

The reality of winter and wildlife

By Doug Leier, ND Game & Fish



I've said for years how nature is not rated "G." Even in a winter like last year with little snow, warmer than normal temperatures, deer and pheasants died. Sometimes I get frustrated trying to explain to people who understand that their pet cats and dogs won't live forever that neither do wild animals. They get sick, diseased and die. The grow old and perish. It's the circle of life.

Even more disturbing to some is watching a coyote eat a small rabbit or seeing crows feed on roadkill. It's completely normal in nature but at times humans don't want to acknowledge or believe there's nothing wrong with predators eating prey.



Photo Credit: NDGF Ashley Peterson

In some cases I ask a question back. Why should a great horned owl go hungry and a rabbit live? At times, I'll explain how those rabbits were also eating their flowers or garden produce.

It's life and death on the prairie.

One point in the conversation of "helping" animals and wildlife is the wrong mindset.

Kevin Kading, private land section leader for the state Game and Fish Department, said harsh winters often generate conversations and questions about feeding wildlife, particularly deer and pheasants.

"The Department does not promote winter feeding and does not have a winter feeding program," Kading said. "We recognize that many people care deeply about wildlife and it can be difficult to watch nature play out, but feeding operations, good intentions and all, can actually do more harm for wildlife than good."

Supplemental winter feeding does not benefit entire populations, Kading said. Individual and smaller groups of animals may receive some benefit from feeding, but feeding can also result in negative consequences such as congregating animals, drawing animals in from long distances away from good winter cover, increased predation, disease concerns, spread-

ing of noxious weeds and feeding costs.

"Poorly conducted feeding operations can actually kill more animals than what they are intended to help," Kading said. "For example, feeding animals on or near roadways can lead to wildlife-vehicle collisions. Providing feed such as corn, which is high in sugar and starch, can lead to acidosis, rumenitis and ultimately death. And even individuals with the best of intentions, who start feeding wildlife early in winter, often end up quitting due to the amount of time and expense required, which can result in the loss of animals that become dependent on the feed."

Wildlife rarely die from starvation in severe winters, Kading said, but it's not uncommon for animals to die in these extreme conditions from exposure to cold weather. Therefore, Game and Fish promotes habitat development that can provide critical winter thermal cover, and food plots should be considered and planted near adequate winter cover.

"One alternative to feeding wildlife is for individuals, landowners or wildlife clubs to plow open areas of harvested grain or row crop fields to allow animals to gain access to waste grains," Kading said. "These areas are also the first areas to melt off when we get a break in the weather."

Remove gear from wildlife management areas

Tree stands, blinds, steps, and other personal items such as cameras, must be removed from all wildlife management areas by Jan. 31.

Items not removed by then are considered abandoned property and are subject to removal and confiscation by the North Dakota Game and Fish Department.



'LEADERSHIP' CON'T FROM PAGE 1

see us hiring a female leader." A big aspect of finding the best candidates is being intentional during the search process, said Kim Lee, director of community strategy and engagement at the American Council on Education in Washington, D.C.

ACE has been active for two decades in promoting an initiative to try to reach parity in hiring top leadership in higher ed called Moving the Needle: Advancing Women in Higher Education Leadership.

"We still have more work to do if we want to look at gender parity," Lee said.

She said it would be beneficial for search committees to tap into leadership development programs ACE has developed, and to consider using search firms that strongly consider diversity in their processes.

The process of filling a vacancy starts with the chancellor appointing a search committee. A presidential search typically takes four to six months, according to NDUS staff, with the SBHE providing direction on the use of a search consultant.

Procedural rules require the committee to submit at least three candidates for consideration by the SBHE.

"It's probably not out of the reach of the discussion around this to ask the search firms to look for strong female candidates," Mihalick said.

Chaffee said that the best pools of candidates include the best men and best women and are diverse in other key dimensions as well.

"You can't be sure you're selecting

the best if you discount or fail to attract women applicants," Chaffee said.

She also believes the SBHE and the chancellor's cabinet at the NDUS both need more female representation, and that this could attract more qualified female candidates to president positions. The SBHE currently has just one female voting member.

On Jan. 14, State School Superintendent Kirsten Baesler announced six finalists - five men and one woman - for two open seats for the SBHE. Those names have now been forwarded to Gov. Kelly Armstrong for his first SBHE appointments of his new governorship, with terms beginning July 1.

"College students need to see and interact with diverse people as part of preparing for success after graduation," Chaffee said. "If the SBHE does not seek, recruit and hire women, there is virtually no chance they will have strong women applicants and have the best possible new presidents."

Carmen Simone, campus dean and Dakota College at Bottineau, said that while she appreciates the sentiment regarding the need to hire more women leaders, her own experience has been "extremely positive" and she is "grateful for the support we receive as leaders."

Of the SBHE, she said: "I have full confidence that they will carefully consider the qualifications of each candidate and ultimately, they will choose the leaders who they believe will best serve our respective institutions."

The North Dakota News Cooperative is a non-profit news organization.

Letter to the editor

The people of North Dakota deserve better than HCR 3003—a proposal at the state legislature that would undermine our rights and our civic powers as citizens. This resolution, like last year's Measure 2, is an attack on our ability to shape our future through citizen-initiated ballot measures. It's designed to silence us by raising the voting approval threshold for constitutional amendments to 60%, making it far harder for everyday North Dakotans to be heard.

Ballot initiatives serve as a vital tool for citizens to directly influence policy, especially when legislative bodies are unresponsive to the needs of the people. This right is so important it is enshrined in our state constitution and aptly titled "Powers Reserved to the People".

HCR 3003 undermines the principle of majority rule, allowing a smaller group to veto initiatives favored by most voters. Meaning if 41% of the voters oppose a measure they would

effectively veto the wishes of the other 59%—putting the interest of the few over that of the many.

As a reminder, Measure 2 attempted to eliminate majority rule by requiring citizens to vote twice on a measure before it could become law. It was soundly rejected at the ballot box by 56%.

HCR 3003 doesn't stop there. It creates a blatant double standard: while citizen-driven initiatives would require a supermajority, proposals from politicians would still pass with a simple majority. This power grab shifts control away from the people and consolidates it in the hands of lawmakers.

We've seen these 60% threshold attempts elsewhere— South Dakota, Ohio, Florida, Missouri—and they're almost always an effort aimed at stifling grassroots democracy. When the bar is raised, it's harder to fight for schools, healthcare, and the issues that matter most to regular folks.

North Dakotans have already said no to this kind of measure. It's clear we don't need more roadblocks to our democratic process. HCR 3003 is a solution in search of a problem, and it's time to stop it in its tracks.

Amy Jacobson, Executive Director
Prairie Action ND

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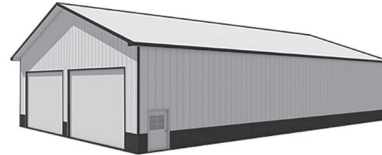
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