

Comprehensive Deer Management Meeting
Barre VT
January 31, 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

- CWD is important deal with it.
- Input from hunters important to management plans.
- Glad Department is listening
- Though regional planning may work better than state-wide planning

Question #2

- One deer limit – buck or doe
- Department should eliminate spike-horn rule.
- Need more balance in the Buck:Doe ratio.
- Too much posted property.
- Coyotes are problem. Trapping should occur year round.
- Hunter orange should be mandatory.

Question #3

- What is the difference between feeding deer and food plots?
- What is on the table for the next plan in regards to APR?
- Has the average size of 2 ½ year old bucks dropped?

GROUP 2

Question #1

- Hard to believe herd is healthier and in better condition than it used to be
- Glad F&W is listening, however, F&W are the experts.

- Lack of direction or objectives (more meat vs. more antler?).
- How does hunter effort relate to harvest rate? How does this compare to other states?
- Would like to see results of hunter surveys.
- Why do only 20% of hunter surveys get returned?
- Make surveys available to all hunters
- Put/make hunter effort survey available to all hunters.

Question #2

- More antlerless deer taken by expanding bow season (Sept)
- Incentives for landowners to improve habitat.
- Forestry expertise-Habitat Improvement.
- Landowners receiving incentives should be required to keep access open.
- What have the implications/results of the antler restriction been? Would like to see data.
- Seen deer in fields is this good feed vs. woody browse?
- More positive publicity for hunters needed:
 - Culture of hunting
 - Accident Rates
 - Women Involvement
 - Type of deer harvested

Question #3

- Do we have a coyote problem? What is fawn survival rate?
- Can CWD be prevented?
- What relationship exists between turkeys and deer?
- What do brow tines tell us about deer herd health?

GROUP 3

Question #1

- Loss of Habitat

Question #2

- Less posting
- Landowner incentives to keep land open
- Coyote bounty should be explored.
- No doe harvest during muzzleloader season.
- One deer limit.
- Improve habitat on state lands.

Question #3

- What ideas have the F&W board been addressed upon?
- How do you address the coyote problem?
- Rethink the Muzzleloader season.
- Can we change the amount of forest the state can cut?

GROUP 4

Question #1

- Unlike previous years seems state is genuinely interested in seeking hunter input.
- Confusion over changes in deer biologist position.
- Heard it all before
- Sounds like biologist(s) is actually going to listen.
- Likes new biologist
- Reassured by the seeking of public input.
- Concerned removing APR would be a step backwards for VT deer management.

Question #2

- Winter habitat improvement should be a priority. Need more cutting.
- Forestry-need more habitat.
- Keep antler restriction.
- Too much posted land.
- No winter habitat.
- Re-arrange seasons to avoid harvesting pregnant does.
- Need an incentive program for landowner to manage specifically for deer.
- Landowner permit system that allows landowners to give permission to specific individuals- will give landowners incentive to open land.
- Encourage a lot more logging.
- Consider 3pts/side.
- More land management needed.

Question #3

- How long until this review process is complete? When will new rules and regulations go into place?
- Are there better ways of modeling deer populations?
- How did/is the connecting hunters with landowners program working? Would like to see results.
- Where did the new deer biologist come from? What is his experience?
- What are the pros vs. cons to implementing a 3 point per side regulation?
- What is the carrying capacity of deer in VT? How does this compare with current population numbers?

GROUP 5

Question #1

- Glad department is seeking public input and all is on the table.
- Glad all options are on table. Optimistic for change.
- Public input appreciated (likes map of deer kill/hunter effort).
- Public resource requires public input, should include non-hunters.
- Online accessibility very important. Science should drive process.
- Likes small group idea and regional working groups. Deer yards need to be examined.

Question #2

- Habitat- better management on public property. Incentive to private landowners
- Tax breaks for wildlife based activities.
- Rifle season needs to be freed up from legislature.
- Too much pressure on bucks. Shorten or change dates of Rifle season.
- Get hunters involved in public land management. Bring back working for wildlife volunteer days.
- Forestry education needed.

Question #3

- Can a map of legally posted land in VT be created?
- What trend has been seen by measuring antler beam diameters? Prior to the implementation of the APR in 2005?
- What deer management mistakes have been made prior to now? What are we doing to prevent them from re-occurring?

GROUP 6

Question #1

- Keep Vermont's deer disease free and try to get people involved.
- Likes Department's attempt to get deer hunter input.
- Concerned over the spread of CWD.
- More constructive debate needed.
- Department wants to restructure out of need to keep up with other states.

Question #2

- APR are good.
- More doe permits are needed.
- APR promotes waste from people shooting spike-horns and leaving them in the woods.
- Bow hunting extended as a way to manage doe harvest.
- APR is one tool but not only tool. Bow season should be extended.
- Use bow hunting as a better management tool.
- APR encourages low antler growth.
- Difficult to identify legal deer.

Question #3

- What direction is the Department headed in?
- What about coyote predation?
- What is the habitat carrying capacity of VT?
- What is the Department 'sure' about and what are they willing to change?
- What is the department's revenue in the past 5 years?
- Is Adam going to get with FPR to better manage WMUs?

- Is the Department engaged in any efforts to actively establish new deer yards and enhance pre-existing ones?
- Why isn't there a tax incentive for landowners not to post?