

# DEER PRODUCTION

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## SUMMARY

- *Wapiti type or Wapiti sires over red hinds give:*
  - faster growing hybrid calves
  - heavier carcase weights
  - heavier velvet yields
  - premium for velvet antlers over 3 kg
- *Select sires on performance not type*

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## INTRODUCTION

The use of wapiti type bulls over red deer hinds has been investigated at Invermay since 1977. Performance of red, hybrid and wapiti type deer are summarised in AgLink FPP 258, along with other information on calving and feeding.

## N.Z. WAPITI TYPE BULLS

Using wapiti type bulls over red deer hinds is a breeding option farmers should consider. The larger wapiti type bulls as sires will produce faster growing (25%) hybrid calves with heavier carcase weights than red deer of similar age.

Wapiti type bulls on average produce relatively heavier velvet antlers than red stags. Through crossbreeding with red hinds, hybrid stags can be produced which will yield heavier velvet antler with more sets exceeding 3 kg/set, for which a premium of about 25% has been paid. To increase velvet production it is important to select sires on antler production rather than on how pure a wapiti they look.

Farmers who wish to maintain a herd of straight red deer hinds for breeding can mate some of their hinds to red stags for breeding replacements and the rest of their hinds to wapiti-type bulls and sell the hybrid progeny.

## CANADIAN WAPITI BULLS (= ELK)

More recent research has investigated the use of larger imported Canadian wapiti over large red deer hinds (110 kg). Adult bulls weigh over 400 kg compared with N.Z. wapiti-type bulls at 300 kg.

Results of crossbreeding in 1982 and 1983 were poor because the Canadian wapiti bulls did not work well in single sire mating groups. Last season a bull which had previously been mated to wapiti cows worked well over a group of 30 hinds. Twenty four (80%) of the hinds produced calves, including one set of twins. Although 2 hinds had to be assisted at calving, no calves were lost.

To avoid calving difficulties it is important that hinds are not overfed during winter and late pregnancy. Hinds should, of course, be well fed during, and preferably in advance of, bad weather in winter but hinds in good condition can afford to lose some weight and pelvic fat during milder winter weather. Restricted feeding over winter can reduce the amount of pelvic fat which could cause difficulties at calving. Restricted feeding over late pregnancy limits calf size and thereby minimises calving difficulties.