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High Fences – Pros and Cons

By Dr. Harry A. Jacobson

Editor's Note: High fences (fences 8 feet or higher) are usually constructed to restrict animals', usually deer or exotics, movement onto and off of a particular piece of property. Initially most high fences were located in Texas primarily for containing populations of exotic (non-native) species. Today, high fences are common in many other states. The majority of today's high fences are to contain and manage trophy white-tailed deer populations.

It is fair to say that most of the public, and probably most wildlife biologists, are opposed to hunting wild game inside high fences. Reasons most frequently given include perceptions that high fences create canned hunts, high deer densities inside enclosures damage habitat, and enclosing game violates public ownership of wildlife. I will try to address each of these issues in turn.

Hunting confined big game within small enclosures cannot be considered fair chase.

Issue 1. High fences create "canned hunts." The inference here is that high fence enclosures give unfair advantage to hunters because the game is confined in an area where it cannot escape the hunter.

This issue is not without merit. Most of us are all familiar with graphic video footage of canned hunts, the most famous of which was in the "Guns of August" production which gave a very unfavorable impression to the public of commercial big game shooting preserves. Hunting confined big game within small enclo-



High-fence enclosures allow landowners to manage their deer herds.

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