

November 2012

MDC Deer Cooperative Newsletter

Upcoming Management Practices to Implement:

- **November**
 - Apply first round of herbicide to fields to start converting them to warm season grasses
 - Remember to record harvest data for all deer harvested
- **December**
 - Remove cedar trees to restore glade habitats
 - Select sites with undesirable trees to create temporary forest openings
- **January**
 - Overseed winter wheat food plots with a legume such as red clover for fall 2013 green browse plots
 - Hold a cooperative meeting to review hunting season and age jawbones

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Pulling the Trigger

With the November Firearms portion just wrapping up and antlerless portion in full gear in certain areas throughout the state, deer hunting and management is on every deer fanatics' brain!

Remember every time you pull (or do not pull) the trigger...that is a management decision! The decisions made this year will affect the deer herd for years to come, affecting population size but also the age structure (affecting antler size) and adult sex ratio!



Get Ready for the 2013 Deer Season

By: Paul Lowry

Deer Season will be over before we know it, so what should you do? Get ready for hunting next year, of course!

This is a great time to contact your local Private Land Conservationist (PLC) or Forester to discuss possibilities for improving forests and wildlife habitats on your farm. Timber Stand Improvement (TSI) can increase browse, bedding/fawning cover, and also increase hard and soft mast production. Identifying the correct trees to remove and spacing of keeper trees is key. The goal of TSI is to increase sunlight to the forest floor, stimulating both herbaceous and woody plant growth. By removing competing trees of lower benefit to wildlife, you also increase sunlight to tree canopies. Think of this as weeding the garden so to speak. This will provide more forage and cover for deer and other wildlife.



A PLC or Forester can mark trees for you to cut, assist with tree identification, and discuss possible cost share opportunities. Cooperative members can also make quick work of TSI projects by assisting one another. Not only will the project be completed much quicker, but you will also see the benefits of working closely with your neighbors.

To contact your local PLC or Forester, go to: www.mdc.mo.gov and click to search for your "Local Contact".

HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE UPDATE

By: Emily Flinn

Unfortunately, statewide reports of Hemorrhagic Disease (HD), which includes the EHD and Bluetongue viruses, increased significantly since the last newsletter to over 6,100 reports statewide. This likely makes 2012 the most widespread and severe hemorrhagic disease outbreak in Missouri on record. The map below illustrates the number of suspected hemorrhagic disease reports per county.

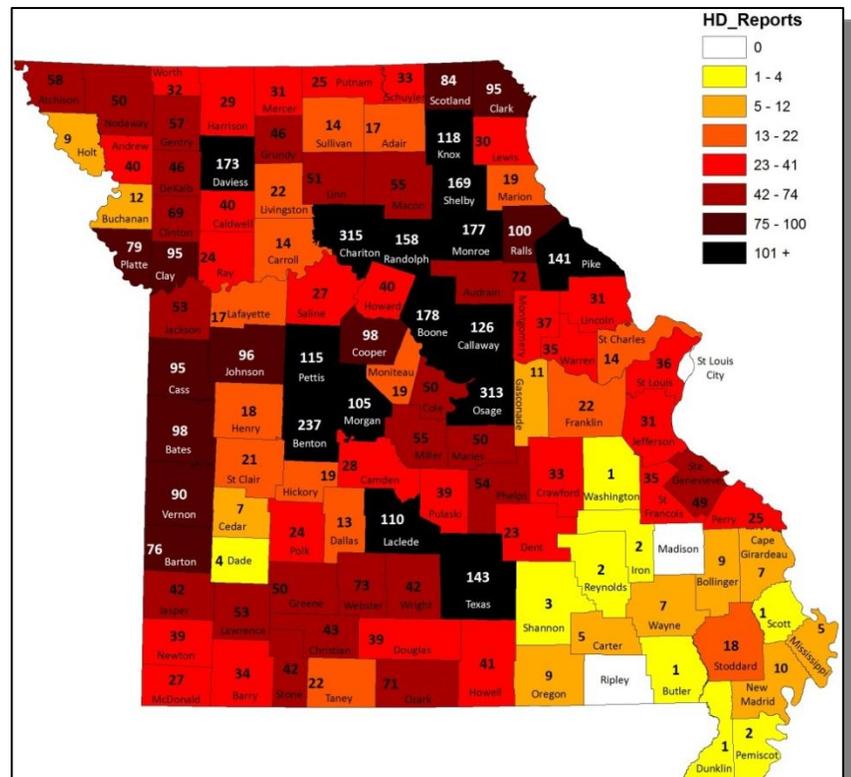
These viruses are spread by a biting midge-fly, and therefore, cooler weather decreases the abundance of the midge, resulting in significantly less hemorrhagic disease reports. And although reports are significantly have decreased significantly, there are still newly infected deer being reported. During other significant hemorrhagic disease outbreaks, infected deer have been reported as late as December.

Hemorrhagic disease can often affect deer populations within a local level, meaning that one area of the county might have significant hemorrhagic disease mortality and another area might have none. Therefore, if you observe significantly less deer than normal or found several deer carcasses typical of hemorrhagic, then you should consider harvesting less does than a typical season if the herd level was ideal prior to the hemorrhagic outbreak. A common mistake is that hunters see less deer, but still attempt to harvest similar numbers as a normal year causing further declines in the deer herd and reducing hunting conditions for years to come.



Although infrequent in Missouri, some deer can survive hemorrhagic disease. These survivors often have lingering effects from the disease that are exhibited in the hooves by growth interruptions or sloughing of the hoof wall.

If you find sick or dead deer (with unexplained cause), please contact your local MDC Conservation Agent or office.



Top Right Photo: EHD positive buck from Howard County
Bottom Left Photo: Residual HD effects of sloughing hooves
Map: Suspected HD cases as of 11/6/12

THE ACORN EFFECT

By: Emily Flinn

Mast surveys conducted by the Missouri Dept. of Conservation determined that this year's overall acorn crop is the lowest on record. The red and white acorns combined are ~60% lower when compared to last year's crop. Although this will provide less food for deer and other wildlife, it can benefit hunters, especially in southern Missouri where there are large woodlands because deer will have to utilize other food sources, especially fields, which will increase sightings, thus opportunities for hunters to harvest deer.

Although everyone wants more hunting opportunities, this might provide a false outlook on the effect of hemorrhagic disease on the local deer population. As mentioned in the hemorrhagic update on previous page, hunters will still see deer but might be slightly fewer than previous years, regardless they'll attempt to harvest similar numbers. Then a couple years later become alarmed when the deer population decreases. In reality, hemorrhagic might have caused significant deer mortality, but might not be as apparent because deer have to travel more in search of food due to the lack of acorns. Therefore, if you found sick or dead deer typical of hemorrhagic and suspect the herd did decrease, then you might want to harvest less does this year or at least discuss this with other cooperative members.

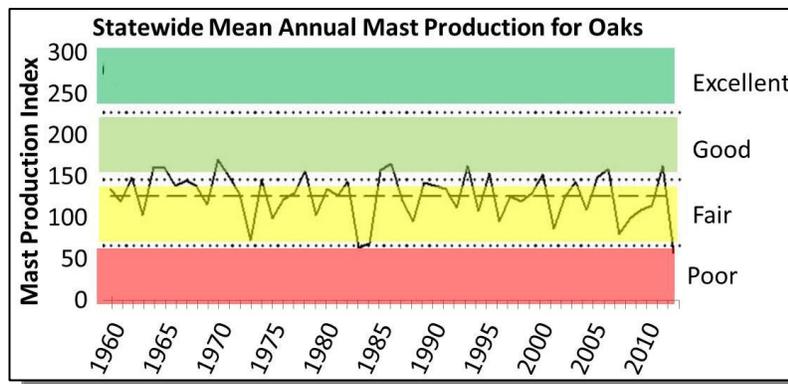


Figure from the 2012 MDC Oak Mast Survey Report.

TIMING OF THE RUT

By: Emily Flinn

Despite articles in magazines and popular books, the timing of the rut is not controlled by moon phase or weather but mainly by photoperiod (day length) and genetics. This might have less allure than determining the rut based on equations involving the moon phase, but if you are looking for the truth... here it is.

The shortening of daylight causes reproductive hormones to increase, triggering breeding behavior. Breeding is often synchronized with the optimum time of the year to increase the survival of fawns, therefore, breeding timing will not vary drastically from year to year. Since pregnancy in deer lasts approximately 200 days, then breeding needs to be at a time that causes fawns to be born late enough that their mothers have plenty of food sources for lactation demands, but early enough to allow fawns to achieve substantial weight before winter. Furthermore, breeding timing is controlled by the doe and not influenced by the buck. However, if a doe is not bred during her first estrus cycle, she might "re-cycle" 28 days later for another breeding opportunity.

However, there are other factors that can affect when an individual doe enters into estrus, or is able to breed. One is age, as some female fawns (~6 months) do breed, but normally around mid-December which is later than adults (1.5+ year olds). The internal "trigger" that determines the optimum breeding timing for fawn survival is also thought to be influenced by genetics.



Deer Hunting Seasons Still to Come!

Archery –
11/21 – 1/15
Statewide

Antlerless –
11/21 – 12/2
Select Areas
(See pg18 of Fall Deer &
Turkey Booklet)

Alternative Weapons –
12/15 – 12/25
Statewide

Late Youth–
12/29 – 12/30
Statewide

Check out the Deer
Publication Series for
landowners and
hunters at
www.extension.missouri.edu/deer



WRAPPING IT UP...

Now is the time to remember that every pull of the trigger is a management decision. Therefore, keep in mind your deer management goals when harvesting deer today!

Have a safe and enjoyable season!

COOPERATIVE NEWS & UPDATES

Ozark Scenic Wildlife Cooperative – Congratulations to several Cooperative members with deer and turkey hunting success this year! Jeff Harnden was among those lucky enough to harvest what he thought was a 2-3 year old doe. When looking at her jawbone, He discovered she was **MUCH OLDER!!** This doe weighed 87 lbs. dressed weight (115 lbs. live).



Congrats to Jeff on a memorable deer harvest and doing an excellent job collecting harvest data!!

HOW TO INCLUDE YOUR COOPERATIVE'S INFO...

To include your cooperative's information, including past and upcoming meetings, habitat work, hunting success (pictures), etc. in the newsletter contact Emily Flinn (below).



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