



**CWD Action Coalition Position Statement on Farmed Cervidae Operations and Chronic Wasting Disease Prevention and Management  
January 2023**

*Whereas*, the presence of wild cervids (deer, elk, and moose) on the landscape represents an intrinsic value to Minnesotans residing in all corners of our state; and

*Whereas*, wild cervids hold great cultural value for all Minnesotans, including the Anishinaabeg and [Dakota], among whom deer, elk, or moose are featured within many traditional stories and exemplify generosity and the abundance of creation; and

*Whereas*, the hunting of wild cervids is a deep-rooted tradition amongst Minnesotans, with around 500,000 people purchasing a deer hunting license each fall and participating in a tradition that connects them to one another, to the land they hunt on, and to the food they eat; and

*Whereas*, deer hunting generates nearly \$500 million annually in total economic activity to the state and is a crucial part of Minnesota’s economy;<sup>1</sup> and

*Whereas*, the hunting of wild cervids was preserved as a tribal treaty right to ensure tribal members had continued access to traditional foods and cultural practices, including for example, the first kill ceremony which celebrates an individual’s transformation from child to adult provider, now accountable for one’s family and community; and

*Whereas*, wild cervids continue to be a significant source of lean, healthy protein for Minnesotans and tribal communities and helps address food insecurity and rising rates of chronic disease; and

*Whereas*, hunting cervids supports healthy lifestyles, traditional and cultural practices, and keeps cervid populations in balance; and

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<sup>1</sup> MINN. DEP’T NATURAL RESOURCES, MINN. WHITE-TAILED DEER MANAGEMENT PLAN: 2019-2028 ii (2019).

*Whereas*, Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a prion based disease that is terminally fatal to all cervid animals who contract the prion; and

*Whereas*, the spread of the disease presents an immediate threat to our state's wild cervid animals and could lead to the loss of healthy cervid populations throughout the state; and

*Whereas*, health-concerns related to the consumption of CWD-infected animals is likely to lead to a reduction in hunter retention and recruitment across the state; and

*Whereas*, a loss of deer hunting participation due to the spread of CWD would have a direct negative impact on business across the state, especially in areas outside the metro, including: sporting goods stores, hospitality businesses, butcher shops, taxidermists, etc.; and

*Whereas*, the movement of captive cervids for the benefit of captive cervid operators has proven to present an unacceptable risk to our state's wild deer, moose, and elk and those who hunt, photograph, or otherwise value wild cervids on the landscape; and

*Whereas*, wild cervids are a public resource being threatened by a small private industry;<sup>2</sup> and

*Whereas*, the state has a duty and trust responsibility to protect said public resource.

*Now therefore be it resolved*, that the undersigned hereby agree and advocate for:

- An immediate moratorium on any new captive cervid<sup>3</sup> operation in Minnesota, except for cervid facilities created for the following purposes: wildlife research, rehabilitation, reintroduction efforts, or zoological facilities accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.
- The closure of all currently operating cervid operations in Minnesota, except for captive cervid facilities created for the following purposes: wildlife research, rehabilitation, reintroduction efforts, or zoological facilities accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. This coalition advocates for the compensation of captive cervid owners, operating in full regulatory compliance, for the loss of their herd. The process for indemnification and payouts performed by the USDA could serve as a model for compensating operators.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> JOHN KECKHAVER CONSULTING, LLC, MINN. CERVID FARMING AND ITS ECONOMIC IMPACT 8 (2017) (estimating the economic impact of cervid farms in Minnesota in 2016 as \$24.2 million).

<sup>3</sup> The use of the word “cervid” is intended to include all members of the *Cervidae* family, including, but not limited to, white-tailed deer, elk, moose, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Based on information provided by the USDA we estimate the total compensation to the operators, under the USDA model, to be approximately \$24 million. This number is generated from the \$3,000 maximum payout allowed by the UDSA for a cervid animal, multiplied by the

- A ban on the interstate and intrastate transportation of live cervids except to a terminal facility. Provisions may be made for transportation to a terminal facility, but not a “terminal hunt facility.” An allowance for the movement of wild cervid animals within the boundaries of the state of Minnesota for the purposes of research, reintroduction, or rehabilitation, or the movement of captive cervids between zoological facilities accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums, should be made.
- A prohibition on the sale, transfer, or movement of bodily fluids originating from cervids, including, but not limited to, doe urine and semen straws.

*Sincerely,*

Minnesota Conservation Federation  
Fond du Lac Band of Lake Superior Chippewa  
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers- Minnesota Chapter  
Bluffland Whitetails Association  
Minnesota Chapter of the Wildlife Society  
Minnesota Deer Hunters Association  
Minnesota Division of the Izaak Walton League of America  
National Deer Association  
National Wildlife Federation  
Sportsmen for the Boundary Waters

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roughly 8,000 captive cervids present in the state according to the Board of Animal Health  
September 2020 Farmed Cervid Program Report.