THE ECONOMICS OF TROPHY HUNTING

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Photos by the author

In America, the right to hunt game within constraints imposed by the state dates to the 1700s. Contesting the English Crown's claim to unoccupied land in the colonies and beyond, Thomas Jefferson rejected the oppressive Norman common law that followed the conquest of Anglo-Saxon England in 1066. He used as a blueprint for land policy in the New World the ancient Germanic common law, which allowed "freemen" to carry arms and exploit land not under specific state control or other proprietorship. Freemen had *allodial* rights (from the Roman term for Germanic estates held free of obligation). Allodial rights accrued to citizens *because they were citizens* (or because by their labor they earned access), not because a sovereign decided to accord them rights. During colonial times, hunting was the assumed prerogative of everyone, so there was no market in hunting opportunity. But the sale of dead game (meat and pelts) became an industry, growing more profitable as eastern cities expanded and wildlife disappeared from the surrounding cultivated land. Commercial hunting peaked during post-Civil War expansion, when hunters fed western rail crews and supplied eastern restaurants with game.

These days, wildlife markets in the United States don't move carcass parts. They are markets in hunting opportunity. And trophy hunters are driving them. Landowners charge high access fees for areas where trophy-class game abounds, while outfitter bills include premiums by the antler inch. Wildlife agencies have increased hunting license fees for coveted big game to match the willingness of hunters to pay. In Wyoming, hunters spend more to improve their odds in two-tiered big game tag drawings, and several states sell lottery tickets for licenses.

The dispensing of hunting opportunity in response to markets is a relatively new development in America, complicated by the fact that wild animals are a public resource, while the land they inhabit may be either public or private. No private landowner may claim as property the wildlife that inhabits his acreage; but he *can* control public access to that wildlife and sell that access for financial gain. This raises many knotty questions. What are the pros and cons of marketing hunting access? Should agencies, the stewards of a public resource, sift hunters by ability to pay—as is the case when license fees rise? Do agencies have a legal option to act as entrepreneurs? Where should the line of wildlife commercialization be drawn?

A NEW ERA OF MARKET HUNTING

Paying for the chance to hunt on private land—fee hunting—is on the rise in the United States. It is hardly a new idea. Hunting clubs in productive waterfowl areas have operated since market-gunning days. Quail preserves in the South and deer camps in the Northeast likewise date back to the nineteenth century. Some of these clubs have an air of exclusivity, limiting recruitment to family members. In Texas, where virtually all real estate open to hunting is privately owned, fee hunting is an accepted institution. Stringent trespass laws enacted in 1925 left control of access to game clearly with the landowner. In fact, the price of rural property is closely tied to the property's deer and turkey production. Tracts in areas known to yield trophy-class whitetails sell at a premium. Hunting leases account for most of the annual revenue on uncultivated land in Texas. Clearly this is "market hunting," even if it is opportunity, rather than carcasses, that are for sale.

Markets work best when goods are tangible and readily quantifiable. Migratory animals are, for all intents and purposes, intangibles. Even resident wildlife cannot be kept in inventory. Some animals in some areas are easy to count (elk in Jackson Hole), while others are notoriously hard to survey (mountain lions just about anywhere). The public stewardship and custody of wildlife, set against the prerogatives of landowners to control public access to their property, complicate markets in wildlife. Animals that do not lend themselves to accurate census taking,

and that move easily across property boundaries, further reduce the effectiveness of markets as a management tool. Markets cannot fully capture non-use values either—those wildlife attributes that have not been priced. Existence values (the satisfaction of knowing wildlife is there) and option values (a landowner's privilege of deferring resource use) are hard to assess in monetary terms. Externalities (the benefits and liabilities of wildlife to adjacent tracts) must also be considered in drawing up management plans. They, too, are often difficult to price.

It might be argued that privatization—*de jure* or *de facto*—would reduce the overall net revenues generated by wildlife and concentrate those revenues in fewer hands. However, consider that Germany— which treats game as a legal commodity—realizes only about half the income from wildlife normally generated in Wisconsin or Wyoming. The pivotal difference is that in Germany, live game is sold as a *commodity* to a few wealthy hunters, while in North America hunting has been sold as *opportunity* to many hunters, the bulk of whom come from the working class. The legislated inefficiency of harvests in the United States not only allows broader public participation in hunting; it produces a cash bonanza for states that provide good hunting.

A landowner's prerogative and ability to market wildlife can benefit the resource, including privately owned animals and those held in trust by the state. Under Zimbabwe's Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources, market forces were responsible at least in part for boosting elephant numbers there during the 1980s, while continent-wide, elephant numbers slid from 1.3 million to 650,000. Compare Zimbabwe's success with Kenya, where elephant hunting and trade in ivory had long been illegal and anti-poaching efforts were vigorous, but there were no market forces at work. Kenya's elephant populations dropped from 65,000 in 1979 to 19,000 in 1989. In northern Pakistan, villagers are now hosting foreign hunters in search of ibex and Marco Polo sheep. Local hunters have agreed to fight poaching and to refrain from subsistence hunting that might reduce sport hunting revenues, which help fund schools and irrigation projects that benefit the community. Ibex numbers have doubled in recent years as a result. The World Wildlife Fund and other conservation groups support the effort.

The United States lacks such stirring examples of success, and negative effects of wildlife marketing have been suggested. For example, enabling landowners to profit from the sale of either wildlife or hunting opportunity can result in perverse incentives. That is, the outfitter or landowner may over-harvest for short-term profit or manage for one species at the expense of others. Some ecologists who question or oppose markets in trophy hunting point out that they encourage landowners to manipulate wildlife populations to the long-term detriment of those populations. Management for trophies, they say, runs counter to natural selection and maintenance of biodiversity. It prompts the killing of animals that would otherwise dominate as breeding males, and it can result in artificially high populations of game species. Additionally, it favors the reduction of natural predators that compete with hunters for game.

The "politics of envy" can also result when markets influence landowner stewardship of game animals. That is, if trophy hunting can be priced by the free market, if access or guided hunts can be sold by the landowner, wealthy sportsmen and landowners benefit most. State agencies can raise the ante. In courting the cooperation of landowners who control large and/or critical tracts of habitat, they may accord these landowners special privileges in return for game management options. On Utah's Cooperative Wildlife Management Units, such privileges include the right to sell at market price a designated number of hunting licenses. That is, the ranch acts as a retailer of some hunting opportunities. It *owns* those opportunities, dispensing them to whomever it wishes and keeping the proceeds. This arrangement is a step beyond fee hunting, in which the landowner can sell access but not hunting licenses. What about the sportsmen who cannot afford the market priced licenses? As a concession to them, the state requires of landowners a guaranteed access to the property for hunters who apply for limited numbers of hunting licenses through a state lottery.

Even opponents of fee hunting concede that it can provide an entry for youth that want to hunt, and an opportunity for inexperienced hunters to learn basic skills. Competition for game is typically lighter on fee-access areas, and game populations denser. Some state wildlife agencies and landowners offer special no- or low-cost opportunities for young people in the first years of license eligibility. Big game hunts in these controlled-access units often target antlerless animals that don't attract paying guests. The youngsters perform a valuable culling operation while having fun and learning essential hunting tactics and etiquette.

SELL A HUNT, SAVE THE FARM?

Historically in the United States, hunting costs above the price of a license went for the services of a guide or transportation to remote areas. One outfitter, whose father brought sportsmen to elk camps in Wyoming's famed Thoroughfare during the 1940s, explained the operation this way:

"It was a two-day horseback ride then, because we didn't have so many roads. Most of the clients were wealthy, because the elk hunts cost $50 a day, with a 10-day minimum. But there was lots of country to hunt for people on a budget. I used a .25-35 for elk in those days—got close and shot at the head of my target animal or ran into a herd and managed a few fast shots while they milled in confusion. We always looked for big antlers and mounted the very best or at least tacked them on a wall. But there wasn't the emphasis on trophies you see now. We killed bulls that would qualify as monsters today. At that time, they were just good elk."

That picture of wilderness hunting is changing as landowners and hunters build markets for high-

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class hunts and trophy-class game on private land. Increasingly, hunters are willing to pay for access. Landowners, once compelled to tighten their belts when grain or beef prices dropped, now find that hunting can add to their profits. A little habitat improvement and livestock manipulation may boost game populations and trophy quality, making areas attractive to hunters who otherwise would not pay for access there. Still, for all the ranchers who want to cash in on a booming market in big game, only a few have the properties or resources that make hunting programs practical. The prices paid for guided hunts on county-size ranches with reputations for high-scoring heads won't hold up on farms and ranches with more limited acreage, no hunting lodge, and no track record. And selling hunts is a business unto itself, with many pitfalls.

One of these pitfalls is defining the arrangement clearly. Fee hunting is often confused with game farming, the raising of game animals under livestock conditions to produce meat and animal parts for sale. This controversial practice is often confused with the marketing of access to free-roaming, native wild animals. State hunting regulations can change too, reducing the opportunity of non-resident hunters to buy licenses and, by extension, the market value of hunting leases. Wildlife is a "fugitive resource" in that it carries no property rights until it is reduced to possession (i.e., legally killed by a hunter). Landowners managing open range are reluctant to make habitat improvements for such elusive property—or for short-term tenancy offered by hunters who typically lease hunting rights a year at a time.

Business prospects are also dampened by the reluctance of banks to approve loans for wildland improvements. This is because the tangible assets that can be claimed if the enterprise fails cannot be immediately identified or rounded up. Liquidation can prove equally difficult. Taxes on designated recreation property commonly exceed those on agricultural land, simply because the recreation property is expected to make more money. But wildlife does not always generate money for the landowner. Property set aside for wildlife can indeed become a financial drain, which is why many farmers and ranchers view hunting income as supplemental and try to combine a hunting program with agricultural enterprises. Under traditional tax structure, landowners who might otherwise protect wildlife habitat, either to start a fee hunting operation or merely because they want to help wildlife, can ill afford to because farmers are typically penalized for land taken out of production. Minnesota's tax credit for habitat preservation and enhancement, on the other hand, encourages set-asides. This tax revision has been studied by other states; some variations have been adopted. But the financial uncertainties of a business based on recreation, with hunting opportunity as the main product, keep many landowners from pursuing hunting as a business.

Even in Texas, where fee hunting is widely accepted and there is no public land to accommodate hunters from the city, many ranches allow no hunting. In the Trans-Pecos region, 56% of ranchers with no fee-hunting program indicated they wanted to limit ranch access to family and friends. Other reasons: 29% did not want hunters on the ranch; 27% said the ranch was not big enough for fee hunting; and 26% cited not enough game to justify the work.

In the quest to maintain hunter access, several states have tried cooperative management programs with ranchers. California's Private Lands Management Program, which focuses on big game, has apparently prompted landowners to invest in habitat improvements. With five vast regions containing 32 million people and valuable farmland vulnerable to wildlife depredations, the California Department of Fish and Game can significantly benefit from alliances with landowners. In Utah, about 25% of the landowners charging hunter access fees have been investing to improve wildlife habitat. Seventy Cooperative Wildlife Management Units (CWMU) now encompass 1.2 million acres in Utah. In 1999, lottery-drawn licenses accounted for 13% of 2,563 CWMU permits for male elk, deer, moose, and antelope. Colorado's program is limited to land blocks of at least 12,000 acres, a stipulation that brings mixed reviews. Critics point out that the policy is unfair to people who want to manage wildlife cooperatively on smaller tracts; also, the political clout of wealthy landowners can affect game law enforcement on participating ranches.

An alternative to fee hunting as practiced in these states was explored in Oregon in the late 1980s. The state proposed collecting fees from hunters for access to private land in return for assuming liability for those hunters while they were on the property. Money would be returned to the landowner if substantive improvements in wildlife habitat ensued. Otherwise some of the proceeds would be used to fund habitat enhancement. This amounts to an expansion of a program established in Wyoming years ago, whereby a landowner hosting hunters was entitled to state reimbursement for each animal shot. A ticket stub on the hunter's license became the voucher.

Entrepreneurs are seeing potential in lands not yet managed for fee hunting. One outfitter and land manager told me:

"When I started leasing land for hunters 20 years ago, I approached oil firms that were losing $300,000 annually in Colorado cattle, and $1 billion in oil. I showed them that they could make money letting me market their wildlife. They have since netted hundreds of thousands of dollars from my operations, which I've expanded to California and Alaska and even the Bahamas. I'm working with Alaska natives to help them market big game hunting on their corporation lands. Sportsmen who buy hunting privileges on pri-

vate land benefit the land and the wildlife and get better hunting in the bargain. That's a good deal for everybody. The traditional notion of hunting as a no-cost American birthright is out of date."

Corporate interest in fee hunting is apparent as well. The southeast division of International Paper earns about a quarter of its profits from recreation, which includes fee hunting. The company has taken steps to improve habitat for both game species and those not hunted. Indian reservations—most notably the Jicarilla, White Mountain, and San Carlos in Arizona—have successfully marketed big game hunting. The White Mountain Apache Reservation, famous for big elk, has sold so many hunts at $12,000 each that the waiting list became ridiculously long. To accommodate affluent sportsmen who want a hunt right away, the tribe offers two hunts annually through silent auction. Minimum bids have ratcheted above $25,000.

Reservations can control hunting just as private landowners do. They have more options because treaty rights enable them to operate outside state hunting regulations. Also, most western reservations are large enough to manage as wildlife units—unlike some ranches that hold animals part of the year but lose them to migration at other times.

RAISING THE BAR: HIGH STAKES HUNTS

Shelling out cash for a place to hunt may still be a foreign idea to weekend deer hunters over most of the U.S. But sportsmen after trophy game are getting used to it in a hurry, as states join landowners in finding ways to capitalize on the keen competition for exceptional animals. Tag fees for scarce game have traditionally been higher than for other game. Now there are fees that boost your odds for drawing permits in game units managed to produce bigger trophies. Nonprofit organizations profit from the trophy hunter's addiction too. Hunters can bid on governor's permits auctioned by conservation groups like the Foundation for North American Wild Sheep (FNAWS). In Montana, where records-book bighorn rams occur with increasing frequency, governor's tags have sold at auction for more than $300,000. FNAWS has raised enough money this way to contribute $20 million to wild sheep conservation since its inception in 1974.

In the traditional American hunting culture it is opportunity, rather than game, that is for sale. A permit does not guarantee the hunter an animal; it only allows him into the field. One avid and well-heeled sheep hunter, who thought he had a records-book ram spotted, bid $405,000 for an Alberta bighorn tag in 1998. Then he could not locate the animal during his hunt. He returned home empty-handed, remarking in an interview that he believed the sheep had been poached. Hunters on a budget, or those who simply would not risk so much money on the chance of seeing one animal, bargain-shop in other states. Wyoming's 1997 governor's bighorn permits sold for a paltry $30,000 each.

Land managed for trophy-class specimens of the most common big game can raise hunt prices substantially, as one outfitter explained:

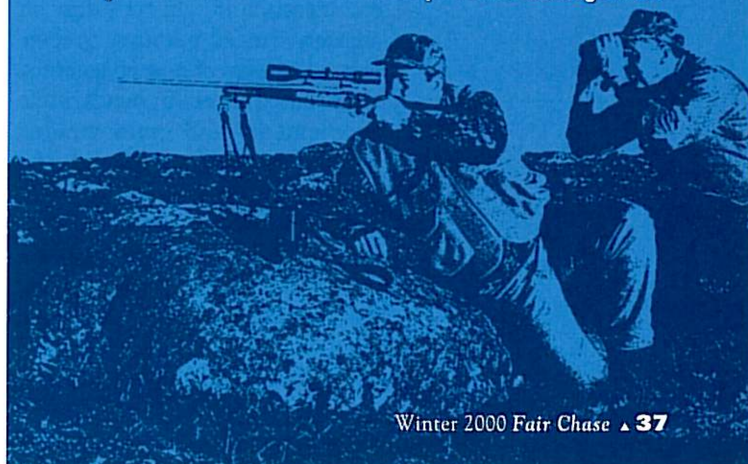
"The going price for a deer lease in south Texas now is $4 to $8 an acre, and those figures will be higher next year because there's so much demand. On some places the cost climbs because the rancher limits the take to boost buck/doe ratios, or imposes a trophy standard. Eventually conservative harvests will make his land more desirable. I've leased 13,500 acres for $76,000. I'm committed, long-term, to improve the deer herd there, so I've invested more money in a feeding program and in blinds for hunters. I sublease each of the 26 hunting spots on that property for $4,500. And I levy a $500 fine on any hunter who shoots a deer less than 4 years old. My buck/doe ratios are somewhere between 1/1 and 1/1.7 now. Deer hunting of the quality I offer can take 10 years to achieve, even on the best whitetail range. No, it's not cheap. It can't be. And it's just going to get more expensive."

Texas has shown how valuable access to big game can be; hunters there spend $300 million annually for a place to hunt. Some ranches have shifted their focus

TRENDS THAT ARE LIKELY TO PREVAIL IN SPORT HUNTING

The long-term future of sport hunting depends not only on markets within the hunting community, but on social and legislative change outside it. However, given the increasing pressure of market forces on big game hunting, these trends are likely to prevail over the next decade:

- Higher fees for big game hunting access
- More leasing of private land by outfitters
  - More control of prime big game hunting land as recreation investments by corporate groups
  - Higher license and permit fees for big game in high demand by trophy hunters
  - Innovative schemes by wildlife agencies to market coveted permits to trophy hunters
  - Higher prices for trophy tags at auctions by non-profit conservation groups
- Better big game habitat on fee-hunt property
- Redistribution of hunter pressure on fee-hunt land to ensure high-quality hunting experiences
- Increasing hunter pressure on public land as more landowners deny access on private lands
- Reduced tolerance for hunters on private land not in fee-hunt programs
- More damage complaints from landowners on property adjacent to fee-hunt properties
- Less state control of big game herd size and composition as landowners attempt active management



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from livestock to hunting, as demand for trophy-class big game outstrips the capacity of public lands to produce it. Serving up antlers for hunters can be exceedingly profitable. Utah's Deseret Land & Livestock charges $1,300 for deer hunting access, and markets elk only on guided hunts at $8,500 apiece (when elk first appeared on this 200,000-acre ranch in the 1930s they were shot as vermin!). In some years, hunts return more than the ranch's 4,600-unit cow-calf operation.

STRETCHING THE LIMITS: CANNED HUNTS AND CAPTIVE BREEDING

Captive breeding and "canned hunts" (inside high fences) are the logical if less appealing sequel to fee hunting. If the trophy is only a prize, not the embodiment of an experience, why not raise all game animals to produce the biggest antlers, horns, and skulls? Horn growth in Dall's sheep reared in captivity has been found superior to that of animals from the same gene pool but living in the wild. In one study, captive rams seven years old had horn volumes of 2,750 cubic centimeters. Wild rams the same age carried horns averaging only 1,500.

Experience with more and more species shows that captive rearing can produce a superior product. Supplemental feeding has become commonplace on private lands dedicated to serving trophy hunters. In a comparison of whitetail deer on adjacent fenced pastures, average dressed weights of unsupplemented bucks stayed under 90 pounds, while supplements and grain yielded dressed carcass weights of 160 pounds. In the East and Midwest today, high-fenced whitetail preserves, like The Sanctuary in Michigan, offer hunts for bucks bred and fed to produce exceptional antlers. Captive game is not eligible for listing in Boone and Crockett records; however, trophy fees for deer and elk shot in enclosures are increasingly tied to antler score. One reporter who investigated high-fence enterprises a couple of years ago reported that an enclosure hunt for whitetails scoring 140 to 150 points on the Boone and Crockett records-keeping system was priced $2,500–$4,000, while bucks with racks gross-scoring above 170 points cost more than $8,500. Ten years ago, he added, bucks scoring in the high 190s sold as stud animals for $5,000. Now 200-class bucks used for artificial breeding bring more than $40,000. One outstanding whitetail was purchased for $150,000 in 1996. His semen was taken by electro ejaculation and frozen, then sold for $1,500 each to deer breeders. Embryo transplants and sperm banks are in the offing.

Currently about 4,000 captive-deer permits have been sold in 30 states. Most of these permits are for hunting operations, which can pack many deer into small areas. While wild deer may require 200 acres each to thrive in arid areas, feeders can reduce the acreage-per-buck ratio to less than 4/1. One game farm with 2,500 acres supported 750 bucks and 250 does. Bigger "Jurassic Park" enclosures (to 5,000 acres) provide real hunting, insist the operators, without compromising success.

Free-ranging big game is harder to protect than are animals within high-fenced paddocks. That is one advantage of game farming over the cultivation of wild herds through habitat improvement. Game farms don't require nearly as much ground; nor do they require natural, high-quality forage. They do not have to be located where game would ordinarily be concentrated. For these and other economic reasons, entrepreneurs have pressured legislatures to ease restrictions on game farming. But the proposals bring controversy.

In 1997 Utah approved game farming as an agricultural enterprise, after its airing of the standard concerns: disease, inhumane antler removal, and genetic threats to wild stock in the case of escape. Operators were under the stipulation that there would be no canned hunts for captive elk. The main product would be antlers, exported to affluent markets in the Far East. Meat would be a secondary source of revenue. Following the near collapse of Asian rim economies, markets for antlers all but vanished. In 1999, unable to justify keeping expensive animals for a one-time return in venison, several of Utah's 21 game farmers petitioned for the prerogative of allowing hunters in to shoot their animals.

Ranchers managing for big game under Utah's CWMU program did not as a group support the amendment to allow hunting on game farms. Some objected to the image of canned hunts staining *their* operations as well as hunting in general. The CWMU Association has in fact excluded high-fenced areas from open units (since only 75% of a cooperator's land must be available to CWMU hunters, a rancher could raise animals under confinement as well). Utah's governor could have divorced himself from canned hunts with a veto—or shown his support for private property rights with a signature. He chose a safer middle ground. The amendment passed without his support; he withheld a veto.

THE TROUBLE WITH GAME FARMING

Disease transmission to domestic stock and other wildlife from game-farm stock is a chief concern of game farm opponents, who note that current technology cannot reliably detect some contagious maladies in wild animals. Quarantine procedures cannot be counted on to arrest disease transmission even where the danger is clear. Elk are vulnerable to bovine brucellosis, the nemesis of cattlemen. Bovine tuberculosis and transmissible spongiform encephalopathy (mad cow disease, TSE) have been found in antlered game. In 1991 Denmark, which had been free of bovine tuberculosis since 1959, discovered TSE in fallow deer on game farms. Subsequently, 1,600 deer in seven herds were killed to prevent an outbreak.

Another problem is genetic contamination of wild animals by escaped captives. In one instance, crossbreeding of domestic goats with Nubian ibex resulted in disruption of the breeding season.

Kids were born during the cold months, and the hybrid population died out through high neonatal mortality. Another problem cross occurred between 1989 and 1992, when game ranchers in Colorado reported the escape of 231 elk and red deer. Of those, 21 elk and 31 red deer were not recaptured. Hybrid animals (elk-red deer crosses) were subsequently killed by hunters in Wyoming as well as in Colorado. Even when the genetic mixing does not disrupt breeding patterns, captive animals are often unable to weather the rigors of the wild, and they can infuse weaknesses into wild populations.

There is also the natural extension of game farming to include exotic wildlife. Exotic game like gemsbok, nilgai, fallow deer, and black buck have been successfully introduced, maintained, and marketed as game in Texas and New Mexico. However, exotic introductions pose risks, both to the imported animal and to native species that might suffer through competition, loss of genetic integrity, or disease. Effects of exotic animals on native vegetation and other wildlife cannot be known until the introduction is made.

Investment in captive game stocks can mean loss of habitat for resident wildlife. Game farming absorbs land just as certainly as do subdivisions. High fences stop migrations or box wild game out of areas crucial to migration, wintering, or birthing. The high value of captive game animals makes loss from predation intolerable, so native predators often suffer heavy shooting or trapping in or near game farms.

Game farms, like other businesses, can fail. The economic collapse of a game farm can bring on environmental problems, because most places suitable for game animals are able to support livestock and crop farming as well. The best use of rural land—for human and wildlife purposes—may be in traditional agriculture. Crop farming and livestock ranching can benefit wildlife. When promises of greater returns lure landowners to game farming, the subsequent changes in plant communities, and the installation of high fences, can adversely affect wildlife for years even if the farm soon fails. Returning the land to its previous use may not be economically or even physically practical. The landowner and the local economy then lose revenue. The habitat may be irreparably damaged. The property could eventually be sold at a loss and turned to uses inimical to wildlife.

The benefits of game farming are mostly economic and accrue primarily to operators. Opponents argue that costs to native wildlife are not justified, given the scant potential return to the public. They also emphasize that private ownership of what is normally considered a public trust under state stewardship will alter public perception of that trust. There is concern within the wildlife community that game farming will tarnish if not destroy the image of egalitarian use and common stewardship of wildlife—a North American scheme with no true counterpart worldwide.

Defenders of game farming assure state legislators that health safeguards can be imposed and that captive big game need not pose a threat to animals, domestic or wild, on surrounding acreage. They insist that the practice can maximize profit on land not suitable for traditional farming and that illegal activities can be minimized with active patrolling and vigorous prosecution of offenders. According to proponents, private landowners given the game farm option would be less apt to sell to developers, and a game farm has a far smaller impact on surrounding land than do subdivisions.

In addition to disease and other biological concerns, game farming is the focus of ethical debates. Many people do not like the idea of shooting big game behind a high fence. Hunters themselves are split. Some cite the ailing image of the hunt as reason enough not to risk additional public disfavor. Others see game farm harvest as legitimate—and note that it provides opportunity to people (beginners, youngsters, and the handicapped) who would otherwise be unable to hunt. Some hunters who see nothing wrong with killing on game farms—likening it to the everyday slaughter of domestic stock—want it clearly distinguished from hunting. It is *not* hunting, they point out; there is no chase. The only thing canned hunts have in common with real hunting is the shot.

The animal species in question seems to affect public perception of what should and should not be shot inside high fences. The most acceptable: exotic game that is not usually available to hunters in the wild but is easily pen-propagated and adept at eluding hunters in small cover blocks. The Indian black buck and the Axis deer have been a huge success in Texas; so too the nilgai. Among native big game, the whitetail deer gives a good account of itself inside fences.

CONCLUSION

In a free-enterprise economy, markets drive prosperity. It's no wonder that our zeal to deal reaches the most elemental of activities. Hunting, once a means of subsistence, has become for many sportsmen a competitive game, a means by which to establish a type of status. High status has high value. Entrepreneurs—first as guides, then as outfitters, booking agents, ranchers, and game farm operators—have profited. They will continue to profit as demand for access to trophy-class animals exceeds the capacity of public lands to supply it. Game will benefit, too, from habitat and harvests more intensively managed. Sportsmen will be unequally blessed. Hunting will get better for those who can afford steeply higher prices. The character of hunting may change as a result. ▲▲▲

Wayne van Zwoll is a Professional Member of the Boone and Crockett Club. His Ph.D. research received a funding contribution from the B&C Grants-in-Aid Program.