

2023 Deer Management Recommendations



NATIONAL
DEER
ASSOCIATION

United for Deer



Lansing We Have A Problem



- Michigan has high deer densities throughout the Lower Peninsula and in parts of the U.P.
- We have Chronic Wasting Disease and Bovine Tuberculosis in our deer herds. Both diseases are fueled by high deer densities and older deer of both sexes are much more likely to be infected than young deer.
- The only way to manage deer densities is to harvest appropriate numbers of does. In most of Michigan we are not even coming close. A rule of thumb is that you need to harvest **at least** 1 doe per buck to slow or stop population growth. All states surrounding Michigan are at 1 or better antlerless per antlered. Michigan? In 2022 only .76 antlerless per antlered.
- Just about every antlerless regulatory lever has been pulled to increase doe harvest with minimal improvements
- “Continuing to do the same things and expecting different results is the definition of insanity”

The Status Quo Is Not Working

“We are in a world of hurt” Brian Frawley DNR
Wildlife Division April 13 NRC meeting

SUMMARY

- 1% decrease in the number of license buyers.
- 4% decrease in the number of people that went afield.
- 16% decrease in the number of deer harvested (buck harvest declined 11% and antlerless harvest declined by 23%).
- 65% of successful hunters reported that the harvest reporting app was easy to use.



We are Harvesting the Wrong Deer

The Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies Technical report on CWD recommends: “Focusing harvest of sufficient intensity on the segment of the population most likely to be infected could help reduce disease prevalence and subsequent transmission. Exploiting potential biases in removal of infected animals via harvest also could be used to enhance the efficacy of harvest as a control strategy”

Montcalm County Data provided by Chad Stewart April 2018

- Other than fawns, yearling bucks are the least likely deer to be infected with CWD with a .92% prevalence rate. Yet yearling bucks were by far the largest segment of the harvest and were 51% of tested bucks and 29% of total tested deer. In contrast yearling does had a slightly higher prevalence rate of .99% and were only 5.4% of tested deer
- Does 2.5 and older were 28% more likely to be infected than yearling bucks
- Due to a strong hunter bias towards harvesting bucks, there were 6 times as many 4.5+ year old does than 4.5+ year old bucks tested, and those **does had 5 times as many CWD detections.**
- Bucks were 57% of tested deer and does only 43%. A doe to buck ratio of only .75, ensuring that densities will continue to grow

Likewise, In Wisconsin, yearling bucks are only about half as likely to be infected as a mature doe. (Gear et al “Demographic Patterns and Harvest Vulnerability of Chronic Wasting Disease Infected White-Tailed Deer in Wisconsin”)

What is the segment of the population most likely to be infected? Older deer of both sexes. What is the segment of the herd that Michigan hunters are most biased towards harvesting? Big bucks

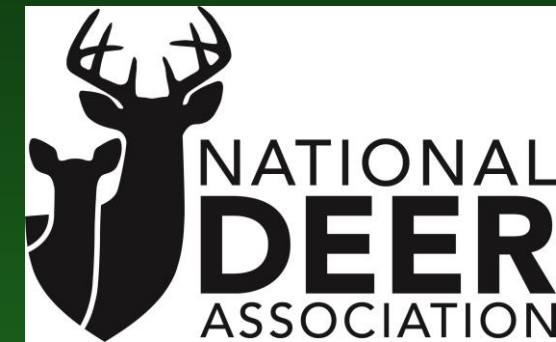
During the CWD experiment the 3 APR counties averaged 1.15 antlerless per antlered and that would have ranked them 5th in the state in 2022. Instead, with APR's removed, they fell to .70 antlerless to antlered with Ionia ranked 45th, Montcalm 57th & Mecosta 58th.



Yearling bucks are much less likely to be infected with CWD than older does or bucks, but are largest part of harvest

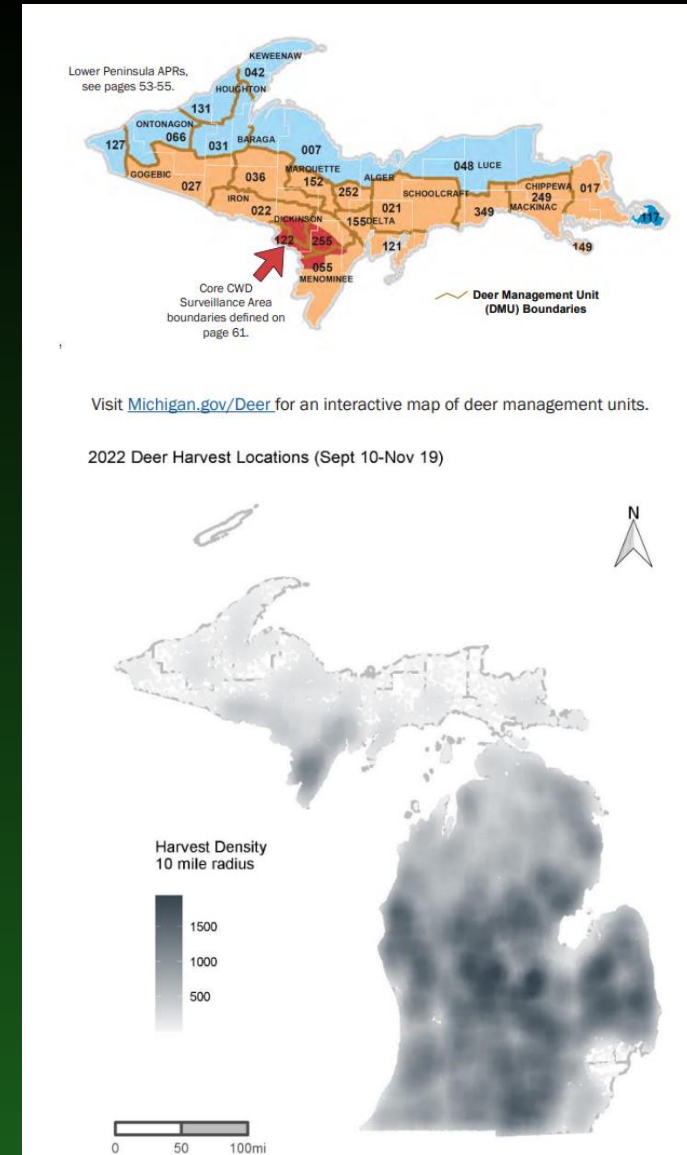
(Montcalm County CWD Harvest & Prevalence Data April 2018)

2017 & 2018							
Sex	Age	Negative	Positive	Total	Prevalence	% of tested	
male	0	422		422	0	5.00%	
male	1	2227	22	2249	0.978%	26.66%	
male	2	1168	24	1192	2.013%	14.13%	
male	3+	849	13	862	1.508%	10.22%	
male total	ALL	4666	59	4725	1.249%	56.02%	
female	0	404		404		4.79%	
female	1	741	7	748	0.936%	8.87%	
female	2	875	12	887	1.353%	10.52%	
female	3+	1651	20	1671	1.197%	19.81%	
female total	ALL	3671	39	3710	1.051%	43.98%	
2017-18 TOTAL	ALL	8337	98	8435			



Recommendation #1 Antler Point Restrictions

- Implement Antler Point Restrictions throughout the Lower Peninsula
- Restore APR's in DMU 122 and Hunters Choice in the rest of the U.P. CWD zone
- In the U.P., support APR implementation, in partnership with other U.P. deer groups, and where there are majorities of U.P. hunters in support.



What Are Antler Point Restrictions?

- Properly designed Antler Point Restrictions (APRs) protect the majority of yearly bucks while also allowing the harvest of the majority of 2.5+ year old bucks. In Michigan the number of antler points that are appropriate to achieve this goal; vary by zone and are determined by the DNR based upon biological data.
- Under an APR roughly 30% of yearling bucks are eligible for harvest & more yearling bucks will typically be harvested than yearling does.

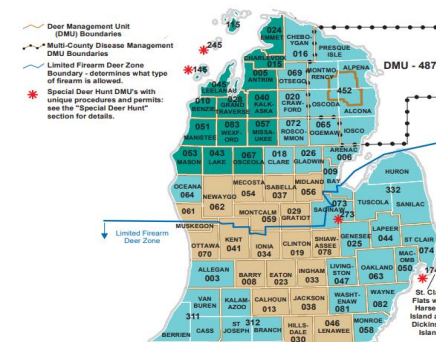
		Seasons		
		Archery	Firearm	Muzzleloader
Deer License	Regular Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
	Restricted Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
Deer Combo License	Regular Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
	Restricted Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
Deer License	Regular Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
	Restricted Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
Deer Combo License	Regular Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or
	Restricted Tag	Y or	Y or	Y or

Youth hunters 16 and younger and apprentice license holders are exempt from antler point restrictions in all seasons, in all deer management units and under all licenses, which also includes the four-point APR on the restricted tag. A legal buck is one with one antler 3 inches or longer.

NOTE: If the youth turns 17 during the season (or prior to it), he or she must follow APRs.

Antler Point Restriction Key	
Antlerless Deer	3 or more points* on one side
At least one antler 3 inches or longer	4 or more points* on one side

*A legal point must be at least 1 inch long as measured from its tip to the nearest edge of the antler beam.



Upper Peninsula APRs, see pages 58-59.



Why Antler Point Restrictions?


Hunters Love them and They Are Proven To Work In Michigan & Many other States

- “Pretty much every survey we are doing shows greater than 50% support for APR’s and, once implemented, support goes even higher” Chad Stewart, Deer & Elk Specialist, Michigan DNR. Michigan Out of Doors TV February 2023
- In 2018, the year prior to the start of the CWD management experiment, 62% of area hunters supported APR’s and 68% were in favor of the experiment
- According to DNR surveys, after 4 years, 76% of hunters in the NW12 supported APR’s up from 67% prior to implementation
- “It (APR’s) is probably, unequivocally the best regulation for improving the age structure of our deer” Chad Stewart, Deer & Elk Specialist, Michigan DNR, Michigan Out of Doors TV February 2023
- APR’s significantly improve antlerless to antlered harvest ratios and antlerless harvest.

Antler Point Restrictions - A Proven Management Tool

Harvest Data (2018-2021)

	←Pre-APR 2018		APR → 2019		2020		2021	
	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered	Antlerless	Antlered
34-Ionia	2,413	3,969	2,701	2,893	3,992	4,001	4,166	3,520
54-Mecosta	3,297	4,143	4,185	2,721	4,765	3,570	4,320	4,078
59-Montcalm	4,556	4,711	4,423	3,984	5,094	4,022	3,834	4,400
41-Kent	2,766	3,928	2,713	4,423	2,986	4,925	3,589	4,930
62-Newaygo	5,026	5,413	5,340	5,598	7,166	6,749	5,216	5,702
Ratio APR	0.79		1.18		1.19		1.03	
Ratio nonAPR	0.83		0.82		0.87		0.83	

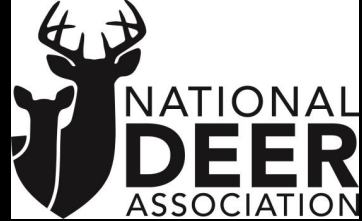


- APR's are currently implemented in 21 whitetail states
- Based upon DNR harvest data, during the CWD Management Experiment, antlerless harvest increase 24%.
- At the May and July 2017 NRC meetings Chad Stewart reported that after 4 years, in the NW APR counties, doe harvest was up by 13% while the surrounding counties were down 16%
- In the 2022 harvest data the NW APR counties continued to outperform the state as a whole in antlerless to antlered harvest ratio. The top county in the state is Lake, an APR county with a harvest ratio of 1.38 to 1. Six of the top ten counties had APR's and only one NW APR county was below the statewide average.
- Pennsylvania has had APR's for over 20 years, their antlerless to antlered ratio in 2021 was 1.6 antlerless per antlered!



Comparing Similar Counties in the CWD Management Experiment

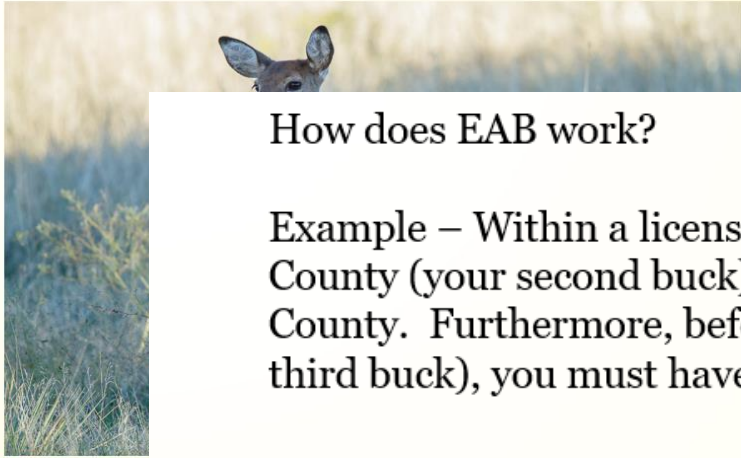
Counties with no CWD detections in the wild herd. Adjacent									
		Antlerless Harvest				2019 - 2021	APR Removed	During Experiment	
		2018 (No APR)	2019	2020	2021	Average	2022	% Change	
Mecosta	APR	3297	4185	4765	4320	4423	TBD	34%	
Antlerless per Antlered Ratio		0.80				1.32	0.68	65%	
Newaygo	No APR	5026	5537	7188	5216	5980	TBD	19%	
Antlerless per Antlered Ratio		0.93				0.99	0.88	6%	
Counties with CWD Detected in corners of the county. Adjacent									
		Antlerless Harvest				2019 - 2021			
		2018 (No APR)	2019	2020	2021	Average	2022	% Change	
Ionia	APR	2413	2701	3992	4166	3620	TBD	50%	
Antlerless per Antlered Ratio		0.61				1.04	0.74	70%	
Kent	No APR	2766	2713	2986	3589	3096	TBD	12%	
Antlerless per Antlered Ratio		0.71				0.65	0.64	-8%	
CWD Endemic Throughout County. No comparable control									
		Antlerless Harvest				2019 - 2021			
		2018 (No APR)	2019	2020	2021	Average	2022	% Change	
Montcalm		4398	4423	5094	3834	4450	TBD	1%	
Antlerless per Antlered Ratio		0.93				1.09	0.69	17%	



Combination License Change

- In those areas of the state where the department determines additional antlerless harvest is needed to control densities or disease, change the combination license to be for an antlered deer meeting regionally appropriate APR or an antlerless deer and an antlerless deer.
- Following the harvest of an antlerless deer on the combination license, a second either sex tag for an antlered APR deer or antlerless deer in that same county could be purchased or become eligible for use.

Virginia's Earn A Buck (EAB) Regulation/Experience

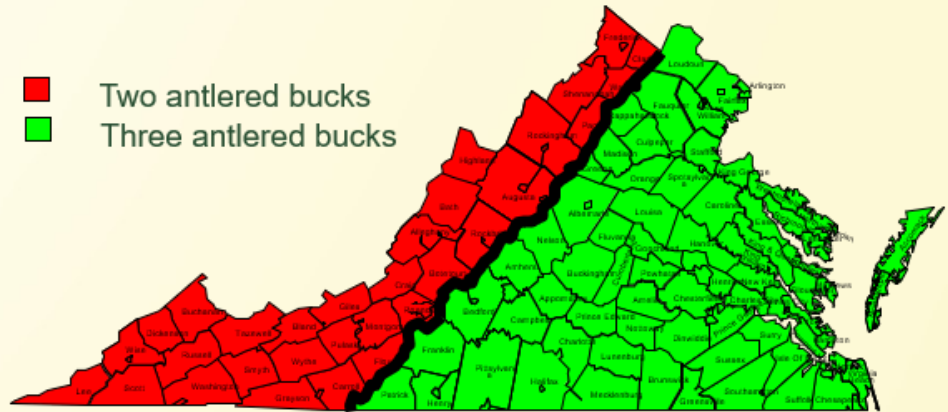
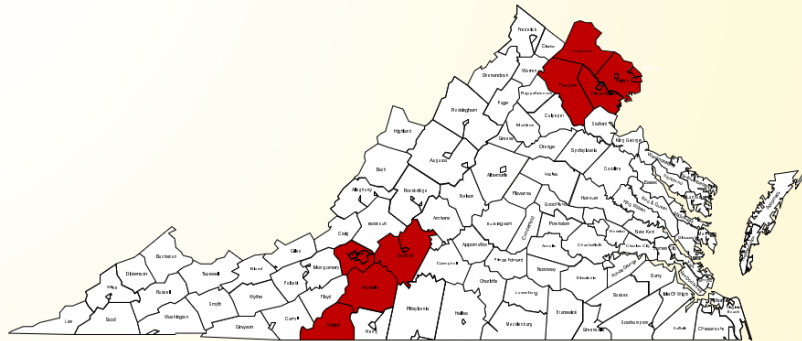


How does EAB work?

Example – Within a license year, before you can take a second antlered deer on private lands in Bedford County (your second buck), you must have taken at least one antlerless deer on private lands in Bedford County. Furthermore, before you can take a third antlered deer on private lands in Bedford County (your third buck), you must have taken at least two antlerless deer on private lands in Bedford County.

Virginia calls its similar program Earn a Second Buck (EASB)

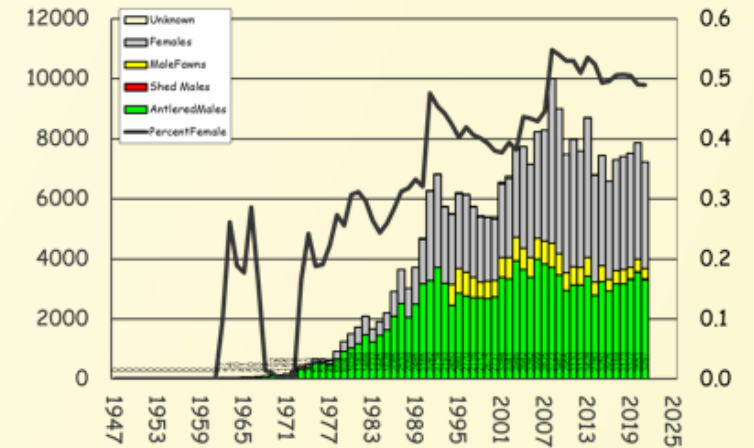
Virginia season buck limit



What about Phantom or Ghost Does?

By far the most common criticism of VA's EAB program are "phantom does" (i.e., deer hunters electronically reporting an antlerless deer kill when in fact no antlerless deer was actually killed).

A statistical test conducted after the initial 2008 EAB deer season indicated that there were 320 phantom does in Bedford County in a total reported deer kill of 10,011 (or 320 of the 5,487 female deer reported killed). This means the reported 54.8% female deer kill was actually 53.3%. Identical tests for three other adjoining counties resulted in similar phantom doe results.



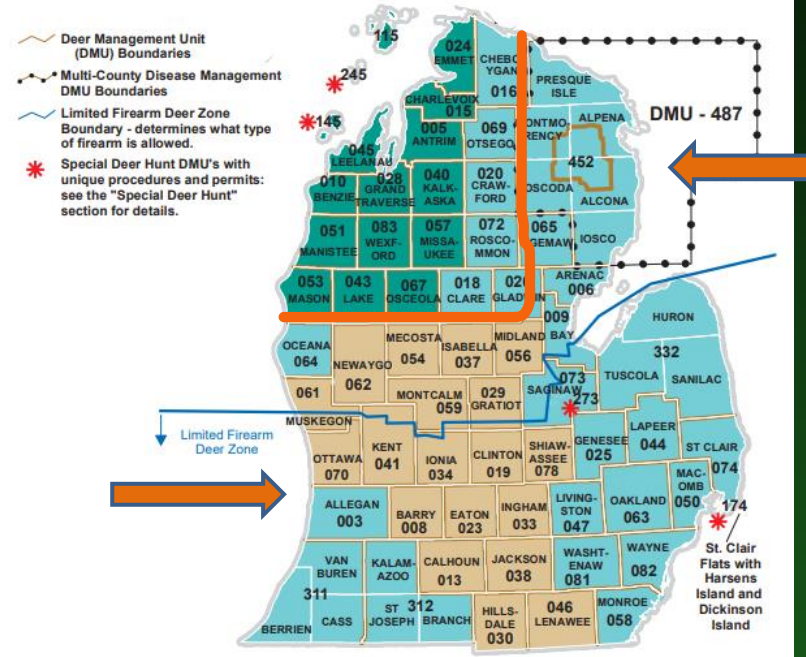
How Might Combination License Changes Be Applied?

(An example, the DNR will determine need & draw lines)

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Upper Peninsula APRs, see pages 58-59.



Non-Regulatory Initiatives & Advocacy

- Free & convenient CWD testing for hunters in CWD areas
 - More efficient & effective CWD surveillance
- Wildlife/Deer Cooperatives – hunters, farmers & landowners working together to benefit Michigan wildlife on more acreage than our State Game Areas
 - Would like the DNR to restore the cooperative coordinator position
 - Advocate for habitat grants to cooperatives and cooperative members
- Youth, disabled, veteran, and new adult mentored hunts and programs
- Feeding the less fortunate through venison donations
 - Advocate for expansion of Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger program
 - Local branch arrangements with local deer processors
- Hunter & wildlife habitat improvement education
- Expanding hunting access



Thank You!