



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

May 11, 2015

Senate Game and Fisheries Committee
Room 8-EA East Wing, Capitol
Harrisburg, PA 17120
(717) 787-2500

Re: Please OPPOSE the expansion of Sunday Hunting

Dear Chair Senator Scavello and Senator Brewster and Honorable Members of the Senate Game and Fisheries Committee;

On behalf of the Pennsylvania supporters of The Humane Society of the United States, we submit this testimony to **OPPOSE the expansion of Sunday Hunting.**

Lifting the prohibition will jeopardize public safety and diminish outdoor opportunities for non-consumptive users. Further, and contrary to popular myth, Sunday hunting will neither reduce risk of Lyme disease in humans nor reduce the deer population in any lasting or significant way.

For the following reasons, we urge you to vote against the expansion of Sunday Hunting.

• **Sunday hunting does not reflect what the public wants:**

Sunday is the one day a week that people can freely enjoy the Pennsylvania outdoors without worrying about encountering stray arrows or bullets, or the sight of an arrow-struck crippled deer. (Domestic animals, such as dogs and horses, are sometimes mistaken for game animals.) Thus, expanding recreational opportunities for hunters diminishes opportunities for hikers, horseback riders, bird watchers, and many others.

• **Share our natural resources:**

It is only fair that given their overwhelming majority of the state's population, non-hunters should have one day per week to enjoy Pennsylvania's rich natural resources in safety and peace. Hunters can already hunt six days per week for much of the year.

• **Pennsylvania wildlife watchers outnumber hunters more than 3 to 1:**

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 37% of Pennsylvanians are wildlife watchers,

while hunters make up only a tiny 11% of the state's population. Many of them, along with hikers, birders, horseback riders, bikers, photographers, and others who enjoy the outdoors, often choose to venture out only on Sundays when there are no hunters in the woods, for safety reasons.

- **Sunday hunting will not reduce Lyme disease risk.**

The Black-legged tick has well over 100 hosts, including all mammals, many popular songbirds, and even lizards. Studies have shown that the removal of one host isn't enough to suppress the Lyme-disease causing tick (Ostfeld, 2010). The ticks are highly adaptable, and will switch to other hosts when there's a shortage of their preferred host -- or they will congregate in higher densities on the remaining deer. In addition, research indicates that hunting may put the public more at risk by creating disease "hot spots" (S. Perkins et al, 2006, Ginsberg and Zhioua, 1999; Ostfeld, 2011). That is, mature ticks that normally latch onto large hosts (i.e., deer) are more likely to end up on people and dogs after deer numbers have been reduced. There's a good reason why the CDC and health authorities don't recommend hunting to control Lyme disease - because it doesn't work.

- **Permitting Sunday Hunting is not good for our state's economy:**

Allowing hunting on Sundays could discourage economically valuable non-consumptive tourist recreational activities. According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife watchers in Pennsylvania contribute more than \$1.4 billion dollars to the state's economy annually. Tourist wildlife watchers in Pennsylvania exceed hunters in trip-related spending by more than 20 million dollars annually, a boost to our economy that would be compromised by allowing Sunday hunting.

- **Public safety concerns:**

Even if Sunday hunting is only allowed on private property, bullets and arrows certainly do not stop at property lines. On private property, homeowners are often forced to dress their kids and pets in blaze orange to go outdoors, sometimes even into their own backyards. Dogs and horses are sometimes mistaken for game animals.

- **Private property rights:**

When last surveyed, Sunday hunting was extremely unpopular with landowners. 82% either strongly opposed or opposed Sunday hunting. Furthermore, 16% would remove land from Pennsylvania Game Commission public access programs and 18% said they would completely close their land to hunting. Trespassing is frequently cited as a major concern for landowners.

- **Sunday hunting prohibitions are common in the region:**

Many Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states join Pennsylvania in prohibiting or limiting Sunday hunting including: Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Virginia, and West Virginia.

• **For many, Sunday is a day of rest:**

Traditionally, many families attend religious services on Sundays and wish to preserve a day of rest, uninterrupted by the sounds of gunshots. There is no reason to disrupt this custom to appease a tiny minority.

• **Not a population management tool:**

Expanding hunting to seven days a week is not an appropriate way to deal with wildlife conflict challenges. Some species can already be hunted throughout the year; adding a few more days of hunting will have no meaningful impact on overall or long-term animal populations.

For the above reasons, we urge you to oppose the expansion of Sunday Hunting.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views.

Yours Truly,



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CITATIONS:

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- Ostfeld, R.C. 2010. Lyme Disease. *The Ecology of a Complex System*. Oxford University Press.
- Perkins, S.E. and I. Cattadori, V. Tagliapietra, A. Rizzoli, and P. Hudson. 2006. Localized deer absence leads to tick amplification. *Ecology* 87 (8), pi 1981-1986.