



QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 160 • Bogart, GA 30622

phone (800) 209-3337 • fax (706) 353-0223 • www.QDMA.com

Date: 21 January 2007
To: Pennsylvania Game Commission
From: Steve Trupe, President, Pennsylvania State Chapter QDMA
Kip Adams, Director of Education and Outreach – Northern Region
Re: 2007-08 Hunting Season

On behalf of the Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) and the Pennsylvania State Chapter we wish to voice our views on Pennsylvania's deer management program. The QDMA is a national nonprofit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to ethical hunting, sound deer management and preservation of the deer-hunting heritage. Among QDMA's nearly 45,000 members are more than 2,500 of the nation's leading wildlife and forestry professionals. As such, QDMA is widely regarded as the most respected whitetail organization in the U.S.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has made great strides in the past few years with respect to deer management. 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. 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.

However, improvements do not come easily and they are not accepted by all stakeholders. We understand there are places in Pennsylvania where the deer population is below what the habitat can support. We also understand there are places where the deer population remains above what the habitat can support. Experience from other states clearly shows the antlerless harvest can be best predicted and regulated through the number of antlerless licenses issued. This system works well in Pennsylvania, but it could more adequately address the issue of area-specific deer densities (whether high or low) if the antlerless licenses could be issued to smaller units. We like the wildlife management unit (WMU) system but encourage you to consider reducing the size of WMUs to allow your biologists to focus additional hunter effort in units with above-goal deer densities and remove hunter effort in units with lower than desired deer densities. We understand you do not manage deer at the property level, but smaller units would allow the deer management program to achieve its goal of producing healthy deer herds and healthy habitats and address hunter concerns in areas with lower than desired deer densities.

Habitat management is also critical to productive deer herds and healthy habitats. Aggressive habitat management is occurring on private lands across the commonwealth. Many of these landowners have higher quality habitat than what is found on adjacent state lands. This is one reason why many private landowners continue to have high deer densities while public land hunters complain of few deer. We encourage you to increase the intensity of forest management programs on game lands to increase the habitat quality for deer populations.

Finally, we fully support the mentored youth hunting program and having deer as an included species. If the Commission feels Pennsylvania's deer herd cannot withstand additional harvest by mentored youth hunters then we offer the suggestion to allow mentored youth to harvest deer on private land and/or DMAP areas.

We recognize the difficult task before you today and hope you continue managing Pennsylvania's deer herd using concurrent seasons, antler restrictions, DMAP, an October antlerless season and antlerless allocations based on the wildlife staff's science-based recommendations. We also hope you consider reducing the size of WMUs, increasing the intensity of forest management programs on state game lands, and keeping deer a part of the mentored youth program. Thank you for your time and commitment to Pennsylvania's natural resources.

Steve Trupe
President, Pennsylvania State Chapter QDMA

Kip Adams
Director of Education & Outreach

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and the preservation of the deer-hunting heritage.*
