

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Visitors' Center and Museum Under Consideration



Earl E. Morgenroth
President
Boone and Crockett Club

THE BOONE AND CROCKETT Club is considering the development of a Visitors' Center and Museum to be located in the Tim Hixon Conservation Summit Center (location of the Boone and Crockett Headquarters) in Missoula, Montana. The Visitors' Center would house important historical artifacts and papers currently owned by Boone and Crockett Club, a world-class display of North American big game animals, important interpretive displays about the role of the Boone and Crockett Club in the American conservation movement, and a merchandise and gift store. I would appreciate any recommendations you may have regarding what you would like to see in the Visitors' Center and suggestions that will help in the success of this venture. I know many of you have worked with other institutions or organizations, and your input would be appreciated. Mail concerning the Center should be addressed to: Attn: Earl Morgenroth, Boone and Crockett Club, 250 Station Drive Missoula, MT 59801. Please mark the envelope: re: Museum and Visitor Center.

The recently completed Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center at the Theodore Roosevelt Memorial Ranch is available for use by groups at a very nominal fee. Meals can also be catered or prepared by your own group. The Conservation Center currently has accommodations for 36 people. Additional people can be accommodated at the newly remodeled ranch house and the bunkhouse. Separate facilities can be arranged for men and women. Conference facilities are available for up to 100 people. Please contact Lisa Flowers at (406) 472-3311, or e-mail, flowers@boone-crockett.org. The Elmer E. Rasmuson Wildlife Conservation Center is located on the Eastern Front of the Rocky Mountains in Montana. It is one of the most beautiful, unspoiled areas in North America.

UPDATE ON CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE

Fear of further spread of chronic wasting disease prompted Secretary of Ag-

riculture Ann Veneman to issue \$2.6 million in emergency funds to help western states. "Without a federal program in place to depopulate infected and exposed animals, the movement of infected elk into new herds and states with no known infection will continue and even accelerate," Veneman said. Veneman further said, in an article in the *Federal Registry*, that chronic wasting disease is a national emergency "that threatens the livestock of this country. [Funding] will reduce the spread of CWD in captive elk herds and discourage entry of positive or exposed animals into the human and animal food chains, and should save the federal government and farmed elk industry from having to deal with a more costly and widespread problem later."

"Public perception and continued fears that CWD from deer and elk could cause disease in humans, or in domestic livestock, could destroy the market for elk and deer products. As demonstrated in Europe, consumer confidence is very difficult to rebuild," Veneman said. Also, Lisa Vilella, Executive Director of the North American Elk Breeders Association, authored an article on chronic wasting disease in the fall issue of *Fair Chase* magazine. Ann Veneman's emergency declaration came as a direct result of this strong statement from the North American Elk Breeders' Association. As I have previously stated, this is a time to set aside our philosophical differences and lend support to any legislation that will stop the spread of chronic wasting disease.

The Club will encourage the Secretary of Agriculture to allocate substantial funding toward finding a cure for the disease. The \$2.6 million in emergency funding is an important step in the right direction to addressing this very serious threat to farmed game animals and wild game herds. The allocation will help elk farmers in America recover damages resulting from eradication of elk herds. CWD has been found in elk farms in Montana, Nebraska, Colorado, Oklahoma, South Dakota and

Saskatchewan. Out of 2,300 elk herds, only fourteen have been reported positive for CWD. A little less than one percent of the animals have tested positive for the disease.

Veneman said that no one knows the total rate of infection in farmed elk in the United States. Probably the only way to stop the spread of CWD is to stop the interstate shipment of animals, farmed and wild, from the states that have proven cases of CWD. Montana, for example, has put into effect a moratorium on the importation of animals into the state. The five-year moratorium matches the theoretical incubation period. The only known way to date to detect CWD has been by killing the animal. Currently, sick deer or elk are killed and tissue examined to determine if the animals are infected. However; a new tonsil test for CWD in live animals has been found to be effective by researchers with the Colorado Division of Wildlife at Colorado State University. This new live test will start being used in Colorado by January 2002. The new test works because the mutant proteins which cause the disease concentrate in deer tonsils and other lymph system tissue during its early stages. When infection is discovered in a herd, the entire herd is normally eradicated.

Unfortunately, the Chronic Wasting Disease Symposium was cancelled due to the September 11th tragedy. I am working with Jack Ward Thomas to help put the Symposium back together. It is necessary to put the best minds in North America together to discuss CWD and make recommendations to stop the spread — and hopefully, find a cure or determine the feasibility of a vaccine. I believe until more research and knowledge is completed, that it is prudent for all hunters to follow the recommendations of the Colorado Division of Wildlife when pursuing or handling deer and elk. The recommendations were published in the fall issue of *Fair Chase*, the September 2001 *Hunter* magazine, and the Colorado Division of Wildlife website. ▲▲▲