

Please accept this written testimony in **opposition of SB2137** relating to the **use of supplemental feed for hunting**. I have worked as a wildlife health professional for 23 years and my considerable experience in this area indicates that supplemental feeding for hunting is not warranted. As a hunter myself, I am concerned about the willingness of the legislature taking up this bill that should be left to the experts within the wildlife management agency, North Dakota Game and Fish, to know what is best for the natural resources in their states. Provided below are the supporting conditions for why I oppose this bill:

1. Given the nature of disease transmission, attracting animals to a specific location by use of supplemental feed increases the likelihood of pathogen spread. Animal congregating in artificially high densities can spread diseases. Animals sharing a pile of corn, bucket of apples, mineral block, or other attractant can leave behind viruses, bacteria, and prions that can infect other animals using that same resource, even if they do not have nose-to-nose contact. Think about a restaurant's salad bar – there is a sneeze guard and tongs so that the person in front of you doesn't leave behind any germs that you may pick up.
2. I study chronic wasting disease in deer and have seen firsthand how difficult it is for states to detect this disease. My surveillance plans found the first cases of CWD in Tennessee, Alabama, and Florida. It is extremely difficult to find this disease and allowing supplemental feeding just promotes diseases spreading even faster than it would naturally. Bait piles contribute significantly to increasing contact between deer. Prions remain infectious when left behind in urine, feces, and saliva, which are found in higher frequency around bait piles.
3. In addition to increasing risks of spreading CWD in deer, there are a number of other animals that also use these human-provided sources of feed. These could include things like raccoons that could increase the incidence of rabies, as well as the ticks on these animals that spread Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses. Birds may be attracted to feed and come closer to domestic livestock and human habitation than would normally be expected, which could present opportunities for spillover of highly pathogenic avian influenza to other species such as cats, cattle, and humans.
4. Supplemental feeding increases the wildlife production beyond what the natural environment can support. Therefore, if feeding is stopped, there isn't enough natural forage to support the extra animals. This creates an unfortunate situation where once feeding starts, it cannot be stopped easily.
5. Hunting wild game is acceptable to the majority of the public, including non-hunters. However, hunting over bait is not considered "fair chase" by many people and could decrease support among the public. Landowners may look at hunters unfavorably and not allow access to their land.

As the trustees over the natural resources and the good people of North Dakota, I hope you will see that this bill is misguided in its attempt to offer greater opportunities to hunters and may ultimately hinder hunting for current and future generations.

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