SENATE FISH AND GAME
EXHIBIT NO. 3
DATE Feb. 10, 2009
BILL NO. SB 336

"Interesting enough, as I researched some data I discovered that, although specific conditions apply, a total of 17 states (mainly in the Southeast) and three Canadian provinces allow the use of dogs for tracking wounded deer. Considering that the loss of one wounded deer is one too many, the idea of allowing tracking dogs may warrant more investigation.

Searching the scientific literature I came across a South Carolina study conducted by Richard Morton to determine the efficiency of archery equipment in conjunction with tracking dogs. In his study, 22 experienced archers shot 61 deer (29 bucks, 29 does, 3 fawns). Twenty of the deer (32.8 percent) fell within sight of the hunters. If bow hunters didn't see their deer fall, the services of a trained tracking dog were utilized one hour after the shot. In total, 60 out of the 61 deer (98 percent) were found within 24 hours of being shot. The one deer that wasn't recovered was reportedly hit in a non-vital area.

Morton also found that most deer reacted to being shot by taking off with their tails down (72 percent) and left a blood trail (68 percent), blood spots (23 percent), rumen material (5 percent), bone fragments (2 percent), meat (1 percent), and hair (1 percent). The average distance traveled by a shot deer was 109 yards. Most deer were not spooked (96 percent) during the search. In fact, 95 percent of the harvested deer were found dead. It took an average of 30 minutes to recover a deer once the dogs were released and 95 percent were found within 4 hours.

Morton concluded, "Our results do confirm that archery hunting can be a highly efficient means of harvesting white-tailed deer when shot selection and shooting skills are emphasized and using trailing dogs is required as part of an organized management approach."

Another study in South Carolina by Charles Ruth, Deer Project Supervisor for the South Carolina DNR, also reflected the benefits of using trained dogs. Hunters in this study used rifles rather than bows. As in Morton's study, trained tracking dogs were brought in to recover animals that ran beyond the hunters' sight. A total of 493 deer were harvested - 305 bucks and 188 does. Ruth determined that trained trailing dogs deserved credit for the recovery of 15 to 20 percent of all those deer.

Both of these studies point out that dogs can be very beneficial and Morton's study once more prove the lethality of bow and arrows. The most obvious benefits in using dogs are in searching the woods for wounded deer when there is no blood or other signs to follow, or when conditions such as darkness; rain or snow; rough/dense terrain; or water/wetlands enter the picture."

C.J. Winand- Outdoor writer: an excerpt taken from www.deersearch.org