

PRESS RELEASE

Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association

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WDHA Disappointed with the Governor's Comments on AB519

The Wisconsin Deer Hunters Association (WDHA) is disappointed with comments made by Governor Doyle during the signing of Assembly bill 519 last week, which allows the practice of baiting and feeding deer to continue. "We realize the situation the legislature put the governor into, but his statements on why he signed the bill are troubling. Apparently the Governor bought into false statements made by those who favor the practices, especially those who make money selling corn," says WDHA President Mark Toso. Doyle noted that there are regional differences, but every reputable survey taken has shown support for a statewide ban among deer hunters. We also believe public support is overwhelming. "Even if hunters are equally divided we should do what's right to protect the deer herd and our agriculture industry," continues Toso.

In his press release Doyle stated he directed the Departments of Natural Resources (DNR) and Agriculture, Trade, & Consumer Protection (DATCP) to continue their efforts to control the disease. Doyle also stated that his administration has worked very hard to do everything they can to control the spread of this disease. "Yet this bill takes away one of the few tools they have to control the spread and hopefully buy time to eradicate the disease," says Toso. "In fact everyone we talked to in his administration believes that a statewide ban is critical in controlling the spread of CWD into new areas" he continues. This bill will not help curb the spread of CWD, as it is well established that deer can often travel great distances. Without a statewide ban baiting and feeding can allow the disease to become established in new areas. "All this bill does is continue the trend of closing the barn door after the horse is out," says Toso.

There are no success stories to report on CWD, as the infected area keeps expanding every time new testing results come in. "Other than providing some limited funding, what has anyone in Madison done to help get rid of CWD? Instead of supporting the agencies headed with eliminating this disease the legislature keeps putting up roadblocks," says Toso.

The science is clear on the disease transmission risks with baiting and feeding. But disease risk is not the only issue. We have an uncontrollable deer population in many areas up north causing habitat destruction, forest damage and car collisions mainly due to baiting and feeding. Hunters are unhappy with many of the regulations put in place to try and manage the deer herd but they have so far been ineffective. "Common sense says if we would eliminate baiting and feeding we wouldn't have these problems. We also have a serious risk to our agriculture industry that no one is considering," continues Toso.

This bill is in no way a compromise, it was written by legislators with the sole intent of continuing the practice at all costs. There are some serious enforcement issues as well. Despite what they say, this bill will not help curb the spread of CWD. In fact there is evidence from the tuberculosis outbreak in Michigan that it may increase the disease transmission risk. "If the Governor and legislature think that deer feeding and CWD are important to residents of northern Wisconsin, wait until CWD spreads there," says Toso.

Rep. Gary Sherman along with the bill's other authors such as Rep. Scott Gunderson ignored every scientist and biologist at the DNR and DATCP, as well as the advice of experts from around the world. In fact before CWD was found Rep. Gunderson and Rep. Gronemus were opposed to baiting and feeding deer to protect the agriculture industry. "We want to know what changed, other than finding the worst possible disease for our deer herd. Someday, when the full impact of

CWD is felt by residents of this state I hope they will take full responsibility for their actions. Somehow I seriously doubt they ever will," says Toso.

The WDHA is a statewide group of conservation minded deer enthusiasts whose mission is to promote scientific and ecological based deer management in Wisconsin. Our philosophy is do what's best for the deer herd, as we believe that is ultimately what's best for the deer hunter.

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