

TSSRM Position Statement
High Fences and White-tailed Deer
February 5, 2004

In Texas, white-tailed deer are a public resource thriving in habitats found primarily on private lands. Sound habitat management on private lands is essential for ensuring sustainability of the rangeland resources and for producing quality deer and deer hunting, which provide an economic benefit to landowners, rural communities and the State economy.

The use of high fences to confine white-tailed deer and other ungulates has specific and legitimate uses in wildlife management and research. However, high fences without proper management of the land and wildlife resources also create the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts. Public support and confidence in wildlife management activities on private lands may be undermined when confined deer are maintained at artificially high population levels that adversely affect habitat for deer and other wildlife species, either from intensive feeding programs or under-harvested deer herds.

The Texas Section Society for Range Management promotes sound stewardship of rangelands regardless of fencing design. With regards to herbivory, grazing intensity is the primary factor affecting the health of rangeland, not the fence design. The Texas Section Society for Range Management supports private landowners in developing, maintaining and protecting habitats on their lands, including the ethical use of high fences. The Texas Section Society for Range Management encourages anyone using high fences to thoroughly understand the potential impacts, and management responsibilities behind the fence. Landowners considering constructing new high fences should first commit to sound stewardship of the rangeland resource. Deer populations should be managed to minimize risks to the habitat and other animal species. White-tailed deer and other ungulates confined within fences should be maintained at numbers that do not exceed the natural carrying capacity of the habitat, and that prevent habitat degradation. The Texas Section Society for Range Management also supports public ownership of native wildlife resources in Texas.

Approved by TSSRM BOD 02/06/04