

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT BAITING

Q. If we are trying to reduce the deer population in some areas of Alabama, won't baiting increase the number of deer harvested?

A. Actually the opposite has been shown to occur. Studies have shown that baiting can and has increased reproduction. Additionally, studies have shown that there is no clear trend that hunters harvest more deer using bait.

Q. What is the difference between food plots and baiting?

A. Food plots are a readily accepted wildlife management tool among those who hunt and those who don't hunt but support our right to do so. Food plots also provide useful habitat to other wildlife, both game and non-game, for significant periods. Regarding disease transmission, food plots cover larger areas than bait piles and allow deer to feed in proximity to each other much like they do when feeding on acorns, honeysuckle, and agricultural crops. Baiting significantly elevates the chance for disease transmission in two ways compared to deer feeding in food plots: 1) baiting causes deer to feed in very small areas where they are in frequent direct contact with each other (feeding nose to nose and mouth to mouth); 2) Even when deer do not feed nose to nose at bait piles or stations, baiting causes them to feed in virtually the exact same place where deer have fed previously. These situations increase dramatically, compared to food plots and natural feeding, the amount of direct contact, saliva, parasite exchange, etc. that transmits disease.

Q. Why is AWF against baiting but not supplemental feeding?

A. AWF is opposed to baiting. We are not opposed to supplemental feeding because in certain instances, supplemental feeding has been shown to provide a needed, biological benefit to certain species of wildlife under the right conditions. Most notably, studies have shown that supplemental feeding has increased the survival of quail and bald eagles. However, we do not advocate supplemental feeding unless it provides a needed biological benefit. Supplemental feeding for deer is a legal practice in Alabama and we have chosen not to pursue making it illegal. Baiting, compared to supplemental feeding, would result in a significant increase across the landscape of feed in a condition and manner that would dramatically increase the chance of disease transmission and spread to an unacceptable level.

Q. What about other states that allow baiting? Are they finding an increase in the spread of disease?

A. Yes - many states that have allowed baiting in the past, have seen very difficult and perhaps unsolvable disease problems develop due to baiting and have taken steps to outlaw baiting in their states. Other states are re-evaluating their laws on baiting in light of recent deer disease developments.

Q. How can baiting cause diseases to occur?

A. Baiting itself does not cause diseases such as CWD or Bovine TB to occur, however, baiting does increase the frequency of direct contact among animals, exchange of saliva, parasites, etc., thereby allowing diseases to spread more rapidly throughout the population. Moreover baiting can cause diseases such as aflatoxicosis and others to occur due to contaminated grain, etc.

Q. Why are we so concerned about the spread of diseases like CWD and Bovine Tuberculosis that don't occur in Alabama?

A. Disease agents typically arrive undetected and may be present for extended periods of time before recognition occurs. Factors that facilitate disease spread increase the likelihood of larger problems developing during this initial period. We do not have CWD or Bovine TB in Alabama and AWF and the Department of Conservation are doing everything we can to insure neither reaches Alabama. While we must take steps to prevent these or other diseases from arriving, we should also take steps or make sure that things are not done that would exacerbate the chance of spread should it ever show up in Alabama. Baiting would provide a significant pathway for these or any disease to spread more rapidly than it would if baiting were not legal when the disease got started. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.