

Senate Agriculture and Veterans Affairs Committee members,

My name is Lee Zimmerman and I am writing in support of SB 2137. We are a farm and ranch operation in McHenry County. Over the years we have developed the land for agricultural purposes to feed our livestock and this has definitely played a huge role in the abundance of wildlife in the area. As a landowner and avid sportsman I feel that we should have the right to supplemental feed wildlife whether it be deer, turkeys or small game animals. The restrictions that the North Dakota Game and Fish have enforced on the use of hunting big game over bait in specified units to control the spread of CWD is unjustified and counterproductive. As an outdoorsman I watch these animals congregate in alfalfa fields, small grains and harvested row crops. Hunting is an option as baiting should be, the choice to do so or not has adversely affected hunters who are disadvantaged whether this may be a youth, elderly, nonland owner or handicapped sportsman. Bait or no bait, deer are as social as humans, they travel the same corridors to and from feeding and bedding areas, they socialize whether it's a 10 acre food plot or 200 acre alfalfa field these animals are always generally within arms reach of each other.

We live 4 miles from a unit where baiting is not restricted, in the wintertime our farm will more than double the normal number of deer, turkeys and small game animals. These animals travel 10-20 miles to a winter range. We have large amounts of corn silage, grain corn, screenings and alfalfa hay that is all in our feed yards. As a landowner I'm not complaining nor am I asking for someone to feed the wildlife for us, for years we have fed the wildlife away from our feed yards October through April to control the damage that occurs on our expensive commodities. We leave acres of standing crop not just as food plots for hunting but because we care for the wildlife also. This has helped keep the animals at large away from our feed areas and cattle pens along with predators that harm our livestock. We have learned that if we can spread the feed out and use multiple locations to feed, this keeps the animals less concentrated and more spread out.

In closing, we will not prevent the spread of disease whether there is baiting or no baiting. Agriculture, food plots, cropland, watering holes are all a necessity to keep our wildlife alive and thriving in the state of North Dakota. As landowners and sportsmen, we care about conservation and our rights. As a parent and avid hunter, I care about the next generation and our youth. Please support SB 2137.

Sincerely,

Lee Zimmerman

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