



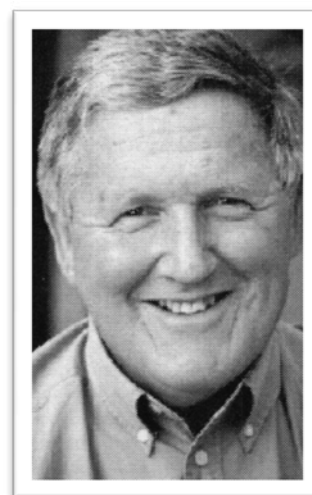
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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Andrew Hansen

Spring has sprung well and truly with welcome rain to top up our excellent winter pastures. Our first heads of velvet show promise for an excellent velvetting season, our hinds are filling out and from the 1st October levies on venison and velvet have been reduced by the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, Senator Joe Ludwig.

The levy on venison has fallen to 8c/kg hot standard carcase weight, by reducing the RIRDC component of the levy to 4c/kg. The levy on velvet is now 1% of the sale value, and the levy on exported velvet is 1% of declared value - this is velvet that has not previously been levied. The levy on live exports is now \$5.00 per head.



The deer industry requested a re-apportioning of the venison levy to increase the amount paid to the National Residue Service, taking it from 4c/kg to 6c/kg, to ensure continued funding of our participation. This has required an amendment to the National Residue Survey (Excise) Act 1998. This has now passed the House of Representatives and awaits passage through the Senate. This may not happen until next year. I presume carbon taxes and immigration laws take precedence.

I recently attended an information forum on the mode I draft regulations for the Land Transport (of livestock) Standards (LTS). States vary in the way they will enact the LTS but it is hoped that the states will synchronise and regulations will be in place throughout Australia early next year. The DIAA has had the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the LTS and sections pertaining to deer transport are not onerous. For example, maximum journey time, and maximum time off water, for deer over 6 months, less than 20 weeks pregnant or not with dependant young, is 48 hours. The LTS can be viewed at www.animalwelfarestandards.net.au and follow the land transport links.

Our industry continues to suffer from a shortage of venison animals and increasing our herd must be a priority to ensure our survival. This season, consider holding back your better female yearlings from the abattoirs. Either build your own herd or encourage past deer farmers, who still have fenced paddocks, to take another look at deer. Based on replies to our survey, many of the reasons they gave for leaving no longer apply. Now we have strong demand, good prices for our product and processors who pay on time. Returns per DSE compare well, and who can afford to build a beef herd or sheep flock with the current market prices for cows and ewes?

With the continuing mulesing and live export debates, the welfare of farmed animals is a hot topic. I urge you to closely follow the rules and techniques as specified in the National Velvet Accreditation Scheme to ensure the safe, pain free removal of velvet antler from your animals and maintain the integrity of our scheme. And don't forget to tag your velvet.