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Don't compromise state's vigilance against CWD

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Legislators standing in the way of a ban on deer baiting and feeding in Wisconsin should accept a new study on chronic wasting disease as their cue to do an about-face. The results of the study, released last week, are further evidence that Wisconsin should ban baiting and feeding statewide as part of its effort to control CWD.

The proposal for a partial ban, to be considered by the state Natural Resources Board today, will help to address the emergency created by legislators' shortsightedness. But it is not a good enough solution.

Last week a study in the respected journal *Nature* concluded that CWD spreads more easily than previously thought. It also added to evidence that the disease spreads through contact with saliva and feces. That information is important to the baiting and feeding argument because baiting and feeding bring deer together in ways that invite contact with saliva and feces.

Baiting and feeding deer have long been suspected contributors to the spread of CWD. After CWD was discovered in Wisconsin's deer herd, the state banned baiting and feeding. But that ban has expired. The state Department of Natural Resources proposed another ban, which the Natural Resources Board approved, but legislative committees rejected it. Consequently, there are now no restrictions on baiting and feeding in Wisconsin.

Some legislators have argued a statewide ban was too severe. They proposed compromise legislation that would permit baiting in northern Wisconsin and feeding throughout the state, except where CWD has been found. But if any more evidence is needed that Wisconsin cannot afford to compromise its vigilance against chronic wasting disease, the study in *Nature* is that evidence.

Lawmakers ought to accept what the experts are telling them. The Legislature should pass a statewide ban on baiting and feeding deer to take effect before the fall baiting and feeding season begins.

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