



## DEER FARMING IN AUSTRALIA

### Origin

“Deer are not indigenous to Australia. They were introduced during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century under the Acclimatization Programs governing the introduction of animals and birds into Australia. Six species of deer were released at various locations- Red, Fallow, Rusa, Sambar, Chital and Roe deer. These animals dispersed and established wild populations at various locations across Australia mostly depending upon their points of release into the wild. They formed the basis of the Australian deer industry.”\*

### Deer Farming

“Deer farming commenced in Victoria in 1971 with the authorized capture of Rusa deer from the Royal National Park, NSW. Until 1985 four species of deer, two from temperate climates (Red and Fallow) and two tropical species (Rusa and Chital), were confined for commercial farming. Late in 1985 the relaxation of import protocols saw the introduction of the North American Elk (Wapiti) and large numbers of Red deer from New Zealand.”\*

### Products

There are several products from deer including:

1. Venison
2. Velvet
3. Skins
4. Co-products

### Productivity

On the positive side they produce a higher quality meat per hectare than other farmed animals.

### Product Uses

1. Venison is the meat of deer and is one of the best sources of iron in our diet. It is also a very low cholesterol meat being almost fat free.
2. Velvet is the unset antler that is dried and used in traditional Eastern Medicine to treat a variety of illnesses such as arthritis and osteoporosis. It is now becoming widely used in Western Medicine as its value is better understood.
3. The skins of deer make the finest leather available for both garments and other leather products.
4. Co-products include such things as tails, pizzles, blood and tendons, which are also used in traditional Eastern Medicine.

## **Harvesting**

Venison, hides and co-products come from the deer that are slaughtered in approved abattoirs. Deer horn, or velvet, is removed using either a local anesthetic or full anesthesia every year by fully trained and accredited veterinarians or farmers.

## **Deer Care**

The requirements of deer are similar to those of dairy cattle. They need long pasture, ample water supply in summer and high-energy foods in winter. In addition they require strong, high boundary fences but can be farmed with internal electric fences. They require specialized handling facilities with either high yards or suitable sheds.

## **Deer Association**

“The first deer industry organization was the Australian Deer Breeders Federation that was formed in 1979. The Industry organization grew and developed into the Deer Farmers Federation of Australia (DFFA) and subsequently evolved into the Deer Industry Association of Australia (DIAA).”<sup>\*</sup> The Deer Industry Association of Australia (DIAA) is the overall peak body of the deer industry and provides a range of services from education to representation to Government.

<sup>\*</sup> Tuckwell, Chris. (2003). *The Deer Farming Handbook*. Barton, ACT: RIRDC, p 1.