

**STATE OF NEVADA
BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS**

Commission Policy #28

Number: P-28

Title: Mule Deer Management Guidelines

Reference: NRS 501.181

Effective Date: May 14, 2011

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 deer existed in populations higher than those that exist today but have suffered declines. As the mule deer is the most numerous and widely distributed of the animals classified as 'big game' by the Nevada Wildlife Commission, it is vital to the State of Nevada that a strong population be maintained.

POLICY

The Board of Wildlife Commissioners 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 should 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, in accordance with state law, job descriptions may be changed and NDOW personnel retrained to meet new job requirements. The Commission's policy is to focus efforts on active game production.
2. The Department of Wildlife should 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 enhancement and maintenance of mule deer populations and their habitat.
3. The Department and the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners should only rely upon solid scientific methods when considering range carrying capacity and 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 shall

close or severely limit deer seasons in areas where populations are far below production goals unless a specific reason can be clearly identified for the declines in population. Mule deer harvest should be reduced or eliminated in areas/units where populations are below objective population goals.

All doe harvests should cease until sufficient scientific data to justify them is presented. 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 should 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 sources and vegetation 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 vigorously advocated and promoted.
5. The Department of Wildlife should study the potential benefits of mineral supplementation and costs of implementation of a significant salt/mineral supplementation program.
6. The Department of Wildlife shall be active in encouraging wildfire prevention in preference to suppression by recommending increased intensive rotating grazing in fire-prone areas and recently burned areas of mule deer habitat. A high priority should be given to seeding newly burned areas with fire resistant plants palatable to wildlife, specifically focusing on mule deer.
7. The Department of Wildlife shall 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.” The Department should also advocate increased commercial woodcutting in appropriate areas.
8. Natural fire cycles are a basic part of habitat management that provides disturbance to vegetation and promotes multiple stages of plant development. It is the policy of the Commission to encourage agencies to allow natural wildland fires to burn areas of dense piñon-juniper stands and where appropriate. Rapid initial suppression should be initiated in designated crucial mule deer habitat and no-control zones for fire suppression should be recommended in areas where burning may be beneficial to wildlife habitat. NDOW should coordinate in production and distribution of a map for firefighting agencies of the most critical wildlife habitat areas that should

receive maximum suppression effort.

9. The Department of Wildlife should utilize all possible methods to assist and encourage private landowners / public-land leaseholders in development and maintenance of all water sources and meadows.
10. The Department shall focus and coordinate planning at the scoping level to address all potential impacts from energy development. They should 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. They should support and encourage renewable energy projects that have low impact, or beneficial impacts to Mule Deer. (e.g. biomass- piñon and juniper projects).
11. The Department shall practice intensive predation control in areas where deer populations are low in relation to game production goals. Department biologists should 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 and the Commission shall consider reductions in government-paid predation control in units when a deer population has continual growth and a decreasing predator population. Focus should be given to game production studies involved in areas where predation control 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 production goals for the specific unit / area.
13. The Department of Wildlife should support and encourage efforts of appropriate control practices of noxious and invasive weeds in areas where such control will benefit mule deer habitat.

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, May 14, 2011.



Scott Raine, Chairman
Board of Wildlife Commissioners