

There along the ridge lies 10 acres of fenced in land that encloses several trophy buck. There are usually about 4 or 5 hunters at a time who pay up to \$1,500 or more each to come for a private hunt for the animal of their choice. The animals available for the hunt range from trophy buck, fallow deer, red deer, black buck, trophy elk, and even animals such as Hawaiian rams. Today's hunt is for the trophy buck. In the midmorning soon after the owner has hand fed the animals, they are let loose on the land so the "hunt" can take place. One of the hunters has already sighted one of the bucks and walks closer to it. Tame to human presence, the buck stands still and watches as the man comes nearer to him while holding his hand out as if he were going to feed him a handful of corn. Within a few yards of the buck, the man aims, shoots, and kills the buck with a single bullet.

This type of hunting, or "canned hunting" has become an arising controversial issue for many people, specifically hunters from around the state of Arkansas and all over the nation. As an employee of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission, I have directly been in contact with many people who have expressed their opinions on this issue. The majority of the comments I have received, either by e-mail or by phone, have expressed a negative disposition toward "canned hunting." By examining many comments from the public and researching the type of conduct that occurs in a canned hunt, I have also come to form a negative opinion towards "canned hunting." "Canned hunting" has become an easy way for hunters to kill an animal that would have otherwise

never been killed in the wild so that they can obtain bragging rights to their "trophy animal." To hunt animals that are confined in a small area where they have absolutely no escape and have had their wild senses taken from them, is simply an unethical way to hunt and kill an animal. As stated in the book, *Beyond Fair Chase: The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting*, one of the ethical matters discussed is "canned hunting." In this discussion the author explains that, "shooting captive or domesticated big game animals in commercial shooting areas where a person with a gun is guaranteed an animal to shoot, is unfair and unethical."

There are several matters concerning the issue of "canned hunting" that need to be addressed so an understanding can be accomplished as to why so many people are participating in the hunts, and why so many people are opposed to it.

First of all, why are people choosing to take part in such private hunts? For some hunters, "canned hunting" allows a person to kill an animal with merely the pull of a trigger rather than spending a lot of extra time matching wits with an actual wild animal, stalking it for hours, and then killing it. With the availability of "canned hunting, a private hunt very much like the one previously mentioned, permits a person to hunt on a closed-in area where the chances of a kill are increased enormously. "Canned hunting" also increases the chance of killing a trophy animal such as a buck or elk, whereas in the wild, a trophy animal is as a rarity as killing a doe with 13 points. Another reason why people

take part in "canned hunting" is because a great number of the participants are unable to travel to other states or countries where they would be able to hunt animals that are native to that particular state or country. By importing animals such as African antelope and buffalo to the state of Arkansas, this allows the option of being able to hunt an animal that would have otherwise only been able to be hunted in another state or country. Although these reasons may seem sensible to some, when examining the ethical matters of this issue, these reasons will appear irrational and unethical for those who follow the ethics of hunting and for those who are concerned with the well-being of the native wildlife in the state of Arkansas as well as themselves.

In the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission's code of regulations under the code 6.06, it states that no person shall shoot at a deer while it is in the water. This regulation exists so that any wild deer that is in water will have the fair opportunity to escape. My question is why is there not a regulation stating that, "no person shall shoot a deer that does not have a means of escape?" Why is this regulation only limited to a deer that is in the water especially if the idea behind having the regulation is for the mere purpose of giving the animal a fair opportunity to escape? Whether the deer is in the water, or enclosed within a 10-acre field by fences, the deer, as well as the other animals, are not capable of escaping. "Fair-chase" is the act of hunting free-ranging wild animals (Beyond Fair Chase). Obviously, in a canned hunt, there are domesticated animals being hunted in an enclosed area. This idea of "fair-chase" is just one of the main

values of hunting ethics that sport hunters have respected for many years. Along with having their chances of escaping from a hunter taken away, animals involved in "canned hunts" have also been raised in pens by ranch owners who feed them on a regular basis, causing them to become dependent on food from a human source. In other words, these animals come in contact with humans on a day to day bases, resulting in the domestication and loss of most of their wild senses of fleeing from man. Other negative impacts investigated concerning this issue are the possible threats of an imported deer breeding with the native deer in Arkansas and health risks for both the animals and humans.

The translocation of animals includes the relocation of "biological packages." If an imported animal were to escape from one of the private hunting ranches, there is a good possibility that a native deer will breed with the escaped animal. This could result in the transformation of the genetics in the white-tailed deer of Arkansas or even result in the spread of disease. Recent reports provided from the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission explain that the translocation of these animals proposes threats to diseases such as Bovine Tuberculosis, and Hemorrhagic disease. As noted in a letter written to Arkansas Game and Fish Biologist, David Urbstan, by Victor F. Nettles, D.V.M., Ph.D., "the benefits that a few individuals might accrue from the importation and private ownership of deer should be weighed against the risks to the wildlife or livestock resources, not to mention some concerns for human health."

"Canned hunting" is not an issue about "hunting," it is about the way one goes about "hunting." This issue is about the negative impacts of hunting wild animals that have become domesticated where "fair-chase" has been totally eliminated by fences. It is about the risks of transporting animals from foreign lands and bringing the possibility of spreading disease and integrating breeds with our native white-tailed deer. It questions the true ethics of hunting itself where the hunter "knows and respects the animals hunted, follows the law, and behaves in a way that will satisfy what society expects of him or her" (Beyond Fair Chase). By the statements I have received from many of the hunters around the state, this concept of canned hunting is not satisfying what the society believes to be true hunting. In essence, "canned hunting" is about greed and the selfish desire to mount the head of a big horned animal on a wall.