

Welcome to the NOVEMBER 2002 edition of the *Deer Farmers' Digest*, a monthly electronic newsletter published for those interested in raising deer, elk and reindeer. This *Digest* is distributed via e-mail to over 3,000 readers in 32 countries.

A copy of ALL the issues of the *Deer Farmers' Digest* can be found at <http://www.deer-digest.com> and in the National Library of Canada at [http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/deer\\_farmers\\_digest/](http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/deer_farmers_digest/).

Please forward this copy of the *Deer Farmers' Digest* to your friends and any other people who may be interested in deer, elk or reindeer.

To ADD or REMOVE your name from our mailing list, please see Subscription Services below.

**IN THIS ISSUE**

- 1. Bagging your venison in 2002 ..... 2
- 2. Direct marketing ..... 5
- 3. Strategies for venison promotion ..... 8
- 4. Reindeer die from West Nile Virus ..... 10
- 5. Industry news ..... 13
- 6. Events calendar ..... 16
- 7. Subscription services ..... 17
- 8. Contact information ..... 18

**\*\* DEER \* BYTES \* \* \* \* \***

A new deer farmer called a vet to his farm to take a look at one of his prize bucks. After a quick look, the vet told the farmer that his buck was dead.

“Are you sure?” asked the deer farmer. “Maybe he’s just in a deep sleep or a coma.”

The vet went back to his pickup truck and brought out his black Labrador dog. The dog sniffed the buck from one end to the other, barked and lay down. Next the vet went to the farmer’s barn and picked up a cat. The cat walked over the dead buck, meowed, and then ran away.

The vet presented the farmer with his bill. “What, \$250 just to tell me that my deer is dead!” exclaimed the deer farmer. “Well,” said the vet, “my original bill was only for \$50, but with the Lab report and the Cat scan ...”

**\* \* \* \* \***

## 1. BAGGING YOUR VENISON IN 2002

*[By Russell Sawchuk, Editor. This article is based on true (although maybe somewhat exaggerated) hunting experiences of the author.]*

**A**h, November – the days are short, the weather is cool and there is snow on the ground. It is also deer hunting season – a time when millions of Canadians and Americans head to the woods to get some venison for their freezers.

I too feel this urge to shoot a deer to supply meat for my family. It must have something to do with a deep primeval instinct in the males of our species. After all, it was only a few short generations ago that our ancestors relied on the fall hunt to help them get through the harsh prairie winters.

I started hunting and shooting early in life. Born and raised on a small farm in rural Saskatchewan, I was allowed to use the single shot .22 by the age of 7. I discovered its value when my mother would ask me to get a rooster for supper. I used to spend half an hour or so trying to catch a suitable fowl. I then discovered it was much easier to shoot the rooster in the head, cut the head off with the axe, and deliver the bird to mother for cleaning. Of course you had to be a good shot, as mother did not appreciate any bullets in the actual body of the rooster.

There were many things to shoot around the farm. Every spring there were hundreds of gophers whose populations had to be controlled. There were the perpetual coyotes and foxes in the chicken pen. Sometimes a sick dog and cat had to be disposed of in a quick and humane way. Occasionally the neighbours would ask me to come over and help butcher a hog or steer. My job was to shoot the animal so we could bleed and butcher it.

I also learned to love hunting and the outdoors. I spent much of my youth out in the fields and woods with my trusty .22 and my dog. I would usually shoot a rabbit or two to feed the farm dogs and cats. When I got older, I went deer hunting with the locals.

After I grew up, my love of the outdoors and hunting continued. Living here in Edmonton, Alberta (Canada), we have one of the best areas for hunting. The Rocky Mountains and the foothills are just hours away. We have the great northern forests, wide-open prairies and farm land to hunt all around us - depending on our mood.

The first step was to get a hunting license and the proper tags. Off I go to my nearest sporting goods store (issuing of hunting licenses has been “privatized” and the whole system is now run by IBM). To get these you need your Firearms Permit, your birth certificate, your driver’s license, your passport, your library card and three major credit cards (well, okay, I’m exaggerating, but only slightly).

To hunt in Alberta, I had to get a Wildlife Identification Number (WIN) - \$8.00, Wildlife Certificate - \$22.85 and appropriate tags – whitetail, mule deer and moose - \$31.75 each and black bear at \$13.25. (You never know what you will run into during a hunt, so I better have the other tags). So let’s see, with tax that comes to \$149.10! Yikes!

Along with the package came a “summary” of the regulations. You’ve got to be kidding! It would take a lawyer a whole day to read and understand these. I gave them a quick glance, and vowed to

try and remember not to break the law – even if many of the rules are ridiculous and totally unenforceable.

Now I had to call my hunting buddy – Bill – to see when he could go. We've known each other a long time, and have hunted hundreds of hours together. I like hunting with Bill because he is the best shot I've ever seen. I personally have witnessed him nail a running coyote at 300 yards with his 300 Winchester Magnum, not once but three times. And yes, we paced out the distance. Bill also likes to field dress deer – saves me from getting my hands all bloody. Bill works for the provincial government health department. He probably really wanted to be a surgeon.

We finally agree on a couple of days that are convenient to both of us. Unfortunately, we could not get out for days of scouting prior to the season, nor spend time at a shooting range practicing our shooting like all those hunting magazines recommend. (I have stopped buying and reading those magazines.)

The big day arrives. We like to be at our shooting spots by daylight. So allowing for a two-hour drive, that means we have to leave at 4:00 am. Boy, do I hate getting up that early! I usually try and have everything by the door, ready to go the night before.

I pick up my hunting buddy – he's up. We make sure all the guns, food and supporting equipment are thrown in the back of our covered 4x4 pickup truck. Then we drive – or rather I drive and Bill catches up on a couple of hours of sleep. We arrive there just as dawn is breaking.

We drive around our favourite spots, looking for deer. There are quite a few other hunters driving around as well. In my experience, most hunting that I have seen is road hunting. They drive around until they see a deer, open the window and bam! These are the same people that are opposed to hunting preserves because it isn't fair chase! Well, neither is road hunting!

We don't see anything. I swear, deer must have Internet service. The day before hunting season they are all over the place. When the season opens, they disappear.

I guess we will just have to do it the hard way – stalking and pushing. But first, we had better get permission from the farmers on whose land we wish to trespass. We stop at the first house, knock on the door and ask politely if we may hunt on the farmer's land. No, he says, he prefers to leave those beautiful animals in peace. Fine. As we walk back to the truck, we noticed the dog chewing a deer leg, and a deer carcass is hanging in the barn.

The next farmer is much more co-operative. Sure, he says, there have been so many deer lately that they are messing up his hay piles. Oh, by the way, watch out for the cows, and especially his bull. This bull doesn't seem to like strangers. Oh great! So, as we quietly walked over the fields, I kept looking over my shoulder for that bull. I'm not sure what I was supposed to do if he came after me.

We continued to work the fields, meadows and brush but did not see anything. Lots of tracks, but no deer. We took a break, went back to our truck and had a snack and a nap. This is more exercise that I get all year.

Dark comes early in this part of the world. We usually like to find a good hiding spot next to a field where the deer come to feed. You need to be in your spot by 4:00 in the afternoon. I found a good

place in some bushes by a fence overlooking several fields. It was cold. I had to sit very quietly, which made it much colder! I used my binoculars to scan the fields.

Suddenly, I heard a fence squeak behind me. I turned around quickly to see a doe and her fawn just yards away. The fawn had the most quizzical look on his face – like “who are you?” I stood motionless for about 5 minutes. The doe then walked away with her fawn. I hope she isn’t a blabbermouth and tells all the other deer that we are there!

It was getting dark. Then a buck came running out, chasing a doe. He stopped a couple of hundred yards from my spot. Off goes the safety, lean the rifle on a tree, aim for the shoulder and gently squeeze the trigger (don’t jerk!). The shot shatters the night. The buck jumps and takes off into the woods. I knew I hit him.

It is getting too dark to continue hunting. Bill shows up and asks what I was shooting at. We get the flashlights and begin to track the buck. There is plenty of blood. We find him stone dead about 400 yards from where he was shot.

Bill gets out his surgeon’s gloves and, under the light of the flashlight, proceeds to field dress the buck. “Be careful of CWD,” I remind him – not really knowing what he could do to avoid it.

I walk about half a mile in the freezing cold and the dark carrying the rifles to get the truck. I drive it as close to the deer as I can. However, we still have to drag the carcass about 400 yards through the trees in the dark. Are we having fun yet?

Finally, the deer is in the back of the truck, and we proceed the long trip home. We get home late in the evening, totally exhausted.

Next morning, I get on the phone to my local butcher to take the buck in for processing. Sorry, due to CWD, he is no longer taking deer, elk or moose. Well, does he know of anyone who is? He gives me several names and phone numbers. I finally find a butcher who is willing to take the buck.

I next had to make half a dozen calls to find out where I can get the deer tested for CWD. I take the deer in to the butcher, remove the head and deliver to an office where it will be tested. It will take about two weeks before I get the results. The butcher informs me that due to CWD concerns I have to take the waste materials to the city dump myself, and will have to pay \$25 dollars. Oh, and I also will have to pay storage fees in addition to the butchering costs of \$150.

The CWD test results finally arrive – negative (what else did I expect?). I pick up my meat, looking forward to a great feast. However, the venison from this buck was gamey (he was in rut) and tough. I tried soaking it for 48 hours in vinegar. Still didn’t help much. This buck was nowhere near the quality of farmed venison I had tasted. I ended up giving most of the meat to my friends – probably not a good idea if we want people to appreciate and enjoy venison.

So, let’s see: I paid \$150 for fees, \$80 for gas, \$200 to the butcher, and \$25 to the city dump for about 120 lbs of meat that I really couldn’t eat. That comes out to \$455 or \$3.79 per pound. In some places, they are also charging up to \$100 for a CWD test.

Next year, I think I will just call up Alberta's Best Whitetail Deer Group and order my venison from them. It will be already cut up, CWD-tested and much more tender and tasty than my buck from the wild.

But what about my primeval urge to provide food for my family? Well, I suppose I could offer to do the shopping more often ... on second thought, nah.

*[There are probably millions of us in North America who are getting too old and too tired of the hassles of shooting a deer for venison. We represent a great new emerging market for farmed venison. See Article 3 below for strategies on how to exploit this opportunity.]*

## **2. DIRECT MARKETING**

With all the recent fascination with electronic communications technologies – Internet, cell phones, broadcast fax – many agri- businesses have neglected an old marketing tool – direct mail marketing.

There are several good reasons why you should consider direct mail marketing. These are:

1. It can be done from anywhere. Business owners in small communities in Canada and the United States can continue to enjoy the quality of life there, and yet market around the world. As long as reasonable postal and courier services are available, it does not matter where you live any more. You can sell and ship your venison (provided it's federally inspected) and velvet products anywhere.
2. It is accountable. Make an offer with a cut-off date, and you will know if you have been successful or not.
3. It is economical. Direct marketing can be as big or as small as you can afford. It is still a lot cheaper than making sales calls, but more expensive than some of the electronic marketing tools.
4. It is a convenient method of ordering merchandise. The catalogue business is booming because more and more people are too busy to go shopping in stores.
5. Direct marketing can be very targeted. You can choose the people to whom you will market directly based on their sex, age, occupation, education, special interests, geographical location, and past buying behaviour.
6. You can personalize the marketing vehicle to deeply involve each prospective customer and prove that you recognize his or her special nature.
7. You can test direct marketing vehicles and offers at a relatively low cost. Once you find the ones that work, you can roll them out.
8. Unsolicited direct mailings seem to upset people far less than other marketing methods such as telephone selling, fax broadcasting and e-mail marketing (also known as spam).

## **Components**

A classic direct marketing package contains the following:

- outer envelope
- letter
- brochure
- response device (coupon, phone number)
- return envelope.

When using direct mail, you always have three goals:

- get your letter opened
- get it read
- get the order.

Obviously, you can't succeed at the second two goals if you don't succeed at the first.

## **Lists**

In a direct marketing campaign, the list is the most important ingredient for success. Select the wrong list, and you are wasting your money. However, sometimes finding the right list can be quite a challenge.

The best mailing list is your own active customer list. This is why it is absolutely critical that you develop and maintain a database of your customers. When compiling your customer list for a direct marketing campaign, keep these factors in mind:

1. The names and addresses should come from current files as you want up-to-date information.
2. The information should relate to customers who have done business with your company within the last two years, since they're the most likely to respond favourably.
3. Include only customers with good credit standing.

## **Writing your copy**

Here some things to keep in mind when writing your direct mail copy:

- Use simple words
- Use short sentences
- Use short paragraphs
- Use "you" not "I"
- Write to a person
- Clearly state your offer and price
- Stress reader benefits
- Outline benefits in descending order of importance
- Keep the copy moving
- Use action words
- Be specific

- Make it interesting
- Ask for the order
- Tell the reader what to do
- Read the copy aloud.

### **Some research findings**

Here is some important research related to direct marketing:

1. The best months for direct marketing are January, February, September and October. The worst months are July and August. As a rule, the worse the weather, the better the climate for direct marketing.
2. Think creatively about stamps. Multiple stamps or a stamp from a foreign land gets attention.
3. Avoid the use of cheap envelope paper, flimsy letter paper, or anything else that looks like “junk mail.”
4. White or off-white, standard business-sized envelopes are the most likely to be opened. Avoid coloured envelopes, as research shows they do not work.
5. Indent your paragraphs to give your letter a more personal feeling.
6. Use your own letterhead when mailing to your own customers. They will be happy to hear from you and will place priority on your envelope and its contents.
7. Saying “Personal and Confidential” will increase the number of people who open the envelope. But the contents had better be confidential, or you have just alienated a prospect.
8. Never right-justify your letter. It appears too impersonal.
9. Many tests show that letters with photographs showing your product in use often perform better than letters without photos. Letters with a photo of a free gift perform the best of all.
10. The best colour combination to attain a healthy response is: white paper, black type, and blue signature, underlines, and/or marginal notes.
11. In a brochure, use drawings if you must, but photographs improve response rates. Photos are more believable, more intriguing, and grab a reader’s attention more than a drawing. A useful tip is to include a caption under any photo. Captions get extremely high readership. Research also shows pictures of babies tend to get the most attention, especially among women.
12. Toll-free numbers increase direct-marketing response rates, especially from mailings to individuals. (However, if you have a toll-free number other than 800, be sure to indicate it is a free call. Most people don’t know that 877 or 866 is the same as 800).
13. Print copy against white, never against black. Test after test shows reversing type (white type on black) does not work.

14. Use postcard mailings whenever possible because postcards don't have to be opened. Also, many other people may see the card (and its message) on its way to the addressee.

15. Present your mailing package in the form of a survey. Include a questionnaire along with the rest of the package.

16. ALWAYS include a PS. Research shows that people read the headline, then the PS and then the body. Restate your offer in the PS.

17. Consider staggering your mailings as budget and time permit. Also, you can hand address or type in the addresses for a more personalized look.

18. In a number of research studies that we have conducted, we found that in business to business dealings, direct mail to place of work is by far the most preferred method of receiving information about a company, its products and services. For consumer products, mailings to the home address will work better.

Don't neglect this traditional marketing tool. It works! Direct mail should continue to be an important part of your overall marketing plans and strategies.

### **3. STRATEGIES FOR VENISON PROMOTION**

Over the last year or so, I have been helping the local bison and elk associations to obtain funding to undertake marketing campaigns to sell their bison and elk meat.

Here are some of the things that these associations have been doing that have proven to be successful. These strategies and activities should be emulated and considered by other associations wishing to develop their meat markets.

1. *Consumer websites* – most associations have a website that is designed for their members and producers. It is a good idea to set up a separate website for buyers of venison products. These consumer sites should have information on such things as: a) nutritional and health benefits of venison; b) preparation and cooking tips; c) recipes; d) quality assurances and safety information; and e) where they can buy the meat products – information on farm-gate sales, farmers' markets, specialty stores, on-line sales and restaurants. Be sure to include a link to our Venison Culinary Centre at <http://www.venison-meat.com>.

2. *Consumer shows* – these are events such as home and garden shows, women's shows and so on, which cater to the general consumer. Booths at these shows are intended to increase awareness among consumers of the availability of farmed venison. Samples and brochures should be given out. If possible, get a celebrity chef to demonstrate preparation and cooking of venison products.

3. *Industry trade shows* – these are events such as restaurant and food services trade shows, meat conferences and so on. These are the places to make restaurant chefs and specialty meat stores aware of your products. Booths should provide information and samples and collect possible leads for future follow-up.



4. *Food festivals* – these are events where people come to eat. The Taste of Edmonton and the Heritage Food Festival are two examples of these events. Booths at these events can provide free taste samples and also sell venison products to the consumer to eat and/or to take home. These events are also a good place to have preparation and cooking demonstrations. Be prepared to move a lot of food!

5. *Culinary programs* – both the bison and elk associations have developed partnerships with the local community colleges that offer chefs' training programs. The associations and their members donate bison and elk carcasses for students to learn how to prepare, cook and present venison for fine dining. These students have also prepared and served venison products at food festivals.

6. *Consumer sampling program* – meat is processed into burgers, meatballs and similar products to be given out at various events. These programs include supporting charitable events where associations cook and serve burgers to hundreds or thousands of participants.

7. *Community barbeques* – the bison association held a series of barbeques over the summer in several small rural communities. Attendance and participation exceeded all expectations. These were held in partnership with a local organization and/or event.

8. *Sponsorships* – these include corporate sponsorship of major events in the community. Events garner huge media coverage for the industry and increase public awareness. They are often combined with the consumer sampling programs described above.

9. *Special events* – in partnership with local selected hotels, sponsor a venison week extravaganza where deer/elk meat is highlighted in their restaurants. Have displays and other information for consumers. Get local radio and television, and newspapers involved.

10. *Media advertising* – these include billboards, bus ads, newspaper and radio ads and banners on city bridges. These ads can be general in nature by referring people to the association's consumer website, or can support special events as per above.

## **Issues**

Here are some issues that need to be addressed when marketing deer and elk meat.

1. *Name* – to avoid confusion with water buffalo, North American producers adopted “bison” for their farmed livestock. For many years, they marketed bison meat to the public. However, market research now shows that this may have been a mistake, causing confusion among consumers. The trend is now back to the term “buffalo” by which the public knows these animals.

A similar situation is developing with elk producers. In order to differentiate themselves from other species, they prefer to use the term “rancher elk meat.” The rest of the world uses the term “venison” when referring to the meat of any deer species.

2. *Quality and consistency* – to make a good first impression on the public, it is important that only superior quality products be sold or given out as samples. Quality is determined by finishing, pre-slaughter handling and stress minimization, as well as proper handling and packaging of the meat. An additional obstacle is that some people are turned off of venison because they tasted some tough old buck that had been shot in the wild and hauled around in the back of a pick-up truck for a week.

3. *Cost* – currently costs of slaughtering deer/elk are way too high, not allowing sufficient profit margins. The numbers bandied around locally are about \$200 per animal as compared to \$35 for cattle. The other major cost limitation is that consumers are not willing to pay a big differential over other types of meat.

4. *Inspections* – in Canada and the United States, animals processed in state/provincially inspected facilities can only be sold within that jurisdiction. Federally inspected plants are required for national and international sales. The problem is that in most places there are too few federally approved plants to meet the needs of the deer and elk industries.

5. *Positioning* – in Europe, venison is considered food for royalty, while in North America it is food for peasants. This is because in Europe, only the nobility were allowed to shoot deer, while over here deer are so plentiful that anyone can harvest them. Therefore, the public image of venison on this side of the Atlantic is not consistent with the marketing position we want to achieve (as a premium meat product). If we want to be able to charge more for venison than other meats, this perception has to change.

6. *Value-added products* – most producers are selling carcasses or packages of fresh/frozen meat cuts. This is the easiest way to start and is the most convenient. However, in North American society, we have few cooking skills and even less time to spend on cooking. The trend is towards food that can be microwaved or thrown in the oven for 20 minutes and served. Venison producers must look at similar value-added products, including deli meats, if they are to successfully compete for consumers' meat purchases.

7. *By-products* – prime cuts are easy to sell. However, the organs, bones and trim are much more difficult to turn into profitable items. One option (that we have mentioned here several times) is to look at turning these by-products into pet food.

Employing the above marketing strategies, the Alberta Bison Commission has been very successful in raising awareness and moving a lot of product. I expect that the Alberta Elk Commission will be similarly successful when they initiate their programs. There are no secrets to developing a meat market. You know what you have to do – so just do it!

#### **4. REINDEER DIE FROM WEST NILE VIRUS**

*[By Tom Scheib, Vice President of the 200-member Reindeer Owners and Breeders Association (ROBA) with reindeer farms in Milltown WI and Taylor's Falls MN]*

**R**eindeer owners have frequently heard that “cervids are cervids” or “deer are deer.” From anecdotal experience, we believe that reindeer respond differently than many other cervids to various disease and testing situations.

Presentations during annual USAHA meetings have demonstrated that these experiences are being validated by scientific studies.

Last year USDA APHIS veterinarians, Drs Mike Philo and Linda Carpenter, indicated to the TB committee that a study at the U of Alaska at Fairbanks confirmed that “reindeer do not respond predictably or consistently to the CCT.” As a continuation to that study, 19 castrated reindeer bulls

were delivered to NVSL to be housed next door at NADC (National Animal Disease Center) in Ames, Iowa in May 2002.

At the 1999 Wildlife Diseases committee meeting at San Diego, I listened to Dr Bob Cook's presentation regarding West Nile Virus in New York and the disease's impact and bird losses for the Wildlife Conservation Society/Bronx Zoo. I was particularly interested in this presentation because I provide 8 reindeer annually to the Bronx Zoo for their Christmas season festival of lights exhibition.

At the 2001 Captive Wildlife and Alternative Livestock committee meeting, Ethel Evans, then president of ROBA, and I listened to Dr. Tracey McNamara's informative presentation on "Bridging the Gap" between various agencies regarding West Nile Virus. We were quite interested in Dr. McNamara's comments regarding cases of WNV showing that initial assumptions of the disease and its effects were wrong.

ROBA members have been speaking with veterinarians and wildlife biologists in various agency positions since 1999 regarding WNV and the possible effects to their reindeer and herds. The overwhelming response from that community was that reindeer should not be expected to contract WNV.

On September 6 and 7 of this year I experienced the sudden deaths of two five-month old reindeer calves in excellent condition at my leased farm in Taylor's Falls MN. The first calf, a heifer, was sent to the WI diagnostic lab at Barron WI, about 40 miles away. The animal was not tested for WNV and cause of death was not definitively determined. The second death, a male, occurred early the next morning, on a Saturday. A necropsy was done by my vet (Dr. John Springer) in high temperature and humidity with samples sent to Barron on Monday. The cause of death was not definitively determined. The animal was not tested for WNV.

About a week later, on September 12th in the late afternoon, I observed a 10 1/2 yr old reindeer bull on my farm at Milltown, Wisconsin in an apparently weakened condition with ears down and at times staggering. That Wisconsin farm is about 7-8 miles from the MN farm, across the St. Croix River, which acts as the border between the 2 states.

His condition did not improve overnight. He went down about 5 am on the 13th, was in rut, and was euthanized a few hours later. He was sent, intact, to the Barron lab. He was not tested for WNV. The brain stem was sent to NVSL for CWD testing, as required by Wisconsin rules.

When the reindeer bull was euthanized, we suspected brainworm may have been a possible cause of the symptoms. After all, cervids and reindeer were not expected to contract or exhibit symptoms of WNV. CWD testing subsequently indicated that no prions were evident. The cause of death was not definitively determined.

Later on that same day, Friday, the 13th of September, I observed a 12 1/2 year old gelding reindeer that was in the same pen as the euthanized bull exhibiting similar symptoms. Since he could still walk, he was led to a large trailer for confinement and treatment for brainworm. He was kept alive for 10 days with supportive treatment, ampicillin, Ivomec, banamine, Vitamin B complex, and dexamethazone. After 3 days of treatment he appeared to improve, and continued to eat and drink, but then began to fail as paralysis continued to progress.

During the treatment period we began to suspect WNV. He died on Sunday, September 22. I had previously decided, since he and I had been constant companions for more than a dozen years, that he would not be carted off in a rendering truck from the lab, but would be buried on the farm, in the pen in which he had lived.

The brain, as required, and blood samples were delivered to the Barron Lab the next day, for further transfer to NVSL. The gelding was sero and PCR positive for WNV.

On October 1st, I was informed by Dr. Mitch Palmer that 3 of the 19 reindeer delivered to NVSL in May had died of WNV.

Those reindeer, housed at NADC, are on pastures adjacent to or near pastures containing elk, white-tailed deer, bison, cattle, sheep and horses. However, to date, clinical signs have only been seen in the reindeer.

Those 3 deaths occurred on September 20, 24, and 27, 2002.

1. Two were found febrile, in lateral recumbency with tetraplegia (all 4 limbs paralyzed).
2. A third was febrile, depressed, head tilt, flaccid tongue with dysphagia (difficult swallowing), progressing to tetraplegia within 12 hours.
3. Brains were PCR positive at NVSL.
4. Histology - mild lymphocytic perivascular cuffing and edema, gliosis and lymphocytic infiltrates. Lesions most pronounced in medulla although still categorized as mild to moderate. Spinal cord also contained perivascular lymphocytic cuffing and marked myelin sheath swelling. Myocardium contained mild multifocal areas of myofiber degeneration/necrosis with little inflammation.
5. WNV IHC showed mild staining limited to the brain stem and spinal cord.
6. CBCs on the September 24 and 27 deaths indicated elevated fibrinogen, stress leukogram, and lymphopenia - consistent with a viral infection.

Some ROBA members have observed similar symptoms in reindeer that have died this past summer and earlier, but were not tested for WNV.

Many, if not most, of our herds are in mandatory or voluntary CWD monitoring programs requiring the brain stem of adult animals for CWD testing. That tissue is also, as I understand, the tissue of choice for WNV testing. This is a dilemma for the reindeer owner whose species is one of 34 that has yet to exhibit CWD but appears very susceptible to WNV, while other cervids may not be.

A review of the federal response time for our TB testing problems can be used to point out the difficulties that our industry has previously suffered. There is no reason to repeat this scenario. We believe USDA APHIS can ensure the appropriate pathologists are aware of reindeer susceptibility to WNV when examining brain stems for CWD. This may have already been accomplished.

Any assistance by USDA or other agencies in developing, recommending and testing an appropriate vaccine for reindeer for WNV would be greatly appreciated.

## 5. INDUSTRY NEWS

*[The best place to keep up with breaking deer and elk industry news is at our enhanced and improved Discussion Forums, now located at <http://www.deer-talk.com> ]*

### **CWD found in Alberta farmed whitetail deer**

A whitetail deer that died on a farm just north of Edmonton was found to have CWD. This is the first known case of CWD in a farmed whitetail deer in Canada.

Two farms have been quarantined – one with 290 animals and another with 68 animals. As per government policy, all the deer on these two farms, along with any other tracebacks, will be killed and tested for the disease.

At the request of the Alberta Whitetail and Mule Deer Association, blood samples will be drawn from all the affected deer along with DNA samples. The blood samples will be sent to GeneThera's lab in Denver to be used as part of the validation trials for GeneThera's new live-animal CWD diagnostic test. This discovery of CWD provides an excellent opportunity to assess the accuracy and sensitivity of GeneThera's CWDSigna™.

This is Alberta's second confirmed case of CWD. In March, a male elk from a farm northwest of Edmonton tested positive after being slaughtered for its meat.

The food inspection agency quarantined that farm and tested its herd of 75 animals, as well as 12 more elk that had been sold to other producers. All those animals tested CWD negative.

Alberta has had a ban on importation of cervids into the province since 1989. Therefore, the discovery of CWD in this jurisdiction has puzzled the experts.

### **NZ venison production down**

According to Game Industry Board figures in the first six months of 2002, only 168,000 deer were slaughtered compared to 233,000 in the same period of 2001. From the record 504,000 killed in the year ending September 30, 2001, the number for this year is estimated at 425,000.

These lower numbers are thought to be a response to the price which has fallen from the high over \$5/kg (US\$) last October to around \$2.65/kg now. The high price was due to European concerns about BSE and possibly Foot and Mouth disease last year. The lower price is attributed to the strengthening New Zealand dollar, seasonal factors which always make this the cheapest time of the year, and cautious buying from European dealers. The present price is only 20 percent below the 10 year average for this time of year.

*(Source: BDFA Deer Farming Magazine, Autumn 2002).*

## **Whitetails of Wisconsin news**

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture will be sending out a mailing to ALL deer farmers sometime in November. The switch from the DNR to the Dept. of Ag will take place Jan. 1, 2003, and this special mailing will be explaining program changes. Be sure to read it.

If you have any questions regarding any interpretation of the emergency rules, you should contact Dr. Shelby Molina at 608-224-4873. For any questions regarding the CWD enrollment or applications, contact Deb Elliot at 608-224-4903. If you have legitimate issues regarding the proposed permanent rules, you should contact your legislators.

The video tape you recently received from WOW regarding the CWD "hysteria" can be reproduced. Feel free to help us distribute this tape to your local sport shops, sportsmen's clubs, radio stations, TV stations, and anyone else who is concerned about CWD. A woman from the Medford radio station, WIGM, saw the tape and was impressed. She is scheduling a radio interview on CWD. One of our board of directors has been asked to join the quorum, along with a local vet and a local DNR warden. This will air on FM 99.3 on November 11th and again on November 18th from 11:00 am - 12:00 pm. Anyone within a 70 mile radius of Medford should be able to tune in.

There was a hearing held in Madison on November 7th regarding the sales tax proposal for any "hunted" animals. The WI Dept. of Revenue was proposing a double sales tax on all "hunted" animals. They wanted to collect sales tax on all deer sold to a hunting preserve and then again when that deer was sold to the hunter. They also wanted to expand the sales tax on all feed that would be fed to any "hunted" animals. It was a victorious day for the deer farmers and the pheasant farmers. The WI Dept. of Revenue withdrew their support of the sales tax proposals on a 9-0 vote and therefore, there will be NO double sales tax!

There is another hearing scheduled for November 12th, from 10:00 - 5:00, regarding the DNR's proposal to double fence any farm not enrolled in the CWD program. This is an open session and will be held in Madison, at the DNR office building, GEF 2, Room 027. The address is 101 South Webster St. The contact person is Sue Solin and her phone # is 608-267-9717. This is a very big issue for all deer farmers. Under this proposal, all hunting preserves would need to double fence. I have heard numerous preserves state that they will close the preserve before being able to double fence. Let's hope we are victorious on this issue also. Anyone who can make the hearing is encouraged to attend.

If you are a deer farmer who purchased deer from any of the quarantined farms, you will probably be revisited by the DNR and/or the Dept. of Ag. If either agency asks you to destroy any of your animals to have them tested, please know that you have the right to refuse them at this time. The indemnification program does not take effect until Jan. 1, 2003, and therefore, you may choose to wait until then or you may choose to wait until there is further testing done at the CWD positive farms. Depending on the results of those tests, you may not have to destroy your animals. If you want to cooperate with the agencies and test the animals in question, you have the right to make that decision also. It may speed up the process and get your farm off the quarantine list sooner. If you choose to destroy any animals, DO NOT send the entire animal to the DNR or the Dept. of Ag. Be sure to keep part of the animal for future DNA if needed.

Our newsletter will be coming out December 15th and we will let you know the results of the November 12th meeting on double fencing. If you would like to know the results sooner, feel free to contact any of our board members or any of our public relations committee.

Your PR committee,

Laurie Prasnicki  
Roger and Laurie Pietrowski  
Bill and Ginny Vyvyan

## **CANADIAN CERVID COUNCIL NEWS**

*[By Serge Buy, Executive Director]*

### **Reception on Parliament Hill**

The Canadian Cervid Council held its reception on Parliament Hill in Ottawa on Tuesday, November 5, 2002. Compared to last year, a smaller number of Members of Parliament attended the reception (a number of other events at the same time) but clearly stayed longer and had a chance to really discuss the industry with members of the CCC Board of Directors present.

We would like to thank the two co-hosts of the evening, the Honourable Don Boudria, MP and Mr. Rob Merrifield, MP. In his remarks, Minister Boudria encouraged the industry to make this reception an annual event and also mentioned that the industry was there to stay in Canada. Mr. Merrifield said that it was important for the industry to provide information to Members of Parliament.

It is important to note that Mr. Larry McCormick, MP and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food informed CCC representatives that he would be meeting with the Korean ambassador the same evening and raising the issue of the border closing. A number of other Members of Parliament had the opportunity to have in-depth discussions on several issues affecting the industry.

### **Donations for the reception and meeting**

The Canadian Cervid Council would like to thank the following companies for generous donations to the Council and its public relations efforts:

- Ferme Boileau (Doug Harper) - Meat for the reception.
- Universal Game Farms (Todd Grignon) - Meat for lunch at the Health for Cervids meeting.
- EverGreen Elk Farm (Dave Loney) - Jerky sticks as a product sample.
- QEVA (Rob Pek) - Bottles of velvet capsules as a product sample.

The great quality of the products donated allowed the Council to raise its profile and provide Members of Parliament with a very good example of the high quality of our products.

### **Mission to Korea**

Dr. Sarah Kahn, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer will be leading the mission to Korea in order to provide information to the Koreans on the CWD issue as well as discuss the resumption of trade of cervid products between Korea and Canada. The delegation will include four highly qualified CFIA

representatives. The Executive Director of the Council will also be in Korea during the same period. The Council had the opportunity to discuss the issues to be raised in Korea with Dr. Kahn. More discussion will take place with Dr. Kahn, but members of the Council were pleased to see the level of cooperation.

### **Promotion of cervid harvest preserves**

The Cervid Harvest Preserve Committee presented its report to the Canadian Cervid Council Board of Directors on Sunday. Promotion of CHPs at North American trade shows is planned in January and February. The Committee is engaging in an active promotional exercise as well as monitoring of activities at the legislative level.

### **CWD herd certification standards and surveillance programs**

There were frank discussions and a number of issues brought forward at the meeting sponsored by the CCC to discuss (with provincial governments present) the CFIA herd certification program standard. The discussions allowed for better comprehension of issues faced by producers and governments. While a number of issues remain unresolved, a mechanism was put in place to obtain answers to questions raised.

### **Funding velvet antler effects on liver disease study**

The Council obtained financial support from the National Research Council to fund a study on the effects of velvet antler on liver disease. The \$50,000 promised by the Council will allow the industry to fund the study.

### **On-Farm food safety**

The On-Farm Food Safety Committee met November 1 and 2 to discuss its future activities and the presentation of a report to CFIA for approval. A manual of Good Producers Practices is being prepared.

## **6. EVENTS CALENDAR**

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

MINNESOTA ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL CONVENTION will be held on January 11, 2003 at the Holiday Inn at Mankato, MN. For more information, contact the MNEBA office at <mailto:info@mneba.org> or phone 320-543-3664.

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

NORTH AMERICAN DEER FARMERS' ASSOCIATION (NADeFA) Annual Convention will be held on March 19-23, 2003 at Jefferson City, Missouri USA. For more information, contact NADeFA at <mailto:info@nadefa.org> or visit their web site at <http://www.nadefa.org>



SASKATCHEWAN WHITETAIL AND MULE DEER PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION will hold their annual convention on March 28 to 30, 2003 at the Travelodge in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. For more information, contact *mailto:info@saskdeer.com* or visit their website at *http://www.saskdeer.com*

REINDEER OWNER'S & BREEDER'S ASSOCIATION 2003 ANNUAL MEETING will be held in Pendleton Oregon USA on June 20-22, 2003. For more information contact Carol at *mailto:roba\_association@hotmail.com* or visit their web site at *http://www.reindeer.ws*

NORTH AMERICAN ELK BREEDERS ASSOCIATION (NAEBA) Convention and International Antler Competition will be held July 30 – August 3, 2003 at Kansas City, Missouri USA. Contact the NAEBA office at *mailto:info@naelk.org* or visit *http://www.naelk.org* for more information.

SECOND ANTLER SCIENCE AND PRODUCT TECHNOLOGY SYMPOSIUM will be held in February 25 to 27, 2004 in Queenstown, New Zealand. For more information contact Mark O'Connor at *mailto:mark.oconnor@nzgib.org.nz* or phone +64 4 473 4500.

\*\*\*\*\* A D \*\*\*\*\*

If you are thinking of starting a deer or elk farm, please visit the Deerfarmer Store located at *http://store.deerfarmer.com* There you will find model business plans that you can use to plan and finance your dream farm.

\*\*\*\*\*

## 7. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

We respect your right to privacy. If you wish to be removed from our mailing list at any time, simply send an e-mail to *mailto:editor@deerfarmer.com* with REMOVE in the Subject line.

If you want your name ADDED to our mailing list, please sign our Guest Book form at *http://www.deerfarmer.com/forms/guest.htm*

The *Digest* is also available in a print format (ISSN 1499-1349). A \$3 per issue (\$36 per year) fee applies to cover postage, paper and handling costs. Subscriptions and back issues can be ordered from our Store located at *http://store.deerfarmer.com*

As per our Privacy Policy, your name, e-mail address and any other information you provide us will only be used by Deerfarmer.com. This information will not be shared with any third party unless we get your permission first!

## 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:

Russell Sawchuk  
Editor and Webmaster  
The Deer Farmers' Digest and Deerfarmer.com  
Box 8220, Edmonton, Alberta Canada T6H 4P1

E-mail: <mailto:editor@deerfarmer.com>  
Phone: 1-780-430-8245 or 1-800-267-9997 (Toll-free in USA & Canada)  
Fax: 1-780-434-0412 or 1-800-267-9993 (Toll-free in USA & Canada)  
Webs: <http://www.deerfarmer.com> <http://www.deerfarmer.net>  
<http://www.deerforum.com> and <http://www.globaldeer.com>

**DISCLAIMER:** This newsletter is for general information only. It should not be relied upon to make business or farming decisions without first obtaining professional advice. Accordingly, we cannot accept liability for loss or damage arising directly or indirectly from any advice, opinion, representation or omission, whether negligent or otherwise, contained in this newsletter.

©2002 Deerfarmer.com. The *Deer Farmers' Digest* may only be redistributed in its unedited form. Permission from the editor must be obtained to reprint or cite the information contained within this newsletter. All articles are written by Russell Sawchuk (Editor) unless otherwise noted. Deerfarmer.com is a division of Steppingstones Partnership, Inc. (<http://www.steppingstones.ca>).

ISSN 1499-1349 *Deer Farmers' Digest* (Print). All issues of the *Deer Farmers' Digest* (print and electronic) are archived and catalogued at the National Library of Canada. On-line copies can be found at [http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/deer\\_farmers\\_digest/](http://collection.nlc-bnc.ca/100/201/300/deer_farmers_digest/).