

Deer feeding decision applauded

By JOHN PEPIN
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MARQUETTE — With wintry conditions continuing to challenge a weakened Upper Peninsula deer herd, heads of sportsmen's groups are pleased with a recent Michigan Department of Natural Resources director decision to allow early supplemental deer feeding.

However, Brian Reynolds, president of the U.P. Whitetails chapter of Marquette County said he thinks the DNR should go farther, by closing hunting for the year once supplemental feeding begins.

DNR officials had been monitoring snowfall depths and weather forecasts since the start of the firearm deer season and decided recently to push up the date supplemental deer feeding by permit could begin across the Upper Peninsula to Dec. 15.

"The snow in the U.P. just keeps coming and it appears that we will be hitting the snow depth triggers for supplemental feeding about a month earlier than normal," DNR Wildlife Division Chief Russ Mason said in a news release. "The U.P. has had record low temperatures and ridiculously heavy

snowfall, with all indications pointing toward the onset of a third difficult winter for deer. Continuously severe winter conditions of this magnitude haven't occurred in the region since the early 1970s."

DNR officials said supplemental deer feeding is typically allowed on private land in the northern U.P. counties along Lake Superior beginning in early January and in the southern counties if accumulated snowfall meets established minimum depths by mid-January.

However, with snow accumulating so quickly across the entire peninsula this month, Creagh made the decision to sign the emergency order.

Mike Dudenas, president of the Calumet-Keweenaw Sportsmen's Club, was pleased with the action.

"The start to this winter has been particularly brutal, pushing deer out of the higher ground and toward their traditional yarding areas where there is nothing to eat," Dudenas said.

Dudenas said Keweenaw hunters were snowed out of their normal favorite hunting locations and deer sightings and deer kills are down significantly from last year, which was down



Photo courtesy of the Calumet-Keweenaw Sportsmen's Club
Deer feeding in the yard of Mike Dudenas, president of the Calumet-Keweenaw Sportsmen's Club. The feed for the deer is purchased by the club. Dudenas said without supplemental deer feeding, there would not likely be a hunt-able population of deer in that part of the Upper Peninsula.

from the previous year.

"Without supplemental feeding in the Keweenaw we feel strongly feel that there would not be a hunt-able population," Dudenas said. "With the supplemental feeding, our club is able to help those deer that can make it to a feeding site to survive the winter."

Reynolds said he's concerned some late season

bow hunters will begin to target places where deer are drawn to supplemental feeding, under the earlier date set by the DNR director.

"They've done the right thing in moving up the date to the 15th," Reynolds said. "They should stop all hunting at that point to get as many deer through the winter as we can and give

them a chance."

An early archery season ran from Oct. 1 through Nov. 14. The late archery season begins Dec. 1 - after the Nov. 30 close of the firearm deer season - and extends through Jan. 1.

Muzzleloading season starts Dec. 5 and closes Dec. 14, just prior to the new opening date for supplemental feeding.