

CHANGES TO GRADING GUIDELINES FOR THE 2005/06 SEASON

Reported by the Velvet Grading Guidelines Review Committee (VGGRC). The VGGRC comprises representatives from producers, velvet processors/exporters, pools, road buyers and a researcher. The group annually considers submissions from industry on proposed changes to the grading guidelines.

This year, the VGGRC met in July 2005.

PRINCIPLES

The Grading Guidelines are intended to:

- Put like velvet with like velvet based on characteristics that the market requires;
- Ensure that producers who remove velvet according to market requirements are rewarded for meeting those requirements;
- Provide sufficient consistency to allow buyers to know what velvet to expect without the need to inspect;
- Ensure the most efficient sale of New Zealand velvet possible.

The VGGRC confirm these principles still apply to the current market environment and do not endorse wholesale change to the grading system.

KEY CHANGES AND BACKGROUND

With regard to Red Deer Velvet Guidelines, the following issues were discussed and decisions made:

Minimum qualifying weight of Super A Premium

To ensure a clear distinction in quality and to meet market needs for this grade, a 2kg lower limit for SAP was discussed and agreed. This premium grade delivers a strong message of defining and promoting genetics for classic velvet.

Clarification of grading guidelines for Damaged Overgrown Velvet

The handling of Damaged Overgrown (OG) velvet was discussed. The Committee agreed that damaged OG velvet should be downgraded one or two grades (at grader discretion), with severely damaged OG velvet being downgraded to Manufacturing 2 or 3.

Hard Horn name change to Hard Velvet

Problems with the term 'horn' were identified in relation to exporting documentation regulations. These have begun to impact on commercial exports making it appropriate for the terminology to change. Hard Velvet (code HV) was recommended and approved.

With regard to Wapiti Velvet Grading Guidelines, the following issues were discussed and decisions made, in association with the Elk Wapiti Society:

Clarification of Elk/Wapiti Supreme Indentation Requirements

The Elk Wapiti Society agreed Elk Wapiti Supreme must have an indentation in the blade of more than the 2.5 cm currently allowed for EW1 to qualify Supreme. Buyers had an expectation that the Supreme grade was a unique style, distinct from the rounded bulb of other EW grades. Even if the 4.0kg weight and minimum beam of 20 cm are exceeded, if the indent was not evident, an antler should remain as EW1.

Addition of Elk Wapiti Damaged Grades 1, 2 and 3

Currently Elk Wapiti damaged velvet is graded in Red damaged grades. This does not reflect the true value of the Elk Wapiti velvet, especially when damage is only light. The new damaged grades will see Elk Wapiti producers getting a better return for their damaged velvet, and a better 'like with like' result in the grading guidelines to assist buyers.

Name change of Elk Wapiti Overgrown to Elk Wapiti Outgrown

The term 'overgrown' is not appropriate for this grade. Outgrown better reflects the intent of this style of velvet. The Elk Wapiti Society as approved this name change.

New Posters

New posters have been produced taking into account previous changes since 1996, when the last poster was first published. Posters can be ordered by emailing info@deernz.org.

Important Notes to Grading Guidelines

These specifications are guidelines only. Grader discretion will be used when applying the guidelines to velvet. Producers interested in viewing the grading process should contact the pool operator. Deer Industry New Zealand will undertake audits of the grading to ensure the guidelines are being followed.

National Velvetting Standards Body (NVSB) Compliance

It is important to provide a reminder about the requirements of the NVSB programme:

- Velvet (including spiker) can only be removed by a veterinarian or by a trained and certificated farmer. Call Deer Industry New Zealand on (04) 473 4500 for information on how to become certificated;
- Velvetting remedies must not be used for any purpose other than the removal of velvet on your own farm;
- A tourniquet must be applied, and tightened before application of local, to minimise drug residue in velvet;
- All velvet removed under the NVSB programme must be properly identified with a uniquely numbered tag provided by the NVSB:
 - For branched velvet, wrap the tag around the beam under the trez tyne - leave a finger's width of space between the beam and the tag.
 - For unbranched velvet (spiker, regrowth, manufacturing etc) put this velvet in a bag and tag the bag.
 - Slip the black plastic sleeves provided onto ID tags where velvet has been removed with local only.
- Unused velvetting remedies and completed record books must be returned to your vet at the end of the season;
- A supervisory vet visit (vet consultation for NaturO™ rings) must be completed by a date specified by the NVSB;
- Velvet should not be hung, and should be frozen as soon as practical after removal, on a slight angle preferably, with the cut end slightly raised;
- Velvet is a food product and must be removed, handled, stored and transported in a clean and hygienic manner at all times;
- NaturO™ rings or local must be used when velvetting spikers.

It is critical that all velvetters comply with the requirements of the NVSB programme. Velvetters that do not comply put the entire deer industry at risk.

A tourniquet must be applied before administering local anaesthetic