

News Release

Midwest Region



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

Tina Shaw, 612-713-5331, Tina_Shaw@fws.gov

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Father and Son Sentenced for Deer Trafficking

Donald W. Wainwright, Sr., 49, of Live Oak, Florida, was sentenced August 3, 2015 in U.S. District Court to 21 months in prison and a \$125,000 fine for 12 charges related to violating the Lacey Act, one count of conspiracy and one count of wire fraud. His son, Donald W. Wainwright, Jr., 29, of Live Oak, Florida, was sentenced to four months of house arrest and three years of probation for eight charges related to violating the Lacey Act.

Carter Stewart, U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Ohio, Gregory Jackson, Special Agent in Charge, United States Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Law Enforcement, Chief Scott Zody, Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Wildlife, Franklin County Prosecutor Ron O'Brien, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Georgia Department of Natural Resources announced the sentences handed down by U.S. District Chief Judge Edmund A. Sargus, Jr.

According to court documents, the co-conspirators trafficked in live white-tailed deer. Wainwright, Sr. owned hunting preserves in Logan County, Ohio, and Live Oak, Florida; both preserves were named Valley View Whitetails. Wainwright, Jr. was part-time resident and part-time operator of the site in Ohio.

Wainwright, Sr. illegally shipped deer to Florida from Ohio and attempted to ship deer to Georgia from Ohio. The deer herds involved with these shipments were not certified to be free from chronic wasting disease, tuberculosis and brucellosis. Federal Law requires interstate shipment of deer to be certified to be disease free. As a result, deer herds in Florida were potentially exposed to these diseases. His attempted shipment to Georgia was intercepted on I-71 South, about 50 miles from the Ohio River, when Ohio wildlife officers noticed deer noses and antlers inside a cargo trailer and pulled over a truck driven by Wainwright, Sr.'s employees.

“Trophy-sized white-tailed deer can sell for hundreds of thousands of dollars apiece if the animals come from herds that have been certified by government agricultural officials to be free from disease,” U.S. Attorney Stewart said. “Farmers are intensely interested in the disease status of white-tailed deer herds because their diseases can be transmitted to cattle and humans with potentially fatal results.”

Wainwright, Sr. placed federal identification tags from a certified deer that had previously died into the ear of uncertified deer they were selling. He then sold breeding services and semen from the deer to breeders around the United States.

The defendants also sold illegal white-tailed deer hunts at Valley View Whitetails of Ohio. They induced clients from around the country to hunt at Valley View Whitetails of Ohio – charging customers from \$1,000 to \$50,000 to kill deer inside his high fence preserve when Wainwright did not have a hunting preserve license.

The customers then took the bucks back to their home states, including: Florida, Michigan, Alabama and Virginia.

"Chronic wasting disease can decimate wild deer and elk populations and we take egregious violations like this very seriously," said U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Special Agent in Charge Gregory Jackson. "We would like to thank our law enforcement counterparts in Ohio, Florida and Georgia for sharing their expertise and resources to fully investigate this case."

Wainwright, Sr. pleaded guilty on February 27, 2015, to 12 charges related to violating the Lacey Act, one count of conspiracy and one count of wire fraud. He was also sentenced to 200 hours of community service to be served in a parks system and ordered to publish an article in The Deer Breeders Gazette.

Wainwright, Jr. pleaded guilty on February 17, 2015, to eight charges related to violating the Lacey Act.

Under the Lacey Act, it is unlawful to import, export, transport, sell or purchase wildlife, fish or plants that were taken, possessed, transported or sold in violation of a state, federal or foreign law. When it was passed in 1900, the Lacey Act became the first federal law protecting wildlife.

U.S. Attorney Stewart commended the cooperative investigation by law enforcement, as well as Special Assistant United States Attorney Heather Robinson with the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office and Assistant United States Attorneys Peter Glenn-Applegate and J. Michael Marous, who are representing the United States in this case.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife, plants and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. We are both a leader and trusted partner in fish and wildlife conservation, known for our scientific excellence, stewardship of lands and natural resources, dedicated professionals and commitment to public service. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen, visit <http://www.fws.gov>.

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