

Welcome to the NOVEMBER 2000 edition of the Deer Farmers' Digest, a monthly electronic newsletter published by Deerfarmer.com - The Deer Farmers' Information Network. This Digest is distributed via e-mail to over 1,600 readers in fifteen countries. A copy of ALL the issues of the Digest can be found at <http://digest.deerfarmer.com>

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1. MONTANA VOTES TO BAN GAME FARMS

In the November 7 election, Montana voters narrowly passed (51% for and 49% against) Initiative 143 that will effectively ban game farms in that state. I-143 amends state law to prohibit all new alternative livestock ranches, also known as game farms. Existing game farms would be allowed to continue operating, but would be prohibited from transferring their licenses to any other party. Existing game farms would also be prohibited from allowing shooting of game farm animals for any type of fee. Expansion of existing game farms would also be prohibited.

According to the Montana Secretary of State, “this measure would eliminate \$104,000 in annual costs to review game farm applications and expansions, as well as \$3,850 in yearly revenues from application fees. Abolishing fee shooting may force closure of some game farms, which could result in less revenue to the state and in lower overall regulation costs.”

There are over 90 elk and deer ranches in Montana. It is estimated that they generate about \$20 million in out-of-state revenues annually on less than 13,000 acres.

Organizations opposed to I-143 (and thus supporting game farming) include:

- Montana Stock Growers Association
- Montana Grain Growers Association
- Montana Bison Association
- Montana Guides and Outfitters Association
- Burlington-Northern Railroad
- Montana Farm Bureau Federation
- Montana Veterinary Medical Association
- Montana Trappers Association
- Montana Taxidermists Association
- Montana Game Bird Association
- Western Environmental Trade Association
- Montana Wool Growers
- Montana Agriculture Business Association
- Montana for Multiple Use
- Montana Chamber of Commerce
- Montana Pork Producers Council
- Montana Contractors Association
- Montana Farmers Union.

Groups supporting and promoting I-143 (and thus opposed to game farms) include:

1. *Montana Wildlife Federation* – promotes a plan for no roads in forested areas, has been against timber harvesting, and has soured landowner/hunter relations. For more information see <http://www.montanawildlife.com>
2. *The National Wildlife Federation* - proponents of “no roads in the forests” plan, wolf reintroduction and logging restrictions. For more information see <http://www.nwf.org>
3. *Fund for Animals* – an animal rights activist group that has been trying to eliminate all types of ranching and hunting for years. Visit <http://www.fund.org>
4. *Defenders of Wildlife* – supports wolf reintroduction and wants to prohibit logging in all forests. See <http://www.defenders.org>
5. *MADCOW* – Montanans Against the Domestication and Commercialization of Wildlife, the main group behind I-143.

The supporters of I-143 make these arguments:

1. Game farms remove large blocks of land from use as wildlife habitat. (The 13,000 acres being used for game farms represents .01% of the total land area of 94 million acres in Montana; better than all agriculture if you want to return significant land to wildlife).
2. I-143 will allow game farmers to continue in business. (Without revenues from fee hunting, and the inability to sell or expand their ranches, this will be difficult).

3. There is the danger of “hybridization” if domestically raised elk escape into the wild. (Every elk farm in Montana is required to test all elk and get rid of any hybrids at their expense).
4. Concerns about the spread of diseases such as TB, CWD and Brucellosis among domestic deer/elk and also the spread of these diseases to wildlife. (Regular and systematic testing takes place, and none of these diseases currently exist on Montana game farms).
5. Game farms don’t produce a viable agricultural product and captive hunting poses a threat to fair-chase hunting. (Somebody should tell the 4,000 New Zealand farmers that raise 1.5 million deer and are a major force in that country’s economy, that deer farming is not viable).

The issues and potential impacts of implementation of I-143 include:

1. Effectively killing the elk and deer farming industry in Montana due to prohibition on fee hunting, and inability to expand or sell/transfer the game farms. Termination of the industry will result in the loss of significant out-of-state revenues (up to \$20 million per year). It will also affect suppliers and likely result in loss of jobs and future employment opportunities.
2. Raises a constitutional and legal issue whether the state can take away and/or prevent the livelihood of a certain segment of their citizens with or without compensation. Some believe that the initiative constitutes a taking of private property that violates the Montana Constitution.
3. Lawsuits by producers seeking compensation that could cost the state from \$50 to \$100 million. Considering Montana’s annual budget is about \$2 billion, this could result in significant hit on the State’s treasury and could result in an increase in taxes.
4. Escalation of bans on agricultural activities. Are bison producers next? Why not introduce initiatives that will prohibit cattle feedlot and hog barn operations? These are much less friendly to the environment as compared to game farms. If the desire is to make more land available for wildlife, then all ranches and farms should be banned as well.
5. Perception that Montana is not friendly to business. What agri-venture will now seriously consider Montana as a good place to do business? This is unfortunate. With a 1998 per capita person income \$20,172 (with only Mississippi, New Mexico and West Virginia being lower), Montana needs to look at agriculture diversification to improve its economy and the well-being of its citizens. This is not the way to do it!
6. Impact on the entire deer farming industry in the United States and Canada. People will now think twice about starting or investing in deer and elk farming. Bankers and investors will be asking – How do I know that a similar ban will not occur in your state? The political system works differently in Canada, and such issues are not put to the ballot. However, the threat of shrinking markets south of the border is bound to put a damper on growth and enthusiasm in the Canadian industry.

So what, if anything, can be done now to deal with this significant threat to our industry? Here are some of my personal thoughts.

1. Associations and individual deer/elk farmers need to continue to support the producers and organizations in favour of game farming. This means providing financial support, if necessary, to help launch the lawsuits to try and overturn this initiative. There are some significant property and civil rights issues at stake here as well.

2. As associations and individuals, we need to write the new Governor of Montana, Republican Judy Matz (State Capitol, PO Box 201701, Helena MT 59620-1701; website <http://www.state.mt.us>) and let her know about the concern we have if this initiative is implemented and urge her to find ways to stop it. Raise some of the points discussed above.

3. I thought about urging a boycott of Montana – suggesting we do not visit the state for vacations or hunting trips, nor purchase Montana goods or services. However, this may hurt the very people we are trying to help. I do think, though, that the citizens should be aware that those of us opposed to this Initiative can express our concerns by spending our money elsewhere.

4. Analyze the events and results in Montana and be better prepared for next time. Now is the time to start doing the research, gathering facts, developing arguments, materials and resources for any future similar eventualities. The associations need to work together to develop a common platform and combine resources.

5. We have to do a better job in communicating to the public. Take a look at the websites of the proponents of I-143. They are very well done and current (e.g., day after the vote, they had the results on). Compare that to most deer/elk industry sites – no mention of the controversy, no supporting articles or arguments, and no publication of the results). As an industry we are being beat at the public relations game!

6. We need better cooperation and joint efforts. In the Deerfarmer.com library is a list of at least 70 deer and elk associations. There has been very little sharing, communication or working together to promote our industry to the public and develop responses to those opposing deer/elk farming. We need a rapid response contingency plan to effectively deal with such threats. The Internet can be a very good tool to work together and get the word out.

7. If your Association does plan to take any action, or has a position on I-143, be sure to send a news release to the Montana newspapers (list and links can be found at <http://ajr.newslink.org/mtnews.html>). Their citizens should be kept aware of the concerns and intended actions of others relative to this initiative. Be sure to keep Deerfarmer.com in the loop as well. We now get over 50,000 visits per month to our websites and thus can get the news out to many “deer-farming-friendly” people.

8. Don't quit – relocate! A final suggestion to the Montana game farmers affected by I-143 is for them to move to a more friendly and supportive jurisdiction and continue to do what they love best! My recommendation is to move a few hundred miles north to Saskatchewan. This province strongly supports deer and elk farming, and thus has a thriving industry and associations. Hunting ranches are legal and growing. Other benefits would include reasonable land prices and being close enough to visit old friends and family regularly. Moving the entire Montana deer/elk farming industry to

another state or province, along with all the economic benefits, would send the right message to citizens in jurisdictions considering similar actions.

Yes, I know, this article should have been written and distributed before the November 7 vote. Perhaps we are all guilty of complacency. But we can't stop our fight now. This is a significant threat to our industry so we need to do something about it. If you have any other ideas or suggestions, please let me know.

2. SO YOU WANT TO BE A DEER FARMER – PART II

In Part I, I discussed some of the research that you need to do, and some of the questions you need to answer, prior to starting a deer or elk farm. Assuming that you have done this, and have decided you want to proceed, the next step is to prepare a business plan.

A business plan is especially important if you are going to be seeking money from investors or financial institutions. None of these will ever consider a funding application without a good business plan. There are other good reasons for preparing a business plan as well. These include:

1. It provides an analysis of the feasibility and potential profitability of a proposed venture. Often after doing a business plan, many an agricultural entrepreneur has decided that his or her idea is not so great, and likely would not make any (or enough) money.
2. It becomes your to-do list. Starting any business requires a number of steps and activities. Having these outlined beforehand allows you to plan better, be prepared and to anticipate (and deal with) any potential obstacles or problems. A well-written business plan provides milestones by which you can measure your progress.
3. It gives you a chance to learn more about the industry and its opportunities and risks. Being more knowledgeable will increase the likelihood of your success.

Before we look at what should be in your business plan, here are some general rules.

1. *Make it neat.* Appearance (and image) is critical. Sloppiness of any kind will reflect negatively on the way you do business.
2. *Make it grammatically correct.* Have someone read the draft and correct any spelling, typing or grammatical errors.
3. *Make it honest.* Do not lie or exaggerate. Tell it exactly like it is, not as you would like it to be. Financial sources are looking for integrity and honesty.
4. *Write in plain English.* Avoid technical jargon. Some 80% of all plans and proposals have too much jargon, which only someone in the field can understand.
5. *Don't over-emphasize your product or service.* Investors or bankers are not going to be interested in what you plan to feed your deer (Massive Rack vs. Antler King) or the details of production.

They will be interested in how you plan to sell your deer to make lots of money to be able to pay them back!

6. *Make it complete.* A well-written business plan contains all the information necessary for the financing source to make a decision without talking to the entrepreneur.

A typical business plan is between 25 to 40 pages long. It usually takes 2 to 3 weeks of actual work to put it together.

So what should be in your deer/elk farming business plan? Let's look at each of the sections in detail.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary should be written last after the business plan is complete. It is the most important part of the whole plan as only 10% of business plans get read beyond the summary. Think of it as a commercial that needs to grab the reader's attention. It should be no longer than two or three pages. It should be brief and highlight key points.

The Executive Summary should include the following points:

1. A brief outline and description of the proposed company and venture
2. Overall strategy and direction
3. Objectives and how you propose to achieve them
4. The market segment you are attempting to reach and how you plan to reach them
5. The unique features of the product or service
6. The people involved and their qualifications/experience
7. Overall financial glimpse of projected operations
8. How much money is required and for what it will be used
9. How and when investors will benefit from their investment.

Introduction

In this section, I like to include the following:

1. *Concept* – a short description of what you are planning to do in this venture. Describe the what, who, when, where and why.
2. *Background* – a short history of your farming operation or company if applicable. If you are farming already and want to expand into raising deer or elk, then describe when you started farming, how much land you own/rent, legal structure, ownership details, locations and geographic areas of operations, and any significant events relevant to this new initiative.

Direction and Environment

In this section, you should describe what you want to achieve through this venture, and the environment in which you will be operating.

In terms of direction, you should describe:

1. *Vision and mission* – give the reader the big picture of where you are going. An example of a vision may be “To contribute to a sustainable and profitable white-tailed deer industry in the United States”. A mission statement might be “To provide leadership to the deer farming industry by developing fallow deer with superior genetics, premium venison and outstanding growth performance.”

2. *Goals and objectives* – these should be specific and measurable statements of what you want to achieve with your business plan. For example, a goal could be “To operate a profitable business that produces and sells superior white-tailed deer breeding stock, deer products and related services.

Examples of objectives could be:

- Develop white-tails with superior genetics and performance characteristics to sell as breeding stock and for semen sales
- Produce and market trophy bucks for the Canadian and American hunting ranch markets
- Create brand awareness and market acceptance of elk venison and associated meat products.

3. *Areas of focus* – investors like to see a company focus on doing one or two things really well, rather than trying to do many things and doing them poorly. As we explained in Part I, deer and elk farming have many options for products and services. Explain in what areas of deer farming you are going to become the best, and why.

4. *Distinctive competencies* – list as many factors as possible that will make your proposed deer/elk farming operation and its products unique or special. Be as specific as possible – remember that investors are looking for companies that have an edge on the competition. Distinctive competencies could be brand awareness, patents, trademarks, or people with unique skills and talents.

5. *Opportunities and benefits* – describe the opportunities and benefits of deer/elk farming that make you want to join this industry. Examples could include:

- Excellent prospects for industry growth in the short and medium term resulting in high demand and prices for breeding stock.
- Increasing worldwide demand for venison, a meat that is perceived as very healthy, i.e., low fat, low cholesterol, high in protein and chemical free.
- Research confirms that deer/elk velvet antler has health and performance benefits. This market is expected to explode, offering excellent returns to farmers producing this product.

- White-tailed deer have a high reproduction rate; twins and triplets are common. This provides a significant competitive advantage over some other deer species.
- White-tailed deer (elk, mule deer) are species native to North America, and thus very adaptable and hardy. They are low-maintenance animals with few disease problems.
- Deer farming is environmentally friendly and does not have the same problems or opposition typically associated with intensive livestock operations such as hog farms and cattle feedlots.
- Deer farming is much less labour intensive than other farming operations. Thus it is a great complementary business to my current farming operations (or for people that have full-time jobs).
- Deer farming can be done on marginal land that is not much good for other agricultural operations.
- Start-up costs are high due to costs of breeding stock, fencing and facilities. This creates significant “barriers to entry” and should keep prices and demand high.
- The return on investment over the next 10 years is expected to be quite attractive. (If you give this reason, you better be able to back it up with the financial projections in your business plan).

Remember, these are just examples. If you are using them, be sure to have some evidence to back them up.

6. *Risks* – no agricultural sector is free of risks. Your investor or banker will want to know the risks associated with your proposed venture. Here are some that we know of already:

- *Regulatory environments* – after the Montana ban described in the previous article, this has to be on the top of our list. Include in this category the fact that movement of cervids is strongly regulated by each state/province and country, and that these regulations can change, possibly restricting potential markets.
- *Price stability* – as one elk farmer put it to me: do the math! Elk numbers are increasing at 28% a year; white-tailed deer at about 45%. At some point in the foreseeable future, we will have more deer/elk than markets, and this will have a downward pressure on prices unless new markets are developed.
- *Competition* – comes from other deer/elk farmers, other species, other states/provinces and other countries, e.g., New Zealand.
- *Public perceptions* – may affect current and potential markets for deer/elk and related products. Risks in this category range from ballots to bans on game farming (as in Montana) to harassment and obstruction to refusing to buy/eat venison or velvet antler products.

- *Natural disasters* – these include such things as diseases, poaching, predators and escape. Lurking in the back of every deer and elk farmer’s mind is Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) and its potential devastating impact on the industry.
- *Infra-structure* – if venison is going to be a major market, then an infra-structure has yet to be developed. This includes having federally/ECC inspected facilities, finishing and grading standards and marketing/distribution systems.

In your business plan, you should describe how you plan to reduce these and other risks associated with your deer farming operation.

Next month in Part III, we will examine and discuss what the Market Analysis section of your business plan should look like.

3. PREPARING YOUR DEER AND ELK FOR WINTER

[By Dr. Larry Sullivan, DVM, Antlers Veterinary Service, Lansing Michigan]

Fall is in the air, the rut is here and it’s time to start thinking about hunting and managing our herds in preparation for winter... and we never know what we will get for winter weather this year! I think the last few winters have been so mild that many of us have been lulled into a false sense of security as far as preparing our livestock for the demands of very cold, blustery, snowy conditions. Your spring survival rate for all age groups, including your fawn crop, may very well depend on the management decisions you make now.

I will briefly run through a few items that most of us are aware of but maybe haven’t paid much attention to in recent years. In no particular order, here they are:

1. *Shelled corn* – I know many of you supplement or extend your pelleted ration by feeding shelled corn going into and during winter, and don’t seem to have any “apparent” problems. But I think this practice does more harm than good. If you do it to save a little on the feed bills, you may be fooling yourself... it could be costing you more than you think. Think about it... why do you feed a nutritionally balanced pelleted ration for most of the year and then un-balance it at a critical time of year by adding shelled corn?? It just doesn’t make any sense to me! Shelled corn is low in calcium, high in phosphorus and lacks many essential micronutrients which can cause or predispose your animals to many different metabolic diseases. Pelleted rations should contain a minimum of 14% protein.
2. *Water* – We don’t usually think of water when we discuss nutrition, but water is one of the most important nutrients. Clean water should be available for your deer at all times. Sure, deer may survive on snow, but they will fare much, much better with access to clean, fresh water.
3. *Micronutrients* – Trace mineral salt blocks are cheap insurance against some nutritional deficiencies. The Great Lakes area is noted for its lack of several trace minerals, notably selenium, molybdenum and others. I think most, if not all, of the “wonder blocks” that are sold by some of the traveling feed salesmen and other carpetbaggers are a waste of your money. Just plain ole TMS blocks from your local feed supplier will do just fine.

4. *Feeder space* – There should be adequate feed bunk space so that all your deer get some “time at the table.” Herd bucks and even older does will sometimes guard the feed bunks and not allow other deer access. Watch your deer at the feeders and make sure they all get enough time to eat without being driven away.

5. *Windbreaks and shelters* – Deer need protection from the wind and blowing snow. If you don’t have woods or terrain to provide this protection, then a solid-wall fence or buildings will help. In fawning season, does also need some coverage or protected areas to drop their fawns.

6. *Rubs* – Bucks need access to rubs to remove the velvet. The act of scraping and marking is also a very important requirement for proper socialization and trophy antler development. I have seen many facilities and lots where there were no trees or brush left smaller than an inch or so in diameter. Deer need smaller diameter trees and brush to properly clean the velvet and dried blood from around the base of the antlers. Also, the tannins in the bark and sap of live trees and brush help to give the antlers good coloring rather than the bleach-white antlers seen at facilities lacking proper scrapes and rubs.

7. *De-worming* – After the first killing frost is the best time for fall de-worming. There are many products that can be added to your feed at the feed mill, or you can “top-dress” your feed with one of several products available at your local elevator or feed supplier. Don’t use the same de-wormer that you used last spring. Rotate your wormers, so that each time you use a de-wormer you use a product with a different active ingredient... and each time you handle an animal, inject it with the correct dosage of *Ivomec-plus*.

4. NEW GENERATION COOPERATIVES

[By Dr. John Church, Livestock Welfare Specialist. Reprinted from *The Elk Scoop*, a publication of the Iowa Elk Breeders Association, October 2000]

Deer and elk farmers are currently facing many challenges, with more on the horizon as we look towards the new millennium. The downturn in the velvet antler markets brought on by the Asian financial crisis, and the softening of prices for breeding stock, are but two issues impacting the industry.

However, we must remember that change creates new opportunities as well. Change has resulted in the need and the desire for the development of new markets for our products, and marketing of our products in innovative ways.

Agriculture has undergone a major transformation in recent years. The farming community is experiencing vertical integration as the ownership, control of production, and processing becomes centralized into few hands.

Historically, cooperatives were developed as a response to individual power in the marketplace. In essence, coops empower farmers, and give them more control over the products they produce.

Conditions in the north-central United States have resulted in a significant wave of development and expansion of cooperative enterprises. This “cooperative revival” has attracted attention from across North America. The term “New Generation Cooperative” has been applied to dozens of

cooperatives that have emerged in this region of the USA in recent years. They have helped improve rural economies and incomes of their producer members.

One of the best and most applicable examples is the North American Bison Cooperative (<http://www.nabisoncoop.com>) that operates in North Dakota, USA. Deer and elk farmers would be wise to take notice of what bison producers have accomplished in the last few years, in terms of stabilizing the prices they receive for the animals they produce.

New Generation Cooperatives are significantly different from the more traditional consumer cooperatives that most farmers know. For example, consumer co-operatives buy goods in bulk and sell them at competitive prices. Examples are retail coops, direct charge coops, and buyers' clubs.

New Generation Coops share many of the key attributes of these traditional cooperatives including:

- Democratic control, based on one-member, one-vote.
- A board of directors elected by the members of the cooperative.
- Distribution of earnings based on sales by the cooperative.

There are three important ways in which New Generation Coops differ from traditional ones:

- A tied-contract that stipulates both delivery rights and obligations.
- Membership exclusively limited to those who purchase delivery rights.
- Higher levels of equity investment by individual members.

New Generation Cooperatives issue shares that are purchased by individual producers, allowing membership and participation in the cooperative. Each share is a tied-contract between the member and the cooperative. Shares are sold to allocate delivery rights/obligations among the members and to generate capital for the cooperative. Shares give a member the right and obligation to deliver one unit of product to the cooperative (e.g., 100 bushels of durum wheat or 1 bison).

Ideally, the total delivery rights available should equal the total capacity of the cooperative. If the producer is incapable or unwilling to meet the delivery obligations, the cooperative reserves the right to purchase the required amount of raw product (in this case animals) and to charge the cost to the individual producer who did not fulfill his obligations. This ensures a dependable supply of product necessary to establish new markets or an industry.

New Generation Coops have typically raised between 30% to 50% of total capital necessary through the sale of shares tied to delivery rights. The total number of members will be restricted by the availability of shares/delivery rights. The price tag of each share is established by dividing the total amount of equity capital the coop wishes to raise by the number of shares issued.

This level of equity is a notable deviation from traditional cooperatives, which generally need only minimal capital contributions by their membership. The higher equity level generated by the New Generation Cooperatives minimizes dependency on traditional debt financing and can contribute to

the project's viability. It is important to point out that members are not obligated to hold equal numbers of shares and delivery rights. The Cooperative may issue other classes of shares or debentures that are not linked to delivery rights.

New Generation Cooperatives hold a great deal of potential for marketing deer and elk products. The producers can control their own destiny, instead of depending on middle men to purchase, process and distribute deer/elk products. Producers benefit from a market in which they have a major role in helping to develop. As an industry, we need to move forward on this concept.

5. NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

Dr. Clinton Balok, DVM from New Mexico, was recently elected President of the Elk Research Council (ERC). The mission of ERC is to support and promote research pertinent to the elk industry. ERC hopes to interest universities in conducting research into the major aspects of the elk industry – nutrition, reproduction, health and management, genetics and marketing.

ERC has undertaken a joint project with Iowa State University and Crownpoint Institute of Technology, a small tribal college on a Navajo reservation. The project involves the development of a 3-hour online course called Elk Management. This course will be the only elk management course offered on the web, and the only elk management course offered in the United States.

The Elk Research Council is seeking research proposals and applications for funding from qualified individuals and organizations willing to perform research involving the following:

- The therapeutic use of velvet antler products
- Health, disease and the production of farmed elk.

Consideration for support will be based on criteria such as benefits to the elk industry, impact on marketing of elk products and meeting of industry priorities.

For more information on the research funding, contact:

Dr. Murray Woodbury
ERC Research Coordinator
510 Smoothstone Crescent
Saskatoon, SK Canada S7J 4T4
Phone: (306) 966-7170
E-mail: murray.woodbury@usask.ca

[Source: North American Elk, Oct/Nov. 2000, page 8]

6. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

CANADIAN RED DEER ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING AND CONVENTION will be held in Cornwall, Ontario, Canada on Nov. 17 to 19, 2000. Call 613-874-9994, fax 613-874-9995 or buy@glen-net.ca for more information.

IOWA ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION will be held on Jan. 13, 2001 in Marshalltown, Iowa, USA. For more information, visit their website at <http://www.wapiti.net/ieba/>, or e-mail to tusseyelk@yahoo.com or phone 641-782-2903.

MINNESOTA ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL MEETING will be held on Jan. 13, 2001 at the Doubletree Hotel, in Bloomington, Minnesota, USA. For more information contact Patty VanGundy at 507-896-2380 or visit their website at <http://www.mneba.addr.com>

ANTLERS INTERNATIONAL'S SECOND ANNUAL WHITETAIL SEMINAR will be held on Jan. 18, 2001. This is an excellent opportunity to listen to some of the top authorities in whitetail breeding and management. One full day of sharing and visiting with the experts. A seminar you do not want to miss! Call us at 573-392-2997, fax 573-392-6926, or visit our website at <http://antlersinternational.com> for more information.

ALBERTA ELK ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION will be held at the Mayfield Inn, in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada on Jan. 26 and 27, 2001. For more information, contact AEA at info@albertaelk.com or visit their website at <http://www.albertaelk.com> (List of speakers and sessions can be found in the Deerfarmer.com Calendar at <http://events.deerfarmer.com>).

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS CONVENTION will be held in Toronto, Ontario, Canada on Feb. 21-24, 2001. Call 888-431-3605, fax 306-924-9792 or info@naelk.org for more information.

NADEFA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBIT – Deer Farming in the 21st Century - will be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, USA on Feb. 28 – March 3, 2001. Call NADeFA's National Office at 301-459-7708, fax 301-459-7864 or visit our website at <http://www.nadefa.org> for more information.

SASKATCHEWAN WHITETAIL AND MULE DEER CONVENTION will hold their 2001 Convention on March 23 and 24, 2001 at the Saskatoon Inn, in Saskatoon Saskatchewan Canada. For more information, e-mail Lisa at info@saskdeer.com or phone 306-783-5257 or visit <http://www.saskdeer.com>.

SASKATCHEWAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOC. CONVENTION will be held in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada on March 29 to 31, 2001. Please call 306-924-9790, fax 306-924-9792 or visit our website at <http://www.ranchernet.com/SEBA> for more information.

AWMDA ANNUAL CONVENTION & TRADESHOW. The Alberta Whitetail and Mule Deer Association Annual Convention and Tradeshow will be held April 6 to 8, 2001 at the Ramada Inn, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Contact the AWMDA at phone: 780-672-5988; fax: 780-672-5978

info@albertadeer.com or visit their website at <http://www.albertadeer.com>.

Many more events, including deer/elk sales, tradeshow and workshops are listed in the Calendar section of [Deerfarmer.com](http://events.deerfarmer.com) that can be found at <http://events.deerfarmer.com>. Take advantage of this free service to list your upcoming events.

7. DEERFARMER.COM NEWS

We at [Deerfarmer.com](http://www.deerfarmer.com) are celebrating our third anniversary of being on the web. We originally went on-line in November of 1997 as *canvena.com*. In April of 1999, after the untimely death of Marvin Ference and a trade-mark dispute with New Zealand, we changed our domain to *deerfarmer.com* and our name to the Deer Farmers' Information Network.

Our popularity continues to grow. In October 2000, [deerfarmer.com](http://www.deerfarmer.com) had 36,300 visits (up from 30,400 in September) from 10,600 different sites (up from 6,400 in September). If we count our traffic in "hits" like many other websites do, we had 296,000 hits at [deerfarmer.com](http://www.deerfarmer.com) in October. The classified ads, photographs and farm directory are the most visited destinations.

At the Discussion Forums (<http://www.deerforum.com>), we had 7,200 visits (up from 6,000 in September) from 2,100 individuals. Just think, every time you post a comment on our Discussion Forums, at least 2,000 people will read it.

At [Deerfarmer.net](http://www.deerfarmer.net), home of websites for deer farmers, we had just over 8,000 visits from 2,500 individuals (up from 7,000 visits in September). For our three sites, the total number of visits was nearly 52,000 or over 400,000 hits.

We have added two new deer farms (both from Alberta) to our websites found at <http://www.deerfarmer.net>. We welcome Gloryview Whitetails at <http://www.deerfarmer.net/gloryview> and Meadowview Deer Ranch at <http://www.deerfarmer.net/mdr>. Please visit these new websites and sign their guest books.

We continue to update our list of Deer and Elk Associations. Visit the Associations list in our Library for contact information of your local Association. We strongly encourage you to support and participate in your local deer or elk industry associations. They are critical to ensuring that the regulations and environment stay friendly for a thriving and profitable deer and elk farming industry. They are also an excellent source of information and assistance for new farmers.

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 that can be found at <http://www.deerfarmer.com/forms/guest.htm>

As per 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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