

**Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting of the Federation of European Deer Farmers' Associations held on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009 at the Manhattan Hotel, Brussels.**

**1. Apologies for absence.** Apologies were received from **Johan Trygve Solheim** (Norway), **Janos Nagy** (Hungary) and **Stefan Voll** (Germany). (The latter has been ill with meningitis but Germany has indicated its wish to join FEDFA and has paid its annual subscription.) **Jaroslav Poporadi** (Slovakia). (The latter due to illness in his family. Membership fee for Slovakia is paid)

**2. Those present** introduced themselves as follows: **Hanspeter Danzer** (HPD) (Swiss deer farmers' association and fallow deer farmer), **Marie Kelly** (MK)(Irish agricultural advisory services and secretary of the IDFA), **Patrick van Aubel** (PvA)(France, red deer farmer), **Tomas Landete Castillejos** (TLC)(research scientist working with deer enclosures in Spain), **Franz Vogelmayr** (FV)(Vice President of FEDFA, secretary of the Austrian deer farmers' association), **Dainis Paeglitis** (DP)(Latvian deer farmers' association & red deer farmer), **Gediminas Vaitiekunas** (GV)(President of the Lithuanian deer farmers association), **Paul Audenaerde**(PA) (vet, red deer farmer and Benelux deer farmers association), **Peter Timmerman** (PT)(Netherlands deer farmers association and red deer farmer), **Radim Kortrba** (RK)(Vice President of FEDFA, Czech Republic – research scientist with the Czech Agricultural University and also a deer farmer), **Asger Andersen** (AA) (Danish deer farmers association, fallow deer farmer and FEDFA treasurer), **Andreas Svensson** (AS) (Swedish deer farmers' association and fallow deer farmer), **John Fletcher** (JF) (red deer farmer, vet and FEDFA secretary), **Rolf Eriksson** (RE) (FEDFA President, Swedish deer farmers' association and red deer farmer).

**3. Matters arising from minutes of the meeting of March 27<sup>th</sup> 2008.** There was discussion of the European deer survey being conducted by Prague university; RK explained that it was very nearly complete and that he was awaiting results from only Germany, Norway, Slovakia, Hungary, Lithuania and Ireland and most of these were expected to report in the very near future. Spain had now reported and TLC explained that only 153 properties were farming deer, with an average of 100 breeding females, compared to over 3000 game estates most of which were fenced. Spain was perhaps the biggest user of Cyclone deer fencing in Europe and has probably over 300,000 red deer. There are in addition 250 enclosures with fallow deer. Hunting enclosures must be more than 1000 hectares.

**4. The President** welcomed the delegates and especially those new to FEDFA: TLC and GV.

**COPA.** He described his frustration at having been unable to organise meetings with either COPA (the Committee of Agricultural Organisations in Europe) or SANCO (the EU committee charged with developing regulations for meat inspection). Stefan Voll from Germany had promised to arrange that we meet at the COPA offices or that a COPA representative would attend our meeting but in the event neither had materialised.

HPD stressed the importance of FEDFA deciding what it wanted from COPA, whether we wished to become a partner, and considering what we might have to pay for their assistance. There was some discussion as to whether approaches to COPA through one or more national agricultural associations might be possible and MK pointed out that we deer farmers might not always have the same views on controversial issues as conventional farmers. FV promised to see if he could meet COPA to discuss FEDFA making closer links with them and the possible implications of that.

**Veterinary attendance at killing of farmed deer.** The President described the efforts that he and JF had made over the last four or five years in trying to have SANCO assist by waiving its regulation that vets be present to witness bleeding when farmed deer are killed. He introduced the bound booklet of correspondence. SANCO had rejected FEDFA's proposal to consider all deer killed by free bullet as wild but had promised to explore alternative ways of avoiding the introduction of this unenforceable and unrealistic 'bad law' and had also promised to keep us up to date on the subject. They had however failed to keep their word and all our many letters had received no replies. The regulation had now been passed and the only hope of having it removed was in Council or else by each member state arguing that its farmed deer were actually wild.

There was prolonged discussion of the problem. FV stated that at the moment there were no vets in attendance at small abattoirs in Austria let alone on deer farms; he did not consider it would be feasible for a vet to attend the death of each farmed deer nor did he consider that all the enclosed deer could be classed as wild. He considered that the German situation would be similar. In Holland PT stated that vets were charging 45 euros per visit plus 75 euros per hour and if they had to come to each farm whenever deer were killed it would be a very big problem. On Czech (RK) farms it is only during the last few months that deer could be killed by free bullet and the effects of this were still to be absorbed. It was thought that in Slovakia all deer were treated as wild. In Denmark (AA) many small deer farmers kill their deer on the farm with a free bullet and it would be disastrous if a vet had to wait about all day to witness the deer being bled. RE explained that in Sweden all the deer were considered wild and he had been assured by the Swedish Food Standards Agency that they would not change this so that the regulation would not affect them. In Ireland around 90 -95% of deer were killed in abattoirs. In France there was a theoretical requirement that vets be present when farmed deer are killed but this was administered by departmental officials and was not often implemented. In Spain it seems that all deer could be classed as wild; vets attended '*monterias*' when large numbers of deer were killed by hunting so that they could examine the carcasses but it would not be possible for them to witness the death of each animal. In Latvia (DP) all deer were killed by free bullet and were theoretically examined ante-mortem by a vet who also signed a paper to say they had been correctly bled although the vets never witnessed deer being shot. In Lithuania (GV) there were 60 deer farms but only two sent their deer to an abattoir to be killed. There was no regulation of the slaughter on the farms.

There was further discussion as to what action FEDFA should take on this issue. It was agreed that JF and RE urgently draft a letter for individual associations to adapt and

send to their own ministries of agriculture, their European members of parliament and to SANCO. The proposal should be that the bleeding be carried out by trained persons as in the case of wild deer. There was unanimous agreement that FEDFA continue to lobby SANCO on this issue. RE agreed to contact FACE (the European hunting organisation) and discuss with them their views on the issue. JF agreed to continue to pursue the issue through the Federation of European Veterinarians (FVE).

**5. There was a short discussion of the situation of Germany** in FEDFA and FV agreed to continue to work towards their being regularly represented on FEDFA.

**7. RE explained how it had been made clear to him that the question of TB testing** farmed deer had arisen through the need for Sweden to demonstrate its freedom from TB through its own Swedish officials rather than by the EU.

**8. PT presented data on N,P, K excretion by deer** that had recently been collected by Dutch scientists- this showed that the figures for P and K were lower than previous work had suggested but that N excretion was slightly higher. Only 7.5 – 8 breeding red deer females could be carried per hectare. This contrasted with Latvia where 17 – 18 hinds per hectare had been accepted.

DP **presented the programme for a meeting in Latvia** in August on 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> when antlers would be measured and evaluated and PRIZES given and there was to be a medieval banquet the following day.

JF mentioned **the Veterinary Deer Society meeting to be held in Leeds on April 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>** and the **International deer biology meeting to be held in Chile in 2010**. He also briefly described the meeting of the **CIC in Sopron, Hungary in November** at which he had presented papers on behalf of FEDFA. He could e-mail those to anyone interested.

**FV stated that analysis of deer brains for spongiform encephalopathies** was continuing in Austria but had only reached 50% of the numbers of brains required.

**RK mentioned his recent meeting with Fischer Boel** in Prague during which she had stated that deer farming - and farming of other unusual species - was deemed a diversification and that since biodiversity was one of the five top priorities in EU agriculture for support, deer farming would be a high priority for support. JF agreed to write a letter to RK detailing the need for support in Scottish deer farming.

TLC explained the Spanish view that **deer in hunting enclosures were valuable conservation species**.

HPD stressed again how FEDFA should be looking to become a partner **organisation within COPA**.

**Date of next meeting.** RE explained the interesting programme for the next meeting to be held in **Slovakia at Smolenice on 8<sup>th</sup> – 11<sup>th</sup> November**.

HPD invited FEDFA to **Switzerland for the autumn meeting in 2010** if Ireland decided not to proceed as our hosts or if Ireland came forward in 2010 then Switzerland in 2011.

The President closed the meeting at 1730.

**ACTION POINTS:** RK agreed to complete the Czech survey of European deer farms as soon as possible.

FV agreed to explore ways in which FEDFA could use COPA if necessary by becoming partners.

JF/RE agreed to draft a letter for distribution to member associations for them to circulate to their own Ministries of Agriculture, European Members of Parliament and to SANCO requesting that a derogation be provided avoiding the need for vets to be present when farmed deer are killed.

JF agreed to write to RK to provide arguments as to why deer farmers needed support

RE agreed to speak to FACE to enquire if they opposed the suggestion that deer killed with a free bullet be considered wild.

JF agreed to write again to the Federation of European vets asking whether they might continue to help us in opposing the requirement for vets to witness the bleeding of farmed deer.