

FINAL BILL REPORT

2SSB 5784

PARTIAL VETO

C 264 L 24

Synopsis as Enacted

Brief Description: Concerning deer and elk damage to commercial crops.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Ways & Means (originally sponsored by Senators Van De Wege, Muzzall, Mullet, Nobles, Wagoner and Warnick; by request of Department of Fish and Wildlife).

Senate Committee on Agriculture, Water, Natural Resources & Parks

Senate Committee on Ways & Means

House Committee on Agriculture & Natural Resources

House Committee on Appropriations

Background: The Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) works with landowners and tenants suffering game damage in order to control the damage without killing the animals when practical and to increase the harvest of damage-causing animals in hunting seasons. The Fish and Wildlife Commission may authorize special hunts to reduce damage from wildlife if there are recurring complaints.

The WDFW may compensate eligible farmers for damage to their commercial crops from deer or elk. The WDFW is restricted to pay no more than \$120,000 per fiscal year from the wildlife fund and no more than \$30,000 per fiscal year from the general fund. The Legislature may declare an emergency under certain circumstances and may appropriate additional monies to the WDFW for damage claims. The maximum payment amount for a claim is \$10,000, except in a case where the outcome of an appeal filed by a claimant determines a higher payment.

Summary: The annual compensation limit for commercial crop damage claims caused by deer or elk paid from the State General Fund is increased from \$30,000 to \$300,000. The maximum payment amount for a claim is increased from \$10,000 to \$30,000. An appeal of a decision of WDFW for deer or elk damage to commercial crops is limited to \$30,000.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

A claim awarded, but not paid due to being in excess of funds available in the current fiscal year, is eligible for payment in the next fiscal year. If additional funds are not provided by the Legislature in the next fiscal year, then no further payment may be made on the claim. Payment of a claim is conditional on the availability of specific funding and is not a guarantee of reimbursement. Claims submitted during a fiscal year will be prioritized for payment based upon the highest percentage of loss, calculated by comparing agreed-upon or awarded commercial crop damages to the gross sales or harvested value of commercial crops for the previous tax year.

The WDFW must review crop and livestock wildlife damage programs in other states and submit recommendations to the Legislature for any changes to Washington statutes by December 1, 2024.

Votes on Final Passage:

Senate	46	3	
House	91	5	(House amended)
Senate	45	3	(Senate concurred)

Effective: June 6, 2024

Partial Veto Summary:

- Removed a three-year pilot program between WDFW and tribal co-managers to collar and monitor elk in South Central Washington in an effort to prevent crop and property damage.