

January 25, 2021

Minnesota Deer farmers Assn.

President Rich Meech

Representative Rick Hansen

Chair House Environment and Natural Resources Finance and Policy Committee

Re: Opposition to HF 219

Representative Hansen and Committee members,

The Minnesota Deer Farmers Association stands in opposition to following provisions in HF 219.

Section 1, Subd 1, (d) Lines 2.1-2.3

Licensed hunters may kill and possess escaped farmed cervidae.

In this provision, we are concerned with the precedent that this sets which essentially removes ownership of farmed cervidae once they leave the enclosure. We also question the provision on constitutional grounds given that property may be seized by hunters with no compensation being made to its rightful owner. The provision also does not take in to account escapes that occur due to circumstances beyond the control of the farmer; vandalism, storm damage, falling trees.

Section 1, Subd 1, (e) Lines 2.4-2.5

Licensed hunter killed deer tested for CWD

All deer which currently die for any reason must be tested. Our opposition is to allowing hunters to kill escaped deer for reasons outlined in the previous paragraph of this letter.

Section 2 subd 6 Lines 2.11-2.14

Identification

Owner's phone number and address to be added to ID tags.

This provision would require retagging all captive whitetail deer on a farm. This brings about an undue hardship on the owner by requiring unnecessary handling of animals and retagging. Under current requirements, it is easy to identify the owner with a simple call to the Board of Animal Health and referencing the number on the animal's current ID tag. We view this change as a solution looking for a problem and does not address any known concern.

The language of this bill is specifically prejudicial against cervid farmers. There are no such provisions in statute concerning the escape of other farmed livestock. It represents a further attempt to regulate the Cervid industry which is already the most heavily regulated livestock industry in Minnesota. It presupposes that all farmed cervidae have CWD which is a patently false assumption. No cervidae farmer wants his/ her animals to escape and does everything in their power to prevent escapes. The motivation provided by the potential loss of valuable assets, combined with the provisions in current statute are more than sufficient to motivate farmers to eliminate escapes.

Sincerely,
Rich Meech
President, Minnesota Deer Farmers Association