

Black-tailed and Mule Deer Status Update - 2010

Alberta

We don't have a provincial summary available back to 1998.

I can provide a summary of where we are at relative to our goals though.

1996 the provincial population goal was 97,000 mule deer. Survey techniques consisted mainly of trend surveys.

In the last 10-15 years, we have moved towards a Random stratified transect method that has provided more accuracy. We still only survey certain wildlife management units with any consistency, so population estimates and goals can be anywhere from a number +/- 9% or simply a WAG.

Within the last 20 years, we reviewed population goals at the wildlife management unit level (we have 185 units in the province).

Our current provincial population goal pre-season is just under 174,000. Our provincial population estimate has averaged around 187,000 mule deer the last 3 years.

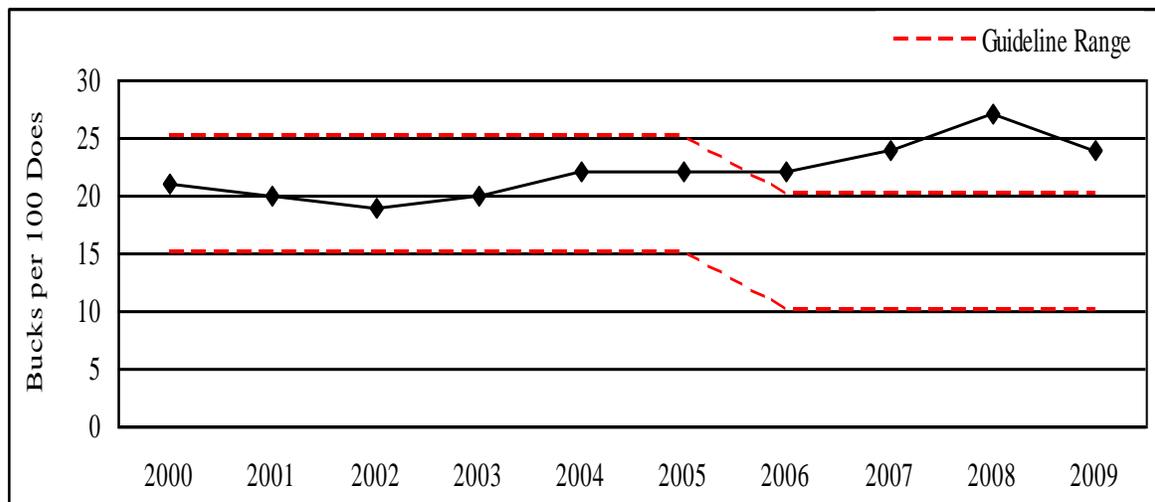
With mild winters and low hunter interest in antlerless mule deer opportunity, we have seen populations steadily increase over the last 10 years.

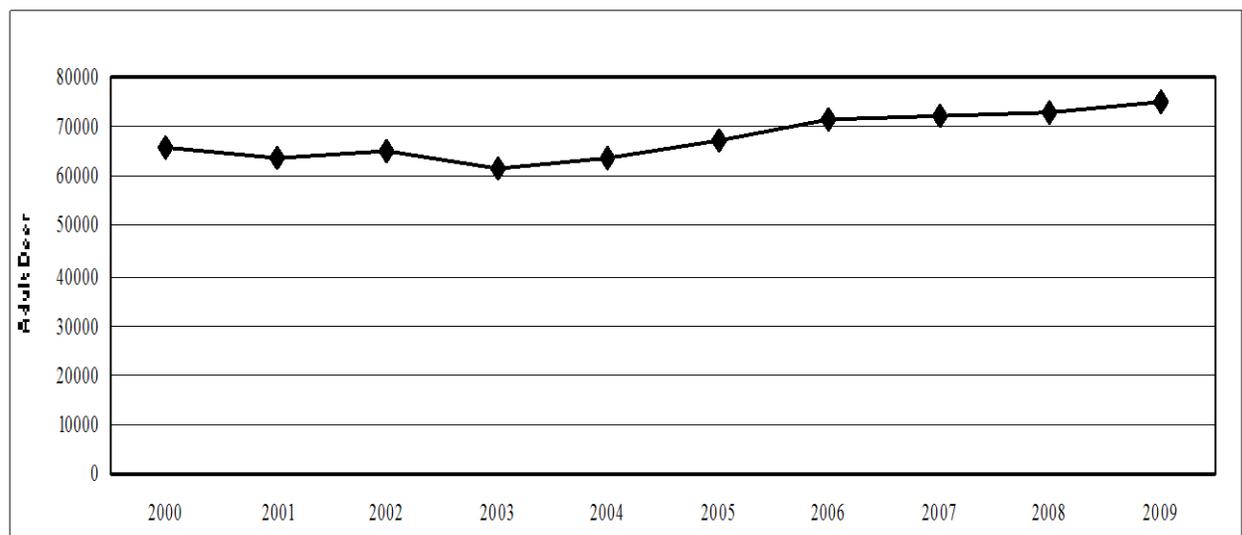
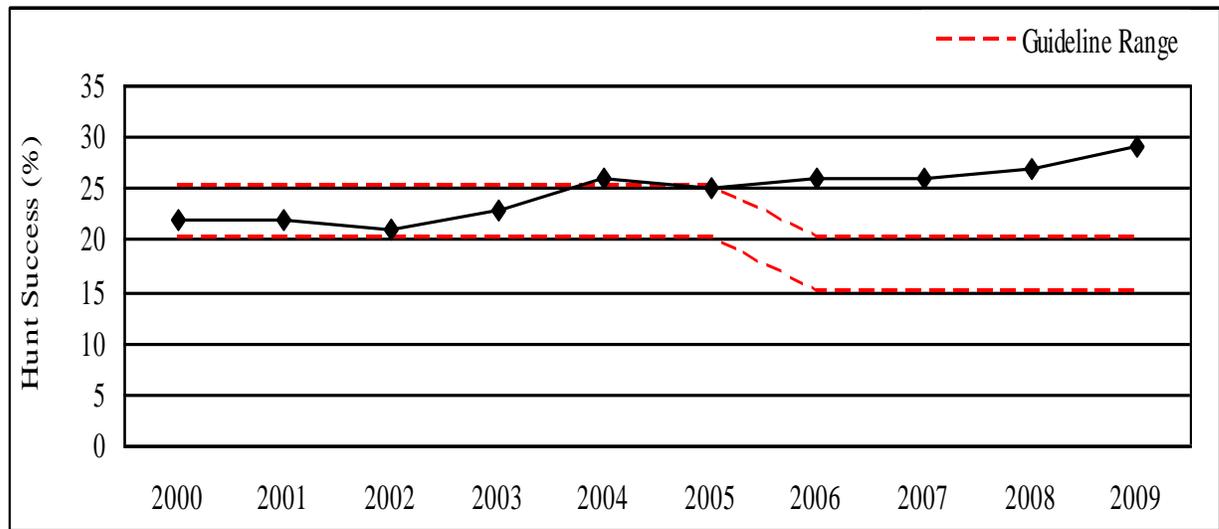
-Kim Morton

Arizona

Here is what we compiled from the last 10 years that we shared with the Regions recently. I believe we have seen a modest increase in Arizona, but the numbers and magnitude are certainly questionable.

Since you are from Arizona and the chair, you may overrule this perspective. In my opinion, Arizona may have seen about a 10% increase in adult mule deer since 2000 (all as a direct result of the MDWG efforts J).





British Columbia

Mule deer numbers declined in the late 1990's, largely due to winter conditions. Since then, they are considered to be generally stable with the 2008 provincial estimate of 108,000-194,000. Populations on the northern edge of the range are vary with winter severity. Mule deer surveys are generally focused to obtain post-hunt buck:doe ratios and spring carryover counts.

Increasing cougar numbers during the early to mid-2000's were considered to be the main reason for a decline in coastal black-tailed deer during this period(1998-present). Predator (both wolf and cougar) population levels stabilized late in the decade resulting in a subsequent general increase in deer numbers in parts of the province from the late 2000's. The 2008 provincial estimate for black-tailed deer is 98,500-166,000.

California

Based on the following population estimates, the overall trend in California is a gradual decline in the deer population (black-tail and mule deer).

2008 - 487,000
2007 - 440,000
2006 - 422,000
2005 - 635,000 *
2004 - 461,000
2003 - 540,000
2002 - 564,000
2001 - 602,000
2000 - 539,000
1999 - 541,000
1998 - 539,000

* Our model includes harvest, and in CA the weather can have a huge impact on harvest. In 2005 we had early storms that coincided with several opening weekends resulting in a higher than normal kill. Like Jerry indicated, we need to use these numbers with caution.

Mary Sommer
Associate Wildlife Biologist
Department of Fish and Game
Wildlife Branch
1812 Ninth Street
Sacramento, CA 95811
(916)445-3549
FAX(916)445-4048
msommer@dfg.ca.gov

Colorado

Mule deer populations in Colorado have increased since 1998 but the majority of the change has been due to an increase in the number of bucks resulting from reduced harvest rates because of fewer licenses. Recruitment gradually improved between 1998 and 2006 but the severe winter of 2007-2008 had a major impact on some west slope deer herds (where 80% of the deer are) and they still haven't fully recovered. Fawn:doe ratios have remained chronically low in some parts of the western slope, especially in the SW, but have increased considerably in recent years on the eastern slope. We are at about 80% of the statewide population objective of 590,000 deer. Unfortunately it isn't possible to directly compare the current population estimate to the estimate in 1998 because of major changes in our population models.

-Bruce

Nevada

Mule deer population estimates in Nevada from 1998 to 2009 show a slight decline. Estimates for 1998 – 2001 were relatively stable at approximately 130,000 deer

statewide. After a one year decline of ~20,000 animals in 2002, estimates have remained relatively stable at 106,000 to 110,000.

- Tony Wasley

Utah

Mule deer populations estimates in Utah have been fairly stable with some weather related declines and rebounds since 1998. Our population estimates are as follows:

1998	307,500
1999	316,530
2000	322,320
2001	309,070
2002	281,350
2003	268,180
2004	289,400
2005	296,050
2006	318,450
2007	302,430
2008	273,100
2009	303,000

We have a 2013 objective of 350,000 and a long term objective of 423,000. -Anis Aoude

(followup note: Goals may not be realistic. Deer populations may be where they need to be)

New Mexico

New Mexico's mule deer populations appear to have improved since 1998. There are areas where more significant gains have been made yet there are still some that need more improvement. Since 1998, more habitat work has been accomplished on the ground both through our Habitat Stamp Program that funds improvements on BLM and USFS property as well as, more recently, Enhancement Tag (statewide licenses) money in other selected priority areas. Our agency has also implemented a Private Land Incentive Program to work with private landowners to improve their property for deer. Given all these efforts as well as having more favorable precipitation conditions the last few years, our surveys and on-the-ground observations indicate improved populations. We haven't turned the corner, but I believe we are fast approaching it.

-Barry Hale

Montana

From 1998 Montana mule deer populations did improve. Over course of last two years at least population levels have again slipped below long-term averages across much of state. In some areas significant weather events (harsh spring weather) have a proximity to these declines but not so in other locales. Levels in some areas are yet above record lows but may be 30% or more below long term average.

Regards, Quentin

South Dakota

In South Dakota, mule deer population have stayed stable on the prairie during this time frame at around 68,000. The Black Hills mule deer population however has shown a steady decline in the last few years even with very limited hunting seasons.

Ted

North Dakota

Upward trend for mule deer numbers in the ND badlands (1998 spring index -- 5.7 md/sq. mile, 2009 spring index -- 8.5 md/sq. mile). Mule deer on the Missouri Slope (secondary range) also showed an increasing trend in population during that time . --

Bruce.

In North Dakota there has been the same anecdotal reports of more mule deer east of the Missouri River in south-central ND along the breaks of the river and in CRP acreage as well. I'm not sure what the official reports are from the NDGF, but I hear comments about that constantly in ND and did see similar scenarios while still working for the NDGF four years ago and spending time in the field in those counties. I guess Bill Jensen or Bruce Stillings would have to answer with what their surveys are saying, though.

-- Brandon Mason

Nebraska

In Nebraska our mule deer population has increased approximately 20% during this time period. In most areas we would characterize our populations as increasing or stable. Our major concern for mule deer populations in the future are the meningeal worm and chewing louse parasites.

--Bruce Trindle

Saskatchewan

In the late 1990's mule deer populations were depressed due to combination of liberal licence quotas and winter weather conditions. Between 1998 and 2010 there have been localized declines due to winter conditions and CWD management but generally the mule deer population in Saskatchewan has increased and continues to expand into portions of their historic range. We continue to use liberal antlerless quotas to stabilize or reduce populations depending on depredation concerns and CWD. Our most recent provincial pre-season population estimate was 59,000 in 2004.

-Adam P. Schmidt

Texas

Attached is our 2008 fed aid report and graphs. In the Trans-Pecos, we have been fairly stable. The Panhandle has been on an increasing trend partly because of the population, as well as we are surveying more country and finding more pockets of mule deer. We are also seeing more mule deer moving eastward in the Trans-Pecos to more "white-tailed deer" country. Hope this helps.

Shawn Gray

Wyoming

In Wyoming, mule deer populations are relatively stable over this time period. In 1998 and 2008, we estimated ~478,000 and ~480,000 mule deer respectively. –Daryl Lutz

Yukon

We do not monitor our modest (our WAG is less than 1000 total) Yukon deer populations effectively but there is a general sense that they declined as a result of harsh winter conditions in 2008/09. We don't have any real idea by how much. There, things summed up in less than three sentences. All the Best, Rick

British Columbia

I have the 2003 and current numbers but I apologise that I won't be able to have the 1998 perspective until the week of April 12 when myself and other key people (experienced) are available. Gerry

Black-tailed deer

- 2003 – 115,000-200,000
- Current - 98,500-166,000

“Increasing cougar numbers during the early to mid-2000's were considered to be the main reason for a decline in coastal black-tailed deer during this period(1998-present). Predator (both wolf and cougar) population levels stabilized late in the decade resulting in a subsequent general increase in deer numbers from the late 2000's to the present.”

Mule Deer - generally stable

- 2003 – 105,000-175,000
- Current - 108,000-194,000

Oregon

Deer populations continue to be a major Hot Topic in Oregon.

Oregon's estimated Mule deer population has continued to decline, from 260,000 in 1998, to 229,000 in 2008 (matching Wyoming's time span); the 2009 estimate was 216,000.

Because of the difficulties with surveying black-tailed deer (BTD) we do not develop population estimates each year. However, in 1998 the BTD population was estimated at 387,000, declining to 320,000 in 2004, the population seems to have been relatively stable since that time. Deer hair loss syndrome was first found in Oregon in the late 1990's and is suspected of being one of the principal factors in the decline (along with changes to forest management and maturing forest habitats, particularly on federal lands).

Both mule deer and BTD are substantially below the long term statewide management objectives/benchmarks.

-Tom Thornton

Washington

We are trying to train our public and press not to ask for answers like this. Population guesses that “end in three zeros” with no confidence intervals can sometimes be more problematic for the manager than they are a help. We still battle some of the collateral damage that came from SWAGs made two and three decades ago.

That being said, in Washington state most of our mule deer and black-tailed deer populations have rebounded and are doing quite well. In North-Central (Okanogan, Chelan, Douglas counties) mule deer seem to be at the capacity that the habitat will support and continue to respond positively to habitat improvements. In the Northeast mule deer numbers are stable but slightly down from the winters of 2007-08 and 2008-09, and fawn survival was excellent for this past winter. The Palouse, Southeast-Blue Mountains, and the Columbia Basin mule deer populations are all stable and doing well. South-central mule deer populations (Yakima and Kittitas counties) are doing poorly with high recent losses attributed to hair loss caused by exotic lice. The mule deer/black-tailed deer gradient along the Columbia River gorge on the state’s southern border are doing very well with good fawn numbers through the winter. Black-tailed deer in western Washington are stable and mostly healthy but have the potential to improve if private and public forests were managed in a more deer-friendly fashion.