

Northern Region 4 CWD and Buck Permit Summary Report



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Executive Summary

Current Sampling efforts for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in northern Region 4 began in 2017. To date, 1174 cervid CWD samples have been collected from Hunting Districts (HDs) 400, 401, 403 and 406. CWD was first documented in HD 401 in 2017 and 2018 in HD 400. A total of 6 CWD positive samples have been detected in HDs 400 and 401. Current estimated prevalence rates for mule deer are 0.8% (95% CI, 0.0% – 2.0%) and 0.2% (95% CI, 0.0% – 1.0%) in HDs 400 and 401, respectively. Estimated prevalence in white-tailed deer are 1.6 % (95% CI, 0.0% – 9.0%) and 0.5% (95% CI, 0.0 – 3.0) in HDs 400 and 401, respectively. Long-term CWD management was implemented beginning with the 2020 general season when a total of 420 antlered buck permits, valid by species and HDs (400, 401, 403 and 406) were issued for 2 weeks following a 3-week general either-sex deer season to focus harvest on mature bucks which have higher prevalence rates. Most permit holders (64%) resided in Region 4. An estimated 323 permit holders hunted deer on the permit across all 4 hunting districts. Antlered buck permit success rates averaged 56.1% for mule deer and 73.9% for white-tailed deer. An estimated 273 (80% CI: 228 – 318) bucks of both species were harvested across the 4 districts on antlered buck permits. The 5-year (2015 – 2019) average total harvest among all License Permit Types (LPTs) with a 3-week general deer season of bucks of both species across all 4 hunting districts is 1823. Average antler points per side was 4.3 and 4.4. Current permit management success rates resulted in a recommended reduction to 305 total permits for the 2021 season. Of those permit holders surveyed that had an opinion, 71% either strongly approve or approve of the current season structure. Of those permit holders surveyed, only 1 indicated access was denied.

Introduction

Once CWD has become established in a population, its eradication is not currently considered feasible (AFWA 2018). However, opportunities remain to stabilize or suppress CWD prevalence and thereby minimize disease impacts on cervids and potentially irreparable harm. AFWA (2018) recommends an increase in harvest intensity on male deer, maintaining or reducing buck:doe ratios, targeting mature male deer during the rut, and maintaining or reducing deer density to maintain the prevalence at a low level and reduce the potential for spreading the disease.

Further, Montana's CWD Response Plan (2018) directs the department to initiate CWD management to keep prevalence low and help prevent spread of the disease following detection. The plan also allows Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) to preemptively manage for CWD in hunting districts adjacent to CWD positive areas.

Currently, CWD exists in HDs 400 and 401 in mule and white-tailed deer. MFWP implemented long-term CWD management during the 2020 season in HDs 400, 401, 403 and 406.

CWD Sampling and Surveillance

The first CWD sample in northern Region 4 was submitted to the Wildlife Lab in 2016. A mule deer migration study was implemented in HD 401 in February of 2017 in which 20 mule deer bucks and 5 mule deer does were captured and fitted with satellite collars. Rectal biopsies were collected from all captured animals, although 17 were considered viable samples; none tested positive for CWD. Attempts were made to collect samples from all harvested study animals. CWD samples were also collected during the Sage Creek Special CWD hunt in January/February 2018. Hunting Districts 401 and 403 were identified as high priority surveillance areas for the 2018 general hunting season. CWD sampling stations were established in Chester and north of Shelby on Interstate 15. As a public service, CWD samples were collected from harvested deer and elk from other hunting districts at hunter request. CWD samples from HD 400 and adjacent HDs were also collected in 2019 during the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt. For the 2019 season, FWP offered hunters the opportunity to submit CWD samples to the Wildlife Lab on their own. During the 2020 general hunting season, hunters could submit CWD samples by themselves or bring the samples or

animal head to the Region 4 headquarters where a technician would collect and submit samples. Additionally, CWD samples were collected by the Conrad Office by request and opportunistically by FWP staff during the 2020 season. The number of samples by year and species is given in Figure 1.

HD 400							HD 401						
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
MD	0	0	100	231	46	377	MD	0	126	168	65	36	395
WTD	0	0	20	29	13	62	WTD	1	3	104	57	38	203
Elk	0	0	0	1	0	1	Elk	0	0	41	8	5	54
Total	0	0	120	261	59	440	Moose	0	0	1	0	0	1
							Totals	1	129	314	130	79	653

HD 403							HD 406						
Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total	Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Total
MD	0	0	24	5	4	33	MD	0	0	3	9	9	21
WTD	0	0	4	2	2	8	WTD	0	0	0	6	9	15
Elk	0	0	0	0	0	0	Elk	0	0	0	2	0	2
Moose	0	0	0	0	0	0	Moose	0	0	0	0	0	0
UNK	0	0	2	0	0	2	UNK	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals	0	0	30	7	6	43	Totals	0	0	3	17	18	38

Figure 1. Number of CWD samples collected by HD, year, and species from 2016 – 2020.

CWD Detection and Prevalence

CWD was first detected in HD 401 in the fall of 2017 when a collared mule deer buck tested positive north east of East Butte. Following the Sage Creek Special CWD hunt in HD 401 in early 2018, no other CWD positive deer were detected in this area. Also, in 2018, a white-tailed deer buck tested positive in HD 400 near the Marias River. The Commission authorized the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt concurrent with the 2019 general season in this area. During this hunt, a single mule deer buck tested positive for CWD within the hunt area. In the fall of 2020 prior to the archery season, a symptomatic white-tailed deer tested positive in HD 401. During the 2020 3-week general season, a mule deer buck tested positive in HD 400 within the prior Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt Area. Another mule deer buck harvested during the 2020 season on a special buck permit also tested positive within the Moffat Bridge Special CWD Hunt area. To date, a total of 2 CWD positive deer have been detected in HD 401 and 4 positive deer in HD 400, Table 1.

Table 1. CWD positive detections by Hunting District, Species and Year.

HD	Species	Year				Total
		2017	2018	2019	2020	
400	MD			1	2	3
	WTD		1			1
401	MD	1				1
	WTD				1	1

Estimated prevalence in mule deer is 0.8% (95% CI, 0.0% – 2.0%) in mule deer for HD 400. In HD 401, estimated prevalence for mule deer is 0.2% ((95% CI, 0.0% – 1.0%).

Estimated prevalence in white-tailed deer in HD 400 is 1.6 % (95% CI, 0.0% – 9.0%). Estimated prevalence in white-tailed deer in HD 401 is 0.5% (95% CI, 0.0 – 3.0).

CWD has not been detected in HDs 403 and 406, however low sample size precludes determining that the disease does not exist in these 2 HDs with statistical confidence.

Long-term CWD Management

To implement long-term CWD management in these HDs, FWP proposed changing from the existing 3 week-general deer season to a 5-week general season for HDs 400, 401, 403, and 406 for the 2020 hunting season. The primary intent of the proposal was to follow the AFWA (2018) guidelines by increasing harvest intensity on mature male deer during the rut. Research (Newell and Bergman et. al. 2011, Newell 1996, Newell and Lukacs 2011, Newell and Meredith 2018, Olson 1996, Thompson 2007) on the differences between a shortened season (3-weeks) and an unrestricted season (5-weeks) has shown no significant differences in total deer harvest, total buck harvest, total mature buck harvest, number of hunter days, or number of hunters. The same research has shown a slight increase in buck:doe ratios in shortened seasons and decrease mature buck harvest density. Therefore, changing to an unrestricted 5-week season could also result in the desired effect of slightly lower buck:doe ratios and a slight increase in mature buck harvest density, thereby improving the ability to manage CWD prevalence. However, due to opposition, the FW Commission requested an alternative proposal.

As an alternative to the 5-week season proposal, FWP recommended species-specific limited antlered buck permits for each of the 4 HDs. The intent of this proposal was similar to the previous proposal primarily increasing harvest intensity on mature deer during the rut. AFWA (2018) recommends a shift/increase of 10 – 20 percentage points over current harvest level. However, current harvest estimates from telephone harvest surveys are calculated to a +/- 20% confidence interval. Therefore, issuing sufficient permits to increase average harvest by 10% would be within the existing confidence interval and will not be statistically different from previous harvest estimates. As a result, a change in total buck harvest, either an increase or a decrease, cannot be rigorously attributable to the addition of antlered buck permits. Further, given the low rate of CWD prevalence, a change in prevalence cannot be rigorously attributed to the addition of permits without very large sample sizes and high numbers of permits. Thus, it is difficult to measure success of such an alternative in these terms. However, this alternative did focus some level of harvest during the rut thereby meeting one of the AFWA's criteria to manage CWD.

A rigorous method to determine permit levels does not exist. Therefore, permit levels were determined using existing harvest estimates and success rates from various LPTs. To achieve a 10% shift/increase in buck harvest to the final 2 weeks of the season, average buck harvest by species was estimated using harvest estimates for the previous 5 years for both species and are summarized in Table 1 (note when this proposal was developed, 2019 harvest data was not yet available).

Given limited antlered buck permit success data exists, success rates were estimated from other LPTs. To estimate the number of permits, an approximate 50% success rate for antlered buck permits for mule deer and 30% success rate for antlered white-tailed buck permits was used.

The number of antlered buck permits estimated to shift/increase average buck harvest by 10% by HD for the 2020 season to the final 2 weeks is given in Table 2 with the number of permits rounded to the nearest 10.

Table 1. Average buck harvest by species and Hunting District, 2014 - 2018.

Hunting District	400	401	403	406
Mule Deer	481	450	141	183
White-tailed Deer	118	238	41	145

Table 2. Estimated number of antlered buck permits by species and Hunting District required to increase/shift buck harvest by approximately 10 percent to the final 2 weeks of the season.

Hunting District	400	401	403	406
Mule Deer	100	90	30	40
White-tailed Deer	40	70	10	40

Permits for these HDs were allocated through the regular Deer Permit drawing. Applications were available online with an application deadline of April 1, 2020. LPTs ending in 50 were assigned to mule deer while LPTs ending in 51 were assigned to white-tailed deer. Per usual, 15% of permits were allocated for Landowner Preference and 10% allocated for non-resident hunters. A total of 391 applicants applied for the 420 permits. All First-Choice resident applicants were successful. On average, 45%, and 27% of Second-Choice and Third Choice resident applicants, respectively, were successful in drawing a permit. A total of 29 permits were not drawn and were sold surplus. All resident landowner applications were successful in the drawing. Resident landowner preference applicants were undersubscribed. There were no non-resident landowner applicants. Note that resident and non-resident landowners could apply without using landowner preference. On average, 47% of non-resident applicants were successful. More detailed information is available in Table 3.

On average, a majority (64%) of the successful applicants resided in Region 4. In only one instance did successful applicants residing outside of Region 4 exceed successful applicants residing within Region 4 (LPT 401-50, antlered buck mule deer, Figure 2).

To assess the management success of antlered buck permits, successful applicants were surveyed via an online survey. All permit holders were emailed a link on December 4, 2020. A reminder email was sent on December 14 and again on December 18. The survey closed on December 31. Of the 420 permit holders, 5 emails were invalid. Therefore, the survey was successfully delivered to 415 permit holders. The survey consisted of 14 questions and an opportunity to provide further comments. A copy of the survey is included in Appendix A.

Table 3. Northern Region 4 Deer Permit Drawing Statistics, 2020

		2020 Drawing Statistics Report (ALS30401) - DEER PERMIT																					
		Landowner						Regular															
		Resident			Non_Resident			Resident						Non_Resident									
		Apps Succ			Apps Succ			Applicants						Successful						Total Sur-			
District	Quota	QTA	1st	1st	QTA	1st	1st	QTA	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	QTA	1st	2nd	3rd	1st	2nd	3rd	Succ	plus
400-50	100	15	3	3	10	0	0	100	54	10	10	54	10	10	10	1	1	0	1	1	0	79	21
400-51	40	6	3	3	4	0	0	40	31	6	6	31	4	0	4	2	1	0	2	0	0	40	0
401-50	90	14	3	3	9	0	0	90	101	18	17	78	0	0	9	19	2	4	9	0	0	90	0
401-51	70	11	1	1	7	0	0	70	74	26	6	68	0	0	7	1	3	0	1	0	0	70	0
403-50	30	5	0	0	3	0	0	30	10	7	3	10	7	3	3	0	2	0	0	2	0	22	8
403-51	10	2	0	0	1	0	0	10	7	3	3	7	2	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	10	0
406-50	40	6	0	0	4	0	0	40	22	13	11	22	13	4	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	40	0
406-51	40	6	0	0	4	0	0	40	33	9	6	33	5	0	4	2	1	2	2	0	0	40	0
Total	420	65	10	0	42	0	0	420	332	92	62	303	41	17	42	27	10	6	17	3	0	391	29

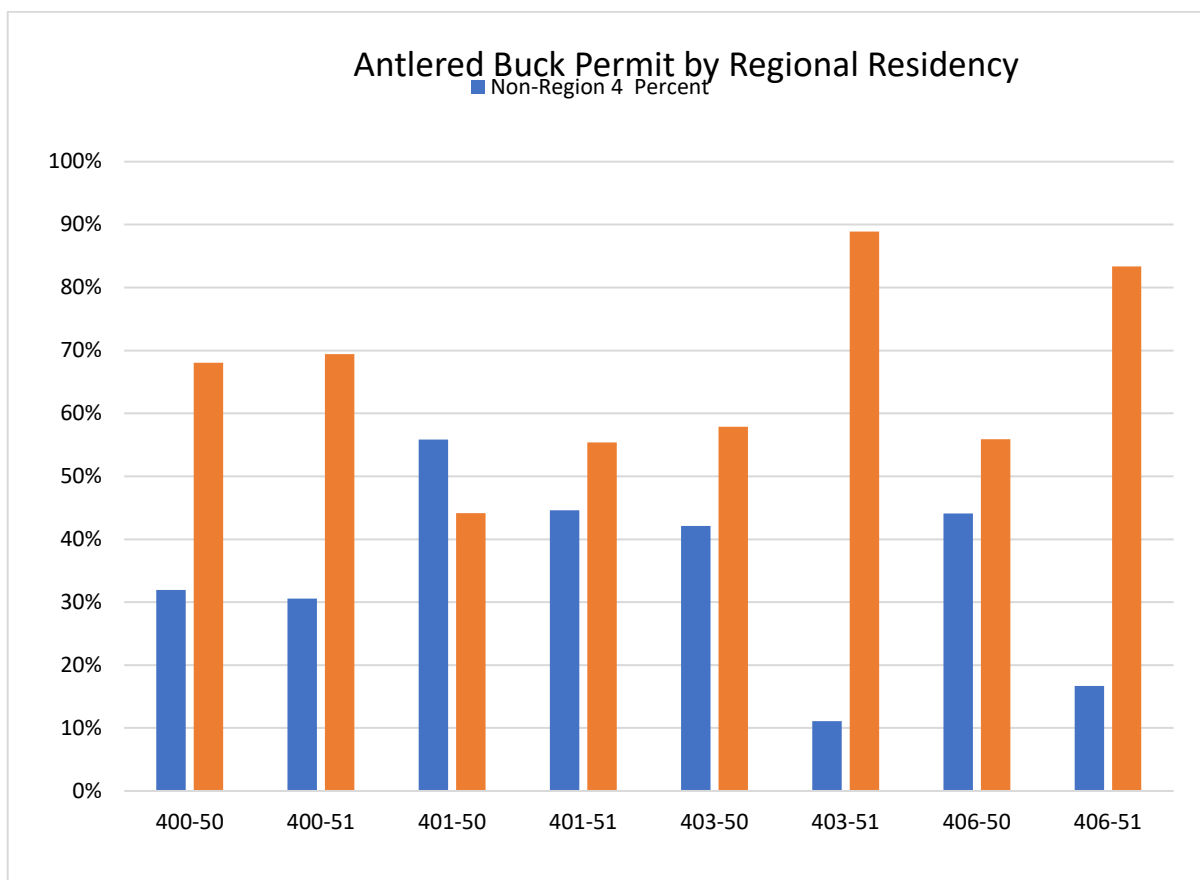


Figure 2. Percent successful Northern Region 4 antlered buck permit applicants by Region 4 Residency and LPT for the 2020 hunting season.

A total of 248 responses were collected for a response rate of 59.7%. Given a 98% confidence interval, the results are accurate to +/- 1%, which means, if the survey were duplicated 100 times, 98 of those 100 times, the results would be within 1% of the current estimates. The high response rate for this survey reduces the concern for potential non-response bias. Further, nonresponse bias has been evaluated on

similar surveys with no change in results. Therefore, sampling error and nonresponse error are not an issue in this survey.

Response rate by LPT varied from a low of 43% (403-51, 406-50) to a high of 90% (403-51) with an average response rate of 61% for all LPTs (Figure 3). Therefore, responses are not overly influenced by a single or groupings of LPTs and represents all permit holders' opinions.

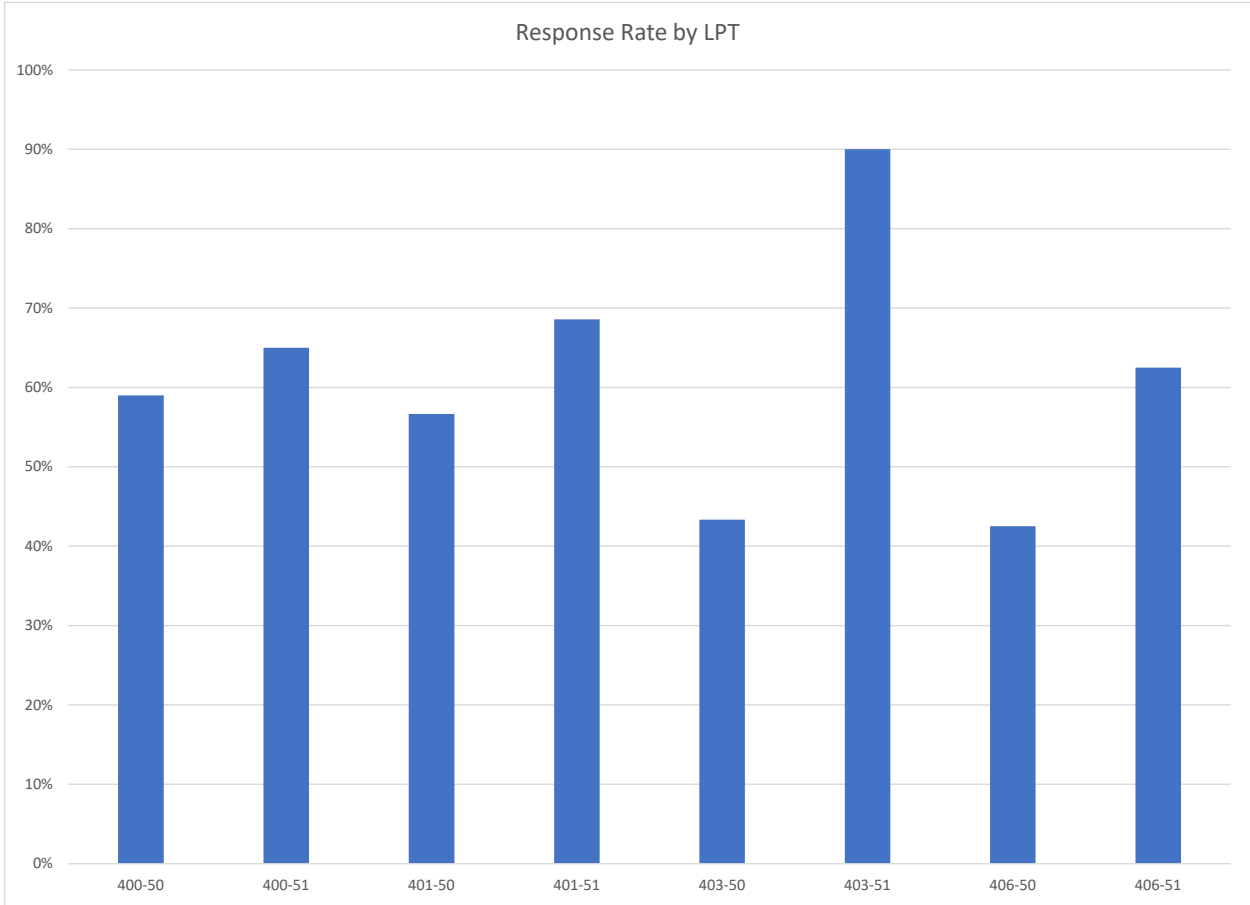


Figure 3. Northern Region 4 antlered buck permit survey response rate by LPT.

A total of 88.7% of respondents (n = 220) hunted deer during the 2020 general deer season. Successful antlered buck mule deer applicants could hunt mule deer in other HDs until the final 2 weeks of the season when the permit was valid. There were no restrictions on successful antlered buck white-tailed deer applicants. Of those respondents that hunted deer during the 2020 general deer season, a total of 76.8% (n= 169) hunted a buck with a buck permit. Therefore, an estimated 323 permit holders hunted deer on the permit across all 4 hunting districts.

Hunting pressure was approximately equally distributed across 4 different land ownership/opportunity types (Figure 4), with slightly more hunting on Block Management Areas and Public Land than Private land

not belonging to family or friends and Private land belonging to family or friends. It should be noted that respondents could hunt on 1 or all the land ownership types.

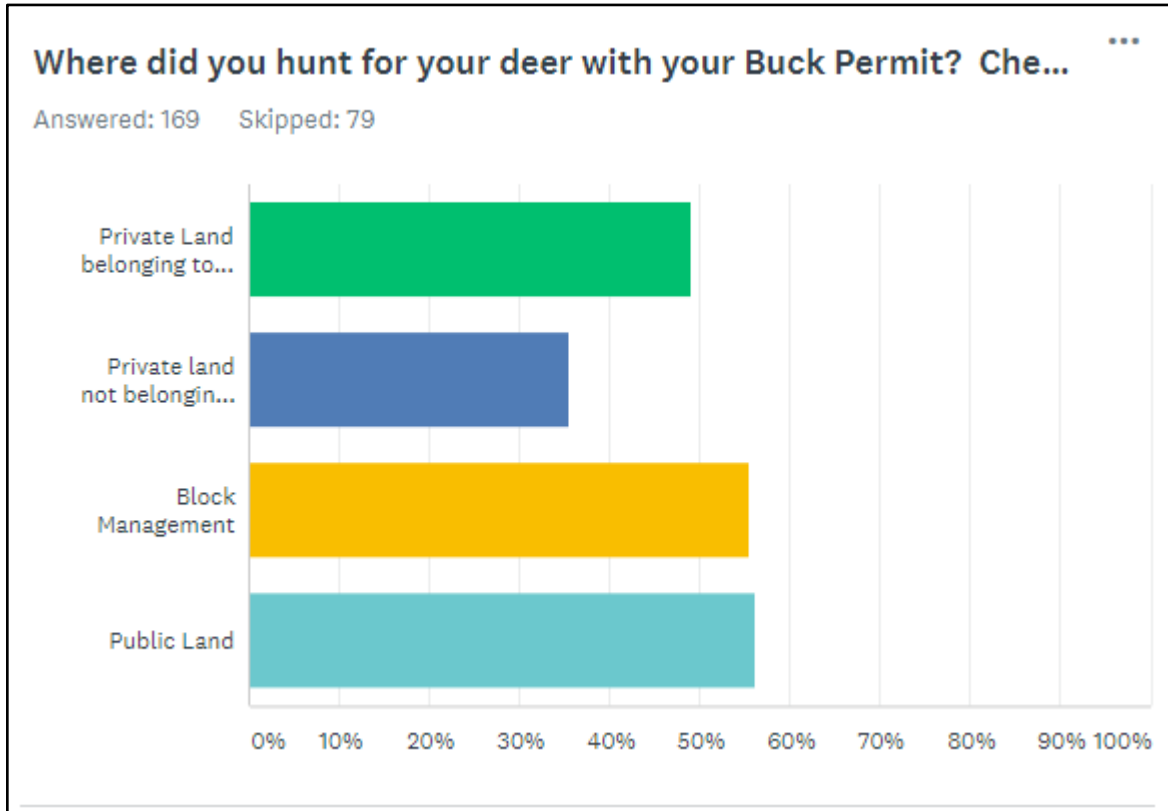


Figure 4. Northern Region 4 Antlered Buck Permit hunting pressure by landownership type.

Of the 169 respondents that hunted with an antlered buck permit, 114 reported harvesting a buck. On average across the 4 HDs, antlered buck mule deer permits averaged 56.1% success (80% CI: 43.3% - 69.0%) while antlered white-tailed deer permit success averaged 73.9% (80% CI: 55.2% - 92.7%). The overall average success rate across all antlered buck permits was 65% (80% CI: 54.4% - 73.7%). An estimated 273 (80% CI: 228 – 318) bucks of both species were harvested across the 4 districts. The most current 5-year average total buck harvest with a 3-week general deer season across all LPTs for the 4 HDs is 1823 bucks. The majority (57.8%) of the harvest occurred during the last week of the season (Nov. 23 – Nov. 29).

Average points per each side was 4.3 and 4.4. Only 14.1% of the successful respondents submitted samples for CWD testing. An email was sent to permit holders recommending harvested animals be tested.

Of the four land ownership types, 38.1% of the harvest on permits occurred on Private land belonging to family or friends. There were only minor differences between the remaining three landownership types (Figure 5).

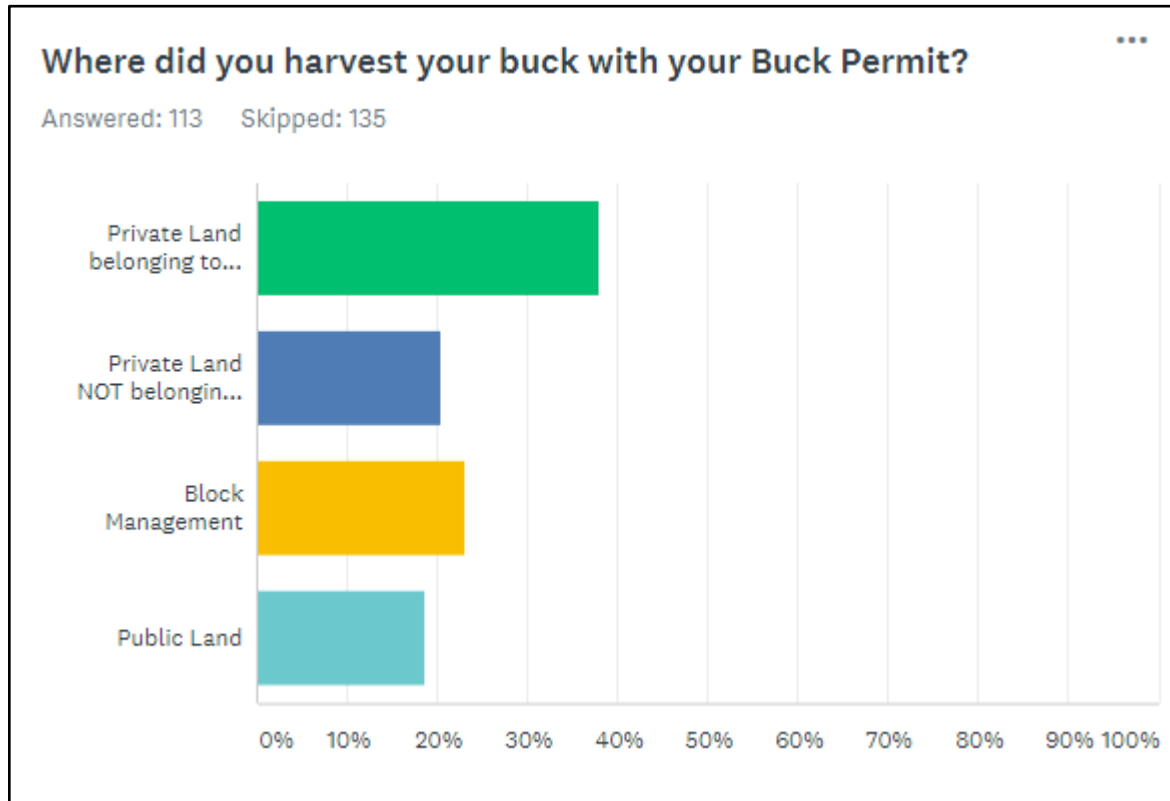


Figure 5. Antlered buck permit harvest by landownership type.

The following question was asked regarding respondent's opinion of the existing season structure: "Chronic Wasting Disease is more likely spread and more prevalent in mature bucks. The current season structure, 3 weeks of General Deer Season followed by 2 weeks of limited buck permits, was implemented to manage CWD by increasing harvest of mature bucks. To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the current season structure?"

Of the 244 respondents that answered this question, 125 (51%) either strongly approve or approve of the current season structure. Further, of all respondents, 52 (21.3%) either disapprove or strongly disapprove of the current season structure. Of all respondents 67 (27.5%), had no opinion, i.e., responded with: Neither Approve nor Disapprove (Figure 6). Of those respondents that had an opinion (n = 177), 71% either strongly approve or approve of the current season structure. Of those respondents that had an opinion, 29% either disapprove or strongly disapprove of the season.

Comments varied from strongly supportive to strongly opposed. Only one permit holder stated he was denied access to private land. Comments are included in Appendix A.

To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the current season structure?

Answered: 244 Skipped: 4

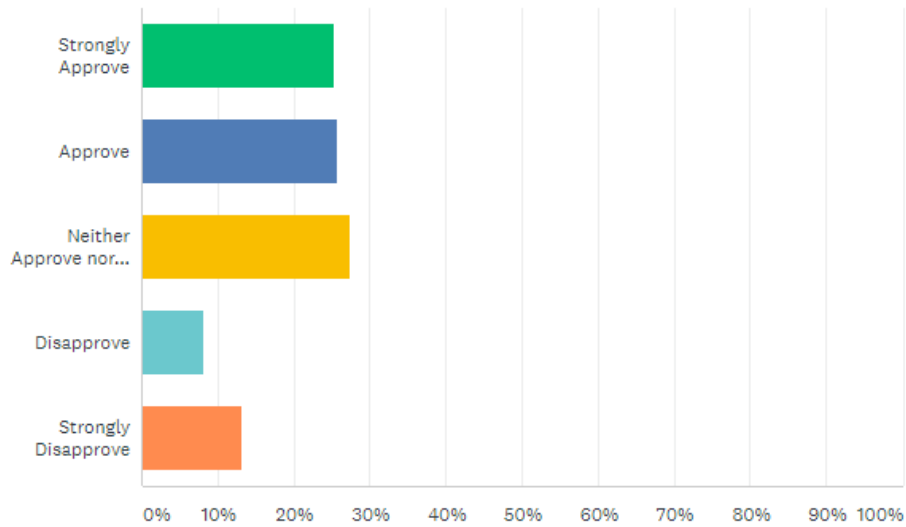


Figure 6. Respondent opinion of current season structure

Recommended Northern Region 4 antlered buck LPTs for 2021 season.

Previous LPT quotas for the 2020 season were developed using 2014 to 2018 harvest data as 2019 harvest data was unavailable. To set 2021 and future LPT quotas, harvest data from 2015 to 2019 will be used as a benchmark. Average buck harvest by species and HD is given in Table 4.

Table 4. Average buck harvest by species and Hunting District, 2015 - 2019.

Hunting District	400	401	403	406
Mule Deer	488	432	136	195
White-tailed Deer	134	250	42	143

Previous LPT success rates were estimated using data from similar LPTs from other HDs and seasons. Those rates were 50% success for mule deer permits and 30% success for white-tailed deer permits. To estimate 2021 LPT quotas, 2020 average success rates by species (56.1% for mule deer, 73.9% for white-tailed deer) were used. This resulted in a reduction of 35 antlered buck mule deer permits and 80 antlered white-tailed deer permits across all 4 districts or a reduction of 13.5% and 50% respectively. Recommended LPT quotas for the 2021 season are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Estimated number of antlered buck permits by species and Hunting District required to increase/shift buck harvest by approximately 10 percent to the final 2 weeks of the season.

Hunting District	400	401	403	406
Mule Deer	90	75	25	35
White-tailed Deer	20	35	5	20

Literature Cited

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Appendix A. Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey and Comments

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

1. Please provide the following information: (optional)

Your First Name

Your Last Name

* 2. Which Buck Permit did you have?

400-50 Mule Deer

400-51 White-tailed Deer

401-50 Mule Deer

401-51 White-tailed Deer

403-50 Mule Deer

403-51 White-tailed Deer

40-50 Mule Deer

406-51 White-tailed Deer

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

* 3. Did you hunt deer in the 2020 season?

Yes

No

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

* 4. Did you hunt a buck with your Buck Permit?

Yes

No

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

* 5. Where did you hunt for your deer with your Buck Permit? Check all that apply.

- Private Land belonging to family or friends
- Private land not belonging to family or friends
- Block Management.
- Public Land

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

* 6. Why did you NOT hunt deer with your Buck Permit?

- I already harvested a deer on my General Licenses and could not hunt using my Buck Permit.
- I hunted deer elsewhere the last 2 weeks of the season.
- I was unable to hunt deer anywhere the last 2 weeks of the season.
- Other (please specify)

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

7. Did you harvest a buck with your Buck Permit?

- Yes
- No

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

8. When during the 2020 season did you harvest a buck on your Buck Permit?

Week 4: Nov. 16- Nov. 22

Week 5 Nov 23- Nov. 29.

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

9. Where did you harvest your buck with your Buck Permit?

Private Land belonging to family or friends

Private Land NOT belonging to family or friends

Block Management

Public Land

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

10. Which Hunting District did you harvest a deer on your General License?

Hunting District

11. What type of deer did you harvest?

Fawn

Doe

Buck

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

12. How many antler points (1 inch or longer) on each side? NOTE: Do not include brow tines on mule deer. Include brow tines on white-tailed deer.

Side 1.

Side 2.

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

13. Did you have your deer tested for Chronic Wasting Disease?

Yes

No

2020 Northern Region 4 Buck Permit Survey

* 14. Chronic Wasting Disease is more likely spread and more prevalent in mature bucks. The current season structure, 3 weeks of General Deer Season followed by 2 weeks of limited buck permits, was implemented to manage CWD by increasing harvest of mature bucks. To what extent do you approve or disapprove of the current season structure?

Strongly Approve

Approve

Neither Approve nor Disapprove

Disapprove

Strongly Disapprove

15. Do you have any comments?

Comments

there is very few deer in hd 406 never been this bad before

someland owners did not like it. they dont let hunters on their land anyway but they want hunter to help them during the comment time to stop this late season hunt. they should not dictate hunting rules or season.

Yes. More research and scientific data is needed on CWD. To many govt/state officials are spreading false data and false theories on control and spread. Not only in MT but other states as well.

The late season deer permits were your worst idea ever!! Most bucks didn't live past 3 years before and with the permits it's worse.

Wasnt able to hunt this year due to a vehicle accident

Thank you all for your efforts and this opportunity.

I did not use my 400-50 tag. When I went to you Ryan for questions because I thought it was a Mulie doe tag which is what I applied for. You were extremely rude to me. I have absolutely no respect for you now.

No mature deer when you kill them for 5 weeks. Not sure why you people think killing all the deer is better then some of them having CWD.

I'm not really in favor of an extended season but not sure of a better solution.

Probably doesn't help much the deer all go to land that the outfitter has leased.

Held out for a bigger buck but never saw one. I think extending the general season might have a similar effect to current season

landowners shut down access for all seasons in disagreement of late season permits. Also, If gun hunter can't get a mature buck in this country in the regular season, then he isn't putting in much effort or getting out of the truck.

If you are going to do a late season hunt when the bucks are in rut with the intention of harvesting only mature bucks, specify in the regulations that legal bucks are 4x4 or larger. That way no one is shooting small bucks just to fill a tag. This happens a lot on the last few days of the season as people have struck out on the big one and are willing to settle for anything with meat.

With the special permits being used as a tool to better understand CWD, maybe there should have been more CWD collection stations or at least have them in more convenient locations. I understand the pandemic had some impact on these stations being open. As far as the hunt. Many private landowners in 401-51 were very opposed to the hunt and even my closest of friends who are landowners, on which I hunt on every year, did not allow me to hunt their land because they oppose the extended season.

Don't understand the short general season in area 406 There are deer everywhere and certainly no shortage of animals

I think they should keep the season dates the same as it was last year. I like to see the large bucks have a chance to breed without being hunted for trophy reasons

Montana needs to go to a draw system for bucks. The fact that I have to spend my thanksgiving patrolling my land for trespassers is ridiculous. Over 70 vehicles per day past my farm that is well off the beaten path is bullshit. Every little two point gets shot, leaving us with a joke of a deer herd. This is probably falling on deaf ears considering FWP has made it blatantly obvious the only thing they care about is tag sales.

Accompanied my father, who also had one of hte late season permits and strangely, we did not see as many mature bucks during the "extra two weeks" this year than we usually do. Usually, during the "closed" last two weeks we see lots of big bucks. I do think that in general the success rates in the area during the normal season were higher than usual as we've heard of some big bucks shot in the area.

The extension of the hunting season will ultimately degrade the quality of deer available for harvest. Also, I have noticed from speaking to private land owners in region 4 that they are adamantly against this rule change. Many have closed down their properties for any hunting due to this rule change. The season should revert back to 3 weeks 4 weekends, without giving out seemingly unlimited "special permits."

I attended 3 public meetings concerning the extended season with at least 130 people against proposal with 2 people (outfitters) for. Once again FWP went against the public's voice--thus we lost access to hunt because our local biologist has an agenda--thanks to 2 of our commissioners we have a 1 year sunset with the hope it goes away or we get a new biologist who will get off his ass and interact with the local land owners. I know as a CAC member I speak for the majority of Liberty Co. landowners. His superiors I have the highest respect for and hope they do the right thing. Something is wrong when the people in Conrad and surrounding area want his head on the chopping block--I have had run-ins with Mr. Rouscher and my personal feelings are the man can't communicate with the public and throws FWP under the bus as it was years ago. I hope the new governor will continue with the transparency that I believe Martha had a vision for. The results of this extended season was as I suspected-- pissed off land-owners - more closed land next year--influx of out of county hunters running all over private land-- tons of does left now- oh 3 positive tests-- kinda like muskies-- I'm a big ambassador for FWP but Mr. Rouscher leaves a bad taste in mine and other people's craw. Thanks for letting me vent Dennis

The mature mule deer buck numbers seemed very low while the doe numbers were very high
I approve it but it needs to be limited as is, with these permits.

Hunting in this time frame was very enjoyable, less hunters. I think the season was the right decision. I wish we had more permit type hunting that lead to less people and more mature bucks.

An extended season mule buck permit is pointless. Simply extend the season for everyone. If you really want to reduce the population, this permit would allow for the harvest of a second buck. There are large bucks all over the place in 403 post-season.

Keep it a limited season

Most everyone I talked to does not agree w/ your current structure yet there suggestions before implementation of current structure went unheard. As a landowner, I do not agree w/ your current structure. I feel it should be left at 3 weeks.

I believe that it is a great idea. There needs to be a longer mule deer doe season. Way too many of them
Surprised at the amount of hunting pressure on block management areas.

Permit #'s seemed high for mule deer compared to #'s for whitetail

I would say if anything it was tough at times to get access to some of the Block Management. It just so happens I would try get written permission for some of it and the rancher would have his gate closed for days on end during the last two weeks. Didn't know if it was covid related or they were displeased with the extended season.

I was in the hospital with COVID. It was very severe for me and I couldn't breathe.

The late season buck permit is a good idea and I believe it should stay in effect.

i miss read the question of "did I use my buck permit". i harvested a white tail deer in 406 the first week. I continued to go looking at deer after i filled my tag and i seen less deer due to the unusual warm weather.

No except a lot of agricultural businesses did not approve of the extended season

We need to work with this on a National scale

It has been over 3 weeks and no results. I have checked on the sample many times thru FWP web site. Sample 28805

The bucks need a chance to grow up, too many small animals.

This area has always had a three week season and that is why the hunting has been descent there now we will see what happens next year with higher buck harvest. We need to start managing for more age group in bucks and not increase buck harvest.

The buck to doe ratio seems to be heavily lop sided. A lot of mule does. Not many mature bucks to be seen on public or BMA land

If the idea is to harvest mature bucks there should be an antler restriction on the special permit holders. These areas were designed to be trophy areas!

Wasn't able to buck hunt in that district because of weather and covid restrictions that affected members of my hunting party.

Unable to get permission on Private land last two weeks to of season to hunt for Bucks then. Opted to harvest Buck during regular season.

Yes this was really a stupid move to mange CWD and was a waste of bucks that will never reach maturity now. Very bad management.

It was nice to get to hunt the rut in Liberty County where it is new as there was a chance to harvest a nice, mature deer. However, I am concerned that in the long run, with these deer now being hunted during the rut, there won't be as many mature, large bucks that survive year to year, overall hurting hunting quality.

The regular which closes 2 weeks earlier than the balance of state is not long enough to harvest mature bucks. Few people can hunt every day that last week of the shorter season. Work, inclement weather, distance to hunting area, etc, directly diminishes the time people have to hunt. Two more weeks increases the probability that people will have a chance to hunt.

Recommend that you educate the locals that live there that there is a extended season up there to folks that draw a permit. While I did not deer hunt up there I did hunt coyote the last weekend of the season. There were two sets where I was questioned what I was doing. They were very admit that deer season was closed. I was not deer hunting but if I chose to I could have been. Until we find more out about the CWD situation I will hold off. Anyway it would not have been a quality experience if hunters are getting harassed by uneducated landowners.

Although I didn't have problems personally, I do know people that shut there land off during the special season,which makes it difficult, Thanks goodness for block management. I have one suggestion. You could change to the season dates to the last 3 wks,therefore keeping the farmer and rancher happy and the sportsman a better chance for a bigger buck,also accomplishing your goal also to harvest the bucks.

No, I look forward to hunting next year.

I am still awaiting CWD results. Would be happy to share if that is important. I encourage FWP to keep trying various strategies to manage CWD in the state.

With the weather in Montana being so unpredictable, two weeks is not a long enough. For those of us that wish to hunt and work full-time as well

Rifle season should be November 16 to December 7th to cover the rut. Not before the rut because of land owners want it. Its when the mature bucks are more active.

The entire state should go to a 3 week deer season with limited draw permits for late season. Also maybe implement a 3 point minimum for bucks harvested. I'm tired of seeing people shoot spikes an two points when they have 5 weeks to hunt, and then complain there is no mature deer left.

Would like to see 3 week season back. Feel there is more young bucks than mature bucks being taken.

The biggest challenge for this permit going forward is cooperation with private landowners. COVID this year played a hand in limiting access, however several landowners I reached out to were strongly opposed of this late season permit. They didn't allow access to their land where a majority of the mature deer were.

I'm Very supportive of the program. Landowners I spoke with in unit 401 expressed their support as well.

Better issuing these late season tags instead of opening up a general 5 week season. Saw lots of deer, wish that land owners in the area would look at the bigger picture instead of just shutting down their property for hunting because there are set with fwp over these late season hunts.

I hunted the entire 5 week season. I hunted private land and ranches, and every piece of public land I could. I saw 5 mature mule-deer bucks on the entire district. We seen lots of mule-deer does, and 2-3 year old bucks. Awesome hunt. Please allow next year

I hunted for five weeks and seen maybe four deer that were five to six years old. I seen a lot of two year old bucks breeding does during the rut. I personally feel like there should be more does harvested. I also think there should be limited special draw for the five week season on bucks. I was looking for a 160 to 170 buck. I only seen one that big and could not shoot because I had no access to the property he was on. I live in this district and own land in this district. I strongly believe that we will not see many mature bucks until hunters stop shooting all the two year old deer. I was very disappointed in the population of our mature mule deer I seen this year and hope the fish wildlife and parks will do something to help manage our deer.

Like this season. It's better than opening up a general 5 week season

Better this way with these extra bug tags than opening up this area for a general 5 week season

I think having a limited number of 4th and 5th week buck tags like this year is a reasonable workable and sustainable way of trying to manage CWD in this district

It's easier to target and kill mature deer when not every Tom, Dick and Rick are out there banging away at lord knows what. I think the late special tag is better at achieving the goal than leaving the general season open. I would like to see general season 2 weeks for opportunity hunters and three weeks for trophy/ mature deer hunters. To ensure enough time for hunters to harvest mature deer. Again. When pressure is max, it is very hard to hunt and kill mature deer.

Hunted Berthelote/Green Coulee Ranch.

I like the fact that those of us that live and hunt in 401 could apply for the permit. I dislike the fact that we can not have a full season of deer hunting like the other districts. We should have the full 5 weeks.

Thank you for the late season permits!!

It was a good hunt without all the hunting pressure.

My buck was missing testicles/showing signs of Cryptorchidism. He was in velvet with 3 out of 4 points broken off on his left side. Appeared very healthy besides this.

Discontinue the late season 401 deer permits. Landowners had more trespassing and harassment incidents in one week than they had the other 3 weeks of the season. Not only that, but hunters weren't just shooting mature bucks, they were shooting at anything with antlers. Your argument that "more mature bucks will be harvested" is flawed from what I personally witnessed those last two weeks. Opening up the extra two weeks for deer only further harmed the already-struggling buck population in 401.

Drawing the permit was a great opportunity to enjoy chasing mature bucks without a lot of other hunting pressure. I would suggest though allowing for more whitetail and mule deer doe tags in 400.

This area don't need a 5 week deer season

Targeting bucks at the end of season is not going to eliminate CWD. It's just going to wipe out the big mature deer that are more ignorant that time of year. Our quality of deer suck already don't need to make it worse.

No hunt due to rotator cuff surgery.

Put the season back to 3 weeks as it once was .

Buck appeared to be very healthy. I would have had him tested for CWD. But there were no testing sites in my area.

Thank you for the awesome opportunity, wish I had more time to be able to hunt up there. It was an awesome experience, and I hope to draw the permit again soon. Thank you to block management cooperators for allowing the permission to hunt!

Sorry I didn't help with the CWD by harvesting a buck. Thank you for giving me the opportunity though!

I have hunted this area for many years and always see mature bucks. This year the deer numbers seemed better than average with lots of small spike to crab claw 4 points. I did not see a mature deer in six straight days of extensive hunting. The 3 wk season allows for some mature deer to survive. This late season tag will ruin the buck hunting in area 400. Also I did not see any deer that appeared to be symptomatic

Lack of information available from wildlife dept.

My tag was for 406-50. I selected the 40-50, hope it was just a typo.

Was a great opportunity.

I was disappointed to find that some land owners closed down due to fwp not listening to there request for more doe tags. It really closed off some good hunting. Thanks FWP for always making hunter/landowner relationships more difficult.

Keep doing what you're doing. You might consider extending general deer season, though, as the rut seems to be starting later.

The addition 2 week season was an utter disaster. I pray this is never again implemented in HD 401. Multiple landowners, including myself, locked up our properties to prevent the destruction of our local herd.

Therefore, multiple, young deer were harvested from the areas that already see the most pressure. I take a tremendous amount of pride in the deer my farm is able to produce, and I hope the season is returned to its original 3 weeks for the 2021 season. Please, do not allow this to go on any longer. Thank you.

We didn't see many mature bucks

Nope. I hate being skunked.

Could not hunt due to covid

If the landowners don't let anyone on that last two weeks, then this doesn't work too well. Managing cwd should be a priority, but working with the landowners would be required to mak it happen.

bad weather and scared of virus this year

There was not many mule deer bucks around this area

I have the lymph nodes in freezer and plan to mail in to be tested for CWD.

I wouldn't apply for this permit again. I didn't see any good mule deer bucks. I saw many nice white tailed. I hunted 5 days hard and got into groups of 25-35 does and there were 2 and 3 points with them. Maybe the weather wasn't hard enough to get the big deer down. I harvested a 4x4 that was 20" wide. I saw one other that might have been 24 in the Maria's Refuge. In my opinion I wasted bonus points applying for this tag. There are large chunks of BMA ground in areas. The remainder is very chopped up private with limited access.

It was extremely hard to obtain any access in my area to hunt deer or anything this year. Since FWP did not work with the landowners everyone shut there places down to hunting. I think FWP made a poor decision about extending the season. I would prefer to see it go back to the 3 week season, and then maybe we would be able to hunt some private land again. If landowners didn't open back up I would completely understand since FWP isn't willing to work with them. FWP ruined a lot of hunting opportunities for people.

Needs too be less tags given out, 90 was too many and at the end of the season the deer numbers had gone down significantly

I feel that hunting the rut hinders the ability for a herd to have proper age structure, and at times, even hinders the ability for does to get bred. I also find it exceedingly wasteful for these CWD tags to be given out, and should be postponed, until there is an actual influx in CWD.

Keep up the good work!