

## COMMODITY

## GAME FARMS

### Description

Game farming in British Columbia is the agricultural production of the wildlife species of fallow deer, bison and reindeer. Under the *Game Farm Act*, producers require a Game Farm License to operate. Through legislative requirements the farming of game farm animals is strictly controlled.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries, and the Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection, administers legislation to minimize the risks of disease transfer to wildlife and domestic livestock, to minimize genetic contamination and illegal trade of wildlife, and to foster the industry's development.

Game farm livestock, raised as breeding stock or as meat products, are raised entirely on deeded, not Crown land. One years' young may be overwintered with the breeding herd and sold the following year. Male fallow deer antler is usually removed and may be sold (velveting).

Game farm producers need access to water for livestock watering and irrigation. They use such farm equipment as trucks, tractors, cultivators, harvesters and sprayers. On-site infrastructure may include irrigation systems, livestock watering systems, barns, corrals and handling systems, storage sheds and fences. They may use pesticides, herbicides and fertilizer on the crops they produce.

### Farm Practices of Particular Interest

Some of the game farm practices are legislated under the *Game Farm Act* or are standards required under a Game Farm License and are identified in the British Columbia Game Farm Manual. Practices for specific farm activities can be found in the Farm Practice section of this reference guide. Farm practices that are of particular interest to game farming include:

#### Animal Care and Handling

On-farm containment of game farm livestock is required to prevent escapes, thus protecting wildlife from the possible spread of diseases and ensuring game animals do not become established off-farm. The game farm license requirements include specific perimeter fence designs, construction methods and facilities where animals can be individually and humanely handled for inspection and treatment.

Specific requirements apply to game at large, including reporting and recapture conditions prior to the animals reverting to the ownership of the Crown in right of the Province. Game at large can be destroyed where it poses a danger to the public or native wildlife.

All game must possess an approved identification system, for example, a tamperproof curl lock ear tag for fallow deer and reindeer and/or a registered brand for bison. Specific reporting requirements are established for inventory control and each licensee shall have available current records.

Licensees must ensure that dehorning, antler removal, castration and other game animal handling and husbandry procedures are conducted in a humane manner by experienced individuals using proper equipment and accepted techniques. Velveting of deer must not be conducted without a nerve blocking

agent of a type, dosage, and in a manner recommended by a practicing member of the British Columbia Veterinary Medical Association.

See Farm Practice: [Animal Care and Handling](#)  
[Transportation](#)

### **Mortalities**

Game mortalities must be disposed of in an accepted manner. Good practices vary by the cause of death, local climate and surrounding land use. A licensee must take all necessary steps to prevent game farm animals from coming into contact with wild ungulates by maintaining inspected fences and facilities and immediately removing and disposing of mortalities. Bison mortalities that exceed a specified level (e.g. 5% of the herd in a six-month period) must have post mortems conducted by a veterinarian on all subsequent mortalities.

See Farm Practice: [Mortality Disposal](#)

### **Transportation**

All transport vehicles must have a locking mechanism on the container to prevent accidental opening. Further, deer must have antlers removed prior to shipping and be segregated by sex.

See Farm Practice: [Transportation](#)

## **Legislation**

Agricultural producers are expected to follow all legislation that pertains to their farming operation. The *Farm Practices Protection (Right to Farm) Act* stipulates that the farm operation must meet the *Health Act*, *Pesticide Control Act*, *Waste Management Act* and the regulations under those acts. Information on federal and provincial legislation can be found in Appendices B and C.

Acts that pertain to specific farm activities are listed in the farm practices section of this reference guide. Local government bylaws may also apply to some farm practices. Acts that are not referenced elsewhere that are of special interest to game farm producers include the following:

### **Federal**

*Health of Animals Act* – covers the diseases and toxic substances that may affect animals or be transmitted by animals to people, and the protection of animals

### **Provincial**

*Animal Disease Control Act* – provides statutory authority to limit spread of contagious diseases

*Game Farm Act* – allows specific types of game to be raised for agricultural purposes  
– the Game Farm Regulation establishes production and operation criteria.

*Wildlife Act* – provides for regulation and management of fish and wildlife resources

### **Local Government**

Applicable *Animal Control Bylaws* and *Meat Inspection Bylaws* where in place.

## **Publications**

Publications that provide information on game farming include, but are not limited to, the following (refer to Appendix D for details):

*British Columbia Environmental Farm Plan Reference Guide*

*British Columbia Game Farm Manual*

*Recommended Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Farm Animals - Farmed Deer (Cervidae)*