

Eight Arrested For Deer Baiting and Other Hunting Violations in St. Clair County

by Jayette Bolinski
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SPRINGFIELD – An Illinois Conservation Police investigation into the illegal use of bait while hunting deer and turkey in St. Clair County resulted in the arrests of eight individuals for numerous hunting-related violations. Citations, warnings and court dates were issued to:

- Seth E. Speiser, 58, of Freeburg – Unlawfully hunting deer with bait, unlawfully placing corn in an area where deer are present, failure to wear blaze orange while hunting, unlawfully transporting an uncased shotgun, failure to have deer permits in possession while hunting, and unlawful take of a whitetail deer with the aid of bait.
- Danny B. Cox, 63, of Freeburg – Unlawfully hunting with the aid of bait, unlawful placement of bait, unlawful take of an 8-point buck and a 10-point buck with the aid of bait, unlawful use of an archery deer permit issued to another person, failure to wear blaze orange while hunting, and unlawful possession of a road sign.
- Kamdan B. Cox, 27, of Clarksville, Tennessee – Unlawful take of wild turkey, hunting without a valid turkey permit, failure to report a turkey harvest by 10 p.m. the same calendar day, unlawful take of a whitetail 5-point buck, unlawful archery hunting without a valid deer permit, unlawful archery deer hunting with the aid of bait, falsifying a harvest report for a 5-point buck, unlawful turkey hunting with the aid of bait, failure to tag a turkey immediately upon kill, unlawful possession of another person's archery deer permit, failure to tag a 5-point buck immediately upon kill with a valid permit, and unlawful placement of waterfowl bait.
- Kyle B. Cox, 32, of Belleville – Unlawful firearm deer hunting without a valid permit, unlawful firearm deer hunting without a habitat stamp, unlawfully using or providing false information to obtain permits, and unlawful firearm deer hunting without a license.
- Steve M. Pate, 62, of Marietta, Georgia – Unlawful firearm deer hunting with the aid of bait, unlawful archery deer hunting without valid deer permit, unlawful take of a whitetail 7-point buck, failure to tag deer immediately upon kill with valid archery permit, unlawful firearm deer hunting without license or stamp in possession, and providing false/deceptive information to a police officer.
- Mitchell L. Speiser, 25, of Freeburg – Unlawful take of a whitetail deer, failure to wear blaze orange while hunting, falsification when obtaining landowner permits, unlawful firearm deer hunting without a valid permit, unlawful transport of an uncased shotgun, and failure to possess deer permits while hunting.
- Brian C. Forrester, 24, of New Athens – Unlawful take of a whitetail deer, failure to wear blaze orange hat and vest, unlawful transport of an uncased shotgun, and unlawfully hunting deer with bait.
- Barry T. Northenor, 63, of Roswell, Georgia – Hunting without wearing blaze orange and unlawful firearm deer hunting with the aid of bait.

On Nov. 18, the first day of the 2022 firearm deer hunting season, Illinois Conservation Police went to Seth Speiser's property in St. Clair County to investigate the possible use of bait to attract deer. During the course of interviews with Seth Speiser, Mitchell Speiser and Forrester, police discovered numerous hunting violations, including illegal baiting, illegal use of landowner tags by non-resident hunters, and more. Also on Nov. 18, conservation police went to land owned by Danny Cox in St. Clair County to investigate the use of bait while hunting.

They discovered nine baited deer stands or blinds with corn, molasses, and mineral salt with trail cameras at each location. In addition, after cross-referencing Illinois Department of Natural Resources harvest records with hunting permit records and addresses, they determined numerous individuals had harvested deer without proper permits and tags.

Police also determined Danny Cox allegedly provided permits to out-of-state hunters that were actually issued to Illinois hunters. In addition, investigators found individuals were hunting with landowner permits even though they don't live on the property.

The use of bait to hunt is illegal throughout Illinois, in part to help stop the spread of chronic wasting disease among deer, but also to reinforce the importance of fair chase, a common, long-held principle of hunter ethics.

"Fair chase has been the standard for responsible hunters for more than 100 years, and these are the ethics we've chosen to live by here in Illinois. We want to give the animal a sporting chance and not cheat or trick it," said Jayette Bolinski, spokesperson for the Illinois Department of Natural Resources. "We also discourage the use of bait because it causes deer to congregate at a food source, which can contribute to the spread of disease and make it more difficult to manage our herd and keep it healthy."

The Illinois Digest of Hunting and Trapping Regulations, published annually, provides useful information about all hunting and trapping guidelines in Illinois, including the prohibition on bait.

The guide specifically notes that, "It is illegal to feed deer at any time and/or take deer by the use or aid of bait or baiting of any kind. Despite their widespread availability, deer baits and attractants commonly sold in stores are also illegal to use at any time except for use by properly licensed owners of captive cervids while feeding captive animals."

The Illinois Conservation Police reminds the public that all who are arrested are presumed innocent until proved guilty in a court of law.

