Animal Products Notice

Regulated Control Scheme for Deer Velvet Harvest

4 August 2017

New Zealand Government

TITLE

Animal Products Notice: Regulated Control Scheme for Deer Velvet Harvest

COMMENCEMENT

This Animal Products Notice comes into force on 7 August 2017

ISSUING AUTHORITY

This Animal Products Notice is issued pursuant to sections 40(1)(b) and 167(1)(f) of the Animal Products Act 1999

Dated at Wellington this 4th day of August 2017

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Ministry for Primary Industries
(acting under delegated authority of the Director-General)

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Introduction

This introduction is not part of the Animal Products Notice, but is intended to indicate its general effect.

Purpose

The purpose of this Notice is to impose a regulated control scheme (RCS) on the harvesting, handling, storage and transporting of velvet intended for export for:

      a)   operators not operating under a risk management programme (RMP); and

      b)   facilitating access to overseas markets requiring an official assurance.

Background

This RCS has been developed to provide regulatory oversight of velvet harvesting, handling, storage and transporting, prior to processing, where the velvet is intended for export. A person who harvests, collects, stores, grades, or transports deer velvet for human consumption is exempt from the requirement under the Animal Products Act 1999 (the Act) to operate under an RMP.

Velvet processors that process the velvet (dries, slices, grinds, or preserves velvet) must already operate under a registered RMP.

Virtually all deer velvet produced in New Zealand is exported either as frozen sticks or as processed velvet for human consumption. Velvet is mainly exported as a traditional Chinese medicine or an ingredient in supplements.

Who should read this Animal Products Notice?

This notice should be read by any person who harvests, stores, handles or transports velvet before it is received by an RMP operator.

Why is this important?

Any failure to comply with the RCS may result in velvet or velvet product being ineligible for export with an official assurance to markets that require MPI oversight of velvet harvesting.

Failure to comply with this Notice is an offence under section 135 of the Animal Products Act 1999.

Other information

The information contained within a guidance box is not part of the regulatory requirements.

Velvetting is a controlled surgical procedure under the Animal Welfare Act 1999. The Animal Welfare Act requires the harvesting of velvet is undertaken by:

      a)   a veterinarian; or

      b)   a trained velvetter under the National Velvetting Standards Body (NVSB).

The NVSB programme trains non-veterinarians how to velvet deer under the oversight of a supervising veterinarian. Information on the NVSB programme can be located on the Deer Industry New Zealand website.

The NVSB programme is annually audited by veterinarians on behalf of MPI. The NVSB auditors are recognised persons under the Act to verify the requirements of this scheme are being met. NVSB and MPI have developed a Memorandum of Understanding to ensure this RCS is effectively managed.

Drugs used in the removal of deer velvet are classified as veterinary medicines under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act (ACVM) 1997.

Part 1:   Preliminary Provisions

1.1   Regulated control scheme imposed

(1)   A Regulated Control Scheme (RCS) is imposed on the harvesting, handling, storage and transporting of velvet intended for both human consumption and for export with an official assurance.

(2)   The RCS applies to a farmer, a velvetter, any person who handles or stores deer velvet, and any person who transports deer velvet after harvest but before it is received by a risk management programme (RMP) operator.

(3)   This RCS does not apply to an operator undertaking harvesting, handling, storage and transport when these are covered by a Risk Management Programme (RMP) under the Act.

1.2   Prime purpose of the regulated control scheme

(1)   The prime purpose of the RCS is to ensure that deer velvet intended for export complies with overseas market access requirements throughout its harvesting, handling, storage and transport.

1.3   Definitions

(1)   In this Notice, unless the context otherwise requires:

Act means the Animal Products Act 1999

approved maintenance compound means any maintenance compound that is approved by the Director-General. These are listed on the MPI website

clean zone means the areas defined by the farmer in accordance with clause 2.1

depot means a facility that is used to temporarily hold or facilitate the transfer of velvet

farmer means a person in charge of male deer

maintenance compound means, in relation to any premises or place where velvet is processed, any substance used for any of the following:

a)   maintaining, repairing, servicing, cleaning, or sanitising equipment or surfaces that may be the source of, or result in, contamination of animal material, animal product, or associated things; or
b)   treating water; or
c)   pest control

product contact surfaces mean surfaces identified in clause 2.1 (1) (b)

velvet means the velvet antler after it has been removed from the male deer

velvet antler means deer antler in the active stages of growth

velvetter means any person carrying out velvetting

velvetting means the act of surgically removing velvet antler from male deer

(2)   Any term or expression that is defined in the Animal Products Act 1999, or regulations made under that Act and used, but not defined, in this Notice has the same meaning as in that Act or regulations.

Part 2: Requirements

2.1 Hygiene requirements

(1)   The farmer must:

    a)   identify the clean zones within which harvesting, handling and storage of velvet is undertaken;

    b)   identify the product contact surfaces within the clean zone that are intended to come into contact with velvet; and

    c)   keep a record of (a) and (b).

(2)   The velvetter must:

    a)   only undertake velvetting in a clean zone identified in clause 2.1 (1); and

    b)   ensure that during velvetting, the clean zone and the product contact surfaces are free from visible contaminants that may impact on the hygiene of the velvet. Such contaminants include, but are not limited to: bird or mouse droppings, mud and blood.

(3)   The farmer must ensure that an approved maintenance compound is used on product contact surfaces immediately prior to velvetting.

(4)   Approved maintenance compounds must be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and in a manner that minimises contamination of velvet.

(5)   The farmer must ensure that any velvet stored on the farm is:

    a)   stored in a freezer that is only used for the purpose of storing velvet; and

    b)   kept free from visible contaminants and prevents contamination of the velvet.

(6)   Velvet that is moved between non-contiguous clean zones must be contained in a receptacle that is free from visible contaminants and prevents contamination of the velvet.

> **Guidance**
> A farmer may also be a velvetter.
>
> Generally an enclosed receptacle is needed to protect velvet from contamination.

2.2 Cold chain management requirements

(1)   Velvet must be placed in a freezer within 2 hours of velvetting.

(2)   Once frozen, velvet must remain in a frozen state until processed under an RMP.

(3)   Any freezer used to store velvet must be:

    a)   capable of providing an internal ambient temperature of -15°C or cooler; and

    b)   free from visible contaminants that may impact on the hygiene of the velvet.

(4)   If velvet is removed from the freezer (e.g. transport, packing, grading or judging), it must be returned to a freezer as soon as practical, but no longer than 4 hours after it was removed.

2.3 Transport requirements

(1)   Velvet must be transported in a receptacle:

    a)   used only for the purpose of transporting velvet (e.g. single use bags or cleaned plastic bin with lid); and

    b)   free from visible contaminants that may impact on the hygiene of the velvet.

2.4 Transhipment at a depot

(1)   Velvet at a depot must continue to meet clause 2.3 (1) at all times and must be separated by an adequate distance from other goods to ensure the velvet remains wholesome and traceable.

(2)   Any freezer used to store velvet at a depot must meet clause 2.2 (3).

(3)   The operator of a depot must record the temperature of a freezer holding velvet in one of the following ways;

   a)   by using a continuous automatic temperature recording device;
   b)   manually at least once every 24 hours; or
   c)   manually at a longer interval than 24 hours if the operator has validated the freezer's capability to maintain the product in a frozen state for that interval.

(4)   Velvet must not be held at a depot for longer than necessary.

Guidance

2.4 (3) When a depot is unmanned (e.g. over a weekend or public holiday) and it is impractical to record the freezer temperature at least once every 24 hours then an operator can validate the freezer operation. Validation would need to show that the products in the freezer will stay frozen even if power is interrupted or the freezer malfunctions. This could be done through trials or by certificates from suitably qualified persons.

2.5 Identification

(1)   Velvet must, at any stage prior to arriving at an RMP facility, be identified either individually or as a batch in a sealed receptacle.

2.6 Documentation

(1)   When velvet is transferred between locations (e.g. farm to an RMP operator) it must be accompanied by a signed declaration by the supplier containing the following information:

   a)   date of transfer;
   b)   identity of the supplier;
   c)   statement that any agricultural compound or veterinary medicine used on the velvetted animals has been in accordance with requirements and approved labels under the Agricultural Compounds and Veterinary Medicines Act 1997;
   d)   statement that the animal is not within the withholding time for any animal health treatments; and
   e)   statement that all requirements under clauses 2.1 – 2.5 have been met.

(2)   Suppliers must ensure there is a documented system to support the declaration in clause 2.6 (1).

(3)   A supplier must keep inventory records of velvet.

Guidance

The NVSB scheme records all the information required in clause 2.6 (1) on the Velvet Status Declaration. A separate document is not required.

Full traceability is achieved using a "one up, one down" (tracing back where velvet has come from and tracking forward to the next recipient) system approach and includes tracing on-sold velvet.

2.7 Record keeping

(1) Records must be:
   a) accessible to the recognised verifier, the recognised person, an Animal Product Officer, the Director-General or any other person authorised by the Director-General;
   b) retained for a period of at least 4 years or other period where provided for in this Notice; and
   c) retrievable within 2 working days.

2.8 Verification

(1) This RCS is subject to verification. Verification must be conducted by persons recognised under the Act for the purposes of carrying out verification of this RCS.

(2) Any velvetter or farmer must give recognised persons such freedom and access as will enable them to carry out their functions and activities under this RCS.

(3) During a verification visit, the person or persons responsible for the day-to-day management of velvetting (e.g. farmer, velvetter) must be available to meet in person with the recognised person.

Guidance

As velvetting is a highly specialised and seasonal activity, verification is managed separately from other sectors. A person subject to this RCS will be notified of any verification visit.