

Farm Bureau Wants Deer Hunting Decision Reconsidered

HARRISBURG (Dauphin Co.) — Pennsylvania Farm Bureau has asked the Pennsylvania Game Commission to reconsider its decision not to allow the sale of surplus antlerless deer hunting tags for the 1999 hunting season.

Farm Bureau member Douglas Gilbert of Guys Mills, who serves on the farm organization's Wildlife Damage Control Committee, made the request during the Game Commission meeting taking place this week in Harrisburg. The Commission hasn't approved the sale of unsold, surplus tags since the 1997 deer season.

Gilbert, a hay, grain and beef farmer from Crawford County, told Commission members, "We recognize the fact that many hunters feel that surplus tag usage on State Game lands will harm their harvest success rate in future years. Farm Bureau is simply asking that you allow county treasurers to sell surplus tags this fall that may only be used to hunt antlerless deer on private lands with the permission of the private property owner."

Farmers are currently coping with price slumps, economic hardships, and urban sprawl, Gilbert said. "Wildlife damage to their already economically depleted and

drought-stricken crops is driving farmers out of business," he testified.

Responses to a survey conducted by Farm Bureau show average yield losses totaled about 35 percent due to white-tail deer feeding on crops in 1998. "Average loss per farm family due to the prolific deer herd was approximately \$9,602," said Gilbert. He urged to Commission to "please reconsider" the issuance of surplus deer tags this season.

Gilbert also drew attention to a Farm Bureau recommendation, the Small Landowner Deer Management Proposal. Under the plan, farmers and small landowners could enroll their property in a Game Commission Landowner Database by filling out a simple form or via the Internet. "Enrollment would then enable sportsmen to access the name, address and telephone number of the property owner via the Internet or by contacting the Game Commission Regional Office," Gilbert explained. "Sportsmen could then apply for surplus tags not yet distributed in that Deer Management Unit." Hunting under such a program would be only with the landowner's permission, Gilbert added.

Farm Bureau recommended

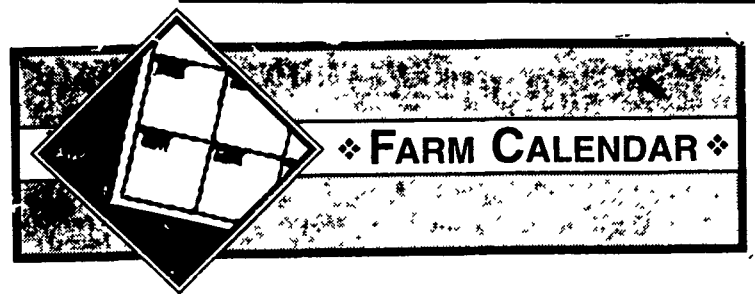
some changes in the deer depredation permit hunting program which allows antlerless deer hunting during specified off-season times from February through September on farms with severe deer damage problems. Farm Bureau asked that reports from farmers using the program be required less frequently than the current weekly basis. Farm Bureau also asked that farmers be entitled to issue twice as many deer hunting permits to hunters — one permit for every five acres of cultivated land instead of the current quota of one permit for every 10 acres. Farm Bureau also expressed its support for the Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs' recommendation that all licensed sportsmen be able to participate in the deer depredation permit hunting program, including hunters under age 18.

Addressing other wildlife crop damage problems, Gilbert said, "... many of our Farm Bureau members in southwest Pennsylvania are being hit hard with extreme turkey damage."

Damage has been as severe as deer damage in some areas, he said. Farm Bureau is asking the Game Commission to develop a "hotspot" program for hunting turkey on farms with crop damage problems. "We also recommend that the bag limit be raised to two bearded birds for the spring gobbler season," Gilbert added.

Pennsylvania Farm Bureau is a voluntary, non-governmental organization which represents over 27,000 farm and rural families.

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(Continued from Page A10)

Sinking Valley Fair, Skelp, thru Sept. 18.

Wednesday, September 15
Southern Lancaster County Fair, Quarryville, thru Sept. 17.

Thursday, September 16
North East Community Fair, North East, thru Sept. 18.

Oley Valley Community Fair, Oley, thru Sept. 18.

Friday, September 17
Big E, 78th Annual Eastern States Expo, West Springfield, Mass., thru Oct. 3.

Great Frederick Fair, Frederick, Md., thru Sept. 25.

Delaware Valley Old Time Power and Equipment Association Days of the Past, Washington Crossing State Park, Titusville, N.J., thru Sept. 19.

Saturday, September 18

Grazier Meeting, Penn State University Haller Farm.

Producer Field Trip to Penn State Haller Farm, meets at Comfort Inn/Bonanza Restaurant at New Columbia exit of Rt. 15, north of I-80 at 8 a.m.

Southeast Regional Cattle Association Annual Farm Tour, Hartford County, Maryland.

Phialdelphia Harvest Show, Horticulture Center at Fairmount Park, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.

Ninth Annual Benefit Auction and Bake Sale for the Clinic For Special Children, Leola Produce Auction, Leola, 8:30 a.m.

Lehigh Community Livestock Roundup Sale, Schnecksville Fairgrounds, 10 a.m.

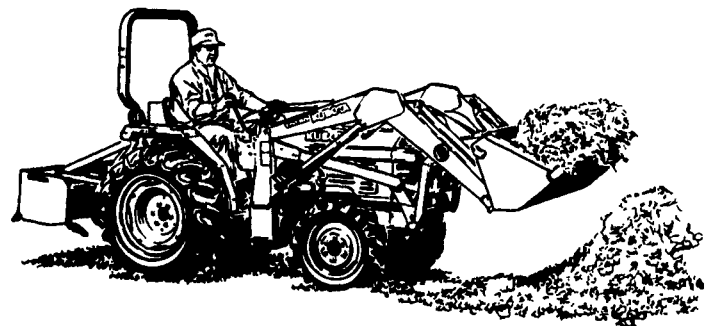
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