

2010 Reporting Rate Survey



Summary Results

April 2012

Conducted by Pennsylvania Game Commission's Deer and Elk Section and Bureau of Wildlife Management
www.pgc.state.pa.us

Introduction

Successful deer hunters in Pennsylvania are required by law to report harvested deer to the Pennsylvania Game Commission (PGC). Reporting rates of known successful deer hunters are determined by recording license numbers at deer processors and determining whether or not the deer was then reported to the PGC.

Reporting rates have been declining, and efforts to increase reporting rates have failed. Concern for the declining rates prompted commissioners to question Bureau of Wildlife Management staff for reasons why hunters do not report harvested deer. The purpose of this survey was to determine the primary reasons why hunters fail to report their deer to the PGC.

Methods

We surveyed a sample of successful hunters from the 2009 firearms deer season who took their deer to one of more than 400 deer processors visited by PGC personnel. Deer ageing teams examined 24,839 deer; however, hunters could have had multiple deer examined. Thus, lowering the effective population size actually sampled. In November 2010, we sent a questionnaire to 1,051 hunters, and asked them to return it in a postage-paid envelope. We received 631 valid surveys for a response rate of 60% to use in the summary analysis which provided confidence intervals of $\pm 4\%$. We did not attempt to re-survey nonrespondents because of the high response rate. Most responses were based on a 5-point Likert scale with the categories of strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

Results and Discussion

Respondents believed that successful hunters forget to report their deer, or at least they forget to report their deer within the 10 day time period after harvest. Most respondents agreed that forgetting to report their deer (61%), or not remembering within the 10 day reporting window (67%) were reasons hunters did not report their deer.

About 20% of hunters agreed that losing report cards attached to the digest was a reason for low reporting rates, but almost half disagreed. Most respondents disagreed that reporting rates are low because hunters do not have access to the internet. A majority of respondents (88%) had access to the internet, with most having access in their home (79%).

More disconcerting is the respondent's belief that hunters do not report their deer because they do not want the PGC to know and/or because they do not agree with PGC deer management policy. Thirty percent of respondents agreed that hunters do not report their deer because they do not want the PGC to know about their harvest, and 35% agreed that hunters do not report their deer because they disagree with PGC deer management policy.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission currently provides 3 options for hunters to report a deer harvest: a postage-paid report card, the internet, and telephone. Check stations are not an option, but a method frequently suggested by critics of the deer program. When hunters were provided with all 4 options, and asked for their preferred method to report a deer, 97% preferred 1 of the 3 options currently offered. Preference for reporting method was report card (52%), internet (34%), toll-free phone call (11%), and check station (3%). Eighty-seven percent of respondents agreed that the harvest report card is easy and convenient for reporting deer. Seventy-one percent agreed that the internet is an easy and convenient method to report a deer harvest, while 62% agreed that a toll-free number would be easy and convenient. Twelve percent of respondents agreed that check stations would be easy and convenient for reporting deer, but only 8% of respondents agreed that all deer should be checked through mandatory check stations.

Respondents also believed that more hunters would report their deer if they knew the importance of reporting their harvest to deer management. Ninety-two percent of respondents agreed that reporting a deer is important part of deer management, and 91% agreed that all deer

should be reported to the PGC. About half (49%) agreed that reporting rates are low because hunters do not think harvest reports are important. However, 72% of respondents agreed that more hunters would report their deer if they understood the importance of reporting. This indicates a void in the knowledge of Pennsylvania deer hunters that need to be addressed.

The distribution of information to hunters is problematic, with no reliable, single source that reaches all hunters. The one source of information all hunters receive is the hunting annual inside the hunting license regulations digest, and the hunting annual was selected by 47% of hunters in our survey as the primary source of information about deer management, with the internet and Game News being selected by 15% and 9%, respectively.

Conclusions

Emphasizing importance of harvest reports and reminding hunters to report may improve reporting rates. Hunters prefer available reporting methods; thus, check stations deserve no further consideration.



Pennsylvania Game Commission
2010 Deer Hunter Survey



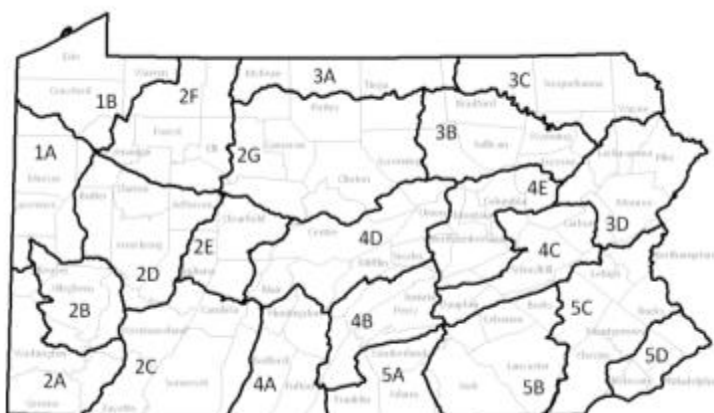
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PART 1 DEER HUNTING

1. Did you hunt deer during the 2009-10 hunting seasons (last year)?

1. YES 100%
2. NO 0% If NO, go to question 4.

2. Circle the Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) where you did most of your hunting in 2009-10 hunting seasons (last year).



Responses: Note: Responses are not representative of the overall harvest because the sample was drawn from successful deer hunters. Numbers do not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

WMU	%	WMU	%	WMU	%	WMU	%
1A	5	2E	2	3D	2	5A	2
1B	12	2F	5	4A	3	5B	7
2A	5	2G	3	4B	2	5C	6
2B	3	3A	5	4C	5	5D	1
2C	7	3B	5	4D	5		
2D	7	3C	4	4E	5		

3. Please circle the number of the statement that best describes your use of a deer processor during the 2009-10 hunting seasons (last year). Please circle one answer.

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| 1. I TOOK A BUCK AND AT LEAST ONE ANTLERLESS DEER TO A PROCESSOR | 15% |
| 2. I TOOK A BUCK TO A DEER PROCESSOR | 24% |
| 3. I TOOK AT LEAST ONE ANTLERLESS DEER TO A PROCESSOR | 50% |
| 4. I DID NOT TAKE ANY HARVESTED DEER TO A PROCESSOR | 4% |
| 5. I DID NOT HARVEST A DEER LAST YEAR | 8% |

PART 2 DEER HARVEST REPORTING. In 2009-10, deer harvest reporting was less than 40%. There are several methods available to report harvested deer. Here we are interested in your opinion about reporting harvested deer to the Game Commission.

Please circle the number indicating your level of agreement with the following statements. (Responses expressed as percentage.)

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
4.	Reporting rates are below 40% because hunters forget to report their deer.	19	42	17	16	6
5.	Reporting rates are below 40% because hunters do not remember to report their deer within the 10 day period.	21	47	14	15	3
6.	Reporting rates are below 40% because hunters lose the report cards in their Hunting Digest.	4	16	31	38	11
7.	Reporting rates are below 40% because hunters do not want the Game Commission to know about their harvest.	10	20	29	29	12
8.	Reporting rates are below 40% because hunters do not think harvest reports are important.	11	38	25	22	5
9.	Reporting rates are below 40% because hunters do not have access to the Internet.	2	11	31	41	15

10. Please circle the number of the option that describes the method you most prefer when reporting a deer harvest. Please circle one answer.

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| 1. POSTAGE PAID REPORT CARD IN HUNTING DIGEST | 52% |
| 2. INTERNET | 34% |
| 3. TOLL-FREE PHONE CALL | 11% |
| 4. CHECK STATION | 3% |

11. Please circle the number of the statement that best describes your access to the Internet.

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|---|-----|
| 1. I HAVE DIRECT ACCESS IN MY HOME | 79% |
| 2. I HAVE ACCESS TO THE INTERNET, BUT NOT IN MY HOME (EX. WORKPLACE, LIBRARY, FRIEND, RELATIVE, ETC.) | 9% |
| 3. I HAVE NO ACCESS TO THE INTERNET | 12% |

12. Please circle the number of the statement that best describes your primary source of information about deer management in Pennsylvania. Please circle one answer.

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| 1. HUNTING DIGEST I RECEIVE WITH MY HUNTING LICENSE | 47% |
| 2. PENNSYLVANIA GAME NEWS | 9% |
| 3. GAME COMMISSION WEBSITE | 15% |
| 4. HUNTINGPA.COM | 1% |
| 5. OTHER INTERNET SITES | 1% |
| 6. PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOOR NEWS | 7% |
| 7. PENNSYLVANIA OUTDOOR TIMES | 0% |
| 8. OTHER PENNSYLVANIA SPECIFIC OUTDOOR PERIODICAL | 0% |
| 9. TELEVISION | 2% |
| 10. RADIO | 0% |
| 11. FRIEND | 4% |
| 12. LOCAL HUNTING CLUB | 2% |
| 13. STATEWIDE SPORTSMAN'S ASSOCIATION | 0% |
| 11. OTHER (PLEASE WRITE IN) _____ | 9% |

Please circle the number indicating your level of agreement with the following statements. (Responses were on a Likert scale of 1-5. The response box now contains the number of responses expressed as a percentage.)

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
13.	The postage-paid report card in the hunting digest is an easy and convenient way to report a deer harvest.	35	53	8	4	0
14.	The Internet is an easy and convenient way to report a deer harvest.	31	40	17	9	3
15.	A toll-free phone number would be an easy and convenient way to report a deer harvest.	22	40	24	12	2
16.	Taking a harvested deer to a check station would be an easy and convenient way to report a deer harvest.	4	8	14	37	37
17.	Reporting rates of less than 40% reflect poorly on hunters.	20	45	22	7	5
18.	All deer should be checked through mandatory check stations.	3	5	14	30	47
19.	The new licenses make reporting a deer difficult.	2	7	34	43	14
20.	If hunters understood the importance of harvest reports, more of them would report their deer.	17	55	19	8	1
21.	Hunters do not report their deer harvest because they disagree with Game Commission deer management.	11	24	37	24	4
22.	I believe the Game Commission's deer harvest estimates are good.	3	28	39	21	9
23.	I will only believe deer harvest numbers when they are based on counts of harvest reports, not estimates.	10	28	41	18	2
24.	Reporting rates of less than 40% reflect poorly on the Game Commission.	5	21	36	32	5
25.	Deer harvest estimates based on reporting rates are acceptable to me.	2	30	40	24	5
26.	Deer harvest estimates based on a mail survey of hunters are acceptable to me.	2	32	42	21	3
27.	Reporting a harvested deer is an important part of deer management.	37	55	7	1	0
28.	All harvested deer should be reported to the Game Commission.	43	48	7	2	1

PART 3. HUNTER CHARACTERISTICS

29. Year of Birth? 19____ Mean = 1965

30. How many years have you hunted deer in Pennsylvania? _____ Mean = 28 years

31. How many deer have you harvested in PA? Please circle one answer.

0 deer	1%
1-5 deer	23%
6-10 deer	17%
more than 10	59%

32. Please check the statement that best describes where you deer hunt in Pennsylvania. Please circle one answer.

1. I HUNT ON PUBLIC LAND ONLY	11%
2. I HUNT ON PRIVATE LAND ONLY	34%
3. I HUNT ON BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LAND	55%

33. Please circle your rating of the Game Commission's deer program.

1. Excellent 5%	2. Good 34%	3. Fair 36%	4. Poor 22%	5. Don't know 4%
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That concludes the survey. Your contribution to this effort is greatly appreciated. Results will be made available on the Game Commission's webpage at www.state.pa.us and announced in a news release.