



The Bugle... blast!



Last Meeting: April 21st Sudima Hotel, Christchurch **Present:** Donald Whyte, Tony Pullar, Tracey McLean, Dave Lawrence, Jack Pullar, John Falconer, Visitors: NZVM (Nick Taylor & John Smith) John Fogarty, Graeme Hawker and Colin Stevenson, Angela Whyte (stand in minute secretary)

Major Meeting Discussion points: *Animal Health Survey:* Fantastic news from the Sustainable Farming Fund in the last few days with their approval of our 20k application for parasite control research work in elk. This is a great result and puts us in a strong position to complete the project with an obvious benefit to all elk farmers and possibly all deer farmers. The EWS is indebted to Dave Lawrence for his persistence and professionalism in the preparation of the SFF application and all the preceding work along with the obvious volumes of work to come. In the meantime our position still stands that we strongly recommend that no pour-on is used for parasite control in elk. Our testing to date through John Gill at Gribbles Lab, Invermay categorically and conclusively found that the main pour-on parasite drench system was completely inefficient in delivering the right or sufficient levels of the chemical to control internal parasites. All other unlicensed treatments including injectable products used on deer would require a 91 day withholding period. Part of the continuing work the society is carrying out on this matter will include a recommendation for parasite control in elk with a product or range of products that will hopefully have a lesser withholding period.

NZ Elk export to China: The Society has received a request for support from a Live Animal export company wishing to export of a number of NZ born live elk. It was the position of the council to not offer any official Society support. The Council took this stance with the knowledge that the export could likely proceed any way without the endorsement of the EWSNZ.

EWSNZ AGM: The annual General Meeting for the EWS will be in Dunedin at The Mercure Leisure Lodge, Saturday, **June 12th**. The official notice of meeting and proxy forms will be out to members in mid May.

EWS Velvet Competition 2011: The 2011 EWS Velvet and Hard antler competition is confirmed for January 22nd at the Golden Gate Hotel, Cromwell

Rising Stars: Wilton Turner was keen to see the EWS offer continued and possibly expanded involvement with the National Rising Stars velvet and hard antler competition. Generally councilors present endorsed the idea and over the coming months will look into how we might expand the involvement of elk heads to this competition.

Velvet sales: Nothing to write home about and of concern was that the majority of elk velvet presented to the pool has been selling very slowly. Afternoon session of meeting to look at the velvet situation

Grants Moving Camp:



Long time elk enthusiast and former EWS President Grant Muir has pulled the pin on elk farming at Hari Hari on the West Coast. Grant has had a series of health issues that have seen him arrive at a decision that we are all ultimately not looking forward to, selling the very last of his breeding stock! Grant is in the middle of selling the cows and replacements then intends to move to somewhere without the rainfall of the West Coast, probably Christchurch.

Presidential Drivel:

The approaching AGM signals another year for the society, and we are still surviving. Many of us mistreated by vagaries of the climate, parched and drought-stricken in many parts of both the south and the north, with the exception of Southland, who have recently been very well washed. As co-ordinator of the EWSNZ council, I feel that we have again contributed some positive and financial opportunities especially to our members, but also to the wider deer industry.

The light has gone on again with those looking for the wapiti advantage in venison production, thanks to individual breeders and the EWSNZ repetitive reminders in the media, that wapiti bulls are still the best root to the chilled venison premiums. A wapiti bull is a cost-effective, 24/7 inseminator, with guaranteed results – hows that for “deer” improvement? The southern meat plant paying a premium for elk and wapiti carcasses was brought about by a society councillor, and this in turn should influence other exporters thinking of setting their schedules.

On our health research, we are very positive about our results to date, regarding moxidectins and their effectiveness. The greater deer industry should pay attention here because our initial findings indicate evidence of not only ineffective drench procedures, but also strong possibilities that resistant worm species are already present. This could be in ALL deer breeds. Our research is continuing, watch this space.

This year the council decided, after consultation, to continue from our historical association with the Wrightsons EWS velvet pools systems, into the new NZVM evolution. Although the NZVM strategy was never sold as a fast track to stability, it is fair to say that a combination of events have contributed to an unsatisfactory selling result, so far, for elk wapiti velvet with NZVM. It is on the back of this situation that the council was again pro-active, and held a meeting, first with NZVM senior personnel, and then the 3 major road buying entities. This was to establish where our velvet currently sits in the international marketplace, their interpretation of the year thus far, and where to from here for EW velvet.

Following these discussions, we have decided to make the future of velvet sales the focus for the AGM. Although on the day, it is the individual grower's decision on how to sell their velvet, the Society does not intend to relinquish the unique historical position we hold. This position means that we can have a positive influence on velvet sales and prices. Our top grades need to be marketed together, from a united strength, to gain best price advantage. With this in mind, if you have a say and want it heard, get off the couch and get to the AGM!

The half dozen councillors who regularly give up their time and travel to attend our meetings through out the year need your endorsements and criticisms to help make stronger their involvement and decisions. This is YOUR society, where the best interests of the Elk Wapiti breed are paramount. Please, make an effort.

Donald

Elk Velvet Meeting: The afternoon session of our April 21st Council meeting was made up of meetings with NZVM Ltd and the three main road buyers. Council met with Nick Taylor and John Smith (NZVM) and then later in the afternoon with the road buyers collectively (Graeme Hawker, John Fogarty and Colin Stevenson). Possible solutions and strategies were discussed and we need to take these on board in the coming months. Partnership opportunities need to be explored and these could be discussed at the AGM in June. As with most velvet sales over the last few years movement of elk velvet has not been straight forward. One enlightening development over this last season is the level of co operation between the three main road buyers. This cooperation is promising and we hope it has benefits not only to the sale of elk velvet but all velvet types.

From Left -John Fogarty, Graeme Hawker, Colin Stevenson and their partners out to dinner at EWS velvet competition.



AGM: The EWS annual general meeting is fast approaching and yes no one wants to be there but without the process we would be a lost cause. The Councillors who turn up throughout the year do so essentially on your behalf and yes they are just as busy as you. Clubs and Societies need the support of their members and with this in mind thought might be given to a good old saying from the US of A, look at what YOU CAN DO for your Society not what the Society can do for you. The AGM can be a social event and is also an opportunity for you to have your say on Society activities. We look forward to seeing as many as possible on the day.

Johns Pond: Just as duck shooting season is upon us many avid hunters are moving in on their favourite ponds. John Falconer at Clachanburn must be the envy of most of his neighbours up on the Pateroa Plains having constructed what could just about be classed as a lake more than a pond! John has had the use out of his massive 180,000 cubic metre irrigation pond for the last year and in an area that is renowned for summer dry, the investment has well and truly paid off. The pond is situated on elevated ground above the flats of Clachanburn which allows for gravity fed irrigation. The power saving alone from the gravity system is estimated to save John anywhere between 50-\$70,000 a year so it's easy to see why the construction cost of



around \$400,000 is justified. John's pond measures 500 metres long by 100 metres wide by 10 metres deep and he assures me it is big enough to accommodate any of the world's currently built aircraft carriers or super tankers by a metre in width and a metre in depth. The pond is filled by winter rains and snow melt from the hills above Clachanburn. This year's long dry summer saw the pond emptied by January which might explain why the Fulton and Hogan team and machines have just arrived to spend the next 4 months digging a second pond. This second pond will be 320,000 cubic metres and between the two systems John should be able to lift his production quite considerably. Little Charlie Falconer will hopefully one day thank the old man for his vision.

Street Gangs: It seems every country has a gang problem. Here in New Zealand we have our share of mongrels in the suburbs but we are not often ever bothered by wildlife threats apart the odd mongrel or a pesky possum bouncing on the roof. In Helena, Montana Street gangs take on a whole new

meaning and this model of gang member roams the best neighborhoods' with just about complete impunity. Imagine if you are not in fact a wildlife lover and maybe a keen horticulturalist, life in Montana could be very frustrating.



This frustration might well have been evident recently at the Clachanburn Station's "Nationally" recognized garden. On returning from a night out it was discovered that 70 R2yr bulls had "somehow" made their way into Jane Falconer's prized garden. Fortunately the bulls were found early in the night and a major disaster was averted. I think it would be fair to say John's name was mud for quite some time around Jane's house. John might note that unlike Montana, mother Jane would have every right to shoot anything nibbling on her maple trees!

Trophy Market: With the trophy season quite a way through most growers seem happy with their sales to date. It would appear there are very few trophy elk left available and the predicted shaky market seemed not to eventuate. European hunters have accounted for the volume of elk moved and we hope this trend continues. The quality of trophy bulls on offer has been very good with upwards of ten animals well over 440 with the best hitting 506i.o.a.



Fiordland Wapiti: Interesting phone call the other morning from Stuart Hamlet of Rotorua. Stuart is very involved with the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation (FWF) and makes regular trips in to the Wapiti blocks not so much as a hunter anymore but more a conservator. Stuart was phoning to ask what antler bench mark might be employed to assess antler quality in young wild bulls. The wild herd has progressed to the point now that some culling of inferior Wapiti stock may occur in the not too distant future. This is promising news and Stuart seems very confident that the Wapiti are in good heart and all stakeholders (hunters, DOC and FWF) are working much better together. It's great to hear that attitudes have changed and it would appear to be just in time. Stuart said new technology such as satellite tracking of Wapiti is coming and that will considerably lower the cost of tracking animals. Currently nine bulls are wearing tracking collars but these have to be tracked by helicopter. In conjunction with the FWF the DOC is also carrying out vegetation monitoring to gauge the actual impact of browsing by deer. FWF is also involved in funding of predator control work in the Wapiti blocks primarily directing protection of Blue Duck. Stuart was interested to know of any pure forms of Fiordland animals still left behind wire.

Cryo What?



What is cryobanking and what can it offer EWS? Deer farming uses crossbreeding and hybridisation as common tools to produce animals suited to particular farming systems. However, over time the original parent genotypes can be lost through a process of 'genetic pollution' or 'genetic introgression'....the purebred genotypes are lost and everything remaining is a hybrid/crossbreed. This is happening with deer both on farms and in the wild (eg. sika deer hybrids are taking over from pure Scottish red deer in the Scottish Highlands). On the home front, unless something is actively put in place, it is possible that pure Canadian elk will eventually disappear from NZ farms. This may partly reflect the fact that the wider deer farming industry seeks terminal sires that are 30-40% wapiti, not F1's. Therefore, there may be little commercial incentive to keep purebreds in favour of high-level (80-90%) wapiti hybrids. However, it would be sad to lose forever the original pure genotypes.

One 'cheaper' option is cryobanking of their cells on the basis that one day cloning will be use to 'resurrect' them. It's not science fiction either. We already having cloning technology for red deer....wapiti wouldn't be any different. With cryobanking, viable cells from any part of the animal's body (often a piece of ear tissue collected with a punch) are stored in perpetuity in liquid nitrogen...in much the same way that semen is stored. This is already happening around the world for pets, farm stock and endangered species. These cells can be retrieved at a later date for the development of embryos that are the clones of the donor animal. The embryos would be transplanted into donor cows/hinds as surrogates.

Presently, the cloning technology is relatively inefficient, but over time it is improving. The beauty of cryobanking is that you can wait until the time is right to take the step of resurrecting the animals. I am aware that there is concern that the original purebred elk genotypes may soon disappear from NZ...there isn't the commercial imperative to retain them at present. Perhaps the EWS should consider cryobanking options for the remaining animals. There is plenty of expertise in this country to perform the task.

Geoff Asher

Footnote: *I contacted Geoff and expressed a concern that pure elk as such are slowly disappearing from NZ. This exercise to me allows us to not be so self-centred at this time and plan ahead for the future generations of NZ elk breeders. I hope the Society will embrace this concept and as Geoff says this is not sci-fi, we can do it now and we should!* Tony.

