

Commission Policy #27

STATE OF NEVADA

BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS

Number: **P-28**

Title: Mule Deer Management Guidelines

Commission Policy Number # 28 Reference: NRS 501.181

Effective Date:

PURPOSE

The Board of Wildlife Commissioners establishes policies necessary to preserve, protect, manage, and restore wildlife and its habitat. The mule deer is indigenous to Nevada. Historically, mule existed in population to in excess of 200,000.

The mule deer population has suffered declines. As the mule deer is the most numerous of the animals classified as 'big game' by the Nevada Wildlife Commission, it is vital to the State of Nevada that a strong population is maintained.

POLICY

The Board of Wildlife Commission does hereby establish the following policy to provide for the preservation, protection, management, and restoration of mule deer populations in Nevada.

1. The Department of Wildlife will actively pursue enhancing game populations by setting and reaching game production goals. Existence of positions within NDOW must be governed by what those positions do to sustain and enhance the population of animals that is their funding source. If necessary, job descriptions will be changed and NDOW personnel will be retrained to meet new job requirements. Focus will be given to active game production.
2. The Department of Wildlife will develop and maintain cooperative, structured, and positive communication between local interests, (private and public), state agencies, (NDOW), and the federal managing agencies, (BLM, USFS, USFW) in regard to Mule Deer-related issues. Much of the agency interaction must start at the public level and should be channeled through the Wildlife Commission / CABMW process working toward the recovery of mule deer and their habitat.
3. The Department and the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners will only rely upon solid scientific methods when considering range carrying capacity and must not rely upon arbitrary or politically or socially motivated estimates of carrying capacity when making management decisions or to determine quotas and / or make season or regulatory decisions. They will close or severely limit deer seasons in areas where populations are far below historical high deer numbers unless a specific reason can be clearly identified for the declines in population. Buck harvest will be reduced or eliminated in areas / units where populations are below objective population goals. All doe harvests will cease until sufficient scientific data to justify them should be presented. Doe hunts may be considered in any area where the

recruitment threshold of 40 fawns per hundred doe is exceeded at both the fall and spring counts for a minimum of 3 consecutive years providing that the overall population is either growing rapidly, or growing and within 10% of the objective population goal. Where damage exists on private lands, doe tags should be issued in tightly controlled areas designed to reduce only the specific local deer population causing the damage with the goal of mitigating the effects of damage done by that specific local deer population.

4. The Department of Wildlife will back and encourage well managed grazing of cattle and domestic sheep in order to receive the direct and indirect benefits to the habitat, especially to water and vegetation sources that will benefit mule deer. Large increases in well-managed, high-intensity, short-duration rotational grazing by multiple species utilizing maximum variation in timing of grazing cycles throughout mule deer habitats Statewide and relaxing regulation on water developments and spring maintenance are to be advocated.
5. The Department of Wildlife will study the potential benefits of mineral supplementation and costs of implementation of a significant salt/mineral supplementation program.
6. The Department of Wildlife will be active in encouraging wildfire prevention rather than suppression by recommending increased intensive rotating grazing in fire-prone areas and recently burned areas. A high priority should be given to seeding newly burned areas with fire resistant plants palatable to wildlife.
7. The Department of Wildlife will be active in encouraging the Bureau of Land Management to create free woodcutting areas for Piñon Juniper to improve habitat for mule deer. Such areas can be designated by exclusion – example: “May cut Piñon Juniper Statewide with no permit except in specified zones.”
8. Natural fire cycles are a basic part of habitat management that provides disturbance to vegetation and promotes multiple stages of plant development. Agencies will be encouraged to allow natural wildland fires to burn areas of dense piñon-juniper stands where appropriate. Rapid initial suppression should be initiated in designated crucial mule deer habitat and no-control zones for fire suppression will be recommended in areas where burning may be beneficial to wildlife habitat. A map for firefighting agencies of the most critical habitat areas that should receive maximum suppression effort should be developed.
9. The Department of Wildlife will utilize all possible methods to encourage private landowners / public-land leaseholders to develop and maintain all water sources and develop meadows.
10. The Department will focus and coordinate planning at the scoping level to address all potential impacts from energy development. They will cooperate and coordinate with federal land management agencies in energy development lease plans, and other planning efforts to avoid or mitigate potentially harmful impacts on Mule Deer and Mule Deer critical habitat.

Federal, state, and local representation should be considered and representation from each should be required. They will support and encourage renewable energy projects that have far less impacts, or even beneficial impacts to Mule Deer. (e.g. biomass- piñon and juniper projects).

11. The Department will practice intensive predation control in areas where deer populations are low in relation to historical highs. Department biologists will work with Wildlife Services in making decisions as to where predation is a factor in mule deer population growth and continue predation control while growing deer populations. The Department will consider reductions in government-paid predation control in units when deer population has five years continual growth and a decreasing predator harvest. Focus should be given to game production studies involved in areas where predation projects are ongoing.
12. The Wildlife Commission must require sound scientific data when setting seasons and quotas. The total days hunted for a species population that the Commission determines to be desired to grow should not exceed 60 days in any year. Total yearly season lengths for deer should be limited to a maximum of 60 days unless the population exhibits strong growth for a minimum of three consecutive years and/ or is within 20% of all time historical numbers for the specific unit / area.
13. The Department of Wildlife will support efforts of appropriate control practices of noxious and invasive weeds.

This policy shall remain in effect until amended, repealed, or superseded by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS IN
REGULAR SESSION, **Date**.

Scott Raine, Chairman
Board of Wildlife Commissioners