.

Therefore it was concluded that these people had been infected by eating infected beef. This meant that for the first time BSE had been documented to have crossed the species barrier to humans.

This type of TSE has been termed new variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (nvCJD). By early 1999, forty-one cases had been diagnosed, 40 in the U.K. and one in France.

4. INDUSTRY NEWS

Utah finds CWD

A buck taken by a hunter in northeastern Utah has tested positive for CWD. The positive sample came from a mature buck taken this fall on Diamond Mountain, just north of Vernal. Some 1,400 samples have been tested for CWD so far, with only positive sample. Utah State University is conducting the CWD tests.

SCWDS Briefs

The Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study (SCWDS) has a publication called SCWDS Briefs, a great source of information about CWD and cervid issues. The newsletter can be viewed at their website which is located at <http://www.scwds.org>

CANADIAN CERVID COUNCIL NEWS

Chronic Wasting Disease

There have been no new cases of CWD in the past eleven months in farmed elk in Canada. The case of CWD in an Alberta whitetail is still being investigated with the result of the trace-outs and the farm where the animal died soon to come.

The US farm surveillance/certification program is not yet ready for publication. The foreign animal disease in poultry in the United States is occupying most of the USDA resources.

The Canadian Cervid Council is pleased to announce that on Thursday, June 5 in Ottawa, we will be hosting a Conference on Chronic Wasting Disease. The main goal of the conference is to inform farm organizations, the general public and the media about what CWD is, current measures being taken to control the disease on farms, CWD research, and CWD risks to human health.

Our hope is that the conference will provide the right information on CWD rather than the rumours and false information presently circulating. The CCC will ask experts to present unbiased information on the disease and its implications. Media and other organizations will be asked to participate. The conference is financially assisted by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Communication

In addition to a response to the Edmonton Journal article and discussion with some media, the CCC participated in an open line show in Saskatchewan's Talk Radio. It was interesting to note that the other participant in the open line show was Colin Maxwell, Executive Vice President of the Canadian Wildlife Federation and former Saskatchewan Environment Resource Management Minister. However, Mr. Maxwell when told that we would also be on the show, declined to appear and cancelled his participation. Mr. Maxwell is much more at ease to speak when he is sure not to be challenged.

In the past month and a half, we were able to make presentations on the importance of CWD surveillance or certification programs in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Dr. Terry Church will soon be in Yukon and more meetings are being planned for the rest of the country. During these meetings, we also took the time to speak about CCC activities and promotional programs.

Our CCC newspaper has been mailed and should reach our one thousand six hundred members soon. The newspaper is an effort to have open and direct communication with our membership. In order to support the newspaper, the next issue will feature advertising.

Trade mission to Asia

The CCC is sending a delegation to Asia starting March 1st. We will be in Hong Kong, Guangzhou, Beijing, Bangkok and Taipei. We are hoping to finalize plans with the holding of the first Velvet Antler Week in China. We will meet with State Drug Administration, the China Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine, the China Chamber of Commerce of Medicine and Health Products Importers and Exporters, Chinese media, Chinese distributors of velvet antler products, Embassy trade officers, a dinner with the Ambassador of Canada to China, Hong Kong importers and distributors of natural health products in Thailand amongst others.

Meat promotion

February 26th will mark the first phase of a nation-wide promotional effort for deer and elk meat. That day, the Ottawa Citizen will feature Canadian farmed red deer and elk in their food section. We will be publishing at the same time a list of retailers and food service operators carrying the meat.

This will be repeated in the Guelph Mercury, London Free Press, Regina Leader-Post, Edmonton Sun, Calgary Herald, etc. We will also be at the Toronto Good Food Festival, working with distributors and retailers to promote farm-raised deer and elk meat.

Culinary Team Canada will be featuring elk and deer meat at the American Culinary Classics, to be held May 17th to 20th in Chicago this year. Team Leader and Executive Chef Judson Simpson is excited about the product. The whole team prepared its rehearsal dinner on February 12th for Members of Parliament and the response was overwhelmingly positive!!!

Office reorganization

Mr. Adam Vervaeke will monitor media, legislative issues, be involved with cervid harvest preserves and work on CCC communications and design documents for the CCC from our office.

Mr. Chris Frantz will be working on international and North American velvet and meat promotion.

Both Adam and Chris are reachable by calling the CCC office at: 613-874-9994.

5. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

SASKATCHEWAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION 2003 Annual Convention and General Meeting will be held on March 6 to 8 at the Delta Bessborough, Saskatoon. For more information contact SEBA at 306-782-6500 or at <mailto:seba@sasktel.net>

NORTH AMERICAN DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (NADeFA) Annual Convention will be held on March 19-23, 2003 in Jefferson City, Missouri USA. For more information, contact NADeFA at <mailto:info@nadefa.org> or visit their web site at <http://www.nadefa.org>

SASKATCHEWAN WHITETAIL AND MULE DEER PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION will hold their annual convention on March 28 to 30, 2003 at the Travelodge in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. For more information, contact <mailto:info@saskdeer.com> or visit their website at <http://www.saskdeer.com>

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.

***** A D *****

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

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 <mailto: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. Subscriptions and back issues can be ordered from our Store located at <http://store.deerfarmer.com>

As per our Privacy Policy, your name, e-mail address and any other information you provide us will only be used by 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:

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