

2023 HB 1151 Testimony

Authored by: Tim Sandstrom

Dear Committee:

I support the HB 1151's intent to retain a hunter's ability to hunt over bait. However, in support of HB 1151 I'm also asking the North Dakota Game and Fish (NDGF) retain reasonable ability to limit how wildlife is baited for the purpose of hunting. To what extent? Open for debate but I'm willing to say we as hunters should be open to compromise such as quantity or truck loads reduced to bucket loads. But to the topic at hand...

I understand the NDGF's concerns with chronic wasting disease (CWD). I share them. The approach has continued to be a debate among many in this nation's game and fish departments, landowners and hunters. To this date, there is no right answer from what I can gather.

So to me it goes to perception.

The passionate perceive by feeding birds, deer or other wildlife they are providing for them. We can debate that topic another time! **But no NDGF rules nor the legislated law prohibit people from feeding wildlife.**

Then there are those that perceive hunting deer or other game over "bait" as unethical. Again, debate for another time. Or is it, could this play a role in NDGF decision making?

What cannot be debated (we should all agree on) is deer congregate "naturally" at all times of the year. CWD isn't just about congregation but its often the main talking point for those against baiting or for baiting. So lets agree...

- Bachelor herds of bucks travel late spring and summer months together.
- Does with fawns travel together for most of the year.
- In the fall to winter months deer congregate in the 10s to 100s (i.e., rut, cold weather).

I found this series of quotes provided by the Fargo InForum interesting where Wildlife Division Director Casey Anderson stated, "Disease is spread by urine, saliva and feces," Anderson said. "It's more likely to be spread when they're pulled together in times of year when they normally aren't."

I'm not the biologist here so this is my perception and translation. Mr. Anderson is stating "hunting over bait" is a means to pull deer together. Ok, I can concede to a point, but many things/circumstances pull deer together. However, when baited deer are said to be more prone to CWD infection versus "naturally" congregated I struggle to accept. And lets go back to the definition of bait. A bait pile is more prone than a bait (food) plot or a water supply?

Here's a real-world example available to anyone's eyes just outside Minot as you read this:

On my way home I drive by five alfalfa bales. Four remain in an alfalfa field assumed never loaded onto a trailer and hauled to a hay yard. The other bale sits upright in my neighbor's yard for the purpose of feeding wildlife.

Every night the past two months there's been multiple deer at each (up to 20 at a time) exposed to urine, saliva and feces.

Again, per above a perception is told CWD spread is not as likely for the random bales or the do-gooder feeding wildlife. But if my other neighbor had a bait pile, then we're elevated to "it's more likely."

I simply cannot support that perception and do not support the NDGF's decision to focus on the hunter utilizing a bait pile versus a bait plot.

Source – Fargo Inforum: [Bill would stop officials from banning deer baiting in North Dakota](#)