

THE ETHICS OF FAIR CHASE

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Brother Ted - this time you missed . . .

I have always thought of the family as a great analogy for the hunting community. As in most families, each and every one of us wants what is best for our family, above all else. However, in an extended family, like ours, there are lots of cousins, nieces, great uncles and such, and while we are all related, many of us were raised in very different places and times, with different values and cultural biases. Given this simple truth, every once in a while brother and sister hunter are going to passionately disagree about how we practice our religion.

Recently, one of my personal favorite family members took us (B&C) and the Pope and Young Club to task in what he called “a very painful NugeBlog”. I now find the need to do roughly the same thing, with a similar amount of pain. You see, in matters of politics, hunting and rock and roll, I have always felt a close kinship with this iconic fellow. I have been an admirer of his remarkable facility with the English language and his exceptional ability to clearly and emphatically articulate his position for many years. While his extreme zeal and his constant use of spiritual references is overwhelming to many, if you actually listen to what Ted Nugent says (not just the TV sound-bites), you know his passion is borne out of a genuine and sincere concern for what he knows to be the truth. He is a crusader in every sense of the word, and he provides no quarter for anyone that doesn’t stick to the truth. To me, this is virtuous; to many it is a stumbling block.

For those of you who may not know what I am going on about, he recently objected to Pope and Young’s and our position on game farming. He has taken the position that game farming is done by hardworking families just trying to make a living and said that our position is based on the narrow beliefs of “unsophisticated, elitist leaders”. He went on to dismiss the connection between game farming and the proliferation of diseases like CWD and hit us right between the eyes with his view of high fences and fair chase. Of course, there was a great deal of colorful rhetoric, as is his style, but I have always believed this is for effect more than substance. He wants everyone to pay attention and he is very, very good at this part.

With all of that as background, Brother Ted—you missed this one by a mile. And like a well-meaning sibling intent on helping my brother out, now I have to say what I have to say.

First and foremost, deer farming (as it is being condemned) is all about the almighty antler inch and the even more almighty dollar. The notion that this industry is largely comprised of hardworking families just trying to eek out a living is misleading and off-base. The manufacturers of Frankendeer are high-dollar

operations catering to fat cats and pseudo-hunters that are willing to pay huge sums just to meet the needs of their egos. To say that the common hunter will ever enjoy this overpriced, artificial experience is not shooting straight. On top of that, these operations are also easy targets for those who are constantly trying to diminish our right to hunt.

Insofar as deer breeding is still completely legal in many states, our consternation is primarily pointed at the end product, not the manufacturer. Truth is, this is fairly simple because the vast majority of our brother and sister hunters wouldn’t hunt this way anyway. A great example of this point can be found in social media. Here you will see that every time a picture of Frankendeer is posted, the overwhelming majority of comments are completely against it. Commonly referred to as “horn porn,” Frankendeer is routinely dismissed as utter BS. While it is mostly true that no one who is deer farming really believes he or she is doing something wrong or bad for the deer, at the end of the day, most hunters don’t want to think of themselves hunting livestock.

Secondly, the conclusion that deer breeding is not statistically related to the incidence and spread of diseases like CWD is cavalier at best. Disease spreading among wild herds has been a fairly constant and consistent discussion among the membership of our Club and the wildlife biology community for as long as I can remember. While we have not come up with the answer yet, the correlation between captive herds and the proliferation of these diseases is irrefutable to most. Brother Ted’s dismissal of this idea is too quick—almost like an afterthought—and I found it peculiar for such a deep thinker.

Despite this little dust up, Brother Ted is a great spokesman and a truth teller. He has a huge and enthusiastic following, and this is well deserved. As a fellow crusader in many of the same causes, I respect and admire him like a brother, even when he misses the mark. ■

