

## Letters to the Editor

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### RE BUDDING OF SPIKERS

Sir:

I would like to make a couple of comments on Gilbert van Reenen's



they urge those notifying under such conditions to ensure that signed authority from the lessor to farm deer is attached.

No figures are available on the number of deer on farms as yet. Statistics Department is to require deer farmers to include deer in their annual survey of stock number, which normally goes out within the next few months. Only then will it be possible to make a reasonably accurate statement as to farmed deer numbers in New Zealand.

There has been a decline in the number of people taking up deer farming in recent months. The first 100 notifications were processed by May 1 last, and the second hundred by August 13. In the five months since there had only been a further 63 notifications. At the height of the deer farming "boom" Forest Service were receiving about five applications per day.

"On the Cervus Side" in the spring issue.

The situation with the "budding" of spikers is very confused and the more deerfarmers I talk to the more methods that I seem to hear of. In general, the results of budding are unpredictable, covering the whole range from no effect to a "second head". However, from the very limited amount of work we've done at Invermay, I can make a few comments.

There would seem to be three basic methods as outlined below:

- With an antler length of eight to 12 cm from skull to tip, the top 0.5 to 1.0 cm is cut off; the results are very unpredictable, with some antlers branching, some showing no effect and some developing very odd-looking "buds".
- With an antler length of about 15 to 16 cm (ie, skull to tip), the antlers are cut back to a height of about seven to eight cm from the skull; again the results are unpredictable, although branching occurs in a majority of cases. However, the shape of the antlers is often poor, with almost "random" branching.
- With an antler length of 22 to 25 cm or longer, the antler is cut down to about seven to eight cm from the skull. The results are much more predictable and a "second head" is usually grown.

Because of the length of time between "budding" and a reasonable antler regrowth (ie, about two months), there would seem to be little point in budding any animals later than the first week of December. I make no comment as to the economics or desirability of budding, or its effect on subsequent antler growth, simply because we have insufficient scientific data at this stage. However, we are interested in hearing from farmers as to their experience with this operation.

As an example, I enclose an illustration of what can occur. One antler was cut from a spiker in early November when the antlers were about 35 cm in length (the photo was taken two months later).

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Invermay.