



## VELVET

Deer horn/velvet is basically half grown hard antler. Known as velvet because of its external appearance, it is actually the internal section of the velvet which comprises cartilage that has been developed from the stem cells.

Deer horn/velvet is fundamental to the practice of oriental medicine. The cosmic forces of Yin and Yang are believed to control all natural phenomena and the life processes. Ideally there should be a balance and a harmony between the two forces. If an imbalance occurs between Yin and Yang, sickness results. Oriental medicine aims to keep Yin and Yang in balance. The interdependence of Yin and Yang is briefly summarised in that the blood, which is governed by Yin, carries nourishment throughout the body which produces energy or "qui" which is controlled by Yang. "Qui" is the force which carries the blood throughout the body. Velvet is the main medicine which raises blood volume, its components and its flow. This, in turn, generates more energy and thus better health.

The Chinese have been using velvet, and many other tonics, to maintain the Yin and Yang balance for over 2,000 years. It is important for us, as growers, to produce a product that they can use. Each stick of velvet is divided into four sections based on the composition of each section. After processing, the two top sections are used with children as a preventative medicine and tonic. Its primary function is to promote growth. The middle section is used in the treatment of arthritis and osteomyelitis. The lower section is used where there is a calcium deficiency, especially in older people.

It can be assumed, that while Yin and Yang are central to medical and consumer thinking, velvet will always play a vital role in oriental medicine. We would neglect this philosophy at our peril. However, our product must be quality-assured in order to access the potential markets.

To maximize the velvet producing potential of any particular animal, there is no substitute for good feeding. Ideally, the animals need good feed all year round. If an animal's condition is let slip, especially in larger mobs, it will take a long time to recover.

Males naturally lose condition in the rut, so the autumn and winter feeding programs are crucial. Once the buttons are cast, and the velvet is growing, it is really too late to pump them full of "high performance" feeds. Most of the elements and minerals needed to produce velvet should be stored in their system before this time.

Once again, the management of your velvet herd will be unique. It will depend on your herd, your farm layout, yard design and harvesting method. It is important to note when the first button is "pushed off" by the growth of the new season's antler. This observation gives you a warning. All your velveting facilities should be ready to use within 50 days or even less - depending on the market to which you are aiming to sell. You should also start sorting your velvet herd into smaller mobs according to their antler casting dates.

*Page courtesy of VicDeer*