

1. Current population trend or estimate - and proximity to management objectives:

Utah is recovering from 6-7 years of drought. During this time, the mule deer population declined by 30 percent (estimated). During the past winter (1992-93), severe winter conditions caused heavy mortality in many areas of the state, reducing the population even more. The statewide mule deer population may be down as much as 40 percent.

A new statewide hunting strategy becomes effective in 1993. Hunters must choose among archery, rifle, or muzzleloader hunting seasons. Previously, hunters could hunt all three seasons until they filled the single buck tag. The new strategy is supported by incentives to attract hunters into primitive weapon seasons, optional antlerless deer hunts if hunters choose not to hunt bucks, vehicle access management, and limited entry buck hunts. The overall objectives are to improve buck numbers and ease rifle hunter crowding. Preliminary hunter surveys indicate a reduction in general rifle hunters from 170,000 to 110,000.

2. 1992 Hunting season statistics:

Type/length of season:	# of hunters afield:	# of hunter days:	% success:	Harvest	
				Antler:	Antlerless:
archery 17 days	28,320		26		
rifle 11 days	170,645		28		
muzzle-loader 10 days	14,972		13		
limited entry varies	1,979		61		
high country varies	1,003		58		
control varies	11,828		72		
Total				56,658	13,279

3. Method used to estimate harvest:

General statewide archery, rifle and muzzleloader harvest surveys are conducted by telephone interview (University of Utah, Research Survey Centre). Limited permit hunts are surveyed by mail questionnaire.

4. Do you limit hunters to one season (rifle, archery or muzzleloader)?

Yes, beginning in 1993.

5. Do your deer seasons extend into the breeding season? If so, how far?

Generally, no. However, some "high country" hunts include the breeding period. Muzzleloader season ends during the early part of the breeding season, and in some areas of the state may approach the peak of rutting. We try to avoid general hunting during the peak of rutting, but we receive constant pressure from muzzleloader hunters who want their hunting period to span the breeding season.

6. How many deer can a hunter legally take per year?

# Antlered:	# Antlerless:	Total:
1	1 - 2	1 - 3

7. Do you use antler-point restriction regulations? If so, what is the purpose of this regulation and is the objective being met? How do you assess hunter compliance - illegal kill?

No. Those our Big Game Board authorized in the late 1980's were rescinded in 1990 because illegal kill was excessive (35+%). Our method of assessing hunter compliance while the strategy was in place was to ride transects by horseback through the various hunting units looking for discarded bucks.

8. Do you have regulations to limit or distribute hunters? What type of regulations and are they working?

Yes. Limiting hunters to one season and offering primitive weapons incentives is our way of stratifying and dispersing hunters. We are beginning this strategy in 1993. We limit hunters otherwise through limited entry hunting. Our limited entry units have become very popular offering aesthetic quality as well as access to a greater number of mature bucks.

9. Do you use access (road) management to regulate hunter distribution? What is the hunting public's reaction? Who is responsible for enforcement of closures etc.?

Lands owned by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources are usually restricted to vehicle access during big game hunting seasons. We encourage vehicle access management on other public land areas as well, but the philosophy is met with a range of mixed responses from complete opposition to complete buyin in certain areas and by certain entities. The initial reaction of the hunting public is mixed but mostly leans toward opposition. However, in time the restrictions on each restricted area become preferred as benefits are realized.

The respective agency having jurisdiction over the property takes the lead in enforcing road closures. Our division lends support as time and personnel allow. We encourage road closures as part of our strategy of improving big game populations and hunting opportunity.

10. Do you use a system such as "preference points" to distribute the opportunity to draw big game permits? If yes, what has been your experience with such a system?

We have adopted Arizona's "Bonus Point" system. Because it goes into effect in 1993, we have no experience yet to judge its results.

11. In what ways do you believe hunting impacts your deer populations (ie. compensatory/additive mortality, total population size, genetics, behaviour, etc.)? What data do you have to support this?

12. What do you feel are the major factor(s) limiting the deer populations, and what evidence is this based on?

Mostly weather and hunting. In recent years we have growing suspicions that disease (ie. blue tongue?) may be playing a greater role - we have isolated incidents of areawide die-offs but no obvious explanations.

13. Do you make any attempts to model deer populations? If so, please describe the model. Identify any problems.

We've only dabbled with a spreadsheet model we developed to specifically use the data we have for our deer herds. It's a simple model that possibly anyone could adapt for their needs. We will be using modelling more seriously in the next few years as we redevelop deer management plans.

14. What is your state or province's approach to manipulating habitat to benefit deer?

Mechanical manipulation of undesirable woodland and decadent shrubs. Limited by lack of funding.

15. Primary deer research efforts underway at this time (please list):

Crop depredation -- evaluation of actual damage and procedures for measuring damage.