
Baiting and Its Effects on Wildlife, People, and Our Pets

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Presented by Brenna Galdenzi, President & Co-founder Protect Our Wildlife Vermont

Current Regulations Prohibit Most Forms of Hunting Using Bait



Black bear, Craftsbury, Vermont

Bait is prohibited for most forms of hunting in Vermont, including for bear, deer, moose, and other species.

However, hunters targeting bobcats, coyotes, foxes, and other furbearer species may use bait, as well as hunt furbearers at night with the aid of thermal scopes and high-tech game-calling devices.

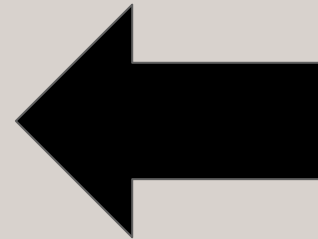
Bait may even be used on our shared public lands.

The only restriction per Vermont's hunting/trapping regulations is: "It is illegal to hunt or take any wild animal using bait during any deer hunting season, except that trappers may use bait to take furbearers."

Concerns

Presents enforcement challenges when bait is allowed for some species, but not others, encouraging illegal activity.

For example, hunters acting illegally may use bait to hunt bears and claim they are targeting coyotes during the open season (*bear hunting season starts on Sept 1st*).



Legal bait pile set by coyote hunters in Addison County

Concerns

Spreads disease among wildlife by encouraging unnatural congregation of animals in a small area.

From the *scientific paper, *Impacts of wildlife baiting and supplemental feeding on infectious disease transmission risk*:



Providing food to wildlife through supplemental feeding or baiting has great potential to negatively impact species health and represents a non-natural arena for disease transmission and preservation.

*Sorensen, A., et al., 2014. Impacts of wildlife baiting and supplemental feeding on infectious disease transmission risk: A synthesis of knowledge. Preventive Veterinary Medicine. 113, 356-363

Concerns

Vermont Fish & Wildlife also warns of the spread of disease and other risks.



Concerns

Risk for the spread of highly pathogenic avian flu (HPAI). *HPAI can spread through contaminated environments, such as soil, water, that has been in contact with infected birds. Infected birds can spread avian influenza through their saliva, nasal secretions and feces.

Since 2022, HPAI has been detected in the US in **bobcat, coyote, red fox, fisher, raccoon,** and other wild mammals.

Photos below: Poultry & pheasant used as bait in Addison County presents HPAI risk (baiting for furbearers is unregulated)



*Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, Detections of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza in Mammals, February 11, 2025

Concerns

Vermont Fish & Wildlife also warns that feeding wildlife can habituate wild animals to people leading to dangerous conflicts with the public.



Vermont citizen found this pile of perch used for baiting.

The same people who complain about coyotes, bobcats and other wildlife causing problems are often the same people who are luring them with bait piles.



Concerns

Endangers pets who are lured to bait.

In recent years, there have been three incidents in Vermont, that we know of, involving **domestic dogs being shot by hunters over bait piles.**

From a Vermont game warden's report of a dog that was shot and killed over a bait pile in Barre Town:

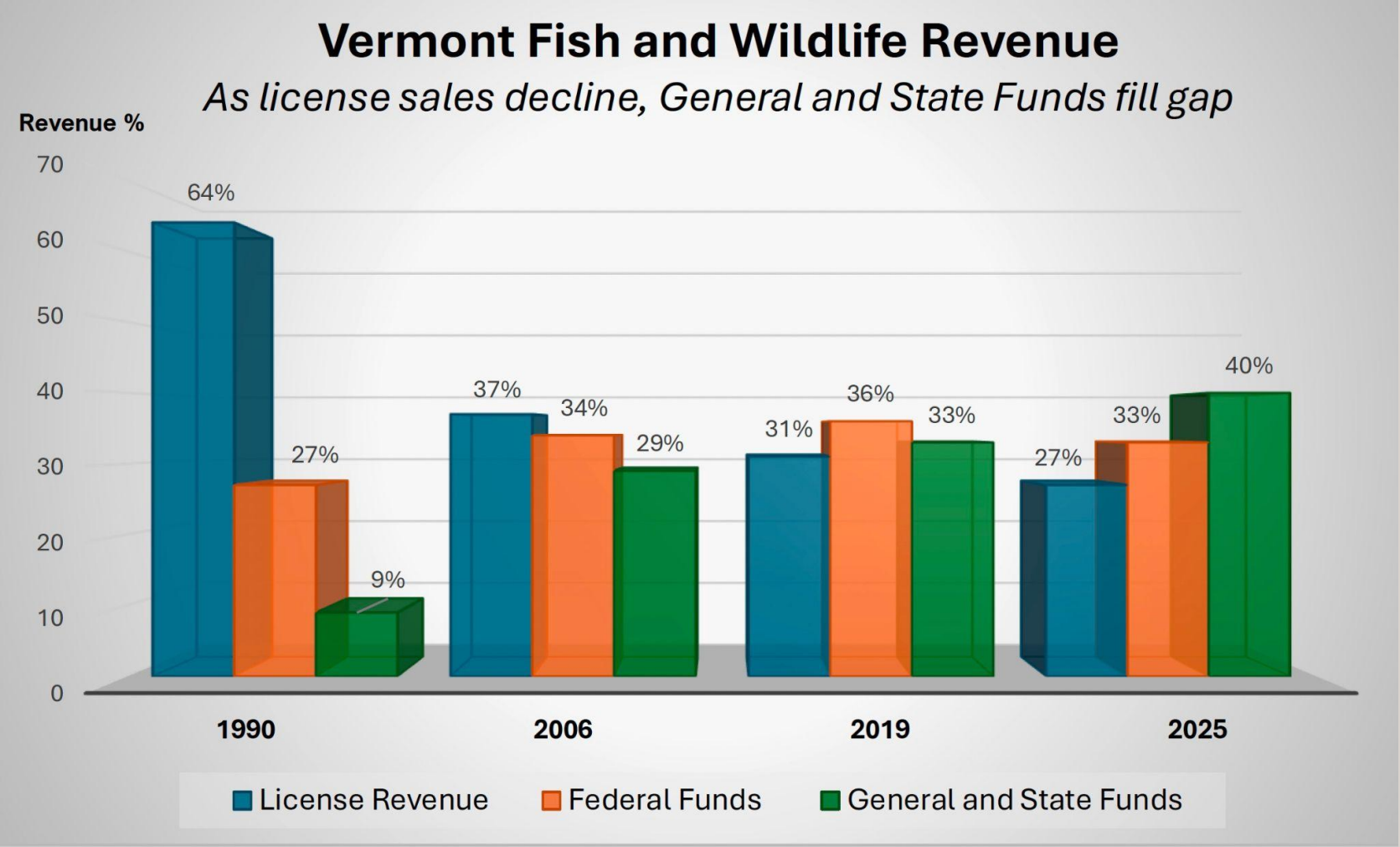
He said that yesterday [December 20th], at approximately 2200 hours, he was at home when he heard an alarm, indicating that something had triggered the motion alarm near his coyote bait pile. Mr. Boisvert went to his garage, where he has a west facing window which has a clear shooting lane to the bait. He took his AR-15 rifle, and looked through it with his night vision scope. He saw what he believed to be a coyote eating the bait pile, and he shot one time. The next morning [December 21st], he went out to the bait pile to see if he hit the animal. He did not locate any blood or other evidence that he hit and and/or injured anything.

Violates all tenets of fair chase hunting, thereby eroding the public's acceptance of the long-standing tradition of deer hunting

“Some hunters are willing to say ‘if it’s legal, it’s ethical.’ But the problem with this is that neither “legal” nor “ethical” are fixed, timeless boundaries. An activity that is an honored tradition in one time and place may be or become anathema just a few miles or years removed. From public perception to concerns with diseases such as CWD, baiting is a practice that sits on this knife edge.”

From: <https://www.backcountryhunters.org>

Promote Hunting Ethics or Risk Losing Public Support



Sources: (1) The VT Wildlife Partnership; *Vermont's Wildlife at the Crossroads, Funding and the Future of Fish and Wildlife in the Green Mountain State* (2) Vermont Fish & Wildlife 2019 & 2025 Budget