



Welcome to the JUNE 2001 edition of the *Deer Farmers' Digest*, a monthly electronic newsletter published for those interested in farming deer, elk and reindeer. This *Digest* is distributed via e-mail to over 2,300 readers in 24 countries. A copy of ALL the issues of the *Digest* can be found at <http://digest.deerfarmer.com>

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1. DEALING WITH GAME FARMING OPPONENTS

In addition to working with the deer, elk and reindeer associations, my current clients include associations for goat breeders, fruit growers and market gardeners (as well as dentists, pharmacists and ambulance drivers). All these groups are similar and all face common challenges – developing new markets, educating their memberships, securing a favourable legislative environment and so on.

However, I noticed that the cervidae industry differs from the other agricultural groups in two significant ways. First, the deer and elk producers have many more regulations and rules. Anybody can start a berry farm. Berry farmers do not have to worry about inventory and record keeping, movement permits or cutting the head of a raspberry bush and sending it in for compulsory CWD testing. I'm struck by the significant regulatory and administrative "overhead" that deer/elk farmers have to put up with.

The second major difference is that fruit and vegetable growers do not have to worry about any opponents to their industry. I find it a real relief and pleasure to work in the fruit growing industry because of the absence of this distraction. It also made me aware of the significant burden and disadvantage that game farmers face in comparison to other agriculture pursuits, just to be able to do what they love doing.

Reasons for opposition

So where did this opposition to game farming come from? I have two personal theories about how this came about.

The present generation of post-war “baby-boomers” were born into a relatively prosperous society. As a result, they were less worried about finding a job and surviving day to day. This generation became one of the most socially conscious and activist in the history of the western world. No cause was too small – justice, caring and saving the environment all became important issues. Killing was wrong – and this included hunting, fur farming and slaughter of animals.

The impact on our value systems and our society was profound. It counter-balanced the drive for business and financial success at any cost. Activist groups that arose during these decades fought for the rights of the under-privileged, animals and the environment. We became a much more “caring” society. They had an impact on the livestock industries to ensure that animals were raised and cared for in humane ways. So these groups, and many others, are naturally concerned about taking deer that live in the wild and raising them domestically for meat and hunting.

The other contributing influence, I believe, arose from our increasing urbanization and reduction of agricultural populations. This has removed most people from the realities of farm life and nature. Although we all like our milk and meat, we don’t have to milk the cow (goat) or slaughter an animal to get our food anymore. How many people do you know that ever had to kill an animal in order to eat it (hunters don’t count)?

This lack of knowledge about the realities on the farm and in the wild is also affected by the romanticization of animals by the media. The most significant one that comes to mind is Walt Disney’s popular film Bambi. One can only speculate on what impact that movie has had over the years to create opposition to deer hunting and deer farming. (I can still remember that evening when I first saw the movie Bambi. At the point where Bambi’s mother was shot by hunters, my wife, sitting next to me with tears in her eyes, turned to me and said, “See, it’s all your fault!” Yes, I was deer hunting at that time, and was being personally held responsible for Bambi’s misfortune!)

I believe that these factors are responsible in part for some of the opposition to game farming and hunting in general.

Opponent strategies

Let’s take a look at the strategies used by game farming opponents.

The first, and preferred strategy, is simply to make game farming illegal in the state, province or country. Once the necessary legislation is in place, farming of cervidae disappears. This is what happened in November 2000 in Montana where voters passed Initiative 43 to ban game farms.

The second strategy, if you can’t get it banned, is to make it so regulated that the industry will drown in “red tape.” More regulations and rules make it difficult to get into the industry, and once you are in it, it becomes so costly to comply that the business becomes unprofitable and most farms will go out of business. The elk industry is very near this point, especially if compulsory CWD surveillance comes into force, and if governments don’t pick up the costs of compliance by the farmers.

I believe the game farming industry is causing its own problems by unwittingly acquiescing to the second strategy. In order to appease its opponents, the industry is agreeing to more regulations and more stringent requirements, which in the end may spell the demise of game farming. An example of this is the recent proposal in Alberta to legalize hunt preserves. The proposed regulations call for a minimum of 600 fenced acres! I'm sure this was put into place to appease opponents concerned about fair chase. However, it also puts hunting preserves out of reach of small operators, and eliminates business opportunities for the very group of small farmers it was designed to benefit.

Deer and elk farming should be subject to the same rules as other livestock industries – goats, sheep, cattle, llamas, etc. – no more or no less! Otherwise the industry is at a significant competitive disadvantage and will have difficulty in surviving.

The opponents

So who are the opponents to game farming, what do we know about them, and what are their concerns? I want to focus on two broad groups – animal rights activists (such as PETA) and wildlife associations (Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, and other similar organizations).

People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), - <http://www.peta.org> - with more than 700,000 members, is the largest animal rights organization in the world. Founded in 1980, PETA is dedicated to establishing and protecting the rights of all animals. PETA operates under the simple principle that animals are not ours to eat, wear, experiment on, or use for entertainment.

PETA focuses its attention on the four areas in which the largest numbers of animals suffer the most intensely for the longest periods of time: on factory farms, in laboratories, in the fur trade, and in the entertainment industry. PETA works through public education, cruelty investigations, research, animal rescue, legislation, special events, celebrity involvement, and direct action.

PETA has 55 permanent staff and its own building. The PETA website is currently (June 2001) advertising for the following positions - campaign coordinator, legislative coordinator, media writer, public affairs coordinator, research assistant (policy), staff attorney. (Wouldn't your deer or elk industry association just love to be able to afford only one or two of these staff positions?)

PETA has a budget of about \$17 million (US\$) per year. The annual budgets of other similar groups are – American Anti-Vivisection Society (\$1 million), Animal Legal Defense Fund (\$2.9 million), Doris Day Animal League (\$2.3 million), Friends of Animals (\$4.3 million), Fund for Animals (\$6.4 million), Humane Society of the United States (\$51.6 million), In Defense of Animals (\$1.7 million), Last Chance for Animals (\$658,000), National Anti-Vivisection Society (\$2.2 million), New England Anti-Vivisection Society (\$1.1 million) for a combined budget of over \$90 million. In comparison, the Americans for Medical Progress had a budget of \$611,000. (Source: COHO Field News, Winter 2001, p14).

In 2000, PETA was mentioned over 7,500 times in the media, and organized 400 “events” or protests. Their education department reaches 170,000 teachers in schools and over 4 million students. They printed over 13 million flyers, brochures and fact sheets.

In the cervidae industries, PETA has been successful in having deer urine removed from some sporting goods stores. Their concern was that the deer were being kept caged up all the time in inadequate conditions in order to collect the urine.

PETA is a well-organized and run organization. Our industry can learn much from them.

The second group of opponents consists various wildlife federations. The opposition from these group is difficult to understand. Many game farmers are (were) deer/elk hunters as well, who wanted to turn their love of these animals into a business. The research and work done by the deer and elk farming industry has significant benefits for our wildlife as well.

Here is the official position of SWF – “The Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation (SWF) does not support the concept of game farming until an extensive professional qualified review of the policy, practices, testing of diseases, etc. has been undertaken and brought forward for public scrutiny and discussion. The SWF strongly opposes any and all efforts to obtain wild game stocks by the game ranching industry.

Game farming and ranching can and does pose substantial risks to the indigenous wildlife of Saskatchewan through the spread of contagious diseases, parasites and hybridization between game farm animals and indigenous wildlife.

To the extent that these practices are permitted, the following conditions must exist:

1. Game farming and ranching must be limited to indigenous and exotic species that pose no possibilities of surviving and/or hybridizing with wild indigenous species.
2. Wild animals of the species under consideration must not be taken from the wild for seed stock.
3. Game farming and ranching must not be permitted on Crown lands.
4. The potential for animals to produce fertile hybrids or otherwise breed with indigenous ungulates must not exist.
5. The potential for animals to become feral and compete for habitat with natural ungulates must not exist.
6. Strict regulations must apply to all aspects of proper care, dealing, farming, processing and marketing of animals and products, which must also include licensing, mandatory tracing of animals and products, monitoring and enforcement. Regulations controlling contagious disease must be stringent.
7. Jurisdiction and regulation of the industry must reside with the provincial wildlife ministry.
8. All regulatory and administrative costs must be borne by the industry, not the taxpayer.
9. Game farmed and ranched animals must be marked with a unique identification number.
10. Game farm and ranch operators must be required to maintain proper records.
11. Proper government inspection of game farms and ranches must be mandatory.

12. Game farm and ranch operators must be required to operate under terms and conditions of a license approved by provincial wildlife management agencies.

13. Game farms and ranches must not be permitted to sell hunting rights.”

The above are the most common concerns stated by these types of associations.

Dealing with the opponents

So what can the industry and individual game farmers do to deal with this opposition in order to save their livelihoods and their passions? Here are some strategies and suggestions.

1. *Be proactive, don't hide* – Several speakers at recent deer/elk conferences have stressed the importance of being proactive. To date the game farming industry (and their associations) have kept a low profile with the hope that if nobody notices them, they will not have any problems. Well, the opponents have noticed game farming, and now the industry faces an up-hill battle. Remember, the vast majority of people are not aware of game farming, and therefore don't have a position or opinion on it one way or the other. Then along come opponents, who make them aware and say it is bad. Now the industry doesn't have a neutral start point to work from, but has to convince people who have a negative opinion to change it to a positive one – a more difficult and challenging task.

It is important for the game farming industry to get their message out – including the benefits for the animals, wildlife, farmers and the economy. This will to some degree inoculate the public against the negative messages from the opponents.

2. *Address and respond to reasonable concerns* – Nearly all game farmers love, pamper and spoil their animals. They ensure that the deer/elk get the best care, nutrition and facilities possible. Steps need to be taken to address disease management and possible escape risks. The public needs to know that these concerns are addressed as much as possible. However, if some demands are unreasonable, then a clear case, along with supporting evidence needs to be presented. Standards and requirements should be “fair and equitable” with other livestock industries.

3. *Police your industry* – One “bad apple” can give the whole industry a bad name. Industry associations should have their members subscribe to a code of conduct and/or a code of ethics. These should be enforced and members who do not comply should be thrown out of the association. Associations must take the time and effort to “educate” their members about these codes and the importance of following them. The associations and industry must also ensure that game farmers have the knowledge, skills and competencies to work with their animals in an effective, caring and humane manner.

4. *Have consequences* - One response by game farmers in Saskatchewan has been to ban SWF members from hunting on their lands. Most game farmers own significant tracts of land. Adding in the land of relatives and supportive neighbours, hunting opportunities on private land could become scarce to SWF members. The following sign has been printed and posted across the province:

“NO HUNTING to any member or anyone supporting the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation. You cannot lobby against the farmers and private property owners of Saskatchewan and still expect to hunt on this private property. Do not support the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation in any form! For permission, contact”

5. *Get under agriculture* – If game farming in your province or state is not yet regulated by the Department of Agriculture, begin lobbying to have the jurisdiction changed. Wildlife management departments do not understand, nor have the appropriate values or mindset to regulate what is essentially an agricultural industry. Game farming is an agriculture activity and should be regulated as such.

6. *Be well-resourced* – Due to the many regulations and requirements, new industry entrants should be well-resourced and knowledgeable. Perhaps if you have only enough funds for an one-acre fenced pen, you should not go into deer farming, but consider other options such as investing in an existing farm or partnering up with someone else. The same holds true of knowledge and skills. Amateurs should not be attempting velvet antler removal if they do not know what they are doing. Situations like this give ammunition to the opponents who can claim inhumane conditions and treatment of animals.

7. *Information packages* – We need to prepare and distribute brochures, flyers, websites and other information packages to explain the benefits of game farming to various audiences. PETA does a very good job of this, and our industry needs to do so as well.

8. *Credible spokespeople* – One effective strategy many organizations use to promote their particular cause is to use celebrities – a well-known sports figure, movie star, prominent business person and so on. The game farming industry should recruit and use such people as well.

9. *Join and support organizations* – There are two separate strategies here. One is to join organizations that support hunting and the game farming industry. Two of the best known are Safari Club International (<http://www.safariclub.org>) and the Canadian Outdoor Heritage Alliance (<http://www.coha.net>). Join these organizations and work with them to preserve the rights associated with your industry.

The other strategy is to join and actively participate in the wildlife associations that presently oppose game farming. These organizations operate on democratic principles, and thus members can affect change from within. Join, attend meetings, make your views known, run for the executive and board, and make things happen.

10. *Lobby government officials* – It is important that the “rule makers” or elected government officials are aware of our industry, its importance for your state/province, and the benefits it provides to rural communities. Do not take politicians for granted, but keep them informed. See suggestions for lobbying in the “*Guide to Becoming an Activist*” located on the PETA website at <http://www.peta.org>

11. *Media relations* – Some industry associations (SWAMDPA, CCC and NAEBA) have become more active in responding to media stories. However, writing a letter to the editor in response to a negative story about the media is not as effective as if we were to have positive articles published in the first place.

We don't do a very good job generally of media relations. First of all, the industry (i.e., associations) rarely sends out press releases about the game farming industry. When it does, it is usually in response to some public concern about disease, or in an attempt to counter negative publicity. This is being reactive and defensive rather than proactive. None of the association websites have a section for the media where press releases are posted, background information is

available, lists of contacts are available – all those things that make it easier for reporters to do their jobs. PETA does, and we need to change that.

12. *Websites and the Internet* – The animal rights organizations recognized the power of the Internet very early. They have comprehensive, well-designed and informative websites that are kept current. On the other hand, most industry websites (other than Deerfarmer.com and Wapiti.net which are privately operated) are simply “brochure” sites – some basic information and occasional updates designed for producers, not the general public. I don’t recall any of the association websites giving a simple, clear description of why game farming is good. PETA makes some very good arguments why hunting is bad. Some associations, including some major ones (e.g., Canadian Cervid Council, Elk Breeders of Canada, ROBA) do not even have a website! Also, there is no one place where the public and media can go on the Internet to get up-to-date information on what is happening in deer and elk farming. The industry has to do a better job in using this medium.

13. *Fundraising* – On every page of the PETA website is a button called “Donate Now”. Click on it, fill out your information, give a credit card number and your donation is made, In return you get a newsletter subscription, plus some other goodies. Their website also provides a wealth of suggestions about how concerned people can go about fundraising for their cause. This well coordinated effort nets PETA some \$17 million a year!

In the game farming industry, we don’t have one organization to donate to – we have many. Also, the few foundations that have been set up are geared more towards activities in research, production enhancements and marketing rather than industry defense. Fundraising tends to be within each association and directed towards their members rather than the general public. We do not have an effective way to reach out to the public and solicit donations to support the industry. We need to develop and put one into place as quickly as possible. We also need to make it easy for people (and corporations) to donate!

14. *Working together* – PETA is one organization; we have over 60 deer, elk and reindeer associations just in the English-speaking parts of the world. Each of these associations has their own jurisdiction, interests and resources. Nearly all are run by volunteer boards and members, and focus on the production and marketing aspects of the industry. Most do not have the resources or expertise to mount effective campaigns against the opposition. Yes, both NAEBA and NADeFA has set up task forces to help local associations lobby for favourable legislation, but much more coordination and working together needs to be done.

15. *Legal actions* – The industry should explore the possibility of taking legal action against opponents when appropriate. This could range from suing for slander to loss of business/livelihood based on actions of the opponents.

16. *School programs* – As indicated above, the opponents have comprehensive programs for teacher and schools. Unless countered, we will have a whole generation of children growing up with the belief that domestic raising of deer and elk is evil. The industry needs to prepare and distribute materials about game farming to school children. Also, children love deer, elk and reindeer, especially the young animals. Farm visits, school visits or anything else that exposes the young to farmed cervidae is important to enhancing long term support for our industry.

17. *Invite visitors* – The more people that see a well-run deer or elk farm, the more support the industry will have, and the harder it will be for opponents to close us down. Therefore, both associations and individual farmers need to make a concerted effort to have visitors to their farms on a regular basis. With the concerns of Foot and Mouth and other diseases, many producers are reluctant to have visitors. Take the necessary precautions, but these public relations activities are necessary.

18. *Don't be set up* – Be concerned if a client shows up at your hunting preserve with a camera crew. Be cautious about who you let on your farm to take photographs or video recordings. You don't want to be set up by the opponents.

The reason you went into game farming is because you enjoy working with these beautiful and fascinating animals. Worrying and battling with opponents takes away time, energy and money from the things you love doing. However, if you believe game farming is worth preserving, then be prepared for constant vigilance and a continuous battle to preserve that right!

If you are not prepared to devote the time, energy and resources to such a fight, you may want to consider converting your deer/elk farm into a berry farm. By the way, if you are interested in fruit farming, check out my latest website at <http://www.albertafruit.com>.

2. PREVENTION OF SCOURS IN ELK CALVES

[By Dr. Jerry Haigh, Western College of Veterinary Medicine. Reprinted in part from the Canadian Elk & Deer Farmer, Late Spring 2001]

There are several principles for scour prevention in elk calves. These good management practices apply to all cervids and include the following strategies.

Removing sources of infection

High infection pressure is a major risk factor on many elk (and deer) ranches. A key management step is to reduce the environmental contamination to a level that will not overwhelm the natural defense mechanisms of the calf or fawn. Steps to achieve this are:

1. *Avoid overcrowding* – We know that overcrowding increases the incidence of scours in beef herds, and this has also been observed in a clinical setting in elk herds. One different aspect in elk is that they tend to swap calves more if they are more heavily confined, which can leave some calves with inadequate colostrums. The amount of space needed varies depending on the quality of the calving grounds, but certainly more is better.

2. *Improve quality of calving grounds* – The land should be dry and well-drained. Potholes with water can be a major problem. All water should be drained either naturally or with a pump, but should not be allowed to just evaporate. These water holes can be a major source of infection. Leaving the calving area clean and dry in the hot summer months will help reduce the number of bacteria in the soil.

3. *Change location of calving grounds* – The calving grounds should not be in the same place year after year. This is especially important if diarrhea has occurred on this farm before. The bacteria and viruses that cause scours can be very hardy, and survive in the soil for a long time. Moving

cows into the calving grounds one to two weeks prior to calving will prevent excessive accumulation of manure and decrease the pathogen loads.

4. *Isolate the calf from contaminated environments* – This is not as important a factor in elk and deer herds as it is in beef herds, mainly because elk are calved in open paddocks. However, it still needs consideration.

5. *Split up the calving herd* – Ideally the early calvers, the late calvers and the heifers should be separated and calved in different pens. If this is too difficult, separation of the heifers from the cows is the minimum. Studies in beef cattle have shown those herds calving heifers and cows together have an increased incidence of scours in all calves. A likely cause of this is inadequate colostrums intake in the calves born of heifers resulting in diarrhea and shedding of pathogens, and thus increased infection rates.

There are 3 reasons for splitting up the early and late calvers.

- a) Older calves can shed pathogens harmful to the naïve younger calves, who have variable immunity levels.
- b) Older calves have waning colostral immunity that makes them more susceptible to pathogens spread by stressed cows at calving.
- c) Older calves may steal milk and cross mothering may create confusion for some calves that end up not getting their due rations.

Reducing stress

Stress is a major factor in disease. Handle the calves as little as possible in their first 30 days. Excessive human contact can be very stressful to the calves, and can greatly increase the incidence of disease. Check the cows no more than 3 times a day from the outside of the pen, and other than tagging shortly after birth, there should be no human contact.

Split up the early and late calvers as mentioned above. This will reduce the amount of stress on the younger calves.

Increasing nonspecific resistance

Colostrum intake is essential in preventing both sickness and death due to scours. Absorption of colostrum from the gut ceases as early as 10 to 15 hours postpartum. Therefore, it is important to ensure that each calf gets at least 50 mls per kilogram, or just under a litre in the first 12 hours after birth. Assuming birth weights of about 18 kg, 2 litres of colostrum in 24 hours is ideal and approaches the mammalian norm of about 10% of body weight as fluids per day.

However, colostrum provides an important measure of local protection inside the gut lumen for much longer than 24 hours after it is absorbed. If you are bottle raising calves, and scours is a risk, you should consider obtaining colostrum from sheep or goats prior to the calving season and freezing it. It can be used later in calves where colostrum is not available from the mother for whatever reason.

Increasing specific resistance

Immunity to specific pathogens varies from herd to herd and within herds, depending on exposure to infectious agents. Therefore, vaccines are used in an attempt to boost immunity to specific pathogens. In the case of elk calves, these pathogens include *E. coli*, rotavirus, coronavirus, *Cryptosporidium* and *Salmonella*. These vaccines are designed to be administered to beef and dairy cows before calving, and the antibodies produced are passed onto the calf via the colostrum. So, colostrum intake is still crucial.

Many elk producers are using these vaccines in an attempt to reduce scour problems. This is an off-label use of these vaccines. We know very little about either the safety or efficacy in elk. The results are mixed.

On the plus side, there are some anecdotal reports of reduced morbidity and mortality in elk herds that have used vaccines. There are no reports (so far) of serious adverse reactions to the vaccines. Therefore, they may be safe, but without clinical trials we don't really know.

The use of these vaccines also has a number of disadvantages. These include:

1. *Off-label use* – These vaccines have only been tested for safety and efficacy in cattle and sheep. Elk producers assume all the risk for any losses that may occur from adverse reactions.
2. *Lack of research* – There have been no controlled trials to see if the vaccines actually reduce problems related to scours. Research has been done with cattle, but do the findings apply to elk? There are cases of scours in herds that are vaccinated.
3. *Variability of pathogens* – There is really no good information on what cause scours in elk calves, as opposed to bovine calves. Cryptosporidiosis is much more severe in red deer than it is in bovine calves, and has the same severity in elk calves. There is no vaccine available to control cryptosporidiosis.

Overall, we simply don't know enough about this disease process or the vaccines to make an informed decision. However, some producers will continue to use the vaccines, with varying success.

Scours in cervid young is a management disease. With good management in the calving season, the incidence of this disease can be greatly reduced or eliminated in most elk and deer herds.

3. INTERESTED IN RAISING REINDEER?

Over the last year or so, I have had the good fortune to work with the Alberta Reindeer Association, assisting them to develop their five-year business plan. As a result, I have gained an appreciation and respect for Santa's transportation fleet – the reindeer. If you are an existing deer or elk farmer, you may want to consider adding a few reindeer to complement your existing herds.

Reindeer, and caribou, are part of the Cervidae (deer) family. Reindeer husbandry, most common in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of Eurasia, can be traced back to the ninth century. Reindeer came

to North America in the early 1900s from Siberia and Norway. Only recently have reindeer been raised on farms in Canada and the United States.

Farmed reindeer can generate many of the same products as the other deer species – velvet antler (although both males and females have antlers), meat, trophy bulls for hunting preserves, and by-products such as robes, hides and shed antlers. A few reindeer owners have mentioned to me that reindeer venison is far superior to any other kind of meat.

Other benefits of raising reindeer include the following.

1. Reindeer can be raised on the same farm as other deer and livestock (but different pens), thus reducing facility, set-up and operational costs.
2. Reindeer are low-maintenance, easy-handling and relative disease-free animals. They do very well in areas that have cold winters and/or marginal land.
3. Costs for handling facilities and equipment are often lower than for other cervidae.
4. There are “fewer” restrictions on reindeer movement between states and countries.

A really unique and attractive aspect of reindeer is the demand for them in commercials, parades, and other promotional events. Reindeer are trained to pull sleighs and can be ridden. Also, being associated with Santa Claus makes them a big attraction with the public, and especially with children. Several bed and breakfast operations have indicated that their reindeer are a major factor in bringing in business. I notice that several Christmas tree farms have reindeer – the promotional opportunities should be obvious.

So adding in a few “trained” reindeer to your farm can bring in additional tourism and advertising revenues, as well as a lot of free publicity.

So where do you get more information on reindeer farming? Here are some resources.

Associations

Reindeer Owners and Breeders Association (ROBA)
Phone: 616-772-2584, fax: 616-772-3332 or gpoest@novagate.com

Alberta Reindeer Association (ARA)
Phone: 403-729-2635 or geyoung@telusplanet.net

Peace Country Reindeer Association (British Columbia, Canada)
Phone/fax: 250-780-2282, or dawnabel@pris.bc.ca

Saskatchewan Reindeer Association
Phone: 305-278-3373, fax: 306-278-2979 or schmidtsoutdoors@sk.sympatico.ca

Manuals

The Alberta Reindeer Association has produced a manual on raising reindeer. It can be purchased for \$25 CDN (about \$15 US) by contacting Sharon Maximovich at maxsharon@hotmail.com or 780-939-3645.

Raising Reindeer for Pleasure and Profit by Gordon Poest is available for \$15 + \$2.50 shipping. It has been revised for 2001 and contains over 100 pages plus 27 photos. Contact Gordon at 616-772-2584 (phone), 616-772-3332 (fax) or gpoest@novagate.com.

Websites

<http://www.globaldeer.com> – will have some reindeer farms listed. Do a search for reindeer under Complex Search.

<http://ads.deerfarmer.com> – will occasionally have reindeer for sale listed.

<http://www.saskreindeer.com> – the official website of the Saskatchewan Reindeer Association. Has useful information, list of members and links to member's reindeer farms.

<http://reindeer.salrm.alaska.edu/> – is the best site for research and links as put together by the University of Alaska.

<http://www.dartmouth.edu/~arctic/rangifer/> – Rangifer at the Institute of Arctic Studies at Dartmouth University has extensive information and contacts on reindeer and caribou.

Also check the Events Calendar below to find several upcoming field days and conferences hosted by reindeer associations. These are great places to meet other reindeer farmers and learn more about the industry.

4. FARMED DEER STATISTICS – UNITED KINGDOM AND CANADA

I often get asked by people interested in deer farming how the industry is doing, and what the future looks like. Unfortunately, my crystal ball is not much better than anyone else's. My standard recommendation is to do a business plan that looks at the industry statistics and crunch some numbers to assess the potentials/risks.

Another thing I like to do is look at where we have come from. Sometimes our glimpse of the future can be predicted from our past. With that rationale in mind, two good sets of deer industry statistics became available to me – one from the United Kingdom, and one from Canada.

In the United Kingdom, the national deer herd numbers are about 36,000. This is down substantially from a peak of 53,000 in 1992. The herd size has remained relatively stable since 1995. Over 95% of Scottish deer are red, while in England, 77% are red, 22% are fallow and 1% are other. Deer farming is not a significant (nor apparently growing) part of the agricultural industry in the UK. Deer represent less than 0.06% of the UK's farmed livestock.

Agriculture in general is declining in the United Kingdom. Cattle numbers fell 2.5% between 1999 and 2000; pig numbers fell by 11%, sheep were down by 5% and total labour on farms was reduced by 25,000, a 5% reduction. These numbers are all BEFORE the outbreak of Foot and Mouth

Disease which will result in additional declines. (Source: *Journal of the British Deer Farmers Association, No 65, Spring 2001, p23*).

In Canada, there are 1,931 licensed game farms with Saskatchewan having 560 and Alberta with 527. These game farms raise a total of 118,491 cervidae. The most common species is elk/wapiti with 67,254 animals (57%), with fallow deer next at 17,289 (15%), white-tailed at 17,176 (14%) and red deer at 15,605 (13%). Mule deer (525) and reindeer (642) make up the remaining 1%.

Looking at the numbers of deer over time, fallow deer numbers are down significantly from their high of 41,250 in 1994 (17,289 now). Red deer are also down slightly from their high of 16,000 in 1997.

White-tailed deer have increased from 3,889 in 1992 to 17,176 in 2000, an average annual increase of 43%. (They will likely surpass fallow deer this year). There was a slight decline between 1999 and 2000 that was due to a reduction of about 3,500 animals in the province of Quebec. The reason for this decline is unknown. The white-tailed deer numbers in Alberta and Saskatchewan have shown consistent growth rates.

Farmed elk have increased from 4,610 in 1990 to 67,254 in 2000. Overall, rates of growth in animals are about 20% per year. Ontario farmed elk dropped from 5,500 in 1998 to 2,600 in 2000. The other provinces (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec) showed increases.

The two native species in Canada – elk and white-tailed deer – seem to be growing. However, both have experienced significant drops in prices for breeding stock due to tightening markets. If these segments continue to grow as in the past, the key to success will be to develop expanded markets for velvet and venison. Without these new and expanded markets, the industry will not remain profitable or sustainable.

[My thanks to Raymond Nixdorf, of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food for compiling and sharing these Canadian statistics. If you would like a copy of all the detailed statistics, contact Ray at rnixdorf@agr.gov.sk.ca or me at editor@deerfarmer.com]

5. NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

AWMDA and AEA

The Alberta White-tail and Mule Deer Association and the Alberta Elk Association will be holding public information meetings across Alberta in the next few weeks (June and July) on Cervid Harvest Preserves (CHP). The proposal, if approved by the Alberta government, would legalize paid hunting on private preserves for deer and elk.

The proposal will not permit hunting on existing deer/elk farms, nor will it permit hunting on private land for publicly owned animals. It will create a new entity on tracts of 600 or more acres with appropriate location, terrain and cover.

All trophies will be permanently identified to distinguish them from those taken in the wild. Identification of each animal will be supported by DNA. Guides will accompany each client. Samples can be taken from each animal to monitor the health of the herd. All elk and deer destined for harvest will be supplied by production farms.

A copy of the news release and background information can be found at <http://www.deerfarmer.com/CHP>. The information package is an excellent example for others interested in legalizing (or keeping) hunting preserves in their provinces or states.

NADeFA

The North American Deer Farmers Association's Cervid Livestock Foundation has produced a 20-page, glossy, full-colour brochure entitled *Farming and Ranching Deer in North America*. This brochure is designed to explain the fundamentals of the deer industry to potential deer farmers, ranchers and government officials. It also serves as an educational and marketing tool to serve as a liaison between the deer farming community and the public.

The brochure covers the origins and production basics of axis, fallow, red deer, sika, wapiti (elk), and white-tail deer species. There is a general deer farming section as well.

Every deer and elk farmer should have several copies. For more information and/or to order copies, contact the NADeFA office at info@nadefa.org, phone 301-459-7708 or fax 301-459-7864.

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The preliminary program is now available for the 2002 NADeFA Annual Conference and World Deer Farming Congress III to be held in Austin Texas, USA on Feb. 19 to 24, 2002.

On Feb. 19-20 will be the NADVet seminar. The first day is a discussion of Chronic Wasting Disease sponsored by the American Association of Small Ruminant Practitioners (AASRP). The second day will be a discussion on Johnes Disease and Tuberculosis, also sponsored by ASSRP. (Separate registration required.)

On Feb. 21, the general conference will begin. The topics include the history of deer farming, presentations by the key deer/elk associations, and papers on deer diseases. The conference continues on Friday, Feb. 22 with presentations on deer farming in public, genetics and species specific break out sessions. Other sessions that day will be on velvet antler, trophy antlers, and venison.

On Saturday, Feb. 23, a panel session will be held on the industry today, tomorrow and beyond. In the afternoon will be the Grand Ole Texas Party.

On Feb. 23 and 24, Safe-Capture International will hold a post-conference workshop on Tranquilization and Remote Anesthesia of Deer and Elk. (See Events below for contact information.)

For a copy of the program, and/or to register, contact the NADeFA office at info@nadefa.org, phone 301-459-7708 or fax 301-459-7864.

This is one event that you don't want to miss! Deerfarmer.com plans to be there, and hopefully can meet many of our Digest readers and website visitors.

6. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

IOWA ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION summer meeting will be held on June 30, 2001 at the Cedar River Elk Farm, 10266 Harmon Rd. La Porte City, Iowa. CWD discussions, meeting plus BBQ. Contact Penni at 641-782-2903 or at tusseyelk@yahoo.com.

ALBERTA REINDEER ASSOCIATION will hold their summer field day on July 7th 2001 at the Canadian Rocky Mountain Ranch, near Calgary. The day will include a farm tour, demonstrations and BBQ. For more details, contact Sharon at maxsharon@hotmail.com or Elaine at geyoung@telusplanet.net or at 403-729-2635.

MINNESOTA ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION summer meeting will be held on July 20, 2001 at the Fargo Radison, Fargo, North Dakota in conjunction with the North Central Antler Competition. For more information contact Brenda at bhartkopf@cmgate.com or phone 320-543-3664.

ALBERTA ELK EXPO will be held in Drayton Valley, Alberta on July 27 and 28. There will be a trade show, antler competition, new producer seminar and live animal demonstration. Free admission. For more information info@albertaelk.com or phone Mike at 403-346-9401.

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION International Antler Competition will be held on August 4-5, 2001 at Pueblo, Colorado. For more information contact info@naelk.org or phone 816-431-3605.

ONTARIO WHITE TAIL DEER PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION Annual Meeting and BBQ will be held on August 12, 2001 at the Walkers' in Ballinafad, Ontario. For more information, contact Mabel Dogherty, President at 519-752-1322.

TEXAS DEER ASSOCIATION 2001 Convention will be held Sept. 7th to 9th, 2001 at the Omni San Antonio Hotel, San Antonio, Texas USA. For more information or to register, contact TDA at 877-912-3337 or info@texasdeerassociation.com or visit their website at <http://www.texasdeerassociation.com>.

REINDEER OWNER'S AND BREEDER'S ASSOCIATION will hold their East Regional meeting on November 10-11, 2001 at Gloversville, NY USA. For more information phone Pat at 518-661-5038 or 515-661-7640 evenings.

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

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

TRANQUILIZATION AND REMOTE ANESTHESIA OF DEER AND ELK workshop will be offered, by Dr. Keith Amass and Dr. Mark Drew for Safe-Capture International on Feb. 23-24, 2002 at the Doubletree Hotel, in Austin Texas (a post-conference workshop held in conjunction with the World Deer Congress). For more information and/or to register contact Safe-Capture International at safecapture@aol.com or phone 1-608-767-3071, fax: 1-608-767-3071 or visit their website at <http://www.safecapture.com>.

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

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

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. DEERFARMER.COM NEWS

Here is what's happening at Deerfarmer.com:

1. Global Deer & Elk Farm Directory – Over 1,000 farms are now listed. Check to see if you are already listed (by using the Search function). If your farm is in the Directory, call or e-mail the webmaster – webmaster@deerfarmer.com to get your password that will allow you to edit and update your listing. If you are not yet listed, and want to be, just add yourself in using the live on-line form.

The Global Deer & Elk Farm Directory is located at <http://www.globaldeer.com>. It also can be reached using <http://www.dfuid.com> and <http://www.elkdirectory.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 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 available in a printed format. A \$3 per issue (\$36 per year plus GST) fee applies to cover postage, paper and handling costs.

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