

Peter Fennessy  
MAFTech, Invermay Agricultural Centre, Mosgiel, New Zealand

### Procedure

For the final assignment of research priorities, three broad research areas of production, processing and marketing were considered by the four participant groups. Each group was made up of people from a range of backgrounds (farmers, processors/marketers, researchers). Each broad area and the sub-categories were assigned a high, medium or low research priority ranking, generally with a numerical score (1-very low to 10-very high).

### Priorities

The overall conclusions placed the broad areas in the following order:

- Production - very high
- Marketing - high
- Processing - medium

Within these broad areas, more specific topics were considered, particularly with respect to Production, where the overall research priority of general areas such as nutrition, reproduction, etc, was also rated. The mean ranking over the four participant groups and the range in ranking between the groups is given in Table 1. The range values are useful in that they highlight areas of potential disagreement in supporting research for the industry. Specific research areas within the Production category were also rated and the priorities are presented in Table 2.

TABLE 1: Mean rankings and the range among the four groups in ranking of the research priorities

	Mean	Range
<b>PRODUCTION - overall area</b>	9	9-9
<u>General areas</u>		
Nutrition	9	7-10
On-farm problem definition	9	6-10
Reproduction	5	4-7
Products (on-farm issues)	5	2-8
Animal health	5	2-7
Genetics	4	2-6
<b>MARKETING - overall area</b>	8	6-9
Methods to expand market demand	5	3-9
Improve utilisation of whole carcass	4	3-6
<b>PROCESSING - overall area</b>	6	3-10
Factors affecting quality	6	3-9
Description of quality	6	3-10

TABLE 2: Mean rankings and the range among the four groups in ranking of the research priorities in the broad area of Production research

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Range</u>
Species comparison across environments (definition of feed requirements)	10	10-10
On-farm problem definition	9	6-10
Manipulation of the breeding season	7	3-9
Trace elements/mineral nutrition	7	5-9
Breeding objectives	6	3-8
Development of diagnostic tests (disease)	5	2-10
Vaccine development and drug evaluation	5	1-10
Maintaining meat quality (on-farm factors)	5	2-9
Methods to spread slaughter season (on-farm)	5	2-9
Artificial insemination/embryo transfer	4	3-8
Import protocols (animal health issues)	3	1-4
Twinning	2	1-3

In respect of the broad categories, there was overall agreement between all four groups on the priorities of Production and Marketing research. However the range in ratings within the Processing area highlights areas of disagreement. This was particularly apparent in "Description of quality" (basically grading system/quality assurance) which was ranked low by two groups and high or very high by the other two groups.

Within the Production area, nutrition and on-farm problem definition were ranked highly by all groups reflecting a need for basic information within the industry, particularly as it relates to differences between the temperate and tropical species. This was highlighted by the very high ranking given "Species comparison across environments" (Table 2). All four other general Production areas (Table 2) had markedly lower rankings.

#### **Comment**

I will now make some comments from an outsider's point of view. From the overall industry standpoint, if one does not have a market or is not satisfying a market, there will not be any need for production. Consequently it is vitally important to support your processors and marketers - hear what they say and evaluate it. The evaluation is particularly important as they will frequently have very different viewpoints. To me, there seems a major need for a grading system presumably based on carcass weight (cut size) and fatness. Enthusiasm for deer and deer farming must not result in people overlooking real problems, but equally it concerns me to hear people talk of venison eventually being the same price as beef or lamb. It's difficult to make a good living from commodities. Venison is not a commodity - it must keep its market edge. Consequently perception of the product by the consumer is vital.

In assessing these research priorities, we have been looking at targeting research for the deer industry. In Australia, there are a number of enthusiastic researchers with interest in deer. The most important element in maintaining researchers' interest is support for their work. It is

essential that researchers be intrigued by the animal and want to find out more because the best work comes from motivated committed people. It is also essential that the research people have very good interaction with the farmers, processors and marketers in order to understand the industry and where it is heading. For me, deer are a fascinating animal - there are several aspects of their biology which are intriguing. Sometimes in evaluating a project, the industry people may be very supportive of the overall area, but consider that particular parts of a project are far too esoteric. The simple fact is that good researchers need intellectual stimulation. Within any good applied research project, there are opportunities to find out more about the biology of the animal, more about the underlying mechanisms and consequently to improve our understanding of the animal. These opportunities to find out more must be taken.

Finally, thanks for the opportunity of being here; I have found it stimulating and really enjoyed the meeting.