

# Game Commission seeks 60,000 antlerless harvest

HARRISBURG — The Pennsylvania Game Commission's proposal to authorize the issuance of 410,600 antlerless deer licenses this year is designed to produce a harvest of about 60,000 whitetails, game management officials said this week.

Last year the Game Commission authorized the issuance of 423,950 antlerless deer licenses, in the hope that hunters would report a harvest of 62,000 whitetails.

The actual reported harvest of antlerless deer last year was 55,930.

This year the Game Commission is proposing to increase the allocations of antlerless licenses in 32 counties, and to decrease antlerless license allocations in another 32 counties. The agency is proposing to keep the antlerless allocation in one county at the 1979 level.

While there usually is a strong correlation between the number of antlerless licenses allocated and the number of deer taken, as well as resultant adjustments to the size of the total deer herd, such is not always the case.

Lancaster County's allocation is down to 4850 licenses; Berks, 6500.

Dauphin, up to 3900; Lebanon, up to 2500; Chester, 6000; York, 7250; Potter, down to 13,150.

Normally, an increase in the allocation of antlerless licenses results in an increased harvest of deer, and a lowering of the total population number.

However, this year's antlerless license allocations are designed to keep deer herds at the same level as last year in 20 counties. These allocations should permit the herd to increase in size in 29 counties, while the population of whitetails should be reduced in 16 counties.

Paradoxically, in some counties the number of licenses this year will be decreased, but the number

of deer in the county will be further reduced. Also, in some counties the allocation will be increased but the herd will be permitted to grow in total numbers.

The seemingly contradictory situation results from combinations of factors affecting deer numbers. Some factors as reported vs actual harvest, sex ratios, age structures, percentages of yearling females, survival and productivity rates, hunter success rates, out-of-season losses, etc., all enter into the picture.

By knowing the reported and actual removal rates, the age-sex structure of the herd, productivity figures and a few other basic pieces of information, the Game Commission is able to calculate the number of deer, by sex and age, present at any given time of the year in every county of the state.

The key to permissible population numbers is the condition of the deer herd and the over-winter carrying capacity of the range.

Studies have shown that about 40 deer can over-winter in a square mile of forest that is in the seedling-sapling or brush (under five inches in diameter) stage of growth. In the pole timber stage of forest development (five through eleven inches in diameter), a square mile of forest can support only about 10 deer in typical winter weather. In the saw timber stage (over eleven

inches in diameter), about 20 deer can be supported per square mile.

By knowing how many deer there will be before the hunting season, and by subtracting the number of deer that can be supported through the winter, the number of deer that must be removed by hunters can readily be calculated.

The number of antlerless deer that need to be harvested will be the difference between the number of bucks that will be taken and the total number of deer that need to be removed.

It is known how many antlerless deer licenses need to be issued to remove one deer in every county. The figure varies from county to county, and from one year to the next.

In some counties, an average of 3.73 licenses issued will result in the harvesting of one deer. In other counties, it may take an average of 23.88 licenses to harvest one deer. The statewide average is 6.8 licenses for each deer taken. In twelve counties, over 10 antlerless licenses have to be issued to harvest one deer.

Thus, the number of licenses issued in any county (or the state as a whole) may not be meaningful, even from one year to the next, unless all of the factors involved are taken into account.

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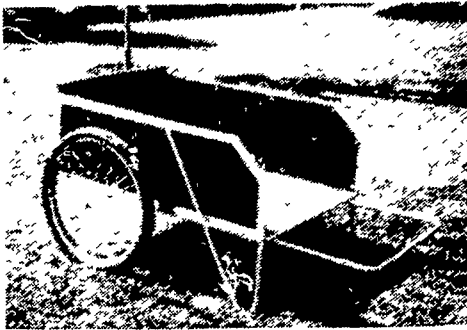
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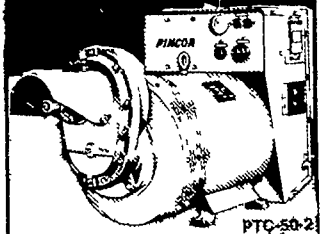
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