

# Pheasant bill ruffles feathers; senator criticizes game officers

By Jim Zalewski

LB133, which would limit Nebraska's pheasant hunting season to 10 days, met opposition at a Constitutional Revision and Recreation Committee hearing Thursday.

No one testified in favor of the bill; 14 people, representing differing interests, opposed it.

Sen. Dennis Rasmussen, of Scotia, who introduced the bill, said the current method of setting seasonal limits is not working. Pheasant population is declining, he said, mostly because of the lack of cover. Hens are producing only two chicks per year instead of the three they were producing in the early 1970s, Rasmussen said.

Rasmussen praised the South Dakota system, where the season now is set at 50 days. Birds can be hunted between noon and sunset, he said, which makes the season virtually 25 days long.

## Pheasant population grows

The pheasant population in South Dakota has risen considerably in the past 10 years because of such protective measures by the game commission, Rasmussen said.

"Nebraska has 33 game biologists," he said. "South Dakota has only 12, yet they are doing a more effective job."

Rasmussen said the 58 conservation officers in Nebraska made 56 pheasant hunting arrests last year, which he said indicates illegal acts are going unnoticed.

"The hunter-landowner situation in Nebraska is very bad, especially concerning trespassing," he said.

Committee chairman George Syas of Omaha criticized Rasmussen for not first presenting his

findings to the state game commission.

## Discrimination

Charles Wilcox, representing the Izaak Walton League, a group which promotes wildlife and outdoor recreation, opposed the bill because he said it would discriminate against the average hunter.

"If this is passed, only those who are retired and the idle rich could hunt," Wilcox said. "The average man could no longer get his recreation through hunting."

Lincoln attorney Doug Marloff said he has hunted in Lancaster County for 25 years and has seen the pheasant population increase in the past year.

Approximately 70 per cent of all pheasants die from exposure, he said.

"What is wrong with legal hunting and the taking of game in the beautiful outdoors of Nebraska?" Marloff asked.

Reducing the season in certain areas might be advisable if the population was near extinction, but a blanket limit for the whole state is not the answer, he said.

## Restricts resources and recreation

Dean Rosenthal, representing the UNL Wildlife Club, said the club opposes the bill because it restricts use of resources and recreation opportunities in the state.

Wayne Ziebarth, former state senator from Wilcox, said the bill would not enhance the current good relations between hunters and landowners in his area.

"We have hunters come in from Texas and other parts of the South," he said. "Opening day there is kind of a big extravaganza. The bill would limit the commerce and the good times we all have."

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