

# DNR: Joint state investigation leads to multiple charges against captive deer farm in Trempealeau County

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MADISON — The owner and one employee of a Galesville, Wisconsin, deer farm will face criminal charges and civil penalties for allegedly running an illegal deer-hunting operation, the State of Wisconsin announced today.

A joint investigation by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection revealed that, Travis Brush, owner, and Randall Hoff, an employee, of Brush Ranch Outfitters were involved in luring wild deer into a high-fenced captive deer farm with the intent to harvest trophy bucks. The accused were found to have altered the fence to allow wild deer to enter the facility from which customers may purchase a hunting opportunity and harvest deer year round. The use of illegal bait along with hunts during closed seasons and hunting with the wrong licenses also were investigated and led to additional charges.

“The investigation was initiated when members of the public reported unusual activity to the agencies,” said Todd Schaller, Chief Conservation Warden for the DNR. “Together the agencies were able to combine resources and work with the Trempealeau County District Attorney on charges.”

The Wisconsin deer farming industry is regulated by both the DNR and DATCP who have authority over different aspects of farm-raised white-tail deer. The DNR is

primarily responsible for regulating fences, while DATCP regulates most all other considerations including deer health, animal movements and hunting ranches.

“In this instance, we found that the actions of Brush Ranch Outfitters created a situation where captive deer and wild white-tailed deer commingled to create a potential disease risk that, if we had not stopped it, could have had a negative impact on the deer population in this part of Wisconsin,” said Dr. Paul McGraw, Wisconsin State Veterinarian with the DATCP Division of Animal Health.

Rick Vojtik, president of Whitetails of Wisconsin, says this investigation touches on a top priority for members of the statewide deer-farming organization.

“We appreciate the work of the DNR and the DATCP in stopping this practice,” Vojtik said. “The White Tails of Wisconsin is against the activity highlighted in this case because we are concerned about diseases being spread in farming and non-farming situations.”

Schaller and McGraw say the joint investigation illustrates how Wisconsin’s citizens and natural resources are served effectively and efficiently by two state agencies combining expertise and assets.

“Each agency brought its strengths to the case which has everything to do with the preservation and health of the state’s highly valued resource – its white-tailed deer,” Schaller said. Hunting is also a major statewide economic driver for the state during fall hunting seasons.

“The DNR focused on the illegal hunting practices of wild deer along the perimeter fence, while DATCP investigated the improper harvesting of trophy bucks and the disease-related implications of their activity,” McGraw said.

The watchful eye of the public is to be commended in this investigation, say both agencies.

“DNR wardens and DATCP investigators cannot be everywhere, so we value our working relationship with the citizens who share the state agencies’ mission to protect and serve,” Schaller said.

*People who have information regarding natural resource violations may confidentially report by calling or texting: **VIOLATION HOTLINE: 1-800-TIP-WDNR or [1-800-847-9367](tel:1-800-847-9367)**. The hotline is in operation **24 hours a day, 7 days a***

**week.** *Trained staff relay report information to conservation wardens. Likewise, reports about captive deer farms can be sent to [datcpanimals@wi.gov](mailto:datcpanimals@wi.gov) or call [1-800-572-8981](tel:1-800-572-8981).*