

Welcome to the JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2004 edition of *Deer & Elk Farmers' Digest*, a monthly electronic newsletter for those interested in raising deer, elk, and reindeer. This *Digest* is published by the Deer & Elk Farmers' Information Network (www.Deerfarmer.com and www.Elkfarmer.com).

A copy of ALL past issues of the *Deer & Elk Farmers' Digest* can be found at www.deer-digest.com or www.elk-digest.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 *Digest* to your friends and others who may be interested in deer, elk or reindeer. To ADD or REMOVE your name from our mailing list, please see the "Subscription Services" section.

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**** FROM THE EDITOR ****

We're back! The first *Digest* was published in January 2000. We produced 41 monthly editions that ran until May 2003. Publication was then suspended due to a heavy workload from several large consulting contracts.

After a rest, I have decided to resume publishing the *Digest*, but with some changes. For this year, we will publish it every two months. This should reduce some of my workload. Also, instead of sending out the entire newsletter to our subscribers, you will get a notification that the *Digest* has been published, along with links to where it is posted. It will be available in both *html* and *pdf* formats. This makes for one less version to produce and at the same time gets around the many problems we have encountered with spam filters and outdated e-mail addresses. Selected articles from the newsletters are also posted in our Library.

Thank you for your continuing support and interest.

Russell Sawchuk, Editor and Publisher

1. Getting the Elk Industry Back on Track

The elk farming industry in North America is in the doldrums. Worse still, no one or no organization seems willing to do anything about it! Elk producers – those who are still left – seem to be sitting around waiting for things to improve. Many are hoping for the return of the good old days when prices for breeding stock and velvet were high, and the animals and velvet antler sold without much effort.

Well, it's time for the industry to wake up and get its butt into gear! Waiting and doing nothing is NOT an acceptable option. We need to manage our future to achieve the results we want. Results take time, so we better start right now if we want to be masters of our own destiny.

Since no one else is stepping up to the soapbox, I will. Here is my prescription for what the elk industry needs to do to return to being a sustainable and profitable agricultural venture.

Vision and plan

I have not yet seen a coherent or well-articulated vision for the elk farming industry in Canada or the United States - one which defines who we want to be. What is the ideal scenario for elk farming? What do we want our industry to be; what don't we want it to be?

Without a vision or destination outlining where we want to go, how on earth can we do the right things to get there? Without a vision, we are forever destined to undertake random and ad hoc activities, or worse still, we do nothing because we don't know what to do!

To me, a vision does not have to be complicated. What aspects of the industry do we want to focus on – breeding stock, velvet antler, hunting preserves, venison, and/or other products and services? What target markets are we going after – health food, pets, restaurants?

Are we going to focus our marketing efforts in North America or Asia?

Once we have an agreed-upon vision, then we need a business plan. The vision is the “what” we want to achieve; the plan is the “how” we want to get there. I really find it disconcerting that the national industry organizations have not developed and communicated a long-range business plan. As well as being a great “to-do” tool, a business plan also communicates to all stakeholders where the industry is going. It is an effective tool for setting priorities for the use of limited resources in order to get the greatest return for effort and investment. A business plan is also a good way to hold board members and executive accountable.

Therefore, the first step to getting the elk industry back on track is to develop a vision and business plans for both Canadian and American producers. The two plans should be distinct and appropriate to their jurisdictions, but also coordinated where common initiatives make sense.

Organization

The industry needs both state/provincial and national associations because, in both Canada and the United States, agriculture is governed mostly by state/provincial regulations and legislation.

In the United States, there should be ONE national cervid association representing all deer, elk, and reindeer producers. The American Cervid Council (ACC) should have an office in Washington, D.C. to lobby Congress and the USDA on a regular basis. The ACC should be an umbrella organization representing all the state organizations. Board members for the national association would be selected from state boards. Part of the membership fees for the state cervid organizations would be forwarded to the ACC for its operations and programs. Thus, every deer and elk farmer who is a member of their state association is

automatically a member of the national association. This arrangement, similar to the Canadian Cervid Council, reduces competition for members, and improves co-operation and communication among the various levels of industry associations.

Discussions will need to take place between the ACC and the state associations about the appropriate roles and responsibilities for each of the following:

- lobbying and influencing decisions on regulations and legislations
- recruitment of new members into the industry
- communications and publications – for members, stakeholders, and the general public
- membership development – conferences, workshops, training materials, etc.
- member services such as animal registrations, tags, and DNA testing
- quality assurance and branding
- plans, promotion, and support for research and development
- promotion and marketing of the industry and its products and services
- fund raising

Following are some suggestions for improved governance, management, and leadership of the elk producer organizations.

1. Change association bylaws to permit additional outsiders to serve on the boards. External board members will bring considerable specialized expertise to the organization, will enhance credibility, and will provide important links and/or access to external resources.
2. The same directors should serve on state/provincial boards and national boards.

This will improve communication and the co-ordination of activities.

3. Consider giving your board members an orientation and some professional development. Running effective volunteer organizations can be extremely challenging. Provide your board members with the knowledge and skills to help them do a better job.
4. Producers must be reminded that if they are acting as board members, they **MUST** perform in the best interest of all the members, not just their own self-interest. In fact, they are legally liable if they violate this trust.
5. Make use of specialized expertise - legal, financial, media, business - when appropriate. Share the costs across several associations if you can't afford to do this yourself.
6. If your association is large enough, hire a good executive director and staff, and let them do their jobs. Give them the resources and don't meddle in the day-to-day operations. Stay out of the way!
7. Provide incentives, rewards, and support to your board members and staff. Appreciate and commend their good work and efforts. Try to remove any obstacles that may get in the way of them doing their assigned tasks.
8. Manage and direct your organization based on your business plan. Get on with doing your priority tasks to achieve your goals and objectives. Of course, if you don't have a business plan, you will run your association on an ad hoc and reactionary basis.
9. You should develop and implement a set of performance indicators to monitor the progress and success of your organization. These measures of success can also be used to demonstrate accountability to your

members, government, and other stakeholders.

Finally, elk farmers should NOT expect their state/provincial or national associations to do it all. Producers, individually or in groups, should examine other organizational models to get things done. The alternatives include

- regular or new-generation co-ops
- commissions (where everyone is required to belong)
- value chains
- private or public incorporated companies

Financial

All organizations need money to be effective. The more money that is available, the more that can be achieved.

Associations need funds for

- administrative, office, and operational expenses
- programs and services
- lobbying and legal expenses
- research and development activities
- communications with members, external stakeholders, and the public
- general marketing and promotion

There are a number of potential sources of revenue that elk industry associations can tap into

- membership fees (primary source)
- conferences and workshops
- service fees from tag sales, registrations, DNA testing, etc.
- advertising in association newsletters, publications, and events
- sales of items such as clothing, books, and signs

- donations of cash and products (e.g., semen)
- fund raising activities such as auctions and raffles
- grants and government funding
- foundation grants
- joint ventures and partnerships

Some suggestions regarding the financial management of associations follow:

1. All associations should prepare an annual budget and monitor it closely. If revenues are seasonal or cyclical, then monthly cash flow projections should also be prepared and used.
2. Compared to other sectors, elk producer membership fees are low; however, members must see value and a return on their investment before they will pay more.
3. A greater effort must be made to tap into external funds. Members should not be the only contributors. Associations should aggressively go after government funds, grants, and donations from suppliers and individuals.
4. Associations should prepare a fund-raising plan and assign a committee or group to implement it.
5. Associations should learn how to get donations from the public at large by studying the strategies of Public Television (PBS) and PETA. Make it easy to donate e.g., via real-time credit card payments on your websites; offer a benefit for donating, e.g., a free subscription to your newsletter; request donations for specific causes that the public may support, e.g., CWD research.
6. Incorporate project tracking into your accounting programs. Allocate revenues and expenses against projects and initiatives. The board and members will know where

the money is spent, and the value that is received.

7. All non-profit organizations are hurting when it comes to financial resources. Competition for donations is fierce. If elk associations are to be successful, they must have a well-thought-out fund-raising plan that is executed aggressively.

Research and development

When things got tough, the elk industry seemed to lose interest in research. Research must be ongoing for the long-term benefit of the industry. Here are some of my thoughts on this topic.

1. There must be a North American elk industry research and development plan that includes annual priorities. Research and development is very expensive. Therefore, the industry must work together to initiate and support those projects that will provide the greatest return.

I believe that the priorities should be on market research to develop North American markets for elk products. Producers need renewed sales and positive cash flows.

2. There are at least three major research projects currently underway - all related to velvet antler.
 - Dr. Marian Allen is doing a study on the effects of velvet antler on rheumatoid arthritis sufferers
 - Dr. Susan Hemmings at the University of Saskatchewan is doing a study of velvet antler and its impact on the liver
 - Dr. Jacque Dupuis has completed a study on the effects of EVA on dogs with arthritis (Canadian Veterinary Journal, Feb. 2004)

3. The Elk Research Council (and equivalent organizations) needs to take a more aggressive role in finding interested researchers, obtaining research grants, initiating and managing research projects, and disseminating research findings.
4. A plan and/or model need to be developed to provide ongoing funds for industry research and development projects and initiatives.
5. Associations need to ask government departments (Agriculture, Economic Development) and universities/colleges to do more research for them. I have had good success in asking government staff to undertake market research studies at their expense. As an industry, we need to do more of this!
6. I believe the following should be the top research priorities for the next five years:
 - Velvet antler and dogs – this represents the single greatest potential to create a huge North American market for velvet antler. Possible studies could include comparison of effectiveness of EVA with other arthritic medications and possible contraindications with glucosamine.
 - Assisted reproductive technologies to permit the greater transference of genetics across closed borders without having to move live animals.
 - Continue with liver studies since initial positive results of these studies provide hope for dealing with liver diseases (for which there are no current treatments).
 - Wound healing – there is some evidence that EVA does promote healing. These studies would be relatively easy to do, and market potential would be significant.

7. I would NOT recommend spending any industry research dollars on CWD. Tens of millions of government research projects are currently underway as well as a number of private initiatives. We are better off spending our limited research funds on developing products and markets.
8. Everyone in the industry needs to do much more to get the research results out to our potential customers, the key stakeholders, and the media.
3. Many people use the Internet as a source of information, yet most associations do not bother to post or keep their websites current. Over the past few years, the traffic to all elk industry association sites has decreased significantly.
4. Communications technologies such as chat rooms, forums, and group software should be used to reduce the obstacles of time and distance. These tools can be used to share information among associations and their members, co-ordinate strategies, and work together on projects/initiatives.

Communication and information

We cannot over-communicate! A message has to be repeated numerous times before most people hear it.

Communication and information must be provided to:

- current members of the association or organization
- potential and past members
- other state/provincial and national associations
- information gatekeepers such as agriculture department staff, veterinarians, and government officials
- trade and general media

Here are some other observations:

1. Lack of information about what is going on is the most common complaint among industry association members. Regardless of what the board or executive does, a large number of members claim not to have been informed or consulted.
2. Multiple channels should be used to get the information out as all individuals have their preferred modes of receiving information. Associations should use newsletters, mailings, e-mail, websites, discussion forums, meetings, magazines, faxes, and any other method available.
5. Some associations hoard information in the false belief that only their paid members should have access to it. This creates obstacles to working co-operatively together on the large issues for the benefit of all industry stakeholders.

Education and awareness

Most of the public and many government and elected officials are still not aware that elk farming exists as an agricultural pursuit; therefore, awareness and education strategies must include these target audiences as well as the elk producers themselves.

1. Education for industry members involves:
 - production and management of skills/competencies
 - maintaining a positive image of the industry
 - contributions for the overall growth and development of the industry
2. Awareness and education for information gatekeepers includes:
 - state/provincial and university agricultural staff
 - veterinarians and their associations
 - pharmacists and their associations
 - other health care professionals

- chefs and food industry decision-makers
- nutraceutical and health food stores

These gatekeepers should have easy access to sources of information and resources.

3. Initiatives for the general public and potential consumers should include:

- awareness and information about elk farming as an acceptable and environmentally-friendly agricultural pursuit
- accurate information and positive messages for teachers and students

Elk velvet antler should become as well known as other common over-the-counter nutraceutical and health food products.

The general public should have easy access to reliable and comprehensive information about the elk industry and its products.

It is important to stress that elk products are produced to the highest quality control standards.

It is important to inform the public that farmed elk are well looked after and are not abused or harmed in any way.

4. When educating politicians, legislators, and bureaucrats, please keep the following points in mind:

- Keep the rules and regulations on a level playing field with other livestock industries.
- These people typically respond better to “wining and dining” than to bullying and threats of lawsuits.
- Emphasize economic and agricultural diversification benefits for the state or province.
- Find and use a “champion” on the other side to plead and promote your case.

- Keep these people well informed about what you are doing and planning to do; they don’t like surprises.
- You will make it a lot easier for them to support you if you provide them with “briefing notes” that accurately and clearly lay out the facts, issues, alternatives, and implications.

Marketing and promotion

I have come to the conclusion that elk associations should stick to general promotion of the industry and its products. There are too many inherent conflicts of interest and risks for the directors if involved in actual marketing activities.

Private companies or co-ops should market genetics, velvet antler, venison, and by-products.

The appropriate marketing roles and responsibilities of industry associations include:

1. Quality assurance and branding – this involves providing producers with a QA seal that they can use, and promoting the brand.
2. Compiling and publishing up-to-date lists of member vendors, e.g., those who are selling velvet antler, meat, and other products.
3. Representing the industry at key trade shows such as farm fairs, health food, and consumer shows.
4. Keeping key gatekeeper groups such as veterinarians, pharmacists, naturopaths, and dog clubs informed about the industry, new research, and products.
5. Organizing and participating in food festivals and other special related events.

It would be helpful if marketing and promotional activities were better coordinated

among national and state/provincial associations, vendors, and individual producers.

The national associations, subject to successful fund-raising as described previously, should consider establishing a marketing assistance fund to help local organizations undertake initiatives that will benefit the whole industry.

Market research studies and evaluation reports should be shared among the associations and companies so that everyone can do a better job of marketing.

Search, identify, and take advantage of various government assistance programs and resources available for market research and marketing ventures. For example, how many of you have

taken advantage of the services provided by your embassies in foreign countries to promote your velvet and elk meat?

Implementation and execution

So what are you going to do now? Are you going to file away this newsletter and wait for someone else to rescue the industry? Or are you going to take on one small project, either yourself, or with a group of other elk farmers?

If each one of us volunteers to do one simple project, just think how much we could collectively accomplish! I plan on continuing to do everything I can to get the elk farming industry back on track. How about you?

2. The Decline of Hunting

The future of fishing and hunting in America does not look good. In the 18 to 24 year age group, fishing participation dropped from 20% in 1991 to 13% in 2001 (Source: U.S. Fish & Wildlife survey). For the same age group, hunting participation dropped from 9% in 1991 to ONLY 6% in 2001!

A recent survey by the American Recreation Coalition showed a total of 13 million hunters in America. Of this number, approximately 1.2 million are females, 300,000 are black and 430,000 are Hispanic. This means that 94% of American hunters are white, only 4% are black, and 2% are other than black or white.

The average age of hunters is 39 with an average income of \$51,000. Those who earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 comprise 34% of all hunters while those earning more than \$75,000 account for 12%. Sixty-four percent of hunters own their homes, 63% are married, 69% are parents, and 47% have children at home under 18 years of age.

Some 67% of the hunters said they had a personal computer at home, and 36% said they used a computer at work in the past 30 days.

Reasons for the decline

I do not have any research information as to why there is a drop in interest in hunting activities; however, I do have some personal theories.

1. People today are simply busier trying to earn a living. All family members are likely to be working to pay for the mortgage, the two cars, the vacations, health care and the children's college education. Finding the time and energy to go hunting with children and friends is now much harder to do.
2. America is becoming more urbanized. There are fewer people growing up in rural America where hunting is a natural and normal activity. Even rural kids are now bussed to larger centres where they are more likely to participate in organized sports. Who has time to go rabbit hunting

on Saturday when you have hockey or soccer practice, or piano lessons?

3. Computers have had a significant impact on how Americans work and play. Instead of going hunting, most kids and young adults will spend the four to six hours surfing the net, sending e-mail, doing school or work projects, or playing video games.
4. Hunting has become more difficult to do. First, owning firearms has become expensive and a hassle in many jurisdictions. The cost of license fees has continued to increase over the years. Finding a convenient, safe, and productive place to hunt that is within a reasonable driving time from home is getting more difficult. Hunting regulations have become burdensome and complex. So why bother with hunting when there are so many other sport and recreational opportunities available?
5. The anti-hunting activists may be having an impact on American youth. PETA does a better job than sports hunting organizations at getting messages to teachers and young children. "Killing is not cool" is the message the "anti's" are getting to our children.

A concerted effort is required by all groups and organizations involved in promoting hunting and fishing to get American youth participating in these activities. Otherwise, these sporting opportunities will simply die when the existing generation of hunters pass on!

Implications

Here are some of the potential impacts that I see of a continued decline in interest in hunting activities.

1. Wildlife populations will explode to nuisance levels. In particular, I am thinking of that very adaptable and magnificent animal, the whitetail deer. The whitetail deer has successfully spread throughout

America and, in many places, is already causing problems. Expect more lives lost, injuries, and damage from cars hitting deer. Expect more crop and tree damage. Costs to states and city governments will increase in an effort to reduce the impact of these animals.

2. Billions of dollars will be lost in tourism revenues, especially in rural America. Hunters spend money on gas, accommodation, meals, bullets, and supplies. Smaller communities and rural areas will be most affected since these are the places hunting is done. Hunting also typically takes place during the autumn, a slow time for normal tourism peaks. Some businesses will close and jobs will be lost.
3. States will see significant revenue losses. They collect hunting and fishing license fees, as well as sales tax from the goods and services hunters buy when visiting their state. Taxes on local residents are likely to increase and/or services and jobs will be cut.
4. State Fish and Wildlife departments will be severely downsized or eliminated. If there are no hunters and the departments are not bringing in hunting fees, who will need them?
5. Conservation and wildlife programs will be negatively impacted in a major way. Hunters contribute most through fees, donations, and their involvement in many conservation and wildlife habitat programs. When there are no longer any hunters, there will also no longer be a Ducks Unlimited or other similar organizations.
6. The anti-hunting and wildlife protection groups and organizations will also vanish. They will lose support for their causes and donations.
7. We will raise a generation of obese and inactive children who will have no

knowledge and appreciation of the wonders of nature and wildlife. These children will also be devoid of all the skills that hunting teaches – patience, self-reliance, persistence, testing your physical and mental limits, and the ability to survive in the great outdoors.

8. Finally, are we raising children who cannot differentiate between virtual reality and genuine reality? A true hunter respects and appreciates life, and knows the

consequences when he pulls the trigger. I am afraid that this distinction may be lost on some of our video game-addicted generation. It is very different to kill a real living animal than zap them in a video game.

Man has hunted since the dawn of time. Many say that the hunting of animals is no longer appropriate in our “civilized” world; however, considering the potential consequences, I’m not so sure!

3. Indiana Deer Breeders’ Resolutions

The Indiana Deer Breeders Association (IDBA) has resolved to encourage its members to join their county Farm Bureau. Belonging to the state’s agricultural association that represents farmers’ interest in the capital is very important to the farming operation. In Indiana, as in other states, the premier agricultural organization is Farm Bureau. The Indiana Farm Bureau can be a significant partner with the Indiana Deer Breeders Association in achieving legislative goals. They can also help us to combat attempts by anti-hunting groups seeking to impose double fencing on our operations.

Indiana deer farmers are encouraged to bring industry supportive resolutions to their county Farm Bureau for adoption. This will help get that resolution adopted at the state level. The Governor of Indiana and legislators seek Farm Bureau’s advice, comments, and positions on agriculture issues.

Indiana is clarifying legislation recognizing the Indiana Department of Agriculture as the appropriate agency to oversee the privately-owned cervidae production industry. The governor and legislators can then rely on the Indiana Farm Bureau agricultural policies for guidance concerning the deer breeding industry. The following policies will be extremely instrumental in articulating appropriate policy for Farm Bureau.

Privately-owned cervidae

A group of animals often referred to as cervidae include white-tailed deer and elk. Typically, the animals are purchased from a breeding farm and not from the state.

Currently there are over 700 farms in Indiana and the number is growing. The animals are fenced in with eight- or ten-foot fences.

Several state agencies now control or require permits for the farms. The DNR requires a permit to construct a fence for the livestock deer. The Department of Agriculture regulates the vaccination, testing, and movement of the animals.

The sale of antlers, venison, and breeding stock can create significant income for farmers looking for income-producing alternatives. We believe that cervidae, which are considered livestock under the animal health laws of Indiana, should be regulated by the Department of Agriculture. We will support legislation to clarify the role of the Indiana Department of Agriculture in regulating and assisting this new sector of the agriculture economy.

We urge the privately-owned cervidae production industry, Indiana Farm Bureau, Indiana Department of Agriculture, and Indiana State University to continue to work

cooperatively to address the marketing, regulatory, and research needs of the industry and state to facilitate the growth of the industry.

We support the designation of privately-owned cervidae as minor species at the federal level so that research data can be used to approve animal health products for use in these species.

We support legislation recognizing privately-owned cervidae production as an agricultural industry. The full benefits of traditional agriculture - production insurance, health certification, loan guarantees and expedited approval - should be extended to this industry.

We support single agency authority overseeing the Indiana privately-owned cervidae production industry with the Indiana Department of Agriculture.

We oppose any federal regulatory agency that would duplicate, supersede, or conflict with state regulations that control the privately-owned cervidae production industry at the state level.

Federal activities affecting privately-owned cervidae production industry, including facility inspection programs, should be under USDA control.

We support a scientific study of the beneficial environmental and economic effects of raising cervidae on marginal land in Indiana.

We support the strict enforcement of current laws and penalties in cases of harassment, theft, and/or willful destruction of privately-owned cervidae operations.

We support an Indiana University livestock academic program in the Animal Science Department to focus on privately-owned cervidae.

We oppose double fencing at producer cost.

Another resolution worth pursuing is promoting the value of hunting ranches to agriculture. This activity adds value to the farming operation resulting in income to retire a mortgage, keep the family farm in the family, preserve open spaces, and provide habitat for a whole host of plant and animal wildlife.

Farms and ranches throughout Indiana, North America, and the rest of the world produce a wide variety of crop and livestock products. In addition to traditional grain, livestock, and produce farms, we have seen the development of niche farms, hobby farms, hunting preserves, dude ranches, direct marketing farms, and other innovative agriculture businesses.

The agricultural areas of the country are an important component of habitat for an extremely large number of wildlife species. It has been estimated that 75% of wildlife use agricultural land as part of its habitat.

The most recent land use survey in Indiana indicates that the land base occupied by human development will increase by over 80% within the next 15 years. Maintaining lands in agricultural production and ownership will be essential in maintaining valuable green space. Deer farmers and ranchers are part of this growing diversity in Indiana, North America, and globally.

A successful farming or ranching operation requires an entrepreneurial spirit, sophisticated planning, hard work, an awareness of the available markets, and supporting legislation. By addressing the challenges of this agricultural sector, we are ensuring that agriculture will remain an essential part of the physical, social, and economic landscape. The following resolution provides appropriate policy to recognize and support the varied and diverse aspects of Indiana agriculture.

Game farms and harvesting preserves

Indiana game breeders and hunting preserve operations that breed, feed, and graze privately-owned animals are an integral part of the agricultural economy of the state. The ownership and operation of these areas provide a buffer to the ever-expanding human development which is eroding agricultural and forestry lands at an increasing rate. Hunting preserves also provide an opportunity for intensive but safe recreational access for the non-farm population to enjoy a unique recreational experience. The industry is concerned about increased local government

restrictions on the use of farms for the purpose of hunting. We will support legislation that provides opportunities and protection for this growing segment of Indiana's diverse agriculture.

The relationship with the Farm Bureau can be extremely positive and helpful, not only in the legislative arena, but by providing the industry with excellent guidance and advice on where agriculture fits and what our responsibilities are as agricultural participants in the state.

All Indiana deer breeders are strongly urged to join their county Farm Bureau now and find out about the resolution process to obtain supportive agricultural policies.

4. Canadian Government Helps with Farm Business Plans

The Canadian Farm Business Advisory Service (CFBAS) is a joint federal and provincial government initiative that gives farmers access to private consultants who will help them develop business plans.

CFBAS includes three services:

1. Farm Business Assessment and Action Plan.

- Eligible farmers are provided with up to five days' worth of consultative services.
- A financial consultant (chosen by the farmer) performs the work.
- The farmer pays \$100 and the government pays the rest (valued at \$2,000).
- The Farm Business Assessment consists of three days' worth of consultation with at least one day spent on the farm. The consultant reviews past records and the current situation, discusses goals and objectives, and helps producers determine their current options in meeting their profitability goals. This service includes identifying producers' goals and options for the future. Each producer receives a business profile, a statement of assets and liabilities, a farm business ratio analysis, an income and expense statement for the previous three years, and other information related to the farm business.
- The Action Plan follows the assessment with producers getting two days' worth of consultation to help them assess their options for increasing farm profitability and establish a plan to implement the options they have chosen. This service will result in financial planning (including cash-flow planning), projections and a written report.
- After using the Canadian Farm Business Advisory Services, a consultant will follow up with producers to discuss how they are progressing in relation to the plan they developed and to offer further advice to the producer if needed. There is no cost for this service.

2. *Specialized Business Planning (SBP) Services.* This component offers assistance to producers in preparing the specialized plans needed for their businesses, such as diversification, marketing, human resources, expansion, risk management, and succession plans. To assist them in developing these types of plans, producers work with a consultant who has expertise in a specific area. This expertise is matched to the producer's specific needs. In terms of cost, the federal government will pay 50% of the total consultant fees, up to a maximum of \$8,000. Producers will be responsible for paying the balance.
3. *Planning and Assessment of Value-added Enterprises (PAVE).* This service is

available to producers who are considering establishing or expanding a value-added enterprise. It will provide them with assistance in retaining the services of a business planning professional to develop certain feasibility assessments and, if appropriate, a comprehensive business plan for specific services. This planning will facilitate access to capital.

Canadian deer and elk farmers should take advantage of these business advisory services. The programs will be available until 2008.

For more information on CFBAS programs and other renewal initiatives, visit the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website at www.agr.gc.ca/renewal.

5. Deer & Elk Farmers' Information Network News

Over the last several months, we have made a number of changes and additions at the Deer & Elk Farmers' Information Network – *Deerfarmer.com* and *Elkfarmer.com*. Here is an update.

Over the summer of 2003, we moved our websites to a new provider – United Hosting (offices in London, UK and servers in Texas). Our previous Internet provider was bought out by a new company and service declined to a point where we just had to move. As well, we were able to obtain a “virtual server” at UH which gave us a lot more capacity at significantly reduced costs. Because we now have full control over the server, we are able to create separate websites. This makes managing all the content we provide a whole lot easier.

The *Deerfarmer.com* family of websites now includes:

- *Deerfarmer.com* and *elkfarmer.com* – this is our home page, which also includes our photo gallery, links section, and some information about us. Our site has always been for elk

farmers as well, but to reinforce this fact, the site can now be accessed from *elkfarmer.com*.

- *Deerfarmer.net* – this site hosts our clients' deer farm websites. However, now that we have control over our server, we can offer full domain websites at a similar cost. All of the websites at *deerfarmer.net* are being moved to their own domain-based sites.
- *Deer-ads.com* – this site has our free classified ads where more deer and elk are sold than at any other place on the Internet.
- *Deer-talk.com* – this is a new site that has chat and project rooms. My hope is that these facilities will be used for educational and joint project purposes.
- *Deer-farms.com* – this is our do-it-yourself deer and elk farm/ranch directory. It has over 2,000 listings.
- *Deer-forums.com* – the discussion forums are our most popular site with thousands of visits every day. One can

learn much from the many experienced deer and elk farmers who contribute regularly. Some heated debates take place about important issues affecting our industry.

- *Deer-digest.com* and *elk-digest.com* – due to demands from our consulting projects, we suspended publication of this monthly electronic newsletter in May 2003. We are now back and plan to publish six times a year.
- *Deer-library.com* and *elk-library.com* – we installed a content management software package for our new library. The library has over 140 quality articles in an easy-to-find and printable format. Most of the articles were taken from the *Digest*.
- *Deer-mall.com* – this site is still under construction but will host our electronic store with products and services for deer and elk farmers as well as the general public. It will have a section where you can purchase a membership to help us maintain and expand our

Deer & Elk Farmers' Information Network services.

- *Velvet-antler.com* – this site is next on our “to-do” list. We plan to compile research and supplier information site to promote the use and sale of Northern American-produced velvet antler.
- *Venison-meat.com* – this site has been recently updated and upgraded. It contains information about cooking venison and elk meat, recipes, suppliers, and links to other resources. This site gets a considerable amount of traffic.

All of our sites are cross-linked so that you can easily find and access all of the information from any location. We will continue to expand and add to our network websites as time and resources permit.

As always, I am pleased to hear your comments and suggestions. Please send them to editor@deerfarmer.com or give me, Russell Sawchuk, a call at 1-800-267-9997.

6. Events Calendar

Here is a list of upcoming events of interest to deer, elk, and reindeer farmers. For more information, please contact the appropriate organization.

Second Antler Science and Product Technology Symposium will be held on February 25 - 27, 2004 in Queenstown, New Zealand. For more information, contact Mark O'Connor at mark.oconnor@nzgib.org.nz or phone +64 4 473 4500.

North American Deer Farmers Association Conference and Exhibition will be held at the Olympia Resort & Conference Center at Oconomowoc, Wisconsin, USA on Feb. 26 – 28, 2004. For more information, visit NADeFA at <http://www.nadefa.org>.

Wisconsin Commercial Deer & Elk Farmer's Association Convention will be held at the Holiday Inn Hotel, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, USA on Feb. 27 – 28, 2004. For more information, call 888-233-1667 or visit <http://www.wcdefa.org>.

Reindeer Owner's & Breeder's Association 2004 Annual Meeting will be held in Ames, Iowa, USA on March 18 - 20, 2004. For more information, contact Carol at roba_association@hotmail.com or visit their website at <http://www.reindeer.ws>.

Saskatchewan Elk Breeders Association Annual CONVENTION AND GENERAL MEETING will be held at the Delta Bessborough Hotel, in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada on March 19 – 20, 2004. For more information, call 306-782-6500.

Alberta Elk Annual Convention will be held at the Executive Royal Inn in Leduc, Alberta,

Canada on March 26 – 27, 2004. For more information, contact AEC at altaelk@telusplanet.net or phone 780-980-7582.

Saskatchewan White Tail and Mule Deer Producers Association 8th Annual Conference And Trade Show will be held at the Travelodge Hotel in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada on March 26 – 28, 2004. Dr. James Kroll will be the guest speaker. For more information, please see <http://www.saskdeer.com> or phone the SWAMDDPA office at 306-783-5257.

Biennial Australian Deer Industry Conference will be held in Mt. Gambier, South Australia on April 16 – 18, 2004. Contact Chris Tuckwell at 61-8-8562-1928 (phone) or 61-8-8562-1728 (fax) or by e-mail at cdtuckwell@bigpond.com.

Pennsylvania Deer Farmers Association Spring Meeting and Fund Raising will be held at the Solanco Fairgrounds, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, USA on Saturday, May 8, 2004. For more information, visit <http://www.padfa.com> or phone 717-566-4555.

New Zealand Society of Animal Production Conference will be held at the Dexcel campus, Newstead Hamilton, New Zealand. For more information, e-mail eric.kolver@dexcel.co.nz.

Sixth International Wildlife Ranching Symposium will be held at the Grande Amphitheatre, Museum National d'Histoire Naturelle, Jardin des Plantes, Paris, France. Contact Viviane Sammarcelli at bonjour@dtour.fr, 31-1-5395-3333 (phone) or 31-1-5395-0333 (fax).

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.

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The *Digest* is also available in print format (ISSN 1499-1349). A \$5 per issue (\$30 per

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As per our Privacy Policy, your name, e-mail address, and any other personal information, will only be used by the Deer & Elk Farmers' Information Network. This information will not be shared with any third party unless we get your permission first.

8. Contact Information

The *Digest* is always looking for articles and news about deer, elk, and reindeer farming to publish in this newsletter. E-mail, fax, or mail your ideas and articles to the Editor (see information below).

For general information or to send your comments and suggestions please contact:

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