

MEMORANDUM



To: Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commissioners
From: Curtis Brown, Director, Division of Law Enforcement
Date: June 19, 2018
Subject: Draft Rule – Commercial and Private Hunting Preserves and Game Farms

Purpose:

To present draft rule language related to the operation of game farms and hunting preserves.

Summary:

Staff was approached by the captive cervid industry in October of 2014 due to their concerns that some game farm and hunting preserve facilities were utilizing fencing designs that may not sufficiently contain the wildlife within their perimeter fences. Poor fencing design and maintenance poses the potential for non-native wildlife to escape into Florida's native population where they could establish themselves. Additionally, escapes could potentially lead to the spread of disease into native white-tail deer populations. Industry also stated there was some ambiguity in terminology throughout the two rules that had resulted in inconsistent enforcement throughout the state.

Staff formed a Technical Assistance Group (TAG) and met with members four times to solicit feedback and discuss draft rules. The TAG consisted of industry experts, staff from the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (FDACS), staff from FWC and staff from the Wildlife Research Institute (FWRI).

These efforts have culminated in the development of draft rules (see attachment) that would modify the current regulations for game farms and preserves. Draft rule language provides clear requirements for fencing, caging and animal welfare. Consistency will be increased by defining terms and clearly identifying fencing requirements and application requirements. To ensure the well-being of captive wildlife kept on preserves, the mandatory area for the wooded and grassy areas has been increased proportionate to hunting preserve size. Draft rule language is focused on reducing the risk of escape as well as specifying application and facility requirements. These changes will minimize the risk of the transfer of diseases such as Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) between facilities and wild populations. Clear language will improve consistency of enforcement statewide. Existing facilities will have a two-year grandfather period to come into compliance.

Staff Recommendation:

Approve advertising the proposed draft amendments to the game farm and hunting preserve Rules 68A-12.010 and 68A-12.011, F.A.C. If approved, a final public hearing will be set for September 2018.

Staff Contact and/or Presenter:

Major Rob Beaton, Section Leader, Division of Law Enforcement