

In the November 1985 issue of *The Deer Farmer*, Peter Fennessy of Invermay Research Centre outlined some of the problems associated with getting imported stags to come into season at the right time of the year. In this article, Peter Wills of Wairoa questions whether too much is being made of the so-called problem.

Who said imported stags don't turn on?

A highly variable situation, it appears

I READ with interest the recent article "Turning on Imported Stags" in the November issue of *The Deer Farmer* by Peter Fennessy, Jim Webster and Jimmy Suttie.

While I acknowledge the good work done by Invermay and its staff for the deer industry, I believe there has been a good deal of theory and imagination in the writing of that article.

One or two phone calls to deer farmers who have imported animals would give a more balanced opinion on these very adaptable animals.

I know of at least six stags in the Gisborne/Hawkes Bay area who came out of quarantine in the November/December period and though the fawn drop was a little later — December to mid-January — the stags proved, under normal farming practices, to be able to change their breeding cycle from northern to southern hemisphere for the following New Zealand breeding season.

On December 21, 1984 I received a 2½-year-old stag from JCB Park in the United Kingdom. He was straight out of quarantine from Somes Island. This animal was very quiet and at this stage shows no aggression to man even during the roar.

The following are a few facts recorded over the next 12 months:

- In very good condition on arrival.
- Arrived in New Zealand November 19. Arrived on Wairoa property on December 22. Total landed price \$9689. In latter stages of roar on arrival. Dropped buttons January 30 and still gaining condition.
- Velvet growing after one week and brow lines showing in 15 days. Farming royals March 15. Complete head 12 points with an estimated weight of 2.5 kg. Antlers hardened off very quickly and started stripping before royals hard, breaking tops and some bleeding.
- Put out to stag with 24 hinds on March 23.
- Stag first roared April 4 and showed some interest in hinds. Other farm stags have been roaring for 10 days.

- Seen to serve a hind April 12. Must have been a shock (pleasant) to the system as he lost all interest in the hinds for eight days. April 20 started roaring again and sounding up hinds; on April 24 was seen to serve two hinds. Last hind seen served on May 7. Took out of hinds and replaced with another stag on May 12. Seen no returns to back up stag. By his condition on May 12, his system obviously was not under too much strain.

- Finished roaring by end of May. Back in good condition by the end of August with good grass but no supplementary feed. Cast off antlers September 9.

While on the subject of imported deer, I would like to make a comment on the standard of some deer coming into the country. In the last batch of deer to arrive in New Zealand, I had the frustrating experience of being in on a ballot system at point of release from quarantine.

On viewing the animals, I would have to say that some of our agents are doing

a disservice to the deer industry in the standard of some of the stags that are purchased overseas.

I believe all deer farmers should insist on nothing but the best. Until deer farmers start refusing sub-standard deer at \$20 000 plus I can see little improvement.

Progeny results of 2½-year-old stag, ex-JCB Park, United Kingdom

— 24 hinds

— 19 fawns from English stag

— 1 from replacement stag

Dates of birth:	2 born	December 1
	3 born	December 4
	2 born	December 5
	4 born	December 7
	1 born	December 9
	1 born	December 10
	1 born	December 12
	2 born	December 15
	2 born	December 24
	1 born	December 25

Replacement

stag: 1 born January 20.

INVERMAY REPLIES...

The short note "Turning on imported stags" was in response to numerous requests we have had from farmers and veterinarians for advice following problems with previous imports. We also know of stags which have come in, in November, and which have successfully sired calves in the following mating season.

However, the initial point is that the situation is highly variable and it is this variability we have been trying to overcome. Some stags do it right — Peter Wills' was one of these; others do things poorly, if at all. For example, one stag left two calves (born in March) having been with hinds since April. This basic problem of variability in response appears to be due to stags having difficulty with their day length detection mechanism — the result is they do not get the required stimula-

tion and are sub-fertile.

This sub-fertility is analogous to the problems we have been having with advancing the breeding season with matings in February. Some stags work well and have reasonable fertility; others are sub-fertile. Some stags are simply better at detecting the day length signals than are others.

The system we suggested in our article would not interfere with a stag who was very responsive to day length changes, but would help to bring in those stags who were less responsive. The system would thus enhance overall fertility of imported stags. Importers of such stags should consider it carefully. —

Peter Fennessy
Jim Webster
Jimmy Suttie