

Welcome to the JANUARY 2002 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 2,800 readers in 28 countries.

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## 1. DEER FARMING IN AUSTRALIA

*[Reprinted in an edited version from the Australian Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation web site located at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/pub/deerrd1.html> ]*

Deer are not indigenous to Australia. They were introduced into Australia during the nineteenth century under the acclimatization programs governing the introduction of exotic (non-native) species of animals and birds into Australia. Six species of deer were released at various locations. The animals dispersed and established wild populations at various locations across Australia, mostly depending upon their points of release into the wild. These animals formed the basis for the deer industry in Australia today.

Commercial deer farming in Australia commenced in Victoria in 1971 with the authorized capture of rusa deer from the Royal National Park, NSW. Until 1985, only four species of deer, two from temperate climates (red, fallow) and two tropical species (rusa, chital) were confined for commercial farming. Late in 1985, pressure from industry to increase herd numbers saw the development of import protocols. This resulted in the introduction of large numbers of red deer and red deer/North American elk (wapiti) hybrids from New Zealand and North American elk (wapiti) directly from Canada.

Statistics compiled during 1997/99 suggest that in 1997/98 there were approximately 190,000 deer in Australia. Fallow deer comprise about 49%, red deer (including red hybrids) comprise about 39%, rusa 6.5%, elk/wapiti about 3%, and chital about 2.5% of the total farmed deer population.

The national farmed deer herd is distributed throughout all states although most are in New South Wales and Victoria.

The number of animals processed annually has continued to increase, despite the downward trend in venison prices since 1997. Of concern is the apparent increase in the number of female animals processed (which may suggest that the industry's production capacity is reduced) and the number of 'whole herds' committed for processing. With more than 40,000 animals processed in 1998/99 and 60,000 in 1999/2000, there is justified concern that future years may see a dramatic drop in production.

Average venison prices (weighted to consider variations of price paid relative to hot carcass weight and less the industry levy) did improve from an industry low of approximately AU\$1.60/kg hot carcass weight in June 1999 to approximately AU\$2.70/kg in June 2000.

From 1997, average prices (weighted to consider variations in price paid for different grades within and between species) for velvet antler were similarly depressed (about AU\$22.50/kg) but 1998 prices showed a slight recovery (up to about AU\$36.50/kg). The recovery continued into 1999 where average prices exceeded \$100/kg.

At least 85% of all venison produced in Australia is exported, principally to Europe. At least 90% of all velvet antler produced is exported in an unprocessed state to Asia.

The industry has embarked on a Quality Assurance program. This is slowly growing in an effort to increase client confidence in the commodities it produces and to guarantee international market access for those commodities.

The Australian Velvet Accreditation scheme continues to have a positive effect on quality that in turn has a positive effect on price paid to growers.

The industry appears to be showing limited signs that it is emerging from a state of depression caused by both internal and external factors that include: (i) the Asian currency downturn; (ii) the industry's lack of competitive advantage in influential markets (particularly in respect to New Zealand competition), and; (iii) within industry processing and marketing competition for limited product volumes of venison.

### ***Industry Structures***

From the formation of the Australian Deer Breeders Federation in 1979, the industry representative body has evolved through the Deer Farmers Federation of Australia to the Deer Industry Association of Australia Ltd (DIAA), which was registered in 1995. The DIAA represents all sectors of the Australian Industry and members subscribe directly or through state branches, breed societies or processing associations.

The industry has established two product development and marketing companies, the Australian Deer Horn and Co-Products Pty Ltd (ADH) and the Deer Industry Projects and Development Pty Ltd, which trades as the Deer Industry Company (DIC).

ADH collects and markets Australian deer horn and co-products on behalf of Australian deer farmers. It promotes the harvest of velvet antler according to the strict quality assurance (QA) program promoted by the industry. The company also plans and co-ordinates regular velvet accreditation courses for Australian deer farmers.

DIC undertakes project work to help the industry achieve its goals as described in the industry five year plan, or otherwise as required by the DIAA.

### ***Industry Development***

Industry estimates suggest that until the early 1990s the rate of the annual increase in the number of farmed deer was up to 25%, but after 1993 this rate of increase fell to probably less than 10%. The main reasons for the decline in the deer herd growth rate at such a critical time in industry development were: (i) severe drought conditions up to 1998 affecting eastern Australia during 1993-96 (in some areas the drought lasted until 1998) and (ii) the consequent slaughter of large numbers of breeding females, at very low prices. These factors combined to decrease confidence within the industry. Lack of confidence saw a drop in new investment within the industry and a lack of willingness of established farmers to expand their herds.

With the development of strong overseas markets for venison and velvet (Australian Deer Horn and Co-Products Pty Ltd), and the prospect of better seasons ahead in 1996, the trends described were seen to have been significantly reversed. However, the relatively small size of the Australian herd was seen to impose undesirable restraints on the rate at which herd numbers could be expanded to meet the demands for products.

Supply difficulties were exacerbated when the supply of products, particularly venison, was maintained by the slaughter of young breeding females. The net result was depletion of the industry's female breeding herds.

### ***Research and Development***

Industry research and development programs are funded by statutory levies on sales of animals for venison, velvet antler sales and the sale of live animals into export markets. The bulk of funds are collected from levies raised by the deer slaughter levy (venison).

RIRDC funds projects within objectives of the 1996–2000 five year plan including animal nutrition, pasture quality, carcass quality, antler harvesting, promotional material and technical bulletins. All projects have generated a significant volume of research information, which compliments similar research undertaken in New Zealand and other deer farming countries.

Major projects funded by levy funds include the Venison Market Development project during 1992 to 1996. This initiative resulted in a dramatic increase in international demand for Australian venison and an increase in the domestic consumption of venison.

However, the rapid increases in exports of venison were accomplished at the expense of maintaining the size of the national herd, (depletion of female stock through slaughter for venison and live exports).

In an effort to maintain existing venison markets in the short term and to increase them in the long term, the industry's top priority (in 1997) became the increase in size and production capacity of the national herd. However, since 1997, the decline in farm gate returns has significantly reduced industry confidence and has seen an increasing number of producers leave the industry and a decreasing interest in new investment in the industry.

The average annual budget allocated for deer industry research during the 1996-2000 Deer Industry Research and Development program ranged from AU\$100,000 to \$250,000. Although the majority of these funds have been obtained from the deer slaughter levy in the past, the current contribution of velvet antler levies to total levies receipts is significantly greater than in the past.

*[I would like to point out to our North American readers that both Australia and New Zealand have NATIONAL marketing agencies for ALL deer species. These organizations are funded by compulsory levies on products providing them with predictable revenues for marketing and promotion. It is my humble opinion that the fragmentation and lack of similar agencies in Canada and the United States are the major obstacles to successfully competing in the international venison and velvet markets. Ed.]*

## 2. 55 MARKETING TOOLS FOR THE DEER AND ELK FARMERS

[By Russell Sawchuk. Taken from our seminar workbook – “Practical Marketing of Your New Venture”]

**H**ere are 55 promotional tools that you can use to market your deer/elk products and services. Many are low-cost or free. Remember, the more of these tools that you use, the more effective your marketing will be!

1. *Name* – Pick a good one. Be sure people can pronounce it, spell it, that it does not confuse them and it is uniquely yours. Register a trademark for the name.
2. *Domain name* – Register an Internet domain name for your farm or business. Try and get the same name as your farm/business name.
3. *Logo* – It is smart to have one. Use it. Spend a few “bucks” and get a professional-looking one. Be sure to get an electronic version so you can plop it down everywhere.
4. *Colour* – Associate colours with your business and use them consistently.
5. *Identity* – Conveys your company’s personality throughout your marketing. Pick a niche and position, and stick with it.
6. *Theme* – This is a set of words that summarizes your company and its prime benefits. Pick a theme you can live with for a long time.
7. *Packaging* – Packaging is your boxes, your truck, your deer trailer, your sales people and you. Packaging will attract or repel customers and prospects.
8. *Business card* – Put ALL relevant information on it. Use both sides and turn it into a mini-brochure. Always have some on-hand.
9. *Internet presence* – At least get an e-mail address; it makes it easier for people to get a hold of you. Consider a web site, even a small one just to get started.
10. *Toll-free telephone numbers* – These are a bargain and make it easier for people to contact you. Try and get one starting with 800 if possible.
11. *Size* – Size influences some people to buy or not to buy. Can you offer benefits of a large and small-size company?
12. *Attire* – You and your employees represent your business. People will develop attitudes about your business based on what you and your employees are wearing. Dress appropriately to your clientele and customers. Consider shirts with your farm name/logo that you can wear at conventions and other events.
13. *Decor* – Prospects and customers will form opinions about your offering based on the decor of your store, office or farm. It should reflect your honest identity.

14. *Stationery* – The look and feel make it a powerful marketing tool. Consider using the back side of envelopes to tell people about your farm and what you have to offer.

15. *Order forms/invoices/cheques* – Opportunity to gain more business, increase referrals, and solidify relationships with customers. Again, put all information such as 800 numbers, e-mail and web site addresses.

16. *Hours/days of operation* – Can provide you an advantage over your competitors. Provide alternatives for people to buy from you e.g., taking telephone orders, providing catalogues, accepting orders by e-mail and having an Internet web site with your products and an order form. Make some of these alternatives available 24 hours a day.

17. *Phone manners* – This is the first contact many customers have with your company. It can be positive or negative. Get an answering machine or voice mail to take messages. Return these promptly.

18. *Neatness* – Messiness causes lost sales because people believe the sloppiness will carry over to other parts of your business. Keep your farm neat and tidy – grass cut, buildings painted, fences fixed, etc.

19. *Location* – An important component in the success of many businesses.

20. *Customer follow-up* – Follow-up is the key to a loyal customer base. It is very important to establish a database of your customers so you can use it for follow-up and repeated marketing. When you sell them deer or elk, follow up to see whether they need advice or help. This will turn them into repeat customers.

21. *Customer recourse* – Know what you'll do if the customer is not satisfied. Have a clear policy and be sure all your staff know and follow it. Remember, the customer is always right!

22. *Guarantees/warranties* – Help the customer feel safer in doing business with you. Make them generous and be flexible. Satisfied customers are one of the best marketing tools you have.

23. *Community involvement* – The more you're involved with your community, the higher your profits will be. This involves more time and energy than money. It could include involvement with community associations.

24. *Tie-in with others* – Display signs or brochures of other businesses if they will do the same for you.

25. *Reprints of ads or articles* – Make inexpensive reprints for mailings and signs.

26. *Special events* – Staging unusual activities around your business is a good way to attract free publicity. Have a contest and award a trophy, throw a party for prospects, have an open house at your farm, arrange for school visits or take a fawn to schools.

27. *Testimonials* – These are free, easy to obtain, and very impressive to new prospects. Use them as signs, in your brochures, ads, and in direct mailings.

28. *Smiles/greetings* – They make customers feel special. Employees should smile in person and on the phone.

29. *Sales training* – Customers like dealing with people who know the products and business. Be sure your sales people know the way you do business and reflect your identity. Consider taking a sales training course yourself.

30. *Audio-visual aids* – These can be very effective tools. Use them.

31. *Videotapes and CD-ROMS* – These can be used as electronic brochures. They are not that expensive and can have impact.

32. *Refreshments* – Little things such as offering coffee and doughnuts in the morning can have a dramatic impact in sales.

33. *Credit cards* – The easier you make it for someone to buy, the more they will buy. The discounts and paperwork are worth the effort. Belonging to some organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce may entitle you to lower discount rates.

34. *Financing* – Many customers will want what you are selling, but won't have the money now. Financing can win sales.

35. *Club and association memberships* – Join these to become part of the community and gain credibility. The Better Business Bureau and the Chamber of Commerce are a good place to start. Also be a member of the major deer/elk associations.

36. *Team sponsorships* – A good way to get involved in the community.

37. *Circulars* – These are inexpensive, flexible and easy to distribute at sales, conventions, under windshield wipers, as bag stuffers, as signs, on counters, at homes and more.

38. *Brochures* – These are more detailed and less time-bound. Their purpose is to provide overall information. Professionally-designed and produced brochures make a better impression.

39. *Samples* – Good quality free samples are one of the most effective marketing tools ever devised, e.g., elk velvet antler capsules, venison, etc.

40. *Consultations* – These are like free samples and work very well for the service business, e.g., farm design and layout, handling facilities, etc.

41. *Demonstrations* – These let customers see what it would be like to own what you sell. Hold a field day on your farm for new deer farmers and others considering entering the industry.

42. *Column in publications* – Many local and business publications will publish a column on your field of expertise. Don't ask for money, only for the mention of your farm name, e-mail and/or web site. National and regional deer/elk publications (including this *Digest*) are always looking for good articles.

43. *Books and articles* – Publishing will establish your credibility. Even self-publishing will help.
44. *Contests and sweepstakes* – These will call attention to your business and obtain precious names for your customer mailing list. If possible, have entrants come to your place of business. Offer one of your products as a prize to better target your audience.
45. *Phone-hold marketing* – When customers are on-hold, impart useful information about your company.
46. *Roadside stands* – Suitable for certain products. However, check your state or county regulations first.
47. *Co-op funds* – Many manufacturers make funds available if you give them a plug in your ads. Perhaps other businesses will help you pay for advertising if you mention them.
48. *Research studies* – The more you know, the better you will be able to market.
49. *Posters* – These can be anything you want but should add pizzazz and visibility to your identity. They can be used everywhere.
50. *Take-one boxes* – Place one of these in any location frequented by your prospects and fill it with your brochures. The brochures can be informational or promotional.
51. *Gift certificates* – Consider offering them if your product can be given as a gift.
52. *Reputation* – One of the most important components to marketing. Be sure to establish and maintain a good reputation.
53. *Customer mailing lists* – Keep them from the day you go into business. The lists are worth their weight in gold because of repeat business and referrals.
54. *Enthusiasm* – Gets passed on by you to your employees, from them to customers, and from customers to potential customers.
55. *Satisfied customers* – These can single-handedly create your word-of-mouth campaign, whereas unhappy customers can put you out of business!



### 3. WHY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENTS DON'T LIKE GAME FARMS

[By Dean Murray, Zumbrota, Minnesota, USA]

The real reason that Montana voted down game farms was purely a financial one and not one of animal health. We are all for healthy animals, but the pressure on legislators was brought to bear by the DNR (Department of Natural Resources) and by hundreds of guide service owners (voters) who believe they already have too much competition for paying customers.

Even though “hundreds” sounds small, you have to remember that the population of Montana is still less than 1 million people compared to 4.5 million in Minnesota. Tourism (including hunting) makes up a huge share of that state’s economy. The state would lose out on selling licenses since game farm hunters are not required to buy them.

Game farm hunts average less than 3 days. Regular hunts run about 8 days. That’s 5 less days of lodging and meals that could’ve been purchased from an outfitter. If an outfitter doesn’t make money, he won’t spend it either.

Each year more and more hunters are booking hunts into big game farms for some very good reasons.

1. They are guaranteed to see and get chances at multiple trophy animals. That’s something that just doesn’t happen to 99.9% of all hunters throughout their lifetime of hunting.
2. They don’t have to compete with other hunters for their secret spot on public/private land. This alone allows hunters to relax so much more and really enjoy their time outdoors. It removes a lot of anxiety about hunting that many of us suffer through.
3. They don’t have to worry about or deal with slob hunters who screw up your hunt by stealing your stand or your animal or intrude illegally onto your turf.
4. They have the opportunity to “pass” on “book” bucks for an even bigger one.
5. In most cases they come away with a feeling of fair chase and thus can feel good about harvesting their trophy.

The first and last points made here are particularly what brings past hunters back to the game farm, along with a new game farm “recruits.” And that is exactly what the DNR can NOT offer. We all want to see trophy bucks walking around in front of us during the hunting season, but it just doesn’t happen that way in the wild, does it?

Here’s the nut of it: game farms are a far greater financial threat to the DNR than a health threat to the wildlife. The DNR knows that the real problem with game farm hunting is that it works. Each year more and more hunters are finding that there are fewer places to hunt that hold mature animals capable of scoring in the record book classes. Today the DNR doesn’t really miss the income lost by hunters going to game farms. But if the number of hunters buying licenses were to decrease by as little as 0.5% per year, it would grab the attention of the DNR in a hurry. That’s the nut.

Because game farm hunting is becoming more and more attractive it also becomes more and more of a financial threat to all DNR organizations. DNR officials have effectively argued that disease control is their only concern. It's a great argument because we all agree that Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) should be eradicated.

What most of the public does not see is that cry for disease control is merely a lily white smoke screen used to divert attention from the real motivation within the DNR, which is self-preservation. We all understand self-preservation.

From a business perspective, the future of every DNR is tied directly to its ability to generate revenue. That's the cold hard truth. They are responsible for the management of wildlife which includes the revenue generation that goes along with wildlife. If they can't justify their own existence by generating enough revenue to sustain the budget, they will be replaced with another organization that can. Sound familiar? It should, because the financial world of the DNR functions much like that of a machine shop, assembly plant or newspaper: make money or hit the road!

Game farms threaten the financial stability of the DNR. What really scares many Conservation Officers is that they recognize that the private sector manages animals and land more efficiently than any governmental agency. That's always been true.

A game farm manager can feed the best feeds, vaccinate and supplement feed with vitamins and minerals. They can minimize stresses such as parasites and predators. They can select the best genetics and ensure that those genes are passed on. They can isolate, quarantine and test animals for health assurance and maintain those records. All these things help them to grow many animals capable of reaching their full potential. Most game farmers will guarantee that you will see and have the opportunity to take a trophy class animal.

Consumers agree that competition is good for business. It makes for a better product and service and a lower price. Since the DNR can't control wild animals like a game farmer can theirs, they (the DNR) can't compete head to head. They can't guarantee anything to the hunter consumer. So the dilemma for the DNR becomes a question of competing or deleting. In Montana they succeeded in deleting their competition.

It makes me wonder if any DNR employees have ever raised the question of anti-trust or monopoly during any of their meetings while discussing the role of the DNR and the future of game farms and shooting preserves within their states.

In the case of Montana, the DNR and guide service owners were successful at preventing their competition from getting a foothold there. Public opinion was manipulated through the media by carefully releasing articles or statements inciting highly emotional responses from readers and listeners.

Statistics and risk assessments were exaggerated along with a failure to inform the public that the CWD problem we have now originated from (and is still present in) captive herd animals owned by the Colorado Department of Wildlife. In essence they're shouting "FIRE", but conveniently forget to tell us that they lit the thing and that they're still holding the arsonist's torch behind their backs. Why are animals infected with CWD that are owned by the state allowed to live with the disease,

but private farm animals must be destroyed immediately? You would not believe the answer if I told you. Go ask the Colorado DOW.

Reporters have fallen victim to the political agenda of the DNR and have unwittingly been doing their bidding for them. It's not their fault, but they should own up to their involvement and begin asking serious questions, like, "At the current trend in game farm hunting, how long before the DNR begins to feel the impact of financial losses?" There is an answer to that question that the DNR would rather not talk about, especially in print. Whether the answer is 5, 10 or 100 years it still makes the point that the DNR admits that they are knowingly competing with private business people for hunter dollars.

It's a curious thing that we as a country are extremely passionate about granting a woman the right to choose to kill a baby, but we won't allow a hunter the choice to kill a wild animal raised behind a fence in Montana or Minnesota.

#### **4. FINISHING FOR QUALITY VENISON**

*[By Jayson Galbraith, Elk Production Specialist, Alberta Elk Centre. Reprinted with permission from the Canadian Elk and Deer Farmer magazine, Fall 2001]*

**In** the summer of 2001, several livestock producer groups met to discuss the need for a "grass-finished" protocol. Benefits of grass-finished livestock, marketing of unique meat products, factors affecting meat quality, and the definition of "grass-finished" were discussed. Many of the issues identified are applicable to the deer and elk industry as they venture into venison production and marketing.

Ruminant livestock grazing on green pastures naturally produce Conjugated Linoleic Acids (CLA) in fat, meat and milk. CLA has been shown to protect experimental animals from cancer and arteriosclerosis (abnormal thickening and loss of elasticity of the walls of the arteries) as well as changing the ratio of fat to lean in a number of mammals. As traditional livestock management systems have moved towards finishing on grain and less forage, the CLA in livestock products has diminished.

Grass finished meat products are appealing to consumers, not only for the possible health benefits, but also from an image point of view. The pristine image of pasture-raised livestock attracts certain consumers. It makes them feel comfortable with the conditions the animals were raised in, and the naturalness of the product.

The deer and elk industry has an advantage in this regard with the natural image of the animal coming very easily to the mind of a venison consumer. The phrases "heritage" or "natural" meat product could be used effectively in the marketing and promotion of venison.

Meat-production operations using grass and forages in the finishing process will have different feeding challenges and goals as compared to a velvet operation. Optimizing the animals' seasonality could be used advantageously in a feeding program.

Seasonality is reflected upon examination of feed utilization in wild populations. Elk in the wild must deal with sharp seasonal changes in dietary quantity and quality. This natural variation in food

consumption has been associated with an increased summer metabolic rate and consequently an increase in food consumption during times when food is abundant.

Farms emphasizing meat production animals may be able to capitalize on seasonality in the planning of their diets. Utilizing forages in the finishing process could keep the feeding costs down at certain times of the year, while still maintaining animals in good body condition.

Many factors contribute to the overall quality of meat. The diets of ruminants affect the quality of meat only to a small degree. However, diets can have an influence on the fat content of the carcass, which in turn can affect overall flavour.

Conditions that the animal is exposed to 24 hours prior to slaughter can be crucial to carcass and meat characteristics. After an episode of handling, transport and off-loading at an abattoir, an animal can become stressed. This will have negative effects on the meat quality.

It has been found that treating bison carcasses to various post-mortem treatments such as elevated temperature conditioning, low voltage electrical stimulation, blast chilling and very fast chilling can have a positive effect on the quality of the meat.

Therefore, if you want quality venison, feeding regimes (grass vs. grain finishing), stress reduction in handling and transport, and post-slaughter carcass treatments are all areas that need attention.

During the meeting, there was considerable discussion as to the definition of “grass-finished.” Does grass-finished mean the animal has eaten forages exclusively during its entire life, or the animal has been fed forages the last few weeks of its life? Also important in the discussion was the fact that a component of the “image” of pasture-raised livestock should be in the definition.

Likely the best approach to a grass-finished protocol may be one that incorporates a high level of grass in the finishing process integrated with limited grain supplementation. This would capitalize on the benefits of a higher energy diet while still maintaining both the health benefits of a high forage diet, and the positive image to the consumer.

Many unanswered questions remain about “grass-finished” venison, both from a production and a consumer point of view. Research studies need to be undertaken to help the cervid meat industry move forward.

## 5. THE SAGE OF BUCKSNORT

*[We welcome Jack Reeves, a professional journalist living in rural Georgia, USA to the Deer Farmers' Digest. Jack spent 15 years (1984-99) at international agricultural research centers - as an agricultural journalist, heading communication and publication programs - in Africa, Asia, and South America. He began as a Science Writer for the University of Georgia College of Agriculture. Jack has edited for the Taiwan Sugar Research Institute since 1993. He has won awards for his writings. His regular columns can be seen at <http://www.theweekly.com/subs/reeves.html> The Sage of Bucksnot will be published in the Digest on an occasional basis.]*

Folks in Bucksnot are intimate with nature. The nature of deer, catfish, possums, hawks, herons, blackberries, kudzu, scorpions, and road-kill. Raw, rugged nature.

This week there was a picture in The Bucksnot Bugle of Jay Bradford and a rattlesnake. After he killed it he threw it in the back of his pickup and drove to the newspaper office so Patrick Smith could take its picture - and Jay's!

The caption read: Jay Bradford is shown with a six-foot diamondback rattlesnake he killed on his farm. It has 10 rattles. He said this has been a bad year for snakes.

The last sentence is unclear. Is it a bad year for humans encountering snakes, or for snakes encountering humans?

If you live close to nature, a rattlesnake is relevant to your life.

The same happens when someone kills a big buck or gobbler turkey, or when a large catfish is caught. You take a picture of it or take it to town for Patrick to photograph.

We're constantly aware of nature. Many of us hear the sounds of hawks, crows, or geese in the morning. Maybe a buck pawing and snorting. In the summer, when the bedroom window's open, an owl in the wee hours of the morning.

The name of our town, Bucksnot, has roots in nature.

Eating possum is not a thing of the past in this county. It's a little greasy, though, for modern, health-conscious, cholesterol-checking types.

For folks who live on farms, animals - wild and domesticated - are an integral part of life. Compare those who daily deal with cows, chickens, horses, rodents, ants, and manure with those whose closest contact with nature is a tropical fish in an aquarium. No criticism of the latter, just contrasting realities, ways of living.

A lot of our daily activities deal with nature: taking livestock to auction, cleaning chicken houses, protecting your poultry from raccoons and foxes. Harold Bowmann lost several chickens last month to a predator.

"Nature's red in tooth and claw," Darwin wrote.

The major aim of both possums and people is to survive. We consume food to stay alive. It's fundamental to life. That's the way nature made us. Few, either from conscience or choice, live on rutabagas and rice. We're part and parcel of nature - even if we live in the suburbs or the space station.

Nature. Creation, the physical world, the natural world. We're part of it. We can, to some degree, isolate ourselves from its processes. But there's nothing about us that's not traceable to our biology, to nature.

Even the stock market?

Near the top of the list.

In Bucksnot, our rural world, we're reminded more than non-rural folks that people don't always rule.

The cockroach and the rat were here eras before us. They scurried around the feet of dinosaurs. Dinosaurs have been gone for 65 million years. The roach and rat are still here. They invade our space, our cities, our homes. They eat our crops and food. We call them vermin.

We may yet be replaced by them.

It's something to think about. Seriously.

## **6. EVENTS CALENDAR**

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

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 <mailto: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 <mailto: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 <mailto: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 <mailto: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 <mailto:info@saskdeer.com>

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention will be held on March 21-24, 2002 at the Riviera, Las Vegas, Nevada, USA. For more information contact <mailto: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 <mailto: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 <mailto:info@whitetailsofwisconsin.com>

DEER BRANCH NEW ZEALAND VETERINARY ASSOCIATION Annual Seminar will be held in Nelson, New Zealand May 15-17, 2002. This is a technical conference for veterinarians, researchers and advanced farmers. This conference will be in the week preceding the NZ Deer Farmers' Association Conference in Wellington. Enquiries to Peter Wilson, at <mailto:P.R.Wilson@massey.ac.nz> or fax 0064 6 3505616

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

## **7. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES**

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## 8. CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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

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<http://www.deerforum.com> and <http://www.globaldeer.com>

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