

**SB367\_RMC\_SupportTestimony\_Crossover.pdf**

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*Susan O'Neill, Chair*

*Charlotte Davis, Executive Director*

Testimony in Support of  
Senate Bill 367 - Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs – Authorization  
House Environment and Transportation Committee  
March 21, 2024

**The Rural Maryland Council supports Senate Bill 367 – Natural Resources – Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs – Authorization.** Senate Bill 367 would allow the Department of Natural Resources to conduct an antlerless deer hunting program in January as a means of reducing crop damage.

The primary objective of this initiative is to tackle the issue of overpopulation of antlerless deer on the lower shore. Since many hunters tend to hunt only for bucks, the population of antlerless deer has grown tremendously in this region. The event that has been organized is exclusively for hunting antlerless deer, and its sole purpose is to bring down the overpopulation. The hunters who take part in the event can either keep the deer they catch or donate them to the local food bank.

During the Maryland Deer Summit (hosted on May 11, 2023, at the Maryland Department of Agriculture), it was estimated by the Maryland Farm Bureau that deer cause about \$50 in damage per acre, which could add up to \$55 million statewide. Add in neighboring states, where farmers also have problems with deer, and the number would be higher still.

Deer overpopulation can be quite a detriment to rural communities, specifically farms, due to crop damage. The state of Maryland has a high density of deer to suitable habitat, which often leads to conflicts with farmers, vehicle drivers, and homeowners. To control the overpopulation of deer, it is important to practice responsible hunting and utilize depredation permits. By doing so, we can help reduce the impact of deer on crops, vehicles, and homes.

The Rural Maryland Council respectfully requests your favorable support of Senate Bill 367.

The Rural Maryland Council (RMC) is an independent state agency governed by a nonpartisan, 40-member board that consists of inclusive representation from the federal, state, regional, county and municipal governments, as well as the for-profit and nonprofit sectors. We bring together federal, state, county and municipal government officials as well as representatives of the for-profit and nonprofit sectors to identify challenges unique to rural communities and to craft public policy, programmatic or regulatory solutions.

“A Collective Voice for Rural Maryland”

**SB367\_HSUS\_LOI\_cross.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jennifer Bevan-Dangel

Position: INFO



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

March 21, 2024

Environment and Transportation Committee

SB367

*Natural Resources - Antlerless Deer Hunting Programs - Authorization*

**LETTER OF INFORMATION**

On behalf of our Maryland supporters, the Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) would like to provide the committee with brief background and information on SB367, which as currently drafted would authorize a person to receive a raffle ticket for each antlerless deer hunted by the person during a certain raffle program that has as its objective the hunting of antlerless deer. We do not take a position on this bill but want to ensure the committee understands the context of the larger conversation around deer management in Maryland.

The HSUS, along with wildlife management professionals and sportsmen's groups, stands in firm opposition to any legislation that contravenes longstanding conservation principles to create direct payments to hunters for taking what is, has been, and must always be a public resource that is managed in the public trust. Further, the commercialization of Maryland's wildlife runs counter to longstanding principles of responsible, fair chase hunting, as well as the historic rejection of market hunting by wildlife management agencies and professionals.

With regard to the regulated hunting of deer, The Wildlife Society says the following:

Killing contests differ from typical regulated hunting by the very nature of the organized public competition and prizes being given specifically for killing the largest, smallest, or most animals. "Big Buck" pools or organized record books differ from killing contests because the animals recognized in these competitions are harvested consistent with ordinary and generally accepted hunting practices and then introduced to the competition.<sup>1</sup>

We do not take a position on the bill as moved by the House and Senate. However, it is critical that the committee understands we have deep reservations about this type of raffle program, and we would need to closely review any potential amendments to the bill to determine if they change our position on the legislation. We urge the committee to review all deer hunting legislation with a critical eye for avoiding commodification of this public resource and to look for opportunities to promote other solutions to human/wildlife conflict.

The HSUS urges the Maryland farming community to work with the Department of Natural Resources to expand the implementation of strategic exclusion, repellent techniques and scare tactics for reducing cervid crop damage and build on existing non-lethal damage management approaches. The use of fencing and/or electric fencing systems is cost effective during the growing season and for high value crops. These proven and sustainable damage prevention methods should be included as the cost of doing business irrespective of deer density.

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<sup>1</sup> The Wildlife Society Issue Statement: Wildlife Killing Contests <https://wildlife.org/tws-issue-statement-wildlife-killing-contests/>