

Magic Valley

Deer:

In recent years the mule deer population has fluctuated in response to winter fawn survival. Poor survival during the 2005-06 and 2007-08 winters depressed populations and resulted in a reduction in the post-season buck/doe ratio of 29 bucks per 100 does.

Consequently, hunters may find fewer 2-year-old and 4-year-old bucks in some areas.

A survey in Units 43, 44, 45, 48 and 52 showed a population decrease, which resulted in fewer doe tags. Winter survival rates improved, allowing for some recovery in deer numbers and providing a healthy crop of yearling bucks for this year's hunt.

In the southern part of the region, mule deer numbers have generally increased over the past five years. Recent surveys indicated midwinter populations of 8,461 deer in units 54 and 55. Hunters that draw a permit in these units should have good hunting.

Success rates have averaged more than 60 percent in recent years.

Recent surveys in Units 56 and 57 estimate 5,891 deer. The general mule deer season in Unit 56 was shortened by seven days and will end Oct. 24. The remainder of the region's general deer seasons will end Oct. 31.

Biologists in the region have collected teeth from mule deer bucks in an effort to relate buck age to antler development. Fish and Game needs front incisors and antler measurements from bucks harvested in the Magic Valley that may be older than 4 years. Hunters harvesting an older buck can help by calling (208) 324-4350.

Elk:

The region had good winter survival, but a helicopter survey of the Smoky Mountains Zone (Units 43, 44 and 48) showed the population has declined by about 20 percent, so controlled-hunt bull tags were reduced.

A survey in Unit 49 showed a stable elk population, but a reduction in bull numbers and 21 bulls per 100 cows. Consequently, Pioneer Zone controlled-hunt bull tags have been reduced and the general any-weapon spike hunt has been eliminated. The one-week spike elk hunt was removed from the Pioneer Zone "A" tag to help bull survival and improve bull/cow ratios.

The region added a general hunt for antlerless elk in a portion of the South Hills Zone. This hunt was designed to offer additional general hunting opportunity while reducing depredation on private land.

The elk population south of the Snake River is growing, so hunters may have high success rates in the new antlerless hunt in the Owyhee-South Hills Zone.

Because this hunt extends through Dec. 31, it provides ample opportunity during a busy hunting season.

In the Smoky Zone, surveys indicated a good bull/cow ratio of 32 bulls per 100 cows, so the spike hunt in Units 43 and 48 promises relatively good hunter success.

There is a muzzleloader antlerless elk hunt in Unit 56 on Nov. 16-30, and an any-weapon elk hunt in Unit 53 that continues through December 31.

General:

Hunters should be aware of new travel regulations in the Sawtooth National Forest.

Motorized vehicle maps are available that show the designated use for each road or trail that is open to motorized use. All cross-country motorized travel in the Sawtooth is prohibited, including for retrieval of game.

There are 37 properties in the Magic Valley Region that provide 182,832 acres through the Access Yes program. For maps go to www.fishandgame.idaho.gov and click on Access Yes.