

Resolution Concerning Chronic Wasting Disease and Game Farms

Background:

Nationally, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has afflicted wild populations of deer, elk and moose for a number of years. State Wildlife Agencies have approached containment of CWD in a variety of ways that have reflected political climates, attitudes of deer hunters and the general public. As time has passed and the information around CWD has increased, it is becoming clear that CWD threatens to be an indiscriminate killer that is very likely to eliminate treasured wildlife species. That outcome would impact what we take for granted and treasure in decidedly negative and spectacular ways.

Human health risk as a result of CWD was considered a non-issue when CWD initially became a publicized threat to wildlife. In recent years the jump to humans has moved from a non-issue-to possible-and now to very possible!

Food plots for deer have become popular on private land and its use has even been extended to public land by deer hunters. Food plots are where non-native agricultural crops are planted and intensively managed to attract and concentrate deer, but not including commercial crops intended for farm use or sale. Concentrating deer increases the probability of CWD spread.

Captive deer farms, where the deer are concentrated, are confirmed in the migration of CWD to wild animals. Attempts to eradicate CWD from infected facilities have sometimes failed. The CWD prions remain in the environment and are very resistant to elimination. Deer were later infected even though the facilities had been closed and cleaned. (Note that private captive deer, and elk farms are the object of this resolution as distinguished from free-ranging deer and elk herds inside fenced areas that are very large enclosures holding semi-wild herds).

Deer feeding should be banned on all lands. Deer feeding occurs where things like corn, minerals or salt blocks are placed to feed and attract deer.

Many deer hunters advocate for management strategies around harvest that favor larger antler spreads (older deer) known as "APR" or antler point restriction. Older deer are more likely to carry CWD.

Minnesota's DNR has been vigorous in its attempts to locate the presence of CWD in wild deer in Minnesota. Significant efforts and expense have been expended in efforts to prevent the spread of CWD in MN. The Izaak Walton League commends them for that.

Concluding concerns:

CWD has the potential to eradicate deer and related animal populations over large portions of their range in North America. Extermination of these animals would have significant ripple effects on wildlife populations and outdoor recreation including hunting, wildlife observation and related interactions between people and wildlife.

The relationship between confirmed CWD in wild deer populations and the proximity to "deer farms" is undeniable. Efforts to move regulation of these farms from the MN Board of Animal Health to MN DNR have been unsuccessful. Recently, the office of MN Legislative Auditor has made it clear that the MN

Board of Animal Health has done a less than admirable job of protecting wild deer populations from contamination by deer on captive deer farms.

Minnesota Division IWLA Resolves:

Given the serious nature of CWD-- the Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America on April 27th, 2019 resolves:

- Minnesota shall immediately prohibit the movement of private captive game farm animals intra or inter-state for any reason. That shall include blood, urine, semen and products made from glands.
- Immediately ban any new captive deer farms.
- Immediately proceed to close all existing captive deer farms.
- Provide a buy-out of all existing private captive deer farms funded in part by .50 cents fee as an add on to all deer hunting licenses.
- Ban deer feeding in Minnesota to reduce animal concentrations.
- Prohibit food plots on all lands in Minnesota to reduce animal concentrations.
- Eliminate Antler Point Restriction (APR), a deer management strategy that produces more large older deer which are more prone to carry CWD.
- Manage deer hunting seasons to keep deer densities relatively low to reduce animal crowding.

Resolution approved at joint meeting of the WJ McCabe Chapter IWLA Board of Directors and Conservation Issues Committee Tuesday March 12th, 2019

This resolution is intended to be sent to:

MN IWLA for action at its April 2019 meeting

MN DNR

Media outlets with a cover letter

National IWLA resolutions Chair and IWLA Conservation Director

Submitted by Dave Zentner

Conservation Issues Committee member