

Jeff Mursau

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 36TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage AB 598 – Farm-Raised Game Bovids January 12, 2022

Chairperson Pronschinske and Committee Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Assembly Bill 598, which relates to farm-raised game bovids. This bill is part of the Wisconsin Sporting Freedom Package. I appreciate your willingness to bring this bill forward.

Under current law, there are many requirements and restrictions relating to the hunting, killing, possessing, transporting, and selling of wild animals. However, there are some exemptions from hunting-related restrictions and requirements that extend to certain categories of captive wildlife, including farm-raised deer. Owners of this class of game, however, are subject to registration with DATCP and certain fencing requirements.

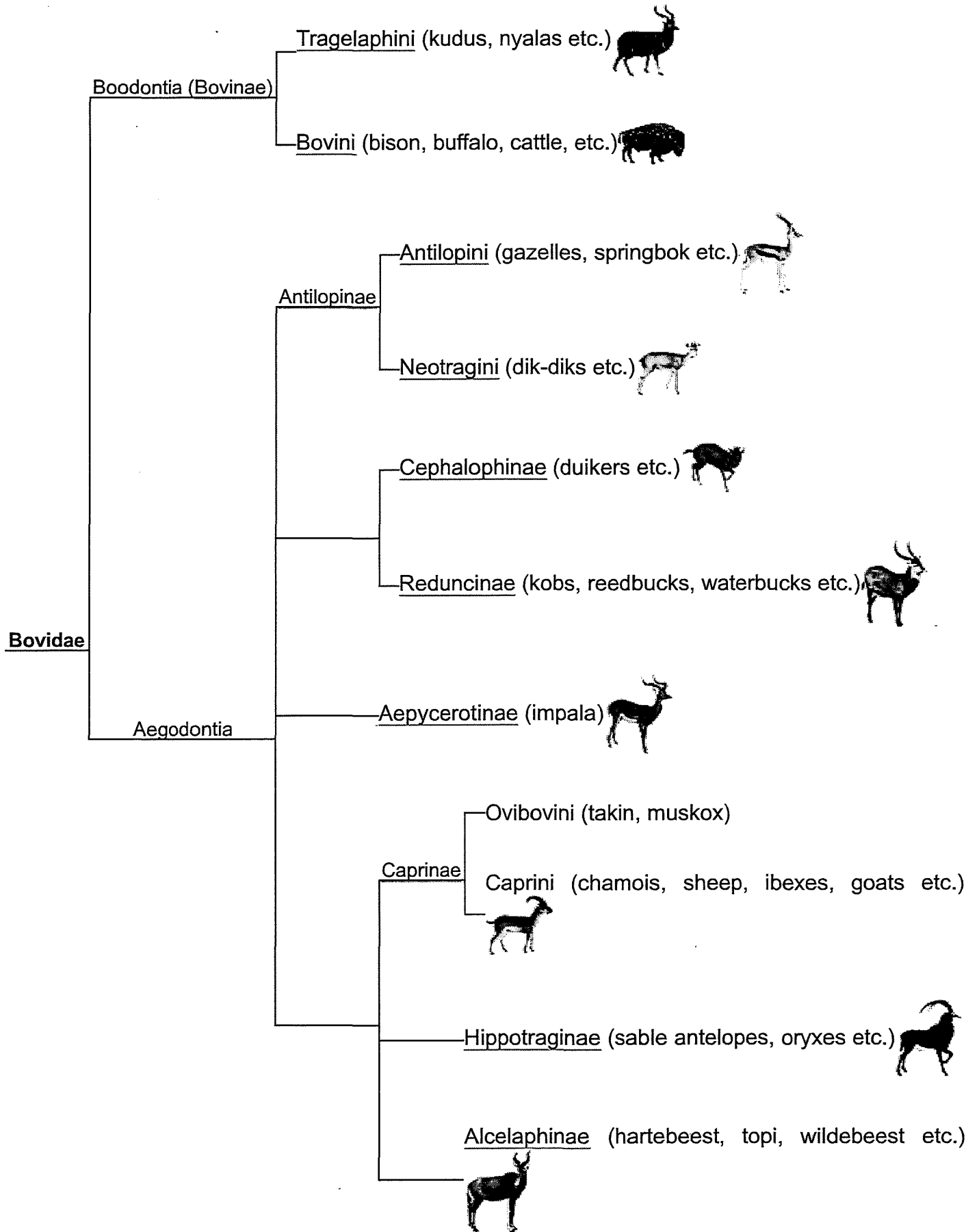
Assembly Bill 598 would add farm-raised game bovids to the categories of captive wildlife that are exempt from hunting-related requirements, but still subject to the fencing requirements and regulation of DATCP. This bill defines “farm-raised game bovid” as members of the taxonomic family bovidae. For your reference, I have attached a cladogram which illustrates the different tribes related to taxonomic family Bovidae.

The Senate reviewed and debated this bill back in October. After concerns were raised at senate public hearing by the Wisconsin Bison Producers Association, we worked with them on an amendment that changes the definition of “farm-raised game bovid” to exempt any animal that is a member of the tribe bovini. This tribe includes specific species of cattle, bison, and buffalo. The amendment and the bill were passed by the full senate in October.

Hunting is a long-standing, proud Wisconsin tradition. Under this bill, Wisconsin hunters will have an opportunity to hunt non-native animals. In some instances, these animals are already being raised on Wisconsin game farms, but transported out-of-state for sportsmen and women to hunt. This puts Wisconsin’s tourism industry and our local economies at a competitive disadvantage because folks are looking elsewhere for an opportunity to hunt a variety of different animals. I’m thankful my legislative colleagues recognize the opportunities this bill could provide our sportsmen and women and included it as part of the sporting freedom package.

Once again, thank you for holding a public hearing on this piece of legislation. I’m

happy to answer any questions you may have. 708 • Telephone (608) 266-3780 • Fax (608) 282-3636
District Office: 4 Oak Street • Crivitz, Wisconsin 54114 • Rep.Mursau@legis.wi.gov



Evolution



PATRICK TESTIN

STATE SENATOR

DATE: January 12th, 2022

RE: **Testimony on Assembly Bill 598**

TO: The Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

FROM: Senator Patrick Testin

Thank you to Representative Pronschinske and to members of the committee for accepting my testimony on Assembly Bill 598 (AB 598).

This bill expands Wisconsin's hunting opportunities by permitting the hunting of non-native farm-raised game bovids – such as bighorn sheep or Thompson's gazelle. In some cases, farmers are already raising these animals in Wisconsin, but must send them to other states to be hunted. That has been the case for one of my constituents who raises bighorn sheep. The animals are bred and born here, but he sends them to be hunted in Michigan and Missouri.

Whether raised in Wisconsin or brought here for the purpose of the hunt, these species will add to the diversity of choices for Wisconsin hunters and will make our state an even more attractive destination for sportsmen and women. Rep. Mursau and I have introduced an amendment that will exempt bison from the bill at the Wisconsin Bison Producers Association. This was done to give us more opportunity to work with them while considering some of the intricacies of their industry.



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES**

January 12, 2022

Assembly Committee on Sporting Heritage

Re: Opposition to Assembly Bill 598

Dear Chairman Pronschinske, Vice Chair Tittl, and Members of the Committee on Sporting Heritage,

On behalf of the Humane Society of the United States and our Wisconsin-based supporters, please accept this testimony opposing Assembly Bill 598, which would dramatically expand captive, or “canned,” hunting in the state by allowing non-native farm-raised game bovids (e.g. Impala, Wildebeest, Gazelle, Water Buffalo, Bighorn Sheep, etc.) to be raised and hunted in a captive setting.

Captive hunting, also called canned hunting, bears no resemblance to traditional hunting. There’s no chance of escape and absolutely no sportsmanship involved on these farms. Animals on canned hunts are bred for the bullet and stocked and shot within fenced enclosures for guaranteed trophies. Wisconsin already allows canned hunting of captive cervids – particularly whitetail deer - selectively bred for abnormally large antlers and often referred to as “Frankendeer” due to their unnatural and exaggerated appearance. Expanding this practice to include numerous animals native to Africa is outrageous.

Captive whitetail deer bred for canned hunts in Wisconsin are already directly responsible for the spread of diseases like chronic wasting disease (CWD), an incurable, fatal condition that afflicts deer and other cervids. The unnatural densities that characterize canned hunts, plus the constant movement of live animals to stock these facilities, creates a breeding ground for the spread of CWD and other diseases that can impact livestock, such as brucellosis or tuberculosis. Canned hunts, through escaped animals, fence-line transmission or environmental contamination, can also spread disease to wild herds.¹

Hunting is on decline nationwide, including in Wisconsin. The number of paid hunting license holders in Wisconsin has decreased by more than seven percent since 2016.² Over half of states currently ban or restrict canned hunts. These prohibitions have largely been driven by hunters concerned that these facilities erode fair chase ethics and spread disease to native wildlife. “Fair chase,” a concept central to the philosophy of many in the hunting community, does not exist in canned hunts. Multiple hunting organizations, including the Boone & Crockett Club, the Izaak Walton League, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers, and the Pope & Young Club have historically opposed canned hunting. Promoting canned hunting puts a black eye on hunting to the majority non-hunting public, as well as to fair chase hunters themselves.

To align with its natural hunting heritage, Wisconsin should be taking steps towards limiting canned hunting, not expanding such an absurd practice. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to vote “no” on AB 598.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our opposition to this bill.

Sincerely,

Megan Nicholson
Wisconsin State Director, the Humane Society of the United States
mnicholson@humanesociety.org

¹ VerCauteren, Kurt C.; Lavelle, Michael J.; Seward, Nathan W.; Fischer, Justin W.; and Phillips, Gregory E., “Fence-Line Contact Between Wild and Farmed White-Tailed Deer in Michigan: Potential for Disease Transmission” (2007). *USDA National Wildlife Research Center - Staff Publications*. Paper 721.

² U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, “*Historical Hunting License Data*” (2021). <https://www.fws.gov/wsfrprograms/subpages/licenseinfo/hunting.htm>