

A photograph of a large buck with impressive, multi-tined antlers. The buck is shown in profile, facing left, standing in a grassy field with trees in the background. The text is overlaid on the lower half of the image.

Economic Impact of the Michigan Deer Farming Industry

Prepared for:

United Deer Farmers of Michigan

(UnitedDeerFarmersofMichigan.com)

Shepstone Management Company, Inc.

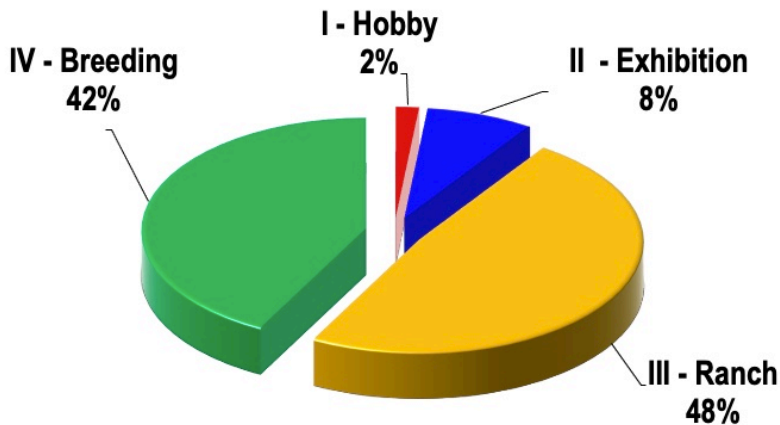
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

A Growing Agricultural Niche Industry

Michigan deer farms represent a growing niche agricultural sector. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reports there are 296 deer and elk farms in Michigan, including 91% in the business of earning income from these farms. Michigan's deer farms are a unique branch of the state's incredibly diverse agriculture industry. They also serve to draw large numbers of tourists to the region who spend money on equipment, various related products, services and transportation, as well as the deer and elk. A 2022-24 survey of Michigan deer and elk farmers indicated it was, and remains, a relatively young niche agricultural industry that is growing.

The cervidae species include white-tailed deer, other deer species and elk found in Michigan as well as other deer. State deer and elk farmers raise these cervids for use in breeding, venison meat production, animal watching, private hunting and other commercial activities. Specialty products such as antlers, deer urine and semen are also being sold commercially, along with trophy bucks for hunting preserves. Some deer farms also offer lodging, nature photography shoots and other agricultural tourism features, making them important attractions.

Michigan Deer & Elk Farms by Type



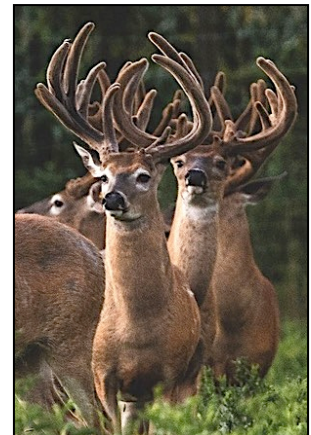
Deer farming has been strong in Europe, New Zealand and Canada for decades. It is now also an important U.S. agricultural industry. Ag Census data for 2022, in fact, ranks Michigan third in the number of deer and elk farms, but does not include the full 296 farms identified by Michigan DNR. The latter's data indicates there are 125 Class IV Breeding facilities licensed to market animals and another 143 Class III Ranches providing for deer hunting, as well as Class I Hobby and Class II Exhibition farms. Deer and elk farms range from one to 5,400 fenced acres in size.

There are deer farms in at least 74 of 83 counties throughout Michigan, including numerous facilities in urban locations such as Genesee, Ingham, Kent, Oakland and Washtenaw Counties and many others where farmland preservation is a priority for maintaining character.

The typical non-hobby deer farm in Michigan is a family farm averaging 228 acres in size. A 2022-2024 survey indicates it grosses \$384,000 per year in sales, providing employment for 3.0 full-time workers and 2.1 part-time employees. These farmers invested an average of \$200,300 each annually in capital for land, buildings, equipment, fencing and breeding stock to support their operations over the last five years, a total investment of \$206.1 million in Michigan agriculture.

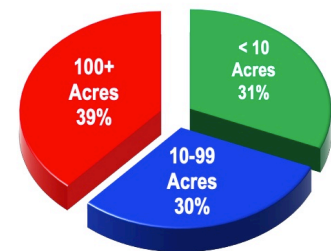
An Industry Leader

- Up to 57,300 deer/elk on Michigan farms
- 296 deer/elk farms in Michigan in 2022
- No. 3 in the nation for deer/elk farming
- Michigan has 5% of deer and elk farms in the U.S. and 6% of cervidae livestock
- Michigan accounts for 6% of all deer and elk sales activity (farms, sales and value)
- Deer/elk farms are located in 74 counties in State of Michigan



- \$769,000 of new capital per deer farm invested over last 5 years in 2023
- \$206.1 million total investment in 5 years
- Another \$98.8 million to be invested in next 5 years
- Average sales of \$385,000/year
- Total 2023 sales of \$103.2 million
- Projected 2024 sales of \$112.9 million

Michigan Deer Farms



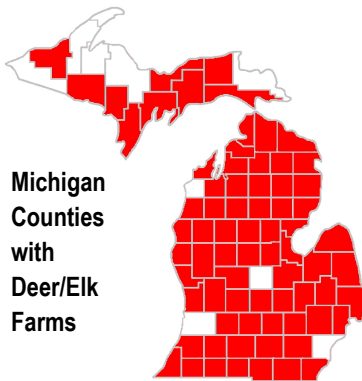
- Deer farms average 228 acres in size
- 31% of deer farms under 10 acres
- 39% of deer farms over 100 acres
- 13% of deer farms over 500 acres
- 5.1 employees per deer/elk farm
- Over 1,365 employees statewide
- Nearly 163,000 visitors per year

ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

Deer Farms Abound

State records indicate deer and elk farms are found in 74 Michigan counties. The top counties as of 2022, according to Michigan DNR statistics, are as follows:

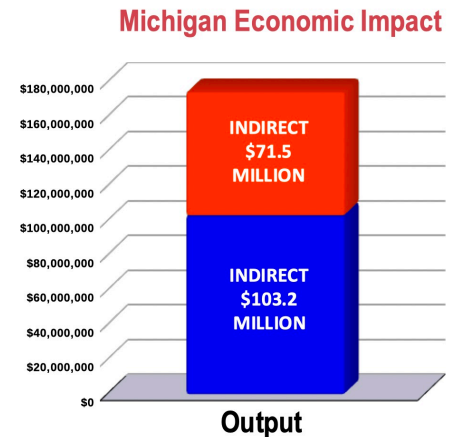
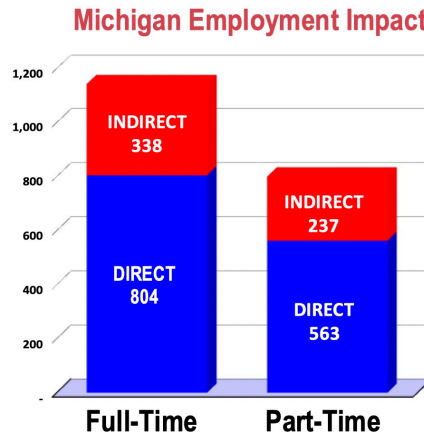
Michigan Deer & Elk Farms Top Counties		
Rank	County	Farms
1	Newaygo	16
2	Otsego	12
3	Genesee	11
3	Mecosta	11
5	Montcalm	9
5	Muskegon	9
7	Gladwin	8
7	Monroe	8
7	Osceola	8
7	Sanilac	8
11	Lake	7
11	Marquette	7
11	Oceana	7
11	Presque Isle	7
15	Branch	6
15	Livingston	6



Deer/Elk Farm Stock	
White-tailed Deer	21,997
Elk	1,697
Fallow Deer	490
Sika Deer	134
Red Deer	97
Reindeer	81
Muntjac Deer	6
Total Deer/Elk	22,104

Deer Farming Growing the Agricultural Economy

The relatively young Michigan deer farm industry already makes major contributions to the state agricultural economy. Surveys made for this study indicate they represent a \$174.7 million industry at a minimum. There are an estimated \$103.2 million in direct sales and another \$71.5 million of added indirect output from the multiplier effects of these sales rippling through the economy. The 1.69 multiplier is based on a Michigan State University study (*The Economic Impact of Michigan's Food and Agriculture System*). It is specific to miscellaneous livestock such as deer and consistent with other agricultural economic impact studies.



Minimum of 1,941 jobs and \$174.7 million of output

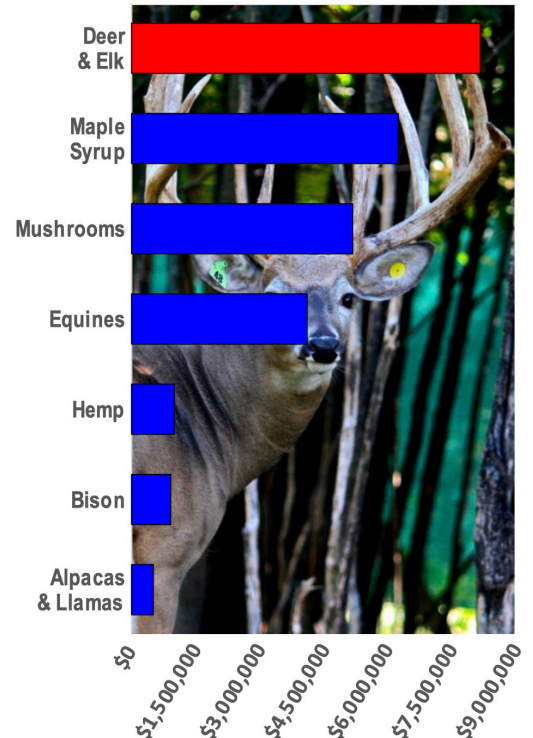
Miscellaneous livestock enterprises also generate an employment multiplier of 1.42. Applying this multiplier to jobs data provided by Michigan deer and elk farmers (an average of 3.0 full-time and 2.1 part-time jobs per farm) indicates they generate 1,941 jobs, some 1,142 full-time and 799 part-time.

Deer farming is already a significant part of the agricultural economy of Michigan. Surveys of Michigan deer farmers indicate direct annual sales of \$103.2 million.

Even the far underestimated sales of deer and elk farm livestock in the 2022 Agricultural Census exceed those for other well-known Michigan farm sectors (e.g., alpaca/llamas, bison, equines, mushrooms, hemp, and maple syrup), as the chart to the right illustrates.

Deer farming has, importantly, the potential to grow much bigger based on surveys conducted.

Deer Farm Industry Livestock Sales Compared to Other Agricultural Speciality Sales



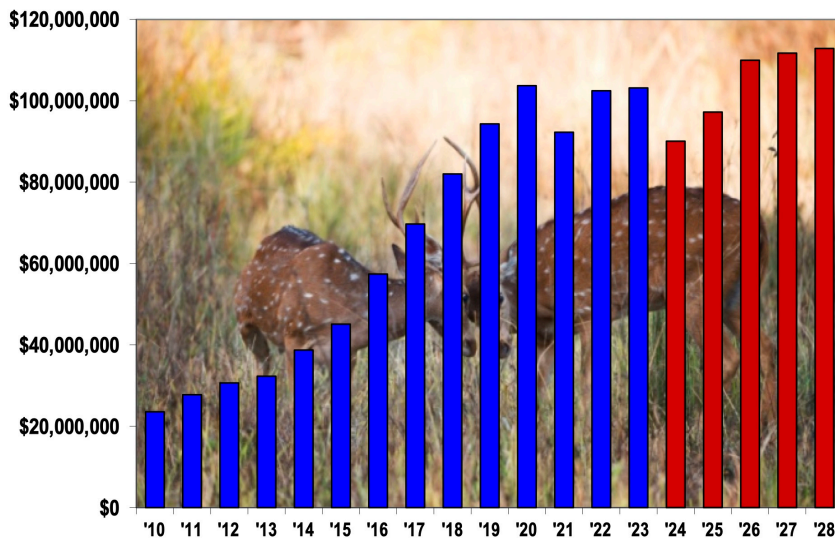
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

An Industry with the Potential to Grow Further

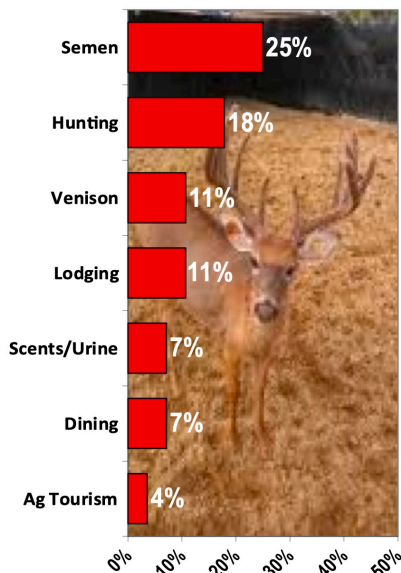
Michigan deer and elk farmers have reached an estimated \$103.2 million in direct sales. This is up from \$27.0 million in 2010, a gain of fully 282% or roughly \$5.4 million per year despite decreased demand during the pandemic. Projecting forward at this rate of growth indicates the industry should reach \$112.9 million in direct sales by 2028. This is without considering additional growth likely to come from new farmers entering the industry and the substantial indirect economic benefits.

The growth taking place is a factor of several industry trends, beginning with the diversity of animals, enterprises and products involved. Michigan deer farms turn out a broad array of products and services, ranging from semen (some 25% of Michigan deer farmers offer it, for example, as indicated in the chart at the bottom left) to lodging (11%) to agricultural tourism (4%).

Estimated and Projected Deer Farm Sales



Deer Farm Offerings



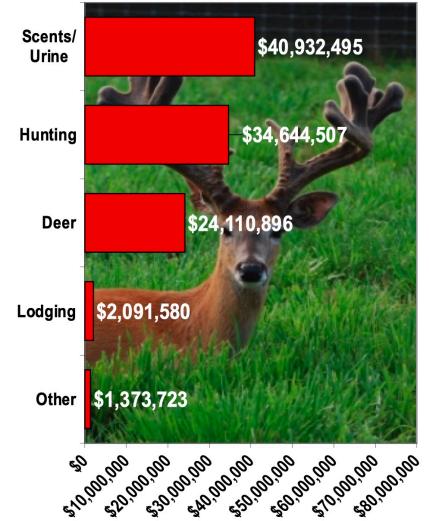
Hunting, breeding stock and other specialties and services are, of course, also among the items offered. The diversity of products sold is also illustrated by the chart to the top right

Sales of scents and urine account for 40%, hunting 34%, deer sales 23%, lodging 2%, and other items (including antlers, venison meat, and agricultural tourism amount to 1%.

The typical Michigan deer farm is a small agricultural business, often a family farm, with four-fifths producing less than \$100,000 in annual sales; and an overall average of \$384,900.

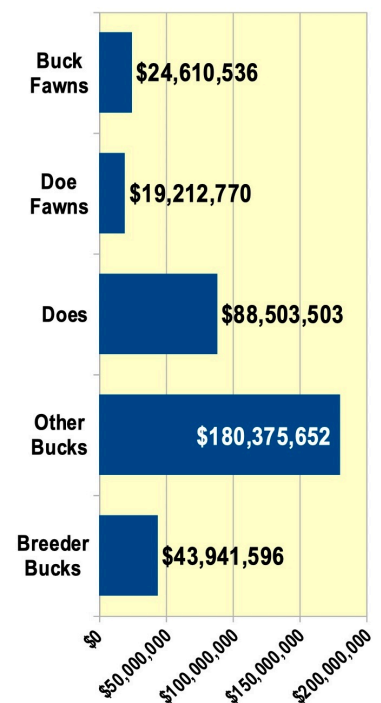
The industry provides niche opportunities for Michigan landowners to gross high returns from relatively small acreage, keeping land in farm use and maintaining rural character throughout the State.

Deer Farm Sales by Product



Michigan deer and elk farmers have over \$355 million invested in animal stock inventories

Deer Farm Inventory



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

Niche Opportunities

Deer and elk farming within the State of Michigan offers numerous opportunities for income from niche specialty products and services. These products include:

- **Venison.** This meat is low in calories, fat and cholesterol with good nutritive value. Various outlets throughout the state market the product to both consumers and restaurants.



Venison Loin

Source: [Michigan Venison Company](http://MichiganVenisonCompany.com)

- **Velvet Antler.** Deer antlers, as they first appear annually and rapidly grow, are covered by velvet-like hair. This velvet (or pre-calcified antler) is frequently used in the practice of Chinese medicine. It is a unique tissue with characteristics thought by some to contribute to cell growth and provide some anti-inflammatory benefits. Velvet antler has also been used as a remedy for canine arthritis and as a health supplement for human beings.



- **Attractants.** Michigan deer farmers also market deer urine and associated attractants and scents made with it to produce an estimated \$40 million in sales in this one specialty category alone.



Deer Farms Spend Money in Michigan

Michigan deer farms spend heavily within the State, stimulating the economy and providing many business opportunities within rural areas while supporting small family farming. Deer farms often provide a supplementary source of income for landowners who maintain Michigan rural character.

Michigan deer farms spend an estimated \$22.1 million per year on labor (including payments to owners). Another \$19.0 million is spent on vehicles and equipment and \$17.1 million is expended on animal stock for re-sale. Feedstuffs account for \$15.4 million and marketing and distribution expenses are \$9.5 million. Altogether, deer farms spend \$109.1 million on operations, 90.4% of it within the State of Michigan. Few sectors of the economy produce such high intra-state spending. Total expenses per farm averaged \$407,200, not including capital spending (see page 5).

Michigan Deer Farm Spending



This is one reason deer farming enjoys a high economic multiplier. Deer farms are small businesses that benefit all Michiganders. These enterprises also support hunting, with deer being by far the most-hunted species in Michigan, accounting for 91% of all hunters and generating over \$35 million in hunting license fees in 2020, some 14% of which were received from non-residents. Hunting, shooting and trapping accounted for \$308 million of economic activity in 2020, according to U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis.

There is another \$1.2 billion spent in Michigan on wildlife watching at last count, a growing market for deer farmers. This includes \$416.5 million of trip-related expenditures. Deer farms are providing residents and visitors the opportunities for wildlife watching, which is a major source of tourism.



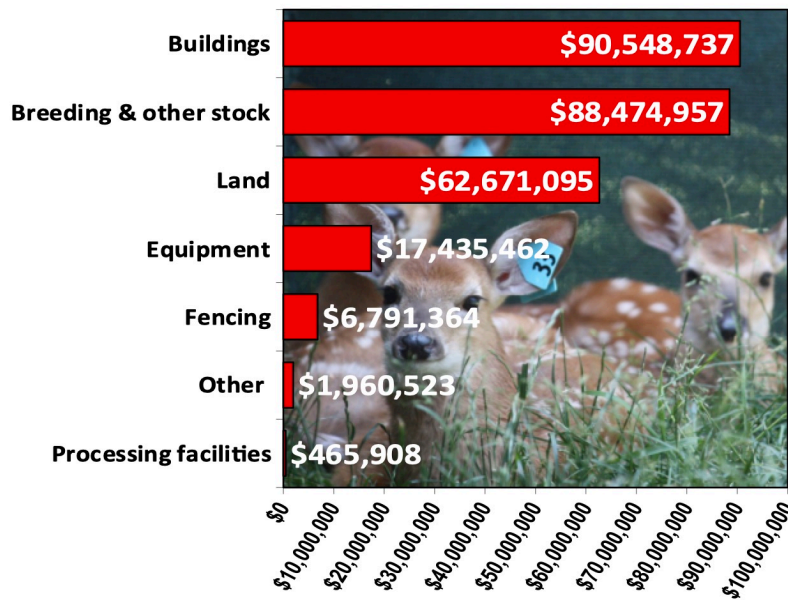
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

Michigan Deer Farms Invest in Michigan

Michigan deer farms are also investing capital in Michigan and preserving its farmland. Altogether, these farms spent an estimated \$268.3 million on capital items over the last five years and expect to spend another \$135.6 million over the next five years.

Total estimated capital investments in Michigan over the last five years have included \$90.6 million on buildings, \$88.5 million on breeding and other stock, \$62.7 million on land, \$17.4 million on equipment and \$6.8 million on fencing. State deer and elk farms expect to invest an average of \$101,600 per year each of new capital over the next five years, indicating a commitment to the industry and realizing its potential to become a dominant specialty agricultural sector.

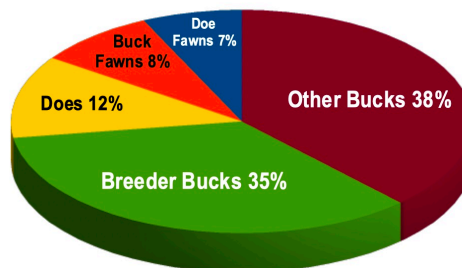
Michigan Deer Farm Capital Spending Last Five Years



This steady investment over several years has made deer and elk farming a recognized Michigan agricultural sector now large enough to enjoy its own category in the USDA Census of Agriculture. The spread of the industry across 74 Michigan counties indicates it is well-suited to the state and can grow much larger.

The inventory of breeding and other stock held by Michigan deer farmers consists of 35% breeder bucks, with an average value of \$12,500±. Other bucks accounted for some 38% of the stock (average value of \$13,700+). Doe animals represent some 12%, with an average value of \$4,300±. Buck fawns amount to 8% of the deer and elk farm stock with average livestock values of 3,000± while doe fawns averaged \$2,500± in value.

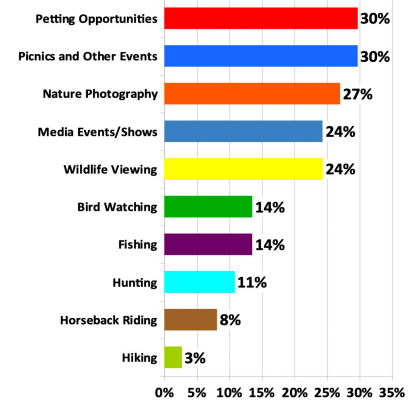
Deer Farm Stock



Deer Farm Tourism

Michigan deer farmers are agricultural tourism attractions. Some 30% provide petting opportunities and Picnic or other events. Some 27.0% of deer farmers offer provide opportunities for nature photography and 24% each accommodate media events/shows and wildlife viewing adventures.

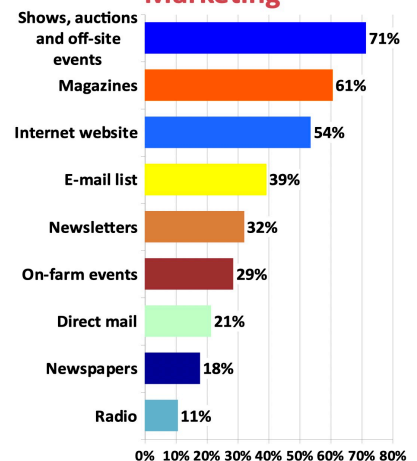
Deer Farm Recreation/Tourism



Some 43% of Michigan deer farms allow university wildlife research, youth/adult educational events, certified testing and events conducted by farm/wildlife groups.

Michigan deer and elk farmers also offer an excellent marketing model for all of specialty agriculture, one heavily oriented toward use of direct marketing techniques, as the following chart shows:

Deer Farm Methods of Marketing

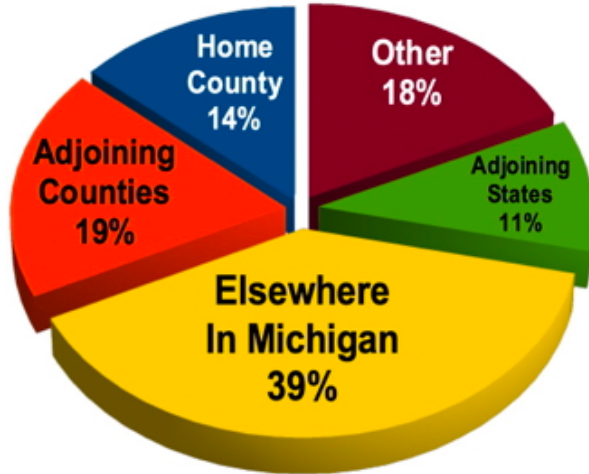


ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

Business for Michigan

Michigan deer and elk farmers attract customers and visitors from across the state and nation, as the following chart demonstrates. Some 28% of customers come from other states or countries, while 72% came from Michigan.

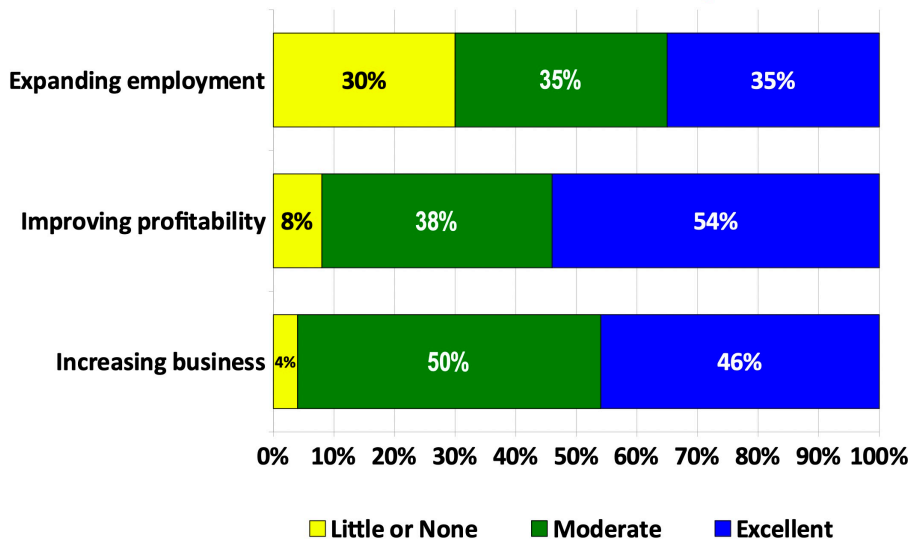
Sources of Customers



Future Prospects for Deer Farmers

Michigan deer and elk farmers see a bright future ahead for the industry and their own farms. Some 96% of those farmers assessing their future business potential thought the prospects for improving profitability were moderate to excellent, 92% felt the same regarding the potential for increasing their volume of business and some 70% had similar expectations for expanding employment at their facilities.

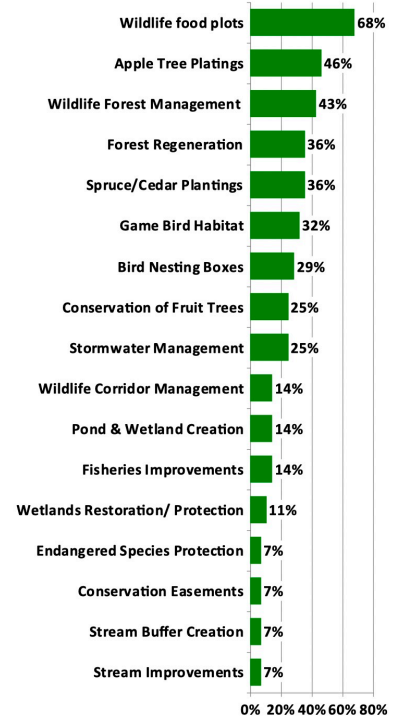
Farmers' Views of Future Prospects



Deer Farms Conserve Michigan's Land

Deer farm wildlife and land conservation activities support wildlife and preserve open space with its attendant benefits, as the following chart illustrates.

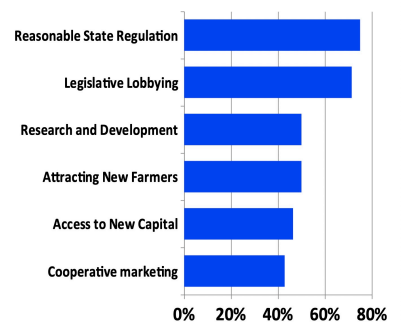
Conservation Measures



Deer Farmer Needs

Deer farmers rank the following factors as keys to the success of their enterprises:

Keys to Future Success (Ranked By Importance)



ECONOMIC IMPACT OF MICHIGAN DEER INDUSTRY

The Key Facts:

Some 296 deer & elk farms, 91% being in business to earn income from these farms.

Michigan ranks No. 3 among the states in deer farms

Over 90% of spending is within Michigan

Deer and elk farms spend \$22.1 million annually on labor

Deer farms found in 74 of 83 Michigan Counties

Average deer farm has invested \$1 million in Michigan in 5 Years

Deer farming is a \$174.7 million industry in Michigan

Deer farming generates 1,941 jobs for Michiganders

Typical deer farm generates \$384,000 of sales per year

Michigan deer farms invested over \$88 million of capital in breeding and other deer animal stock in 5 years

Family Farms

Small Business Enterprises

Agricultural Tourism Ventures

Specialty Niche Agriculture Industry

Outdoor Recreation Resource

Clean and Green Open Space



For More Information on

United Deer Farmers of Michigan:

[Web Address](#)

UnitedDeerFarmersofMichigan.com

[Email Address](#)

UnitedDeerFarmersofMI@gmail.com