

This written testimony is to support HB 5321 and, in particular, the prohibition of sterilization of game animals. I reiterate some of what I gave in testimony at the Natural Resources Committee hearing of this bill on Wednesday last on behalf of the Michigan United Conservation Clubs. I must emphasize that I have a good understanding of the rural/urban nature of Washtenaw County and the clash of cultures that exists here having lived in both Ann Arbor and rural Washtenaw County for almost 40 years. My House Representative, Rep. Donna Lasinski, has spoken to this viewpoint difference on more than one occasion. This issue of population control of the deer herd in Ann Arbor is a good example of that dichotomy. The scientific basis of the research permit to allow the sterilization of deer in Ann Arbor is very contentious. It was granted to appease emotions more than to gather useful scientific information upon which to base sound wildlife management. The Ann Arbor City Council was coerced into this policy by animal rights activists who are not educated in wildlife biology and certainly not in the humane use of animals in research (the premise on which the permit was granted).

The study design is faulty in several aspects. The most significant being that immigration and emigration of deer within the release areas of the sterilized deer is not controlled. Nor is there sufficient numbers of the sterilized subjects in comparison to the very large number of deer to be taken in the cull portion of the program, thereby confounding the results of subsequent census taking. In other words, if the culling is successful in removing large numbers of deer from the landscape (which is likely as it is the most efficient, not to mention, humane way to decrease the population), it could cause misinterpretation of the efficacy of the sterilization technique. The statistical and field methods to tease out these complications have not been elucidated.

I can confidently voice this opinion as it is well-founded in my knowledge and experience with wildlife biology, veterinary medicine, and the use of animals in research. I post, below, an excerpt from a letter written by myself and fellow resident concerning this subject published in the Spring edition of Michigan Out of Doors Magazine. This excerpt is the basis of most of my previous testimony before the committee:

“Sterilization as a wildlife management tool is not only impractical and expensive, it could even be considered less humane than a well-placed bullet (or arrow). The American Veterinary Medical Association Panel on Euthanasia considers gunshot a humane form of euthanasia for wild ranging wildlife. It should also be considered that the stress and pain from an abdominal surgery followed by the abortion of any fetuses (if present) are significant and the inability to provide postoperative pain relief and prophylactic antibiotic therapy is problematic. This lack of an ability to follow up your surgical patient is verging upon malpractice, if not an inhumane practice. In addition, survival surgery in a tool shed cannot be considered the same as aseptic surgery required by the Animal Welfare Act. So a sterilization method to control the deer population that is meant to be more humane than a method approved by the AVMA, may be not so. A City Council decision based on emotion to appease animal rights activists instead of proven scientific reasoning is unwise.”

There are many alternatives to this ill-advised procedure such as: the education of residents in the planting of less desirable browse; increasing the doe permit numbers in surrounding rural settings where educating private property owners about the importance of granting access to the hunting public; and, most appropriately, the establishment of urban archery seasons where possible (parks and public property as well as private property owners allowing the same access or availing themselves of the opportunity to do their civic duty).

Several municipalities have instituted urban archery seasons and presently, three urban counties in SE Michigan have an extra deer season to deal with overpopulation.

<https://www.clickondetroit.com/news/michigan-dnr-extends-archery-deer-season-in-macomb-oakland-wayne-counties>

The program instituted by Ann Arbor is wasteful and very expensive not to mention the fact that it will be ineffective in achieving population control. Hunting and culling are the only viable and responsible solutions.

Despite the fact that you will undoubtedly get "heat" for supporting this legislation from a vocal minority of your constituency, I urge you to support it. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this issue further, please do not hesitate to contact me

Respectfully submitted

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