

**Meeting Date:** January 25, 2024

**Agenda Item No.** 12

**Agenda Item:** Winter Feeding of Deer and Elk

**Bureau Chief Approval:** SR

**Prepared by:** Miranda Reinson, Regional Wildlife Biologist

**Background:**

Idaho ungulates have adapted to survive on a reduced caloric intake during the winter when forage abundance and quality are greatly reduced. Although ungulates have adapted to this stressful period, under certain circumstances IDFG does implement emergency feeding efforts with the goal of reducing winter mortality. Most often, emergency feeding operations designed to reduce mortality in severe winters are aimed at deer, which are more susceptible to mass mortality events than elk. Baiting operations focused on elk are typically designed to mitigate public nuisance or human safety issues.

This presentation will cover the IDFG winter feeding program, including big game biology, legislative statute, policies, and the role of regional winter-feeding advisory committees. Additionally, this presentation will provide examples of when feeding or baiting is used by IDFG and specifics on implementation of feeding efforts.

**Statutory Authority and/or Policy Issues:**

IDAPA 13.01.18 – Rules Governing Feeding of Wild Cervids; establishes the rules in which the department shall feed ungulates. Idaho Legislative Code Section 36-111; establishes a fund for emergency winter big game feeding which is a set dollar amount taken from each deer, elk, and pronghorn tag sold. Idaho Legislative Code Section 36-123; establishes the winter-feeding advisory committee in which each region shall appoint five commission approved members to act as advisors on big game feeding. IDFG Emergency Big Game Feeding Policy No. W1-0; directs the Department on guidelines for feeding of big game during the winter.

**Public Involvement Process:**

Not applicable.

**Justification:**

This presentation is informational for the Commission about winter feeding of big game animals.

**Staff Recommendation:**

No action requested. This agenda item is presented for Commission information.