

**Midwest Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies  
Deer and Wild Turkey  
Study Group Committee Report 2008  
September 24, 2008**

Respectfully submitted by  
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### **Meeting Time and Place**

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission hosted the 32<sup>nd</sup> Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group (MDWTSG) meeting September 14-17 at Fort Robinson State Park in Crawford.

### **Attendance**

With the exception of Colorado, Kentucky, North Dakota and Ontario, Canada representatives from all 14 member states (Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin) were present at the meeting. Ohio sent only a deer group representative, and Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota sent only a turkey group representative to this year's meeting. Besides invited speakers, representatives from the National Wild Turkey Federation and the Quality Deer Management Association were in attendance.

### **Executive Summary**

The Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group conducted its annual meeting September 14-17, 2008 at Fort Robinson State Park in Crawford, Nebraska. Invited speakers gave the following presentations: 1) David Walter, National Wildlife Research Center, Fort Collins, CO "Space Use of Sympatric Deer in an Endemic Chronic Wasting Disease Area of Western Nebraska". 2) Bruce Trindle, NGPC, Norfolk, NE "History of Chronic Wasting Disease Management in Nebraska". 3) Todd Nordeen, NGPC, Alliance, NE "Bighorn Sheep in Nebraska", and 4) Lonnie Hansen, MODC, Columbia, MO "Antler Point Restriction". A combined deer and turkey group discussed lead in venison, hunter and youth recruitment and retention, increasing deer and turkey harvests, deer donation programs, deer damage and urban turkey problems. Individual state status reports and the business meeting followed on the second day. Kansas agreed to host the 33<sup>rd</sup> annual MDWTG meeting in 2009.

### **Director Action Item**

None to report.

## Director Information Items

Lead in venison - Discussion was limited because representatives from North Dakota, Minnesota and Iowa were unable to attend. These states have been actively involved with this issue. Lead in venison became a topic of interest when North Dakota detected lead in 50% of ground venison samples from their deer donation program this spring. In response, they removed the remaining processed venison from their program. North Dakota plans on resuming their donation program this fall with guidelines for hunters and meat processors on how to process deer to minimize the possibility of lead contamination. A major change for the program this fall will be that only whole cut meat will be distributed. North Dakota is waiting for the results from a CDC study being conducted.

Iowa will continue their deer donation program, but will include a page in their regulation booklet with precautions on lead in venison.

Minnesota plans on continuing their deer donation program this fall. They have published results of lead testing from their donation program in their hunting regulation booklet; 26% of 1029 packages of ground venison contained lead versus 2% of 209 packages of whole cuts. Minnesota is waiting for the results from a lead fragmentation study involving different bullet types they are conducting.

Missouri has decided to go ahead with their deer donation program without any changes. However, they are planning on publishing an article in their conservation federation magazine on how to process deer to reduce bullet fragments.

South Dakota will provide instructions on how to prevent lead contamination in processed deer in their hunting regulations.

Wisconsin reported that they will continue their deer donation program this year. Pantries will be informed not to distribute product without testing for high density particles. They will also provide an advisory in their hunting regulations.

Hunter recruitment and retention - This joint discussion, with both the deer and turkey group representatives present, began with Nebraska outlining what they were doing to maintain or increase the number of deer hunters. They will have an unlimited antlerless bag limit, use bonus antlerless tags (i.e., free tags included with the purchase of several types of regular permits) for white-tailed deer, have reduced priced antlerless tags for non-residents and season choice antlerless formats (i.e., tags valid across archery, muzzleloader, and rifle seasons) for landowners. They will try and maintain or increase the number of turkey hunters by allowing 3 statewide permits per hunter for the spring hunt, offering bonus tags in the fall, and opening the fall season during the fall firearm season.

A majority of the states present were also doing similar things to attract hunters. However, Missouri suggested that the group consider issuing multiple year permits that discount a deer or turkey permit for a stated duration. This would keep some hunters from dropping out of the pool by offering a reduced priced permit good for several years. The group felt that this new approach might hold some promise for recruitment and retention of hunters.

This discussion also covered the methods for increasing antlerless deer harvest. There was concern that over-liberalization of season formats could reduce the perceived value of does. Ohio suggested that by restricting opportunity, harvest of antlerless deer could be increased. The hypothesis is that hunters given an unlimited time to harvest a deer may not accomplish it because of the perceived lack of urgency. If the amount of time available to the hunter is restricted they will more likely kill an animal.

#### Youth recruitment and retention –

**Nebraska** has lowered minimum age for deer hunting from 12 to 10. Youth deer season is Sept 15- January 15. Firearm and crossbow hunters under 12, any deer hunter ages 12-15, and hunters ages 12-29 using an Apprentice Hunter Education Exemption Certificate must be accompanied at all times by an experienced hunter age 19 or older. Hunters aged 12-29 who have not completed a hunter education course may obtain an Apprentice Hunter Education Exemption Certificate once in their lifetime for \$5. Youth deer permits are valid for ages 10-15 and allow the taking of a deer of either sex with any legal weapon statewide.

**South Dakota** has a mentored hunting program for ages 10-15. No hunting license is required for the youth, no hunter education class is required, and the youth must be accompanied (within arms length) by an unarmed mentor who must be licensed, be hunter education certified, and 18 year of age. If the mentor is not the parent or guardian they must have written permission of the parent or guardian. Only 1 mentored hunter per mentor. Their youth deer season is Sept 13-January 31.

**Illinois** has enacted an Apprentice Hunter License which is a one-time, non-renewable license for residents only. It allows persons 10-17 to go hunting with a parent, grandparent, or guardian who has a valid resident hunting license. Persons 18 and older may go hunting with any family member or friend who is a licensed resident hunter. A hunter education course is not required to purchase this license. Their youth deer hunt is October 11-12 with a \$10 fee.

**Missouri** has an early youth deer season November 1-2 and is adding a late youth season January 3-4. Youths must be 6-15, except there is no minimum age for resident landowner youth hunting on their own property. Youth permits can be used for ages 6-15 who are not hunter education certified but are hunting in the immediate presence (close enough for

normal conversation without shouting) of a properly licensed adult who is hunter education certified. Missouri has also enacted a new mentored hunting program for hunters 16 and older who are not hunter education certified. An Apprentice Hunter Authorization can be purchased for \$10 in 2 consecutive years, but a firearms hunting permit is also required.

Apprentice hunters must hunt in the immediate presence of a properly licensed hunter 21 years old or older who is hunter-education certified. The mentor must also have a permit for the prescribed season.

**Michigan** has an Apprentice Hunting license for persons who have not completed a hunter safety course. This license can be purchased for 2 years. Apprentice hunters under age 17 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or someone 21 or older designated by their parent or guardian who possesses a valid regular hunting license. Apprentice hunters 17 and older must be accompanied by someone 21 or older with a valid regular license. The minimum age for a firearm deer license is 12, but youths 10-16 can purchase a junior archery license. Michigan has a 2-day youth and disabled veteran firearm deer season September 27-28. Youths 10-11 years old must use archery equipment and youths 12-13 may only hunt with a gun on private land. Youths must be accompanied by an adult 18 years or older. Approximately 25,000 participate in the 2-day youth season and harvest about 10,000 deer.

**Ohio** has a 2-day youth gun hunt November 22-23 for hunters 17 years old or younger. Youths must be accompanied by a non-hunting adult. The bag limit is 1 deer of either sex. The cost of a youth deer permit is \$12, ½ the cost of a regular deer permit. A valid hunting license and deer permit is required unless the youth is hunting on landowner by their parents (both license and permit waived) or grandparents (license waived). The non-hunting adult may only accompany 2 young hunters. Apprentice Hunting Licenses are available for up to 3 years for new hunters of all ages to sample the experience of hunting under the mentorship of a licensed adult age 21 or older prior to completing a hunter education course. The apprentice license costs \$10 for youths and \$19 for adults.

**Indiana** has a youth consolidated hunting and fishing license for \$7 that includes all hunting and fishing (small game, deer, turkey, all state stamps). Also offered are apprentice hunting licenses (\$7 for youth consolidated, \$24 for resident deer) for hunting without taking a hunter education class. Up to 3 apprentice licenses can be purchased in a lifetime. Apprentice hunters must be accompanied by a licensed hunter at least 18 years old. The mentor can accompany no more than 2 apprentice hunters. Youth deer season is Sept 27-28.

**Minnesota** – persons aged 10-11 may take big game without a license or firearm safety certificate if they are under the direct supervision and immediate reach of a parent or guardian who is licensed to take big game. Big game taken by a 10-11 year old must be tagged with the parent or guardian's license. Apprentice Hunter Validation is available for \$3.50 for residents who are 12 year old or older who have not completed hunter education.

These validations are good for 1 year and can be used once in a lifetime. Apprentice hunters must be accompanied by a licensed adult hunter and must purchase all applicable licenses and stamps.