

Management Bull Elk Hunt

Background

Managing the elk herds in certain locations throughout Nevada has become increasingly complex and challenging. The continuing pressure to provide a balance of “hunter opportunity” and “trophy quality” coupled with meeting herd management and population objectives presents a difficult challenge for The Nevada Department of Wildlife.

In Lincoln County, as with many other areas, the balance of herd numbers, management objectives, hunter opportunity, and trophy quality are debated continuously. In an attempt to ensure the long-term quality, opportunity, herd structure and population objectives, a Management Bull Elk Hunt should be implemented as a “tool” to aid in successfully managing the elk populations.

Definition: Management Bull Elk:

A “Management Bull” is defined as: A bull elk with 5 points or fewer on at least one of its antlers. This includes damaged or broken antlers.

A “Point” will be defined as: An antler projection at least one inch long, with the length exceeding width at one inch or more in length. (Boone and Crockett)

Criteria:

- Valid Hunting License
- Tag Fee: Resident-\$120; Non-Resident (if applicable)-\$1200
- Application Fee: \$15 (possible increase in application fee could aid in harvest data)
- Predator, On Line Convenience, etc... Resident-\$5; Non-Resident (if applicable)-\$6.50
- Bonus point only: \$10

- The Management Bull Hunt shall be treated as such. It will be any legal weapon hunt. Bonus points accrue normally. There is no waiting period upon successful draw of a tag. A person is eligible to apply for the Management Bull Hunt in any year.
- Quotas shall be somewhat conservative in the short term; with an emphasis on possible harvest data acquisition and monitoring. Being able to show results of a couple of years of harvest would prove valuable for future management strategies.
- A shorter season than that of the Trophy Bull Hunt. (maybe 10-14 days)

Platform:

1. The Nevada Elk Species Management Plan, 1997, states that a ratio of 15-40 bulls per 100 cows should be maintained in all elk populations.
 - a) The bull to cow ratio in many hunt units far exceeds 15-40:100.
 - b) More bulls should be harvested. However, harvest during the Trophy Bull Hunt focuses primarily upon older-class, “Top-end” Bulls. By simply increasing the Trophy Bull Quotas, the focus compounds on these “Top-end” bulls.
 - c) Potentially, the overall numbers, quality, and superior genetics of the “Top-end” bulls will be severely depleted. The result will be a less desirable

tag for many who currently see areas in Nevada a highly sought after trophy elk hunt.

- d) In many cases, hunters who have waited several years (or longer) will pass on lesser quality and younger bulls because of the desire to harvest a larger bull. This in turn, may lead to lower success rates and lower harvest numbers.
2. Elk population management levels are detailed in each Nevada Elk "Sub-Plan." In some cases it is difficult to maintain these numbers and there are going to be small fluctuations for a variety of reasons.
 - a) For some areas, maintaining the elk numbers is a difficult challenge. In addition, to maintaining the balance of "quality" and "opportunity" along with population and herd structure, an alternative method of harvest has to be implemented. (A method other than simply increasing trophy bull tag quotas.)
 3. The Management Bull Hunt targets a wide cross sectional age class of elk.
 - a) There is a strong representative population of mature bulls that have "trophy quality" characteristics but are only a 5-point bull. These bulls may realistically *never* become a six point bull, even if they reach double digits in age. In the eyes of many hunters, these types of bulls are trophies in their own right.
 - b) For a variety of reasons, many hunters will "pass up" a mature, large-framed 5-point bull for the chance at harvesting a 6-point bull; even if the 6-point bull happens to be smaller.
 - c) There will be many bulls harvested in lower age classes as well.
 - d) By harvesting a cross section of age classes no single or progressive age class is targeted. (this would be the case with a spike hunt)
 4. The Management Bull Hunt provides another "opportunity" to hunt.
 - a) For those hunters who are within the "waiting period" for a trophy bull elk hunt, this hunt provides an added opportunity.

Enforcement

As with any hunt that incorporates some form of antler restriction, there will be issues surrounding enforcement. Penalties should vary depending upon circumstance and other factors.