



Hot Springs Village Deer – To Feed or Not to Feed?

Description

To feed or not to feed the deer; this has been a highly debated question in Hot Springs Village lately, both by the Board Directors and on social media. Let's examine what happened.

Deer Feeding Ban Not Passed in April

At the April 21, 2021, Regular Board Meeting, then Board Director, Kirk Denger, introduced a motion regarding the amendment of the Forest Wildlife Policy. The language proposed to be added to the policy was, "The feeding of Canadian [Canada] geese in and around Hot Springs Village lakes and golf courses is prohibited. The feeding of deer and bears is also prohibited except during sanctioned hunts or trapping for safety reasons."

Vice-chair, Tucker Omohundro objected to the prohibition of feeding deer for the reason that this infringed on personal freedom. Kirk's motion passed, except it was decided to remove the ban on deer feeding. (Below please see Kirk's original motion.)

Proposed Motion to Approve Revision to Common Property, Forest and Wildlife Policy (April 21, 2021)

[13_Chp_Two_CP_Forest_Wildlife_Policy_memo](#)

Board Revisits Deer Feeding Policy at June Meeting

At the June 2, 2021, Hot Springs Village Property Owners' Association Board Discussion Session, Chair JoAnne (Joanie) Corry read an email from Common Property, Forestry, and Wildlife Committee Chair, Bruce Caverly. Bruce asked the Board to reconsider the decision made at the April Board Meeting where it was decided to only prohibit the feeding of Canada geese and bears.

Caverly Memo to Board re: Feeding of Deer

This is a follow-up to the last Board meeting regarding the discussion on feeding deer. While I agree with Tucker on infringing on personal freedoms there is also a safety issue here and warrants some

additional consideration.

- 1.) We have approximately twice the number of deer in the village (1700 to 2000) than Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AG&F) recommends for maintaining a healthy herd. Currently, we have about 43 deer per square mile. AG&F recommends 25 deer or less per square mile in our environment which has food, water, shelter, and no predators. The annual birth rate is approximately 25% of the total number of deer.
- 2.) Having this many deer leads to inbreeding and a decrease in herd health and immune systems.
- 3.) We are seeing an increase in the number of deer-vehicle accidents which is a safety issue and costs all of us.
- 4.) And most importantly susceptibility of contracting Chronic Wasting Disease (CW). CW is in the northwestern quadrant of Arkansas and is in the next county to us, Yell County. AG&F just identified two additional counties with CW. CW can be carried asymptotically for several years before symptoms appear. See the information below. I think we need to be proactive and effectively manage our deer herd. Again, I think we should consider adding deer back into do not feed these species of wildlife, and thanks for reconsidering this issue.

Best regards,

Bruce Caverly

From National Deer Association Feb 2021: *“As many states have learned, limiting the spread of CWD is a daunting task, and early detection and rapid response once the disease is found is critical for long-term management. Adhering to strict best management practices is key to slowing the spread of CWD in Arkansas’s wild deer and elk herds.”*

[07.06 — Baiting And Feeding Prohibited Inside The CWD Management Zone \(agfc.com\)](#) “It is unlawful to place or deposit foodstuffs, scents, lures, grains, minerals, pelletized feed, or other materials for the purpose of hunting, attracting, or enticing wildlife for any reason inside the CWD Management Zone.”

[Chronic Wasting Disease – What’s New for 2020 – Bing video](#)

Director Again Objects to Loss of Personal Freedom

Tucker said, “I guess I’d ask. Did feeding them get them to come here? I didn’t feed mine and they are all over my place. How does feeding them keep them here? They are going to be here anyway. Unless I am mistaken. I am just curious.”

The chair stated that she didn’t know and Bruce was not at the meeting.

Director Robert (Bob) McLeod said “I think what we deal with is just that people are feeding them. We shouldn’t be feeding them. That was what the problem was. Just don’t feed them.”

Tucker stated, “well, I am just saying. Are we going to tell people not to feed birds too? Where are we

going to stop? You got kids, grandkids here. What difference does it make if we feed the deer?”

Bob answered, “we shouldn’t be feeding the deer.”

Tucker replied, “that is your opinion. But what difference does it make?”

Bob stated, “that is his [Caverly’s] opinion, too.”

Tucker stated, “well I don’t care. My opinion is, ‘I don’t care if somebody feeds the deer.’ It’s not going to make them go away to not feed them. It’s not going to change anything in this community, to not feed the deer. We’re just [saying]- and ‘no you don’t feed the deer.’ I don’t agree with that. Give me a reason why. The bear – I understand it. The geese – there was a reason. The deer – nobody’s come up with a reason yet to convince me not to feed the deer.”

Bob said, “I could agree with you, but then we’d both be wrong.”

“Okay, cool,” Tucker replied.

Feeding of Deer Can Increase Chances of Chronic Wasting Disease Contraction

“How Will a Ban on Feeding Deer Help?”

“Feeding deer won’t cause the disease, of course, but it causes the animals to concentrate their populations around the feed source. Bringing a large number of animals together increases the possibility that the disease will spread. If just one CWD-infected animal comes to a feeder, the chance that the disease will spread to other deer is far greater than if those deer were just browsing normally in the wild.” Click [here](#) to read the article from the Mississippi State University Extension.

The prions that cause CWD can lie dormant in the soil for years.



Deer Suffering From Chronic Wasting Disease (For Illustrative Purposes. This is NOT in Hot Springs Village.)

Deers With CWD are More Prone to be Involved in Vehicular Accidents

Some states also prohibit “baiting and feeding,” which would include putting out salt for animals because that entices the deer, elk or moose to congregate in an area, which in turn can make them more susceptible to infection with CWD. [Also, many states test deer or elk that have been killed by cars primarily because animals with advanced CWD are particularly vulnerable to that sort of accident.](#)

It is up to the Board to weigh the facts and take preventive measures for the health/safety of the deer and the human population (possible prevention of some deer-vehicular accidents). Chronic Wasting Disease is only one county away. Importantly, as Bruce stated, this disease can be present before symptoms are shown. Procrastination on this issue may not be in our best interests.

Cheryl Dowden, June 9, 2021

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Category

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2. HSVPOA Board Meetings

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