

CONFERENCE REPORT:

2ND INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE RANCHING SYMPOSIUM

EDMONTON, JUNE 4-7, 1990

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This was a symposium available to game farmers, game ranchers, conservation and wildlife personnel, hunters, animal scientists, veterinarians, wildlife biologists and others interested in utilisation or exploitation of wildlife. The conference programme was extremely diverse. Topics ranged from aspects of intensive farmed deer management, to management of feral game populations and consideration of a range of wildlife species including deer, bison, iguana, cabybara, llama, some species of bird, and feral sheep. The programme also considered diseases, management, chemical restraint and drugs, herd improvement, range management, hunting systems, products, marketing and the relationship between wildlife and indigenous people. There were 18 sessions in all.

There was a considerable contingent of New Zealanders present and it was notable that with the rise in interest in wildlife farming worldwide, there is a focus of attention on New Zealand experiences with deer farming and this experience is being used as a model for the farming or domestication of a range of other wildlife species.

As is inevitable with a conference of this size, with the number of solicited papers, the standard of presentation varied considerably, but the New Zealand delegation showed its experience with a uniform high standard of presentation.

1. Commercialization

Philippe Chardonnet of the Ethnozoology Group of the International Foundation for the Conservation of Game, Paris, France, presented the first paper which discussed making the right choice for the sustainable exportation of wildlife. This presentation focused on the need to choose species for farming which are already adapted to the local environment and accepted by the local people. This is particularly important in many African countries in which wildlife species are better adapted than the cattle species which presently form the basis of most farming systems in those countries.

There was also discussion about marketing of the products of wildlife ranching in terms of providing for local markets to sustain local populations, compared with international marketing requirements of those countries which rely heavily on export of meat products.

There was an array of papers describing wildlife ranching and utilisation in a number of countries including reindeer in Alaska and Scandinavia, deer in USSR, Korea, Britain, Europe, New Zealand, USA, Canada and Australia.

2. **Veterinary Issues**

A session on animal health and care was introduced by a general paper on diseases by the author of this presentation, but included Brucella suis of reindeer, Johne's disease in elk, meningeal worm in deer, a disease survey of deer in Australia, laboratory tests for tuberculosis, management and health strategies for deer, and health of exotic wildlife sheep. Unfortunately a session on capture and restraint ran concurrently with the diseases section, but at that session there was discussion of the use of various tranquilizers and immobilising agents including xylazine, carfentanyl and the use of other methods for deer capture.

3. **Agricultural Management**

This session concentrated on description of nutritional research work based largely on New Zealand work. Sessions on reproduction concentrated on embryo transfer, reproductive physiology and artificial insemination. Optimum systems for production of venison and velvet were presented.

4. **Public and Private Hunting Systems**

This session concentrated on conservation, ecology and management of game species on private and public land. It included environmental management, historical perspectives, prospects for hunting farms, access fee hunting, economics of wildlife management for hunting and benefits of wildlife ranching for sustainable wildlife production.

5. Game products unfortunately both the antlers and meat sessions ran concurrently. The antler session looked at the use of velvet antler in medicine, assessment of biological efficacy of velvet and a little on antler growth cycles. The meat session looked at slaughter times, retail market development, market demands and sustainable development.

6. **Conclusion**

There would appear to be a substantial interest in methods of wildlife exploitation with an emphasis on the need for an understanding of the ecology and biology of the species and for sustainable exploitation, be that either in the feral or farmed environment.

Fortunately there will be a proceedings of refereed papers produced from this conference and they will be available from:

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