



## New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association Incorporated

Level 1, 45 - 51 Rugby Street, PO Box 6514, Wellington  
Phone: 04 801 7367 Fax: 04 801 7368  
Email: [deerstalkers@paradise.net.nz](mailto:deerstalkers@paradise.net.nz)  
Website: <http://www.deerstalkers.org.nz>

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The National TB Plan Review Secretariat  
P O Box 3412  
WELLINGTON 6140  
Your email: [submissions@tbplanreview.co.nz](mailto:submissions@tbplanreview.co.nz)

Dear Sir or Ms,

### SUBMISSION ON TB PLAN REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

The New Zealand Deerstalkers' Association has as its mission, "To retain, enhance and create opportunities for the enjoyment of responsible recreational hunting and the sport of shooting for the members of the Association."

Its general policy is to oppose generally the use of poisons, disease, snares and other unethical practices for killing game animals. Its specific policy on poisons and toxins, is to cooperate with the Government and other official organisations in the solution of New Zealand's conservation and animal health problems, but will be unequivocal in opposition to poison as a non-selective killer of game animals.

NZDA rejects the argument that limited "by-kill" is an acceptable cost of poisoning campaigns and demands that alternate methods for controlling the target pest species be developed and used. In short, the association opposes categorically, the use of poison when used in such a way as to kill game animals deliberately or otherwise.

#### **Impacts upon NZDA members and upon recreational hunting**

Operations devised for the control of bovine Tb impact on recreational hunters in general, and NZDA members in particular, in the following ways:

- Closure of hunting areas during the operational period;
- Closure of hunting areas after the operational period, to allow the decay of deceased animals and the breakdown of the pesticide through the processes of natural decomposition;
- The threat to dogs used in recreational hunting to reduce the "cripple loss" that of wounded animals escaping. The use of dogs to reduce such losses is in accord with the NZDA position on ethical hunting practices.

As many members and recreational hunters hunt for the table, losses arising from loss of opportunity for gathering table fare may exact a considerable economic impact on these families.

It has been noticed over the past decade that efforts made to communicate with recreational hunters have improved considerably. These improvements are commendable, but appear not to have reduced the frequency of poison operations, this frequency being of the order of three to five years between operations.

### **Recent history**

The Association notes with regret that measures for countering bovine Tb, instituted in the late 1940s, seemed not to be enforced with the usual zeal as the 1970s and 1980s progressed. Perhaps this arose from the reforms arising from the passage of the Resource Management Act (1991), or perhaps from the major social upheavals engendered by the machinations of the Fourth Labour Government (and subsequent administrations) of the 1980s.

The result was a sharp upsurge in the number of bovine Tb-infected herds, noticeable from the early 1990s onwards as campaigns to control bovine Tb were implemented. These featured the widespread use of poisons, at times distributed indiscriminately from the air.

### **Contemporary situation**

A quarter century later, the promise of eradication of bovine Tb continues to be held out as justification, despite the ongoing use of older methods for detecting the disease. The continued use of the skin tests for detecting bovine Tb, recognised as having a failure rate of the order of 20%, suggests a success rate of 80%. In the twenty-first century, it remains inconceivable to the NZDA that such an imprecise method, dating from the 1950s, continues to be used as the testing methodology for this disease. It is suggested that not only are improved, more precise and reliable methods now available, but their deployment will lead to savings.

Many bovine Tb outbreaks are caused by the movement of infected livestock, and NZDA suggests that more rigorous identification of infected herds and enforcement of livestock movement prohibitions would lead to a quicker reduction in bovine Tb infections than the present approaches appear to. Farmer education and increasing the liability of transport operators moving livestock herds subsequently found to be infected would help reduce these infection levels further.

### **Suggested resolutions**

It is suggested that;

- increased efforts be made to devise baits which are absolutely specific to the species intended to be the target, to eliminate the poisoning of non-target species;
- bait loadings be reviewed to ensure a reduced risk to non-target species; when possums, not deer, are the avowed target species, then it remains questionable that bait sizes remain large enough to attract non-target animals such as deer, yet the operation is allegedly for “possum control”, and bait loadings remain sufficiently high to kill animals with a body weight ten times or more than that of the declared “target species”, possums;
- greater effort be made to ensure more precise targeting of areas intended for poisoning, and the elimination of errors arising from bucket swings and mis-directed global positioning system localities. A system known as “Spydertrack” is suggested as being worthy of consideration for reducing this particular error.

Yours faithfully

Chaz Forsyth  
National Secretary