

# NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF WILDLIFE

## GAME DIVISION



### BIG GAME SEASON PRESCRIPTIONS AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES FOR QUOTA RECOMMENDATIONS

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### OBJECTIVE

Management Objectives for Hunting Seasons are designed to be used by Nevada Department of Wildlife (Department) Game Biologists when formulating hunting season and quota recommendations. Management objectives are intended to provide general guidance on the target parameters toward which big game species are managed. Season and quota recommendations, as well as targets associated with management objectives will be shared with the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners (Commission), County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife (CABs), and interested publics annually to make them aware of the objectives the Department is attempting to achieve with the recommendations being provided. Management objectives may be changed in subsequent years if the Commission provides direction to that effect.

The management objectives themselves are one piece of a strategic approach used by the Department in managing wildlife. While management objectives describe the parameters toward which the Department manages, other protocols describe how that data is collected. Management plans (e.g., species management plans and related sub-planning documents) describe landscape-level objectives, opportunities for habitat enhancement, specific herd management objectives (e.g., increase population), and management challenges (e.g., persistent low fawn recruitment for pronghorn).

The Department also operates under a strategic plan that provides agency vision, an annual work plan developed under the Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration (WSFR) Program, annual or biennial translocation plans approved by the Commission, and an annual implementation plan that tie together budgets, specific tasks, and work units for the upcoming year. The Department manages Nevada's wildlife within the biological limits of each species. Management strategies are developed to address social perceptions, which are routinely more conservative than the limits at which wildlife may be biologically managed.

Ultimately, the Department manages wildlife in the public trust for all of Nevada's citizens. All game animals, including predators, big game, and upland game, are managed as part of an important ecosystem of at least 894 species to be sustained for future generations of Nevadans and our visitors to enjoy. These

management objectives have been developed to meet a variety of hunting desires and strive to provide adequate opportunity for all, while maintaining a self-sustaining resource. The objectives are based on the best available biological and social science. Nevada has a diverse wildlife resource, yet many of these resources are limited in supply. The following objectives attempt to provide the diversity of experiences desired by the hunters of Nevada, while providing the necessary management so that everyone will benefit from diverse wildlife populations in the future.

DRAFT

## **APPROACHES FOR MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND GUIDANCE**

- Commission Policy 24 provides direction to the Department in allocating quotas among weapon classes and between resident and nonresident hunters.
- Seasons are recommended biennially, with recommendations from the Department to CAB's, the Commission, and interested publics.
- Recommendations from area biologists, regional supervisors, and game staff will be the primary method of managing standard, alternative, or non-standard hunt strategies.
- Population estimates will be derived from survey data, harvest metrics, and population models when possible.
- Provide for a diversity of hunter experiences while maintaining wildlife population health.
- Maintain consistent wildlife survey protocol and interpretation to develop hunt recommendations across the state in accordance with other pertinent management plans (e.g., species management plans and annual work plans).
- Population management objectives (male to female ratios, harvest metrics, age of harvested animals, main beam length) for specific units may be described within pertinent species management plans.
- Use innovative management hunts to address specific management objectives that are not being achieved through standard hunt structures.
- Use split hunt structure to reduce user conflicts and hunter densities.
- Use targeted harvest by hunters to address human-wildlife conflicts when appropriate.
- Promote youth hunts when possible.
- Emphasize primitive weapons hunts where possible to allow for increased participation due to lower success rates especially when a minimum of 10 tags are offered for corresponding any legal weapon seasons.
- Several specialty hunts are offered each year consistent with appropriate statute and rule, to include Heritage, Silver State, Dream, and Partnership in Wildlife tags. These are important programs that have relatively little influence on harvest management for the remainder of Nevada's wildlife. Their implementation is acknowledged but not described within these guidelines.

## ROUNDING AND MINIMUM TAG CONVENTION

### **Deer and Antelope ALW Tags:** *(Minimum of 2 tags for Mule Deer hunts)*

If the array recommends:

- 10 tags or under: Leave as is
- 11 – 99 tags: Round up to nearest 5
- 101 – 300: Round up to nearest 10
- 301 - 500 tags: Round up to nearest 25
- 501 - 1000 tags: Round up to nearest 50

### **Deer and Antelope Archery & Muzzleloader Tags:** *(Minimum of 2 tags for Mule Deer hunts)*

- If ALW tags are more than 10, have a minimum of 5 tags
- If ALW tags are 10 or fewer, leave as is
- 6 – 10 tags: Round up to 10
- 11 – 99 tags: Round up to nearest 5
- 101 – 500 tags: Round up to nearest 25
- 500 - 1000 tags: Round up to nearest 50

### **Elk ALW, Archery, and Muzzleloader tags:** *(Minimum of 2 tags for Antlerless Elk hunts)*

- Under 20 tags: Leave as is
- 21 – 100: Round up to nearest 5
- 100 – 300: Round up to nearest 10
- 300 – 500: Round up to nearest 25
- 500 +: Round up to nearest 50

### **Bighorn and Mountain Goat:**

- No rounding

## BIGHORN SHEEP

The Department’s goals are to restore and maintain bighorn sheep herds at optimal population levels, provide diverse recreational opportunities, recognize hunting as a legitimate and desirable use of the bighorn sheep resource, strongly advocate habitats be maintained in good ecological condition, and reduce and manage risk of disease transmission.

### Bighorn Season Prescriptions

1. Bighorn hunts include separate ram and ewe hunts using weapon classes for Any Legal Weapon or Archery.
2. Bighorn sheep season dates are set with the following considerations: bighorn breeding season that varies across subspecies and elevation, other hunting seasons to reduce overlap, aerial surveys, capture operations to reduce hunter/NDOW conflicts, allow hunter access to higher elevations, and reduce hunter congestion. Split or extended seasons may be implemented if hunter congestion and hunt efficacy become an issue. Standard season length will not be less than 21 days and preferably 30 days. Hunts on Department of Defense (DOD) lands may be reduced for total hunt days to accommodate special regulations and restrictions.
3. Bighorn ewe seasons will be no shorter than 14 days and will occur on dates that do not overlap with bighorn ram seasons in the same unit. Other considerations are to reduce overlap with mule deer rifle seasons in the same unit and to accommodate optimal timing of bighorn sheep captures for management and disease surveillance.

<b>Desert Bighorn (Nelson) Sheep Seasons</b>	
<b>Ram Any Legal Weapon Standard Season</b>	November 20 – January 1
<b>Alternatives to Standard Seasons</b> – earlier seasons to accommodate high elevation herds; split seasons for high quotas; date shifts to accommodate hunter access, bighorn water availability issues, and for DOD land restrictions	
<b>Ram Archery Standard Season</b>	October 20 – November 14
<b>Ewe Any Legal Weapon Season</b>	Prior to any legal weapon and not overlapping archery season

<b>California Bighorn Sheep</b>	
<b>Ram Any Legal Weapon Standard Season</b>	September 1 – October 31
<b>Ewe Any Legal Weapon Season</b>	After ram season
<b>Ram Archery Season</b>	Prior to any legal weapon and not overlapping ewe season

<b>Rocky Mountain Bighorn Sheep</b>	
<b>Ram Any Legal Weapon Standard Season</b>	September 1 – October 31
<b>Alternatives to Standard Seasons</b> – earlier and later seasons to accommodate high elevation, heavily timbered, and difficult to access herds;	

<b>Management Ram</b>	
<b>Management Ram Any Legal Weapon Season</b>	After Any Ram Any Legal Weapon Standard Season

### **Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. Tag quotas for rams for each unit group will be based on the following criteria: a minimum of 8% of the total estimated number of rams, not to exceed 50% of rams  $\geq 6$  years of age, derived from a herd's population model. These criteria are expected to maintain a mean age of harvested rams  $\geq 6$  year of age within each unit or unit group.
- B. Units will be the primary geographic basis for managing bighorn harvest. Units may be subdivided to more optimally spread or focus hunting pressure and harvest to all known areas of bighorn distribution during bighorn hunting seasons.
- C. Criteria for establishing ewe hunts and tag quotas will be based on evaluating seasonal or yearlong habitat resource limitations (e.g., water), past cyclical declines associated with record high population size, or proximity to known disease risk. Opportunities for removal of source stock animals for low-risk translocations will be considered prior to recommending ewe hunts.
- D. Archery ram hunts will be considered in units where the majority of water sources used by bighorn sheep are natural to discourage hunting over man-made water developments. The total tag quotas for all archery ram hunts will not exceed 5% of the statewide total any legal weapon ram hunt quotas
- E. Management ram hunts will be considered in specific units to target harvest on a particular ram age group (i.e., nonbreeding rams to reduce an artificially high ram: ewe ratio and lower the probability of young rams foraging, and contacting domestic sheep), rams that have specific horn characteristics (i.e., mature one-horn or broken-off horn rams), or where hunter access and/or mature ram detection is extremely challenging. Tag quotas may vary depending on which type of management ram hunt is implemented but will not exceed 5% of the statewide total ram tags issued for all other hunts.

## BLACK BEAR

The Department's Bear Management Goal is to manage black bear population numbers and distribution as an important part of Nevada's fauna. The hunt recommendation goal is to allow bear hunting harvest, while managing for representation of older age cohorts of both sexes in the population.

### Black Bear Season Prescriptions

1. Black bear season will begin September 15 and run through December 1.
2. Seasons will be set for units or unit groups where populations of black bears occur in harvestable numbers. As black bear populations expand, units or unit groups may be added.

### Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations

- A. The Department will manage black bear harvest toward light harvest, while considering modeled population trends.
- B. Tags and harvest limits may be adjusted to maintain light harvests. The most recent 3-year-average or trend should receive greater emphasis when determining tag quota levels and harvest limits; emphasize previous year's data when a clear trend exists or emphasize the most recent 3-year mean data when no clear trend exists.
- C. Harvest limits may be placed on the entire hunt area or specific units within the hunt area. Additionally, harvest limits may apply to total harvest or specific segments of the population (e.g., female harvest limit).
- D. Determine harvest effect and provide tag quota recommendations using the criteria below based on the previous 3-year mean. If 2 or more parameters exceed light harvest, then tag quotas or harvest limits should be reduced.

Parameter	Light harvest	Moderate harvest	Heavy harvest
Percent females in	<30%	30–40%	>40%
Mean age of harvested females	>6 years	5–6 years	<5 years
Mean age of harvested males	>4 years	2–4 years	<2 years



## MOOSE

Presence and distribution of Shiras moose (*Alces alces shirasi*) in Nevada prior to European settlement is unknown. Historic sightings of moose in Nevada date back to the 1950s, likely coinciding with burgeoning moose populations in neighboring states. Since the early 2000s, frequency and distribution of moose sightings in Nevada have increased substantially. Currently, the Department believes the resident moose population is stable to increasing with numerous and repeated observations of adult males (i.e., bulls), adult females (i.e., cows), and juveniles (i.e., calves).

The Department recognizes moose as an important component of Nevada's diverse wildlife landscape and serves to protect, maintain, and, where applicable, increase the moose resource for current and future enjoyment by Nevadans. In 2020, the Department initiated a long-term monitoring effort to better understand habitat preferences, movement corridors, abundance, and distribution of moose in Nevada. Monitoring efforts have yielded high-resolution movement data from 7 adult moose, providing previously unknown insight about habitat preferences and seasonal movements. The Department also maintains a database of moose sightings and reports to supplement moose records and data. Information collected from these efforts will assist the Department in identifying and protecting critical habitat for moose in Nevada, as well as assess the population's viability to support sustainable harvest.

In concert with these activities, the Department has identified three goals guiding management of moose in Nevada. Those goals (1) maintain and improve abundance and distribution of Nevada's resident moose population, (2) allow natural expansion of moose into suitable but unoccupied habitats, and (3) identify and encourage recreational opportunities for all user groups. Specific Departmental activities related to moose must have a nexus to achieving these management goals.

### **Season Prescription**

1. No season is proposed for moose.

### **Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. No tags are recommended for moose.

## **MOUNTAIN LION**

The Department's Lion Management Goal is to manage the mountain lion population, numbers, and distribution, as an important part of Nevada's fauna while providing mountain lion hunting and other recreational opportunities.

The Department will establish a statewide harvest objective and monitor harvest within 6 management zones. These zones correspond to the genetic subpopulations identified in recent research within Nevada. Five zones correspond with 5 unique genetic subpopulations identified by Andreasen et al. (2012). An additional zone comprised of transient units is defined by NDOW.

### **Mountain Lion Season Prescriptions**

1. Hunts for either sex mountain lion "any legal weapon" seasons will occur on March 1 and run until the last day of February of the subsequent year.
2. Unit 091 is managed as an interstate hunt with Utah. Hunter harvested lions from 091 will be considered part of the North management zone.
3. Hunting hours are any time of the day or night; however, hunters are required to follow local county ordinances for legal shooting hours.

### **Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. Mountain lion hunts may be authorized for "either sex" seasons, except that spotted kittens or females accompanied by spotted kittens may not be taken. The harvest limit is 1 animal per tag, 2 tag maximum per person per year.
- B. The number of total and adult female mountain lions removed from each management zone will be monitored annually. A premolar will be removed from each harvested mountain lion during the mandatory check procedures. Premolars will be sectioned, and age will be determined using cementum aging techniques. If the 3-year mean percentage of adult ( $\geq 3$ -year-old) female in the regulated hunting seasons within any specific management zone exceeds 35%, the Department will establish a separate harvest objective for that zone to limit harvest.
- C. Female mountain lions should comprise  $< 50\%$  of the overall take within a specific management zone. If the 3-year mean percentage of female in the regulated hunting seasons within any specific management zone exceeds 50%, the Department will establish a separate harvest objective for that zone to limit harvest.
- D. Harvest objectives within a specific management zone may be increased or combined with the statewide harvest objective following 2 consecutive seasons in which the 3-year mean of adult females in the harvest is  $\leq 35\%$  of the total harvest and the 3-year mean of total females in the harvest is  $< 50\%$ .

**Management Zones**

Central units	142,143, 144, 145, 155, 161, 162, 163, 171, 172, 183, 184, 251
East units	102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 108, 109, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 121, 231
North units	044, 045, 046, 051, 061, 062, 064, 065, 066, 067, 068, 071, 072, 073, 074, 075, 076, 077, 078, 079, 081, 091 101, 107, 141, 151, 152, 153, 154, 156
West units	011, 012, 013, 014, 015, 021, 022, 032, 033, 034, 041, 192, 194, 195, 196, 201, 202, 203, 204, 206, 291
South units	131, 132, 133, 134, 164, 221, 222, 223, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 253, 254, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 271, 272, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, 286
Transient units	031, 035, 042, 043, 181, 182, 205, 207, 208, 211, 212, 213, 252
Units closed to hunting	033, 269, 280, 281, 282, 283, 284, and 286 which are closed by other administrative regulations imposed by the Department of Defense, US Fish and Wildlife Service, or similar restriction.

## MULE DEER

The Department's Mule Deer Management Goal is to maintain and enhance deer populations to levels that provide maximum and diverse recreational opportunities, while avoiding adverse effects to the species and its habitat. Harvest strategies for mule deer generally follow the draft *Nevada Management Plan for Mule Deer*.

### Mule Deer Season Prescriptions

1. Generally, hunting seasons are for “antlered mule deer” or “antlerless mule deer”. Junior mule deer tags are issued in accordance with NAC 502.063, and Commission Policy 24, which currently authorizes antlered or antlerless also known as “either sex” tags for junior youth hunts. “Antlerless mule deer” hunts are used when deer populations require reduction or stabilization and to provide hunter opportunity. “Antlered mule deer” hunts are used to manage the ratio of males to females in the population while providing recreational hunting opportunities for both residents and nonresidents.
2. Hunts for antlered mule deer typically follow a progression from late summer through mid-autumn (archery, muzzleloader, any legal weapon). Seasons may be split to reduce hunter crowding or more effectively target the timing of harvest. Any legal weapon hunts during the early seasons provide greater probability to draw a tag and are primarily designed to achieve management objectives, whereas late seasons provide higher likelihood to harvest more mature bucks. Antlerless deer seasons are designed to target specific sub-populations while minimizing overlap with antlered any legal weapon seasons, except for some unique situations such as late depredation hunts.
3. Junior “either sex” seasons generally coincide with the any legal weapon season for standard mule deer hunts, the muzzleloader season, and the archery season dates for the unit or unit groups in which the hunt is adopted. Junior hunts that coincide with standard and early-late split seasons for the any legal weapon class will begin on October 5 and end following Nevada Day weekend, with a few exceptions.

<b>Archery – Antlered Mule Deer</b>	
Standard Season	August 10 – September 9
Optional Non-standard seasons	November 10 – November 20 December 1 – December 10 December 1 – January 1 December 16 – January 1
<b>Muzzleloader – Antlered Mule Deer</b>	
Standard season	September 10 – October 4
Optional Non-standard seasons	September 10 – September 30 September 10 – October 10 November 10 – November 30 November 21 – December 10 December 1 – December 15 December 11 – December 20

<b>Any Legal Weapon – Antlered Mule Deer</b>	
Standard Single Season	October 5 – November 5
Standard Early-Late Split Season	October 5 – 20 October 21 – November 5
Standard Early-Mid-Late Split Season	October 1 – October 16 October 5 – October 16 October 17 – October 30 October 31 - November 8

Optional Non-standard Seasons	October 5 – October 31 October 5 – November 2 November 5 – November 30 December 1 – December 15
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### **Antlered Mule Deer Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. For standard hunt units, the Department manages for approximately 30 bucks per 100 does to provide a quality experience for hunters that are drawn. The Department also manages some units as "alternative" hunt units with higher buck ratios, lower hunter density, and older-age-class animals in the harvest.
- B. Alternative hunt units are managed for a minimum of 35 bucks per 100 does. In addition to buck ratio objectives, the Department will consider hunter success rate and percentage of 4-point or greater when making quota recommendations for alternative hunt units.
- C. The Department will make quota recommendations for non-standard hunts based on a 3-year trend in hunt success. When a clear trend does not exist, the Department will recommend no change to the quota allocation from the previous year.

<b>Standard Hunts</b>	
Buck ratio objective (post-season)	30 bucks per 100 does
All units or unit groups not managed as Alternative or Non-Standard	

<b>Alternative Hunts</b>	
Buck ratio objective (post-season)	35 bucks per 100 does
Hunter success rate objective	40-55% success
Percent of harvest bucks with $\geq$ 4-points	50-75%
Unit Groups	Eastern Region: 065; 081; 114, 115; 131-134
	Southern Region: 221-223; 241-245
	Western Region: 033; 194, 196

<b>Non-Standard Hunts</b>	
<b>Hunter Success Objective</b>	<b><math>\geq</math>45% success</b>
Unit Groups	201, 204; 202, 205-208; 291; 041, 042; 261-268; 271, 272
<b>Hunter Success Objective</b>	<b><math>&gt;</math>35 - 45% success</b>
Unit Groups	015; 021; 195; 203; 211-213; 251-254

### **Antlerless Mule Deer Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. Antlerless mule deer harvest may be used to manage mule deer population size, growth, or to provide hunter opportunity. Recommendations of when to implement an antlerless harvest can be based on an assessment of the carrying capacity, trends in fawn-to-doe ratios, or body condition (either captured or harvested).
- B. Generally, antlerless mule deer hunts will not be recommended in units that have total population estimates of < 1,000 adults, unless indices suggest that populations are at or above carrying capacity. In hunt units with > 1,000 adults, fawn-to-adult ratios obtained during spring surveys or modeled or measured survival of fawns and does will be used to guide Game Biologists to a range of harvest strategy options.
- C. Catastrophic environmental events (such as large-scale wildfires or severe drought) will be considered when recommending doe quotas and could initiate harvest beyond those described in these harvest objectives.
- D. Harvest rate will be determined as the percentage of the adult female population (typically from population model estimate) based on the following general guidelines:

3-year-avg fawn: adult ratio	< 30	30–40	>40
Pre-hunt population est.		>1,000	>2,000
Doe Hunt?	No	1% - 5%	5% - 10%

- E. Where possible, a 3-year mean of observed spring fawn-to-adult ratios will be used; however, a longer term or regional average may be considered when three consecutive years of observed spring data are not available. Extenuating circumstances such as prolonged drought conditions, severe population declines, or other indicators may affect management prescriptions.
- F. In some instances, fawn-to-doe ratios may decline when the population approaches the capacity of the habitat. In those instances, although it may seem counterintuitive, doe harvest may be needed to maintain healthy populations.

### **Restricted Nonresident Deer Hunts**

“Restricted nonresident deer hunts” are designed to provide nonresident hunters an opportunity to hunt with a licensed Nevada guide for mule deer. These tags are drawn in a separate drawing before the main draw for big game and nonresidents must be accompanied by a licensed master guide at all times. Any legal weapons may be used during these hunts. Seasons for restricted nonresident deer tags coincide with any legal weapon deer hunts and are issued according to NRS 502.147. Nonresident applicants who apply in the restricted nonresident guided deer hunt are not eligible to apply for deer tags in the big game main draw in the same year.

### **Landowner Compensation Tags for Mule Deer**

An owner, lessee, or manager of private land in this state may apply to the Department for the issuance of deer tags to compensate for damage to their private lands. These tags can be used by the owner, lessee,

or manager if he or she holds a valid Nevada hunting license, or the tags can be sold to any holder of a valid Nevada hunting license at any price mutually agreed upon. Landowners, lessees, or managers of private land will be awarded 1 tag for every 50 mule deer present on the property as compensation for damage to private land as per regulation NRS 502.145 and NAC 502.424. NRS 502.145 limits the number of compensation tags to  $\leq 2.5\%$  of the total number of mule deer and pronghorn tags authorized by the Commission.

## PRONGHORN ANTELOPE

The Department’s Pronghorn Management Goal is to protect, maintain or increase the resource for the enjoyment and use by the people now and into the future. Management practices are maintained annually to determine the status and trend of the pronghorn resource and its attendant habitat.

Factors used to determine population trend include survey observations, harvest success metrics, recruitment, climate and habitat conditions, disease or related items, and modeled population estimates.

Current harvest objectives for pronghorn antelope are set forth in the Department’s pronghorn antelope management plan: *Nevada’s Pronghorn Antelope, Ecology, Management, and Conservation (2003)* and subsequent Commission action: *Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners Policy for the Management of Pronghorn Antelope (2003)*.

### Antelope Season Prescriptions

1. Pronghorn antelope hunts may be authorized for either “horns-longer-than-ears” (bucks) or “horns-shorter-than-ears” (does).
2. Hunts for horns-longer-than-ears pronghorn may be recommended for “Any Legal Weapon”, “Muzzleloader”, or “Archery” seasons for both residents and non-residents. These seasons occur on standard opening dates. In some instances, seasons are split into “early” or “late” timeframes to reduce hunter density or to target harvest timing more effectively.
3. Where they currently occur, hunts for horns-shorter-than-ears pronghorn are limited to “Any Legal Weapon” seasons.

<b>Horns-longer-than-ears Archery</b>	
Standard Season	August 1 – August 21
Standard Season in areas with early Muzzleloader	August 1 – August 14

<b>Horns-longer-than-ears Muzzleloader</b>	
Standard Season	August 15 – August 21
Late Season	September 25 – October 4

<b>Horns-longer-than-ears Any Legal Weapon</b>	
Standard Season	August 22 – September 7
Late Season	September 25 – October 4
Optional Non-Standard Split Season	August 22 - 28 and August 29 - September 7

Optional Non-Standard Season	October 15 – October 30
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<b>Horns-shorter-than-ears Any Legal Weapon</b>	
Standard Season	September 8 – September 24
Optional Non-Standard Season	September 10 – September 16

**Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. Harvest levels for horns-longer-than-ears (buck) pronghorn are based on a desired post-season buck ratio objective of 25 adult ( $\geq$  2-year-old) bucks per 100 does. The target buck-to-doe ratio is based on adult bucks because many yearling bucks have horn lengths that would not allow them to be legally harvested. The ratio of adult bucks per 100 does is derived from the computer population modeled estimate.

<b>Standard Units</b>	
Buck-to-doe ratio objective (post-season)	25 bucks per 100 does
Applicable hunt units	All open units

- B. The primary variable that influences buck quotas for pronghorn is the availability of bucks 2 years of age and older. If the buck: doe ratio for  $\geq$  2-year-old bucks increases above 30:100, this indicates that more bucks are available for harvest. If the population of pronghorn is trending upwards, this also indicates that more bucks are available for harvest. Under these scenarios, tag quotas may be recommended for increase. Conversely, if the buck: doe ratio for  $\geq$  2-year-old bucks decreases below 20:100 or if population trend is downward, then a tag quota decrease may be recommended.
- C. Harvest levels for horns-shorter-than-ears (doe) pronghorn are determined on a hunt unit basis to allow for herd population management and to provide additional and desired hunting opportunities to harvest pronghorn does. Extenuating circumstances such as prolonged drought conditions, severe population declines, or other indicators may affect management prescriptions.

Doe harvest is typically managed with the range of 1 - 10% of the total adult doe population for smaller populations and could range between 5 - 20% for larger herd at or above carrying capacity. Harvest rates may fall outside this range in the case of catastrophic environmental or climatic events or other unique situations. Emergency depredation hunts may also be authorized as needed for catastrophic events such as wildfires or disease outbreaks.

In some instances, fawn-to-doe ratios may decline when the population approaches the capacity of the habitat. In those instances, although it may seem counterintuitive, doe harvest may be needed to maintain healthy populations.

**Landowner Compensation Tags for Pronghorn Antelope**

An owner, lessee, or manager of private land in Nevada may apply to the Department for the issuance of pronghorn tags for compensation for damage to their private lands. These tags can be used by the owner, lessee, or manager if he or she holds a valid Nevada hunting license, or the tags can be sold to any holder of a valid Nevada hunting license at any price mutually agreed upon. Landowners, lessees, and managers of private land will be awarded 1 tag for every 50 pronghorn present on the property as compensation for



damage to private lands as per regulation NRS 502.145 and NAC 502.424. NRS 502.145 limits the number of compensation tags to  $\leq 2.5\%$  of the total number of mule deer and pronghorn tags authorized by the Nevada Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

## **ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK**

The Department's Elk Management Goal is to maintain elk populations to meet population objectives, while providing recreational opportunities and avoiding adverse impacts to the species, its habitat, and reducing land use conflicts. The Commission has adopted various local sub-plans, which provide broad and specific management goals for elk in Nevada and identify additional objectives specific to those areas.

Harvest objectives for elk are set forth in the Department's *Nevada Elk Species Management Plan (1997)* and 10 subordinate sub-plans: *Bruneau River Watershed Environmental Analysis (1994)*; *Wells Resource Management Plan, Elk Amendment and Decision Record (1995)*; *Environmental Assessment for the Release of Elk into the Jarbidge Mountains, Nevada (1997)*; *NDOW Decision For Lands Outside of Wells RMP Elk Amendment Subplan*; *Central Nevada Elk Plan (2004)*; *Conservation Agreement for the Spring Mountain National Recreation Area (1998)*; *the White Pine County Elk Plan (1999)*; *Lincoln County Elk Management Plan (2008)*; *the Western Elko County Elk Management Plan (2003)*, and *the Humboldt County Elk Management Sub-Plan (2016)*. Specific population objectives described in each plan are appended to these guidelines (Appendix 1).

### **Elk Season Prescriptions**

Because of high population growth rates observed in most elk herds and conservative population objectives identified in elk sub-plans, the need to increase harvest on elk to reduce both population size and growth rates has required aggressive hunt structures to maximize the harvest of antlerless elk. These aggressive season structures and quotas are designed to meet the population objectives and minimize conflicts with other hunts. Standardized season dates are implemented when practical. Population objectives identified in local sub-plans, however, may supersede the implementation of the standardized season. Elk hunts are currently authorized for "antlered elk" (i.e., bulls), "spike-only elk" (i.e., yearling bulls), or "antlerless elk" (i.e., cows).

1. Antlered elk hunts, which consist of "any legal weapon", "muzzleloader", and "archery" seasons, may have varied dates among units to reduce overlap with concurrent hunt seasons for other species. In some units, a multiple any-legal-weapon split-season (i.e., early-late) structure has been adopted to reduce hunter densities, increase hunt quality, and more effectively achieve desired harvest objectives.

<b>Archery – Antlered Elk</b>	
Standard Seasons:	Aug 25 – Sept 16 Aug 16 – Aug 31
Optional Non-standard Seasons:	Sept 1 – Sept 20

<b>Muzzleloader – Antlered Elk</b>	
Standard Seasons:	Sept 1 – Sept 16 Sept 17 – Sept 30
Optional Non-standard Seasons:	Oct 5 – Oct 21

<b>Any Legal Weapon – Antlered Elk</b>	
Standard Seasons:	Nov 6 – Nov 20 Nov 21 – Dec 4
Optional Non-standard Seasons	Sept 17 – Sept 30 Oct 5 – Oct 21 Oct 22 – Nov 5

2. Antlered elk hunting in Unit 091 is cooperatively managed with the State of Utah. Season dates for “archery” and “any legal weapon” hunts are established annually and will span 2-3 weeks beginning on a Saturday around the third week of August for “archery” hunts or the second week of September for “any legal weapon” hunts.
3. Spike-only elk hunts are established in identified hunt units to reduce the hunting pressure and harvest of mature bulls, while still managing population and harvest objectives. Spike elk hunts will generally run concurrent with seasons for antlerless elk since most spike bulls are found in association with cow-calf elk groups.
4. Hunts for antlerless elk, which consist of “any legal weapon”, “muzzleloader”, and “archery” seasons, have varied start and end dates to reduce overlap with concurrent seasons. Antlerless elk hunts are used where the elk population requires reduction or stabilization (i.e., above population objective). Where populations are above local sub-plan objectives, a more aggressive harvest strategy is implemented to bring populations closer to objective. In some units, a multiple any-legal-weapon, split-season structure may be implemented to reduce hunter densities, increase hunt quality, and more effectively achieve harvest objectives. Various combinations of non-standard antlerless elk seasons may exist for all weapon classes and will be implemented on a herd-by-herd basis to address emerging management needs.

<b>Archery – Antlerless Elk</b>	
Standard Seasons	Aug 1 – Aug 15 Aug 1 – Aug 24

<b>Muzzleloader – Antlerless Elk</b>	
Standard Seasons	Sept 1 – Sept 16 Sept 17 – Sept 24 Sept 17 – Sept 30
Optional Non-standard Seasons	Aug 16 – Aug 31

<b>Any Legal Weapon – Antlerless or Spike Elk</b>	
Standard Seasons	Sept 25 – Oct 4 Oct 1 – Oct 20 Nov 21 – Jan 1 Dec 5 – Jan 1

5. Depredation hunts for antlered or antlerless elk may be implemented in management areas and units with no existing sub-plan, in areas designated as “elk restricted” or “elk de-emphasis” areas, or to address existing or potential private land conflicts. Depredation hunts offer liberal tag quotas with

relaxed eligibility requirements to facilitate the most effective harvest possible. These seasons may be structured to begin and end at any time to best achieve management objectives. Innovative season structures or harvest prescriptions, including antler point restrictions, may be proposed to address emerging needs.

- 6. Antlerless elk landowner hunts may be implemented to specifically target offending elk on private lands where conflicts occur.

**Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. Percentage of main beams  $\geq 50$  inches in the antlered harvest will be used to guide recommended tag quotas for antlered elk. Data collected from hunter return questionnaires and cementum annuli from tooth submissions indicates a strong relationship between main beam length and age. The length of the main beam of most antlered elk aged  $\geq 8$  years is reported to be  $\geq 50$  inches. Three-year average percent of main beams  $\geq 50$  inches, changes in population size, and bull ratios will be evaluated to determine tag quotas for antlered elks needed to maintain desired hunter outcome.
- B. Spike elk harvest, when implemented, should not exceed 15% of estimated yearling bulls in the population. Predicted spike harvest at the lower end of the objective provides added hunter opportunity with minimal long-term population impacts, while predicted harvest toward the upper end of the objective will be implemented to stabilize or lower bull ratios without impacting current availability of mature bulls in the population.

<b>Standard</b>	
Main beam length $> 50$ inches	25–35% of bull harvest
Optional spike harvest	$\leq 15\%$ of estimated yearling bulls

<b>Alternative</b>	
Main beam length $\geq 50$ inches	35-45% of bull harvest
Optional spike harvest	$\leq 15\%$ of estimated yearling bulls
Hunt units	Units: 078, 105–107, and 109; 091; and 111–115

<b>Non-Standard</b>	
Modeled bull to cow ratio	Supports harvestable surplus
Harvest success	Stable
Hunt units	Units: 051, 075, 241, 242, and 262

<b>Depredation</b>	
Hunt units	Units: 101–103, 144–145, 115 and 251

- C. For antlerless elk in areas where sub-plans exist, quota recommendations are based on specific population management objectives. These objectives may be used to reduce, stabilize, or encourage growth of elk populations. In circumstances where populations are below objective, cow harvest may be designed to slow growth rates while still allowing herds to increase towards population objectives. In areas where no sub-plan currently exists, quota recommendations are based on providing hunting harvest, reducing conflicts with other resource users, controlling population growth and expansion, or reducing private land depredation issues.

- D. Quotas for elk incentive hunts are calculated as identified in NAC 502.42279.

## ROCKY MOUNTAIN GOAT

The Department's Mountain Goat Management Goal is to protect and maintain or increase the mountain goat resources for the enjoyment and use by the people now and in the future.

### **Mountain Goat Season Prescriptions**

1. Units may be subdivided into smaller hunt units to prevent hunters concentrating in specific areas within mountain ranges or to encourage hunting within areas with available mountain goats that may be avoided because of access difficulty.
2. All hunts will be "any legal weapon" seasons. Animal criteria for hunts may be either "any" or "male only" mountain goats.
3. Standard Mountain goat seasons will be September 1 through October 30. Multiple shorter seasons may be considered for larger mountain goat herds with minimum season length of 14 days. This would increase the application options for applicants.

### **Management Objectives for Tag Quota Recommendations**

- A. Hunt recommendations should be developed using estimated populations with accurate sex composition based on credible and scientifically sound survey, harvest, and demographic data.
- B. Harvest will be managed to allow for the take of 2–5% of the total population. For purposes of harvest management, hunter success for future hunts will be assumed to be 100%.
- C. For "any" mountain goat hunts, successful applicants will be required to attend online mountain goat identification class with a formal test at the end of the class that they must pass before tag will be issued.