

# Achieving earlier calving from hinds

Why, How and Limitations



# Why?

- Improved lactation of hinds (?)
- Longer calf growing season = bigger weaners
- Improved grass utilisation (?)
- Beat the drought....calves big enough to handle supplements

# How early is possible?

- By natural means....2-3 weeks



- Melatonin.....4-5 weeks

# How to achieve early calving

- Join hinds:stags early (1 March)
- Hind BCS of 4(+) at joining
- Early weaning helps by improving BCS
- Low stress environment (over lactation & mating)
- Genetics (Eastern are earlier)

# Why is there a limit?

- Seasonal births controlled by seasonal conceptions
- Seasonal conceptions regulated by **photoperiod** (light:dark ratio change)
- Short days = ovulation/rutting/mating
- Hard-wired into red deer!

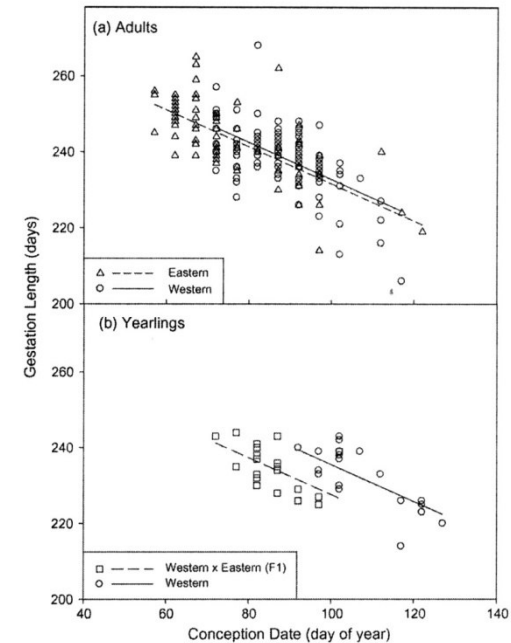
# But.....

- There is 'fuzziness' around the absolute timing of about 2-3 weeks only
- Larger changes require us to trick the hard-wired system.....**melatonin**
- 'Regulin' implants registered for use in deer but does the industry want to go down this path?????



# Another sting in the tail.....

- Early conception = long gestation
- Late conception = short gestation
- 250 days----233 days----220 days  
Red deer hinds really, really want to calve in summer!!!!!!



- However, every **10 days** advancement in conception date still = **6-7 days** advancement in calving date

# Conclusion

- 2-3 weeks earlier calving is possible by changes in management
- Earlier calving is beneficial on lowland systems prone to drought...5-6 kg heavier weaner
- Early joining and hind BCS are very important
- Genetics is a long-term approach (BVs for conception date are in DEERSelect)

