



ALBERTA
DEPUTY PREMIER
MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DM02-CD-1653

December 12, 2002

Mr. Blair Rippin
Conservation Committee Chair
Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Box 4990
Edmonton AB T6E 5G8

Dear Mr. Rippin:

Thank you for your letter of November 27, 2002 regarding your concerns relating to game farming.

I agree with you that the wildlife in Alberta are a valuable resource and need to be protected. However, the phasing out of game farming is not a consideration at this time. Staff in our department and Alberta Sustainable Resource Development (ASRD), are working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the cervid industry on issues regarding Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD).

To address the threat of CWD, Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (AAFRD) has instituted a mandatory CWD surveillance program in order to detect any pockets of CWD that might exist in farmed cervids in Alberta. The fact that a farmed whitetail deer was recently detected positive as a result of a submission through this program is an indication that the program is working as it was designed. The Food Safety Division laboratories are working closely with the laboratories of the CFIA to ensure quality controlled laboratory results using the most advanced diagnostic techniques available.

CFIA also has the responsibility to conduct trace-backs. They have extensive experience in this area and I am confident that any further animals associated with this situation will be identified and eliminated.



Our Interdepartmental Disease Management Committee has been monitoring the CWD situation since this disease was first diagnosed on a game farm in Saskatchewan. As a result, the voluntary Alberta CWD surveillance program was implemented in 1996 and a mandatory CWD surveillance program was implemented in July 2002. As a result CWD has not become established in Alberta. To date, well over 4000 farmed cervids have been tested for CWD over the past five years and only two animals have been detected positive. No wild deer or elk have been detected positive for CWD in Alberta.

The game farm record keeping and inspection staff work hand-in-hand to carefully monitor the inventories on game farms, based on the information collected and stored in our databases. With the recent case of CWD the trace out animals were identified quickly and CFIA was notified.

Although I don't believe that it is necessary to phase out game farming, I thank you for your comments. The opinions of your organization will be given serious consideration as programs to protect the wildlife resource in Alberta are reviewed now and in the future.

Yours sincerely,

Shirley McClellan
Deputy Premier and Minister

cc: Honourable Ralph Klein, Premier
Honourable Mike Cardinal, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development



ALBERTA SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Minister

DM02-KC-0738

December 17, 2002

Mr. Blair Rippin, Conservation Committee Chair
Alberta Chapter of the Wildlife Society
Box 4990
Edmonton, Alberta
T6E 5G8

Dear Mr. Rippin:

Thank you for your November 27, 2002 letter regarding big game farming in Alberta. I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your request.

Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) continues to work in conjunction and co-operation with Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to evaluate the risks and to develop appropriate policies and regulations aimed at protecting free-ranging wildlife as well as farmed cervids and traditional livestock.

As for your specific question regarding SRD's response to the recent finding of chronic wasting disease (CWD) in one farmed elk and one farmed white-tailed deer, I offer the following. SRD staff closely monitor the CWD control and eradication programs administered and implemented by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to ensure that minimizing the risks to wildlife are considered in all programs and responses. Upon confirmation of the presence of the disease within Alberta, we immediately implemented a request for heads of hunter-killed deer and elk within the vicinity of the affected farms. This will provide a surveillance sample on which we can better design appropriate follow-up programs. We are committed to eradicating CWD from the province and will continue to use scientifically-credible programs to reach that goal.

Sincerely,

Mike Cardinal
Minister
MLA, Athabasca/Wabasca Constituency

cc: Honourable Ralph Klein, Premier

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