



Minnesota Department of Natural Resources  
Division of Fish and Wildlife  
500 Lafayette Rd  
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 06, 2025

Senator Larry Luick, Chair  
North Dakota Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee  
600 E Boulevard Ave.  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Chairman Luick and Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee members,

On behalf of the Fish and Wildlife Division within the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (MNDNR), I am writing to express my concerns with Senate Bill 2137. This bill would eliminate the authority of the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to adopt rules or policies that restrict the use of supplemental feed for hunting of big game animals. Not only will this bill impact wildlife populations within North Dakota, but it also affects wildlife in bordering states and provinces.

Concentrating wildlife by baiting or feeding can facilitate the transmission, establishment, and spread of diseases and parasites. It is vital that state wildlife agencies maintain the capacity to regulate these practices and address disease concerns in wildlife populations. Between 2005 and 2012, feeding and baiting restrictions were a critical science-based tool that MNDNR utilized to successfully eradicate bovine tuberculosis in a wild white-tailed deer population. This helped prevent tuberculosis from becoming established in our deer populations and spreading to neighboring states. Minnesota is now utilizing this tool to address chronic wasting disease both within the state and along the shared border between Minnesota and North Dakota. Feeding and baiting deer in North Dakota will increase transmission and spread of chronic wasting disease in both our states and directly hinder long-term management efforts to limit the disease.

I encourage the members of the Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee to follow recommendations from the Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies Resolution in opposition to the baiting and feeding of cervids (adopted in 2018; attached) and allow the North Dakota Game and Fish Department to regulate the intentional baiting and feeding of deer. Directors of state wildlife agencies across the Midwest voted to support this resolution and recognize baiting and feeding as a significant wildlife management concern. Maintaining the authority to implement regulations designed to protect the health of our wildlife is essential for state wildlife agencies to ensure the long-term viability of our wildlife populations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Kelly Straka". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "O" at the end.

Kelly Straka, DVM MPH

Director, Division of Fish and Wildlife

*Equal Opportunity Employer*

## **RESOLUTION REGARDING THE BAITING AND FEEDING OF CERVIDS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF DISEASE TRANSMISSION AND ESTABLISHMENT**

WHEREAS, baiting (placement of food by humans to aid hunter harvest), recreational feeding (placement of food by humans to aid in wildlife viewing for entertainment) and supplemental feeding (placement of food by humans to increase the nutrition available to wildlife) congregate animals and increase transmission of infectious diseases;

WHEREAS, increased transmission of diseases in deer may place wildlife, domestic livestock and public health at risk;

WHEREAS, some infectious diseases such as chronic wasting disease (CWD) and bovine tuberculosis (TB) may remain infectious at bait or feed sites after the feed or bait no longer exists;

WHEREAS, baiting and feeding artificially concentrates deer and their activity, facilitating both animal-to-animal contact and exposure to potentially disease-contaminated sites;

WHEREAS, evidence to date suggests that restrictions on feeding quantity would not mitigate the potential for disease transmission and that putative mitigating practices such as spreading feed or bait over a specified area, or restricting the kinds of food items that can be used does not substantially reduce the potential risk for disease transmission;

WHEREAS, baiting and feeding may both change social dynamics among animals and increase contacts between otherwise disparate individuals, groups, or species-another risk factor for disease transmission;

WHEREAS, peer-reviewed research suggests the effects of baiting for increasing harvest is insignificant;

WHEREAS, diseases such as CWD and TB can result in devastating economic losses and/or significant ecological impacts;

WHEREAS, effective communication, education and enforcement are enhanced when rules and regulations are consistent across state and provincial boundaries;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, MAFWA acknowledges the social and political sensitivity associated with restricting baiting and feeding cervids.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, MAFWA agrees with the current wildlife research and expertise that illustrates the negative effects of baiting and feeding of cervids on disease transmission and establishment.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, MAFWA recommends advancing this issue of baiting and feeding restrictions to AFWA for development of a national position on baiting and feeding of cervids to reduce the risk of disease transmission and establishment.