

Good Operating Guidelines for Velvet Competitions

October 2022

Introduction

Velvet is a food product and needs to be treated as such at all times following harvest, this includes when velvet is entered into competitions.

The Regulated Control Scheme for Deer Velvet Harvest (2017) allows frozen velvet to be out of a freezer for a maximum of four hours and must remain frozen at all times.

The NZDFA, NVSB and DINZ have developed the following guidelines for velvet competitions, with the intention of ensuring that velvet is handled, displayed and appreciated in a safe and hygienic manner that minimises health risks to people and maintains the quality and food safety standards for the velvet.

Guidance

Handling/Judging

- Judges should not handle velvet or attend competition events if they feel unwell. Members of the public should be encouraged not to attend if they feel unwell.
- Minimise handling of velvet at all time, including the public handling any sticks on display.
- Wear disposable gloves when moving velvet or during judging and replace them when entering/leaving the room or when changing velvet classes.
- When judging or being in close proximity to velvet, it is recommended to wear a mask.
- Velvet must remain frozen at all times. As soon as velvet appears to be thawing, it needs to be placed back into the freezer immediately, even if judging that class is not complete (the class may need to be re-visited later in the day). At the conveyors discretion, large lines of velvet might want to be split with some remaining in the freezer, if there is concern of thawing.

Display

- Velvet must remain frozen at all times. Display velvet for the minimum time necessary, then return it to the freezer, to minimise potential downgrading.
- Place velvet on clean white agricultural plastic wrapping or single use, industrial plain paper that is changed between velvet classes, rather than fabric tablecloths, for improved hygiene.
- Use signs to explain what is and isn't acceptable to the public. Signs can be downloaded from the DINZ website.

- Consider using a cordon or roped-off area, to keep the public away from any sticks on display.

Basic Hygiene

- Hand sanitiser should be available at all times but is not a suitable substitute for disposable gloves for judges and those handling velvet.
- Rubbish bins with lids should be provided for the safe disposal of used gloves and masks.

Notes for competition organisers

Velvet competitions are public events and first impressions matter. *What the public sees is what they will remember.* During planning and on the day, do everything you can to give attendees a positive impression of the event and the deer industry. Good hygiene, handling and presentation of velvet, along with clear rules about what is expected of attendees, will help in achieving this.

Organisers have a responsibility to *provide suitable Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)* for those who are handling/judging velvet or otherwise working behind the scenes to make the event a success. This includes providing suitable masks, disposable gloves, hand sanitiser and bins.

Organisers also have a responsibility to firmly, yet politely, enforce the rules they have set for members of the public at all times during the event. If attendees put themselves at risk, they also put the competition and industry at risk.

Velvet should be returned to entrants in a similar condition as it was sent. Photos should be taken of each stick on arrival and any blemishes or damage noted. If damage occurs to a stick during the event, this should be documented, photographed and the entrant informed as soon as practical.