



Discussion Topic

November 2009

A monthly resource for the Community Action Groups of Michigan Farm Bureau

HUNTING FOR FARMERS WHO WANT HUNTERS

Try as we might to look at the issue from a different angle, there's one thing that never seems to change as hunters head to the woods in search of venison. Farmers soon will be criticized for refusing hunter access to their property.

It's not that they haven't tried. Recently, Michigan Farm Bureau formed a partnership with the Michigan Brain Injury Association to link hunters with farmers. The effort was specially designed to connect disabled veterans who hunt with farmers who wanted deer numbers reduced during the Sept. 18-22 special antlerless hunt on private land. However, said Nicole Campbell with Michigan Farm Bureau's public policy department, not a single disabled veteran signed up for the offer.

"Among the reasons we heard were that the potential hunters wanted to go after bucks, not does," she said. "What Farm Bureau wants hunters to know is that establishing a relationship with the farmer during the early season could have led to private land access during the seasons in which they could take bucks. Farm Bureau encouraged its members to make their land accessible, but there was no interest from the hunters. That was discouraging."

What's baffling about that absence of response is that farmers in many parts of the state desperately need hunters to thin the deer herd on their farms and reduce crop damage. And hunters continually clamor for private land on which to hunt. Getting them together, though, remains a major hurdle.

"We'd like to connect hunters and farmers so they both can be part of the solution to deer overpopulation and hunter success," Campbell said. "Not only do offers like this one for the early hunt create goodwill, they will help control the deer population where it's needed most."

Many hunting groups have called for a list of farmers willing to let hunters on their farms, something many Farm Bureau members have been hesitant about even though member-developed policy calls for Michigan Farm Bureau to form a list of farmers and hunters who want to contact them.

"Our policy calls for a database, but it hasn't taken off because farmers are concerned about liability issues, safety, property damage and other issues," she said. "And most farmers already have hunters they trust who have been hunting their property for years. This issue is not about providing lists of names and addresses. It's about establishing relationships between the two groups, and that requires face-to-face contact and long-term trust, not just a database."



QUESTIONS

1. Please list three new ways to establish trusting relationships between hunters and farmers.
2. How can your county Farm Bureau help control the deer population more efficiently?
3. What can hunters do to secure access to private hunting grounds?

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