

# **ARE WHITE-TAILED DEER VERMIN?**

By E. W. Grimes, Former Director/President, Maryland State Chapter of the Quality Deer Management Association

I've tried in the past when writing articles to be positive with the best facts available, opinionated somewhat, but with documented facts collected to support opinions and based on hands-on experiences.

When talking about White-tailed deer there are segregated groups with varying points of views. The largest group is the non-hunters which agree that deer should be managed so they (deer) don't eat their plantings around their houses, and stay out of the way of their cars. Maryland Public Attitudes Regarding Deer Management (any Maryland Annual Deer Report) a 2007 survey found 36% of the general public were strongly in favor of deer hunting, with 25% somewhat in favor, 19% neutral or had no opinion. It would be unfair to leave out the 10% were somewhat opposed to deer hunting, and 10% strongly opposed. 80% of general public that took part in survey favored, were neutral or no opinion. Similarly, 76% agreed or strongly agreed that deer should be hunted to MAINTAIN a healthy population. I would like to ask surveyors if they would allow safe hunting on/or around land near them? Common sense warrants where hunting is NOT allowed managing deer will NOT HAPPEN! Management hunts have been/are very successful on a few state lands, in Howard County and Montgomery County when true QDM management (harvest of female deer with limited harvest of male or antlered deer) is used. So why has other counties not embraced these successful programs? The programs (on going nearly 2 decades) are targeted properties where hunting is restricted and/or limited public lands.

Farmers, nurseries and others that grow produce or products from growing plants (forestry) must not have taken part in survey above; most tend to have the same opinion to kill every deer that may affect their produce and income. Well in most cases it's hard to find fault with their opinion. Most frustrated, they don't have the time or resources to significantly manage

deer populations, more so when deer are coming from other properties. This creates the problem for farmers, Department of Natural Resources, and Wildlife & Heritage Service and the affect on recreational and traditional hunting.



WHAT!!! How does this problem affect hunters???

The solution to the problem, Farmers (in general);

Political avenues, meaning putting pressure on the state departments to reduce and/or eradicate deer populations. Conclusions, DMP's (deer management permits) and liberal bag limits for recreational hunting. While regulated DMP's can and will result in reduction in the deer herd because on paper it targets antlerless deer (female deer). Crop Damage management using DMP's provide the opportunity for farmers to progressively manage deer populations on their lands. Regulations of DMP's include ½ hour before sunrise to ½ hour after sunset 365 days a year. Deer taken must be reported (checked-in) and deer taken must be consumed by permit holder or donated to others or charitable organization for the purpose of consumption. Even regulated DMP's has negative side when abused, antlerless includes button bucks for sure but shed and velvet bucks mistakes will happen went killing any and all deer. Another way to manage deer would be (proven to work on QDM Co-op's) to use the liberal bag limits to require hunters to harvest a doe or two before hunter can harvest a antlered buck.



When talking with farmers I will always ask do they require hunters on their land to harvest a female deer before a buck. I've be told by some farmers that some hunters will not shoot does, the solution is to have them hunt elsewhere. If hunters are unwilling to manage deer population, they are NOT helping the farmer's problem.

By limiting bucks with antler restrictions, will keep hunters managing deer on the property. Also having them only be able to shoot one buck, and done, does nothing to manage deer also.



By using hunters to manage property (even with DMPs) will be part of the solution and not part of the problem. Hunters managing properties can help stop trespassers and poachers targeting older class bucks. DMP's are supposed to be damage identified but are given out like candy at Halloween with some added bucks tags. Other horror stories include gut shot deer, deer piled up and not being used, some telling neighbors that they have permits when that is not true and using permits to harvest trophy bucks (pictured above). Yes, this was reported with no response! These deer were shot from farming equipment while crops were being managed. Note that the bucks were still in velvet when shot. Understanding that DMP's have their place but liberal bag limits for recreational hunting can/have reduced populations in areas other areas where younger bucks were passed tend to have much more content hunters.

The Department of Natural Resources and Wildlife & Heritage Service has the most difficult problem trying to keep all stakeholders and the public satisfied with goals of the 2009-2018 deer plan. To balance Population control and ensure the long-term

viability of Maryland's Deer, educate Marylanders on all aspects of deer biology, including management tools, disease issues, economic aspects and RECREATIONAL opportunities. Recreational Goal: Provide the opportunity for all hunting citizens to safely, fairly and ethically enjoy diverse deer-related recreational experiences and traditions consistent with deer population trends goals. In short, balancing politics with science and I'm certain political views weigh-in heavier than science. Herd reduction while not protecting (at least) yearling bucks in NOT QDM and is having a negative effect on our Deer and Deer Hunting.

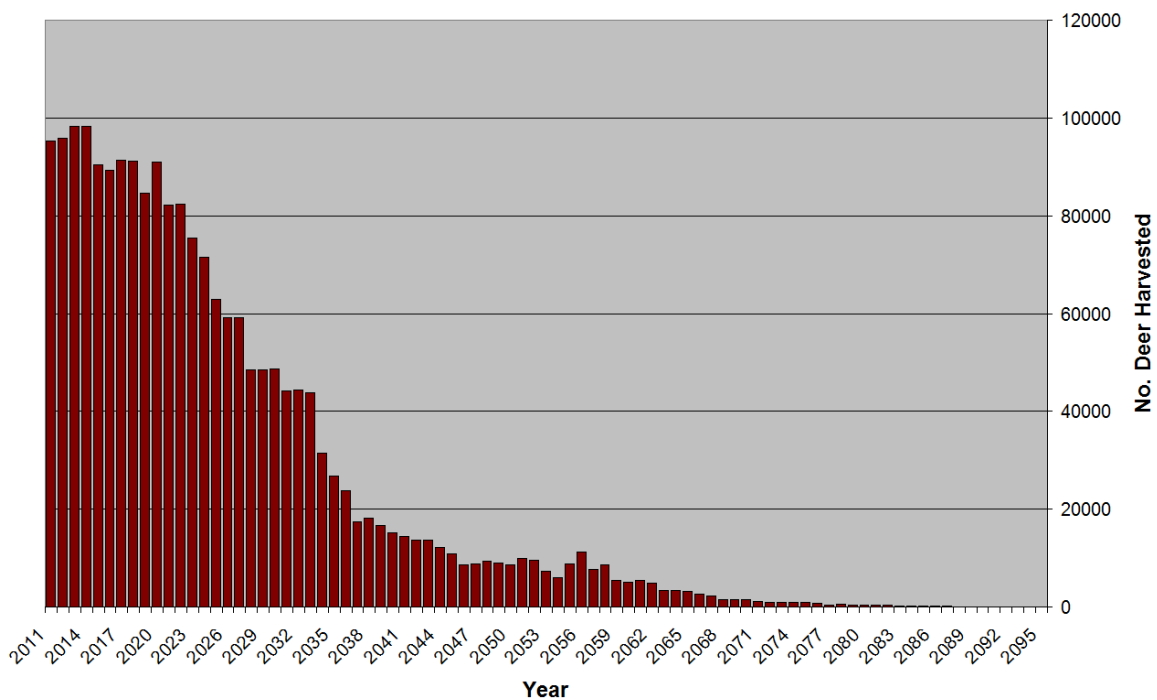
Deer Hunters may be the smallest group (less than 10%) with the most to lose, yet are self controlling when regulations fall short. My reasons that I say this is QDM Co-ops and some other hunters have proven reducing deer crop damage by doe management while passing younger bucks to ensure opportunities for future years. Reducing crop damage increases income for farmers which are proven to work, not just talk but results. Regulated liberal antler-less (female deer) harvest designed to reduce herd numbers hunters have stepped up to the task. However without regulating buck harvest, like the state and counties managed hunts, QDM Co-op managed properties, and not leaving out the hunters who voluntary pass younger bucks, has and does have an adverse effect on public and private lands regarding recreational hunting. How often have you heard hunters say "not seeing any deer"? Well if they were passing younger bucks and small antler-less deer their chances of see deer would increase. Self regulating only works when it is used.

Recreational hunting white-tailed deer is and remains the most cost-effective and efficient population control mechanism available where hunting can be utilized. However there are a lot of property owners, managers and public (cities, towns etc.) who WILL NOT USE recreational hunters. Reasons are it is easier to get DMPs through the regulated system, being able to make certain hunters are effective and most the time does not do any deer management. These property owners/managers that do nothing should be held responsible for deer damage on surrounding properties. These properties tend to be raped by trespassers, poachers and are policed by NRP and police departments. Solution; hunters and hunter groups (like QDMA Members) are willing to manage the deer population (harvest does) with the opportunity to harvest an older class buck. This does and will get measureable proven results. When the opportunity to harvest an older buck is removed from the management area results diminish. The new age hunter is a needed manager that offers a strong ethical hunting standard by promoting stewardship in the pursuit of deer.

Are White-tailed deer vermin? NO!!! So why manage as if they are? White-tailed deer hunting has a strong history from the early 1930's and 1940's with hunting seasons to allow growth and expansion of relocated deer herds when regulations enforced targeting 3" or more antlered deer and NO antlerless Harvest. Current deer seasons

and bag limits encourage (but not regulate) the harvest of antlerless (female) deer in order to manage deer populations and at the same time regulate bag limits to encourage hunters to be more selective with antlered buck harvest. In some areas this has been effective, but lately not so much. Recreational hunting provides significant economic benefits to Maryland, if fact hunters buy hunting licenses to hunt (manage), not eradicate the deer. Regulations that encourage harvesting antlerless deer without protecting younger bucks (1.5 year old) is not managing for the future. See the chart below for the projected deer harvest if regulations stay as they are; is this what recreational hunters want for their future? The future is in question!

## Deer Harvest



The QDMA mission statement: QDMA is dedicated to ENSURING the future of whitetail deer, wildlife habitat and OUR Hunting Heritage. How are deer doing in your area? Many areas in Maryland have reduced deer numbers. Time to manage (some areas past due) and regulate to ensure the future of our deer hunting heritage with science not politics. The use of DMPs should be managed to encourage recreational hunting, and offered after recreational regulated hunting has been tried. The positive recreational hunting benefits will be effective (proven) when available to all. Time for changes is now. Be proactive, NOT reactive!!!

Respectfully,



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Quality Deer Management Association



4-6  
months



11-13  
months



13-17  
months



17-20  
months



3.5  
years