

Welcome to the JULY 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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**\*\* A D V E R T I S E M E N T \* \* \* \* \***

Visit our brand new Deer Farmers' Venison Culinary Centre located at <http://www.venison-meat.com> or <http://venison.deerfarmer.com>. The VCC has information on preparing and cooking venison, recipes and links to resources. We are also compiling a directory of venison vendors and distributors. If you are a reputable seller of farm-raised venison products, and want a FREE LISTING, please apply using the on-line form at <http://venison.deerfarmer.com/html/vendor.html>

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## 1. MARKETING VELVET ANTLER

*[By Ann Cooney, Specialized Livestock Marketing Research Group, Dept. of Ag. Economics, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon Canada. Reprinted from her report – “A Review of Scientific Literature on the Health Benefits of Velvet Antler”]*

Velvet antler has been entering the North American market very slowly through pharmacies and health food stores. Discussions were held with health food stores and pharmacies in Saskatoon (Canada) to understand the marketing strategies for these products.

Velvet antler is considered to be a nutraceutical. It is available on the market mainly in encapsulated form, although skin care cream made from it is also available. The current regulatory framework for nutraceuticals in Canada (and the USA) precludes antler products from having health claims on their labels.

Here is what we discovered in our discussions with velvet antler retailers.

### **Target audience**

People aged fifty and above tend to purchase antler products mainly as a natural remedy for arthritis. Customers access information about these products from Internet advertisements, magazine articles (Alive magazine), radio commercials, pamphlets available in health food stores and pharmacies, and from cultural medicine.

However, velvet antler products are not as well-known as other traditional remedies such as ginseng and echinacea. Most pharmacies are not familiar with this product.

### **Distribution criteria**

Velvet antler products may increase in popularity if they can access large chain store pharmacies. Most pharmacies and health food stores set their own standards for the products they stock. Some of the standards used by stores are discussed below.

Most of the retailers identified the reputation of the processor as one of the most important factors determining purchasing decisions for nutraceuticals. Processors must be reputable.

One health food store owner suggested that independent deer antler producers should get their product marketed through renowned antler manufacturing companies to improve market penetration. This would also help ensure consistent product quality and safety. Product safety concerns include animal health (chronic wasting disease), bacterial contamination (E. coli, Samonella spp.), chemical contamination, and physical contamination such as dander.

Many retailers require some level of good manufacturing practices (GMPs) in the processing plants to ensure product safety and quality. A Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system implemented in processing plants is preferred. In some cases, stores send representatives to inspect the processors to verify sanitary processing conditions.

Several retailers expressed a preference for Canadian products or Canadian companies, but will sell imported nutraceuticals from reputable sources. One company verifies the original manufacturers of these imported products. Other issues include the ability to provide appropriate, professional labeling and informational brochures.

Another significant factor that retailers consider when choosing nutraceuticals is product quality. However, the definition of quality differs from retailer to retailer, ranging from raw ingredients to the finished products. Several stores verify sources of raw materials to ensure quality. One retailer requires Canadian raw materials from natural sources.

Another store requires the manufacturer to provide a full ingredient list. If any ingredients are unknown, the store conducts further verification on the product. Another retailer selects products containing the least amount of food additives such as artificial colours and artificial sweeteners. The purity of the finished product is also assessed, as several stores require independent laboratory analysis of nutraceutical products before the products are purchased.

Most stores named the health benefits of nutraceuticals as an important consideration in making purchasing decisions. Several stores require the manufacturer to provide information about a product's benefits, including independent scientific or sponsored studies, journal articles, or magazine articles, before stocking a product. One retailer listed proven scientific benefits as the most important factor in determining purchasing decisions.

Although the health benefits of the products are the most important factor to one retailer, customer demand was identified as the most important consideration by another store. The store was confident buying products that are well known to consumers such as vitamin C, and glucosamine. However, this store was very reluctant about buying a new product such as velvet antler because it perceived a lack of customer demand. This particular retailer suggested that antler product manufacturers should promote the health benefits of their products through the media to raise consumer awareness.

Price was also mentioned by several retailers as a factor to consider when stocking a product. At least one store stated that quality outweighed price. Another store identified package size and labeling as important considerations.

### **Current marketing approaches**

Most stores visited for this study stated that manufacturers approached either their stores directly or their head offices to sell their products. Methods of product procurement include independent store retailers purchasing directly from manufacturers, centralized buying by a purchasing office for a chain, and independent and chain stores ordering products from a wholesaler.

Most wholesalers or manufacturers provide product information in the form of brochures, pamphlets, independent scientific studies, and monographs either to the head office or directly to the stores. Pharmacists receive this information and have access to supplemental information from the Internet, Drug Information Line, academic institutions, the MEDLINE database, and doctors. Some stores have compiled their own manuals that include product characteristics, or they may request further scientific literature from the manufacturer. Manufacturers periodically offer "crash courses" on the benefits of their products to stores.

Once in stock, several stores have a trial period for nutraceuticals. One store keeps a product on the shelf for a three-month trial period, after which point the price is reduced. If the product remains unsold, the store returns the product for credit or exchanges the product for another from the same manufacturer.

Some stores have a “guaranteed sold” clause in their agreements with the manufacturer that credits the store for product that has not been sold before its expiry date or that has not sold with a defined period such as three to six months. After that period, the store returns them to the manufacturer with approximately a 5% restocking charge or a full refund.

Most stores surveyed keep the product on the shelf until the best before date or expiry date. One wholesaler credits any pharmacy clients that return expired nutraceuticals, and then return the product to the manufacturer for credit. Another independent retailer does not return the product for credit, but reduces the price.

Several stores inform customers of the correct dosage of every product, and review customers’ diet, lifestyle, medication, and medical condition to ensure correct usage of the product.

The comments from retailers show there are a variety of policies for evaluating product quality, stocking products, procurement and product information. This suggests that there is a need for a coordinated industry strategy or to set standards as to what constitutes good velvet antler products. For example, standards could entail processors working with producers who are part of an on-farm quality assurance program that has protocols for traceability, animal husbandry and velvet antler harvesting.

The processors themselves would likely have implemented a food safety program such as Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) and a quality assurance program. This would help provide markets (retailers and consumers) with long-term confidence in products, especially in light of the situation with CWD.

A consistent set of product standards would also alleviate confusion for marketers, processors and wholesalers. Currently, different retailers have different product requirements. Therefore, devising a product development and marketing strategy based on a retailer who has low requirements would preclude doing business with others who have a much higher standard. Low standards may create a poor image of the industry, which in turn would result in poor consumer acceptance. There are clear advantages to a coordinated industry strategy in responding to retailers’ information and product quality needs.

### **Need for research**

The importance of market research and having credible scientific information cannot be overemphasized. An industry strategy to continue searching for other existing reference materials and investing and encouraging scientific research on health benefits is important for continued growth and to secure retail/consumer confidence. Communicating the benefits of the product to retailers and consumers in a user-friendly fashion needs to be done in a targeted and professional fashion.

Product literature must include information about side effects due to medical conditions. Although anecdotes and testimonials may encourage consumer experimentation with a new product, they do not provide retail outlets, such as pharmacies, with the scientific information required to promote the product with confidence. The risk is that velvet antler may be perceived as a fad product, lacking in scientific credibility with potentially detrimental side-effects.

## **Competition**

Most importantly, the industry must recognize that in order to be successful in the nutraceutical business, velvet antler has to compete with a large variety of other health products. Velvet antler marketers have to work closely with retailers to share information, to get feedback from them on customer reactions to the product, on promotional strategies, and producing literature that addresses consumer questions and concerns. This on-going process of information exchange is a management tool that will help sustain and grow the markets.

Competing in the nutraceutical industry also demands high quality standards for products, scientific information, labeling and promotional tools. Industry co-ordination in these matters is essential to ensure that consistent and accurate product and industry information is disseminated.

Success in the nutraceutical industry also demands that producers understand the alliances they are undertaking with marketers so that they are supporting marketing efforts that will help create the desired product image in a manner that produces sustainable markets.

## **2. THE UPSIDES OF CWD**

**B**y now, we are all very aware of the negative consequences that CWD has brought to the deer and elk farming industry in North America. These include: loss of significant markets for velvet antler due to Korean ban on imports; restrictions (up to five years) on the inter-state and inter-provincial movement of cervids; de-population of elk farms; a significant loss of revenue to the industry; and an increased pressure by opponents of game farming to shut the industry down.

But what about the upsides of CWD? No, I'm not joking. I believe there may be some significant benefits and opportunities associated with the CWD "crisis."

First, however, let's look at a recent media release from the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) regarding CWD. [My observations and comments are in brackets].

### **Where has CWD been found?**

CWD is known to infect free-ranging deer and elk in northeastern Colorado and free-ranging deer in western Colorado, southern Wyoming, western Nebraska, South Dakota, Wisconsin, New Mexico and Saskatchewan. It has been diagnosed in elk in game ranches in Colorado, Nebraska, South Dakota, Montana, Oklahoma, Kansas, Alberta [only one elk so far] and Saskatchewan.

[Some people believe CWD may exist in wild animals in other places, but the authorities simply haven't bothered to look/test for it. I feel that the general public lacks accurate information and believes CWD is pervasive among all wild deer and elk herds.]

### **Is CWD dangerous to humans?**

Epidemiologists with the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta and epidemiologists at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment have studied chronic wasting disease and have found no evidence that CWD poses a risk to humans or domestic animals. Over 16 years of monitoring in the infected area in Colorado has found no disease in people or cattle living there. The World Health Organization has likewise said there is no scientific

evidence that CWD can infect humans. HOWEVER, as a precaution, the WHO also says no part of a deer or elk with evidence of CWD should be consumed by people or other animals.

[There are mixed messages here – there is no evidence that it is unsafe, but don't eat the animal if there is evidence of CWD. Other than sending in a brain for testing, how is a person supposed to know whether the animal has CWD?]

### **What precautions should hunters take?**

Health officials advise hunters not to consume meat from animals known to be infected with the disease. Boning out meat is recommended. In addition, they suggest hunters take simple precautions such as wearing latex gloves when field dressing carcasses, minimizing handling of brain and spinal tissues, washing hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing is completed, avoiding eating the brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, and lymph nodes of harvested animals, and finally requesting that your animal is processed individually, without meat from other animals being added to meat from your animal.

[Problems are arising because butcher shops are refusing to process wild deer because of fears of CWD and issues related to disposal of offal.]

### **How can you tell if a deer has CWD?**

Because the brain is the organ affected by the disease, infected animals begin to lose bodily functions and display abnormal behavior such as staggering or standing with very poor posture. Animals may have an exaggerated wide posture, or may carry the head and ears lowered. Infected animals become very emaciated (thus “wasting” disease) and will appear in very poor body condition. Infected animals will also often stand near water and will consume large amounts of water. Drooling or excessive salivation may be apparent.

[At early stages, deer and elk may have CWD and not exhibit any major symptoms. I understand that it takes 36 months for the disease to exhibit major symptoms and for the animal to die.]

### **What should I do if I see a deer that shows CWD symptoms?**

Accurately document the location of the animal and immediately contact the nearest Wildlife Division or Law Enforcement Division office. Do not attempt to touch, disturb, kill, or remove the animal.

[I find this to be an curious recommendation. Wouldn't it be better to kill the animal and have it tested, rather than having it flee into the wild while you are reporting it to the wildlife division. Do wildlife divisions have the resources to track down every deer or elk that hunters report may have the symptoms of CWD? I think not!]

### **Can I have deer venison tested?**

Deer “venison” cannot be tested - only brain and neural and lymph node tissue can be tested to detect the presence of CWD. There is no means of testing deer tissue samples for CWD in Texas at present. However, the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Lab in College Station is in the process of being certified by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to be able to test CWD samples. Eventually, the public may be instructed to contact the Texas Animal Health Commission for information on testing.

[Can the average Joe deer hunter have the deer he shot in the wild tested for CWD prior to butchering and eating it? Some places such as Saskatchewan do test many hunter kills; other places don't have the resources. Also who pays for the testing? Are adequate lab resources available to do the testing?]

### **Is the meat safe to eat?**

While the agent that produces chronic wasting disease in deer and elk has not been positively identified, there is strong evidence to suggest that abnormally shaped proteins called prions are involved. Research completed to date indicates that the prions accumulate only in certain parts of infected animals - the brain, eyes, spinal cord, lymph nodes, tonsils, and spleen. Based on these findings, hunters are recommended to bone out their meat and consume only muscle tissue from harvested animals.

[I think many people still may be hesitant about eating wild deer meat that has NOT been tested for CWD.]

### **Benefits and opportunities**

I don't know about you, but after reading the above, I think I will pass on filling my freezer with wild venison this fall. If I want venison, I will go to <http://www.venison-meat.com> and buy some farm-raised venison that I know has been tested for CWD and processed in a government-inspected plant. Taking into account all the fees, expenses and hassles in shooting your own deer, buying safe, quality rancher venison is probably a lot cheaper too. I believe a lot of other hunters are thinking the same way. Increased interest and demand for safe farm-raised venison is one of the upsides of CWD.

The other beneficiary of the CWD scare is the hunting preserve industry. If I am determined to go out and shoot my own deer this fall, animals from CWD and TB-monitored herds on well-run preserves are going to look a lot more attractive than wild stock. If I were a preserve owner, I would be ramping up my advertising and focusing on these benefits. Also, with the abundance of animals due to restrictions on inter-state movement of deer and elk, I would encourage preserves to offer more "economy" hunts. This would provide a viable and affordable option to those hunters that are concerned about CWD in the wild.

What are some of the other upsides and opportunities that I see from CWD?

1. It will eliminate the marginal operators that give the industry a bad image. People with small pens, poor feeding and health programs, and little knowledge, skills or interest to look after their animals properly will go out of business.
2. It is a great time to upgrade your genetics. With prices for quality breeding stock being so reasonable, why not get the best genetics possible? Also, look to the future. As the venison market develops, you may want to get animals that have bigger body weights.
3. Now is the time to get rid of your marginal animals. Sell them for meat. Any does/cows that don't produce offspring, have difficult births, over-mother, or are high-strung (see Article 4 below) should be sent to the slaughterhouse. Research done at the Agriculture Canada Research Station at Lacombe, Alberta has found that the meat of elk bulls and cows remains tender into old age.

4. With prices for breeding stock being so affordable, it is a good time to recruit new farmers into the industry. We believe deer and elk farming is a viable and sustainable agricultural pursuit. Now is a good time to get in. Your associations should be aggressively marketing this opportunity!
5. With the inter-state movement restrictions of cervids, the opportunities for semen sales and use of other reproductive technologies increase. There is now an incentive to undertake more research to increase our knowledge of these technologies. Advances here could reduce the need for movement of animals in the future, thus reducing risks of disease migrations, and increase the profitability of producers.
6. With lower animal prices, venison is now a more affordable meat that is competitive with other red meats. This should introduce venison to new consumers who hopefully will become addicted to this tasty and healthy alternative.
7. Lower animal prices have enabled some entrepreneurs to establish profitable businesses buying deer/elk at auctions and selling cost-competitive venison directly to consumers and at farmers' markets.
8. I believe that the CWD issue will encourage the development and implementation of better record-keeping systems and related regulations. Canadian provinces already have such inventory and trace-back systems in place. More U.S. states need to do so, and there needs to be some harmonization across jurisdictions.
9. The paranoia about CWD will result in more research and the eventual finding of a live animal test. What we learn about CWD will have significant implications for other related animal and human diseases as well.
10. With fears continuing about CWD in the wild for the next few years, there will be a significant reduction in the number of people going deer and elk hunting. This will be especially true for out-of-state hunters concerned about transporting carcasses and contributing to the spread of disease. This, in turn, will see drastic reductions in revenues of state Fish and Wildlife Departments. Because these Departments rely on these revenues, there will be staff reductions and loss of influence of these agencies on public policy making regarding deer and elk.

### **Some thoughts on the venison opportunity**

I am seeing a lot more interest in developing a venison market than ever before. Deer and elk numbers keep growing – anywhere from 15 to 30 percent per year. The producers either need to invest in expanding their fencing and facilities, or to get rid of a certain number of animals each year. Right now, selling the animals for venison is the only reasonable option.

Here are of my some thoughts regarding the venison market.

1. Don't expect your deer/elk association to do your venison marketing for you. They can promote venison in general, but are not set up to sell on behalf of their members. There are just too many conflicts of interest for an association to do an effective job.
2. At the other extreme, not every deer or elk farmer has to set up their own venison marketing firm. Most don't have the resources or expertise. As indicated in other Digest articles, having too many sellers competing with each other is harmful to developing venison markets.



3. The ideal situation is to have several organizations with adequate resources and staffing to do the marketing. Then most producers can concentrate on producing quality, standardized animals. These marketing organizations can be co-ops or private companies.

4. We here at Deerfarmer.com are trying to do our little bit to develop and promote the venison market. We have just added a new section to our web site called the “Venison Culinary Centre.” The VCC has information about cooking, recipes and links to other sources of information. We are also compiling a directory of reputable venison sellers so that the consumer can easily find a place to buy some. If you are interested, please complete the form located at <http://www.venison-meat.com> or at <http://venison.deerfarmer.com>

### **Final comments**

As I have described in this article, there are upsides and opportunities associated with the CWD outbreak. Hopefully, we will take advantage of these opportunities to make our industry stronger and sustainable for the long run. As the old saying goes – when life hands you a lemon, make lemonade!

### **3. AUTOPSIES – A SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

I’m sure you have heard it said many times – “If you have livestock, you will always have deadstock.” What do you do with your animals when they die? I suppose that if you are participating in a CWD monitoring program, you have to send the head (or part of it) to the lab for testing.

What about the rest of the animal that has died? If you just bury it, or burn it, you may lose valuable information regarding your health management program. An experienced veterinarian can obtain much valuable data from a complete autopsy. A post-mortem, which can be completed quickly, allows all the internal organs to be directly viewed and sized. The tissues can be cut open and touched for texture. It takes the guesswork out of a diagnosis.

Several questions can be answered by a thorough autopsy:

1. Is this an individual animal problem? If yes, then there are no concerns for the rest of the herd?
2. Is this an infectious disease? If so, what can be done to prevent its spread to the rest of the animals?
3. How long has the disease been in the animal? Did we miss seeing it for some time? What can we change in order to detect the clinical signs better in future cases?
4. If treatment was initiated to combat the disease? Why did the treatment fail?
5. Did the animal have any parasitic or nutritional problems?

Producers are often distraught and want reassurance about whether they missed signs of the disease and whether the death could have been prevented.

Post-mortem examinations on sudden deaths are especially important because clinical signs were not evident. Several serious diseases such as blackleg, anthrax and plant poisonings have sudden death as the only symptom.

Most animals bloat after death. To help the veterinarian, the carcass must be preserved as much as possible. Decomposition only takes a few hours on a hot summer day. Keep the carcass covered in a cool location until the veterinarian arrives. Make sure predators such as coyotes or your dogs don't ravage it.

The opposite occurs in winter when fresh carcasses make diagnosis easier. While freezing has a tendency to disrupt tissues, it is a far better storage method than allowing the carcass to rot.

Liver samples can be sent to the lab to check for analysis of trace minerals such as copper, iron or zinc. Labs can also perform culture and sensitivity tests. If bacteria are the cause of the ailment, these tests can determine the best choices of antibiotics. This can give an effective option for farmers with outbreaks of such diseases as pneumonia. Veterinarians can preserve the necessary tissues at the clinic in the event that other cases appear. Abortions can be studied this way.

Post-mortems done for insurance reports should be documented, with a complete identification of the animal. Photographs as part of the records are useful. Some farm insurance policies cover acts of God such as lightning or drowning, but a veterinary examination will be necessary. Most auction marts carry insurance, so most unexplained deaths are autopsied primarily to find out when the problem started. For example, it can determine if injuries occurred during the transport or at the facility.

Use your veterinarian to study most deaths on your farm. This can go a long way toward preventing other disease situations in the future. Most cases can be easily diagnosed and preventative measures, if necessary, taken quickly.

#### **4. KEY TO BIGGER ANTLERS**

Whether you are raising elk or red deer for the velvet antler market, or whitetail bucks for hunting preserves, bigger antlers mean more profits. So what are the secrets to growing larger antlers?

Dr. George Bubenik, a University of Guelph zoology professor, has spent the last 35 years studying deer and their antlers. He feels three factors are responsible for good antlers: nutrition, genetics and stress.

##### **Nutrition**

Here are some feeding considerations that affect antler size.

The animal feed should contain about 14 percent protein; anything higher is wasteful and may cause damage to the animal's waste elimination systems.

One of the secrets to large antlers may lie in the amount of calories available to deer. However, timing is important. Energy and protein provided in early spring, at least two weeks prior to "button drop," may help set the yield potential for the season. Also, getting bulls/bucks in shape for a month

after the rut give the animals a better start in the spring. Overfeeding during the winter months is a waste because of the cervids' slowed winter metabolism.

Providing a balance of livestock minerals, including calcium and phosphorus, is important. The deer and elk will take what they need.

### **Genetics**

The genetics of the male AND female are important to make big antlers. Producers must know the genetic heritage on both sides of their animals.

### **Stress**

Nervous deer should not be used as breeding stock. Stocking rates and handling systems also play a critical role in producing larger antlers.

Research has shown that deer will produce smaller antlers the following year if they are under pressure in the rut, are kept low in the herd hierarchy, or have had to concentrate on foraging or defending small territories. Stress lowers the testosterone level that is needed for good antler growth the following year. Producers need to practice good management techniques to keep stress down if they want larger antlers.

For more on this topic, see these two articles in the Western Producer that provided the source material for this article -- <http://www.producer.com/articles/20020221/news/20020221news21.html> and <http://www.producer.com/articles/20020221/news/20020221news21a.html>

## **5. INDUSTRY NEWS**

### **A whole lot of reading in the kitchen**

According to a note in the Summer 2002 edition of the British Deer Farmers Association "Deer Farming" magazine, some 15,000 German chefs have ordered copies of a new New Zealand Game Industry Board recipe book (printed in German). Hmm, North American venison producers should take notice.

### **Possible vaccine for CWD**

There is a report in the July issue of the American Journal of Pathology (Vol. 161, p13) by Thomas Wisniewski from the New York University of Medicine about a vaccine that delayed the onset of prior disease in mice. It did not stop the TSE, but the vaccinated mice took significantly longer to contract the disease. The vaccine uses recombinant prions to counteract the disease. This is the first step to developing a vaccine for prion type diseases.

### **North Carolina forms association**

On June 1, 2002, about 35 people got together in North Carolina to establish the North Carolina Deer and Elk Farmers Association (NCDEFA). The purpose of the new association is to:

1. Promote the privately owned hoof stock industry in the Great State of North Carolina.

2. Provide educational opportunities for members and the public through the sharing of information.
3. Be a collective voice in governmental issues that affect the hoof stock industry in North Carolina.
4. Promote the highest in ethical standards in the care, handling and harvesting of hoof stock products.
5. Insist that members operate in a legal, honest and forthright manner with our fellow members, other hoof stock producers and more especially the general public.

The following executive was selected: Tom E. Smith, President; Henry Hampton, Vice-President; Darlene R. Tarlton, Secretary; Wendy Wilson; Treasurer and Richard Haliburton, as Newsletter Editor.

Other board members elected were Michael Lister, Larry Seibel, Martin Whitener, Brad Hoxit and Sammy Varnam.

For more information, please contact Richard Haliburton at 704-878-6893 or fax 704-872-7613.

### **An outsider's perspective**

John Fletcher, former editor of the British Deer Farmers Association "Deer Farming" magazine, attended the Third World Deer Farming Congress held in Austin, Texas USA. Here is his view of the deer farming industry on our side of the Atlantic ocean.

"The American deer farming industry seemed to be in considerable disarray. Whilst a few hardy souls were making some income from niche venison marketing, most were professionals with alternative sources of income. After all, what chance is there for someone selling deer meat when beef is so cheap? Or when venison from the burgeoning wild deer population is being donated to people on welfare?"

"Instead, most North American deer farmers see their income in big bucks, i.e., trophies, velvet and perhaps live sales. Sadly, however, chronic wasting disease (CWD) had closed off the markets for velvet in the Far East and has created a lot of damaging publicity, however ill-founded, about the enclosing of deer in general, and has certainly closed a number of inter-state borders to live deer movements. The trophy business is finite and should be seen against a background of overall declining numbers of hunters."

"That, at any rate was how I saw the North American deer farming scene. I very much hope I am proved wrong."

### **New velvet antler pool and drying plant**

A new plant for drying velvet antler is being set up in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. A group of producers have been working with J.K. Trading Ltd. to set up a producer co-op velvet pooling operation as well.

The organizers feel that they can get better prices for their velvet by reducing processing fees and eliminating middlemen from the marketing process.

The group is looking for 50 to 100 tonnes (220,000 lb) of velvet annually to justify the investment in the drying facility. So far, about 20 tonnes has been committed by local producers.

For more information, contact Ho Jung at 780-461-3541.

### **Thorleifson moving to Manitoba**

Ian Thorleifson, formerly Executive Director of the Alberta Elk Association and the Canadian Cervid Council, is moving from Alberta to Manitoba. He has accepted a position as Executive Director of the Manitoba Elk Growers Association. We wish Ian the very best and hope he continues sending us all the industry gossip and news.

### **Second symposium on antler science**

The Second International Symposium on Antler Science and Product Technology will be held February 25 to 27, 2004 in the scenic tourism center of Queenstown, New Zealand. The first meeting was held in Banff, Canada in the spring of 2000.

The 2004 meeting will cover such topics as antler growth, humane removal of velvet antlers, and marketing-related subjects of processing and clinical trials.

This symposium may be a good excuse for that tax-deductible trip to New Zealand you have always wanted to take. If you are interested in submitting a paper or poster, contact Jimmy Suttie at Agresearch Invermay, Private Bag 50-034, Mosgiel, New Zealand or e-mail <mailto:aspt2@velvet.org.nz>

## **6. EVENTS CALENDAR**

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

SASKATCHEWAN ELK VELVET CLASSIC competition will be held on July 12 and 13, 2002 on the Exhibition Grounds in Kindersley, Saskatchewan. This NAEBA recognized event will see class winners go on to the International Competition to be held in Kansas City in August. For more information, contact SEBA at 306-337-1530 or <mailto:seba@sk.sympatico.ca>

ALBERTA ELK EXPO 2002 will be held in Vermilion on July 19 and 20, 2002. The event will be hosted by the Elk Point Chapter of the Alberta Elk Association. For more information contact the AEA office at 780-980-7582 or <mailto:info@albertaelk.com>

NAEBA INTERNATIONAL ANTLER COMPETITION will be held at the KCI Expo Center, Kansas City, Missouri USA Aug. 2 to 4, 2002. For more information contact Peni at <mailto:peni@naelk.org> or phone 816-431-3605 or 641-782-3765

FIFTH INTERNATIONAL DEER BIOLOGY CONGRESS will be held August 25-30, 2002 in Quebec City, Canada. For more information contact Michel Crete at 418-521-3955

TEXAS DEER ASSOCIATION 4<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONVENTION AND AUCTION will be held September 13-14, 2002 at San Antonio, Texas USA. For more information call 210-767-8300 or visit <http://www.texasdeerassociation.com>

BRITISH DEER FARMERS ASSOCIATION Annual Conference and AGM will be held October 18-20, 2002 at Barony College in Dumfries. Hands on workshops will be part of the conference. For more information, visit the BDFA website at <http://www.deer.org.uk>

MINNESOTA ELK CALF SALE will be held on October 26, 2002 at R&J Horse Sales in Verndale, MN. Contact John Johnson, Wadena, MN at 218-631-4412 or <mailto:jomarelk@wcta.net>

ALBERTA ELK ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION will be held Jan. 16-18, 2003 at Grande Prairie, Alberta Canada. Contact the AEA office for more information at <mailto:info@albertaelk.com> or visit their web site at <http://www.albertaelk.com>

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION (NAEBA) Convention will be held Feb. 5-8, 2003 at St. Louis Missouri USA. Contact the NAEBA office at <mailto:info@naelk.org> or visit <http://www.naelk.org> for more information.

NORTH AMERICAN DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (NADeFA) Annual Convention will be held on March 19-23, 2003 at 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>

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.

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Please help us offset the costs of producing and distributing the *Deer Farmers' Digest* by advertising in our newsletter. Visit our Store at <http://store.deerfarmer.com> for more information on *Digest* advertising options and to place your ad order.

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## 7. DEERFARMER.COM NEWS

You may have noticed some renovations taking place on the Deerfarmer.com web site. Over the years, as we added sections and features to our site, I never felt constrained to use the same design style. As a result, we have different looks in different sections of the web site. Since I like our most recent “look” the best, I am slowly converting the site to the same style.

Our focus has always been on content – news, information, ads, discussion forums – that is why you come to our site. Our major design priorities have always been readability, speed of loading and ease of navigation. Plus, we try and make it an attractive site through the use of simple layouts and photographs.

Our major new addition is our Venison Culinary Centre (VCC). The purpose of the VCC is to help develop and promote the venison part of our industry, especially here in North America. The site is designed both for venison producers and consumers.

The VCC contains information on cooking and nutrition, more than 50 recipes and links to other sources of information about venison. In addition, we have started to compile a directory of venison sellers. Customers can't buy if they don't know where to buy. If you are a reputable, established venison vendor and want to have a free listing on our site, please complete the on-line form.

The Venison Culinary Centre can be reached either through <http://www.venison-meat.com> or <http://venison.deerfarmer.com>

We have also redone our Calendar of Events section. Sometimes, simple is best. Several years ago, we installed a fancy calendar program. However, it was too complex and time-consuming to keep up to date. Very few people visited it (including us). So we have gone back to a one page listing of upcoming events, just like we do in this newsletter. Please let us know about your important upcoming industry/association events. The Calendar is available at <http://events.deerfarmer.com>

Finally, we have begun work on our Velvet Antler Centre. This Centre is designed to promote the velvet antler segment of our industry. The site will contain information on the health and nutraceutical benefits of velvet antler, research summaries and articles, a listing of the major players, and a resource section. Hopefully, the VAC will be complete in a few months. The Velvet Antler Centre can be reached at <http://www.velvet-antler.com> (I can't believe that domain name was still available) or <http://velvet.deerfarmer.com>

As always, I appreciate feedback, comments and suggestions regarding our Deerfarmer.com website. Please send your comments to me at <mailto:webmaster@deerfarmer.com>

## 8. 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!

## 9. 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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