



May (Autumn) 2012, 2 pages

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Andrew Hansen

The 16th Annual General meeting of the DIAA was held in Melbourne on the May 5th at 2.00pm, preceded by a council meeting of directors commencing on May 4th.

The following were confirmed as DIAA directors- Milton Stevens (SA, director at large), Dawn Evans (Qld), Jim Moir (Vic), Mark Huisman (WA), Jeff Varcoe (SA) and Gordon Carter (Vic-director at large) and Andrew Hansen (NSW), unchanged from last year.

I retained my position as president, Milton Stevens as vice president and Marika McKinnon secretary and treasurer.

Andy Cowan, Nigel Barry and I (as DIAA president) were confirmed as directors of Australian Deer Horn and Co-products Pty Ltd. Jim Moir and Dianne Lawrence have resigned as ADH directors.

The council noted the fall in the quantity of velvet handled each year at the ADH velvet pools (less than 30% of the total Australian production in 2011), and the rise in the number of private regional velvet collection points that have developed. The council has made a recommendation to the directors of ADH that they consider not holding a pool in 2012, and that they also consider the winding-up of ADH as it may have outlived its purpose. Read more on this issue in another article in this magazine.

The council noted that the DIAA reserves are in a healthy state, but that we continue to make an annual loss – about \$10,000 in the 2010-11 year. Our current industry association structure, a company limited by guarantee, was determined when the DIAA had several hundred members, not the 86 of today. The council has resolved to investigate a restructuring of the DIAA from the company that it is to something probably along the lines of a state based association. The association would be registered in the state of the secretariat, which may vary. This would keep us within the rules of our constitution, reduce directors' liability and save at least \$3000 in insurance. The directors will obtain advice on the legalities of such a change, tax implications and whether RIRDC would recognise such a body as the voice of the Australian deer industry. A position paper will be produced and circulated to members allowing plenty of discussion before a decision is made at the 2013 AGM.

The deer industry has over \$400,000 in our research and development reserve. The Department of Finance and Deregulation (DoFD) holds this reserve. To access these funds, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC) and the Deer Industry Research and Development Corporation must apply for their release for a research project. We have been informed that, as RIRDC has not made an application for the release of any funds in 2012-13, it is unlikely that the DoFD will release any funds until the year 2013-14, except for priority research. Thus a government department is holding deer farmers' funds and they are unlikely to be accessed until July 2013. Confused? Nola Anderson, Chair of our RIRDC/DIAA advisory committee will investigate and report.

There has been no activity in the deer industry quality assurance programme for some years. However, three valuable "Best Practice" manuals were produced-one for deer farmers, one for deer processors and one for transporters. These manuals, each a mine of information, are now available to all. Contact our secretary if you wish to purchase a copy.

At the conclusion of the AGM, the assembly was treated to a very interesting presentation by Luca Bernasconi, an agronomist from Italy. Luca spoke of his research project into the feeding habits of wild red and fallow deer in the foothills of the Italian Alps. He described pasture and herbage preferences, feeding times and the range and routes to feeding areas. Luca can be contacted through our secretariat.

A report from one of our major venison processors noted that the European market is difficult. The high \$A, the EU monetary problems and it being the non-game eating season all contribute to this dilemma. However, he is encouraged by the development of smaller niche export markets in a variety of countries. Although the domestic food service sector has been generally slow, he sees many opportunities in the domestic market for venison. This processor currently exports 80-85% of his production (venison, co-products and hides) and emphasizes the importance of our continued participation in the National Residue Survey to maintain these markets.

I remind you that our website is now **deerfarming.com.au**. Please use the site and encourage those who express an interest in our industry to access this valuable resource. The site recorded 335 visits (4259 hits) for the month of April, mostly from Australia and the USA. The hits also came from countries ranging from the Ukraine to the Ivory Coast. For an uplift, check out Emily McKinnon's marvelous contribution, "The Life of Farmed Deer" in the Community Notice board.

My best wishes for the coming winter months.

Andrew Hansen.
President DIAA.