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NEW JERSEY FARMERS APPLAUD COURT RULING ON BEAR HUNT LICENSING

TRENTON, NJ (November 17, 2004) -- New Jersey farmers are relieved that the state appeals court ruled in favor of the bear hunt, to be held from Dec 6-11, in northwestern New Jersey, according to the New Jersey Farm Bureau, the grass-roots member organization of 19,000+ farmers and farm-related entities within the state. "The bear population is adding to the increase of wildlife without any natural predators," says Richard Nieuwenhuis, president of the Farm Bureau. "Bears not only feed on chickens and roll in cornfields, decimating wide swaths of corn plants, they also feast on the beehives that farmers use to pollinate crops and extract honey. Farmers make heavy use of beehives for pollinating fruits and vegetables, often renting them for the season that begins in early spring, just when the bears emerge from hibernation. Damage caused by hungry bears is often un-recoupable.

"The increasing bear population is clearly exceeding its viable habitat," says Nieuwenhuis. "Back in August, 30 serious bear incidents were reported. We've had instances of bears on major highways, clogging traffic, endangering themselves and drivers, scavenging around homes and migrating into densely populated urban areas."

Before the 2003 hunt, the *statewide* bear population was estimated at 3,200 bears. This year's study encompassed only two small areas, *about one-third of the 2003 hunt region*, and the bear population within that was estimated at almost 1,500 bears.

"The harm of excessive wildlife in general to farmers, homeowners, businesses, public lands and the animals themselves continues at critical levels," says Nieuwenhuis. "We have to get real and take practical measures to manage our wildlife -- they aren't about to do it for themselves. We certainly don't endorse the DEP's idea of wild animal contraception -- a costly folly that could ultimately result in more problems than any hunt ever could; no one knows what effect such measures might have on animal populations."

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The New Jersey Farm Bureau is a member organization of more than 19,000 farmers and farm-related entities within the Garden State. It is the only organization solely dedicated to representing the grass- roots interests and directives of its members in educating all levels of government and the public on the farm community's policies and positions. The Farm Bureau also takes a lead in seeking out initiatives, activities and ventures to enhance the profitability of producer members and the ensure the viability of agriculture in New Jersey -- *the Garden State for Good Reason.*

For further information, contact the New Jersey Farm Bureau, at The Farmhouse, 168 West State Street, Trenton, NJ 08608. Phone 609-393-7163; fax 609-393-7072; email mail@njfb.org; website www.njfb.org

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