

House Energy and Natural Resources Committee
Testimony in opposition of S.B. 2211
Bruce Willyard, Treasurer, North Dakota Fur Takers Association
March 4, 2021

Chairman Porter and members of the Committee

When I was a Hunter Safety Instructor, the class is designed to teach first time hunters safe gun handling, hunter ethics and shooting. This concept of night hunting, goes totally against what is being taught in Hunter Safety!

Rule number 1. KNOW YOUR TARGET

During the act of shooting, know your target, once that trigger is pulled, the projectile, whether shot or bullet, can not be brought back.

In the Winter issue of 2020, the Fair Chase magazine, the official publication of the Boone and Crockett Club, Craig Boddinton, Professional member, wrote an article, "Tricks of Light" (or with night hunting the lack there of). To quote the article, "Light and angles do funny things. Visual acuity and quality optics help, but while the eye, whether aided by optics or not, sees what it sees, the brain has a tendency to interpret what it wants to see, not always what is really there."

On the night of January 30th, 2021, Dale Arlen Merbach, age 60, Rugby, North Dakota, was shot and killed in a night time hunting accident. Dale and a hunting buddy were hunting night hunting coyotes in a gravel pit, near Velva, North Dakota. In the process the hunting buddy saw what he thought appeared to be a coyote, shot and killed Dale. A sad case of the brain telling the eye what it wanted to see. Source of information local law enforcement, Rugby radio station, and Anderson Funeral Home, Rugby and Towner.

Rule number 2. Know What Lies Beyond your intended target

It's night, who knows what is parked out in the fields. Anything from Tractors, Combines, Water Trucks, Sprayers, Anhydrous tanks, the list goes on and on and on, not to mention guys out baling alfalfa half the night, to keep the leaves on, just over the hill. Also numerous old farmsteads, that Nonresident waterfowl hunters own, and there usually not a yard lite on year round, so indication that anything is over there.

If this bill, S.B.2211 passes, it will get to more popular than anyone thinks. The Game and Fish will need to come to the Legislature, again, to request more money for a new string of night Game Wardens. You can't expect your current Wardens to work 24 hours a day without repercussions from somewhere or somebody.

Talking with Wildlife Services people, even with the current night hunting, it makes their job so much more difficult. The nonprofessionals educate more than they kill, especially with coyotes, they learn fast, retain that knowledge, and I have personally witnessed passing along that knowledge.

We in the North Dakota Fur Takers Association whole heartedly agree that landowners have the right to protect their property and possessions, which they currently do. The NDFTA is absolutely against legislation mandating the North Dakota Game and Fish to have night hunting on anything and everything that has a season. It is the Wild West, Katie-bar-the-door scenario, that the North Dakota Fur Takers oppose.

For these reasons Chairman Porter, we would respectfully request a DO NOT PASS on S.B 2211