

**STATE OF NEVADA  
BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS**

**Commission Policy Number 24**

**Title :** Hunting Opportunities Among Various Weapon Classes and Hunter Groups

**Reference:** NRS 501.105, 501.181

**Effective Date:** May 13, 2006

**Amended Date:** November 2023

**PURPOSE**

To establish hunting opportunities for the various weapon classes and hunter groups.

**POLICY**

It is the policy of the Board of Wildlife Commissioners to approve the harvest levels for big game species based on the various weapon classes and hunter groups relative demand for hunting opportunity and hunter success rates.

**FINDINGS**

After due deliberation and consideration of the relevant information presented, the Commission makes the following findings:

1. The Commission has a duty to provide hunting opportunity in Nevada.
2. Hunting in Nevada is an important activity for its citizens for many reasons, including but not limited to the following values that hunting provides:
  - A lean, healthy source of protein.
  - Family and other social interaction.
  - A link to Nevada's outdoor history, culture, and traditions.
  - A source of physical exercise important for maintaining health and fitness.
  - Appreciation for the natural habitat and scenic landscape, which is a major component of Nevada's quality of life.
  - Public support for Nevada's wildlife management programs.
  - One of the principal sources of wildlife management funding in Nevada.
3. The Commission takes administrative notice of Nevada's wildlife-limiting climatic and habitat conditions. These include precipitation averages that make Nevada the driest state in the nation, and Great Basin and Mojave Desert vegetation and geography types that provide limited forage and cover. These limiting conditions prevent Nevada's wildlife populations from reaching numbers comparable to those of other states, including other western states.

4. Due to Nevada's relatively low wildlife numbers and its increasing human population, it is necessary to manage big game hunting opportunities in the State.
5. Nevada's already-limited resident hunting opportunities would be significantly lowered if nonresidents competed equally with residents for big game tags or were given a greater advantage. Such a change would be against the public interest.
6. Given the geographic and climatic constraints of Nevada's natural environment, the Commission — with the support of both resident and nonresident hunters — has elected to emphasize a sustained quality hunting experience rather than attempt to match the quantity of hunting opportunities available in other states. To do so, the Commission has consistently applied a conservative strategy that, compared to other states, maintains a high male to female ratio among big game populations.

### **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Antelope With Horns Shorter Than Ears:** In accordance with NAC 502.003, any pronghorn antelope without horns or with both horns that are shorter than its ears. Generally considered to be a doe (female), fawn, or young male antelope.

**Antelope With Horns Longer Than Ears:** In accordance with NAC 502.002, "antelope with horns longer than its ears," any pronghorn antelope having at least one horn that is longer than either ear of the antelope. Generally considered to be a mature male antelope.

**Antlered Deer:** In accordance with NAC 502.007, "antlered deer," any deer having at least one antler that is visible above the hairline of the deer. Generally considered to be a buck (male) deer.

**Antlered Elk:** In accordance with NAC 502.0074, "antlered elk" means any elk having at least one antler that is visible above the hairline of the elk. Generally considered to be a bull (male) elk.

**Antlered Moose:** Any moose having at least one antler that is visible above the hairline of the moose. Generally considered to be a bull (male) moose.

**Antlerless Deer:** In accordance with NAC 502.008, "antlerless deer," any deer without antlers. Generally considered to be a doe (female) or fawn deer.

**Antlerless Elk:** In accordance with NAC 502.009, any elk without antlers. Generally considered to be a cow (female) or calf.

**Antlerless Moose:** Any moose without antlers. Generally considered to be a cow (female) or calf.

**Big Game:** For this policy, big game means all big game mammals except mountain

lion.

**Billy:** Any male mountain goat.

**Boar:** Any male black bear.

**Demand:** Demand is defined as the measure of interest that a particular hunter group has in attaining a big game tag based on applications from previous years for a given hunter group and unit group. Demand is defined as the First Choice of unsuccessful applicants combined with successful applicants for all choices.

**Ewe:** In accordance with NAC 502.345, any female bighorn sheep having a horn or horns of at least 5 inches in length each as measured on the outside curve of the horn from the skull to the tip.

**Expand:** Taking a projected number of harvested animals and dividing by the expected hunter success rate to generate a tag allocation.

**Hunter Groups:** Residents of Nevada, resident juniors, and people who are not residents of Nevada.

**Harvest Objectives:** The numbers of male and female big game animals that the Department has determined can be safely removed from a population through harvest without causing detrimental impacts to that population.

**Hunter Success:** Percentage of tag holders reporting they hunted and harvested a big game animal. Hunter success calculations omit those tag holders that did not hunt. Hunter success is a valuable metric for understanding the experience of hunters in the field.

**Junior Hunter:** In accordance with NAC 502.063, generally a person between 12 years and 18 years.

**Management Ram Hunt:** Ram hunts that seek to achieve a specific population management objective beyond a standard hunt and may vary for the type of ram targeted. These may include broken-horn hunts, young ram hunts, hunts in areas where rams are extremely difficult to locate, or hunts designed to remove rams due to disease or rams found in undesirable areas.

**Nanny:** Any female mountain goat.

**Nonresident:** Anyone who does not meet the requirements for residents set in NRS 502.015.

**Projected Male Harvest:** A projected number of males reported to be harvested that will result in a desired post-hunt male to female ratio objective.

**Projected Female** (*antlerless deer, antlerless elk, antelope with horns shorter than ears, or bighorn ewe*) **Harvest:** A projected number of females reported to be harvested to achieve various management objectives; maintaining population numbers in balance with habitat conditions, optimal levels for a given species, or below a level set in local management plans; optimum sustained yield during periods of average to exceptional environmental conditions; and/or providing for recreational opportunity.

**Ram:** Any male bighorn sheep.

**Resident:** In accordance with NRS 502.015, a person is a resident of the State of Nevada if they are a United States citizen who has maintained his or her principal and permanent residence in Nevada for six months next preceding the application and has not purchased or applied for any resident hunting, fishing, or trapping privileges in another state, country, or province.

**Sow:** Any female black bear.

**Spike Elk:** In accordance with NAC 502.104, spike-only elk hunts are intended to target young bulls (males).

**Tag Success:** Percentage of tag holders responding to their hunt questionnaire and subsequently harvesting a big game animal. Tag success calculations include those tag holders that did not hunt. Tag success, used in the Demand-Tag Success formula, will be primarily based on tag success rates from previous years for a given hunter group and unit group. A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates.

**Unit Groups:** A defined geographic area within Nevada where separate or conjoined population assessments, harvest objectives, and other management actions are applied.

**Weapons Groups:** Any legal weapon, muzzleloader, and archery.

### **GENERAL RULES — ALL SPECIES**

Population estimates of males and females (one year-old or older) for each unit group at the pre-hunt period (late summer) will be the basis for determining projected harvest levels for each species class.

The Commission approves the projected male and female harvest levels among those weapons and hunter groups that are identified for each unit group through the public scoping process involving the County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife and interested publics and approved by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

## **FIRST COME FIRST SERVED**

Any tag remaining after the big game draws, returned to the Department with no eligible alternate, or returned to the Department with less than 14 business days before the season opener may be offered for purchase to both residents and nonresidents in the First Come, First Served program. Returned resident tags will be designated for residents and returned nonresident tags will be designated for nonresidents beginning in 2023-2024.

## **DEMAND-TAG SUCCESS**

A Demand-Tag Success formula will be used to allocate tags to various weapon classes for deer, elk, and antelope.

Demand is defined as the measure of interest that a particular hunter group has in attaining a big game tag based on applications from previous years for a given hunter group and unit group. Demand is defined as the First Choice of unsuccessful applicants combined with successful applicants for all choices.

Tag Success is defined as the percentage of tag holders responding to their hunt questionnaire and subsequently harvesting a big game animal. Tag success calculations include those tag holders that did not hunt. Tag success, used in the Demand-Tag Success formula, will be primarily based on tag success rates from previous years for a given hunter group and unit group. A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates. Tag success must be used in the Demand-Tag Success Formula to achieve projected harvest while accommodating tag holders that do not hunt.

## **RESIDENT AND NONRESIDENT TAG ALLOCATION**

The Commission strives to allocate approximately 90 percent of available quota to resident hunters and 10 percent of available quota to nonresident hunters for males of each big game species in the Main Draw.

### **PARTY HUNT QUOTA MINIMUM**

For deer, antlerless elk, and horns shorter than ears antelope hunts, the minimum tag quota will be two to allow applicants who wish to apply as a party to apply and have a chance of drawing those tags.

## **SPECIFIC RULES — BY SPECIES**

### **MULE DEER**

#### **Allocation of Projected Harvest by Weapon Group**

The Demand-Tag Success process for determining antlered mule deer hunting quotas

will be as follows:

For Standard and Alternative Hunt Units (see Game Division Big Game Management Objectives)

1. Determine the desired animal harvest for each unit group based on the pre-hunt population estimate and desired male to female ratio (typically 30 bucks per 100 does).
2. Apportion the desired harvest into the various weapon classes based on demand from previous years for standard hunt units.
3. Apportion the desired harvest of 25% to Junior Hunters (Juniors).
  - a. Junior hunts may be divided into Any Legal Weapon class and Archery/Muzzleloader combination to allow for increased Junior participation.
  - b. Junior deer tags will be considered antlered deer tags except in areas that have open antlerless deer hunts, where they will be considered either-sex tags.
  - c. Juniors can apply for five years and be awarded a maximum of three junior tags before the age of 18.
4. For alternative and non-standard hunt units, the demand will be based on the number of first choice applicants for each weapon type from the previous years.
5. Determine final quota for each unit group and weapon type by dividing the desired harvest by the previous 3-year average tag success rate.

A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in demand and tag success rates.

## **ELK**

### **Allocation of Projected Harvest by Weapon Group**

Modeled changes in population size, bull-cow ratios, and percent of main beams  $\geq$  50-inch reported by hunters from previous years will be assessed to determine desired elk harvest. Using calculated demand, the projected antlered, antlerless, and spike harvest will then be distributed among the various weapon groups identified for a given elk class and unit group. The projected harvest, once allocated among the weapon groups, will be divided by hunter success for the appropriate weapon group to determine the recommended tag quota.

## **ANTELOPE**

### **Allocation of Projected Harvest by Weapon Group**

The projected buck harvest will be divided among the various weapon groups identified for a given antelope class and unit group. The projected harvest, once divided among the weapon groups, will be expanded to hunting opportunities.

Horns shorter than ears harvest will be based on the tag success of previous years for a given hunter group and unit group hunter success. A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates.

### **BIGHORN SHEEP**

#### **Weapon, Hunter Groups, and Animal Classes**

Bighorn ram and ewe hunting opportunities will involve any legal weapon and archery weapon groups. Management ram hunts may be implemented in unit groups where broken-horned rams may exist, where reduced ram densities are desired, and where consistently low ram tag success occurs.

#### **Allocation of Projected Harvest by Hunter Group**

Tag success rates will not be used to expand either the projected ram or ewe harvest.

### **MOUNTAIN GOAT**

#### **Weapon, Hunter Groups, and Animal Classes**

Mountain goat hunting opportunities may consist of any mountain goat (male or female), or billy only. Hunts are any legal weapon only.

#### **Allocation of Projected Harvest by Hunter Group**

Tag success rates will not be used to expand the projected mountain goat harvest.

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, November 4, 2022.*

**Chairman Tommy Caviglia  
Board of Wildlife Commissioners**