

SUBJECT: Revising identification requirements for breeder deer

COMMITTEE: Culture, Recreation and Tourism — committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 9 ayes — Cyrier, Martinez, Bucy, Gervin-Hawkins, Holland, Jarvis
Johnson, Kacal, Morrison, Toth

0 nays

SENATE VOTE: On final passage, April 10 — 25-5 (Creighton, Hall, Hinojosa, Menéndez,
Whitmire)

WITNESSES: For — Quint Balkcom, Game Warden Peace Officer's Association; Don
Steinbach, Texas Chapter Wildlife Chapter; John Shepperd, Texas
Foundation for Conservation, Texas Coalition for Conservation; Tom
Vandivier, Texas Wildlife Association; David Yeates, Texas Wildlife
Association; Roy Leslie; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Travis Hawver,
Backcountry Hunters and Anglers; Cyrus Reed, Lone Star Chapter Sierra
Club; Walter West, Republican Party of Texas; Peyton Schumann, Texas
and Southwestern Cattle Raisers Association; Janice Bezanson, Texas
Conservation Alliance; Marko Barrett, Texas Wildlife Association; Janie
Dishongh)

Against — Tim Condict and Richard Mann, Deer Breeders Corporation;
Charly Seale, Exotic Wildlife Association; Mark Hubbard and Patrick
Tarlton, Texas Deer Association; and 10 individuals; (*Registered, but did
not testify*: Ben Mooring, 4m Ranch; Mickey Cash and Tyus Paul, 4M
Whitetails; Robert Myers, Blackjack Whitetails; Debbie Chisholm, Bonita
Whitetails; Richard Wolf, Ryan Baty, Bryce Beatty, Brown Trophy
Whitetail Ranch; Fred Trudeau, Cola Blanca Genetics; George Courtney,
Deer Breeder Corp; Brian Wilson, Deer Breeders; Verona Wilson, High
Roller Whitetails; Bryant Kern, Keeper Ranch; Jesse Boger, Limitless
Genetics; Charleen Long, Long Whitetails; Derrick Lester, RDL
Whitetails; Jessica Wiggins, Wilks Whitetail; Cordell Whittle and
Rebecca Whittle, Wilson Wildlife; and 83 individuals)

On — Susan Rollo, Texas Animal Health Commission; Stormy King and Clayton Wolf, Texas Parks and Wildlife Department; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Gerald Stoneham)

BACKGROUND: Parks and Wildlife Code sec. 43.3561 requires that breeder deer receive a durable identification tag attached to the ear containing an alphanumeric number of not more than four characters assigned to the breeder facility by the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department by March 31 of the year following the deer's birth. A breeder deer must have the unique identification number tattooed on its ear before it can be removed from the breeder facility.

DIGEST: SB 810 would require a breeder deer to be identified by an electronic identification device in addition to an identification tag and ear tattoo.

The Texas Parks and Wildlife Department would be required to create and maintain a database containing electronic identification device numbers entered by deer breeders. In making a determination to destroy a deer due to public health concerns, the department would have to consider an electronic identification device as evidence of positive identification for a breeder deer that could not be identified by either an identification tag or ear tattoo.

An electronic identification device applied to a breeder deer would have to meet certain requirements specified in the bill. The bill also would specify additional requirements for both ear tattoos and identification tags, including that identification tags be commercially manufactured and have five alphanumeric characters.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019, and would apply only to breeder deer born on or after January 1, 2020.

SUPPORTERS SAY: SB 810 would ensure breeder deer always had at least two ways to be identified by adding a requirement for each deer to have a unique electronic identification number. This would allow breeders to utilize their own identification systems and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department

(TPWD) to identify the deer electronically.

When a deer's tag is lost or destroyed or becomes illegible, TPWD must euthanize the animal and test it for disease. This bill will reduce the number of deer considered to be a disease risk because of a lack of identification.

The bill also would update the current ear tag identification system by requiring commercial tags with uniform standards and changing identification numbers to have five alphanumeric characters instead of up to four. Adopting these standards would mitigate issues where unclear or improperly applied tags cannot be used to identify the deer.

**OPPONENTS
SAY:**

SB 810 would create unnecessary burdens on the breeder deer industry by forcing breeders to buy commercially manufactured ear tags. Tattoos also should no longer be required, as adding an extra character would make tattoos even more time-consuming to implement and the bill's requirement for electronic identification tags would make the tattoos unnecessary.