

HB 115 -- WILD ELK

SPONSOR: Schad

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Crime Prevention and Public Safety by a vote of 13 to 1.

This bill specifies that the Department of Conservation will have ownership and title to all wild elk in Missouri. Any person taking possession or killing a wild elk is deemed to consent that the title of the elk will be and will remain in the department for the purpose of control management, restoration, conservation, and regulation of wild elk.

The department will be financially responsible for any damage caused by wild elk including, but not limited to, crops and pasture, livestock, fencing and other private property, and motor vehicles. A landowner is allowed to destroy any wild elk that has caused any damage to his or her property.

FISCAL NOTE: No impact on General Revenue Fund in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014. Estimated Net Cost on Other State Funds of Unknown in FY 2012, FY 2013, and FY 2014.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that the introduction of wild elk into the state by the Department of Conservation will lead to numerous problems including vehicle accidents, destroyed crops and gardens, damaged fencing, and livestock health issues due to disease. The proposed introduction zone is not entirely remote; and the elk population will grow rapidly, leading to high costs because of the damages caused by the elk. The department should be responsible for these costs since it is introducing them.

Testifying for the bill were Representative Schad; Bobby Simpson; Darrell Skiles; Missouri Farm Bureau; Missouri Insurance Coalition; and Jeff Windett, Missouri Cattlemens Association.

OPPOSERS: Those who oppose the bill say that the introduction of wild elk was based on a carefully designed and managed plan to release a limited number in a defined restoration zone found mostly on public land. The elk will be fitted with GPS tracking collars. An increase in tourism is expected. Wildlife in the state is managed for the citizens of the state to use and enjoy and requiring compensation for damages would not be a good idea. Other states that have introduced elk have not reported problems.

Testifying against the bill were Jim Sample; Department of Conservation; James D. Pace; Earl Cannon, Central Missouri Chapter of Safari Club International; Jim Maddox; John Burk, National Wild Turkey Federation; and Elsa Gallagher, Quail

Forever and Pheasants Forever.