

SENATE RESOLUTION NO.17

Senator McBroom offered the following resolution:

1 A resolution to urge the Natural Resources Commission and the
2 Department of Natural Resources to end the research study begun in
3 2019 concerning the effectiveness of antler point restrictions as a
4 management tool in the chronic wasting disease core area.

5 Whereas, Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a contagious fatal
6 neurodegenerative disease affecting several species of cervids
7 (deer, elk, and moose), including white-tailed deer. CWD is
8 considered the most important disease currently threatening North
9 American cervids. It belongs to a group of diseases known as
10 transmissible spongiform encephalopathies that are caused by
11 infectious misfolded proteins called prions that attack the brain
12 of infected animals, resulting in death; and

13 Whereas, While CWD has been identified in deer in several

counties in both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas, five counties in the Lower Peninsula have been identified as the Core CWD Area. These counties, Ionia, Kent, Mecosta, Montcalm, and Newaygo, are the focus of the antler point study; and

Whereas, The Department of Natural Resources is studying the influence of antler point restrictions on hunter harvest decisions. While harvest decisions may affect population, herd composition, and demographics, these decisions will not provide any data regarding changes to CWD prevalence, disease transmission, disease related mortality, or other data directly related to CWD within the Core CWD Area; and

Whereas, The antler point restrictions under the study will be in effect through 2021; and

Whereas, The Department of Natural Resources' CWD Response Plan clearly acknowledges that increasing harvest of yearling bucks will minimize disease spread via dispersal. Conversely, antler point restrictions protect most yearling bucks from harvest, facilitating increased dispersal, enlarging the geographic scope of CWD, and increasing the number of mature bucks in the herd. Demographic sampling suggests that mature bucks have up to double the prevalence rate of other deer in the herd; and

Whereas, Adequate safeguards to prevent an adverse impact to the resource caused by antler point restrictions are lacking from this experiment. Eliminating antler point restrictions will increase the harvest of yearling males thus reducing the geographic spread of CWD and also reducing overall herd prevalence; and

Whereas, Discontinuing the study before it is completed is the decision of the Natural Resources Commission in consultation with the director of the DNR. Preliminary data resulting from this study

1 fails to support the premise that antler point restrictions result
2 in changes which could be beneficial to mitigating CWD. This
3 evidence suggests that antler point restrictions resulted in a
4 significant decrease in the deer harvest, which is detrimental to
5 CWD mitigation efforts. Continuing this study will result in
6 irreversible biological harm to the resource due to the lack of
7 adequate safeguards mitigating the adverse impact that antler point
8 restrictions have in areas where CWD is a factor; now, therefore,
9 be it

10 Resolved by the Senate, That we urge the Department of Natural
11 Resources to end research concerning the effectiveness of antler
12 point restrictions as a management tool to reduce chronic wasting
13 disease; and be it further

14 Resolved, That copies of this resolution be transmitted to the
15 Director of the Department of Natural Resources and the members of
16 the Natural Resources Commission.