

National Velveting Standards Body

New Standards for Handling Velvet

Velvet is a food product and/or traditional medicine prepared for human consumption. The following measures are intended to ensure that velvet is harvested and handled in a way that conforms to good hygiene practice and minimises food safety risk. Compliance with these standards will provide velvet producers and handlers an assurance that they are also acting in compliance with the Animal Products Notice: Regulated Control Scheme for Deer Velvet Harvest (to be published).

1. Hygiene requirements:

- The velvetter must define for their premises, clean-zone or clean zones that include the areas for collection, handling and storage of velvet.
- The clean zone(s) must include:
 - the de-velvetting space (crush or pen(s)),
 - the cold storage space (the freezer and its immediate surrounds), and
 - any areas containing contact surfaces for removed velvet.
- The velvetter must ensure that at any time velveting is to be undertaken, or velvet is to be handled, the clean zones are free from visible contamination. This includes contamination from bird, dust, soiling, blood, rodent, other vermin and any animal health remedies.
- Surfaces that velvet comes into contact with during and after removal must be kept clean.
- When washing contact surfaces within clean zone(s), the velvetter must use approved disinfectants¹ and in the approved method of application. Non-approved disinfectant or cleaning products must not be used within the clean zone.
- For the purpose of clarification, velvet contact surfaces shall include (but not be limited to):
 - Immediate velveting area that velvet comes into contact with during velveting (crush or pen floor),
 - Resting racks, receptacles and scales used immediately post velveting

¹ Approved disinfectants are those approved by MPI for use in food production premises. For further information: <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/elibrary/industry/maintenance-nondairy-manual-approved-maint-compounds/parta.pdf>

To search the list: <http://www.foodsafety.govt.nz/registers-lists/maintenance-compounds/index.htm>

- Receptacles used for transferring the velvet to the freezer
- Inside of freezer, including racks.
- Should animal health treatments (other than velvetting drugs) be administered to an animal while velvet is being collected, then they must be administered after the velvet has been removed and any velvet contact surfaces must be cleaned before further velvetting is undertaken. All animal health treatments should be used in accordance with the NVSB Manual or the ACVM Act 1999.
- Velvetters (or any other person) must not handle velvet if they have an infectious disease.
- The velvetter must undertake an assessment of vermin risk in the velvetting clean zone, and if required, apply a vermin control plan.
- If velvet is to be transported on farm across any area that is not part of the defined “clean-zone”, velvet must be contained in a clean receptacle (e.g. a clean plastic bag or box) that protects is from soiling or contamination.

2. Cold chain management requirements

- On-farm, velvet must be put into dedicated velvet only freezers. Velvet must not be stored with any other products. Freezers must be cleaned with approved disinfectants prior to velvet being placed within them.
- If velvet is stored in walk-in freezers (off farm), there must be a separation between velvet and other food products. Other food products are only acceptable if they are processed and packaged.
- Velvetters must be able to demonstrate that all freezers used for velvet storage have a current capability of delivering an ambient temperature of -15°C. (Checks are best done prior to velvetting for the day. Dated photographic evidence or data logger downloads will form acceptable evidence).
- Once removed from the stag, velvet must be placed in a freezer capable of delivering -15°C as soon as practical, but no more than two hours after removal.

3. Transport requirements

- Velvet must be transported from farm to depot in a clean receptacle (e.g. a one trip bag or cleaned velvet only transport container or trailer).

- When being transported off-farm, velvet must arrive at its next storage or processing location in a frozen state.
- After transport from farm, velvet should be returned to a freezer capable of delivering -15°C as soon as practical and no more than four hours after being removed from the farm freezer.
- When velvet is removed from a freezer for the purposes of transport, grading or at competitions, it must remain in a frozen state at all times.

4. Traceability requirements

- Every piece of whole-stick velvet must have been removed in accordance with the NVSB programme and therefore leave the farm with an NVSB tag on it. Smaller velvet pieces, including spiker and regrowth, must be placed into a new one-use bag with an NVSB tag around it.
- Velvet can only be accepted into a pack-house or processing facility with appropriate documentation. This documentation must:
 - identify the farm of origin and date that velvet has been transferred
 - include a signed statement from the velvetter (producer or veterinarian) that the velvet contained within the consignment has been removed, including the use of any sedation and pain relief, in accordance with the requirements of the NVSB Standard
 - include a signed statement from the velvet producer that any other animal health treatment used on the velvetted animal have been used in compliance with the requirements of the ACVM Act 1997
 - have a signed declaration from the velvet producer that the consignment meets the NVSB cold chain management and hygiene standards (as outlined above).
- Documentation can be tailored to individual companies requirements, but must include the elements above. In the absence of company or farm specific forms, a current NVSB Velvet Status Declaration form must be used.
- All velvet buyers, pack-houses, processors and exporters must keep accurate records of all incoming and out-going velvet batches/consignments in accordance with the Animal Products Act 1999 (Animal Products Notice).
- All velvet must be traceable by batch or consignment date back to a farm or group of farms.