

Differences between planted and managed food plots and the baiting and artificial feeding of game species of wildlife.

Food plots or other agricultural crops left standing in the field:

1. Offer year-round or seasonal access and availability to deer and other free – ranging wildlife on a 24-hour per day basis where they can feed at will rather than just when the feeder trips or bait is available.
2. Are large enough that deer or other wildlife species are not concentrated in such a small area that the density promotes disease transmission or inter-specific competition among species.
3. Do not promote unhealthy food production or availability like feeders or bait piles which can get wet, moldy and toxin impacted.
4. Do not have a negative impact on non-target species like corn or other grain which might be infected with aflatoxin, nor do food plots or agricultural crops left in the field create an attraction for predators in an unhealthy density like feeders or baiting.
5. Food plots add other benefits such as providing openings for improved turkey and other bird and small mammal brood range and nesting sites whereas baiting or feeding does not provide any such benefits.
6. Money spent for the preparation, planting and management of food plots for use by wildlife provides for habitat improvements such as openings for brood range, or it may substitute needed seasonal forage for a deficiency of mast producing trees in the area, or provide good nesting cover, plus most food plots can be managed to improve wildlife habitat for several years without significant management costs.
7. Food plots and agricultural crops left standing do not significantly alter wildlife behavior or cause dependency or increased habituation to people.
8. The non-hunting public has rarely if ever objected to the planting and management of food plots for the benefit of wildlife.
9. Food plots have been demonstrated to be cost-effective in improving wildlife habitat without increasing the likelihood of increased wildlife health problems.
10. Surveys of hunters and landowners have not identified any opposition by or private landowners to the planting or management of food plots as to the ethics of improving habitat for wildlife, in contrast to the majority of hunters and landowners who oppose baiting.
11. It is recognized that many people do hunt in or adjacent to food plots and that is a choice they make for themselves, however, free- ranging wildlife may or may not frequent food plots during daylight hours when people are hunting because other natural foods may be preferred and more beneficial to their needs, or because wildlife associate these openings with people activity.

Baiting and Artificial Feeding creates:

1. A situation that requires someone to supply bait or feed on a regular basis which is significantly more expensive than preparing and managing food plots, or other habitat enhancement and if baiting and feeding are not done regularly the animals

- that have been fed may be short or natural food in the area because they have eaten or damaged preferred species in the baited or feeding area.
2. Significant opportunities, and ideal environment to hasten the spread or transmission of diseases such as hemorrhagic disease (bluetongue), tuberculosis, CWD, and a whole host of other diseases to deer as well as to non-target species such as turkeys, and they attract other species such as raccoons which serve as reservoirs for other diseases such as rabies.
  3. A situation where non-target wildlife species such as song birds, predators, and other preferred game species such as turkeys may be drawn in to feed on the bait or feed which if infected with aflatoxin (40% of deer corn examined for sale had illegal levels of aflatoxin and was prohibited from being sold for animal food) or other toxins or fungus may cause death or serious health problems to these non-target species. In addition, much of the bait or feed disseminated is likely to be eaten by species other than what the bait is being provided for.
  4. Funds expended for baiting and feeding are not improving habitat in any way, and in fact are degrading the habitat by causing too many animals to frequent the immediate area and may exacerbate human/wildlife interaction and vehicle/deer collisions if near highways.
  5. Baiting and artificial feeding pose a significant problem for non-target wildlife species, and is likely to encourage and exacerbate poaching problems and encourage the taking of wildlife out-of-season. In fact there are cases on record where hunters in Florida and Louisiana hunting over deer bait have illegally taken Threatened subspecies of black bear that were attracted to the deer feed (usually corn).
  6. Baiting and artificial feeding if made legal will discourage many landowners from practicing and expending limited resources on wildlife habitat management and enhancement because even if they don't bait or feed themselves but their neighbor does it, the neighbor is likely to cause a change in wildlife behavior especially if he baits and feeds primarily during the hunting season.
  7. Baiting and artificial feeding significantly alters wildlife behavior patterns and creates a dependency on someone putting out the bait and feed which also increases wildlife habituation to people which is not in the best interest of wildlife.
  8. Survey after survey has indicated that the non-hunting public perceives baiting and artificial feeding of wildlife or the purposes of hunting as non-ethical and not as a "fair chase" method of hunting, and their attitude is likely to change to oppose hunting if they perceive hunting over bait as giving unfair advantage to hunters.
  9. Baiting and artificial feeding has been proven in case after case of not being cost-effective aside from the fact that it increases the potential for epidemic disease transmission and negative impacts on wildlife health.
  10. Every survey, state, region, or national that I am aware of that has polled hunters about whether they think baiting or feeding should be legal, has resulted in the great majority of hunters opposing making it legal to hunt over bait or feed, and this is certainly true in Mississippi.

11. Baiting and artificial feeding unnaturally lure/attracts wildlife to localized areas and to hunt over such area is not perceived as fair chase hunting by the majority of hunters or the general public. Is teaching our children or grandchildren to hunt by shooting an animal over a bait or feed pile the hunting legacy we want to leave future generations?
12. Most scientific nutritional studies have shown that corn which is the choice of most people who bait and feed deer is not the most nutritional diet for wild deer, nor is a healthy diet that meets the complete nutritional requirements of deer.