

COLORADO PARKS AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION POLICY

TITLE: EMERGENCY WINTER FEEDING AND BAITING OF BIG GAME UNGULATES

Effective Date: November 20, 2015

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in statewide approaches for emergency winter feeding and baiting of big game ungulates.

II. AUTHORITY

C.R.S. § 33-1-104 (1) “The commission is responsible for all wildlife management, for licensing requirements, and for the promulgation of rules, regulations, and orders concerning wildlife programs.”

III. POLICY STATEMENT

Emergency feeding of big game ungulates may be used as a last resort to reduce unusually severe winter-related mortality in cases where the anticipated winter-related mortality exceeds thirty percent (30%) of the adult female segment of a major big game population. Where available, managers should make use of existing on-the-ground ungulate monitoring activities and data to guide decisions on emergency feeding. Compared to small game, big game populations recover more slowly from significant winter mortality. Therefore, consideration should also be given to the effects of mortality on population recovery and associated impacts to local economies, license numbers, etc. The decision to feed in a severe winter is complex and will be made considering both biological and social factors. Based on the experience from previous feeding actions, significant mortality of deer, particularly fawns, should be expected regardless of effort. In addition, at least one year of suppressed recruitment likely will occur.

The decision of where and when to feed will be made by the Director after considering site-specific information (quantified to the extent possible) about the anticipated costs of feeding versus the consequences of not feeding. If feeding occurs, it is recommended to use weed-free hay (for elk) or commercial pellet products formulated for use in wild ungulates.

The Colorado Parks and Wildlife Commission recognizes the additional and unique threat created by congregating animals into feeding areas where chronic wasting disease (CWD) exposed animals may be present. Therefore, notwithstanding any other provision

in this policy, emergency winter *feeding* shall not occur in any Game Management Unit (GMU) where CWD has been found in wild ungulate populations without prior approval of the Commission. In addition, managers should carefully consider whether winter feeding in a particular area might increase the risk of establishing CWD in an area where it is not known to occur.

Baiting is defined as the use of feed to move or redistribute animals with no intent to support or maintain animal condition. Baiting of big game ungulates may be used to prevent or reduce damage to private property when other preventative measures have been ruled impracticable, inappropriate or ineffective. Furthermore, when considering whether or not to bait, the cost of baiting relative to the estimated cost of damage to private property should be evaluated. Baiting may also be used to address the loss of animals unusually congregating near highways and railroad tracks (often as a result of severe winter weather). These situations create a public hazard and can cause significant localized big game mortality. If baiting occurs, it is recommended to use weed-free hay or commercial pellet products specifically formulated for use in wild ungulates. The decision of where and when to bait will be made by the Director (or the Director's designee).