

Game Commission Explains How Hunting Season Set

By Milt Guymon

What makes a deer season? To the hunter the deer season may mean the crisp atmosphere of fall, a buck deer flushed from an aspen thicket, or the memorable experiences of friends and campfire.

It may mean a week-long trek to the high country or it could be a single day or several weekend jaunts. It might mean a tented camp site among the pines, or the more deluxe comforts of trailer house or camper.

And the quest is deer, bucks if the hunter can find them, but an antlerless animal will do if he's lucky and he has the proper tags and permits. Each hunter dreams of success and works to this end, but when the last day is done perhaps 50 per cent will find the deer as elusive as the Holy Grail, and some may not even have fired a shot.

Time of Challenge
In brief this is the hunters' hunt, a time of year of challenge, of success and disap-

pointments, a time to pit woods lore and hunting skill against the cunning of the wild creatures.

But there is far more than just participation that goes into the making of a deer season. To the game biologist it is a year - round fact finding chore that begins and ends with each season.

The work of a deer season goes on around the calendar, culminating in setting the time and bag limits for the hunters' hunt.

To determine just what goes into the hunters' hunt we must follow the game biologist from season to season as he in turn follows the deer herds through the seasons.

Although many facts are tabulated such as diseases and parasites, starvation and other mortalities, spring fawning, weight and animal condition, migrations, all of which are taken into consideration when hunting seasons are set, three major factors on deer and deer herds are critically stud-

ied and analyzed. These include herd composition, census trends in deer numbers, and food and range use and condition.

Herd Counts
It would be impossible in a column such as this to recount the findings of biologists for all big game ranges within the state. But a typical one might be the Northside range in the John Day country, one of the seven major mule deer ranges in the upper John Day basin, and one over which

hunters have voiced considerable concern in the past.

Herd trend counts here have averaged for the past four years 21.3 deer per mile on 56 miles of permanent sample routes that traverse the Northside winter ranges. Spring counts last year - 1962 - showed 24.6 deer per mile on these same sample routes. This is above the four - year average for the Northside area.

Herd composition counts on the Northside following the 1961 hunting season showed 16

bucks and 60 fawns per 100 does for the 424 animals classified. Three man - days were required to tally and classify this number of deer. This is a good fawn ratio for Grant county ranges.

However, starvation took a high percentage of fawn deer during the ensuing winter. Data gathered show that winter mortality during 1961-62 accounted for 20 per cent of the youngsters.

Fawn Loss
This year's herd composition

of 729 animals just recently completed shows 18 bucks and 64 fawns per 100 does. Four man - days were required to classify the 729 animals.

On this range, yearling bucks normally average around 50 per cent of the bucks observed. In 1961 as an example, spikes and two - points made up 52 per cent of the total observed. This fall after the hunting season the yearling bucks made up only 32 per cent of the bucks observed, again indicating the loss of fawns

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