

RESOLUTION # 16

WILDLIFE AND AGRICULTURE

1 **WHEREAS**, excessive populations of wildlife, and the accompanying economic
2 and natural resource losses to farmers, livestock owners, homeowners, businesses and
3 public lands caused by such wildlife populations, continue at critical levels in New
4 Jersey; and

5 **WHEREAS**, widespread development in New Jersey has led deer, black bear,
6 geese, starlings, turkeys and other birds, as well as small mammals, to seek the
7 relatively open spaces of New Jersey farmland and its appurtenant woodlands,
8 infiltrating and feeding upon the crops farmers depend upon for their livelihood and that
9 residents depend upon for fresh, nutritious, locally grown and produced foods, and
10 risking the introduction of diseases common to wildlife into the domestic animal
11 population and to humans; and

12 **WHEREAS**, the burgeoning black bear population, in particular, poses a threat to
13 smaller agricultural animals such as sheep, goats and chickens -- as well as to New
14 Jersey beekeepers' honeybee colonies that are vital to pollinating many of New Jersey's
15 leading produce crops and which account for a growing fresh honey supply -- and these
16 bears have increasingly come into contact with humans in residential areas; and

17 **WHEREAS**, there have been several bear-human encounters in New Jersey in
18 the past year, including the mauling death of a 22-year-old Rutgers University student by
19 a black bear in September 2014; and

20 **WHEREAS**, the deer-farming industry has been strong in Europe, New Zealand
21 and Canada for years, and is growing rapidly in the United States; and

22 **WHEREAS**, New Jersey deer farmers need state support to protect the health
23 and well-being of livestock entering the food supply, through disease-control programs,

24 humane standards for care, and surveillance and response for diseases that impact their
25 animals; and

26 **WHEREAS**, protection from Chronic Wasting Disease is critical for New Jersey
27 deer farmers, and transfer of oversight to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture
28 would allow for implementation of a CWD management and monitoring program, which
29 does not exist in New Jersey under supervision by the DEP Division of Fish and Wildlife;
30 and

31 **WHEREAS**, legislation (A-2903) has been introduced and passed through the
32 Assembly Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee, with the Senate version
33 pending; and

34 **WHEREAS**, the 1999 Report to the Governor on Deer Management in New
35 Jersey and the 2005 adoption of the Comprehensive Black Bear Management Strategy
36 call for using hunting, among other methods, as a tool to manage these wildlife
37 populations; and

38 **WHEREAS**, deer overpopulation in New Jersey is an established fact, with an
39 estimated 200,000 white-tailed deer statewide and 31,192 deer-vehicle collisions
40 occurring in New Jersey in 2011-2012, and significant crop damage from deer
41 experienced by farmers every season; and

42 **WHEREAS**, the use of snares is an important tool, especially for farmers seeking
43 to minimize crop damage, in the control of coyotes, foxes and beavers.

44 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that we, the delegates to the 100th
45 State Agricultural Convention, assembled in Atlantic City, New Jersey, on February 4-5,
46 2015, do hereby urge the Governor, the Legislature, the New Jersey Fish and Game
47 Council and/or the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife and/or all other appropriate
48 state, federal and local agencies to effectuate the following:

- 49 1. Urge those responsible for wildlife management on public lands, including
50 federal, state and local lands, to establish effective, proven methods of
51 controlling deer populations on those lands and encourage expanded hunter
52 access on privately-held lands.
- 53 2. Work with USDA-APHIS and the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife as
54 appropriate to expand black bird control programs in New Jersey.
- 55 3. Continue to work with the U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Migratory
56 Birds and the Atlantic Flyways Council to extend the statewide resident Canada
57 goose season year-round and increase the daily bag limit and to encourage
58 greater control strategies for Canada geese.
- 59 4. Urge the Division of Fish & Wildlife to allow the use of a farm's prior year's crop
60 damage from wildlife as the basis for issuing the current year's depredation
61 permit instead of requiring the current year's damage be documented first in
62 order to issue the current year's permit.
- 63 5. Increase the number of available turkey hunting permits and conduct and/or
64 support extramural research on turkey damage.
- 65 6. Support the expansion of wildlife damage surveys and plans for New Jersey,
66 wildlife damage research, and education at the Rutgers/NJAES Center for
67 Wildlife Damage Control.
- 68 7. Urge the New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife to stop the practice of pulling a
69 depredation permit if the carcass of a shot animal covered by that permit cannot
70 be found.
- 71 8. Continue to support a science-based black bear management methodology that
72 incorporates a hunting season as needed.
- 73 9. Support the creation of a multi-species depredation permit to streamline the
74 process of obtaining such permits for farmers facing crop damage from multiple

75 species, instead of requiring separate depredation permits for each species
76 causing damage.

77 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we oppose legislation (A-2122 and S-687)
78 that seeks to prohibit “deer baiting” by hunters in areas designated as “black bear
79 habitat,” in part because the legislation fails to define “black bear habitat,” leaving open
80 to interpretation of the Department of Environmental Protection what areas of the state in
81 which someone could be charged with breaking the law, as well as leading to a further
82 increase in the existing deer over-population that also causes millions of dollars in crop
83 damage a year.

84 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge those responsible for wildlife
85 management on public lands, including federal, state and local lands, to establish
86 effective, proven methods of controlling deer populations on those lands, as those
87 populations frequently are in close proximity to farms and contribute greatly to crop
88 damage annually.

89 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the passage by the Legislature and
90 the signing by the Governor of A-2903, to move the administration of the New Jersey
91 deer farming industry from the Division of Fish and Wildlife to the New Jersey
92 Department of Agriculture.

93 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Governor and Legislature to
94 support pending legislation that calls for moving the New Jersey Fish and Game Council
95 and the Division of Fish and Wildlife into the New Jersey Department of Agriculture,
96 creating a more logical alignment with USDA and its myriad of wildlife programs, and
97 thus resulting in a better-coordinated effort to balance the needs of wildlife with those of
98 the agricultural sector, provided that all concerns about such a realignment are
99 addressed through a combined effort of the NJDA and NJDEP, with an eye toward
100 accomplishing the missions of both departments.

101 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to pass, and the
102 Governor to sign, legislation that requires all publicly owned lands purchased or
103 operated with any public funds to be managed with site-specific wildlife management
104 plans, approved by the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife or the U.S. Fish and
105 Wildlife Service, in consultation with the Department.

106 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge the Legislature to reject pending
107 legislation (S-2538) that would prohibit the use of snares as a means of controlling
108 coyotes, foxes and beavers in New Jersey.

109
110 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey's Congressional
111 Delegation to sponsor and support federal legislation to increase, by at least \$400,000,
112 the USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services budget for staffing and support for a pilot
113 Cooperative Waterfowl Damage Management Program in New Jersey, and to implement
114 actions in support of the "Depredation Order at Agricultural Facilities" contained in the
115 newly-completed Environmental Impact Statement for Canada Geese.

116 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that we urge New Jersey's Congressional
117 Delegation to consider legislation authorizing and funding the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
118 Service to make restitution to farmers for wildlife damage to crops and livestock, and for
119 costs incurred for materials and labor used to prevent damage caused by wildlife that the
120 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service regulates.