

**PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION
BUREAU OF WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT
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 2007 through 30 June 2008

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 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 2007-08 hunting seasons, 801 properties enrolled in the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). The PGC issued 32,379 DMAP coupons, of which 22,148 were redeemed for DMAP permits. Seventy-nine percent of DMAP permit holders submitted their mandatory report card. Hunters using DMAP reported harvesting 5,006 antlerless deer. In 2007, 223 properties enrolled in the Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program (Red Tag) and reported a harvest of 982 deer.

OBJECTIVE

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

METHODS

Prior to 2005, information on the Deer Management Assistance Program was reported in Project Job No. 21001. Landowner participation and deer harvest for the Agricultural Deer Control Permit Program were not reported before 2005.

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 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, or a Forest-Game Cooperative 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, the 1,000 or more acres requirement for hunting clubs was removed. In addition, hunters could receive up to 2 permits per enrolled property.

Applications received by 1 July 2007 were reviewed by region Wildlife Management Supervisors. Following application approval, coupons were sent to landowners for distribution to hunters. Hunters then redeemed a coupon for a permit to harvest an additional antlerless deer on that 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 only required when a deer is harvested, 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 the hunter application ineligibility provision was removed if a report card was not received in 2006.

The Agricultural Deer Control, or Red Tag, Program provides those landowners experiencing agricultural deer depredation a tool to remove antlerless deer outside of the regular hunting season. Applications are only accepted from persons who are currently enrolled and have participated in one of the Commission public access programs (Farm Game Project or Safety Zone) for a minimum of 2 years, except for applicants in Wildlife Management Units 5C and 5D. 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 between dawn and dusk only. The permit is not valid from 16 May to 30 June. 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

Over 800 properties were enrolled in the DMAP in 2007-08 (Table 1). Enrolled acreage decreased between 2006-07 and 2007-08, as did the number of coupons requested (Table 1). Approximately 79% of DMAP hunters submitted report cards to the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC). Hunters reported harvesting 5,006 antlerless deer with these permits. Harvest success for 2007-08 remained consistent with previous years (Table 2). In 2007-08, DMAP harvests increased WMU antlerless harvests by 7% or less of the total antlerless harvest, except in WMU 2G where harvest was 25% of the total antlerless harvest (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 to address clearly defined problems.

Two hundred and twenty-three properties were enrolled in the PGC's Red Tag program in the 2007 calendar year (Table 4). Mandatory monthly reporting by enrolled landowners showed 982 deer taken by hunters with Red Tag permits (Table 4). Eighty-two percent of the deer harvested were female and harvest levels varied by WMU (Table 5).

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Continue to 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 2007-08.

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
2006-07	758	1,877,850	36,841	36,816	28,432
2007-08	801	1,470,306	32,379	32,379	22,148

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 ^a
2004-05	7,946	23	81
2005-06	7,644	24	84
2006-07	7,396	26	78
2007-08	5,006	23	79

^a Hunters failing to report were contacted by mail; 2 mailings were sent.

Table 3. 2007-08 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 ^a (%)
1A	75	1%
1B	196	2%
2A	12	0%
2B	2	0%

2C	186	2%
2D	113	1%
2E	129	2%
2F	480	7%
2G	1,629	25%
3A	270	3%
3B	256	3%
3C	231	2%
3D	278	4%
4A	338	5%
4B	9	0%
4C	133	1%
4D	517	6%
4E	39	0%
5A	60	2%
5B	20	0%
5C	33	0%
5D	0	0%

^a For example, a DMAP harvest of 196 antlerless deer in WMU 1B increased the regular license antlerless harvest by 2%.

Table 4. Red Tag properties and harvest in Pennsylvania 2005-2007.

Year	Properties enrolled	Harvest
2005	168	867
2006	197	1,013
2007	223	982

Table 5. Reported Red Tag harvest by WMU, Pennsylvania 2006 and 2007.

WMU	2006 harvest	2007 harvest
1A	32	34
1B	11	0
2A	139	134
2B	12	20
2C	34	37
2D	273	154
2E	51	68

2F	14	13
2G	5	5
3A	21	19
3B	0	0
3C	22	5
3D	1	0
4A	109	50
4B	0	2
4C	30	63
4D	51	78
4E	0	0
5A	9	14
5B	35	17
5C	138	218
5D	26	51
