



Minnesota Elk Industry Fact Sheet

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1. Who are the members of the Minnesota Elk Breeders Association (MnEBA)?

A trade association consisting of livestock producers who commercially raise elk. Products produced and sold include farm-raised elk meat, velvet antler, hard antler and shooter bulls.

2. How many elk producers are there in Minnesota?

There are currently 199 premises raising elk in Minnesota. The total inventory of elk on these farms is 6,467 animals. The average herd consists of 32 elk.

3. What animal health programs do elk producers participate in?

Elk farmers routinely test for tuberculosis (TB) in their animals. Working together with the Board of Animal Health, elk producers voluntarily began testing for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in 2001.

In 2004, new rules made it mandatory for all cervids over the age of 16 months to be tested for CWD. Since 2002 when computerized records began, over 19,300 farmed cervidae have been tested for CWD in Minnesota.

Additionally, all farmed cervidae herds are required to undergo a yearly inspection by the Board of Animal Health to ensure complete compliance with all farmed cervidae rules and regulations.

4. Does the industry support these rules and regulations?

Yes. Industry representatives have worked with the Minnesota Board of Animal Health, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and other state agencies since the early 1990's to develop monitoring and oversight programs for the industry. This includes the CWD monitoring program which is successfully working to eliminate CWD in farmed cervids. This program was initially developed in Minnesota at the request of the elk industry.

5. When and where was the first case of CWD discovered in the United States?

CWD was first recognized as a clinical "wasting" syndrome in 1967 in mule deer in a wildlife research facility in Northern Colorado. In 1981, CWD was detected in a wild elk and in 1985 it was detected in a wild mule deer in Colorado. Further surveillance showed the disease was present in wild deer and elk in northeastern Colorado and southeastern Wyoming. For many years CWD in wildlife was thought to only occur in this region, referred to as the "CWD endemic area." However, wildlife surveillance begun in earnest in 1997 by wildlife agencies led to detection of CWD outside of the historic endemic area.

CWD has now been found in wild cervid populations in Colorado, Illinois, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

CWD has been found behind fence in Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New York, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

6. Are humans susceptible to CWD?

The National Center for Disease Control (CDC) and World Health Organization have found no scientific evidence that the disease presents a health risk to humans.

7. Are there government fees associated with raising elk in Minnesota?

Yes. For each herd, the owner or owners must, on or before January 1 of each year, pay an annual inspection fee equal to \$10 for each cervid in the herd as reflected in the most recent inventory submitted to the Board of Animal Health up to a maximum fee of \$100.

There are also costs involved with testing elk for TB and CWD which are paid out of pocket by each producer. These can range from several hundred to several thousand

dollars per year depending upon the size of the operation.

8. How do elk farmers contribute to their local economy?

Elk are farmed primarily in the rural areas of Minnesota. They contribute greatly to their local economies in a variety of ways:

- * Veterinary supplies and testing services from local veterinarians
- * Use Minnesota meat processors to slaughter animals and sell to local consumers
- * Purchase supplement, grain, seed and fertilizer from local elevators
- * Purchase hay and grain from local farmers
- * Hire help to harvest grain, bale hay, build fence and for general chore work
- * Purchase fencing supplies from local hardware or fence suppliers
- * Purchase tractors, hay bines and other machinery from local implement dealers
- * Purchase 4-wheelers, mules, heavy duty trucks and trailers from local dealerships
- * Hire local truckers to haul animals
- * Purchase fuel and utilize repair shops and local service stations

9. In what other ways does elk farming benefit Minnesota?

Pastures where elk are raised make excellent use of highly erodible land by planting them in native grasses and legumes, thereby reducing soil erosion and runoff into Minnesota lakes and rivers.

Family farms in Minnesota are quickly disappearing. Elk farming is less labor intensive than traditional farming and allows a producer to have a job in town and also efficiently manage the farm.

The products produced by elk are growing enormously in popularity, especially the meat market. Elk producers in Minnesota and all across North America are having a difficult time keeping up with consumer demand. There is also significant growth in the hard antler market where again, supply is not keeping up with demand.