

HOUSE RESEARCH

Bill Summary

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Overview

In the past few years, chronic wasting disease (CWD) has become a major concern for hunters and other persons interested in wildlife, for game farm owners, and for farmers who raise elk and deer for the niche meat market. Regulation of "cervids" (deer, elk, moose, reindeer, caribou, etc.) has been split between the Minnesota Department of Agriculture, the Board of Animal Health, and the Department of Natural Resources. Also, despite substantial tightening of controls over the registration and movement of these animals in the last two years, many authorities believe health risks to wildlife and humans are still too great. House File 649 clarifies authority for disease control in wildlife and confined herds and makes permanent certain import restrictions that were scheduled to expire on June 1, 2003.

Section

1 **Definitions.**

Subd. 1. Cervidae. Clarifies the definition of cervidae to include all members of the cervid family and names several species.

Subd. 2. Farmed cervidae. Amends the existing definition of farmed cervidae so that it will include all cervid animals raised for any purpose.

Subd. 3. Owner. This definition remains unchanged.

Subd. 4. Herd. This new definition establishes the common (herd) relationship between animals that are housed together or are moved or comingled from time to time

Section

and from place to place.

- 2 **Slaughter of farmed cervidae.** Allows slaughtered cervidae to be inspected under the state meat inspection program in addition to the federal inspection program.
- 3 **Fencing.** Increases the standards for fencing of cervidae herds and requires that fences built to lower standards in years past must be brought up to new standards by January 1, 2004.
- 4 **Disease control programs.** The headnote on this section is changed to more accurately reflect the purpose of board of animal health rules for management of farmed cervidae.
- 5 **Farmed cervidae identification.** A change in current law requires that after January 1, 2004, the identification tag of each farmed cervidae animal must be visible from a distance of 50 yards and the identification must be applied to all animals by December 31 of the year of birth or before the animal is moved from the birth premises.
- 6 **Inspection.** The division of authority for inspection of farmed cervidae is more clearly delineated between the commissioner of agriculture, the board of animal health, and the commissioner of natural resources. Specific authority to inspect "farmed cervidae facilities" is added.
- 7 **Mandatory registration.** New language requires that as of January 1, 2004, no person may possess live cervidae in Minnesota unless the person is registered with the board of animal health. Illegally possessed cervidae can be seized and destroyed by the commissioner of natural resources.
- 8 **Mandatory surveillance for chronic wasting disease.** New language that will become effective January 1, 2004, requires that each farmed cervidae heard must be inventoried by a veterinarian each 12 months; movement of farmed cervidae from one location to another must be reported to the board of animal health within 14 days after the move; and all farmed cervidae over 16 months old must be tested for CWD upon slaughter or if they die.
- 9 **Cervidae import restrictions.** Cervidae import restrictions originally imposed by a 2002 law were scheduled to expire on June 1, 2003. An amendment to the law makes the import restrictions permanent.
- 10 **Game and fish rules.** The commissioner of natural resources is given new authority to "manage wildlife health."
- 11 **Power to manage wildlife health.** A new subdivision gives the commissioner of natural resources wide-ranging authority to adopt emergency rules that would allow the implementation of measures necessary to prevent or control wildlife diseases.
- 12 **DNR wildlife licenses.** Allows a portion of certain hunting license fees to be deposited in a fund for big game health management. Places a rolling cap on the fund at \$2,500,000.
- 13 **License requirements.** Removes the ability for a person to breed and propagate moose, elk, caribou, and deer on private land (a game farm) by merely obtaining a license from the DNR.
- 14 **Taking, possessing, and transporting wild animals for certain purposes.** Allows the commissioner of natural resources to issue special permits for wildlife health management. Also, prohibits the taking or possessing of wild or native deer as pets.
- 15 **Taking wild animals for wildlife health management.** New language allows the commissioner to issue a no-cost license to take wild animals for purposes of wildlife health management.
- 16 **Importation of hunter-harvested cervidae.** New language strictly limits the portions of a hunter-harvested cervidae carcass that can be imported into Minnesota from another state.
- 17 **Possession of live cervidae.** Beginning January 1, 2004, it is illegal for a person to possess live cervidae except as authorized by laws and rules of the board of animal health.

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- 18** **Deer season and restrictions.** Gives the commissioner of natural resources flexibility to designate special hunting seasons at any time of the year.
- 19** **Repealer.** Repeals two subdivisions relating to procedures for managing farmed cervidae that escape from a confinement area or wild cervidae that get into a cervidae confinement area.