

IX. THE CAPTURE AND HANDLING OF DEER; DISCUSSION

M.H. den Boer and E. Hazebroek

The discussion focused on three areas: catching techniques, the use of chemicals and their influence, and handling techniques.

Catching techniques

Ratcliffe warned about situations where red deer refuse to enter enclosures. Together with Putman he suggested creating attractive areas just outside the fencing, e.g. by the application of artificial fertilizer in the catching area.

Van de Veen knew that in this area the red deer are accustomed to fences and do not even hesitate to enter enclosed areas when gates are left open.

Perzanovski described a catching area in which only the handling section is closed, i.e., by a wall 2.3 m high.

Putman suggested having permanent poles for use with temporary netting. For roe deer, Schober advised the use of drop-nets.

Drugs and their influence

Immobilon is by far the most effective chemical for this purpose. Illius uses Immobilon as a starter, to immobilize the animals, followed by an intramuscular injection of Diazepam. Harrington observed a loss of appetite in animals given Immobilon.

Other drugs, although less effective, might be used, e.g. Azaparon or Rhompun. Hellabrunner Mischung is not appropriate; it has too little effect on stressed animals and even the effect of an overdose is very uncertain (Hellabrunner Mischung is a mixture of Rhompun and Ketalar).

Most chemicals, if not all, affect blood parameters. In Tataruch's experience, xylazine decreases the haemoglobin concentration in the blood. However, stress itself can affect blood parameters, which makes their use disputable (see also Chapter XI).

Handling

Maintenance of quiet is of paramount importance to prevent or diminish stress. Trembling animals with glazed eyes must be released immediately,

which means that an emergency escape route should be provided. Blindfolding is advised for fallow deer and roe deer but seems to be less effective in red deer. Extreme caution must be exercised, because red deer, especially if they are in hard antlers, can be extremely dangerous. A riot-shield may be useful, but better still would be to build a few permanent wooden shields like the ones used in Spanish arenas, behind which one can retreat.

About twenty minutes after Diazepam has been consumed, someone enters the enclosure quietly, walking slowly, to get the animals to the subdivision. It may be advantageous to let the animals enter and leave the handling area to familiarize them with it. The handling itself, inside the handling area, will be easier if several animals are present together. A very fine spray of water may calm them down. Illumination must be reduced by roofing the handling area. By preference, one animal is handled while the operator is leaning over another one.

An alternative handling contraption consists of a Y-shaped crush with a collapsing floor so the animal drops down slightly, loses its footing, and then becomes wedged in the Y-shaped narrow race. Information on the Y-shaped deer crush can be obtained from: Mr. D.N. Wallace, Livestock Officer (MAF) Animal Health Division, Tauranga, New Zealand.



The rather complicated type of harness needed for a wild boar to carry a transponder