

The bar is being raised

A new standard for Cervena® venison will mean some on-farm changes



The Cervena on-farm standards

Here are the on-farm criteria that deer must meet in order to qualify for Cervena

Deer

- Sourced from New Zealand farmed deer herds of *Cervus elaphus* (red and elk/wapiti) and *Dama dama* (European fallow)
- From farms that comply with the DeerQA Standard for On-Farm Quality Assurance or an approved equivalent scheme such as the NZ Red Meat Farm Assurance Programme
- Three years old and under.

Natural

- No hormones or growth promotants may be used in the production of Cervena venison
- Cervena deer must be recorded as being pastured on the farmer's Animal Status Declaration
- Cervena deer must not have consumed feeds derived from genetically modified plants from 1 January 2019.



Photo: Trevor Walton

Walking the talk in the marketplace

Cervena is the name – or appellation – given to the best red meat in the world. Cervena cuts from our prime deer are sold into selected markets by licensed NZ venison marketers.

Chefs and consumers love Cervena because it's consistently tender and delicious. Also, because we say it comes from the 'fresh, clean, natural farmlands of New Zealand', it satisfies concerns about food safety, animal welfare and farming systems.

But slogans are no longer enough. 'Natural' has to mean what our customers think it means. And customers increasingly want proof that our claims reflect what really happens on the farm.

From 1 January 2019, young deer must be fed only non-GM feeds in order to be eligible for the Cervena programme.

Natural means no GM feeds

'Natural' means our Cervena deer are not given hormones and growth promotants – claims that have been made for Cervena since it was launched 25 years ago.

But today's customers also take 'natural' to mean that Cervena deer are not fed GM (genetically modified) feeds. This is important to them and is one of the reasons why they pay a premium price for Cervena.

At present, most of our deer have a non-GM diet, but we don't have the proof. That's why a non-GM feeding standard for Cervena deer is being introduced from 1 January.

It means we will be able to assure customers that Cervena deer have no GM feeds in their diets.



It won't be a big change

Most deer farmers already provide non-GM feed to their deer, for all or most of the year. That's because no GM pastures or crops are grown in New Zealand.

However, imported feed ingredients from GM crops are commonly used in animal feeds like meals, pellets, nuts and molasses. Imported GM maize is also sometimes imported for use whole or kibbled as animal feed.

From 1 January 2019, Cervena farmers will need an assurance from suppliers of supplementary feeds that they don't include any GM ingredients.

Major feed manufacturers say this won't be a problem. There are many alternative non-GM ingredients available. Also they already provide non-GM feeds and printed assurances to other farming groups, such as suppliers to the Dairy Goat Co-operative.

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What deer are used for Cervena?

Venison marketers use the Cervena appellation to set our venison apart from the competition and to maximise the value of the carcass.

They select venison cuts from deer in the premium weight range that are 3 years old or younger at slaughter. The proportion of cuts used for Cervena varies from marketer to marketer and the time of the year.

Talk to your venison company about their requirements, but assume that all deer that could be slaughtered at 3 years old or younger are potential Cervena animals that must be fed only non-GM feeds.

Will farmers be audited on this?

No. This non-GM feeding standard will initially be based on assurances provided by farmers to their venison company. But your venison company may have additional requirements.

Farmers should keep certificates or letters from suppliers of bought-in feeds confirming they contain no GM ingredients.

If you feed your deer solely on feed grown in New Zealand your declaration to your company will be all that's needed.

Does this mean the deer industry is opposed to GM crops?

The non-GM feeding standard is a response to the clear expectations of customers. The deer industry is not taking a stance on the wider issues relating to genetic modification.

One day, GM cultivars may be developed that offer great benefit to farmers, animal welfare or the environment. But those cultivars are not yet available.

In the meantime we must provide our customers with Cervena that they see as 'natural'.

GM-free claims will not be made in Cervena advertising or product packaging. This will make it easier to respond to possible future changes in GM technology and market expectations.

Any questions?
www.deernz.org/GM-Cervena

Get to know your oats

Non-GM feeds for deer

Cervena deer can be given feeds based on the following ingredients that are known to be GM-free:

NZ-grown

- All arable, forage & horticulture crops

Imported

- Barley
- Beans
- Copra meal
- Oats
- Peas
- PKE
- Sunflower
- Tapioca
- Triticale
- Wheat (bran, broil, pollard)

Possibly GM

These imported feeds are available from both GM and non-GM sources. Before feeding deer with products that include these ingredients, ask the supplier for a certificate or letter confirming they are non-GM:

- Alfalfa (lucerne)
- Canola
- DDG (Dried distillers grain)
- Distillers syrup
- Maize (corn)
- Molasses
- Soybean

Imported GM maize is sometimes sold whole or kibbled as stock feed. Always get a non-GM assurance from the supplier before buying maize as feed for Cervena deer.

Compounded feeds: Meals, pellets and nuts are the most likely source of GM feeds. Always get a non-GM assurance from the supplier before buying compounded feeds for Cervena deer.

The best red meat in the world

Help keep it that way

Cervena® is an elite meat sold to some of the world's most discerning chefs and affluent consumers. To reinforce that status, two changes are being made to the Cervena on-farm standards:

1 January 2019

Cervena deer must be fed on non-GM feeds

1 October 2019

All Cervena farms will need to be QA-audited



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