

Natural Resources Commission Votes to Lift Deer Baiting Ban

The Michigan Natural Resources Commission on Thursday voted 4-3 to lift the current deer baiting and feeding ban in the state's Lower Peninsula. The ban had been in place since 2008, when Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was detected in a deer at a private deer breeding facility in Kent County.

Baiting will still be prohibited in Deer Management Unit (DMU) 487, the six-county Bovine Tuberculosis zone in northeastern Lower Michigan. The counties where baiting will continue to be prohibited are Alcona, Alpena, Iosco, Montmorency, Oscoda and Presque Isle.

The NRC approved a proposal to allow baiting in limited quantities from Oct. 1 to Jan. 1.

Hunters may place any type of bait, no more than two gallons at a time, across a 10-foot by 10-foot area per hunting location.

The NRC also reinstated recreational feeding of deer in the Lower Peninsula, with the exception of DMU 487. Property owners may place two gallons of bait on their property within 100 yards of their residence year-around.

The NRC also placed a three-year sunset on the regulations, which means it will reconsider the baiting issue again in 2014.

In 2008, the Department of Natural Resources announced it had detected the state's first case of CWD in a three year-old female deer at a private deer breeding facility in Kent County. At the time, the Department followed protocol as outlined in the state's emergency response plan for CWD and immediately banned baiting and feeding of white-tailed deer in the Lower Peninsula. The NRC then passed regulations making the ban permanent, but said it would reconsider the ban in three years, giving the DNR adequate time to perform disease testing and surveillance in the state for CWD.

In the three year period, the DNR tested thousands of white-tailed deer for CWD, but did not detect another case.

The NRC also directed the Department to work with the Legislature to strengthen the penalties for baiting violations. A potential bill sponsor has been identified who supports establishing an escalating scale of penalties for repeat offenders, which would include mandatory hunting license revocation.

If hunters do use bait, the DNR requests they not place bait repeatedly at the same point on the ground, and only place bait out when they are actively hunting. This may minimize the chance of direct and indirect exposure of deer to any unknown disease that may be present.

For more information about CWD, go to www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations. For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/dnr.