

LONGEVITY AND REPRODUCTIVE PERFORMANCE OF FARMED RED DEER HINDS - AN INTERIM REPORT

M W FISHER, G H MOORE/AND M B ORR, Invermay Agricultural Centre, Private Bag, Mosgiel, NEW ZEALAND.

Abstract: The fertility and production of aged red deer (*Cervus elaphus*) hinds is currently being monitored to determine their likely lifespan and therefore the most appropriate age for culling. A group of 21 hinds of unknown age (currently at least rising 20 yr of age) and 19 of their progeny (currently approaching 17 yr of age) are farmed together as one group, in separate paddocks from younger animals and preferentially fed (ready availability of high quality pasture or supplementary feed). Live weight, reproductive success and condition of the incisors are regularly collected.

In 1990, mean (S.D.) live weights at mating were 95.2 ± 7.0 kg and 93.9 ± 6.2 kg in the unknown-age and known-age groups, respectively. Reproductive results obtained over the last 3 seasons are presented in Table 1. ←

In 1990, most hinds (12/12 of the unknown-age and 14/16 of the known-age) had severely worn incisors (two or more incisors worn below the level of the lower dental pad). To date, 9 unknown-age and 3 known-age hinds have died or have been slaughtered due to malignant catarrhal fever (2), misadventure (2), poor condition (5), calving-related disorders (1), or of unknown causes (2). These results suggest that the majority of farmed red deer hinds can, with good management, remain productive until at least 16 yr of age.

Key Words: red deer, farmed, aged, hinds, longevity, mortality, reproduction

Resume:

Mots-Clés:

Table 1. Reproductive results of aged red deer from 1987 to 1989.

Group	Year	Age (yr)	n	Hinds calved	Calves weaned
Unknown-age	1987	≥ 17	16	12	9
	1988	≥ 18	14	7	6
	1989	≥ 19	14	5	4
Known-age	1987	14	17	16	15
	1988	15	16	13	10
	1989	16	16	14	13