

Economic Impact Study

Indiana Cervidae Farming Industry



Breeding Farm Survey

Prepared By: Indiana Deer and Elk Farmers Association (IDEFA)

With Assistance From: North American Deer and Elk Farmers Association (NADeFA)

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Dear Deer Farmer,

Deer farming is a unique and little known industry within the state of Indiana. As such, it is important to let our state legislators know and understand the economic impact brought into the state by deer farmers. The impact reaches beyond the property boundaries of the farm itself, but well into the local communities through the spending of farm dollars in your community.

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) manages their deer herd, (the wild deer population) through the sale of hunting licenses. Wild deer populations grow to a point of exceeding the area holding capacity. When the wild herd population reaches elevated levels, crop damage increases, nuisance deer complaints in residential areas increase and more critically, deer/vehicle collisions increase with often deadly results to both deer and humans. In severe circumstances populations reach a level where the health of the herd itself is at risk (disease, starvation, etc.).

Wildlife Biologists working for the DNR will establish and recommend a desired wild deer holding capacity for each county within the state. They methodically study area populations and adjust both total numbers and gender specific numbers with the issuance of harvest tags. In extreme cases, "Controlled Hunts" are established such as in parks where the deer have lost their fear of humans and populations have burgeoned. These control functions of the DNR are funded either all or in part by Hunters. Using licensing, the DNR "sells" their surplus herd to their terminal market, the hunting public. This is a very effective, tried and true method used throughout the United States.

All commercial livestock operations utilize terminal markets. Hunting is the terminal market used not only by the DNR with the public herd, but by every commercial Cervidae Farmer for his/her herd as well. Most of the whitetail bucks generated both in the wild, and on commercial Cervidae Farms will travel through this terminal market. In essence, the DNR runs a statewide Hunting Preserve. However, the Cervidae Farmer does not have unencumbered access to the public hunting market. They have two markets in which to sell the product of their investment; 1) Breeder Market, and 2) Hunting *Preserve*. The breeder market trade is only as strong as the value of the Whitetail Bucks it generates through selective breeding. Ultimately, the sale of these magnificent animals is to the hunting public, but this can only happen through the use of "Hunting Preserves." However, due to current administrative order, access to this is highly restricted, and market entry to new preserves is closed. It is for this reason the Cervidae Industry within the State of Indiana must unite and work together with one common message to our Elected Officials. Deer Farming is a livestock business! In nearly all cases, this is one of the last frontiers of "small family farms" in the state. The Hunting Preserve is not only the primary market, but the **ONLY** market for this production. The State needs to reconsider its position on this job creating, revenue generating industry, and protect this small family farming business by changing its position on whitetail hunting in Hunting Preserves. There are now only four Hunting Preserves in the State of Indiana. There are 400 Cervidae Farms. This forces our small business owners to try and find markets outside of Indiana, in which to market their production.

Please help support the advancement of our industry by filling out the attached survey and returning it in the enclosed envelope, by September 15, 2011. We are working with Purdue University in quantifying the information generated. We want to accurately quantify the economic impact of the Cervidae Industry in the state so that we can share this information with our elected officials to aid them in making the right decision on this Critical Issue!

Thank you in advance for your expedient response and cooperation in this study.

IDEFA Board of Directors