



**House  
Legislative  
Analysis  
Section**

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**PRESERVE WILD TURKEY POPULATION**

House Bills 4007 and 4008 as passed by the  
House

Second Analysis (2-22-89)

**RECEIVED**

Sponsor: Rep. John D. Pridnia  
Committee: Tourism & Recreation

**APR 17 1989**

Mich. State Law Library

**THE APPARENT PROBLEM:**

Efforts have been made within the past few years to increase Michigan's wild turkey population. However, the number of these birds continue to be dramatically decreased due to the introduction of domestic (farm-bred) turkeys into the population. Domestic birds are sometimes introduced in the wild by people attempting to establish a wild turkey population. These efforts fail because domestic turkeys are typically tame and easy prey when introduced in the wild. In addition, the domestic birds often spread diseases to wild turkeys, thereby accelerating the demise of the wild population. Although current law prohibits the introduction of domestic birds into the wild, the law has not served as deterrent to the illegal release of turkeys. Legislation has been proposed to address the illegal release of domestic turkeys.

Reportedly, approximately 50 years ago the DNR attempted to increase bird populations by establishing a limit on the minimum number of birds to be released each year during the shooting preserve season. Today there is no need for the minimum limit because most bird populations have been firmly established. In addition, the designation of limits for the taking or release of animals is currently regulated by the Natural Resources Commission through the rule making process. Therefore, legislation has been proposed to delete the minimum release limit and allow the commission to continue regulation of the number and types of animals to be stocked and released.

**THE CONTENT OF THE BILLS:**

Under current law, a person cannot maintain game in captivity or propagate or sell game without a valid license. House Bill 4007 would require all wild turkeys or wild turkey hybrids covered by a license to have one wing pinioned (clipped) within fourteen days of hatching. The bill would also prohibit the removal of game from licensed premises by persons other than game breeders, shooting preserve operators, or persons holding permits authorizing the possession of the game. Further, the bill would prohibit the removal of wild turkeys or turkey hybrids from licensed premises unless they were pinioned. Under the bill, removal of the fertile eggs of wild turkeys and turkey hybrids from licensed premises would be prohibited. The bill would also prohibit the release of game birds from licensed premises without the written permission of the director of the DNR.

The bill would clarify that a license could be suspended or revoked when a license holder failed to comply with any requirement of the act or was convicted of violating the act. The bill would also provide for the consistent use of terminology relating to game birds by ascribing to the term "game" the same meaning that it has in the Wildlife Conservation Act.

MCL 317.71 et al.

House Bill 4008 would amend the act regulating shooting preserves to require preserves with animals not native or commonly found in the wild in Michigan to be adequately fenced and maintained to keep animals in complete and continuous captivity as approved by the director of the DNR. The bill would also require wild turkey or wild turkey hybrids to have one wing pinioned and to be fenced and released in compliance with regulations established by the DNR. Finally, the bill would require that animals held under a suspended or revoked license (in addition to birds, as currently specified) would have to be disposed of as approved by the department.

The bill would also delete a provision of the law which establishes a minimum release limit of 100 birds during the shooting preserve season.

MCL 317.301 et al.

**FISCAL IMPLICATIONS:**

According to the Department of Natural Resources, neither bill would have fiscal implications for the state. (2-21-89)

**ARGUMENTS:**

**For:**

Within the past five years several hundred wild turkeys have been introduced in the wild of Newaygo County at a cost of approximately \$500 per bird. Despite this action, the wild turkey population in Newaygo County has completely vanished. DNR officials, game breeders, and shooting preserve operators have stated that the population disappeared because of the introduction of domestic birds into the area. By requiring people who keep domestic turkeys to have the birds' wings pinioned, it is hoped that the bills will help decrease the probability of the decimation of total wild turkey populations. If a domestic turkey is released with its wings pinioned, the chances of its survival are very slim, because it would not be able to fly away from predators and would not have the survival instinct of a wild turkey. Further, the turkey would have less of a chance to breed with wild turkeys and spread diseases to the population. The DNR has recently introduced wild birds purchased from the state of Iowa (and other states) into southeastern Michigan. Many of the birds are dying due to the introduction of domestic birds. It is hoped that speedy passage of the bills will help save part of the wild turkey population in that area. In addition, domestic birds have been known to scratch cars and become extremely aggressive with dogs and small children during the spring mating season, and it is hoped that the bills will also address this situation by rendering the birds harmless if they are illegally released.

**For:**

The Department of Natural Resources has received many complaints concerning animals non-native to Michigan that have been found outside of shooting preserve areas. For

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example, during the 1987 firearm deer hunting season a deer hunter shot a wild boar that escaped from an inadequately fenced shooting preserve area. House Bill 4008 will address this problem by requiring preserve areas with non-native animals to be adequately fenced and maintained.

When birds and animals are held under a suspended or revoked license and must be disposed, it is not clear who is responsible for disposing of the game or in what manner the game is to be disposed. Sometimes, animals are shipped to zoos or temporarily housed by the department, but a procedure has not been clearly established to deal with this issue. House Bill 4008 will clarify that animals (in addition to birds) held under a suspended or revoked license will be disposed of only in a manner approved by the DNR.

***For:***

Approximately fifty to sixty years ago a minimum release limit was necessary in order to increase the bird populations within the state. Today, the bird populations have been firmly established in the environment and play an important role within the state's ecological system. Therefore, there is no longer a need for the minimum release limit. In addition, since the Natural Resources Commission currently has the authority and flexibility to regulate the stocking and release of animals, it is impractical to have certain types of animals still regulated in statute. House Bill 4008 will address both of these issues by deleting the minimum release limit.

***POSITIONS:***

The Department of Natural Resources supports the bills.  
(2-21-89)

The National Wild Turkey Federation supports the bills.  
(2-22-89)

The Michigan chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation supports the bills. (2-22-89)

The Pere Marquette chapter of the Michigan Wild Turkey Federation supports the bills. (2-22-89)