

Effective Date: 7/11/08

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POLICY - 5302

Cancels: WDFW M6002

See Also: PRO 5302

Approval By: /s/ Joe Stohr

POL - 5302 FEEDING WILDLIFE DURING THE WINTER

This policy applies to all WDFW employees except if policies and procedures are in conflict with or are modified by a bargaining unit agreement, the agreement language shall prevail.

Definitions:

Artificial feeding: The distribution of harvested feed for wildlife through either supplemental feeding or emergency feeding.

Emergency feeding: The occasional feeding of wildlife, which the Department implements due to extreme winter conditions or a disaster such as fire or drought.

Supplemental feeding: The Department's regular winter-feeding operations to provide feed to wildlife where adequate winter habitat is not available and feeding is necessary to support the population level as identified in a management plan, or for specific control of deer or elk damage.

1. WDFW May Provide Supplemental or Emergency Feeding for Wildlife Under the Following Conditions

- A. To prevent and/or reduce deer or elk damage to private property (agricultural or horticultural crops).
- B. To support a Department management plan.
- C. To respond to an emergency as determined by the Director or the Director's designee.
- D. To allow for the regeneration of winter habitat that has been severely damaged or destroyed by disaster, such as fire or drought.
- E. For Department approved wildlife research or wildlife capture.
- F. In areas or times where hunting seasons have closed.

2. The Director or Director's Designee Declares an Emergency

Implementation of emergency feeding operations will begin after an emergency has been declared in a specific location of the state. The Director's Emergency Feeding Advisory Team will include the Assistant Directors of the Enforcement Program, Wildlife Program, and affected Regional Director(s).

3. WDFW Will Use the Following Factors to Determine Whether an Emergency Exists in a Specific Location of the State

- A. Weather conditions and forecast:
Includes conditions such as abnormally cold temperatures, extreme wind chill, snow depth, icing, or crusting over a prolonged period of time. Evaluation may also include the forecasted weather to reflect early arrival and projected duration of severe winter weather.
- B. Concentration and distribution of wildlife:
Includes assessment of wildlife patterns such as animals concentrated in unusually high numbers in a specific area or located in areas where they are generally not found.
- C. Access to natural forage:
Assessment of availability of natural forage, including factors that may limit access (such as snow depth, icing, or crusting)
- D. Disaster:
Includes description of disaster (such as fire or drought) and its impact on wildlife, such as winter range that has been severely damaged or destroyed. Feeding may be an option to provide adequate time for recovery of wildlife habitat and subsequently reduce wildlife mortality.
- E. Physical condition of wildlife:
Evaluation to determine the physiological condition of animals, including experienced judgment by Department personnel based on knowledge of local wildlife. Evaluation may include bone marrow and kidney fat analysis to evaluate body fat reserves necessary for winter survival.

4. WDFW May Discourage Private Feeding of Wildlife

The Department discourages private feeding of wildlife where animals may become a problem or a nuisance, cause damage to property, or

present a health risk.

WDFW will provide the public with information on the appropriate way for winter-feeding of wildlife (i.e., deer, elk, upland birds, songbirds).

WDFW may provide feed in those situations where private actions will complement agency staff supplemental or emergency feeding.

5. **WDFW Will Accept Donations to Help Pay for Emergency Winter Feeding**