

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 12/17/2023 6:50:39 AM

First name: Linda

Last name: Raynolds

Organization:

Title:

Comments: With regret, I am in favor of closing the elk feed grounds. Previously I had enjoyed the traditional aspect of it, the horse-drawn feed wagons, the humans for once helping the wildlife through a difficult time of year. I wasn't wild about the concentration of so many elk on the feed grounds, but I thought the trade-off was worth it. Times have changed, and I no longer believe that.

Besides the horrifying images of animal suffering depicted in the reporting on the hoof rot outbreak, there is CWD to contend with. CWD is 100% fatal. That means, unless we humans figure out how to intervene with a cure for prion diseases, our deer and elk will soon be locally extirpated, and in time will go extinct. It's just a matter of a few years, a few decades. If young cows die of CWD, or are so sick they cannot conceive, or give birth to, or raise a calf, then the species is gone, blinked out.

A hard stop as opposed to a phase out of the feed grounds will be challenging to the elk. Many will not make it, because they have grown accustomed over time to relying on this seasonal resource. They will have to disperse out, which will inevitably bring them into conflict with humans in the surrounding agricultural lands. However, when the study numbers were analysed, it was clear that stopping feeding was way better than phasing it out over three years. It will not be an easy transition, but it is the alternative that gives the elk themselves, as a species, the best chance for survival. It will give the elk more time for humans to find a cure for CWD. We owe it to our wildlife, to these magnificent creatures who have successfully roamed this continent for millennia, to do whatever we can, despite the hardships imposed on human and animals both in the transition phase.

Please stop feeding the elk.