

Comprehensive Deer Management Meeting
Castleton VT
January 30, 2013

In January of 2013 the Fish & Wildlife Department held two special meetings to gather deer hunter input on current deer hunting regulations and season structures as part of the comprehensive review of deer management activities. After a department presentation on deer and deer management, members of the public were divided into groups of 6-8 individuals and asked to provide input on Vermont's deer management program. Below are the questions asked of each group and a transcription of comments received.

Questions below were asked to all groups who participated in the meeting:

- 1) What have you heard and what does it mean to you?
- 2) What is the most important thing you think could be done to better Vermont's deer and/or deer management?
- 3) What questions do you have for about Vermont's deer and/or deer management program?

GROUP 1

Question #1

- Need logging in the National Forest around Mount Tabor.
- Not sufficient feed in the woods for deer, may lead to over browsing.
- Low deer sightings on non-posted and public land.
- Doe harvest should be reduced.
- Too many coyotes.
- Overharvest of bucks in K2 and prior to the rut
- Lack of habitat and landowners need training about how to improve habitat for deer.

Question #2

- Vermont should institute a 3 point antler protection rule.
- Public education to non-hunters on deer hunting and its benefits.
- Base management plan on scientific fact not public opinion.
- Work with utility companies and NRCS to fund food plots under power lines.

Question #3

- Any data on effect APR has had on antler characteristics?
- How can hunters help F&W accomplish goals, such as access on private land?
- Why is a ban on urine based lures not in place?
- How did the deer go into winter this year?
- Development a landowner's manual?
- Do hunters' opinions really matter?

GROUP 2

Question #1

- Youth deer weekend should only allow each youth participant a onetime harvest during youth weekend and then they are done.
- Lack of deer due to limited habitat

Question #2

- Population modeling efforts needs improvement. Would like to see in more detail how they arrive at the annual conclusions.
- Landowners need more information on wintering areas and ways they can be improved.
- Department needs to improve working with landowners who would also work with the Department.

Question #3

- More cutting on state lands and better upkeep of these properties.
- What size buck does the department think should be harvested?
- What kind of hunter education programs are out there to insure the morals and ethics of the next generation of hunters remain proper?
- What is the average age of a buck harvested in Vermont?

GROUP 3

Question #1

- The amount of posted land is a big concern. The deer stay there during the season.
- No feed in woods this season.
- There are no hunters in woods.
- The deer population is good.
- Current land use should be altered to give a tax break for not posting land.

Question #2

- Improve habitat through mowing, seeding, and cutting.
- Cut more in National forests and on state lands. Clear cuts are best.
- Hunters should be allowed to bait with stipulations.
- The buck to doe ratio should be improved.

Question #3

- How is the department "in charge of" deer herd?
- Hunters hope Department listens to their concerns.
- Where are we going with the spike-horn rule?

GROUP 4

Question #1

- CWD is important hunters and Department should be doing what they can to prevent it from occurring in VT.
- Be more open minded to hunter input
- Deer herd is healthy.
- Hunters should look at 10 year comparisons vs. annual changes in harvest/permits.

Question #2

- Antler Point regulations should be done experimentally with different zones under different regulations.
- Pittman Robinson funds should be spent on habitat.
- 9 day shotgun season with no APR (antler protection rule)

- Lengthen archery season up until Rifle season.
- Habitat needs to be created on state owned property.
- Hunter should hunt under a 1 buck limit, 2 deer total per year.
- Current antler point restriction is good. Bucks are bigger.
- Current use land should be open to hunting.
- Logging restrictions need to be less restrictive.

Question #3

- Why can't hunters bait deer?
- Is it policy or illegal to bring carcass part back? Are these rules different for urine lures?
- How are deer herds estimates determined, are we satisfied with hunter success rates?
- How come the state allows windmills but can't clear cut the national forest for wildlife?
- Last year the commissioner said he would go after current use and development rights, has anything happened?

GROUP 5

Question #1

- Vermont tracks deer health information closely.
- Vermont has lots of variables when it comes to deer herd including winter severity.

Question #2

- Need more feed in the woods through logging and/or food plots.
- Antler point restriction needs to be increased to 3 on a side.
- Limit the number of youth weekends youth hunters can participate in.
- Limit annual bag limit for adults.
- Remove the spike horn rule.
- Reduce the number of late season doe permits
- Archery season should run through all deer seasons.

Question #3

- How does Vermont model deer populations?
- What is the composition of the youth harvest in relation to sex, age, weight, antler development?
- Any consideration of increasing the Antler point restriction?
- What can be done about coyotes?
- Is a spike-horned deer a sub-standard deer? If so, why protect them?

GROUP 6

Question #1

- Appreciates the Department asking for public input.
- Group likes the deer biologist and liked what he had to say.

Question #2

- Logging and habitat improvement needs to happen in GMNF/State Forests.
- A coordinator is needed for the land use access program to make the new landowner hunter access program successful.
- State needs to improve deer yards and inform hunters of how to improve their deer yards.

Question #3

- Can we form a land use that gives tax breaks for not posting land?
- More research projects are needed to better understand predator prey relationships.