



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

JUL 21 2014

The Honorable Jim Moran
U.S. House of Representatives
2252 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Moran:

Thank you for your letter of June 6, 2014, cosigned by your colleagues, calling for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to prohibit interstate trade in captive-bred cervids.

I share your concerns about the need to control the spread of chronic wasting disease (CWD), bovine tuberculosis (TB), and similar threats. However, based on our ability to effectively monitor for these diseases in captive cervids, as well as the regulatory requirements we have set for their interstate movement, we do not believe it is necessary to ban the shipping of these animals across State lines. This is consistent with our successful approaches to addressing a number of other livestock diseases in the United States.

USDA recently completed rulemaking for the establishment of a national CWD herd certification program and interstate movement requirements for farmed or captive cervids. The final rule, published on April 29, 2014, provides strong safeguards to reduce the introduction, transmission, and spread of this disease. For example, cervids moved interstate (other than to slaughter or for research) must be from "certified" herds that have been monitored for a period of at least 5 years. The rule also allows States to impose their own, more restrictive regulations, unless they prohibit or further restrict the transit through a State of otherwise eligible cervids.

USDA believes that these safeguards, along with the newly revised program standards, will effectively minimize the risk of CWD spread, while providing guidelines for the investigation and management of infected and exposed herds. We believe this is the best approach to managing CWD in captive cervid herds, while still supporting the movement needs of the cervid industry.

USDA also has in place an accreditation and testing program that has effectively limited the spread of bovine TB in the United States. No cases of bovine TB have been detected in a captive cervid herd since 2009.

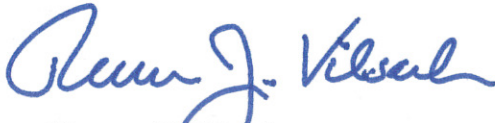
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With regard to your concern about captive-hunting, or “canned hunt,” facilities, many States ban or restrict captive hunting. Additionally, current regulations—including the requirement that captive-bred cervids transported interstate come from CWD herd-certified breeders—minimize the likelihood of the spread of CWD and make the disease risk at captive-hunting facilities no greater than at any other facility.

Thank you again for writing. USDA remains committed to addressing the risks posed by CWD and other disease threats and to improving the domestic and international marketability of U.S. cervids. Should you have further questions or concerns, please have a member of your staff contact Todd Batta, Assistant Secretary for Congressional Relations, at (202) 720-7095. I am sending a similar response to your colleagues.

Sincerely,



Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary