



NATIONAL DEER ASSOCIATION

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18 February, 2021

**Committee on Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
c/o Legislative Information Office
100 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333**

RE: House P 321 - An Act To Allow Deer Baiting by Hunters

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the National Deer Association (NDA), I am writing to voice our opposition of House Paper 321 (H.P. 321) - An Act To Allow Deer Baiting by Hunters. NDA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting. We represent over 60,000 members nationwide and our membership includes hunters, landowners and natural resource professionals.

H.P. 321 would allow the holder of a valid license to hunt deer to place bait to hunt deer. NDA opposes the expansion of baiting where not currently legal. We recognize a number of disadvantages or negative impacts resulting from the use of bait to hunt deer:

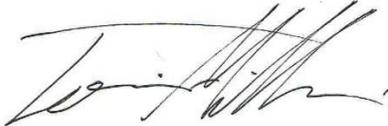
- Disease – Baiting increases density around a single food source and therefore increases the potential for direct and indirect contact among individuals. Currently, there are 12 deer diseases that are thought to be spread by direct contact, two of which are bovine tuberculosis and chronic wasting disease (CWD).
- Habitat Impact – Studies have shown that baiting can decrease the home range size of deer and therefore can also negatively impact the surrounding native vegetation. Secondarily, many wildlife professionals believe that a reliance on baiting for hunting purposes may reduce native habitat management efforts.
- Nocturnal Effect – Several studies have shown that baiting of deer increases nocturnal activity and decreases daytime activity.
- Non-target Species – Scientific data shows that baiting for deer can negatively impact several non-target species, such as songbirds, game birds, and small mammals. Baiting can also increase predation at and around bait sites.
- Artificial Increase in Carrying Capacity – Baiting can artificially increase a species carrying capacity. This problem is exacerbated when the bait is only available seasonally, especially in the fall (hunting season).
- Fair Chase – The ethical battle concerning baiting as fair-chase hunting continues to divide both hunters and wildlife professionals.

The practice of baiting and its role in deer management have grown in terms of controversy and complexity in recent years. Therefore, we have used the available scientific data and the experience of professional wildlife biologists in formulating this position. We do, however, support the use of baiting by wildlife

professionals conducting scientific research, and we support continued research on the effects on baiting in deer management programs.

For the foregoing reasons, we respectfully ask the committee to table H.P. 321. Passage of this bill would negatively impact the very things we strive to ensure: the future of wild deer, wildlife habitat and hunting.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Torin Miller', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Torin Miller
Director of Policy