

PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION  
BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT  
RESEARCH DIVISION  
PROJECT ANNUAL JOB REPORT

PROJECT CODE NO.: 06210

TITLE: White-tailed Deer Research/Management

PROJECT JOB NO.: 21011

TITLE: Deer Management Assistance and Agricultural Deer Control Permit Programs

PERIOD COVERED: 1 July 2005 through 30 June 2006

COOPERATING AGENCIES: None

WORK LOCATION(S): Statewide

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**Abstract:** To assist landowners in achieving their deer management goals, the Pennsylvania Game Commission has developed a number of landowner assistance programs. The Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program, established in 1995, and the Deer Management Assistance Program, established in 2003, provide landowners with additional permits for hunters to take antlerless deer. During the 2005-06 hunting seasons, 691 properties were enrolled in the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). The PGC issued 42,235 DMAP coupons, of which 31,641 were redeemed for DMAP licenses. Eighty-four percent of DMAP permit holders submitted their mandatory report card. Hunters using DMAP reported harvesting 7,644 antlerless deer. In 2005, 168 properties were enrolled in the Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program (Red Tag) and 867 deer were harvested.

**OBJECTIVE**

To monitor participation and use of the Game Commission's DMAP and Red Tag programs.

**METHODS**

Information on the Deer Management Assistance Program was previously reported in Project Job No. 21001. Landowner participation and deer harvest for the Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program have not been previously reported..

The Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) provides landowners with a tool to increase antlerless deer harvests to meet individual landowner deer management goals. Eligibility requirements have changed throughout the first 3 years of this program. In 2003, public landowners and private landowners enrolled in a Game Commission public access program such as Farm-Game, Safety Zone, and Forest-Game Cooperatives were eligible to participate. In 2004, DMAP was expanded to public landowners, private landowners who do not charge a fee to hunt, and hunting clubs of 1,000 or more acres that were established prior to 1 January 2000. In 2005, removing the 1,000 or more acres requirement for hunting clubs again increased eligible properties. In addition, hunters could receive up to 2 permits per enrolled property.

Applications received by 1 July 2005 were reviewed by region Wildlife Management Supervisors. Following application approval, coupons were sent to landowners who then distributed the coupons to hunters. Hunters then redeemed the coupons for a permit allowing them to harvest an additional antlerless deer on the specific DMAP property.

Hunters are required to return a postage paid report card regardless of hunting success. In the first year of the program, 2003-04, approximately 50% of all DMAP participants returned report cards by the deadline in February. Because it was a new program and the reporting requirement differed from regular hunting license reporting requirements where report cards are required to report a harvested deer, letters were sent to non-respondents to remind them of the need to report regardless of harvest. A second mailing was then made to the remaining non-respondents. Following the second mailing, 99% of DMAP participants had reported. The second year, 2004-05, nearly 80% of hunters submitted their DMAP report cards. No additional mailings were made. However, hunters who did not submit a report card were not eligible to participate in 2005-06. This requirement was relaxed and when there was a discrepancy between whether a hunter thought they reported and whether the PGC had received a report card, hunters were given the option of submitting an affidavit indicating they had reported to become eligible.

The Agricultural Deer Control, or Red Tag, Program provides those landowners experiencing agricultural depredation by deer a tool to remove antlerless deer outside of the regular hunting season. Applications are only accepted from persons who have been enrolled in one of the Commission public access programs (Farm Game Project or Safety Zone) for a minimum of 2 years and are currently enrolled. Applications for deer control permits are made through the district wildlife conservation officer. Following application approval, a permitted landowner is authorized to enlist the aid of a limited number of hunters. Landowners distribute Red Tag permits to hunters that are valid from 1 February to 28 September each calendar year, excluding Sundays, during the hours of dawn to dusk only. The permit is not valid from 16 May to 31 July, inclusive, for general crop farming and from 16 May to 30 June for vegetable farming. Only antlerless deer may be taken under this program. Because of uncertainty about reporting consistency and procedures prior to 2005, summary data prior to 2005 are not included in this report.

## **RESULTS**

Nearly 700 properties were enrolled in the PGC's DMAP in 2005-06 (Table 1). Enrolled acreage increased between 2004-05 and 2005-06, but DMAP units and requested coupons declined (Table 1). Approximately 84% of DMAP hunters submitted report cards to the PGC. Hunters reported harvesting 7,644 antlerless deer with these licenses. Harvest success remained stable (Table 2). In 2005-06, DMAP harvests increased WMU antlerless harvests by a small percentage of the total antlerless harvest, except in WMUs 2F and 2G (Table 3).

Coupon requests and subsequent harvest per enrolled area are declining. This suggests those participating in this program need less assistance. If true, the program as implemented has generally been effective. Future changes should be implemented as solutions to quantitatively defined problems.

Approximately 168 properties were enrolled in the PGC's Red Tag program in the 2005 calendar year. Mandatory monthly reporting by enrolled landowners showed 867 deer taken by hunters with Red Tag permits. Seventy-nine percent of the deer harvested were female.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Collect and summarize DMAP and Red Tag participation and harvest data by WMU.
2. Maintain current DMAP regulations.

Table 1. DMAP units, acres enrolled, and coupons requested, approved, and redeemed, Pennsylvania 2003-04 to 2005-06.

Year	Units enrolled	Acres enrolled	Coupons requested	Coupons approved	Coupons redeemed
2003-04	176	696,309	31,898	31,783	23,348
2004-05	696	1,722,619	47,848	47,812	34,135
2005-06	691	1,945,759	42,279	42,235	31,641

Table 2. Number of antlerless deer harvested, hunter success, and reporting rate by year, Pennsylvania's DMAP.

Year	Antlerless harvest	Hunter success (%)	Reporting rate (%)
2003-04	6,250	27	99 <sup>1</sup>
2004-05	7,946	23	81
2005-06	7,644	24	84

<sup>1</sup> Hunters failing to report were contacted by mail; two mailings were sent.

Table 3. DMAP Harvest by WMU and subsequent increase in antlerless harvest in comparison to regular license antlerless harvests, Pennsylvania's DMAP.

WMU	Reported DMAP Harvest	Increase in Antlerless Harvest <sup>1</sup> (%)
1A	61	0%
1B	169	2%
2A	25	0%
2B	2	0%
2C	248	2%
2D	116	1%
2E	134	2%
2F	2698	33%
2G	1308	21%
3A	383	4%
3B	383	4%
3C	242	2%
3D	386	5%
4A	323	4%
4B	44	1%
4C	188	2%
4D	721	9%
4E	28	0%
5A	40	1%
5B	52	0%
5C	14	0%
5D	1	0%

<sup>1</sup> For example, a DMAP harvest of 169

antlerless deer in WMU 1B increased the  
regular license antlerless harvest by 2%.