

Sen. Marklein: Dump your deer right here

Posted on Friday, Aug 2, 2019

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In just a few short months, hunters will return to the woods in pursuit of the whitetail deer. In the communities of southwest Wisconsin, the deer hunting season is our opportunity to thin the herd, fill our freezers and continue the tradition of deer hunting with family and friends.

It is also another opportunity for us to continue our work to eradicate Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in Wisconsin.

According to the United States Geological Survey (USGS), CWD is “a fatal, neurological illness” occurring in deer, mule deer, elk and moose. It was discovered in 1967 and has spread rapidly through animal-to-animal contact and indirectly through the environment. CWD takes 18-24 months before there are noticeable signs of the disease such as weight loss, behavioral changes, increased drinking, urination and excessive salivation. No treatments or vaccines are currently available.

Even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not warn against eating CWD-positive animals and has not found a direct link between the disease and human impacts, many of us who hunt in the counties where CWD is prevalent are concerned about it. We want a healthy deer herd!

I recently introduced a bill with State Representative Tony Kurtz (R-Wonewoc) on behalf of several active and engaged constituents who have been working on ways to manage, study and control the proliferation of CWD in our deer herd. In Iowa, Richland and Sauk counties, CWD impacts 55% or more of wild adult male deer. Dr. Elizabeth Baker and Mitch Baker in Sauk county and Doug Duren in Richland county, have led the effort to expand, fund and formalize a Deer Carcass Dumpster program

in southwest Wisconsin.

Senate Bill (SB) 325 and Assembly Bill (AB) 384 requires the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to establish a grant program for deer carcass disposal dumpsters and provides money to administer grants to County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs). This bill allocates \$205,200 annually from the Conservation Fund for this purpose.

Grants would be available to CDACs in counties that the DNR has identified as having one or more wild CWD positive deer and counties that the DNR has identified as being within 10 miles of a CWD positive deer in an adjacent county. Currently, 38 counties would qualify for a grant under this program.

Under this grant program, CDACs would be responsible for finding locations to place the dumpsters and contracting with private companies for dumpster rental, transportation and disposal. Grant money may be used by CDACs for dumpster rental, transportation and disposal as well as to purchase a plastic liner and other necessary materials such as tie-downs. Grant funding would be limited to \$5,400 per county, or enough money for six dumpsters in each affected county.

The Bakers, Duren and other volunteers piloted a Deer Carcass Dumpster program in Richland, Sauk and Dane County in 2018 with private donations and volunteers. The goal was to encourage hunters to dispose of deer carcasses in a safe way that prevents the re-introduction and spread of CWD positive animal matter into the landscape. The dumpster program was very successful last year, but the model is unsustainable and ultimately should be supported by the State of Wisconsin. As Duren and the Bakers have said, "this resource is held in trust by the state to be kept and managed." They are right.

Biologists, outdoor clubs, hunters and landowners have been recommending proper carcass disposal activities since 2008. Our bill, if passed, will provide the formal support and funding for leaders and volunteers like the Bakers and Duren to pursue this goal.

Since our bill was circulated for co-sponsorship, the DNR has announced plans to continue the Adopt-a-Dumpster program. However, our legislation goes further. We provide the funding for local CDACs to fully operate the dumpster program. We also provide flexibility for the local CDAC to determine locations, make arrangements and decide disposal options. This is what they asked for.

Rep. Kurtz and I are hopeful that we will be able to move this legislation through the legislative process before the deer hunting season begins this fall. We sincerely appreciate the tireless advocacy and hard work of local sportsmen and women who have invested their time and passion in this issue. We share their goals - we want to protect our wildlife and hunting heritage for future generations.

For more information and to connect with me, visit my website <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/17/marklein> and subscribe to my weekly E-Update by sending an email to Sen.Marklein@legis.wisconsin.gov. Do not hesitate to call 800-978-8008 if you have any questions or need assistance with any state-related matters.

Marklein represents the 17th Senate District, which includes all or parts Grant, Green, Iowa, Juneau, Lafayette, Monroe, Richland, Sauk and Vernon counties. Marklein serves on the legislature's budget-writing Joint Finance Committee and is Chair of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Revenue & Financial Institutions.