



**House
Legislative
Analysis
Section**

Olds Plaza Building, 10th Floor
Lansing, Michigan 48909
Phone: 517/373-6466

DNR DEER MANAGEMENT

**House Bill 5655 with committee
amendment
First Analysis (5-21-96)**

**Sponsor: Rep. Carl F. Gnodtke
Committee: Agriculture and Forestry**

THE APPARENT PROBLEM:

Michigan's deer herd is estimated to be one of the largest of any state east of the Mississippi, reaching nearly 2 million animals in recent years. While this many deer offer exciting opportunities for well over a million resident and non-resident hunters who buy both gun and bow and arrow deer licenses here each year, they also pose a serious threat to the state's agricultural crops. Particularly in certain counties in the Upper Peninsula, in the "thumb" area, and in southern Michigan, large deer herds can cause serious economic harm to farmers who live in areas where they roam and forage for food. The Department of Natural Resources has tried to alleviate the problem by encouraging the taking of more "antlerless" (i.e. female) deer in the most heavily populated regions through the issuance of special licenses and permits. Apparently, however, some people feel language in the act actually limits the DNR's ability to issue second deer licenses for purposes of controlling deer populations in certain areas, and that specific language is needed to clarify the department's ability to issue second licenses by geographic area for controlling deer populations. In addition, some people feel the department's ability to address this problem could be further enhanced if it were authorized to issue licenses to non-resident hunters allowing them to take only antlerless deer.

THE CONTENT OF THE BILL:

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act currently allows the Department of Natural Resources to issue orders designating the kind of deer (i.e., male or female) that may be taken with either a gun or bow and arrow deer hunting license, and to limit the issuance of a second deer license (using a gun or bow) for use in specific areas where managing deer is necessary. The bill would amend the act to delete language pertaining to the department's ability to limit the issuance of a second license for purposes of managing deer and replace it with language that would permit it to designate the geographic area in which either a first or second deer hunting license, using a gun or bow, would be valid. However, the bill provides that, notwithstanding any other section of the act, the department could not require residents to take only

antlerless (i.e., female) deer during either the gun or bow seasons.

MCL 324.43526 and 324.43527

FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:

The Department of Natural Resources says the bill would not affect state or local budget expenditures. (5-17-96)

ARGUMENTS:

For:

The bill would clarify that the DNR could provide for the issuance of deer hunting licenses that would be valid for use in certain geographic areas, for purposes of managing deer herd levels. Apparently, some people feel current language in the act limits the department from being able to issue second gun or bow licenses in certain areas in order to reduce deer numbers in heavily overpopulated regions of the state, such as in certain counties in the Upper Peninsula. However, in clarifying the matter the House Agriculture and Forestry Committee also added language to the bill that generally would prohibit the department from requiring resident hunters to take only antlerless--that is, female--deer during either the gun or bow seasons, since many hunters' first choice is to shoot a buck. Thus, the department would be free to issue antlerless-only licenses to non-resident hunters, and for use in specific areas, which reportedly is one of the methods used by other states to control deer levels.

POSITIONS:

The Department of Natural Resources supports the bill. (5-17-96)

The Michigan Farm Bureau supports the bill. (5-20-96)

■ This analysis was prepared by nonpartisan House staff for use by House members in their deliberations, and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.

House Bill 5655 (5-21-96)