

**REPORT ON WELFARE WORKSHOPS
at the 1990 NZVA
Deer Conference**

D. Blackmore/L. Welch

Four one hour workshops on welfare related to the removal of velvet were held. Each group was split into two subgroups consisting of 8 to 12 people under the guidance of David Blackmore and Lynda Welch. The groups were asked to discuss the following four statements and questions for 20 to 25 minutes and then to meet back as a single group to further discuss the deliberations of each sub-group.

1. The Animal's Protection Act is at present being revised. It is envisaged that the new Act will have separate clauses covering de-horning of cattle and antler removal of deer.

What would you like to see included in any new legislation on antler removal?

2. A significant number of farmers ask their "vet" to supply local anaesthetic, and sometimes xylazine, so that they can remove velvet from their own stags.

In what circumstances, if any, do you consider this an acceptable practice?

3. A significant number of farmers remove velvet without any form of anaesthesia or analgesia.

What measures can be taken to reduce this barbaric practice?

Topic 1

All except one sub-group wished to see separate clauses in the Animal's Protection Act, covering dehorning and removal of antlers respectively. All groups wished to see a definition which differentiated between antlers in velvet and hard antlers (The phrase loss of innervation was suggested). It was pointed out by an Australian delegate, that polling of fallow deer was a separate issue and must involve general anaesthesia. Most delegates felt there should be no differences made between spikers and older animals in velvet, and that all animals in velvet should be subject to complete analgesia or anaesthetic of the antlers before they were removed.

It was also the opinion of those who discussed the topic, that the analgesic properties of xylazine were probably not sufficient for this drug to be used only for velvet removal in spikers. However, several people considered that research was urgently required to determine the degree of stress and pain in spikers subject to different regimes of velvet removal.

Topic 2

Virtually all delegates believed that xylazine should only be administered by veterinarians.

It was felt that this problem would be partially overcome by the Animal Remedies Board reclassifying xylazine. The question of supply of local anaesthetics to farmers was a much more contentious issue.

It appeared that most delegates were prepared to supply local to specific farmers who had been trained to administer local anaesthetics properly. This opinion appeared to be influenced by a somewhat pragmatic approach, in the belief it "vets" did not dispense the drug, farmers would get hold of it anyway. A few disagreed with this approach and suggested that local anaesthetics become more restricted by reclassification. Others felt any form of velveting must be solely by veterinarians, and an Australian delegate discussed the concept of classifying velveting as an "Act of Veterinary Science". Apparently in Australian legislation any procedure classified in this manner can only be carried out by a veterinarian.

Topic 3

Topic 3 was not specifically addressed by any group. However, many groups expressed the concern on how present or future legislation can be enforced.