

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It has been brought to my attention that there has been some discussion about who should be making decisions about baiting. I would like to humbly offer my opinion as a born and raised North Dakotan who grew up hunting and fishing. I shot my first deer at the age of 14 in western North Dakota, and every year since then (for the last 26 years) I've hunted exclusively on one 80 acre piece of land just west of where my family lives in eastern North Dakota. I grew up eating wild game, and venison is the primary source of protein in my diet. It always has been.

We know that Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a real threat. We also know that while it is extremely contagious, it can take over a year before any symptoms of the disease develop in an infected animal. And finally, we know that CWD is spread between animals directly through bodily fluids and indirectly through contamination of soil, food, and water sources. So now think about this: an infected deer can look and feel healthy despite being infected. This deer walks up to a bait pile and congregates with 10, 20, 50 deer at or near that bait pile. Now every single one of those deer has been exposed to the disease! And not only that, any other deer, elk, or moose that pass through that area may be exposed as well since the virus can linger in the environment for an extended period of time.

Additionally, if a hunter kills an animal with CWD, they will not be able to eat the meat. If they get one deer tag to feed their family and they shoot a deer that tests positive for CWD, that means they go an entire year without meat in the freezer. Add that to the fact that it's taking 5, 6, 7 years to draw a tag...who would bother hunting if it's already that tough to get a tag and then when they finally draw one and fill it, they can't eat the meat. I can't think of anything more discouraging. So then if the purpose of baiting is to encourage young hunters, it seems to me that this this would do the exact opposite.

I truly believe that the best way to manage this threat is to defer to the experts, in this case the North Dakota Game and Fish Department. They have access to the most up to date research and evidence-based best practices. It is literally their job to ensure that North Dakota continues to be a place where wild animals roam and hunters have an opportunity to feed themselves and their families.

I am a proud North Dakotan. My family and I care about the animals that live here. This land and these animals give us life. It is our responsibility to do our part and care for them too.

Thank you,

Noelle Solseng