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It's Time to End Game Farming

We've said it for 15 years – it's time to end game farming. While applauding the Alberta government's decision to deny penned 'hunts', AWA joined the Alberta Fish and Game Association and Alliance for Public Wildlife in calling upon both federal and provincial governments to immediately dismantle game farming and the legislation upon which it was based.

At a press conference, August 13, we pointed out that compensation — to assist the individuals to leave the industry and to protect public wildlife and wildlife economies — is both necessary and justified; but any efforts to prop up the industry are badly misguided. Compensation would be contingent on the complete dismantling of the industry.

"Contrary to the repeated claims by government, game farming has never been viable in Alberta and it never will be," said Vivian Pharis, AWA Director. "Global markets for meat and antler have always been limited and are effectively closed indefinitely to North American producers because of Chronic Wasting Disease [CWD]. It is unfortunate that Premier Klein and agriculture minister Shirley McClellan have encouraged some game farmers with talk of help to find new markets because they are doomed to fail."

Last week the Alberta government gave a resounding "no" to penned hunting; but most game farmers had already come to the realization that penned hunts would not make the industry viable. Game farmers had convened emergency meetings well before the decision on penned 'hunts', and when votes were taken, an overwhelming majority agreed that the industry would not be viable, and indicated they would leave if some level of compensation was possible.

"The combination of diseases, saturated markets, and severe drought have all converged to make this situation desperate, and it will get far worse if we don't take action," said Darrel Rowledge of the Alliance for Public Wildlife. "Our governments refused any and all legitimate analysis, yet they consistently lured people into this industry—in the face of all evidence," he said. "We cannot simply abandon people in this situation; they need our help, and it is in our best interest to do what's right. That means completely dismantling the industry."

Even though it is illegal, some game farmers have threatened to release game farm animals to the wild because they can't afford to feed them. All sides oppose such irresponsible (and illegal) action.

The three groups propose an end to game farming by:

- A full dismantling of the industry in Alberta and a retraction of all relevant regulations and legislation.
- Limited compensation to game farmers based on number of animals as of June 30, 2002, contingent upon the complete elimination of the industry.
- The humane killing of all game farmed animals; their brains to be submitted for testing and carcasses incinerated.
- Removal of game farm fences only after inspection confirms it free of disease.
- Agreement by those indemnified to leave the industry permanently.
- The development of a wildlife policy that is protective of wildlife.

We held press conferences on July 22 and August 13. Our latest news releases on the game farming issue can be found on our website. See also www.maddeer.org.

