

## **ODFW General Either Sex Archery Criteria Recommended by Archery Review Public Advisory Committee 2014**

**Criteria to move from a male only bag limit to either sex bag limit** for archers during the general archery season. The move from no or controlled antlerless archery harvest as part of the bag limit would be tied to both population level and recruitment of young animals into the adult age classes as represented by spring fawns/100 does or calves/100 cows at the end of winter.

A move from a male only to an either sex bag limit for general archery season can be made in advance of this criteria if ODFW believes the change would not result in negative consequences for the affected population in a unit.

These criteria describe a process for moving between either-sex and male only bag limits in units with general archery seasons. Units managed entirely with controlled hunts are not subject to these criteria since there is no general season to apply the bag limit changes described below. However, the controlled hunts in these units would include an antlerless animal in the bag limit under a similar thought process to the criteria in this document.

### **Elk:**

Population: 105% of Management Objective (MO) and rising for units with a MO of 2,000 or more animals.

110% of Management Objective (MO) and rising for units with a MO under 2,000 animals.

Recruitment: equal to or greater than 31 calves/100 cows in end of winter composition surveys for previous 3 years. No less than 2 surveys would be needed in last 3 years to make a determination. Lacking 2 or more surveys in 3 years would require additional years to obtain the necessary 2 surveys.

Distribution: Where a population is rising only because of increases in a specific portion of a unit, the either sex bag limit may be enabled only where the unit is experiencing growth.

### **Mule Deer:**

Population: 110% of Management Objective and rising.

Recruitment: Equal to or greater than 45 fawns/100 does in end of winter composition surveys for previous 3 years. No less than 2 surveys would be needed in last 3 years to make a determination. Lacking 2 or more surveys in 3 years would require additional years to obtain the necessary 2 surveys.

**Criteria to move from either sex general bag limit to male only** for general archery season. As with the criteria to move from male only to either sex bag limits for general archery seasons, the population relative to management objective for population level as well as recruitment of young animals to the adult age classes will be used to determine whether the bag limit during the general archery season will change to male only or remain as an either sex bag limit. Controlled either sex tags could still be offered in units moving from either sex to bull only bag limits during the general archery season.

These criteria describe a process for moving between either-sex and male only bag limits in units with general archery seasons. Units managed entirely with controlled hunts are not subject to these criteria since there is no general season to apply the bag limit changes described below. However, the controlled hunts in these units would include an antlerless animal in the bag limit under a similar thought process to the criteria in this document.

#### **Elk:**

Population: 100% of Management Objective and declining.

Recruitment: Equal to or less than 25 calves/100 cows in end of winter composition surveys during previous 3 years. No less than 2 surveys would be needed in last 3 years to make a determination. Lacking 2 or more surveys in 3 years would require additional years to obtain the necessary 2 surveys.

Distribution: Where a population is declining only because of poor production in a specific portion of a unit, the bag limit may be restricted to male only where the unit is experiencing decline, leaving the balance of the available for either sex harvest.

#### **Mule Deer:**

Population: 100% of Management Objective and declining.

Recruitment: Equal to or less than 30 fawns/100 does in end of winter composition surveys during previous 3 years. No less than 2 surveys would be needed in last 3 years to make a determination. Lacking 2 or more surveys in 3 years would require additional years to obtain the necessary 2 surveys.

**Notes for elk and mule deer criteria:** The Department could recommend changing the general season bag limit either below or above these thresholds if considered appropriate, the commitment is “it will be offered at these levels unless there is a specific reason it is not suitable”. For example, an additional consideration is the size of the population. If the population MO is a few hundred rather than several thousand it may not be appropriate to open it to antlerless hunt during a general season when the additional animals available is a relatively small number. Also, if a hard

winter, disease, or other factor causes a dramatic change in a population the Department may not wait for 3 years before proposing to change the bag limit.

General seasons cannot be changed immediately. There is a 1 ½ year delay between a decision to remove a certain bag limit and when it is implemented.

**Black-tailed Deer: Black-tailed deer are not subject to the criteria in this document.**

**Population:** Currently making reliable population estimates are difficult due to the behavior, habitat and inadequate management assessment methods. There are currently no Management Objectives for black-tailed deer. Since the late 1980's the total black-tailed deer population in western Oregon appears to be declining based on Department data including hunter harvest, hunter success rate, and field surveys conducted by biologists. While the Department believes there has been a widespread decline, it should be noted declines are not apparent or to the same extent in all areas. The reduction is likely related to the quality and quantity of habitat, increased incidences of disease, and higher rates of predation.

**Note:** In 2004 black-tailed deer either sex bag limit in the general archery season was changed to a legal buck only due to the above mentioned criteria in most western Oregon WMU's. ODFW is currently investigating new population estimation techniques, and until the apparent population decline can be stabilized and then reversed, the either sex bag limits in the general archery season will be unlikely to be reinstated.

## **ODFW Thought Process on Establishing Controlled Hunts for Either Sex Archery Hunts.**

These hunts are intended for times in animal management when the population is below Management Objective (MO) but producing some surplus animals that could be taken as harvest.

**Establishing hunts:** Hunts will generally be established when a population is below the triggers to move into general either sex archery hunting, but is still producing some surplus animals for harvest. Considerations involved in a decision to pursue a controlled hunt are as follows:

1. **Where the population is relative to MO:** The MO is not the sole deciding factor in considering whether or not to move from no antlerless archery hunting to a controlled hunt with limited tags, but is important in the decision since the establishment of a controlled hunt with an antlerless animal as part of the bag could have some effect on the population's ability to recover to MO if it is below that threshold at the time of consideration. The managing biologist would likely look at the success rates of hunts in other units to predict the likely harvest of antlerless animals in the hunt under consideration. Tag numbers would be set short of absorbing all of the biological surplus so some antlerless animals could remain to repopulate the unit.
2. **Herd Productivity:** The ratio of young per 100 adults would be considered to indicate whether the population was productive enough to provide a biological surplus of animals for both take as hunter harvest as well as young animals to serve as additional recruitment to the population for recovery. If the surplus is not enough to feed both needs, the harvest would be cut by reducing tags, or the hunt would be eliminated altogether if the surplus was not large enough.
3. **Animal Distribution:** This issue is especially relevant to archery season since most archery recreation and harvest occurs on public lands. Animal populations (especially elk) can be influenced to move to areas of more security at the expense of quality habitat in some cases. In recent years, this has been seen with elk in certain locations. Causes such as poor habitat conditions, as occurs in western Oregon, or animal disturbance which is increasingly happens in eastern Oregon move animals off higher elevation public land in favor of lower elevation private land. These animals stay on private land through the fall and are not available to the public land hunter for harvest. Some of these animals stay on private land year-round and are seldom available for harvest. However, they are still part of the Unit's MO number. A situation is created where an animal distribution shifts from perhaps 90% of the animals being on public land and 10% on private to 50% or less on public land. In such a case, the easily accessed population of animals on public land where most recreation occurs has been cut almost in half.

The increased number of animals on private land cause damage and also put pressure on areas intended for winter range. The land mass has little ability to withstand grazing for 3-4 extra months or in some cases, year-round. Antlerless rifle seasons are put in place for damage to satisfy our statutory responsibility to alleviate damage, but rarely result in a reversal of the movement due to lack of sufficient pressure on those private lands. Private land elk remain to over utilize winter range, cause agricultural damage, and exist as part of a unit's MO without providing much recreation to the hunter who is not affiliated with private land interests.

In a unit where animal redistribution to private land has occurred, some reserve will be exercised in adding additional pressure in the way of antlerless hunting. If the antlerless recreation disturbance is purely additive, as is the case with antlerless hunts with distinct and separate timeframes, the season will have significant additive effect toward animal disturbance which will contribute to displacement from public land. In the case of a controlled season that occurs concurrent with a general season which will likely recruit hunters from the general season base, significantly less disturbance effect would be expected. In the case of the concurrent controlled season, some recreation could occur with less chance of increased disturbance effect to the public land elk resource. Where the public land animal disturbance is viewed as unsupportable, but recreational opportunity still exists on private lands, a season may be established for either sex harvest on the animals shifted to private lands only with antlerless protections remaining on public or accessible lands.

**Removing Hunts:** The decision to remove a hunt will be based on consideration of a number of similar factors associated with establishing hunts. The goal of these controlled hunts is to provide available either sex recreation on the affected animal population that doesn't negatively affect the performance of the population. Hunts that remove animals from a population in excess of the population's ability to sustain without damage would be eliminated. Specific factors considered are as follows:

1. **Relation to MO:** Populations below MO and declining are typically unable to withstand harvest from any antlerless hunts unless the actual harvest is insignificant to the population as a whole. Hunts taking significant numbers of antlerless animals in declining populations below MO would either be eliminated or tag numbers would be reduced to nearly insignificant levels. Priority of protection would be placed on animals residing on public lands which provide most of the recreational opportunities for the typical hunter.
2. **Herd Productivity:** If a population is below MO and the productivity has declined to the point of herd reduction in the absence of antlerless hunting. Any remaining sources of antlerless harvest would be eliminated on public land elk and would be reduced where agricultural damage is not occurring. Even in the situation where herd levels are in serious decline, ODFW has no ability to ignore big game damage to private land resources. As a result, agricultural damage harvest often continues to occur when populations are well below MO.
3. **Animal Distribution:** Similar to the description above, where a significant percentage of animals previously residing on public land have shifted to private land for most or all of the year in a manner which prevents recreation by the average hunter, tags would be reduced or eliminated where their continued existence contributed to excessive disturbance of animals on public land. The change would be made with reference to whether the loss of the hunt would contribute to correcting the issue of animal displacement. Where animal displacement would not be reduced by the elimination of a controlled hunt, the hunt would remain, although reduced tag numbers would be likely.