

Welcome to the SEPTEMBER 2002 edition of the *Deer Farmers' Digest*, a monthly electronic newsletter published for those interested in raising deer, elk and reindeer. This *Digest* (ISSN 1499-1357) is distributed via e-mail to over 3,000 readers in 32 countries.

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*** ADVERTISEMENT ***

BULK DEER URINE FOR SALE: Guaranteed CWD-free! Urine is collected only from animals that have been slaughtered and laboratory tested for CWD, bacteria, yeast and mold levels. Contact Brad Sakowich, Alberta's Best Whitetail Deer Group Ltd., at 780-675-5648 or at <mailto:alstabest@telusplanet.net>

1. ELK FARMING – THE REST OF THE STORY

*[By Glenda Elkow, President of the Alberta Elk Association, Leduc, Alberta,
mailto:info@albertaelk.com]*

In the past few weeks, a number of articles in the media have focused on the elk farming industry. Normally we welcome the attention and are quite keen to discuss our industry, its future and the issues we are facing.

However, we have noticed that the recent flurry of articles was based only on a few issues and tended to dwell on the negatives facing the industry. We are here to set the record straight!

The constant opposition to elk farming by a few vocal misguided individuals has created a climate where the facts are easily distorted. What our producers raise on their farms is domestic livestock - not wildlife. We are not involved in the capture of wildlife and their containment behind fences - we raise livestock. As an organization we strongly oppose this practice. Not unlike other types of farms (cattle, hogs, chicken, bison, horses, ducks, etc.) we are part of agriculture. The fact that elk exist in the wild is equal to the fact that horses, bison, ducks, fish, pheasants and other species also exist in the wild and farms at the same time, and in the same region.

Our elected officials have chosen the easy way out and decided to reject the cervid harvest preserve initiative. Gone are principles of the right to farm, property rights and fair competition. We are saddened that a small group of vocal activists was able to muscle their way through our government with rumours, lies, innuendoes and fear-mongering. We have been labeled barbaric and abhorrent. Quite to the contrary, we believe in, and promote, the humane treatment of our animals.

Our proposal is not so different than what is practiced in several countries, from Europe to Asia and from our own country and the United States to New Zealand. Our producers have been denied the same rights as their colleagues in other regions and therefore will have to compete without the benefit of all parts of the diversification of our industry.

Reason had nothing to do with Premier Klein's statements and final decision. There are artificial lakes filled with fish ready to be harvested. The province has its own cervid harvest preserves. There are a number of other hunt farms with other types of livestock. But Premier Klein was convinced by this vocal lobby and has now wrongly decided that Alberta producers will not be able to fully diversify.

We would like to acknowledge that indeed the industry has recently faced several challenges.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) and the perception of the disease has certainly hurt some of our markets. The good news is ALL tests conducted relating to the ONE CWD case in Alberta have been NEGATIVE. While all scientific reports to date say that CWD does not transmit to humans, the industry has taken strong measures to ensure that animals that might be infected by the disease do not reach the food chain. However, the perception of the disease has worried some people - we wish to assure them that there are no risks in consuming elk products. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Health Canada, the United States Department of Agriculture - all agree on this point.

The drought has created an additional hardship for our producers. Not only do they face the same problem of finding affordable hay as do their other counterparts (cattle, bison, etc.), but they also have difficulties gaining access to slaughter facilities. The current drought-initiated sell off in other livestock industries has created a backlog at these facilities. As well, a few restrictions facing our industry complicate the situation even further. The fact that our elk are tested for CWD prior to the meat being released provides an added confidence in our meat products. Clients from all over the world have requested products coming from Alberta for this reason.

On a positive note, we have had more buyers of velvet antler than ever in the past. Over 75% of the 2002 velvet antler production has already been sold! This is a first for our industry this early in any given year. While prices are still low, they have increased by close to 30% since last year. We expect that the rise in prices will continue next season.

While breeding stock values have dropped, I am pleased to say that at a sale this month, some elk were sold for over \$10,000 with the highest valued elk at \$20,000.

Elk and deer producers have invested \$42 million in the local economy in the 2000-2001 year. A number of jobs have been, and are being, created through direct farm labour, velvet processing plants, slaughter facilities, etc.

The Alberta elk industry will continue to prosper. While the last few months have been difficult for our producers, and some are prepared to give up elk farming, others are growing their herds and new producers are entering the business. This is one of the youngest agricultural industries and the time to be part of it is now. And, to those few special interest groups who make their living by preying on legitimate enterprise, fasten your seat belts. We are here to stay!

2. FEEDING ELK IN THE AFTERMATH OF A DROUGHT

[Jayson Galbraith, M.Sc., Elk/Bison Production Specialist, Alberta Elk Centre, Leduc, Alberta]

The drought facing western Canadian farmers this year has devastated many farms. It has affected all types of farmers, elk and deer farmers included. A friend of mine was giving directions to a trucker who was hauling hay from Manitoba to his farm. After the directions were given, the trucker humorously stated something about us being “a little crispy out there.” Well, we’re sure not hauling hay from Manitoba because we like the shade of green that Manitoban alfalfa has! Yes we’re crispy!

Finding ways to get through the drought that has stunted, and in some cases annihilated, the first cut of hay and any pasture growth, is no laughing matter. It can involve some tough decisions. There have been several articles written about strategies for coping with the drought. Throughout this report I will provide website links to articles already written where applicable.

Elk digestive anatomy

To properly understand the nutrient requirements of elk, and how various crops and storage methods may work with elk, a brief examination of their digestive anatomy is useful. Elk have been described as intermediate or mixed feeders that will naturally select a mixture of food from grasses to browse material such as leaves. This is different from cattle or bison, which are classified as roughage/grass eaters and will select almost exclusively grass.

The implications this has when considering feeds for elk is that they have a smaller stomach size relative to body weight and their digestive systems are designed for more rapidly digestible feed. Conversely, cattle and bison hold feed in their rumens for a longer time to allow for digestion of more fibrous plant material. These anatomical differences should be considered when making feed decisions for elk based on information from cattle research.

Elk will consume around 2.5% of body weight under ad lib feeding; this is a similar predicted intake to what would be expected for beef cattle. In trying to manage a feeding program through a drought, it may be wise to feed less roughage, and balance the ration accordingly with a concentrate. An elk can be fed less than 2.5% of body weight total dry matter diet, provided that nutrient requirements are met in the diet. Generally, the higher the quality of the feed, the less space it takes, and the more of it elk can consume. Lower quality and high fiber forages, straws and some green feeds take up more stomach space. Elk won't eat more if their 'gut' is full.

Alfalfa

Alfalfa grown during a dry year has been shown to have significantly lower fiber than that grown in a regular moisture year. Full bloom alfalfa grown in a drought will have similar fiber levels as pre-bloom alfalfa grown in a normal year. Therefore, it would be a wise thing to test nutritive value of hay - this year in particular. If it is of higher quality than "usual" hay due to the drought, it would be important to know this when calculating least-cost rations.

To access a document titled "Drought Options: Roughage Needs," go to <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionsroughage.html>

Green feed

Green feed can be fed to elk effectively. The animals will typically select the more choice parts of the feed first, and leave the coarse stem material. Removing the bale feeder, once the bale gets low in the feeder, will allow the animals to root through the remaining plant material and select out any remaining leaves or grain kernels, allowing for more complete usage of the bale.

Many crops may be salvageable as grazing or for winter feed as green feed. For more info on "green feed production," follow this link:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionsgreenfeed.html>

Drought conditions can cause nitrates to be elevated in green feed. It should therefore be tested to prevent nitrate poisoning.

For specifics on "nitrates in feeds," refer to the Alberta Agriculture article posted at:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdex/400/0006001.html>

Silage

If forage plants show signs of drought stress, caution should be exercised when using them as fresh forage because nitrate levels may be high. Silage is a preferable option since the fermentation process reduces nitrate levels. Making silage offers the opportunity to put up high quality feed with minimum harvesting losses. See the following link for info on the "Feeding Value of Silages":

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/crops/forage/silage/feed1.html>

Making silage is a practical method of salvaging weedy, hail-damaged, frozen, or otherwise damaged crops to produce a palatable and nutritional feed supply. However, changing the diet of any livestock should be done over a period of time (10-14 days) to allow the digestive system to adjust to the new feeds.

For information on the “Ensiling Process”:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/crops/forages/silage/silag2.html>

For information on “Evaluating Silage Quality”:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/crops/forage/silage/silag3.html>

Hay silage

Round bale silage is a flexible, low-capital cost method of preserving forage. However, variable costs and spoilage losses can be high. Mixing hay and hay silage in a bale chopper works well to make the feed more uniform, thus decreasing selection by the animal. It can also be used to incorporate a lower quality hay in the total diet.

For information about hay silage see

<http://ohioline.osu.edu/agf-fact/0010.html> and

<http://www.gov.on.ca/OMAFRA/english/livestock/dairy/facts/foragealternate.html>

Brassica crops

Canola (all varieties except industrial-use oils) and mustard can be fed as part of an elk’s diet. Protein levels range from 10-12% to as high as 16%. Ideally, crops should be cut in the early podding stage, just after flowers have dropped. For cattle, it is recommended that no more than 30% of the total feed intake is canola or mustard hay or silage.

For more information on feeding brassica crops for hay or silage see the following article posted on the Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization’s website:

http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/DOCS/crops/forage_pasture/forage_management_production/Brassicacrops.asp

Testing forage quality

Particularly in this year of drought when feed is expensive, having your forages tested can enable you to feed a diet that is properly balanced to meet the needs of your elk herd. Whether you’re wintering pregnant cows or feeding a velvet bull herd, efficient management decisions about how much of each feedstuff to use can be made based on the results of feed analysis of your specific forages.

For info on collecting forage samples for feed analysis go to the following link:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionscollectforage.html>

Corn

The drought has not only affected the price of roughages, but also of grains. Corn has become a viable alternative this year to traditionally used grains. Research in cattle indicates the performance can be equal to, or greater than, traditional free choice silage rations. The cost effectiveness of using corn will depend on the price of alternative forage and the price of grain, as well as storage and feeding capabilities available on the farm.

For articles discussing the use of corn in rations:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionscowcornrations.html> and

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/droughtoptionsfeedingsheep.html>

Using grain screenings for feed

Dockage is the unwanted material that is removed during grain cleaning. The composition of grain screenings will vary with the plant material. Nutrient content of grain screenings pellets have been reported in the 12-16% crude protein range. Talk to your local feed mill to see if lower cost screenings may be available reduce your costs of feed.

Drought Management Articles

Feeding Livestock During Feed Shortages, Saskatchewan Agriculture:

http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/docs/livestock/beef/feeds_and_nutrition/feedshortages.asp

Preparing For Drought:

http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/d_preparing.html

Drought, Water, Forages and Cattle:

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/01061.html>

Feed for sale listings

Alberta: <http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/store/haylist.html>

Saskatchewan:

<http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/feedforage/default.asp?firstpick=Feed%20Grain%20and%20Forage%20Listing>

Manitoba:

<http://www.gov.mb.ca/agriculture/news/haylist/bja03s00.html>

Alberta's agricultural safety net programs

<http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/fiap2002/safetynetprograms.html>

http://www.agric.gov.ab.ca/agdisaster/drought_programs.html

Hopefully next year we'll see plenty of moisture and ideal growing conditions. Then we won't have to be talking to truckers hauling hay across the country about being "crispy out here."

3. RETHINKING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENTS

[By Rex Rammell, Idaho, USA]

There are three main groups interested in the welfare and control of wildlife. Firstly, there are those who like to hunt and fish. These are the sportsmen. The more animals there are to hunt and the more fish there are to fish the happier this group is. If they could, they would hunt and fish year round.

Then there are the wildlife activists. This group is also happiest when there is an abundant population of wild animals, and the streams are full of fish. They would have the land covered with wildlife with little or no control. They believe the best population control is natural predation, i.e., wolves, coyotes, mountain lions, and bears.

Finally, there are the farmers and ranchers who enjoy wildlife, but see them as a nuisance. Animals eat their crops and attract the public who trespass upon their land. Many of this group would just as soon see them gone or at least significantly reduced.

To keep all of these groups happy, the state organized the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. The role of this department is to find an acceptable balance of animal numbers and maintain that number through population control. The numbers are determined through wildlife population studies and controlled by predators and hunters.

Where the game lives depends on their survival or demise. Elk that inhabited the high desert near the INEEL were in the wrong place politically. The entire herd was destroyed. Other herds have been significantly reduced because of the damage they have done to farmers, ranchers, and other private property owners. Herd populations have also been reduced to prevent the spread of disease such as Brucellosis. Feed grounds are believed to be a means of spreading disease and have been discouraged as an unnatural attempt to manage the game. Herds that exist in wolf and grizzly bear recovery areas are seen as food for the endangered species recovery.

Political and economic constraints exerted upon the Fish and Game Department have limited predator control, resulting in a thriving population of coyotes, cougars, bear, and wolves. Pressure from land owners have severely impeded population growths by demanding depredation hunts. Disease issues have eliminated survival practices such as feeding refuges that would augment the survival and increase of herds. As well, because Fish and Game is funded strictly by revenues it generates, out-of-state hunters are highly solicited.

To generate sufficient monies to maintain the Fish and Game agency, they must sell a certain number of tags and licenses. To sell tags and licenses, they must maintain certain numbers of animals and fish. The problem that has developed, because of all of the pressures on wildlife survival, is that there is not enough game to satisfy both in-state and out-of-state hunters and predators. This has resulted in plummeting numbers of out-of-state hunters. Last year alone, some 1700 reserved out-of-state hunting tags were NOT sold. This has left the Fish and Game Department scrambling for answers and income.

This decline in out-of-state hunters has been happening for several years. Part of the problem exists in the short and untimely seasons. This lowers hunter success in an attempt to preserve and restore game numbers. The consequence of this management strategy is hunter discontent.

One attempt to restore numbers has been to increase predator control. The infamous trapper, John Graham from Montana, was solicited by Roy Moulton for this purpose. We all know the heat Roy has taken from this action. In my conversations with Roy and John, effective predator control has significantly restored game numbers in Montana in areas where few other reasons can be considered. Why Idaho is resisting this effort is beyond me. We can have predators or we can have big game - but we can't have significant numbers of both. Game numbers should increase with increases in predator control. However, predator control is not the only answer. The real solution to the problem is much deeper and goes back to the beginning.

The founding fathers never intended for government to engage in business. Nor did they intend on its interference. Government was set up to protect our rights to life, liberty, and personal property. Many of the problems we are experiencing in our society today is because of government interference we call 'oversight.' Oversight is one thing; out right business is another.

Who could argue that the Department of Fish and Game is not a business? They manage a commodity, wildlife, to earn monies to fund themselves. Are they any different from any other business who competes for survival? They should be protecting our state rights to hunt and fish, not selling them for money so that they can justify their existence.

Is it wrong to have such agencies fund themselves? Yes, it is! Should we collect more taxes to fund them? No. Then what are we to do? We dissolve them! That's right; we scrap the Fish and Game as we know it! This agency is not needed. They never should have existed from the beginning! I know of no other agency more controversial in the United States. Before the Fish and Game Department was organized there was abundant fish and game for all. Big bulls and big bucks were the norm in my father and grandfather's day. Now we're hard- pressed to find either.

Who then will take care of the balancing of the wildlife and the satisfying of the three groups of people? The people! Government is best at its closest level. A firm principle in the proper role of government as explained by Ezra Taft Benson in 1968, is "never ask a larger group to do that which can be done by a smaller group. The smaller the unit and the closer it is to the people, the easier it is to guide, to correct, to keep it solvent, and to keep our freedom."

This was the intent of the Constitution. The federal government was limited to only twenty things. The rest was the responsibility of the states. The same goes for the state as a whole. Not everything in Idaho needs to be governed from Boise. Bring what we can back to the people at its closest level.

Wildlife management is a regional issue. Wildlife districts governed by people who live in those districts will provide the best government. Let the people decide on predator control, feed grounds, the price to charge out-of-state hunters, and so on. Regional or district wildlife commissions could be set up from amongst the local people. The county sheriff's office could enforce the fish and game laws. A professional consultant could be hired to help the local people manage the fish and game. Fees could be established by the district commissions on how much in-district, out-of-district, and out-of-state hunters pay. (For people that have resided in a particular district for twenty years, I think they have earned the 'right' to hunt and fish for free.)

To encourage land owner cooperation and conservation efforts to promote more game, a significant land access fee should be charged to hunters that wish to hunt on private ground. This will compensate the land owners for their crop damage and hunter management time. Soon land owners

would realize the potential profits and would work hard to manage for more and bigger trophy animals. This has become a successful \$1.5 billion business in Texas.

The idea needs more work, but the concept is sound - let local districts made up of people who know the area and the game, manage their own wildlife resources. In fact, let them manage all their natural resources - water and forests included. Bring government back to the closest level at which it can manage. Think of the potential this plan has for southeastern Idaho alone. Wildlife resources managed correctly could bring significant financial rewards to the county residents. Ideally, the day will return when there is abundant wildlife and other natural resources for all Idaho residents.

If you would like to help with this reform movement please call me at 356-3690. It is my intention to draft legislation for the 2003 session. It is time to take back Idaho!

4. NADeFA POSITION PAPER ON CWD

[In an effort to keep the borders open to deer and elk movements, the North American Deer Farmers Association has developed a position paper on CWD. This position paper along with a covering letter was sent to every USA State Veterinarian.]

Position statement on CWD

The North American Deer Farmers Association is dedicated to the promotion of deer farming and ranching as an agricultural pursuit. The Association serves its members through its educational programs and publications, and by providing leadership in setting and maintaining quality standards.

Recognizing the current uncertainty with our regulatory agencies concerning the issue of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), and in the spirit of offering constructive, safe and workable regulations for the movement of Cervidae around the country, the following guidelines are offered. NADeFA recommends:

1. That all cervid farmers enrolled in a state administered CWD surveillance or monitoring program also work towards a TB accredited herd status.
2. That each animal bear a unique, individual identification number approved by the State Veterinarian.
3. That a live animal test for CWD be pursued. States, provinces and the domestic cervid industry assist the leading experts on CWD by funding extensive research and development in order to create a live animal CWD disease detection test.
4. That hunted carcasses from within endemic zones be prohibited from leaving those zones, unless CWD tested. Only processed meat, cape and antlers can enter states.
5. The prevention of feeding any animal byproducts to any cervidae.
6. That interstate and intrastate movement of deer, elk and other cervids remain open, except from areas of positive CWD test results, through December 31, 2002.

7. That restrictions be only for known susceptible species.
8. Beginning January 1, 2003, all cervid farms enrolled in a state administered program in 2002 will receive one year monitored status and will gain additional years of surveillance status needed through certification by a licensed veterinarian.
9. That TB testing continue as presently required by federal law.
10. That interstate movement rely on a single Brucellosis test.

If interstate and intrastate movement of deer and elk is stopped, it will worsen the current situation. A disease issue is not resolved by locking down an industry. History shows continued movement will encourage and result in further testing and tracking of animals.

Letter to State Veterinarians

State Veterinarian,

The information herein was established and approved by the U.S. Cervid Congress and the North American Deer Farmers Association.

If interstate and intrastate movement is stopped, it will worsen the current situation for cervid farmers/ranchers. A disease issue is not resolved by locking down an industry. History shows continued movement will encourage and result in further testing and tracking of animals. Moratoriums are counter-productive because they will result in a lack of trace-backs to herds. Moratoriums that affect the financial future of families will lead to desperate actions. Therefore, we have enclosed a copy of our position statement on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

There are over 11,000 cervid farms/ranches with an average of 50 deer per farm in the United States alone. These farms/ranches have on average one or two employees equating to thousands of jobs. If bans are placed on, or remain in effect on, interstate or intrastate movement, there is a potential for a significant number of these individuals to lose their jobs. This would result in billions of dollars in costs to the government in the form of unemployment compensation. These cervid farmers/ranchers have over 3 billion dollars invested in their operations, and generate millions of dollars annually. Now imagine what this equates to in terms of supporting crop farmers, feed mills, equipment, etc. Think of the potential economic impact this has inside and outside your state's borders. We are talking about the livelihood of a very large industry that helps support our nation! Let's support them!

These farmers/ranchers are willing to work with the states in an effort to eradicate CWD, but they need the government's support too. We need to educate and arm the public with the facts.

To date, there have been no cases of CWD being found on a deer farm, in a farmed herd, in the United States of which we know. With current testing, even deer on the same premise have not contacted the disease. We recommend that the borders remain open for continued trade, and that we phase in a CWD monitoring system. Beginning January 1, 2003, all cervid farms enrolled in a state administered program in 2002 should receive one year monitored status and would gain additional years of surveillance status needed through certification by a licensed veterinarian.

We need your help and support in changing the regulations on hunting with regards to movement and importation of carcasses from endemic areas across state lines. Only processed meat, cape and antlers should be allowed to enter states. There needs to be sampling and testing of free-ranging cervids. Only if this is done will endemic areas be identified. If testing is not done, you don't know whether you have a problem or not. Also, another important consideration is placing a ban on animal byproduct feeding.

Please feel free to contact the National office of the North American Deer Farmers Association at 920-734-0934 for your local and/or cervid associations.

Mark Drew, President
Phyllis Menden, Executive Director

5. INDUSTRY NEWS

Two companies developing CWD test

GeneThera, Inc. has announced that it has secured a commitment from BioTech Research Fund for \$1 million to fund the continuing validation process and commercialization of its test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

The company is in the later stage of completing its molecular assay for a live animal test for the detection of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) through a single drop of blood. GeneThera built the CWD test on its proprietary molecular diagnosis platform to allow high sensitivity results and volume testing. To date, the company has received and successfully tested over 100 blood samples from Colorado, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

GeneThera operates a recognized biotech laboratory in Wheat Ridge, Colorado providing testing services to meet the growing demands of the agriculture, veterinary, and health care industries. The company uses real-time PCR testing equipment and proprietary technology for high sensitivity and throughput testing for contaminants that threaten the nation's food supply. GeneThera's technology provides a platform to efficiently develop and commercialize genomic assays for detection of contaminants and the creation of recombinant DNA vaccine for treatment. They have spent three years developing molecular assays to diagnose such diseases as Chronic Wasting Disease, Mad Cow, and E.Coli O157:H7. The company plans to license and directly market and distribute test kits for its scientific discoveries, begin limited distribution by the end of 2002, and achieve volume commercialization by mid 2003.

* * * * *

Saigene Corporation, a Seattle USA biotech/genetics firm, believes it has identified the markers needed to develop a test to detect CWD in deer and elk. The company has discovered the messenger RNA target and is able to detect the presence of CWD in the bone marrow. Saigene researchers feel that their technology may be able to detect the disease within 100 days of contraction.

The tests will likely cost \$10 and can be used on live or dead animals. However, the tests must be performed on the company's portable micro-unit, a shoebox-size device that will likely cost \$4,000 to \$6,000. These could be something veterinary clinics or deer/elk associations could purchase.

The device is expected to be ready for field testing in 2003, and should be available for purchase in late 2003 or 2004.

[A lot of time and effort is currently being spent to develop policies, protocols and regulations based on our CURRENT testing procedures for CWD – sending the brains to labs. I strongly encourage the deer/elk industry associations to look ahead – and start developing “rules” based on reliable live animal tests NOW! It will take some time to have governments approve the live-animal tests and change protocols anyway. These delays will continue to hurt the cervid farming industry. Ed.]

No CWD risk in this deer pee

There have been some concerns expressed about the possibility of deer urine products posing health risks to hunters and contributing to the spread of CWD among wild deer and elk.

An Alberta company has taken extreme measures to ensure that their deer urine products are safe. Alberta's Best Whitetail Deer Group Ltd. collects urine from deer, then slaughters the animals for venison. Upon slaughter, the deer heads are sent to an approved laboratory to be tested for CWD. Only after the results come back negative are the venison and urine released for sale.

As well, to ensure that the urine products are free of possible infectious agents, Alberta's Best has an independent laboratory test the urine for bacteria, yeast and mold levels. This further ensures that their deer urine products pose no health risks to hunters or other deer. All urine producers should take note and implement similar precautions.

For more information, contact Brad Sakowich at 780-675-5648 or <mailto:altabest@telusplanet.net>

North American Cervid Alliance formed

At a July 24, 2002 meeting in Dallas, Texas, several organizations agreed to form the North American Cervid Alliance (NACA). The propose of NACA is to “promote, protect and ensure the future of the alternative livestock industry.”

Members of the Alliance include the Exotic Wildlife Association (EWA), the North American Deer Farmers' Association (NADeFA), the North American Elk Breeders Association (NAEBA), Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), Texas Deer Association (TDA) and Whitetails of Oklahoma.

The following parameters were agreed upon at the meeting:

1. NACA would represent all alternative livestock, not just cervids.
2. NACA should be set up as a Trust, in which all donations for funding would go directly to the Alliance.
3. NAEBA would be responsible for the administration of the NACA as part of their contribution.
4. NACA would be composed of an executive team represented by the three national associations – NAEBA, NADeFA and EWA. The remaining 4-5 executive team seats would be filled from other state associations across the nation. These would be either appointed or elected positions.

5. In addition to the executive team, the state task force of the Alliance will be made up of one representative from each state association. These representatives must be good spokespersons for that association. They must be articulate and good communicators.

Funding for the Alliance was discussed. NACA was awarded a grant in the amount of \$15,000 from the Cervid Livestock Foundation (CLF) to be used for education. Additional funding would be in the form of donations from each individual association's members. The CLF would like to challenge the other national and state associations to match this pledge.

For more information or questions please contact Michelle Fleshman at 888-431-3605 or <mailto:info@naelk.org>

Research grant proposals

Over the last week or so, I have been busy writing three grant applications for funding to undertake projects that will help our industry develop new markets and promote our products. Briefly, these projects are about:

1. Compiling information about the health benefits of velvet antler and making it available to the 58,000 plus pharmacists in Canada and the United States. Pharmacists are positioning themselves as a profession to be the "gate-keepers" of medication-related advice. Thus it is very important that pharmacists be aware of, and knowledgeable enough, to be able to advise their clients about the health benefits of velvet antler.
2. Conducting a detailed market research and product development study to determine whether the trim meat from deer, elk and reindeer can be used in dog/pet food products. Prime venison is easy to sell. If we can develop a market for the less desirable cuts and trim, farmers will be able to get far greater returns for their meat animals.
3. Doing a consumer acceptance study and evaluating various marketing strategies and channels – direct sales, pet stores, vet clinics and big-box stores – in the distribution of velvet antler products for pets.

Discussions are underway with the various industry associations to form partnerships to submit the funding applications and undertake these projects. For more information on these proposal, contact Russell Sawchuk at <mailto:info@deerfarmer.com> or 800-267-9997.

6. EVENTS CALENDAR

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

WHITETAIL DEER FARMERS OF OHIO will hold their fall meeting on September 7, 2002 at Apple Creek Park. Speakers will include Dr. George Bubenik on antler growth, and Dr. Brad Thurston, who will provide an update on CWD. Contact Steve Laughlin at 330-866-5421 or <mailto:sklisret@earthlink.net>

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

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

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

NEW ZEALAND GRASSLAND ASSOCIATION will hold a symposium on deer nutrition at Lincoln University on November 8-9, 2002. This is being presented in conjunction with the Canterbury Deer Farmers Association and will cover various topics on nutrition. For more information, contact Suzanne at 0800-376-8448 or Marie Casey at <mailto:mariecasey@wrightson.co.nz>

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 <http://www.albertaelk.com>

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

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

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

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

***** A D *****

Visit our new Deer Farmers' Venison Culinary Centre located at <http://www.venison-meat.com> or <http://venison.deerfarmer.com> The VCC has information on preparing and cooking venison, recipes and links to resources. We also have a directory of venison vendors and distributors in Canada and the United States.

7. DEERFARMER.COM NEWS

We have expanded our Venison Culinary Centre (VCC) to include more than 100 pages of useful information. Our most recent addition is the posting of information on the products and services of more than 30 venison vendors in Canada and the United States.

The VCC contains information on cooking and nutrition, more than 60 recipes and links to other sources of information about venison. If you are a reputable, established venison vendor and want to have a free listing on our site, please complete the on-line form.

The purpose of the VCC is to help develop and promote the venison part of our industry, especially here in North America. The site is designed both for venison producers and consumers.

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

8. SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES

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

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

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

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

9. CONTACT INFORMATION

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

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

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>

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