

## CHRONICLE

## Rector elections at the Lithuanian University of Agriculture

The Lithuanian University of Agriculture held Rector elections on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2004 with two candidates running to Rector, Vice-Rector for Research Prof. Dr. hab. Romualdas Deltuvas and Dean of Faculty of Agricultural Engineering, Prof. Dr. hab. Algirdas Jonas Raila. The Senate of the University voted for Prof. Dr. hab. Romualdas Deltuvas, who will take the place of Rector Prof. Dr. hab. Albinas Kusta, led the University two five-year terms of office. Prof. Dr. hab. Romualdas Deltuvas becomes the thirteenth Rector of the University. It must be noted that in 1924 the first Rector of the University, Prof. Povilas Matulionis, was elected and he also was the forester like Prof. Romualdas Deltuvas. Romualdas Deltuvas is Professor of Forest Management, scientist of ideas and a mind of wide scope. Professor is member of the several national and international scientific associations, boards and organizations, Head of the Committee of Biomedical Sciences at the Lithuanian State Science

and Studies Foundation. He was the expert of the Royal Swedish Academy of Agriculture and Forestry. Currently he goes in for several international projects in forest sciences. Professor is head of the working groups in projects on the readjustment of Lithuanian forest enterprises and Lithuanian Rules of Forest Management. Furthermore, Prof. Dr. hab. Romualdas Deltuvas is the Associated Editor of the scientific peer reviewed journal *Baltic Forestry*.

Editorial Board of the journal *Baltic Forestry* has a great pleasure to congratulate Professor Romualdas Deltuvas on the occasion of new appointment

**DR. OLGIRDA BELOVA**  
Baltic Forestry  
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## Deer farming in Lithuania: First congress of deer Farmers

The First Congress of Deer Farmers was held in Miškiniškės, on the territory of Aukštaitija National Park in Eastern Lithuania on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2004. More than 50 deer farmers and prospective farmers as well as representatives of the Ministry of Environment, General Forest Enterprise, Ministry of Agriculture, scientists, students and all minded in deer breeding were met together to discuss a present problems. The Congress programme encompassed the keynote presentations in two sessions on the present state of deer breeding and other related problems in Lithuania.

In Lithuania deer breeding in the special parks was mentioned in the historical annals since 14<sup>th</sup> century. As far back as 1397 Crusaders' messenger K.H.Kyburg mentioned a menagerie near the Vilnius, in which deer and European bison were kept. Menageries mostly have served for the Lithuanian Grand Duke's hunting.

Additionally, the parks were at service to provide the emergency store of meat during wars. The information on animal behaviour, reproduction and feeding was collected.

Sub-fossil remains have shown that the Red deer (*Cervus elaphus* L.) has already occurred on the territory of present Lithuania in the early Holocene and more spread in the middle Holocene. However, it is not clear when the red deer has disappeared exactly. By the Polish – Lithuanian game survey, as S. Ladovski (1783) and some later J. Eichwald (1830) supposed, the date is about the beginning of 18<sup>th</sup> or 19<sup>th</sup> century. In the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century red deer was reacclimated in the Žagarė forests in the northern Lithuania, and the first free herds formed from animals, which were escaped from the enclosures of Earl Naryškin during the World War I. The Lithuanian noblemen and earls



**Figure 1.** Deer enclosure in Miškiniškės (after E. Bukelskis)



**Figure 2.** Deer enclosure in Miškiniškės, Ignalina region, Aukštaitija National Park (after E. Bukelskis)

have brought the fallow deer (*Cervus dama* L.) in the 16<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Deer were kept in the menageries – parks. The 30-40 animals were recorded in the northern regions of Lithuania before World War II. Unfortunately, fallow deer was disappeared later, and was brought from the former Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Germany and Ukraine (Askania Nova reserve) in 1976-1977. Animals were raised in the enclosures in Marijampole district and released deer successfully adapted in the vicinal forests. Presently, the total number of fallow deer reached about 300 individuals. Other deer species the Sika deer *Cervus nippon* (T.) was introduced in the Lithuania in 1954. The animals were released in the forest of Dubrava forest enterprise. However, they were disappeared eventually. Presently, there are not free sika deer in Lithuania. Some observed free animals could be escaped from the enclosures only. In the 7<sup>th</sup> decade of the previous century the total area of enclosures reached 1,200 hectares. The main breeding species were the fallow deer and moufflon (*Ovis ammon musimon* Pall.). The moufflon difficultly survived in the wild and they are kept only in enclosures. The total number of moufflon

was about 33-40 animals in 2000. Since 1988 moufflon hunting had started.

This short historical variation shows that deer breeding in enclosures has deep historical roots and traditions in Lithuania. Formerly in the Soviet time, the deer enclosures were used to enrich the game populations and were under state control. Since 1987 the first private enclosures have been established. After the restoration of independence, deer breeding became oriented to product the venison or antlers depending of the market demands. The former big state enclosures were eliminated. In 1998-1999 there were about 10 enclosures on the area of 1,000 hectares. Presently there are about 20 enclosures on the 800 hectares. The main raised species are fallow deer, sika deer and red deer, which farms are formed in the last time. There are 343 fallow deer, 470 red deer, 686 sika deer and 140 moufflon in enclosures. The basis of herds is indigenous deer from forests. Fallow deer farms are oriented to pedigree, hunting and venison. Sika deer is used for the venison and trophy. It is supposed that the deer number and the area of enclosures will be increased in future. A number of owners and state forest enterprises intend to start deer breeding. Several state owned enclosures are being completed as well.

In 1999 a group of devotees established “The Association of Deer Farmers” (*Elnių Augintojų Asociacija-EAA*). The main task was to fill the information gap about intensive deer farming. However, it was only small group of 3 members. Despite this fact, the Lithuanian EAA became an associated member of FEDFA (the Federation of European Deer Farmers Associations). FEDFA, established in 1990, now represents the deer farming industries of the 18 countries as the follows: Austria, Benelux (including Belgium and the Netherlands), Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK and also Lithuania. FEDFA has good lines of communication with all members and with appropriate bodies in EC. FEDFA is active in helping and advising on the implementation of EU legislation affecting deer farmers. FEDFA promotes improvements in deer farming and coordinates action on welfare, breeding and disease control measures with particular emphasis on research. The important discussed question is marketing. Membership is open to all EU national deer farmers’ associations and other European countries with Management Committee approval. Although national associations must continue to be responsible for the interests of their own members, FEDFA is recognised as the first point of contact for matters affecting deer farming at the international level.

Deer farmers of Lithuania still have not cooperated into the certain societies. They have not possibil-

ities to share their experience. Therefore, deer breeding was uncoordinated in Lithuania. Present area of abandoned lands, the development of the village and nature tourism as well as the benevolence of state bodies promote an establishment and further improvement of deer farms. However, the critical social and economical situation in rural areas and the lack of breeding animals became the main reasons, which deter this process. In spite of this, the deer farming in Lithuania seems very promising. Many problems related to the legislative basis of the establishing of enclosures, veterinary demands and animal welfare as well as exchange of pedigree animals and formation of herds have arisen. It was the main motivation to call the Congress of Deer Farmers.

The participants of the Congress were interested in the presentation of the leader of the initiative group Mr. Valdas Danilevičius who surveyed the present state and the main problems of deer farmers in Lithuania. Mr. Beniaminas Sakalauskas, the Head of General Forest Enterprise, presented the programme of the increase of wild animals' populations in the state forests. Dr. Gediminas Petrušis (State Forest Management and Inventory Institute) has given information on the state of deer breeding in Europe, and Mr. Laimutis Budrys (Head of Nature Protection Department of the Ministry of Environment) stated the actualities of the legal basis for the designation of enclosures. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Egidijus Bukelskis introduced to the importance of enclosures for the increase in game abundance. The representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture told on the possibilities to use the structural funds for the deer breeding and explained the way to apply for the support. Dr. Olgirda Belova elucidated the importance of the feeding, the main food for deer in enclosures depending on the behavioural and morphological fea-

tures of deer as well as the importance of dissemination of the information among the owners and scientific consulting. Dr. Rimantas Baleišis (Institute of Ecology of the Vilnius University) told on the effect of deer raised in captivity on the free animals living in the wild. Participants have possibility to observed deer enclosures in Miškiniškės and future enclosures for the black grouse and hares. The enlarged meeting of the Deer Farmers Association has been held within the Congress. Participants decided to renew and expand activities of the Deer Farmer Association of Lithuania. The Congress passed the initiation of 19 new members and elected the Board of Association. The Chairperson of the Association became Mr. Valdas Danilevičius.

The Lithuanian Deer Farmer Association aims to coordinate farmer work, share experience, exchange pedigreed deer and information. An important task for the Association is the membership of the Chamber of Agriculture that would help to use structural funds, to coordinate animal production procurement and usage. Members of the Association and all participants of the Congress intend that in a few years deer farming will become a perspective agricultural sector as in many other European countries. The release of part of enclosed animals into the wild will enrich the local game populations.

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