

## IN SUPPORT OF HB 1151

Hello, my name is Levi Nelson and I am from rural Solen, ND where we raise cattle and horses. I also have a passion for hunting and the rural outdoors. At the time that I started hunting, it was not legal to hunt over bait due to (chronic wasting disease) CWD being present. However, during that time, it was permissible to feed deer. During the last few years, I have participated in and helped film episodes for Ultimate Outdoor Adventures TV. The organizers of this show include a group of hunters who understand how important it is to respect the rules. While working with them, I have learned many things in regards to deer management and have adopted many of the same morals and values.

While it would have been legal to feed deer that come onto our ranch, I avoided feeding during the months of September through January so that I was not accused or prosecuted for hunting over said bait or trails leading to it. My behavior had nothing to do with the ethics of "baiting", but everything to do with the law. If it was up to me, I would consistently supplement the deer, just as we do with livestock because North Dakota winters can be difficult. Deer, like livestock, are dealing with the weather while trying to grow offspring and maintain their own body condition. Crop aftermath is a common source of feed but today's equipment cleans up far more grain than ever, leaving less food for our wildlife.

Agricultural stewards are expected to provide their livestock with the necessary nutrition in the months and weeks leading to birth. While this nutrition can be met through the use of forages, supplementation may need to be considered in years when forage quality is limited. As a producer, we would never make livestock fend for themselves and go without the proper diet prior to giving birth. If we consider CWD research and compare it to what we see year after year, what has a higher mortality rate? CWD or winter deaths?

Next, I would like you to consider the ethics of hunting over feed versus other hunting practices. For example, the utensils we use to harvest deer have become more efficient year after year. Blinds and stands have become better built and people are developing more lethal strategies all the time. With many hunting practices in play, I find it hypocritical that hunting over feed is unethical. To point a finger at one technique and say that it is not hunting is ridiculous, especially when done on private land where any other legal hunting style is accepted.

I have never claimed that CWD does not exist nor have I stated that it is not a potential hazard to deer herds in this region. However, CWD has not impacted the numbers of deer in North Dakota. If that were true, unit 3F2 would be devastated by the effects of CWD. Unit 3F2 is where CWD was first found in 2009. In the years since, the deer numbers have soared. For example, 2,950 rifle deer tags were given out in 3F2 during 2018. In 2022, after a devastating bout with epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), they gave out a whopping 4,250 tags in the same unit. If this prion was a pandemic, as they say, one would think we would have far different results.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to contact me at 701-391-6127. I would be more than happy to visit with you about my personal experience regarding this matter. I thank you for your time in reading my testimony and I ask you please vote yes on HB 1151.