

Transporting deer within New Zealand

On the journey from pasture to plate

Deer transport is a vital link in the quality chain that begins on a farm and ends with a delicious eating experience on the other side of the world.

Because consumers care about the ethics of how food animals are raised, many importing countries seek, and are given, assurances about how New Zealand meets their stringent requirements for the transport of animals. These are becoming increasingly complex and will influence the way we transport deer in the future.

For these reasons, as well as simple economics, it is essential that our deer transport systems continue to be safe and animal welfare-friendly.

The general maxim is 'Look after your deer and they will look after you'.

Selecting deer for transport

It is the responsibility of the farmer in charge to select only fit and healthy deer in good condition for transport. All unfit deer will require a veterinary certificate of Fitness for Transport to Slaughter.

Deer with a body condition score of less than 2 are considered to be unfit for transport without a veterinary certificate. (See next section).

If the driver says a deer is unfit for transport, accept the decision. Refusing to transport a client's animal is not easy for the driver. Do not try to coerce them into changing their mind.

Other things to take into account when planning to transport deer are:

Key points

- Prepare deer for transport
 - Select only fit and healthy animals
 - Use DeerQA accredited transport operators only
 - Never handle a deer by the tail
 - Look after your deer and they'll look after you.
- Pregnant deer must not be transported if they are expected to give birth within 21 days (Code of Welfare requirement).
 - The last day for transporting pregnant hinds to slaughter is 1 October (DeerQA Transport Standard).
 - A veterinary certificate is required if transporting pregnant deer after 1 October.
 - Stags with velvet or hard antler longer than 110 mm measured from the top of the skull between the pedicles in any direction will not be accepted for transport.
 - Deer of different ages, sex and species should not be transported in the same pen.
 - Deer must be able to stand and bear weight and walk on all four entire limbs.
 - Deer must be fit enough to withstand the journey without suffering undue pain or distress.

If you suspect any animal of having Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), call the **Exotic Disease hotline 0800 809 966**.



Hinds on a truck and looking comfortable

Don't overload. Put sexes and age groups in separate pens and listen out for bad behaviour



It's a tail, not a handle

Never handle a deer by pushing or twisting the tail. Tail bones break easily, leading to internal bleeding and potentially death

Condition scoring of deer

Deer with a body condition score (BCS) of less than two are emaciated, which makes them unfit for transport without a veterinary certificate. Under the Code of Welfare you must get veterinary advice about deer in this condition. If appropriate, your vet may provide a certificate allowing these deer to be transported.

The only reliable way to assess the condition of live deer is by hand.

Body condition scoring is based on a hands-on assessment of condition over the ribs, spine, pelvis and rump of live animals. This simple system enables you to score deer from 1 (emaciated) to 5 (excessive condition).

Body condition scores are broadly accurate when used to assess the condition of all species of New Zealand farmed deer. They are less accurate when used for assessing weaners.

Assessing the body condition of live deer by sight is difficult and inaccurate, particularly during the cooler months when a long coat can disguise the appearance of the pelvis, ribs and spine. In the warmer months, a short coat can make the body of a deer appear more irregular than it really is.

A BCS wall chart was posted to all NZ deer farmers in late 2014. Ring DINZ tel 04-473 4500 for a copy, or view it on www.deernz.org/BCS chart

Prepare deer for the journey

Deer being sent for sale must have been weaned for 10 days or more (hinds and/or fawns). However, newly weaned deer can

be transported from farm-to-farm so long as it takes no longer than six hours from yarding to delivery.

Deer will travel much better if they have been standing in yards or pens for at least four to six hours, but for no more than 12 hours, to allow them to settle and begin to empty out. Water should be provided.

Trophy stags

Special attention needs to be paid when transporting deer in hard antler. Use individual pens in deer crates specially designed for this purpose.

Preparing to load

- The transporter's vehicle must be able to access your loading ramp in any weather conditions, under its own power.
- The loading ramp must have non-slip coverings or cleats.
- Someone must be on hand to help load the animals – this is for the health and safety of both the deer and the driver/handlers.
- Never ever grab a deer by the tail and twist it. The tail bones break easily, causing internal bleeding and possibly the animal's death. Offenders could be prosecuted under the Animal Welfare Act 1999.

DeerQA Transport Quality Assurance Programme

Venison processors/exporters require all deer to be delivered to their plants by accredited DeerQA Transport Quality Assurance deer transporters.

When booking transport, either directly or through a stock agent, always ask if the operator is an accredited deer transporter. If yes, on the truck's arrival you can expect to see: A crate ID plate, a driver ID card, a clean and washed out crate and a competent driver, able to handle deer in most situations.

Most deer farmers will have preferred transporters and/or drivers who they trust. If you are not satisfied with the competence or service supplied by a transporter, contact Deer Industry NZ on 04-473 4500 and they will speak to them on your behalf.

More>>

Animal Welfare (Deer) Code of Welfare, National Animal Welfare Advisory Committee (NAWAC) 2007 www.deernz.org/welfare

Animal Welfare (Transport Within New Zealand) Code of Welfare, NAWAC 2011 www.mpi.govt.nz

Herd management, transporting deer (web page), DINZ Deer Hub www.deernz.org/transport

Deer QA Quality Assurance Programme Transport Standards, Deer Industry New Zealand (PDF document) www.deernz.org/transport



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