

## ICTWS POSITION STATEMENT

### **Confinement of white-tailed deer, elk, and other Cervidae for farming or commercial hunting**

"Deer farming" has grown in Illinois in response to demand for hunting and sale of captive white-tailed deer and elk, or their meat and other products. Complex issues surround this industry and existing or attempted regulation has been contentious and controversial. Diseases and their potential impact on human and livestock health are at the forefront of biological issues. Diseases and other biological issues can be framed with science-based facts, conclusions, and recommendations. In contrast, socio-economic issues involve cultural, legal, and ethical arguments not amenable to science-based resolution. The Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society believes it is in the public interest to closely regulate "farming" captive wildlife, either native or exotic, and hunting of animals confined behind high (avg. 2.4 m) fences. We endorse the more general statement (Confinement of Wild Ungulates Within High Fences) adopted by The Wildlife Society, but believe a policy more germane to Illinois is necessary and in the public interest.

While confinement of white-tailed deer may have specific value in the conduct or research, and is recognized as an agricultural activity in Illinois, such activity poses risk of serious adverse impact. We recognize 2 components of confinement of wild cervids within high fences: (1) is production and sale of live animals or their parts; and (2) is confinement of white-tailed deer or other cervids for commercial hunting. The policy of the Illinois Chapter of The Wildlife Society with respect to confinement of white-tailed deer and other cervids for farming or hunting is to:

1. Oppose further conversion of Illinois' native wildlife to private ownership.
2. Oppose commercial hunting of white-tailed deer in high-fenced enclosures. No new enclosures should be allowed and existing areas should be regulated solely by the Illinois Department of Natural Resources.
3. Support regulations and enforcement to prevent escapes of captive cervids and facilitate recovery in the event of an escape.
4. Support a moratorium on construction of new high-fenced facilities and any shipment of live cervids until reliable live animal diagnostic tests are available to detect important infectious diseases.
5. Support collaboration and cooperation with the Illinois Department of Agriculture and other agencies and groups to prevent spread of infectious diseases among deer farming operations and risk of spread to free-ranging native wildlife.
6. Oppose use of funds generated from recreational licenses, tags, and other fees generated by traditional sport hunting for confined-animal inspections and other regulatory activities.

*For Chapter review March 3, 2004*