

DATE: December 5, 2006 FILE REF: [Click [here](#) and type file ref.]

TO: Secretary Scott Hassett

FROM: Chief Warden Randy Stark

SUBJECT: Significant concerns from the Warden Service regarding baiting and feeding of deer.

I have prepared a separate sixteen page report to highlight the concerns and enforcement activity associated with deer baiting and feeding. No single issue in my 23 years of service as a conservation warden has consumed as many pages of warden deer season narrative like baiting and feeding issues has this year. Many common themes converged from warden reports originating from all corners of the state that clearly suggest the Department take prompt and proactive steps to address the problems associated with baiting and feeding for deer.

The issues are as follows:

- Baiting and feeding results in the privatization of a public resource because it concentrates deer on the private property of those who can put out the most bait, most often. This removes opportunity from hunters of ordinary means who cannot afford to own land and bait. The resulting condition confronts the premise of the conservation ethic, that wildlife is owned by everyone, and everyone should have equal opportunity to enjoy it.
- Science has now confirmed what was heretofore inferred: that CWD can be transmitted via saliva and the artificial concentration of deer through baiting and feeding places our deer herd at higher risk of CWD. In light of this, it is incumbent on us to proactively work with the hunting community in Wisconsin to address the issues associated with deer baiting and feeding to protect the deer herd for future generations.
- Baiting and feeding alters natural movement patterns of the deer (often causing them to go nocturnal), it creates refuges for deer, and reduces opportunity to harvest deer by those who don't or bait. All of which frustrate population control efforts, frustrates hunters, and results in hunters baiting in "self defense".
- Baiting and feeding creates conflict between adjacent landowners and hunters on public lands. This in turn spawns unethical conduct and potentially dangerous emotional conflict between armed people.
- Baiting related issues are frequently the genesis of arguments between hunters on public lands. This leads to ruined hunting experiences and the escalation of conflict.
- Baiting and feeding creates vulnerability for opportunistic poaching of deer at night with lights at feeding stations associated with cabins and residences. Trophy bucks are often the target.
- Issues associated with baiting and feeding consume tremendous amounts of day and night enforcement time and operational resources of the warden service.
- An over-reliance on baiting as a hunting method is resulting in a generation of hunters who know no other way to hunt deer than sitting over a bait pile.

I recognize this report will be very controversial. However, it is my hope that this information serves to promptly open proactive, thoughtful, and serious dialogue with the people of the State of Wisconsin regarding the prudence of continuing to allow baiting and feeding of deer.

Four ingredients are needed to ensure the future of deer hunting: Healthy deer populations, hunters, access to a place to hunt, and a public that accepts hunting. Wardens are reporting issues associated with baiting and feeding deer that are adversely impacting all these factors directly or indirectly.

History

In the course of my career as a conservation warden, I have had the opportunity to witness the birth and maturation of the deer baiting and feeding in this state. Baiting and feeding for deer in Wisconsin started to become popular in the mid to late 1980's. Since that time, baiting and feeding has become increasingly widespread, to the point that baiting and feeding for deer is now arguably ingrained in the culture of Wisconsin deer hunting. I have seen the impacts of baiting go from being largely a debate exploring the ethical contours of baiting in the 1980's, to the serious and widespread implications for the future of hunting that have developed over the past 20+ years.

Baiting and feeding for deer has polarized Wisconsin deer hunters. It was the focus of a study committee in the Deer 2000 initiative. The Deer 2000 debate largely centered on value laden differences of opinion on such things as whether baiting was ethical, triggering extreme polarization of positions and making difficult to gain any sort of consensus on the issue.

There have been several Conservation Congress votes on the topic baiting. Over time, the results have generally been a 50-50 split. However, the most recent Spring Hearing question asking whether people would support a prohibition on baiting (not feeding) was supported in 48 of 72 counties and by a popular vote of 56% of those voting on the issue. This change in sentiment over time seems to be consistent with the sentiment wardens are getting from hunters in the field – that people are increasingly tiring of the issues associated with baiting and feeding.

As baiting became ubiquitous in Wisconsin, many changes were occurring in Wisconsin. Disease control is now prominently displayed on the radar screen of future issues impacting deer hunting. Wisconsin's landscape has become much more fragmented resulting in more land owners, smaller parcels, and more property lines. Finding access to a place to hunt has become more difficult. Deer populations have increased dramatically. With respect to disease management in the deer herd, a significant change is that we now have science we did not have just a few years ago that clearly indicates baiting and feeding of deer has the potential to undermine our disease control efforts.

As often happens with change, it happens gradually and imperceptibly until the velocity and convergence of the change, coupled with other events, makes the connections and impacts obvious. We see the impacts and understand the connections of baiting and feeding clearly now, and we believe the costs far outweigh the benefits in terms of the future of deer hunting.

While valiant efforts have been made to find middle ground on this issue in the past, we cannot continue to avoid the difficult question. Given what we know, is it prudent to continue to allow baiting and feeding for deer in Wisconsin? Like so many issues, the central question ultimately comes down to the classical dilemma created between competing short term interests of the current generation versus long term interest of future generations. Which alternative serves the greater good?

From the perspective of the warden service, we believe this to be a very serious issue that must be addressed promptly. Alternatives considered must be in the best interest of both current and future generations of hunters, and must include serious consideration of entirely eliminating baiting and feeding

for deer. We believe this not only from the perspective of disease control, but equally because of the broader constellation of social issues associated with baiting and feeding that we conclude are not in the best interest of the future of deer hunting.

In an effort to articulate why we have drawn these conclusions, I provide the following information and excerpts from warden reports to communicate the issues associated with baiting and feeding. There are several pages of supporting information provided by wardens regarding what is happening in the field today – specifically, how baiting is adversely impacting the future of deer hunting.

Baiting has been the leading violation for the last three years.

Illegal use of bait was the number one violation for the third year in a row, with the number of baiting cases up 15% (from 221 cases in 2005 to 254 cases in 2006), and illegal feeding cases up 125% (from 20 cases in 2005, to 45 cases in 2006). Baiting represented 22% of the violations during the 2006 gun deer season.

2006 Rank	2005 Rank	Violation	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	% Change
1	1	Illegal use of bait - Firearms	254	221	150	76	87	99	15%
2	2	Trans. loaded gun in vehicle	106	102	113	112	112	118	4%
3	3	Trans. uncased gun in vehicle	88	75	84	117	117	131	17%
4	7	Shoot w/in 50' of a road or across roadway	68	39	65	82	82	83	74%
5	4	Failure to validate tag	48	67	57	52	51	54	-28%
6	9	Hunt deer or bears before or after hours	45	32	27	31	41	39	41%
7	15	Feeding wild animals violations	45	20	27	16	28	0	125%
8	5	Hunt w/in 50' of paved road center	44	51	75	68	69	85	-14%
9	12	Hunt without a license	32	23	8				39%
10	19	Hunt without blaze orange	30	16	16	31	23	33	88%

Baiting is causing conflict.

Baiting is often one of the contributing factors in an increasing amount and intensity of conflict among hunters and landowners on both public and private property.

Baiting has the potential to adversely impact the future health of the deer herd

A healthy deer herd is a prerequisite to deer hunting. Given the recent scientific findings showing one of the ways Chronic Wasting Disease can be transmitted is through saliva, and the research and common knowledge of deer interactions at baiting and feeding locations, this alone should be sufficient to generate serious dialogue to call the question on prudence of continuing to allow baiting and feeding deer.

Baiting undermines the ability to control deer populations and privatizes the deer herd

Baiting undermines the ability to control deer populations by concentrating deer on private property during the deer seasons. What is the difference between a fence and a continuous source of bait on the

ground in terms of privatizing deer movements? One holds deer within an area through an artificial physical barrier; the other attracts and holds deer in an area through artificially fulfilling the number one item on physiological hierarchy of needs. In either case, the end result is not in the best interest of the future of hunting: deer movements are artificially controlled; many deer hunters of ordinary means have reduced access to a public resource; and the effectiveness of deer hunters, the number one tool in deer population control and management, is severely limited. Deer do not need to move when everything they need is provided on a small area of their range. Several years ago wardens heard loud and clear from hunters that they saw more deer the year deer baiting and feeding was banned because deer reverted back to natural movement patterns.

Baiting begets more baiting

In talking to hunters, wardens have learned that widespread baiting has created a widespread reflexive response in the hunting community. The warden service has labeled this “baiting in self defense”. Since hunters feel everyone else is baiting, they feel they need to do it also to at least attempt to level the playing field. Many hunters contacted would prefer not to bait, but they feel they it necessary to compete. They indicate that if everyone else stopped baiting, they would stop too.

Baiting makes deer, particularly trophy bucks, more vulnerable to poaching.

Baiting creates a situation of vulnerability for wildlife, and opportunity for poachers who desire to exploit the resource. Wardens have seen an exponential increase in cabin shooting, a term we use to describe situations where people place out feed close a dwelling, illuminate the feed with a light, and illegally shoot deer at night from the dwelling. Many of these people focus on trophy bucks, thereby stealing opportunity from law abiding hunters. The recent Blue River Outfitters case is a great example – subtract baiting from that equation and the poachers in that case would not have been nearly as effective.

Baiting is consuming warden time that could be more productively used

Wardens are spending tremendous amounts of time on issues relating to baiting and feeding. This is time that could be spent elsewhere if baiting and feeding were not consuming a growing amount of the financial and human resources in the warden service.

Summary and recommendation:

Scientific studies have conclusively demonstrated CWD can be spread from deer to deer through saliva. Science has now confirmed what was heretofore inferred: that CWD can be transmitted via saliva and the artificial concentration of deer through baiting and feeding places our deer herd at higher risk of CWD. Until now, proponents of baiting argued, among other things, that we did not know for sure how CWD spread. They were right. We did not know then, but we do now, and we have the responsibility to act to protect Wisconsin’s deer herd and deer hunting tradition for current and future generations.

Additionally, and equally important, this report has outlined many of the social problems associated with baiting and feeding that result in conflicts between hunters and adjacent landowners, the alteration of natural movement patterns of deer, increased vulnerability to poaching, undermining the ability to manage deer populations by creating concentrations of deer on private lands – essentially privatizing the deer herd, and creating a generation of deer hunters who know no other way to hunt deer other than by baiting.

In light of these issues, it is incumbent on us to proactively work with the hunting community in Wisconsin to promptly open proactive, thoughtful, and serious dialogue with the people of the State of Wisconsin regarding the prudence of continuing to allow baiting and feeding of deer.

At the end of the day, our responsibility is to endeavor to pass on our natural resources to future generations – unimpaired. If future generations were part of the debate and had a seat at the table with the information we have today, what would they do? It's our job at this point to represent that currently empty chair and advocate for those who will be sitting in it in the future – just like someone else did for us in the past.

Compilation of comments from wardens across the state.

Please note the common themes that resonate from all corners of the state regarding baiting and feeding. Many of these warden comments come directly from warden reports with little editing. Any editing that was done was done carefully to retain the meaning with fewer words. Where a comment is not attributed to a particular warden or location in the state, it generally reflects a more generalized trend. The following are the comments:

Warden Schartner (Drummond). Some hunters are paying people to bait for them. Some hunters feel that paying someone to bait an area on the public hunting grounds where they intend to put their deer blind, gives them the right to claim the area as their own property. Of course the investment ratchets up the conflict. Schartner received a hot line concerning a young hunter who was approached by a MN Resident Deer Hunter both were hunting National Property (public hunting grounds). The MN Hunter requested that the youth move on to a different area. The MN hunter informed the youth that he had paid to have someone bait the area for him prior to the deer season and if the youth wished to continue to take advantage and hunt the baited area, he would have to pay the MN Hunter to remain in the area. The MN Hunter told the youth that his payment would be applied toward what he had paid to have the area baited. The youth contacted his hunting party, at which time a group from the hunting party attempted to make contact with the MN Hunter, but he failed to come out of the woods, until the season hours closed and the hunting party left.

Warden Pfeiffer (Mercer) received several complaints of conflicts between hunters arising from feelings of ownership of areas of public lands resulting from the hunter's investment of time and money to place bait in the area they intend to hunt. In some cases these conflicts were resolved quickly by one unhappy hunter leaving the area, in other cases they escalated into verbal confrontations and/or complaints to Warden Pfeiffer of harassment. In all cases these conflicts are a problem. These conflicts seem to be getting more common every year and Warden Pfeiffer believes it is only a matter of time before one such conflict escalates into violence. According to Warden Peters, the biggest conflict that I see is the conflict between baiters and non-baiters.

Warden Michels (Park Falls) received hotline complaints of territorial conflicts between hunters where excessive bait was being used on public land.

Warden Rick Koch (Laona) reports that one conflict between hunters occurred in the Hiles area involving hunters who got too close to another hunter with an established bait pile and stand on public lands.

Threats were made but after officers responded to the area the hunters who had made the threats could not be located.

Warden Michael MacKenzie (Boulder Junction) had a lot of people complaining about baiting. So much bait had been dumped the two weeks prior to and during the season that many believed it stopped the deer from moving around during legal hours. MacKenzie did have a lot of late shooting the first few days and had a couple complaints of late shooting the last weekend. Baiting seems to be dividing hunters. MacKenzie had several older hunters (40's-60's yrs of age) make the same comment which he found interesting. They stated "we are not carrying on the tradition/heritage of hunting by baiting deer". One guy stated that baiting is only allowing hunters to harvest deer, not actually "hunt" them.

Wardens Thole (Amery) and Herzfeldt spoke to a landowner about an ongoing feud with his neighbor. The wardens learned that the landowner stole his neighbors trail camera, placed a dead deer carcass near his neighbor's deer stand, and dumped gasoline on his bait near the stand. The landowner told the wardens he was mad at his neighbor because he was baiting and luring all the deer to his property. The wardens cited the landowner for interfering with hunting.

Wardens Krsnich and Bartz (Spooner) investigated a complaint in Sawyer County of an individual illegally baiting/feeding deer. Upon investigation the wardens located two illegal feeders. They were each gravity hoppers capable of holding 5,000 pounds of corn. Neither of them was being hunted over. The property owner had a 3,000 acre contiguous piece of land which he intensively managed for wildlife. He told the wardens that he had 56 acres of food plots on his land distributed between 33 different locations. He also told the wardens that he feed the deer before and during the deer season because if he did not that the feeding and baiting his neighbors did pulled all of the deer off of his property even with all of the food plots and active land management he was engaged in. He further stated that he hated baiting and feeding and that the Department needed to make it illegal as nothing good came from it for anyone. The gentleman was cited for illegal feeding.

Warden Peery (Ladysmith) reported there were too many large bait piles to note. Several were found containing 10 and 20 gallons of illegal baiting material. Wardens found more illegal bait piles than they did legal ones. Considerable time was spent trying to catch someone using them.

Warden Peters and Warden Nerva (Lincoln County) worked on enforcement of the baiting and feeding laws during the gun deer season, as well as during the week before. Numerous citations were issued for excessively sized baits. Interestingly, it appeared that many of the offenders knew what the law was, but did not bother to measure the amount of bait that they were placing.

Warden Tim Price (Eagle River) investigated a complaint he had received and pre-scouted prior to the 2006 gun deer season relating to too much bait. Once at the scene Price observed that the hunter had cut a shooting lane approximately 200 yards long and 5-10 feet wide on state land. Price later learned from the hunter that baiting was occurring since August and the tree stands were present for the last four years. Charges are pending for illegal bait, tree stands on state property, destruction to state property, ATV use on state land and baiting more than 24 hours prior to the hunting season.

Warden Michels (Park Falls) cited 10 hunters for hunting over illegal/excessive bait on opening day. Seven of the 10 also used ATVs to access an area of Price Co. forest where ATVs were not allowed and four of those had permanent stands that were screwed into the trees and also cut trees to make shooting lanes.

Warden Dryja (Langlade County) cited an individual who was hunting over two piles of corn totaling approximately 60 Gallons. Dryja contacted another subject who was hunting over two illegal metal gravity feeders. The subject was still hunting 29 minutes after the close of season. Citations were issued appropriately.

Warden Schartner (Drummond) walked in on an over bagging complaint opening morning, finding a 16 year old boy sitting over more then 6 gallons of corn, pumpkins and two mineral blocks. It so happened that the youth had yet to see the bait, he arrived the night before.

South Central Region wardens encountered a great deal of illegal baiting this deer season. Twenty-four citations for baiting were issued in the region, and 12 in Rock County alone.

One hunter had an illegal feeder in Dodge County, which he had filled with about one hundred pounds of corn. The hunter complained that he had only 16 acres and that he needed to do *something* to attract the deer.

On a piece of state land in Dodge County, corn and apples were found, but it was placed in a manner to facilitate shooting deer at night with the aid of headlights. No one was found to be hunting over the bait during the day.

Supervisor Holmes (Poynette) reports many of the subjects cited in Dodge, Columbia and Sauk Counties for illegal baiting knew the baiting law was in effect, but were willing to risk a citation to get the "edge."

Warden Casey Krueger (Portage) received a complaint of several individuals who had been hunting over a baited area on opening morning and had shot an eight point buck over the bait. Krueger observed both subjects hunting over bait and cited both and seized the buck.

Warden Boyd Richter, Janesville, investigated an area that was observed baited with corn and deer pellets on private land in Avon Township. The suspect hunter had shot an adult doe within about 20 yards of the bait pile on the property. The landowner admitted to placing a 25 pound bag of corn and a 25 pound bag of "Buck Grub" pellets for bait, but claimed he was not aware it was illegal. Two subjects were cited for placing and hunting over illegal bait for deer. Richter seized the doe from the hunter.

Warden Heather Gottschalk of Beaver Dam and recruit warden Dave Oginski seized an eleven point buck from a hunter that had shot the deer during the archery season over illegal bait area on Friday. The hunter was baiting with over one hundred (100) lbs. of corn.

Wardens Boyd Richter and Mike Dieckhoff, Rock County, located 9 illegal bait piles prior to season. On the opening day of the deer season, wardens made contact at four of the nine illegal baits and issued 4 citations.

Warden Michael Green of Wisconsin Dells issued five (5) baiting citations to hunters during the season.

Warden Casey Krueger of Portage investigated a baiting complaint on a property near the Pardeeville area. Krueger observed the individual hunting over the baited area. The subjects did not display a back tags to avoid easy identification. The subjects were cited for hunting over a baited area as well as hunting without a back tag.

Warden John Buss of Sauk City had received a baiting complaint prior to the deer season. Buss had scouted the area and found three feeding stations with trail cameras. He and Deputy Warden Travis Hilliard contacted the group of hunters and issued citations.

It was suggested by several traditional hunters that they would like to see, like bear hunting, an every other year approach to baiting. Where one year we would have a baiting season and the following year we would have a traditional year/no baiting. That way those who wish to hunt with out competing with the baiters can do so, and the warden could catch those needed to be caught. Then one would not have to leave the state and go where baiting is not allowed.

Wardens report one of the problems encountered with baiting is that the baiter now feels an ownership to that piece of public land and there are more hostile encounters with other hunters in the area and also a lot more tree stands are being stolen because they are in the baiter's area. This creates undue conflict in the woods.

Wardens report cabin shooting is a huge problem. Shots are heard on most nights. Wardens in the far north feel it gotten out of control and that the only solution is to end baiting and feeding. Although not a preferred alternative, banning baiting and feeding during hunting seasons would solve many problems.

Wardens Peery (Ladysmith) and Barnhardt received significantly more baiting/feeding complaints prior to the start of the season, compared to last year. These complaints resulted in a heavy investment of field time prior to the season start as well as dominating enforcement activities during the season. Wardens saw increased recreational feeding violations as non-hunter landowners perceived the need to compete with their baiting/hunting neighbors to keep deer on their property. Some animosity was noted between neighbors as Wardens saw an increase in reports of illegal baiting being received from adjoining property owners. Wardens issued approximately 15 citations this season for illegal bait or feed violations along with more than double that amount in warnings being issued.

As a result to the baiting activity, wardens Peery and Barnhardt noted that there were significantly more late shots heard as people are sitting in their stands longer waiting for the deer to come to the corn pile. Some shots were heard as late as 30 minutes after the end of hunting hours and this was on a regular basis!

Warden Peery reported that in 1999, wardens in the northern region cited 30 people for hunting over illegal bait piles and we cited almost half of that in Rusk County alone. While looking through the 1999 deer season report, I found this quote by then regional warden Dave Zeug. "Once again this year wardens have noticed the dramatic impact that baiting and feeding has on the Wisconsin deer hunt. One veteran warden stated that in his 25 plus years in service, absolutely nothing has changed deer hunting and a warden's work as much as the feeding and baiting of deer. While it can be argued that this makes for a safer hunt, the repercussions of this type of activity is immense, be it conflicts over hunting sites on public land or the concentration and subsequent lack of natural movement of deer for the non-baiting hunters or the late hinting/night hunting that takes place over these bait piles".

Baiting is the number one hunting related issue in Lincoln County according to Warden Peters; the overwhelming majority of hunters that Peters talked to felt that it would be a good thing if baiting were

banned. This included most of the people I cited for illegal baits. The biggest reason given for the use of bait was that they needed to bait in order to keep competitive with others who baited nearby.

Several hunters complained to Warden Peters that they were not seeing the deer that they used to, and felt that it was because of baiting. They felt that the deer were not moving naturally during the day and felt that they could not hunt the way they wanted to because of the influence of bait over natural deer movement.

Almost all of the baits that I found had a lot of deer sign around them, commented Warden Peters but when contacted the hunters using the bait reported seeing very few deer, if any. In one instance a landowner was contacted with several excessive baits on the property. There was a lot of deer sign around, but the hunter declared annoyance with the DNR for their ability to count deer. I pointed out the deer sign in and around the bait stations and explained that he had several fat and happy deer that would gladly wait until after dark to eat the corn.

This is indicative of the type of hunter that bait is creating. Many are unable to read the woods good enough to figure out why deer would like one spot over another, and pre-season scouting amounts to fitting the ATV between the trees far enough in to dump a pile of corn on the ground.

That brings me to my last point on this issue, states Warden Peters. In Lincoln County, baiting and illegal ATV use goes hand and hand in the fall. This time of year, you can follow just about any ATV track into a bait pile. We are seeing more people pre-baiting their hunting spots this way and it has become a problem with people dumping excessive baits with the expectation that the baits will be eaten down by the opener. Of course, this all amounts to a huge workload issue for Wardens in the field, as each bait pile may take several hours of scouting even before contact is made with the suspect.

Wardens Nerva and Peters (Lincoln County) focused their deer season efforts primarily on illegal baiting. Together they cited 31 hunters for exceeding the 2 gallon limit. All the hunters that Warden Nerva encountered knew that they had out too much corn and admitted it. One hunter even told us that he knew what the fine was because he read the CUFF'S AND COLLARS in the OUTDOOR NEWS. Without exception the hunters that were being cited would say "I wish you guys would make baiting illegal. I only bait because everyone else does". The new method for violating this law seems to be to bait too much the week before the season and then be at the legal amount during the season. We spent a considerable amount of time scouting locations the two weeks before the season and the work paid off. It becomes very apparent that deer movement almost ceases the week before the season because of all the bait that is placed by rifle hunters the weekend before the hunt. Many people commented that their bait would disappear every night but they would not see a deer during daylight hours. I do not think that there would be huge resistance to a ban on baiting in the north anymore.

Spooner Team: Baiting continues to be a problem. Wardens are contacting a new generation of youths who have no idea what hunting was like without a corn pile, enclosed tree stands, and heaters. Warden Ashton (Luck) feels that in the eight years he has been a warden baiting and feeding problems have increased every year.

Warden Ashton feels that the majority of people he spoke to would support a baiting ban. Most people Ashton talked to stated if there is a ban it need to be through out the entire bow and gun season, not the 10-day before gun season ban that has been talked about.

Most every hunter that Warden Ashton talked to regarding baiting had nothing positive to say about it. Almost everyone Ashton talked to stated we need to get rid of feeding and baiting. Most people Ashton talked to said they saw hardly any deer and thought it was because so many of their neighbors were feeding and holding the deer on their property. Ashton spoke to several people that are against baiting but felt compelled to bait just to compete with their neighbors who were baiting and holding the deer on their property.

There are a lot of people baiting deer. We found that people didn't understand the importance of the baiting laws. People always asked if there was CWD in this area. The wardens explained to the people that not only for CWD, but other diseases it was important not to have deer congregating. Many people said that they wanted bait and feeding banned. These people were mainly private property owners who said they weren't seeing as many deer because their neighbor was baiting and all the deer were going there.

There seems to be excessive baits everywhere and I believe we are only touching the surface with the ones we find. There seems to be a number of hunters putting out between 4-6 gallons of corn, which is 100% over the limit.

Most hunters encounter and cited for the illegal baiting claim to be doing it as their neighboring land owners or other hunters on public near them are baiting, so if they don't put out more, they will not get any deer where they hunt. Most are using it to draw deer onto their land or hunting area as if they don't use it, they will not see deer.

Notice an increased number of hunters on private lands using food plots, but still excessively baiting by spreading corn on the food plot and placing out excessive piles. Again, main reason cited for this is they are trying to draw and keep deer on their land or near their hunting site.

100 lb bags of corn at the gas stations disappear at an alarming rate on a daily basis. Every vehicle appears to have 100# sack of corn on there vehicle or in a trailer, along with their ATV.

Only contacted a select few hunters who actually don't use bait. Those who didn't, complained that there are no deer in their area as they are not baiting them. They claim all the deer seem to be wherever there is bait. Not many complaints from other hunters on the baiting issue outside of saying too many excessive baits on the landscape

Warden Fell (Rice Lake) issued one baiting citation to a hunter for having about 20 gallons of bait at his deer stand. This hunter was hunting on one of a number of 5 acre parcels which were sold off from an 80 acre piece. This area is poor natural deer habitat and only attracts deer because of the placement of bait. In fact, this hunters bait and stand were within a softballs throw of US HWY 8. Most of his neighbors were also baiting their 5 acre lot but were in compliance. Fell encountered this same phenomenon on several properties. The trend is to build a tree stand were it is convenient to get materials to by ATV and then put out bait and let the deer come to you. It is rare to find a baited stand any farther than few yards from an ATV trail.

Warden Spaight (Grantsburg) found that the majority of hunters contacted were in favor of banning baiting. It seemed that most hunters felt that heavy baiting on private property was having a large impact on the amount of deer they were seeing. There continues to be a huge problem with baiting and feeding. It is our largest complaint from hunters and now I am receiving complaints about feeders too close to roads and such. I did make one arrest on a cabin feeder with a very large amount of feed out and it was

left out even when they were not up. I worked some baits complaints and assisted with other warden's bait complaints but did not have the hunters present over the bait when we were there. These seem to be opening weekend hunters and if you don't get there then, you just are going to miss them. We don't have enough wardens to deal with the problem. Hunters complained about not seeing the deer, and about the deer not moving or moving only at night. There were also a lot of complaints of late shooting or calls about night shots. This is a baiting and feeding problem. The deer are going to the feed at night and the feed/baits are behind the houses/cabins.

Woodruff Team: Warden Kelly Crotty (Florence) received only a few complaints on illegal deer feed/bait piles. Crotty reports that it does seem as if hunters continue to place somewhat more than 2 gallons of feed or bait. These hunters are not taking the time to read the current deer regulations. Other hunters understand the 2 gallon limit for bait, but do not seem to understand that the feeding rules also limit piles to 2 gallons. Crotty is still attempting to contact several subjects with illegal feeding issues.

Warden Tim Price (Eagle River) reports that baiting and feeding continue to be a significant issue. Price heard over and over throughout the season that baiting and feeding needs to stop. Price was told that the people who can afford to bait have the deer on their property thus not allowing other hunters to have equal opportunities. Price also heard on numerous occasions that baiting and feeding are making the deer more nocturnal during the hunting season. One hunter offered a suggestion that bait be taken in at the end of each day to force the deer to move during the day in search of food. There was certainly a lot of concern and disgust expressed to Price about baiting and feeding throughout the season.

Warden Pat Novesky (Three Lakes) reports that from a workload standpoint several hours are spent on illegal baits, cabin shooting and other related activity daily. From a hunter standpoint the whole season changes because instead of the traditional still hunting and deer drives, the hunters are all standing guard on their respective bait pile for 9 days then complaining that the deer are not moving. From the standpoint of getting young hunters involved and keeping them involved, sitting staring at corn is not the most exciting thing for a teenager to be doing.

Warden Rick Koch (Loana) reports that baiting continues to be the root problem with most deer season conflicts both during and before the season.

Warden Jim Jung (Rhineland) received two baiting complaints in 2006, although five baits had been located by scouting prior to gun deer season. Follow-up revealed some of these scouted areas were archery only stands and not hunted on opening day. Others revealed no hunters in the stands when checked.

Warden Supervisor Tom Wrasse (Woodruff) had several people express the desire to eliminate baiting and feeding with the perception deer would move about more in search of food rather than visit a feed pile whenever they were hungry.

Warden Tom Kroepelin (Woodruff) talked to many hunters that are hoping baiting gets banned. The hunters said they bait because they have to compete against the other hunters who bait.

Warden Tom Kroepelin (Woodruff) worked the first day of the gun deer season catching people who had excessive baits. Kroepelin wrote six citations for hunting over excessive baits.

The majority of those contacted by Warden Michael MacKenzie (Boulder Junction) complained that baiting was messing up the deer patterns. Many hunters stated that the deer did not move after opening morning due to all the bait dumped before and during the season. There were a lot of empty corn bags lying along the roadsides in MacKenzie's area. Most people stated they believe baiting was ruining the deer gun hunting season. MacKenzie has never seen so many people baiting in his area. For two weeks leading up to deer season MacKenzie observed many trucks and cars filled with corn bags going around and setting up bait sites. MacKenzie believes that most people baited to compete with other hunters and to mark their hunting areas.

From the West Central Region - The influence of baiting from northern Wisconsin has definitely migrated to this part of the state as well. Sale of bags of shell corn at a local coop in Stoddard in Vernon County the week before the deer gun season was brisk, despite the fact it is within the baiting/feeding ban area. Some hunters complain that baiting is increasing and should be banned. They feel all the guides are doing it so people feel they have to. This is a problem that will increase dramatically in the near future. People who hunt adjacent to large tracts of land that bait feel they have to bait to see deer. And if 2 gallons doesn't work they will increase the amounts.

Baiting arrests were the most common violation many of the teams, and included some significant illegal baiting cases. **Wardens Henry Bauman (Onalaska) and Russ Wilson (La Crosse)** issued some citations for "truckloads" of corn that had been dumped in front of blinds for bait.

Wardens Wade Romberg (Friendship) and Bill Miller (Adams) found many illegal baiting sites in Adams County ("no-bait" county). In all, Romberg and Miller issued 41 baiting and feeding citations along with many warnings for both during the nine days of the season.

Warden Matt Weber (Necedah) and Hunter Education Administrator Tim Lawhern issued 6 citations for hunting deer over bait in Juneau County ("no-bait" county).

Enforcement of Baiting/Feeding violations takes up a tremendous amount of time during the gun season and seems to be increasing. Having to locate the baits which are sometimes a lengthy hike, and then returning time and time again in hopes of finding the responsible party is very time consuming.

Warden Wippermann (Waupaca County) had one subject hunting over a 10+ gallon pile of shelled corn while dressed in full camouflage. Guess he didn't want to be seen by anyone, especially wardens. Had another incident where a father dropped off his 17 year old and 10 year old sons to hunt over an approx. 100 gallon bait smorgasbord consisting of pumpkins, shelled corn, cob corn, soybeans, etc.

Warden Young (Shiocton) located a hunter hunting over excess bait which he stated he did not know was there. The 5-gallons of corn were plainly visible 20 yards from the stand where the hunter faced the bait.

Using information from a bowhunter cited for illegal baiting a property was scouted prior to the opening day. On opening day Wardens Nigbor and Mesman (Marquette County) walked through the property contacting hunters at each of the stand sites. Four hunters from one family and three hunters from an adjoining property were contacted with all of them hunting over illegal bait.

Wardens Goerlinger (Peshtigo) and Kazmierczak cited a hunter after watching him fill a large hollow stump in the woods with over 120 lbs of rock salt to attract deer on his property as he closed up camp for the season.

Wardens Stahl and Fabian apprehended a person hunting with camouflage clothing from the stand. The individual was found tracking a wounded deer without a back tag or a blaze orange jacket. His tag was back in his stand and a camouflage coat was located on a chair the suspect admitted wearing. In addition an illegal bait pile was located.

Wardens Paul (Oconto County) and Eddy made several illegal deer baiting cases including one case where the suspect with the illegal bait nearly went to jail for intoxicated use of a firearm as he barely passed field sobriety tests at 6:28am on opening morning. The subject and his companion were both cited for illegal baits.

Warden Ebert (Marinette County) encountered numerous instances of hunters placing or hunting over bait piles in excess of the two gallon limit in Marinette Co.

Wardens Meade (Marinette County) and Sanidas located several illegal bait sites on both public and private lands that were well over the 2 gallon limit. The majority of hunters are now throwing down rotten old pumpkins as bait to compliment their corn piles. Many citations were issued.

Wardens Egstad (Outagamie County) and Higgins contacted 4 hunters on a 160 acre property. Warden Egstad contact a father and son hunting on the north side of the property with violations for too much bait, not within sight and voice contact of a 13 year old, possession of rifle in shotgun zone. Warden Higgins contact two hunters on the south side of the property with violations for too much bait, enforcement action taken.

Wardens Russ Wilson (La Crosse) and Henry Bauman (Onalaska) cited two men in La Crosse County for dumping separate truckloads of corn on two different properties. The two wardens later cited two men in the metro unit of La Crosse County for hunting over illegal bait, hunting with rifles in a shotgun area, hunting without blaze orange, and hunting without backtags. Additional illegal baiting arrests were made on a nearby property for a large quantity of bait. Several of these sites were in the metro area and involved “backyard” hunters who slip out the backdoor to hunt smaller parcels of land in the midst of suburbia. Helping to control deer numbers in these areas is good, but to hide their illegal activities in populated areas, the hunters were found wearing camo clothes and hiding rifles in tree stands, although they had walked in and out of the woods with blaze orange clothes and a shotgun.

Warden Jim Jung (Rhineland) received a DNR Hotline regarding a gunshot during the early morning hours on Tuesday of the season. Jung investigated with the assistance of Investigators Steve Daye and Dave Goldsworthy. The investigation revealed the subject shot and missed a very large buck from a bedroom window and over a bait which was illuminated by the yard light. The investigations also revealed that the same person had filled archery tags for a companion. The shooter killed multiple bucks during the archery season using tags of others. The firearm, bow, two archery bucks and a third deer rack were seized and charges will be filed.

Wardens Meade and Ebert (Marinette County) investigated a complaint that an individual shot a deer at 1:30 AM on Thursday morning from his cabin. Warden Meade located the lighted deer feeder, a closed circuit TV camera directed at the feed, a gut pile and a drag trail leading back to the suspect’s yard. The investigation revealed the suspect shot a doe over the illegal lighted deer feeder and registered the deer as a kill from a different deer management unit to obtain an extra earn-a-buck sticker.

From the Northeast Region: Baiting and feeding of deer continues to be one of the major issues with the management of our whitetail deer herd. As previously noted in the report, the most common citation (26%) issued in the NER during the 2006 deer gun season was for illegal baits. Hunters have come to depend upon bait and food plots to attract deer to their property/stand and often feel that they have to bait in “self defense” from other hunters. A significant amount of LE time is being devoted to baiting enforcement which is complicated with the county by county application of the rule and the 2-gallon limit. Individual team comments:

- **Oshkosh Team** - Baiting continues to be a common complaint and violation in addition to being a huge workload for Conservation Wardens (monitoring site). We now have the scientific backing (recent CWD study) and need to eliminate baiting statewide. (**Warden Egstad** - Just like 2 years ago when we had EAB here I saw hunters using bait that is over the 2 gallon limit or using it when in the past Egstad knows they have not used it. Hunters mentioning that they would like to see it totally banned so everyone on a level playing field and let the deer go back to daylight movement. **Warden McCann** - spent time dealing with illegal baiting complaints. One complaint ended with a warning for having bait in a wooden container, one hunter never hunted the stand, and several McCann took care of before the season by finding archery hunters over the illegal bait sites. **Warden Disher** - The vast majority of baiting complaints in Calumet County involve private land that is leased or hunted by someone other than the landowner. This makes apprehension of suspects difficult and time consuming. On several occasions, Disher has received calls from hunters who own property adjacent to parcels that are / were illegally baited. These hunters all complained about the “lack of deer” on their property and the continued need for Herd-Control seasons

- **Green Bay/Regional Operations Team** - Two counties located within the Green Bay Team have a ban on baiting. Those counties are Calumet and Manitowoc Counties. Manitowoc County had the worst compliance as noted below.
 - This was the worst year for baiting in Manitowoc County since the ban went into effect in the 2002 season. **Warden Stroess** had a lot of bait piles lined up prior to the gun deer season. All but two were taken care of during the season with enforcement action. Several others were developed during the season and will be followed up on. All people contacted knew baiting was illegal. Warden Stroess explained the reasoning behind the ban to hopefully get them to change their ways.
 - **Wardens Kratcha and Protogere** issued a citation to a hunter on opening day for hunting over approximately 8 gallons of corn.
 - These baits and others appear to have been baited with a far greater amount of bait before the season, but when opening day rolls around, the amount of bait is conveniently reduced to bring the volume within the two gallon limit should the game warden pay a visit.
 - **Warden Groth** ran across more baiting violations than in years past. Most of the illegal baits showed up the 24 hours prior to the gun season.

- **Peshtigo Team** - Deer baited still is a big problem as it continues to be the number one violation with 24 citations written, yet wardens had few pre-season complaints. Baiting is a greater problem in the northern areas. Many more of the undocumented excessive baits however were quickly consumed pre-season. Pumpkins seemed to generate animosity that they should be ignored by wardens. Wardens feel if we can eliminate feeding and baiting many workload problems can be minimized and the quality of the hunt restored. At the very least banning feeding and baiting 10 days before and during the gun deer season would help or eliminate deer baiting on public land.
 - Warden Ebert had several inches of snow before season to scout hunters to their deer stands which helped him document violations with most being greater than 5 gallons. During these two

days Warden Ebert spent all of his time in a small portion of his patrol area consisting of approximately ¼ of one township. During the week before deer season and the week of deer season, Warden Ebert spent a large amount of his time working baiting and feeding issues. During the deer season the majority of complaints received related deer baiting and cabin shooting.

- Marinette County has a large cabin shooting problem. Wardens in counties such as Marinette are spending large amounts of time working cabin shooting complaints. These complaints require extensive time commitments and are very difficult to work. The only solution to significantly reducing the cabin shooting problem is to ban the baiting and feeding of deer.
 - Based on Warden Ebert's experience in Marinette County the two gallon limit is disregarded by most hunters who use bait for deer hunting. The majority of bait piles encountered by Warden Ebert was in excess of the two gallon limit and bait piles averaged approximately 5-8 gallons.
 - Warden Meade says he sees this as the number one problem in the deer hunting season. Wardens are out scooping piles of corn and bait to measure gallon amounts to figure out if the situation is legal or not. A lot of hunters are dumping large amounts of rotten pumpkin out in front of their stands. How many pumpkins are illegal? Meade had an extremely heated conversation from a hunter who was hunting over too much bait. Meade feels that this is going to be a very dangerous situation in the future if we are going to continue this way in dealing with baiting.
 - The public expects us now to do something to stop the infestation of CWD and other transmissible diseases now that we know it can spread through nose to nose contact at a bait pile. We should look at what we are trying to accomplish in the southern part of the state, to prevent the spread of disease instead of possibly promoting it by allowing baiting/feeding. If science and the experts say the best possible game management tool from a health perspective is to not allow baiting and feeding, then we need to look at why we are ignoring this. I think we need to do something fast before SCIENCE looks at us in the very near future and says, TOLD YA SO!!!!!!
 - Warden Paul received many complaints of illegal baits. This took up a lot of Warden Paul's time. When Warden Paul found the bait sites, most of the bait had been consumed, and the hunter was out of the area. There are very few deer in the Northern part of Oconto County. The few deer that are out there are clustered around cabins that are feeding deer. This concentrates hunters near these areas thus creating more opportunity for a bullet to go through a house or injure people in their yards. The majority of successful hunters were shooting their deer over bait piles. Although bait is very popular, those who do bait and feed legally are open to closing or limiting baiting and feeding in some form or another during the season or all together.
- **Wautoma Team** - This is the #1 issue identified by the team as an enforcement issue. Given the new data on how CWD is transmitted the DNR has to push for the elimination of baiting and feeding statewide. The fine of \$530 is not a deterrent to keep illegal baiting from occurring. The hunters were more concerned about being able to hunt again during the season from the stands involved than the cost of the fine. Considerations should be given to mandatory license revocation for illegal baiting and feeding violations. This may be the only way to get a foothold on this. **Warden Young** - Many illegal baits that were located prior to the season were unoccupied when Young made his way to them through out the season. I would believe that the hunters harvested their deer than left for the season since these baits were not recharged. Contact will be made later with the suspected baiters for feeding violations.
 - **Warden Young** - Many hunters comment that they wish baiting would be outlawed. Ironically even as a citation is being issued to the subject for violating the bait laws they say this. When asked why they bait the response is because every one else is and it's their only chance to get a deer.

- **Warden Nigbor** - Illegal baiting and feeding in Marquette County is flourishing and is increasing tremendously every year! Fifteen illegal baiting cases were made throughout the season and several people were warned for feeding. In every case, the hunters knew it was illegal to hunt over bait, but they were either competing with the neighbors that were baiting too, or wanted to have an advantage over the neighbors by keeping the deer on their property. The current penalty is not enough of a deterrent to stop hunters from baiting. One individual stated that hunting over bait was the only way that he knew how to hunt.
- **Warden Algrem** - We have not allowed baiting/feeding in Waushara County since 2002 yet we still have those who try. Most excuses were, “We need to see more deer”. April Dombrowski and I worked a 400 acre property that had a number of baited stands. On Thanksgiving morning we contacted 3 young men in the stands and one adult. The one adult claimed the other boys father’s had placed bait at the boy’s stands so their son’s would be more successful in shooting a deer. While those father’s were not hunting we did find that the father’s stands were also baited.
- **Warden Wippermann** - As long as baiting remains legal we will always have people testing the limits. As evidenced in other non baiting counties, some people can’t live without baiting and really don’t know how to hunt without it. We presently have a generation of hunters that were brought up sitting over the bait piles and it will be difficult to change those attitudes this late in the ball game. Recent research involving saliva/CWD transmission may change a few minds, but there are plenty of people that are still in denial over CWD in the first place. I still hear the comment occasionally “oh , that CWD has been here forever – what’s the big deal”. We are in for one great challenge to contain CWD geographically.
- **Warden Mesman** - Illegal baiting and feeding is now the worst problem that we are facing. It doesn’t matter if I was working in baiting allowed or prohibited counties, if the hunters were stand hunting there was illegal bait near by. The attitude of the hunters also appeared to be that bating was essential to the harvest of deer with no other hunting method option. The fine of \$530 didn’t seem to faze the hunters either. They were more concerned about being able to hunt from the stands again.
- **Warden Mesman** - I think we need to have a mandatory license suspension of at least one year. This would get the attention of the hunters where they are willing to bet \$530 on not being caught. They may not be willing to bet their ability to hunt for a year though.
- **Warden Mesman** - I was working with Judi on opening day and had 12 to 14 (one case is still be worked) violations of the baiting regulations.