

Northeast Deer and Elk Farmer News



Winter 2003

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Membership is available to anyone at a cost of \$40 US per year. Checks should be made out to NDEF and mailed, along with the filled out Membership Application from Page 7 of the Newsletter, to Henry Ahern, Treasurer as listed below. Membership includes a newsletter subscription, and 2 free classified ads per year.

Advertising rates:
Full Page \$50.00
Half Page \$23.00
Quarter Page \$12.50
Classified Ads \$.15 per word

Camera Ready Ads for the NDEF newsletter should be sent to Brookside Studio, PO Box 1882 Wolfeboro, NH 03894 or emailed: cvclutr@worldpath.net

Payment for Ads to be sent to:
Henry Ahern, Treasurer
Bonnie Brae Farms
601 Daniel Webster Highway
Plymouth, NH 03264



President's Pasture

by Jim Neil

This is the last column I will be doing as your president. April will be the end of my second year. New and energetic blood will be taking over the presidency at the convention in Syracuse, so, start thinking about who you want to see as our new president, and be sure to pass that word along to the directors.

Dick Krebs, true to form, has again shouldered his responsibility well, putting together an excellent program for Syracuse. Registration material is out early, so everyone should have no trouble with attending. The conventions are well worth the effort, as those know who attended last year, and years before that. It looks like this one may stack up to be better yet. I will look forward to seeing you there.

We have seen some dramatic changes over the past two years. All involved species have now evolved from a breeding stock driven market to a more, long term, sustainable meat industry. That is not to say, that quality breeding stock has not retained its' value and demand for the genetic improvement that every livestock industry must have, but it will no longer be the driving factor of the industry. The growth in the hunting business has demonstrated that the stigma once associated with high wire hunting is dissolving. A growing portion of the public is seeing the many advantages associated with quality high wire

hunts, and the demand for that service will continue to grow. Our greatest hurdle in that sector remains regulatory agencies, and I am certain our turn will also come from animal rights activists. It will not be an easy growth, but I see growth as long as we operate quality operations with health and populations monitoring. It will require fairly close involvement and cooperation with departments of agriculture/and or/ wildlife agencies. But as seen in Maine two years ago, and New York this past fall, concerted organized effort from within the industry gets favorable results.

I have just come off the road doing the winter trade show circuit. It is always an enjoyable opportunity to see NDEF members. As importantly though, it gives me an opportunity to promote our industry to the general public, and get pretty random feedback on current issues. Chronic Wasting Disease being the current topic I was most tuned in to. I have already heard every available version of a hunting trip and visits to Yellowstone and Jackson Hole, so I sort of tune these out (there are also many opinions on the Iraqi situation). However, to my pleasant surprise, I heard very little about CWD. One or two veterinarians had a few pointed questions, and a couple of people had opinions based

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President's Pasture

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on something they may have heard at a F&W hearing, or had picked up from a sporting magazine. But in general, most folks aren't even aware of it, or do not really have a concern, other than how it might affect them from an out-of-state hunting perspective. I can easily say, ninety-five percent of comments made were against the actions wildlife regulators are taking to address the perceived problem. Many are downright angry at the wildlife agencies. Only one person in the many hundreds I have spoken with over the past two months placed blame on domestic cervid farmers, this comment fostered from an erroneous remark made by a wildlife agency employee. He left my exhibit a much more informed person !

Chronic Wasting Disease remains a major issue. We have come a long way. I predict workable regulations will be in place in several states of our region within a year. They may not be what we all want, but it will again allow for the movement of animals on a highly restricted level within the foreseeable future. WE ALL MUST BE ENROLLED IN A CWD SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM. I have made this statement so many times I sometimes get tired of hearing myself say it, but it is a fact if we expect to see cooperation from the regulatory agencies. The wildlife people have been a disappointment in most states on their wild herd white-tail testing programs, not doing the number of heads required to gain meaningful statistical conclusions. New York seems to be the exception with over 950 heads checked - all negative.

The Cervid Industry has matured in the northeast. Credit for this can be given to the hard work of state organization leaders, the Northeast

Deer and Elk Farmers, and much credit to individual entrepreneurs. Our industry is already in the early stages of the next level – the demand for quality venison and elk carcasses grows daily. Not everyone is a marketer, for those who have shown initiative in that area, the rewards have been forthcoming. The balance of the industry will be drawn along, with the levels of financial gain determined by proper management practices and participation in marketing efforts. Organization support on state, region, and national levels are an essential something we all can do. Certainly a high potential gain for a minor investment. Together we have a voice. We have marketing clout when our resources and efforts are pooled. Those are my parting words.

Thank you for the opportunity to have served you in these challenging times. And, a special thanks to those unselfish, dedicated individuals with whom I have so enjoyed working.

MAINE NOTES:

Sometimes we tend to think that not much has happened during these winter months until we take time to reflect. On occasion, the long dark evenings keep you wondering what to do next, for those of us who get "Cabin Fever". But, as we all know, when spring comes, which it will, with it comes rejuvenation of EVERYTHING including us.

Maine deer farmers have a lot to be proud of, a hardy bunch of folks that forge on. We were facing the possibility of losing our Commissioner of Agriculture, who has been a tremendous supporter of our industry, with the change of Governorship here in Maine. That possibility alone could have undone a lot of work that Maine deer farmers have accomplished in the past 4 years.

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Maine Notes

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Our Maine deer and elk farmers association was approached for endorsement of Commissioner Spear. A letter writing campaign proved successful. We were also asked to send a deer-farming representative to his confirmation hearing in Augusta which appears to be leaning in his favor as it goes to the Senate for approval.

Just this week, Mainers had their turn at fighting for their rights again. We faced legislation that would have prevented hunting behind fence. Just two years ago, our State lawmakers saw fit, after much work, to allow a total of nine Hunt Parks in Maine. Due to the collaboration of these individuals and other supporters, including our association, there was excellent, organized testimony given which effectively killed this bill in the legislative hearing. It cannot resurface for at least two years. The Maine Farm Bureau lobbyist complimented all those who gave testimony in opposition to this bill.

We read that others in these New England states and New York have faced similar challenges. We Mainers appreciate the work you're doing. You're efforts are directly related to our survival here in Maine and our nation, for that matter.

It makes us glow with pride, you know, when you think of all we do. It doesn't matter who does it, personally or what deer association does it—it gets done because we continue to need to fight for our rights and the survival of our industry.

So as the daylight starts to lengthen, take a deep breathe and pat yourself on the back, you all deserve it. Is it hard, tedious, intrusive, disgusting work? Yes, but it has its rewards, if you really think about it. Enjoy the sunshine and think spring.

A Deer farmer's wife in
Maine

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

SAT. /SUN. NOVEMBER 9-10, 2002

LAGUE INN - BERLIN, VT

Board Members Present: Tony Tuttle, John Morse, John Barnatowicz, Jim Neal, Les Armstrong, Henry Ahern, Diane Rowlee, Richard Frost, Hank Dimuzio and Dick Krebs. Absent: Mark Drew. Guests: Punky Rowlee and Mrs. Barnatowicz.

President Neil called meeting to order at 11:20 AM.

Secretary's Minutes were read. Hank made motion to accept; Dick seconded - motion carried. At this time Jim presented copy of letter sent to Martha Goodsell supporting the grant initiative for regional marketing effort to be added to official correspondence. He added that he thought the grant was awarded.

Treasurer's Report: Henry reported there is \$13,750.90 in the bank. Total income for current period is \$6,442.06 with expenses of \$5,868.56 leaving total profit of \$573.50. Complete report is being made a part of these minutes. Henry also reported the following total paid membership numbers: NY - 22, ME - 18, VT - 14, NH - 12, MA - 2, RI - 2, CT - 1 and Ontario - 1. Discussion on membership tabled until later in meeting. Hank made motion to accept report with John Morse seconding. Motion carried.

Old Business:

Discussion concerning the website took up a good deal of time. Board in general discussed ways to improve site and who should oversee content. Ken Swett has been asked to monitor site and make suggestions to webmaster. Several suggestions for improving site was to add counter to monitor hits, links

to member sites and tourism sites as well, minutes of board meetings, articles relating to deer/elk farming etc. Discussion centered on who would approve content. After much discussion Henry made an amended motion: Website oversight committee consisting of 3 members with at least one of which shall be a member of the board appointed by the president shall be formed. Richard seconded. Motion carried. Initial committee will be Ken Swett, Hank Dimuzio and Punky Rowlee. Ken appointed chairman.

At this time the board went into executive session to discuss ethics complaint.

Following the executive session Henry made a statement that if anyone hears about infractions to their state regulations they should notify the board.

Next item on the agenda is the directory. Diane apologized for the delay in the publication. She has the draft ready but was concerned that about 24 members from last year had not renewed membership. After discussion, it was determined that Diane would contact those members and let them know that by not renewing membership they would not be kept informed of evolving developments in the state and federal gov't. Regulatory area, but would be dropped out of the directory and the website directory.

This lead to a lengthy discussion on how to increase membership. Farmers who called asking for information on CWD but did not

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Meeting

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want to join NDEF discouraged several board members. Richard made a motion that the president would draft a letter to potential members (Diane has database), explaining NDEF's role in the fight to keep deer/elk farming viable and the need for a strong membership to keep up the fight keeping cost to between \$200/\$300. John B. seconded. Motion carried.

Dick Krebs then gave a 2003 Annual Meeting report. The date will be April 25-26, 2003 and will be held at the Ramada Inn in Syracuse, NY. Please look for further information in next newsletter.

The board then moved onto CWD reports and updates. Jim and Henry attended a meeting held in Portland, ME in early November, which included northeast area state vets, dept. of agriculture representatives, some fish and wildlife reps and industry representatives. About 40-45 people attended. Several speakers presented up-to-date information from on-going studies. Further information will be in president's message.

Jim reported that all the northeast states will be doing testing in the wild this fall during the deer hunting harvest. States will not be making any decisions on the importation ban until results are obtained from these tests. He recommended that anyone not already signed up for the monitoring program should get on board. He reported the following numbers of farms in each state: VT -50, NH-30, ME - 90, MA - 22, RI - 1, CT - 15-20, NJ - 30-35 and NY - 400. Jim said they came away from the meeting encouraged but that there were no border openings at this time.

Hank reported that VT will be testing specifically around deer/elk farms. Also that they have ruled that no meat will be admitted to state unless boneless and packaged. Richard asked if a state did not have a program can a farmer use the USDA program. Jim indicated that the states would have to follow at least the USDA program unless they wanted to strengthen it. Dick indicated he was informed that once the USDA program is in place the Korean border would reopen. Les shared NY's proposed program, which was deemed ludicrous. There will be new drafts and there will be hearings throughout December.

Next on the agenda was the newsletter. Jim reported that Missy could no longer publish the newsletter as she has gone back to teaching. He was concerned about the money collected from advertisers and whether we would continue to have a newsletter. Discussion revolved around the immediate need of having the newsletter done and done soon. Henry said he knew someone outside of the organization who did newsletters for a business. During the meeting he was able to contact that person who said she would do the newsletter for basically the same price as Missy.

The board then discussed the content we would like to see in newsletter. This upcoming edition should have a summary of the Portland meeting, minutes of this board meeting, state news that should be submitted by state reps who volunteered at the Annual Meeting and possibly starting the bios on board members. On the subject of advertising, the questions came up as to what we would charge for a full-page flyer. It was determined that we would charge the same price as a full page add plus the added postage.

New Business:

Henry reported that there is FSA drought assistance funds although they do not mention deer/elk farms as being eligible. He suggested that if you require assistance, that you should apply anyway. It was suggested that NDEF forward letter to USDA and FSA offices asking to have deer/elk farming be recognized.

Diane mentioned that she has made contact with a person who specializes in grant writing and was seeking the boards permission to have this person research possible grants for NDEF's marketing approach. The board felt we needed to stress the positive aspects of deer farming and venison and other by-products. Henry suggested looking in SARE grants. This would be a regional effort.

Business meeting recessed at 5:10 PM to be reconvened at 8:00 AM at breakfast.

The breakfast session dealt mainly with how we can counteract the negative image CWD has given the industry by way of press releases, news stories, interviews etc. Also discussed was having another chef's cook off at the Annual Meeting. There are several cooking schools in the Syracuse area and the suggestion was made to open the cook-off to students only and giving the grand prizewinner a scholarship to the school. Dick will look into this concept.

Meeting adjourned around 9:30 AM.

Meeting Dates

NADeFA Meeting
March 19 - 23, 2003
Jefferson City, MO
Contact
920-734-0934
National Office

NAEBA Meeting
July 30 thru
August 2, 2003
KCI Expo Center
Kansas City, MO
Contact: Peni Tussey
816-431-3605
peni@naelk.org

Important Notice!

The USDA's 2002 Census of Agriculture that is currently underway is the only planned official survey of deer and elk producers for the next five years. If you are not counted, our industry will not be properly represented by the statistics. Help enhance the status of our industry by making these results accurate. Use deer code "888" and/or elk code "890" in Section 12, item 7. Value of sales is combined with several other animal species in Section 14, item 16. **If you did not receive a Census report form, please call 1-888-424-7828 to get a copy.** Your answers are completely confidential, exempt from disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act and cannot be subpoenaed in a court of law. You may call Aubrey Davis, New England Agricultural Statistics Service, USDA in Concord, NH at 1-800-642-9571, x129, if you have questions.

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NDEF Membership /Renewal Application

Name _____ Date _____

Farm/Company Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Province/Country/Zip _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Email _____ Web Address _____

New Membership Renewal Membership Is above an Address Change? Yes No

Currently Own Deer? _____

Type of Deer Owned _____

of Deer Owned _____

Topics of Interest _____

Do you wish to be included in the Association Website? Yes No

Do you wish to be included in the Association Directory? Yes No

To join or renew membership in the Association, complete the information above with a check or money order for \$40, mail to:

Northeast Deer & Elk Farmers
Henry Ahern, Treasurer
601 Daniel Webster Highway
Plymouth, NH 03264

Northeast Deer and Elk Farmers ANNUAL MEETING

April 25-27, 2003
Ramada Inn
Syracuse, NY



*Watch for registration forms in next newsletter
Several excellent speakers to present at the meeting*

Vendor Exhibits

Vendor Booths Available

Auction and Door Prize items from both vendors and attendees welcomed

For more information, contact
Dick Krebs at email: dick@empireelk.com
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