

From the IDAHO SPORTSMEN'S CAUCUS ADVISORY COUNCIL

Ada County Fish & Game League ** Blackfoot River Bowmen ** Boise Valley Fly Fishermen ** Deer Hunters of Idaho ** Foundation for North American Wild Sheep ** Idaho Bird Hunters ** Idaho Falconers Association ** Idaho Huntsmen's Association ** Idaho Outfitters & Guides Association ** Idaho Rifle & Pistol Association ** Idaho State Bowhunters ** Idaho Trappers Association ** Idaho Trout Unlimited Council ** Idaho Walleye Unlimited ** Idaho Wildlife Federation ** National Wild Turkey Federation ** Pheasants Forever ** Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation ** Safari Club International ** Snake River Cutthroats

TO: Honorable Senators
FROM: Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council
Subject: House Bill 174

The Sportsmen's Caucus Advisory Council is opposed to House Bill 174 for the following reasons:

● The Expansion of Cervidae Allowed in Pened Farms is too

Great a Risk to our Wildlife – Many states including Wisconsin, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, and Wyoming, plus the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, now have Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in their wild game populations. All of those states plus Michigan, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Montana have CWD in their captive animal populations. Many of these wild infections are related to infected penned populations. White tailed deer require special fencing to contain them in most states. This bill provides for no such requirement. White tailed deer have a particularly high risk of carrying the disease and spreading it.

◆ Eradication programs in wild populations are costly and damaging to wild herds
- Eradication of deer in infected areas: Once infected with CWD, the only way to contain that infection is through large sampling of animals to define the boundaries of the infected area. Then that area must have virtually all of its deer eradicated. Wisconsin reduced deer populations to below 5 per square mile by killing over 30,000 deer in a known infected area and all had to be tested for CWD. The DNR uses extra hunter tags and trained, hired marksmen over bait stations to destroy the infected deer herds.¹

● **A Huge Risk of State Expense** – Wisconsin has spent \$20 million dollars since February of 2002 in testing and eradication efforts to control CWD.²

● **Risks for Loss of Hunting Economic Activity** – Big game hunting in Idaho creates \$133,000,000 of economic activity yearly.³ That is more than 150 times the value of cervidae farms. An outbreak of CWD in Idaho's wild game herds would frighten many people away from eating game meat and hunting. If the CWD infection rate in the wild herds were to exceed 50%, a study indicates that 50% of hunters would not hunt, eliminating over \$60,000,000 in hunters' spending in our state.⁴

● **Health Risks** – If a connection between CWD and infections in livestock or humans was ever established, economic losses would be astronomical. At this time no such link has been established. CWD belongs to a family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) similar to mad cow disease in cattle and scrapie in sheep. There is no known relationship with other TSE diseases of animals or humans. Public health officials recommend that human exposure to the CWD agent be avoided while research continues.⁵



● **Volunteer Monitoring is Ridiculous** — No disease with these risks can be allowed to have the industry run by voluntary testing and surveillance. This type of laxness will guarantee a deluge of penned farms moving to Idaho to avoid the regulatory requirements of other states and may result in the dumping of high risk (or even infected) animals into our state. Michigan found in an audit that 37% of the operators were out of compliance with that state's mandatory program.⁶ A voluntary program is useless. What operator would voluntarily report results that would result in the destruction of his animals?

● **Hunter Liability for Killing Escape Animals; No limit on Time or Distance Traveled** — If there were any doubts this is an egregiously self-serving bill for the benefit of the small minority these businesses represent, this item should convince. The inability of the owner to contain these animals results in their escape (escapes that are not uncommon.) That animal not only threatens Idaho's wildlife resources and the economic engine they represent, but these owners want no responsibility for their loss either. So, some hunter miles away and months or years later, is liable for taking the animal in a legal hunting season. These animals, especially "shooter bulls", can be valued at \$10,000 or more. How can a person be expected to tell an escapee animal from a wild one under hunting conditions?

● **The Concerns of the Idaho Department of Fish and Game are expressly to be Ignored and Disallowed Standing.** —The department that is the representative of the sportsmen of this state and has jurisdiction over the resources that will be impacted by this legislation is expressly removed from the process of dealing with the regulations, management decisions, and all input into the process. This is another egregious self-serving maneuver by the industry not to be held accountable for what are well-known risks and costs to the public's resources of this type of activity.

● **No Impact on the General Fund** — Given the experiences of other states, this characterization is not realistic. Huge expenses may very well follow this bill's enactment if CWD contaminates the state's wild game herds.

1. Wisconsin DNR website, <http://dnr.wi.gov>
2. Crossley, Alan. CWD Project Leader, Wisconsin DNR
3. U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 2001 *National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation for Idaho*, Revised March 2003.
4. Research paper, Needham, Vaske and Manfredi, *Human Dimensions of Wildlife*, Fall 2004.
5. *Questions and Answers on Chronic Wasting Disease for Hunters*, Wildlife Management Institute and National Shooting Sports Foundation, June 12, 2003.
6. Outdoors Column, Bob Gwizdz, *Ann Arbor News*, March 20, 2005.