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Submitted by Joan Nichols, Executive Director, Connecticut Farm Bureau Association

Testimony in support of SB 1148 AN ACT AUTHORIZING CERTAIN KILLING AND HUNTING OF BLACK BEAR AND PROHIBITING BIRD FEEDERS AND OTHER UNINTENTIONAL AND INTENTIONAL FEEDING OF POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS ANIMALS

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association (CFBA) is a non-profit membership organization representing nearly 2,500 farming families in the state of Connecticut.

Chairmen Lopes and Gresko, Vice-Chairs Hochadel and Palm and Members of the Environment Committee,

Connecticut Farm Bureau Association urges your support of SB 1148 which establishes a permitting program through the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection for the taking of wildlife that threatens or causes damage to agricultural crops, livestock, or apiaries.

In recent years Connecticut farmers have seen an exponential increase in losses due to wildlife. Coyotes have always been a threat to livestock and poultry. In recent years bobcat and black bear populations have increased and are now as much a threat to livestock and poultry as coyote.

The average beehive costs \$300. Beekeepers must now install electric fencing to keep bear away from the hives. This is an additional cost of \$1,000 - \$1,500 to install and maintain. When a bear destroys a beehive, it is not only the loss of the hive but also the loss of revenue from the honey and the cost to replace and replenish the hive and the damaged fencing.

One sheep or goat could cost as much as \$300. A lost calf equates to at least \$1,000 of loss as a mature, marketable animal. Mature turkey market at \$3.00 - \$4.00/lb. That is a loss of \$50 to up to \$100/bird depending on the size of the turkey. Loss of poultry to wildlife can be in the thousands. When livestock is attacked by wildlife the farmer not only incurs the cost of the loss of the animal but also the cost of veterinary care to the injured animal along with trauma to remaining animals and poultry. Traumatized livestock often lose production and have their feeding schedules interrupted.

Additional losses are incurred in damaged and destroyed fencing, structures, and crops. Bear and coyote destroy corn crops by raiding the corn and knocking over the stalks. Once wildlife become familiar with access to crops, livestock, bees, and poultry they keep returning despite the best efforts of farmers to deter their activity.

Farmers understand they need to live with wildlife. They work tirelessly to strengthen their fencing and infrastructure as much as is humanly possible to protect their livestock, crops, and beehives. Many farmers invest in livestock guardian dogs as an added message of protection. However, there are circumstances when a farmer needs to legally expend wildlife to protect their livestock, bees, poultry, crops, and livelihood.

In addition to the passage of SB 1148 we also ask that the statutes related to animal control be amended so that barking from livestock guardian dogs is exempt from nuisance complaints. When a trained guardian livestock dog is barking, they are barking because there is an eminent and immediate threat from a predator to the livestock they are protecting.

Current animal control laws consider a barking dog a nuisance and there is no exemption or protection afforded a farmer when a neighbor complains about a barking guardian livestock dog.

Exempting agriculture and livestock guardian dogs from nuisance complaints under state animal control laws would be another tool to help farmers protect their livestock against wildlife and would be less intrusive to native wildlife.

[*The State of the Bears – CT DEEP*](#) 2022 Report