

SUPPLEMENTAL FEEDING

What is supplemental feeding?

- The process of placing food, either natural or artificially produced, with the intent of supplementing the naturally occurring food that is available to wildlife.
- Supplemental feeding does not include food plots, leaving of unharvested agricultural crops or leaving of agricultural products in place after normally accepted harvest processing methods are used, cutting of native vegetation, or artificially fertilizing herbaceous or woody sites.

Is it legal to supplemental feed?

- On May 16, 2003, supplemental feeding was banned in all Michigan counties by the Natural Resources Commission.

Under what authority is supplemental feeding regulated?

- The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act, 1994 PA 451, authorizes the Director and Commission to issue orders to manage wild animals in this state.
- Public Act 66 of 1999 gives the Natural Resources Commission the authority to regulate deer and elk feeding.
- Within Wildlife Conservation Order 3.100a the order states *effective May 16, 2003 it shall be unlawful to engage in the supplemental feeding of deer in Michigan.*

Why and when does supplemental feeding occur?

- Usually in an attempt to minimize winter mortality, increase the number of deer in an area, or for wildlife viewing.
- Feeding usually occurs in winter months.

Why did the Natural Resource Commission decide to ban supplemental feeding?

- Supplemental feeding can bring about three harmful effects on deer and their habitat.

Disease transmission:

Supplemental feeding assembles deer in a relatively small area, which can facilitate the outbreak and transmission of disease. Although supplemental feeding does not cause disease, the potential for disease transmission is much higher at these feeding sites. The spread of disease is related to deer density, stress, and increased number of animal-to-animal contacts. No contagious disease, like TB or CWD, has been detected in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. However, the scientific community believes that supplemental feeding contributes to the maintenance of TB in northeast Lower Michigan.

Effects on movements:

In northern climates, deer often travel long distances to find lower snow depths and winter shelter in suitable habitats. However, supplemental feed can deter deer from traveling to wintering areas. Deer attempting to survive in poor wintering habitat may expend more energy than supplemental feed can provide, influencing both condition and survival.

Effects on habitat:

Supplemental feed placed in wintering areas increases the number of deer using the area. Regardless of how much supplemental feed is placed, deer will continue to consume natural browse (woody vegetation) around the feeding site. The resulting overbrowsing degrades the habitat and decreases the area's ability to winter deer. These impacts may persist for many years.

How can I help to build a healthy deer herd?

Maintain high quality habitat on your property by creating or maintaining winter thermal cover of cedar and hemlock. Provide natural food sources such as acorn, beechnut, and fruits by planting trees and shrubs. Selective cut for natural regeneration when necessary. Do not supplemental feed on your property.

What is the difference between supplemental feeding and recreational feeding?

Recreational feeding is to attract wildlife with the use of food. This is legal in Michigan if it is conducted in the following way: Volume of feed cannot exceed two gallons, feed must be scattered and must be no more than 100 yards from your residence. The feed must be at least 100 yards from livestock or captive cervidae. **It is illegal to recreationally feed in Alcona, Alpena, Crawford, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle counties.**