

QUALITY ASSURANCE



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Introduction to Quality Assurance

With financial assistance from the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism (DIST) - Food Quality Program, the Deer Industry Association of Australia (DIAA) developed the Australian Deer Industry Quality Assurance Programs that include:

- The Deer Farming Best Practice Program
- The Deer Transport Best Practice Program
- The Venison Processors and Marketers Program

The DIAA actively encourages the acceptance of the program by all sections of the industry. Adoption of the program involves:

- Review of the deer farming/transport/processing process
- Identifying the critical farming/transport/processing practices
- Modifying those practices if necessary
- Keeping a record of practices
- Checking the results for improvements
- Adopting the practices that deliver benefits

The Australian Deer QA Program Model

The Australian Deer QA program provides customers with an assurance that Australian Deer products are produced by deer that are managed according to industry controlled standards for animal health and welfare.

The quality assurance program includes:

- Accreditation for farmers that:
 - Are accountable for all aspects of their production system
 - Maintain a system of records that allows all aspects of the production system to be monitored
 - Ensure that acceptable standards of animal welfare are maintained
 - Maintain requirements that ensure product traceability
 - Ensure Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare requirements for personnel involved in deer farming
- Accreditation for transporters that:
 - Are responsible for people and vehicles used for transporting deer
 - Ensure deer are transported with a minimum of stress
 - Ensure that acceptable standards of animal welfare are maintained
 - Maintain requirements that ensure product traceability

- Provision to ensure Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare requirements for personnel involved in deer transport
- Accreditation for processors that:
 - Are responsible for the humane slaughter and hygienic processing of carcasses
 - Ensure that acceptable standards of animal welfare are maintained
 - Maintain requirements that ensure product traceability
 - Ensure Occupational Health, Safety & Welfare requirements for personnel involved in deer processing
- Routine and spot checks of accredited farmers and transporters at least every two years

Linked to the Quality Assurance programs is the National Velvet Accreditation Scheme (NVAS) training and accreditation program. It includes information relating to techniques for velveting and the management of male deer to maximise velvet production, acceptable standards of animal welfare and Quality Assurance standards.

The Australian Deer Industry QA Program

The Australian Deer Industry administers the Deer Industry Quality Assurance Program through an independent Quality Assurance Board. This is a 'living' program that continues to develop as new techniques and technologies become available.

Steps to Gain QA Accreditation

1. Purchase an appropriate (Deer Farm, Deer Transport or Deer Processing) QA manual from the DIAA
2. Self assessment of compliance to the quality code
 - a. Undertake a self assessment and submit the self assessment form from the manual to the Deer QA Board and request Level Three accreditation
3. Industry assessment of compliance to the code
 - a. Within eighteen months of gaining level three accreditation apply for external (assessment by an industry QA facilitator) of compliance to the code
4. If required, external (3rd party) assessment and accreditation to ISO 9000 quality system standards

The Deer Quality Assurance and Management Analysis Program (Deer QAMA)

All people who purchase a copy of the Deer Industry Quality Assurance Farming Best Practice program manual receive a free copy of the Deer QAMA computer program. Deer QAMA is a computer database program ('Deer Quality Assurance Management and Analysis') that will easily record, store and report on all information that should be maintained by farming businesses accredited by the Deer Industry QA program.

Market Focus on Venison Quality

In both the domestic and international venison markets, the Deer Industry Quality Program will gain increasing recognition in the market place.

To assure continued and future access to some markets and to give credibility to marketing claims industry Quality assurance programs:

- Must focus on providing product that consistently meets or exceeds customer expectations and eliminates waste within the industry
- Must be developed and owned by the industry and deliver clear benefits
- Must involve everyone from farmer to exporter and all levels from slaughter floor workers to management
- Should be integrated throughout the industry yet remain voluntary

Use of the Australian Deer Industry Quality Assurance mark is restricted to those who can demonstrate an ongoing commitment to the standards set by the Australian Deer Industry Quality Assurance Board.

Benefits for Deer Farmers

Quality Assurance does not provide instant improvement in market returns however with increasing buyer emphasis on food safety and quality, QA accreditation is increasingly a minimum standard for market access.

The primary objective is to develop a program that is practical and workable for each sector of the industry. QA is the way we do things all the time, it is ongoing and means continually improving our practices to meet higher national and international standards.

The QA program assists farmers in providing the best approach to deer farming management by providing information that allows control over critical farming issues including:

- Land Management
- Deer Welfare
- Deer farming practices
- Farming infrastructure, ie fences, pens, yards, ramps

Benefits of QA are both:

- Short Term
 - Improved on-farm performance through best farming practice
 - Improved operating and cost efficiencies
- Long Term
 - Assured market access for venison
 - Industry capability to meet new challenges
 - Higher returns through consistent high quality venison

Registered Quality Assurance Marks

Specifications for the industry quality marks have been developed and registered by the Deer Industry Company on behalf of the DIAA.

Individual producers, transporters, venison and velvet antler processors and marketers can access the Marks under licence from the Deer Industry Company. The industry is hopeful that the mark will become increasingly recognised in international and domestic markets as a symbol of quality that is backed by a commitment of all industry sectors to ensure that products consistently meet or exceed consumer expectations.