



MAY 2009
Australian Government

Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation

DR PAUL PRESIDENTE

It's with considerable sadness that RIRDC notes the sudden death of Dr Paul Presidente on 29 December 2008, at age 64.

As many members will be aware, Paul had had a long and influential association with the Australian Deer industry, with an involvement that commenced in its earliest days, and he was also a stalwart of the RIRDC Deer Program R&D Advisory Committee.

Paul came from the USA to Australia in the 1975 as a well-respected veterinary parasitologist, and it's arguably in this role that he made his major contribution to the industry. One of Paul's earliest interactions with deer in Australia came from his study of the wild population of hog deer that had been released on Snake Island and Sunday Island in Victoria by acclimatisation societies in the 1850s. From there, his involvement with deer in Australia grew until he became a key point of reference for the industry on all matters relating to deer parasites.

Of particular note was Paul's major input into the process of protecting the Australian industry from the threat posed by *Elaphostrongylus cervi*, a significant parasite of deer in other parts of the world, which also has the potential to cross-infect cattle.

Paul was instrumental in the development of quarantine polices that enabled the safe importation of live red deer and other materials from New Zealand free of *E. cervi*. He also identified the only known quarantine breach in Australia in 1986, and was involved in the subsequent successful effort to eliminate the parasite. The absence of this dangerous parasite from deer in Australia can truly be viewed as one aspect of his legacy to the industry. Further, his development of parasite monitoring and treatment protocols also provided a key enabling element for live deer exports from Australia to Asia.

In addition to his 'hands-on' input, Paul was an industry-nominated member of RIRDC's Deer R&D Advisory Committee for many years. In this role, he was widely acknowledged as a strong contributor in all matters scientific, and as a meticulous and fastidious 'details' man in reviewing experimental design, methodology and analysis. Paul had recently accepted a re-appointment to the Committee for a further term, and his contributions in this role will be greatly missed.

Finally, above and beyond his professional role, Paul was very highly regarded as a colleague and as a person. Mention of his name routinely brings forward descriptions of a polite, good-natured and considerate person, who was unstintingly generous with his time and help. We acknowledge Paul's life, his scientific work and his contributions across so many aspects of this industry, and once again express our condolences

to his wife and family.

2. RIRDC Deer R&D Program

Ms Nola Anderson continued to hold the position of Committee Chair throughout the year, and we thank her for her inputs in this role.

Ms Annette Sugden, the previous Program Research Manager, left RIRDC in November 2008, and her role was taken up by Dr David Dall.

Current Program Operating Position

Financials

As most here will be aware, RIRDC receives industry levy monies, as well as other government contributions, to be invested for purposes of R&D and associated activities for the benefit of the industry.

In a broad reflection of the current difficult time for the industry, this financial year is likely to produce a relatively modest income for these purposes, as compared to previous incomes from four or five years ago.

At the end of the 3rd quarter of this FY (ie March 2009), statutory levies of \$41,801 had been received, and overall Program income was \$83,390. Total income to the Program for the year is estimated to be about \$95,000.

Program reserves at the start of this FY were \$490,775; forecast total expenditure for 08-09 is \$129,000. The Program is thus at close to 'steady-state' for this year.

Recent and Current Projects

Since the last Annual Report, the RIRDC Program has received Final Reports for four projects:

- Fallow venison development program;
- Improved knowledge of constraints to value-added venison products;
- Meeting regional abattoirs requirements for Australian domestic processing of deer; and
- Market Focussed Venison Alliances.

The Program is currently supporting two R&D projects, 'Establishment of a Deer Industry Database, and 'Communication and Information Programs for the Australian Deer Industry', both of which are being undertaken by Solange Shapiro.

The program also supported travel by Jim Moir and Milton Stevens to the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy International Conference.

One project – 'Velvet antler use in animals' was terminated at the request of the researcher, who was unable to enlist help from collaborating veterinarians as required for the work.

New projects

At its meeting earlier this month the Committee approved Program support for three new projects:

- “Deer velvet antler – research quality and returns through the pools” (Ross Lawrence);
- “Defining the Australian market for velvet antler products” (Gordon Dryden), and
- “DIAA website maintenance and information for the Australian deer industry” (Solange Shapiro).

Review of the Program

In line with best practice management procedures, the Program commissioned a mid-Five Year Plan review of its current operations.

Terms of Reference of the Review were to:

- (i) identify structural and funding opportunities and options for the deer research program for the short term, and
- (ii) determine the most cost effective and appropriate way forward for deer research from the viewpoints of RIRDC and the deer industry.

The Review has been circulated to Committee members and to Mr Jim Moir in his capacity as President of the Deer Industry Association of Australia.

The Review identified three clearly feasible options, namely to:

- continue the program in its current form with reductions in management costs;
- put the R&D Program in abeyance, set the research levy at zero and draw down reserves on an ad hoc basis; and
- continue the deer R&D levies but manage deer R&D as part of RIRDC's New Animal Products Program.

The reviewers considered that none of these options offer significantly improved cost savings over the others, given that major cost reductions were already being built into the 2008-2009 budget.

RIRDC favours the third option, ie, managing deer research as part of RIRDC's New Animal Products Program, on the grounds that it will enable the project to retain its identity, while maintaining an effective but minimum cost management structure.

Uptake of this option will also enable RIRDC to reduce its own transaction costs, which are under continuous and increasing pressure, in line with directives from its own Board.



2008-2009 ANNUAL REPORT

Dr Susan M. Joubert Chairperson

We first have to thank Solange once again for her dedication to the NVAS, the administration of which requires a large time commitment and considerable proficiency for the functioning of the scheme.

We continue to lose deer farmers from the industry due to unreliable velvet prices and now the severe financial crisis affecting our planet will surely impact further on velvet prices.

Once again the NVAS will require all farmers to undertake a revisionary exam prior to receiving accreditation for the next three years. As before, this will be a self-paced written exam that will be sent to all deer farmers who are currently registered. This will be sent with their annual pre-season letter.

I need to reiterate the basis essence of what the NVAS means. It is this. The velveting procedure involves the annual removal of living tissue from the male cervid. It is and always will be a controversial issue both with respect to the welfare aspects of the procedure and the prescription and dispensing of the drugs required for sedation and analgesia.

It is therefore important to maintain the standards set by the NVAS and to be accredited. The NVAS provides a buffer between the deer farmer and the general public, animal welfare agencies and also

sections of the veterinary profession that would have velveting banned.

There have been no changes to the velveting procedure regarding types of drugs for sedation or local anaesthetic. We will continue to follow New Zealand, using xylazine for sedation and lignocaine for local anaesthetic.

Method of administration:

The amount of lignocaine in the harvested stick of velvet will be greatly reduced to well within acceptable levels of residue if the tourniquet is applied with consistent pressure around the whole circumference of the pedicle before the administration of lignocaine. The lignocaine is injected below the tourniquet around the base at a dose of 1ml. per centimetre. A complete ring block with overlapping blebs appears to provide the most effective analgesia.

We still have access to a source of inexpensive tags for the velvet sticks although this will run out this season. We need to decide on a suitable form of identification in the near future. The most appropriate suggestion to date is a declaration attached to each box of velvet stating that the deer farmer is currently registered with the NVAS and that the velvet has been harvested in accordance with NVAS procedure and standards.

Lastly, on behalf of the NVAS committee, I would like to express our shock and horror at the ferocity of and the destruction caused by the Victorian bushfires. The loss of human and animal lives is appalling.



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5TH WORLD DEER CONGRESS

The 5th World Deer Congress is to be held in Changchun, Jilin Province, China on July 27–28, 2010.

The Congress is jointly sponsored by Jilin Agricultural University and Changchun Association for Science and Technology. Its purpose is to expand our knowledge exchange and cooperation in the field of deer science all over the world, promote the development and utilization of deer products in the field of medical care and health protection etc. and quicken the drive of deer farming in the world context.

Jilin Province is located in North-eastern China, where the world famous Sika deer originated. Jilin Province is also the earliest recorded place for artificial breeding of deer in the world with more than 300 years of history. After years of scientific research and productive practice, our university has accumulated a very rich experience in the aspects of medical care and health protection. We have made outstanding technical progress, with products derived from deer now developed into hundreds of types and uses.

In order to promote worldwide deer farming development to improve the level of deer science, encourage and speed the application of deer products to the field of the medicine and health care, we believe this congress will provide an opportunity for deer farmers and experts from all parts of the world to enhance business, scientific and technological contacts and cooperation, and to open a channel for bilateral and multiple common research and development of deer products.

As Chairman of the 5th World Deer Farming congress, I sincerely invite you, your friends and your colleagues to Jilin Agricultural University, Changchun, Jilin Province, China. I believe, with your attendance and involvement, the 5th World Deer Congress will be a great success.

We welcome you and look forward to seeing you at the Congress.

Yours sincerely,
Dr. Qin Guixin,
Chairman of the 5th World Deer Congress
Congress documents including a programme, registration details and call for papers to be presented will be made available via a website shortly.

URGENT URGENT
NATIONAL VELVET ACCREDITATION SCHEME (NVAS)
If you have not forwarded outstanding items to the administrator,
please do so as a matter of urgency.
Letters are due to be prepared to Vets informing them of
those suspended from the NVAS
Forward cheques and paperwork to:
DIAA Secretary
PO Box 246. Berwick 3806
Victoria Australia
Cheques to be made out to “DIAA”