

President's Report

And what a great Spring it is - drought in Queensland, devastating bushfires and developing drought in NSW, snow on the Alps, late frosts destroying grain and grape crops.

But there is some good news. Our venison is receiving excellent exposure as it is being served in Qantas first and business cabins. It is proving to be very popular with passengers and crew. Credit for this is due to the processor, Mandagery Creek Venison, and to the dedicated farmers who supply the deer to obtain this excellent product.



Pictured above you will see what they are eating up the front behind the curtain on Qantas flights - venison backstrap on grilled polenta with sautéed kale topped with green pepper sauce.

With velvetting in full swing, and spikers growing their first antlers, it is timely to remind deer farmers that the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines - Land Transport of Livestock have now been incorporated into animal welfare legislation in each state. The standards restrict the transportation of stags to those that have less than four (4) centimetres of velvet. Stags must not be transported until seven days after velvetting, and stags with more than four centimetres of hard antler must be transported in a pen separate from other deer.

AQIS inspectors at abattoirs are aware of these requirements and have already reminded one processor of the obligations of the farmer, the transporter and the receiver of the deer. All should be conversant with the requirements of the Standards as they are now law.

Whilst on the subject of deer transport, now is the time to plan the movement of stags, considering the time of first velvet removal, regrowth removal and the approach of the rut with the increasing aggressiveness of the stags. The Land transport Standards do not refer specifically to transport of deer during the rut (roar), however, the New Zealand Deer QA Programme states that only stags under two years of age can be transported to abattoirs during the roar and that older stags should not be transported between mid-February and June for the safety and welfare of both the deer and their handlers (I would suggest that in Australia this should be advanced to mid-January). The Programme notes that the effects of the roar can continue until button drop and that care must be taken when transporting this class of deer. Good advice. No news has been received from RIRDC regarding the deer industry five year plan. I shall keep you informed.

It is encouraging to note that our secretariat has had a number of calls lately from people interested in farming deer. Not hobbyists, but farmers who are serious about the venture. With the venison price remaining firm, increasing domestic awareness of venison, overseas markets developing and the average velvet price across the grades very profitable, why not consider deer farming?

I hope you are enjoying the electronic ADF. If you have comments or helpful suggestions, please contact editor Andy Cowan.

No more information has been received about the World Deer Congress but start planning your trip - Kazakhstan 30th August 2014.



Andrew Hansen.
President DIAA