

Welcome to the NOVEMBER 2001 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 2,600 readers in 27 countries.

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WRITER'S CONTEST! The lead article in the December 2001 *Digest* will be a fictional story entitled "How Dirty Dick, the Evil-eyed Reindeer Nearly Ruined Christmas". This title was inspired by a reindeer bull owned by Dr. Terry Church of the Rocky Mountain Game Farm near Calgary, Canada. It seems that each year during the rut, Dick becomes dirty and smelly, and lowers his head, giving the evil eye to everyone that comes into his pen.

Submissions will be accepted for a maximum 2,000 word fictional story that fits this title. The story should be about Dirty Dick, perhaps urged by some animal rights group, going to the North Pole and trying to sabotage Santa's annual Christmas Eve trip. However, in the end, good triumphs over evil. The story should include plenty of references to issues in the cervid farming industry.

The winning entry will be published in next month's *Digest*. In addition, the winner will receive a free banner for two months on the home page of *Deerfarmer.com* – a \$1,000 USD value. So flex those imaginations and off you go to your computers! Send all entries to [editor@deerfarmer.com](mailto:editor@deerfarmer.com) by December 10, 2001.

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## 1. POSSIBLE ORIGIN OF CWD

*[By Gary Gerhardt, Staff Writer, Rocky Mountain News, Colorado USA November 5, 2001.  
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FORT COLLINS -- A state Division of Wildlife biologist believes a nutritional study he conducted with deer, sheep and goats in the late 1960s might have been the genesis of chronic wasting disease. Gene Schoonveld suspects some of the sheep in his study had scrapie, a relative of chronic wasting disease. Some of the deer might have become infected with scrapie, which then mutated into CWD and spread to other deer.

For more than 25 years, scientists have searched without success for the starting point for CWD, which has spread into the wild and to domestic herds of elk on game ranches.

The state is in the process of killing more than 1,500 wild deer north and east of Fort Collins and more than 1,000 elk infected with CWD on game ranches throughout the state.

Schoonveld admits he doesn't have conclusive proof, but he said if the sheep had scrapie, it might have "jumped" from the sheep and mutated in deer as CWD. The deer and sheep were penned together from 1968 to 1971 during his master's degree project at Colorado State University.

Schoonveld was attempting to determine why mule deer didn't digest alfalfa and natural hay supplied during extremely harsh winters. Over the course of study, about three dozen deer died of what later would be identified as classic CWD symptoms.

It wasn't until 1977 that CWD was positively identified in the family of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies, or TSE, which includes scrapie in sheep, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans, and bovine spongiform encephalopathy or mad cow disease in domestic cattle.

"I learned after the study that some of the sheep may have had scrapie, and I think they infected deer, which in turn infected wild deer that came around the pens during rutting season, in particular," Schoonveld said.

He said that during the study, Colorado State University left sheep in pens where his spare deer were kept. Schoonveld said he was told to use any sheep he wanted as a comparison for the deer in his study.

"During that time, two or three dozen of my deer died, and when I sent them to CSU for a necropsy, it always came back that they died of enteritis, an inflammation or infection of the intestinal tract," Schoonveld said.

Many of the doe deer came from the wild where they were bred, gave birth, and were turned back into the wild after having been in the pens.

"The sheep didn't show evidence of scrapie at the time," Schoonveld said. "I know because I went into pens where I had 40 or 50 deer in reserve and 30 to 40 sheep. I got what I needed from that pen, but it wasn't until later I was told those sheep came from a scrapie project. Since scrapie and CWD is so closely linked, what else could it be?"

Schoonveld said after CSU graduate student Beth Williams positively identified chronic wasting disease in deer and elk in 1977, "it became crystal clear it was CWD that had killed my deer."

But the exact cause of CWD in deer or how they contract it remained a mystery.

"I think Gene's hypothesis is very reasonable. I, too, would lean toward scrapie, but there's nothing to prove it is how this disease first began," said Williams, now a professor at the veterinary science lab at the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

Williams said she asked around about sheep with scrapie being on the campus in the late 1960s and couldn't find anyone who was aware of any such project.

"However, they didn't always diagnose scrapie so I wouldn't rule it out," she added.

Wildlife division veterinarian Mike Miller, who has done extensive study on CWD, doubts Schoonveld's theory.

"In all the literature we have searched there never has been a mention of scrapie in sheep in those pens during that period. And even if there was, there is nothing to prove CWD is the result of a transfer of scrapie from infected sheep to deer or elk," Miller said.

Cleon Kimberling, a professor of clinical sciences at CSU, said he also heard there was scrapie in the pens at the time of Schoonveld's study, but had no proof.

Steve Kerr, a work-study student at CSU at the time of the experiment who now is a veterinarian in Torrington, Wyo., said, "I remember at the time there were sheep that had surgeries, but they weren't kept as long as the deer. They could have had scrapie, but we didn't know it."

Going back through slides from the pens, Kerr said he doesn't see sick sheep but does see sick deer.

"There have been sheep with scrapie on grazing allotments in the wild, but the disease doesn't seem to have spread to deer. The only thing different was the proximity of their being in the pens," he said.

That's what led Schoonveld to his conclusion.

"I'm guessing it was prolonged nose-to-nose exposure between infected sheep and deer that may have led to the jump," he said.

Wild deer would come around the pens during the rut and because it was a single fence, Schoonveld said, they could have come nose to nose with the deer in the pens and may have contracted CWD, which spread into wild herds.

Transmissible spongiform encephalopathies attack the brain and central nervous system, destroying healthy tissue. The victim loses basic physical and mental abilities as the disease progresses. The word spongiform describes the spongelike condition of brain tissue, which has microscopic holes in it. To date, there is no cure for the fatal disease.

Since proteins differ from one species to another, pathogens -- proteinaceous infectious particles, or prions -- are far less likely to survive when transferred, or "jumped," from one species to another. This "species barrier" is extremely difficult to breach.

If a breach happens, however, scientists say the prion could mutate and be rather easily passed to other members of the same species.

"We don't know how it jumps, but we do know it's possible for diseases of one species to cross the barrier to other species," said Gregory Raymond, a scientist with Rocky Mountain Laboratories, Laboratory of Persistent Viral Diseases, in Hamilton, Mt.

"Sheep that grazed in an area may have left a disease on the ground that can't be killed by disinfectant, and it could pass on to other species," Raymond said.

Extended nose-to-nose contact, or a deer licking the placenta of an infected sheep might be a factor in a disease crossing the species barrier, said Raymond, who added that hasn't been proved.

## **2. FACTS AND MYTHS ABOUT MARKETING**

**I**f you are a deer or elk farmer developing a marketing program for your animals or related products and services, here are some research findings that you should keep in mind.

First, the facts about marketing.

1. Most purchasing decisions are made in the unconscious.
2. Repetition is the secret to accessing the unconscious mind of people. The most important rule in marketing is repetition. Too many marketing programs give up too soon. On average, you have to have seven to nine repeats before you will see results in your marketing program.
3. Your marketing can be twice as effective if you aim it at both right-brained (emotional, aesthetic) and left-brained (logical, sequential) people. The North American population is about evenly divided, so if you use only one approach, half your advertising budget will be wasted.
4. The more data you have, and the more you know about your customers, the better your marketing will be. This data is available from many published sources, or you can collect your own by asking your customers lots of questions.
5. Children are influencing family purchases more today than ever. These are the results of more mothers working and children's greater access to media.
6. You can't rely on consumers to provide accurate information on their buying behaviour. They don't always do what they say they will! Therefore, be careful in interpreting consumer surveys.
7. There are two bonds to make a sale - the human bond and the business bond. People would much rather do business with a friend than with anyone else. So become their friend.

8. People are human beings and like to be treated as such. Don't treat people as prospects; don't treat them as demographic groups.
9. People have a basic need to belong. Let them belong to your club. Recognize the 20% of your customers that give you 80% of your business.
10. Getting a person to say yes to a sale works best if you establish momentum first with lesser questions to which it is easy to answer yes.
11. Your customers will be buying a lot more than merely your product or service. They are buying your personality, your reputation, your service, and your status in the community.
12. People will remember the most fascinating part of your marketing and not necessarily your product or service. That is why you need to be very careful every step of the way.

There are also some common misconceptions or myths about marketing that you should be aware of, and should avoid.

1. It is good to have a great deal of white space in advertisements, brochures, and other printed materials. *Fact:* Not today where the consumer wants as much information as possible about your company and products. If you don't have room, include your web address where they can go to get more information at their convenience.
2. Use short copy. People won't read long copy. *Fact:* This is one of the most dangerous, costly, and silly myths in marketing. People want enough information to make a buying decision.
3. It is expensive to purchase radio and television advertising. *Fact:* With the explosion of television channels, cable companies and interactive television, more and more cost-effective opportunities are becoming available. Be sure to get viewer or listener numbers so you can calculate the cost of reaching each potential customer. Rates may be cheap, but that may be because only a few hundred are listening or watching – not a good use of your advertising dollar!
4. Sell the sizzle and not the steak. *Fact:* The easiest way to sell a product is to offer it as a solution to a problem your customers may have.
5. Great marketing works instantly. *Fact:* Great price-off sales work instantly as does giving away product. Great marketing takes time.
6. Marketing should entertain and amuse. *Fact:* Show business should entertain and amuse. Marketing should sell. Winning marketing awards for your advertising does not mean more profits in your pocket.
7. Marketing should be changed every few years to keep it fresh and new. *Fact:* The longer your marketing promotes your product or service, the better, e.g., *things go better with ...*
8. Public relations stories have a short life span. *Fact:* Only if you let them. Make copies and use it a part of your other marketing strategies.

9. Bad publicity is better than no publicity at all. *Fact:* Bad publicity is bad for your business! With on-line services such as the Internet, millions of people can get to know about bad publicity. Have an action plan in place for such contingencies.
10. Word-of-mouth marketing is all a great business needs. *Fact:* Not any longer. Businesses need to be marketing all the time with a variety of tools.
11. The purpose of marketing is to generate maximum sales volume. *Fact:* Wrong, the purpose of marketing is to generate maximum profits.
12. Quality is the main determinant in influencing sales. *Fact:* Confidence in the business is the main determinant; quality is second.
13. It makes a lot of sense for a small business to retain the services of an advertising agency. *Fact:* No it does not. Better work at more reasonable prices is available from marketing consultants.
14. Once your business has a solid customer base, it can cease marketing. *Fact:* Perhaps you can cut down on general marketing but you must maintain contact with your customer base or someone will take them away.
15. Repetition of a marketing message is boring. *Fact:* It may be boring to you, but it won't be boring to your prospects and customers.

### 3. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE ELK INDUSTRY

**A**s a consumer, how comfortable are you in purchasing and eating elk products such as meat and elk velvet antler products? With CWD (mistakenly equated with mad cow disease) stories circulating in the media, who could blame the ordinary consumer from shying away from our products.

It is critical to the success of our industry that we implement systems to ensure the safety and health of our consumable products. It is equally important that we convince the consumer that our deer and elk products are completely safe (and good for you), and make them aware of the comprehensive systems we have in place to do so.

The Alberta Elk Association, representing over 400 producers in this western Canadian province, has done just that. What the AEA has done serves as an excellent model for other associations and jurisdictions to follow.

Alberta's elk industry has implemented a Quality Assurance (QA) program designed to ensure safety and enhance consumer confidence in the industry and its products. Most of the QA protocols are based in federal and provincial legislation, while others are voluntarily supported.

Alberta's Quality Assurance components include the following:

1. Product safety – products are processed from farm to consumer in a manner that ensures food safety.

2. Products of consistent high quality – products are processed, formulated, packaged and labeled using protocols that promote quality and consistency.
3. Exemplary care of animals – the farmed elk industry proactively leads, researches and improves elk care, management and health.
4. Minimal impact on the environment – by nature, farmed elk have a low impact on the environment. The industry is committed to ensuring that farming practices minimize environment impact.

The elk industry in Alberta is also committed to implementing the national On-farm Food Safety Program, currently under development in all livestock industries. As well, the industry is looking forward to the new Natural Health Products regulations being enacted by the Canadian government. These regulations apply to products such as vitamins and nutraceutical products. Elk velvet antler products will fall under these regulations.

Here is a more detailed description of each of the components and how they contribute to the Quality Assurance program.

### **Animal and product traceability**

1. Alberta Livestock Industry Diversification Act (LIDA). This Act regulates the production of cervid species, including elk, and is an important base for industry QA. The audited animal and antler inventory required under this Act provides absolute traceability of animals and antler to the farm and animal of origin.
2. Velvet antler processing policy. This policy of the Government of Alberta ensures that all antlers transported and processed within the province, and from outside the province, are tagged as to the source of origin and traceable from raw product to consumer product lot number.

### **Health risk prevention**

1. Food production safety. The Velvet Antler Removal Certification Program is a mandatory producer training program required for all farmers who remove their own velvet antler. In addition to the humane removal of antler, producers are trained in antler growth, antler removal legislation, industry responsibilities, product handling and animal nutrition as it pertains to antler quality. The elk industry is pursuing a HACCP based, Canadian On-farm Food Safety Program.
2. Import protocols. For several years, Alberta has not allowed any elk or other farmed cervids to enter the province. Proposed new import protocols will allow movement of animals into the province that have met high health criteria.
3. Antler GMP/HACCP (voluntary). Buyers and distributors of antler products can determine whether the expectations of their consumers and regulators are met by seeking specific information from individual processors and distributors regarding the QA protocols they have in place, including whether their QA procedures are certified, externally audited and recognized.
4. Meat HACCP. All elk meat and meat products sold must meet the national and provincial Meat Inspections Act standards including HACCP monitored processing.

## **Health status**

1. CWD surveillance. No cases of Chronic Wasting Disease have been detected in Alberta's farmed or wild elk population under the Alberta CWD Surveillance Program.
2. Disease management. All farmed elk are tested for reportable diseases as per protocols established by the Government of Canada's Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Reportable diseases are effectively controlled and eliminated by the CFIA when identified. Non-reportable diseases are detected and controlled by local veterinarians and producers.

## **Certification**

1. Compliance with Acts. Elk farms and operators must be licensed by the Province of Alberta each year. Ongoing licensure is dependent upon compliance with all Acts and Regulations pertaining to the industry.
2. Natural Health Products Regulations. The Government of Canada is developing the Natural Health Products Regulations to ensure that registered products meet safety and quality standards. As these regulations will affect elk velvet antler products, the AEA supports this initiative and is providing input to the government.

## **Animal care and welfare**

1. Cervid Code of Practice. Elk industry producers must agree to abide by the "Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farmed Deer (Cervidae)" developed by the Canadian Agri-food Research Council. The Alberta Elk Association endorsed this Code of Practice in 1989 and included it in the AEA Member Code of Conduct.
2. Velvet Antler Removal Certification Program. This program addresses the humane removal of antler including animal welfare responsibilities, animal handling and restraint, antler removal anesthesia, antler removal techniques and the appropriate use of antiseptics and medications.

The program was developed in cooperation with the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association and requires that the producer establish and maintain a veterinary-client relationship. The program is an industry requirement under the Veterinary Professions Act and is identified in the regulations under the LIDA.

3. AFAC Affiliation (voluntary). The Alberta Elk Association is an active member of the Alberta Farm Animal Care Association and promotes the continuous improvement of animal well-being.

## **Environmental sustainability**

1. LIDA compliance. LIDA and the Provincial Wildlife Act require elk producers to follow certain protocols that strive to eliminate the possibility of disease transfer and the mixing of the gene pools of wild elk populations and farm elk. Elk farming is noted for its low environmental impact.

As comprehensive as this program is, I still believe that it is missing one critical component – the capability for the consumer to determine the originating farm for the products. Yes, by using lot numbers the government can track where the product came from, but they would do so only if major problems arose. It would be nice if the consumer could look at the label on the package and be able to easily find out the country, state and farm from which it came.



This missing component is actually very easy to achieve. There are over 1,700 deer and elk farms already registered in the Global Deer and Elk Farm Directory (<http://www.globaldeer.com>) each with their own unique DFUID (Deer Farm Universal Identifier). By printing the DFUID of the originating farm on each product package, buyers would immediately know the country and state from where the product came. They could identify the specific farm by using the Internet to go to <http://www.dfuid.com> and entering the DFUID in the search field.

Associations and the elk industry in all jurisdictions must implement similar Quality Assurance systems to ensure safe and healthy products. And, by the way, don't forget to let the consumer and general public know what you are doing.

#### **4. TAX CREDITS FOR CANADIAN CERVID RESEARCH**

Recent changes to the Canadian Scientific Research and Experimental Development (SR&ED) Program can help deer/elk farmers and their associations fund research projects.

The Government of Canada has established a tax incentive program to encourage Canadian businesses of all sizes to do research and development that will lead to new, improved, or technologically advanced products and services or processes. The program, administered by Canada Customs and Revenue Agency (CCRA), gives claimants cash refunds and/or tax credits for their expenditures on eligible research and development work done in Canada. This is an entitlement program with no limit – if you qualify, you get the tax credits or refunds.

To be eligible for SR&ED incentives, work must meet the legislative definition of “scientific research and experimental development.” The work must fall into one of the following categories:

1. Experimental development – this is the work done to achieve technological advancement to create or improve new materials, devices, products, or processes.
2. Applied research – this is work done to advance scientific knowledge with a specific practical application in view.
3. Basic research – this is work done to advance scientific knowledge without a specific practical application in mind.
4. Support work – this is work that directly supports and is commensurate with the needs of experimental development, applied research and basic research. This include the following eight specific types of work: engineering, design, operations research, mathematical analysis, computer programming, data collection, testing and psychological research.

Work can be done by the individual/company or contracted out. Only SR&ED done in Canada qualifies under the program.

The following work is NOT eligible under this program:

1. Research in social sciences or the humanities.

2. Commercial production of a new or improved material, device, or product or the commercial use of a new or improved process.
3. Style changes.
4. Market research or sales promotion.
5. Quality control or routine testing of materials, devices, products, or processes.
6. Routine data collection.

Qualifying Canadian-controlled private corporations may receive a refundable investment tax credit of 35% of their qualified SR&ED expenditures.

For other Canadian corporations, the investment tax credit for qualified SR&ED expenditures is 20% for both current and capital expenditures. These credits may be carried back three years or carried forward ten years to reduce tax liability.

Proprietorships, partnerships and trusts can earn investment tax credits at the rate of 20% of qualified current and capital SR&ED expenditures. After applying these credits against taxes payable, you can get a cash refund on 40% of the balance of tax credits.

Deer/elk (and other non-profit) associations are NOT eligible to receive tax credits or refunds under this program. However, recent changes to the program enable the associations to collect the tax benefits on behalf of their members. For example, if part of the membership fee is used for eligible research, the association can claim the tax credits and refund them to their members. Supposedly the process has been streamlined to do this efficiently.

So if you are a Canadian deer or elk farmer or company, and have done, or are doing, “research”, you should check out this program. Some 20% to 35% government assistance with the costs could help significantly. Canadian cervid associations should find out more about how they can use this program to encourage greater contributions for research. The associations should also explore ways to take advantage of this program, e.g., setting up a joint private research company.

For more information, visit <http://www.ccra.gc.ca/sred>. CCRA staff are available to talk about the program, and can assist individuals to claim their credits/refunds. Deer/elk farmers in western Canada should contact the CCRA Calgary office at 403-691-6452.

## 5. NEWS FROM THE ASSOCIATIONS

The 2002 North American Deer Farmers Association Veterinarian Seminar will take place on Tuesday, February 19, 2002, and Wednesday, February 20, 2002, at the DoubleTree Hotel in Austin, Texas. It will immediately precede the 2002 NADeFA Annual Conference and World Deer Farming Congress III.

The seminar will be divided into 4 half day sessions which will include information on Chronic Wasting Disease, Tuberculosis, Foot and Mouth Disease and Johnes Disease.

The registration fee is \$65/day and includes breakfast and lunch. For further information contact the NADeFA office at 301-459-7708 or <mailto:info@nadefa.org> or call Jill Bryar Wood at 512-847-3205 or <mailto:bryarwood@aol.com>.

## 6. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

WHITETAILED OF WISCONSIN meeting will be held on Jan 5, 2002 at the Holiday Inn, Stevens Point, WI. For more information see <http://www.whitetailsofwisconsin.com> or e-mail <mailto:info@whitetailsofwisconsin.com>

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 320-543-3664 or <mailto:bhartkopf@cmgate.com>

ALBERTA ELK ASSOCIATION Annual Conference will be held from Jan. 24 to 26, 2002 at the Capri Inn in Red Deer, Alberta Canada. For more information, contact the AEA office at <mailto:info@albertaelk.com> or phone 1-780-980-7582.

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

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

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

SASKATCHEWAN WHITE TAIL AND MULE DEER PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION will hold their 2002 annual convention on March 15-17, 2002 at the Delta Hotel in Regina. For more information contact Lisa at <mailto:info@saskdeer.com>

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

ALBERTA WHITETAIL AND MULE DEER ASSOCIATION Annual Convention will be held at the Capri (Red Deer, Alberta, Canada) April 5 to 7, 2001. For more information contact AWMDA at <mailto:info@albertadeer.com> or visit their web site at <http://www.albertadeer.com>

WHITETAILS OF WISCONSIN ANNUAL MEETING will be held on April 6, 2002 at the Stoney Creek Inn, Wausau, WI. For more information see <http://www.whitetailsofwisconsin.com> or e-mail <mailto:info@whitetailsofwisconsin.com>

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

## **7. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES**

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## 8. CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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

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