



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Date: 22 January 2012
To: Pennsylvania Game Commission
From: Rick Watts, Pennsylvania State Chapter President
Kip Adams, Director of Education and Outreach
Re: Deer Management

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) and the Pennsylvania State Chapter we appreciate the opportunity to provide input on Pennsylvania's 2012-13 deer season. The QDMA is an international nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ensuring the future of white-tailed deer, wildlife habitat, and our hunting heritage. The QDMA has nearly 50,000 members nationwide including over 3,000 in Pennsylvania. Notably, Pennsylvania's membership includes hunters, landowners, and numerous wildlife and forestry professionals.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has made numerous advancements with respect to deer management during the past decade. Pennsylvania's deer herd is more in balance with the available habitat, it has a more balanced adult sex ratio, it has a more complete male age structure, and it has provided some incredible hunting experiences. Antlerless deer harvests have been predictable based on allocation rates within consistent seasons, and Pennsylvania hunters have had some fantastic buck hunting. These improvements were made possible by antler restrictions, concurrent seasons, the deer management assistance program (DMAP), the October antlerless season and a science-based approach to antlerless license allocations.

A quick comparison to other states clearly shows how successful Pennsylvania's deer management program is, and how fortunate our hunters are. For example:

- PA is one of only six states in the U.S. to harvest more than 300,000 whitetails annually;
- In 2010 PA harvested 3 antlered bucks per square mile (PSM)– this is higher than the averages for the Northeastern (2.1) and Midwestern (1.9 bucks PSM) states;
- In 2010 for the second year in a row over half of PA's antlered buck harvest was 2.5 years or older;
- In 2010 PA harvested 4 antlerless deer PSM – this is higher than the averages for the Northeastern (3.1), Midwestern (2.5) and Southeastern (3.5 antlerless deer PSM) states. Pennsylvania hunters continue to annually harvest more deer on a PSM basis than most other states in the U.S.; and
- In 2010 PA hunters shot 13 percent more antlered bucks than during the 2009 season.

The above data are included on pages 5, 7, and 9 of QDMA's 2012 Whitetail Report available at www.QDMA.com, and they clearly show how well Pennsylvania compares to other states. These are reasons to celebrate our deer management program.

We acknowledge there are some areas in the Commonwealth with very low deer densities, and we sympathize with hunters in these areas. We contend the reason for these densities is habitat related in most instances. The proper way to address these situations is through improved habitat management, especially with regard to the percentage of forested stands in the 0 to 10 year age class. Young forests provide abundant cover and up to 1,000 pounds of deer browse per acre. In contrast, mature forests often provide less than 100 pounds of deer browse per acre. As our forests mature, they simply do not support as many deer. Fortunately this can be corrected through aggressive forest management programs.

Our final comments relate to DMAP and youth hunter recruitment and retention. We support all public and private landowners having the opportunity to take full advantage of the DMAP program, and keeping DMAP coupons separate from the general antlerless license allocation. This is one of the most useful programs ever afforded to landowners. Our mentored youth hunting program is an overwhelming success, and the opportunity to harvest antlerless deer in this program will further increase its value. However, not allowing DMAP coupons to be transferred to mentored youth is counterproductive to both programs. We urge you to correct this inconsistency. We also support allowing mentored youth the opportunity to hunt during the fall turkey season. As we have stated numerous times in the past, we also fully support the opportunity to hunt all species on Sundays.

The majority of Pennsylvania hunters are currently reaping the benefits of a successful deer management program. However, non-concurrent seasons, reduced opportunity and maturing forests on state lands threaten these successes. We urge you to enhance hunting opportunities where scientifically appropriate (e.g., return to statewide concurrent seasons, DMAP coupons for mentored youth, and Sunday hunting) and increase the percentage of young forests on state lands. Thank you for your time and for your commitment to Pennsylvania's natural resources.

Respectfully,

Rick Watts

Rick Watts
Pennsylvania State Chapter President

Kip Adams

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Director of Education & Outreach