

Frequently Asked Questions Lower Peninsula Bait and Feed Ban November 2008 (edited August 2009)

What is the deer bait and feed ban?

Baiting and feeding has been banned for a number of years in Alpena, Alcona, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle due to the outbreak of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in wild white-tailed deer. Because of the confirmation of a deer with chronic wasting disease (CWD) in a privately owned deer in Kent County in 2008, the ban was extended to the entire Lower Peninsula, under the authority of Section 40 108, 1994 PA 45 1, as amended, being MCL 324.40 108 of the Michigan Compiled Laws. The ban applies equally to feeding for recreational viewing as well as hunting. An NRC action on October 10, 2008 made the ban permanent.

What is considered bait?

According to state law, "bait" for deer is "a substance composed of grains, minerals, salt, fruit, vegetables, hay or any other food material, whether natural or manufactured, may lure, entice or attract deer."

Is this ban still necessary?

Yes. Biologists have long known that disease is easily spread among animals that are drawn into close physical proximity by feed. Although the exact means of transmission of chronic wasting disease is not known; most scientists believe any exchange of bodily fluids -- saliva, urine, and feces -- facilitates transmission. One year of testing without finding a CWD positive deer does not mean or ensure the disease is not present. Preventing the spread of the disease if it is in the wild herd is of paramount importance. The protection of a healthy white-tailed deer population in Michigan is important for the following reasons:

- Any regional threat to a healthy deer population is a statewide concern.
- Chronic wasting disease can spread through the deer herd.
- Without appropriate management within the current CWD surveillance zone, the disease may spread to other areas of the state.
- All deer infected with CWD die from the disease.
- White-tailed deer are native to Michigan and it is important to preserve our native wildlife.
- A healthy deer herd is important for hunting traditions. Michigan has more than 725,000 deer hunters who have harvested an average of 450,000 deer annually during the past decade. Deer hunting contributes more than 10 million days of recreation every year.
- Deer hunting annually generates more than \$500 million dollars impact to the state's economy. A healthy deer herd is critical to the state's economy.

Isn't restricting baiting in the entire Lower Peninsula too extreme?

No. The state of Michigan adopted a policy, which was developed by the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Agriculture, six years ago designed to help stop the spread of chronic wasting disease in the event it was detected in a deer or elk within the state or within 50 miles of the state's border. The policy calls for the

immediate end to baiting and feeding within the entire peninsula in which the infected animal was detected.

- One year of testing without finding a CWD positive deer does not mean or ensure the disease is not present. Surveillance programs, not just for CWD but for any wildlife disease cannot guarantee the discovery of all cases of disease. The CWD plan calls for three years of testing and that is what will be done. The situation will be re-evaluated after that testing.
- Contagious diseases will continue to be threats to the free-ranging deer and elk herd. This is due to many factors; such as:
 - The nation-wide illegal movement of live deer and elk, and carcasses,
 - Feeding and baiting of cervids,
 - Globalization that has brought a host of foreign species and diseases to Michigan.
 - The inability of surveillance efforts to detect all disease occurrences.
- For CWD in particular, the seriousness of the disease:
 - There is no evidence of genetic resistance to CWD in white-tailed deer.
 - There are no proven treatments or vaccines for prion diseases and all infections are believed fatal.
 - Acquiring CWD in wildlife would be disastrous, not only in regard to the health of the wild white-tailed deer and elk in Michigan, but financially for the State. In Wisconsin, the DNR has spent over \$35 million since 2002 in its CWD surveillance, management, and eradication efforts. Funding in Wisconsin has come primarily from hunting license revenue, with minimal outside funding. This has required the Department to redirect wildlife program staff and program dollars to maintain the emphasis on CWD management and control.
 - The National CWD Management Plan recommends the elimination of baiting and feeding of deer as a control strategy for containing and eradicating CWD.

"Our primary goal is to protect the health of our wild white-tailed deer and elk populations. Stopping CWD and other diseases from becoming established in our wild deer and elk is our top priority." - Director Becky Humphries. This is why it is important to maintain vigilance and preventative measures such as not allowing feeding or baiting of cervids.

How does this ban affect bear baiting?

Bear hunters may use fish or fish products, meat or meat products or bakery products to bait bears. However, no substance defined by law (see question above “what is considered bait”) as bait for deer may be used in the Lower Peninsula.

How long will the ban be in effect?

On October 10, 2008, an NRC action made the ban permanent.

Can I still feed turkeys?

It is legal to feed turkeys; however, people feeding turkeys must make every effort to prevent deer from gaining access the site. Elevated feeding platforms, for instance, would not be legal if spilled grain from the platform was accessible to deer.

How about hunting over food plots or agricultural fields?

It is legal to hunt over standing crops or food plots.

May I use attractant scents?

Yes. Scent products are not considered bait unless they are designed for deer to ingest or lick, in which case they would be illegal.

What if I discover someone else baiting?

Call our RAP (Report All Poaching) Line at 1-800-292-7800 and report any illegal activity.

Is it illegal to sell bait?

No. The DNR does not regulate the selling of agricultural products.

What's the fine if I'm caught baiting?

The fine for illegal bating is anywhere from \$50 to \$500 and up to 90 days in jail.

For more information:

Controlling CWD in Wisconsin: a Progress Report, Wisconsin DNR, PUB-CE-461 2005
Deer Baiting Issues in Michigan, MDNR, Wildlife Div. Issue Paper 5, Feb. 26, 1999
Deer and Elk Feeding Issues in Michigan, MDNR Wildlife Div. Briefing Paper, Mar. 9, 1999

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