

VENISON PRODUCTION

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SUMMARY

- Future developments in the deer farming industry are likely to be based on expanding production and marketing of venison.
- Research has demonstrated how and when to slaughter deer to produce a lean and tender meat, with long shelf life, suitable for export in chilled form to distant markets.

INTRODUCTION

Meat production from the deer industry is now beginning to expand and some estimates suggest that we could be producing 20-30,000 tonnes by 1992 (\$175 million export income at today's prices.)

Venison from young deer is very lean and is aimed at the high priced gourmet market.

VENISON FEATURES

- Deer are leaner than sheep or cattle.
- One- and two-year-old red stags are seldom 'overfat'.
- Mature stags are always 'overfat' at the end of summer and usually overfat if slaughtered soon after velvetting.
- Wapiti and hybrids within an age group are much bigger and leaner than red deer (see Table 1).

Table 1: "Good" farm weights and fatness for two-year-old stags

	Carcase weight (kg)	GRD* (mm)	% fat in carcase
Red	70	10	12.6
N.Z. wapiti	100	?	7.0
Wapiti/red hybrid	91	?	8.8

*Tissue depth over 12th rib 16 cm from midline.

CONCLUSIONS

- Dressing % and proportion of edible meat from the carcase of the deer is more favourable than from sheep or cattle.
- Yearling and two-year-old deer are unlikely to be overfat, but older stags should be slaughtered in winter to avoid overfatness.
- Appropriate ageing and conditioning treatments, together with electrical stimulation in deer slaughter premises, will greatly improve meat tenderness.
- Well dressed and prepared chilled venison can have a shelf life of at least 14 weeks.