

MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS
HUNTING SEASON / QUOTA CHANGE SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Species: Mule Deer
Region: 6
Hunting District: HD 652
Year: 2021

1. **Describe the proposed season / quotas changes and provide a summary of prior history (i.e., prior history of permits, season types, etc.).**

Increase the quota range for the 652-50 antlered buck mule deer permits from a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 125, to a new range of a minimum of 50 and a maximum of 400.

Old range 50-125
New range 50-400

Also, increase the number of antlered mule deer permits from 125 to 200 for the 2021 season.

Permit Type	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
652-50	200	125	100	100	100

2. **What is the objective of this proposed change? This could be a specific harvest amount or resulting population level or number of game damage complaints, etc.**

The proposed change will increase the quota range, of which the quota is currently at its maximum, and also increase the quota. This higher proposed range and newly adjusted quota will allow an increase in hunting pressure and harvest on mule deer bucks in HD 652, reducing the buck:doe ratio. This reduction may help reduce or slow the spread of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). Research has shown that adult mule deer bucks tend to have a higher prevalence of CWD, and that increased pressure on mule deer may help to modulate CWD, particularly in areas with a low CWD prevalence.

3. **How will the success of this proposal be measured? This could be annual game or harvest surveys, game damage complaints, etc.**

The success of this proposal will be measured by monitoring the buck harvest and effort through hunter harvest surveys, monitoring buck and total deer numbers during deer trend surveys and through continued surveillance for CWD.

4. **What is the current population’s status in relation to the management objectives? (i.e., state management objectives from management plan if applicable; provide current and prior years of population survey, harvest, or other pertinent information).**

The objectives for HD 652 are set in the Adaptive Harvest Management Plan for mule deer. The buck:doe ratio objective for this district is “at least 40:100”. Currently, the buck to doe ratio is 111:100. The density objective for this district is a “minimum post season population density of 3 deer/sq. mile”. Currently the population density is 3.8 deer/sq. mule. The ten-year average harvest success in the district is 41%.

5. **Provide information related to any weather/habitat factors, public or private land use or resident and nonresident hunting opportunity that have relevance to this change (i.e., habitat security, hunter access, vegetation surveys, weather index, snow conditions, and temperature / precipitation information).**

Hunter access is good to excellent across hunting district 652, with large amount of public land and private land enrolled in the Block Management program.

6. Briefly describe the contacts you have made with individual sportsmen or landowners, public groups or organizations regarding this proposal and indicate their comments (both pro and con).

Landowners and hunters have commented on the increase in total deer in HD 652, as well as the large number of bucks that are being seen. During the most recent season setting process, several conversations were had with hunters about the likely increase in buck harvest opportunities in 652, namely, to help slow the spread of CWD.

While hunters are protective of this limited opportunity and do not want to see it go away, they are also aware of the threat that CWD poses, particularly in a herd of mule deer that is currently managed for older age class deer. This proposal represents a step to increasing management effectiveness to protect overall herd health, but still maintaining a limited permit opportunity.

The area FWP game warden was also consulted on this proposed change, and he was supportive. Also, Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge staff have reviewed the proposal and are supportive.

Submitted by: [Drew Henry](#)

Date: 1/4/2021