Economic Impact of the Deer & Elk Farming Industry in Indiana

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Executive Summary

- Deer and elk farming has seen rapid growth nationally and in Indiana

- Indiana has 388 deer and elk farms

- Licensed breeders have increased 19% since 2006

- A survey was given in the fall 2011 to IDEFA members to collect detailed information regarding farm inventory, annual expenditures, herd sizes, annual revenue, and labor supply and cost.

- Total employment and family labor income in Indiana exceeded $16 million annually based on survey results for the industry.

- Deer and elk farmers and hunting preserves had a direct economic impact of $27 million in 2010

- The Indiana deer and elk farming industry had a total economic impact of $49.3 million dollars in 2010.

- The economic footprint of deer and elk farming is very significant for many rural counties in Indiana.

- Indiana hunting preserves are the major demand driver for the local breeding industry with per hunting preserve sales in excess of $460,000 per year

- Over 95% of Hunting preserve clients are from out of state, bringing dollars into Indiana

Survey Results

Survey Highlights

- The response rate for the Breeding Farm Survey was 20% (n=75) and the response rate for the Hunting and Breeding preserves was 75% (n=3). The average breeding farm has been in existence since 2004 and the average breeding and hunting operations have been around since 2000.
- Total purchases for breeding operations were 147 animals purchased in 2010 for a reported total of $475,151
- Total sales for breeding operations were 213 animals for a reported total of $757,228
- Breeding farms average 31 animals per farm
- Expenditure on equipment category for breeding farms last year was over $1.6 million dollars
- Feeding expenses make up 25% of the annual expenses for a breeding farm operation

Change 02-07 Deer Inventories
- 3 - 42
- 43 - 95
- 96 - 175
- 176 - 271
- 272 - 415
- 416 - 639
- 640 - 1531

Change 02-07 Elk Inventories
- 7 - 12
- 13 - 24
- 25 - 42
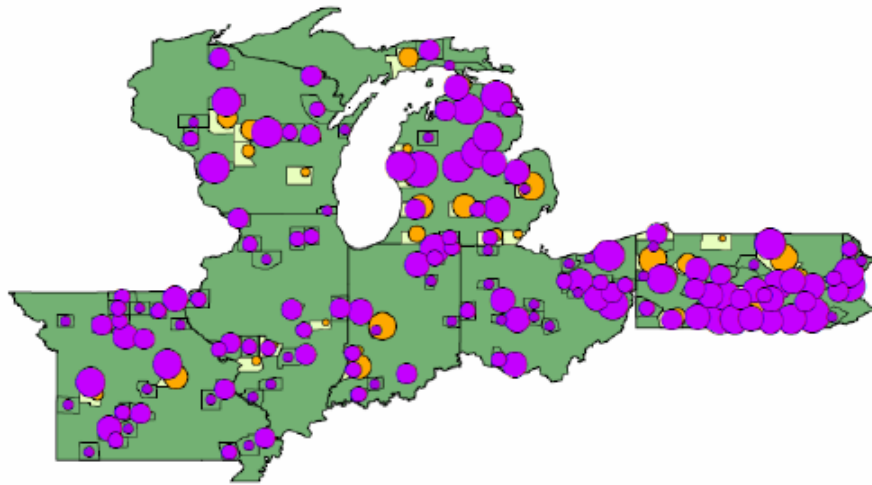- 43 - 61
- 62 - 85
- 86 - 138
- 139 - 276

Figure 10: USDA Agriculture Census, Growth in Deer and Elk Inventories from 2002 to 2007

Constraints to growth in the deer and elk farming industry in Indiana may be affected by several current policies. The limitations on current hunting preserves by Indiana House Bill No 1349, prohibits hunting and harvesting of game mammals on existing preserves after July 1, 2013 and does not allow for new hunting operations to be established, with the thought that the four preserves in state will gradually be phased out. By contrast, Figure 9 shows the growth of deer and elk farming in the region. A large percentage of this growth is driven by demand from the hunting preserve sector. For example, Pennsylvania has approximately 1000 deer and elk breeding farms and over 47 cervid hunting preserves. Indiana, in contrast, has 388 farms and only 4 hunting preserves. The deer and elk farm to preserve ratio is 21:1 in Pennsylvania while the ratio is 97:1 in Indiana. The lack of growth and development of hunting preserves in Indiana has resulted in many Hoosier breeders to rely on out-of-state markets.

Another factor that will affect the future growth and development of the Indiana deer and elk farming industry is how other states choose to regulate imports of live animals, semen and other cervid products. A review of different state rules and regulations regarding the cervid farming industry reveals a wide variation in policies. Some states have banned the importation of live animals from other states in an attempt to support their own breeding industry. Other states have restricted importation based on possible health risks and disease spread fears to their herds. Animal breeding operations are always at risk for disease outbreaks from wild herds. DNR and BOAH are monitoring wild Indiana deer herds for the spread of bovine tuberculosis from herds in Michigan and Minnesota. Limiting the geographic market available to Indiana deer and elk farmers will hurt the future growth of this sector.