

**Patrick Tarlton, Texas Deer Association**  
**Testimony to Senate Water and Rural Affairs Committee**  
**RE: Senate Bill 810 by Chairman Charles Perry**  
**March 18, 2019 – Texas Capitol**

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name is Patrick Tarlton and I am the Executive Director of the Texas Deer Association. I am testifying in opposition to the Committee Substitute to Senate Bill 810 before you today.

I want to be abundantly clear. This bill has nothing to do with chronic wasting disease or the rules implemented to manage that disease. This bill only addresses the need for legible, reliable, and easy to use identification of breeder deer standing in pens.

Members, this is a pretty simple issue. The breeder industry stands unified with Texas Parks and Wildlife permit and law enforcement staff to ensure the tags in a breeder deer's ear are legible, reliable, and can quickly identify the animal in case of inspection. We also agree with the Chairman and Department for the need for a secondary form of identification in case of a missing tag. In fact, we agree with 90% of the language in this bill regarding these requirements. There are subtle changes that need to be made to allow for contrasting colors in tags and other minor changes, but the deer industry stands ready to work alongside the Chairman, the department, and others to ensure breeder deer can be easily identified while standing in a pen.

The major concern for our industry in the legislation today is the secondary form of identification required by March 31<sup>st</sup> after the year of their birth in all deer. As you have heard, this bill only allows for a tattoo as the acceptable form of secondary identification. The reality is that the tattoo is the LEAST reliable form of identification used in any animal husbandry business today across the United States. Even according to testimony given by the Department last session, tattoos are simply not sufficient for animal identification in many cases. Our industry formally requests that an RFID microchip, RFID button tag, or tattoo be allowed to serve as the secondary, permanent ID device in breeder deer.

The truth is that RFID devices – either a microchip or a button tag - are utilized throughout the world as the gold-standard for animal movement and

identification. Microchips and other RFID devices are endorsed by the USDA, every major veterinary medical Association, and almost every international animal welfare organization in the world. Simply stated, this is a no-brainer. There is no better way to identify animals in the United States than a microchip or RFID device. If a microchip is good enough for a million-dollar horse, your beloved yellow lab, or your cherished family cat, then we can all agree it should be good enough for a deer!

There are additional reasons why our industry needs the security of RFID devices as an acceptable form of secondary ID. The reality is that we are no longer a small cottage industry. The foundation of our sales is largely based upon the dependability and certainty of animal identification. The ID of animals during transactions must be done with confidence and reliability. That is why many in my industry have actually chosen to go to a microchip or RFID device. Microchips have a very low failure rate, a very high rate of reliability, and provide the consumer certainty that he or she is actually getting the product that was advertised. For many in my industry, a microchip is the most effective form of identification to establish confidence in the sale of permitted animals.

The case for microchip and RFID technology is obvious. The Texas Animal Health Commission and the United State Department of Agriculture ALREADY accept RFID microchips and RFID button tags as formal secondary forms of identification. The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department ALREADY allows for breeders to input the 15 digits RFID numbers into their own reporting systems. And, Law Enforcement officers in the Texas Parks and Wildlife Staff ALREADY allow for a microchip or RFID device to be used to identify an animal for investigation purposes. Therefore, we believe this legislation should be amended to allow RFID devices as a secondary, permanent form of ID.

Thank you for allowing me to testify today and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.