ONTARIO FEDERATION
OF ANGLERS & HUNTERS

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Ontario Conservation Centre

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October 8, 2015

OMAFRA-University of Guelph Research
  Program Review Committee

Dear Committee Members:

On behalf of the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, its 100,000 members, supporters and subscribers, and 725 member clubs, I would like to indicate our support for the research proposal titled *"Risk Assessment for the Incursion and Establishment of Livestock Orbiviruses in Ontario: serosurveillance and characterization of current vector composition."* Hemorrhagic diseases (HD) such as bluetongue (BT) and epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV) pose a significant risk to Ontario's white-tailed deer and reintroduced elk populations. An increase in BT and EHDV occurrence in Ontario could jeopardize local management objectives and the sustainability of cervid populations.

Researchers have demonstrated that the northern latitudinal range of reported HD occurrence increased with time. Further, several American states that border Ontario have reported HD occurrence. Climate change is predicted to further alter the northern limit of *Culicoides* biting midges (the main vector of HD). Therefore, it is vital to: (1) establish a baseline estimate of HD prevalence in Ontario, and (2) assess the distribution of competent vector species in Ontario. This research, proposed by Nicole Nemeth, is a logical first step in preparing for an increased occurrence of hemorrhagic diseases in Ontario's deer and elk populations.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for this research. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further questions or comments.

Yours in Conservation,

Matt DeMille, M.Sc.
Manager, Fish & Wildlife Services

MD/gh

cc: Angelo Lombardo, OFAH Executive Director
        Mark Ryckman, OFAH Senior Wildlife Biologist
        Dawn Sucee, OFAH Fish & Wildlife Biologist