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## HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 633

Offered January 10, 2001

Prefiled January 10, 2001

*Requesting the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to study the total impact of damage done by deer in the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, damage to crops, private property, automobiles, and aircraft operations, and incidents that result in personal injury.*

Patrons—Day and Stump

Referred to Committee on Rules

WHEREAS, according the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF), the deer population in the Commonwealth has experienced exponential growth during the past six or seven decades, from a low of approximately 215,000 in 1931, to 575,000 in 1987, to close to 950,000 in 1995; and

WHEREAS, although the deer population has remained relatively stable, between 950,000 and one million since 1995, the Commonwealth has experienced substantial growth in the human population and increased sprawl from urban and suburban areas into traditional deer habitats, and those trends have resulted in increased interaction between man and deer and greater opportunity for damage done by deer to personal property, including trees and ornamental plantings, shrubbery, vegetable gardens, and automobiles; and

WHEREAS, changes in deer population density and deterioration in the quality of deer habitat, including the availability of sufficient food, in many rural areas of the Commonwealth has resulted in increased encroachment by deer into agricultural lands and greater opportunity for damage to crops, livestock, farm equipment, and automobiles; and

WHEREAS, a 1992 deer damage committee established by DGIF estimated the amount of crop damage caused by deer to be approximately \$11.4 million, but did not provide estimates of damage done by deer to property in urban/suburban areas; and

WHEREAS, a deer damage survey conducted by Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University and funded by the Virginia Deer Hunters Association indicated that 58 percent of the 732 respondents reported experiencing moderate to severe deer damage to agricultural crops and personal property during 1995, and 70 percent indicated a desire to reduce Virginia's deer population; and

WHEREAS, according to DGIF's 1999 Deer Management Plan, collisions between vehicles and deer are one of the most critical deer damage problems in Virginia, and while reliable data is not available, it is safe to assume that tens of thousands of collisions between vehicles and deer take place each year, with a conservative estimate of \$1,000 in damage per accident, and a likely total in property damage of at least \$25 million; and

WHEREAS, the Code of Virginia contains several statutes that recognize and address the problem of deer damage and its monetary toll; and

WHEREAS, § 29.1-529 of the Code of Virginia authorizes the issuance of kill permits for the killing of deer damaging fruit trees, crops, livestock, or personal property, or creating a hazard to aircraft operations or motor vehicles; and

WHEREAS, § 29.1-352 of the Code of Virginia establishes a damage stamp program to provide for an available source of funds to compensate for damage to certain agricultural crops and farm equipment done by deer, and § 29.1-355 provides for disposition of those funds to those who have experienced such damage; and

WHEREAS, as part of its stated mission to manage Virginia's wildlife to maintain optimum populations of all species, the DGIF has implemented a deer management plan, and the focus of that plan has shifted from establishment and protection of the deer population to controlling population growth, managing habitat, and preventing damage; and

WHEREAS, effective deer management, including control of deer damage, requires comprehensive, reliable data on the various types and impacts of deer damage, in both urban and rural areas, and such data is not currently available in the Commonwealth; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED by the House of Delegates, the Senate concurring, that the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, be requested to study the total impact of damage done by deer in the Commonwealth, including, but not limited to, damage to crops, private property, automobiles, and aircraft operations, and incidents which result in personal injury; and, be it

RESOLVED FURTHER, that the Clerk of the House of Delegates transmit a copy of this resolution to the Secretary of Natural Resources so that he may be apprised of the sense of the General Assembly

INTRODUCED

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**59** on this matter.