

Reasons to NOT Feed Deer



NORTH DAKOTA GAME AND FISH DEPARTMENT



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1. Wildlife are a renewable natural resource whose population size and density are governed by habitat availability and environmental conditions like weather. We must accept that some wildlife die in severe winters and their populations will naturally decrease if ample habitat is not available.
2. Artificial feeding and baiting may remove wildlife away from areas where essential winter cover is located. This alteration of wildlife behavior may linger on for years after feeding. Animals habituated to feeding on artificial food sources are more likely to seek out these feed sources, rather than browse, leading to potential depredation issues.
3. Quality HABITAT needs to be present to support wildlife populations. A population cannot be sustained on a food source alone.
4. Artificial feeding congregates animals unnaturally. This increases the risk of disease transmission. Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is now endemic in North Dakota. Other agriculturally important diseases such as bovine tuberculosis (TB) can spill over to wildlife and can spread faster through shared feedstuffs.
5. Artificial congregation of wildlife, through feeding, also has the potential to create habitat damage, spread noxious weeds and increase predation.
6. In some cases feeding can actually kill wildlife. A large percentage of deer presented to the NDFGD Wildlife Health Laboratory that die of grain overload actually have fat reserves that would have likely allowed them to survive through winter. Well-intended individuals may be doing more harm than good.



Stomach contents from a deer that died from grain overload.



Deer killed from grain overload can have fat reserves that would have sustained them through winter.