

**STATE OF NEVADA  
BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS**

**Commission Policy Number 24**

**Title :** Hunting Opportunities Among Various Weapon Classes and Hunter Groups

**Reference:** NRS 501.105, 501.181

**Effective Date:** May 13, 2006

**Amended Date:** January 27, 2024

**PURPOSE**

To establish hunting opportunities for the various weapon and hunter groups.

**POLICY**

It is the policy of the Board of Wildlife Commissioners to approve harvest levels for big game species based on a fixed allocation for the various weapon and hunter groups for hunting opportunity and incorporating hunter success rates for those weapon groups.

**FINDINGS**

After due deliberation and consideration of the relevant information presented, the Commission makes the following findings:

1. The Commission has a duty to provide hunting opportunity in Nevada.
2. Hunting in Nevada is an important activity for its citizens for many reasons, including but not limited to the following values that hunting provides:
  - A lean, healthy source of protein.
  - Family and other social interaction.
  - A link to Nevada's outdoor history, culture, and traditions.
  - A source of physical exercise important for maintaining health and fitness.
  - Appreciation for the natural habitat and scenic landscape, which is a major component of Nevada's quality of life.
  - Public support for Nevada's wildlife management programs.
  - One of the principal sources of wildlife management funding in Nevada.
3. The Commission takes administrative notice of Nevada's wildlife-limiting climatic and habitat conditions. These include precipitation averages that make Nevada the driest state in the nation, and Great Basin and Mojave Desert vegetation and geography types that provide limited forage and cover. These limiting conditions prevent Nevada's wildlife populations from reaching numbers comparable to those of other states.

4. Due to Nevada's relatively low wildlife numbers and its increasing human population, it is necessary to manage big game hunting opportunities in the State.
5. Nevada's already-limited resident hunting opportunities would be significantly lowered if nonresidents competed equally with residents for big game tags or were given a greater advantage. Such a change would be against the public interest.
6. Given the geographic and climatic constraints of Nevada's natural environment, the Commission — with the support of both resident and nonresident hunters — has elected to emphasize a sustained quality hunting experience rather than attempt to match the quantity of hunting opportunities available in other states. To do so, the Commission has consistently applied a conservative strategy that, compared to other states, maintains a high male to female ratio among big game populations.
7. When given the option, hunters overwhelmingly choose any legal weapon hunts on their big game application. However, hunters generally experience higher success rates during any legal weapon season than other weapon groups (i.e., muzzleloader, archery). Higher success rates yield fewer tags when expanding desired harvest to tag quotas. The Commission has adopted a Fixed Allocation-Tag Success formula for determining tag quotas. In most cases, this will result in the redistribution of desired harvest from any legal weapon to primitive weapon groups, yielding a greater number of tags available for primitive weapon hunts.

### **TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Antelope With Horns Shorter Than Ears:** In accordance with NAC 502.003, any pronghorn antelope without horns or with both horns that are shorter than its ears. Generally considered to be a doe (female), fawn, or young male antelope.

**Antelope With Horns Longer Than Ears:** In accordance with NAC 502.002, "antelope with horns longer than its ears," any pronghorn antelope having at least one horn that is longer than either ear of the antelope. Generally considered to be a mature male antelope.

**Antlered Deer:** In accordance with NAC 502.007, "antlered deer," any deer having at least one antler that is visible above the hairline of the deer. Generally considered to be a buck (male) deer.

**Antlered Elk:** In accordance with NAC 502.0074, "antlered elk" means any elk having at least one antler that is visible above the hairline of the elk. Generally considered to be a bull (male) elk.

**Antlered Moose:** Any moose having at least one antler that is visible above the hairline of the moose. Generally considered to be a bull (male) moose.

**Antlerless Deer:** In accordance with NAC 502.008, “antlerless deer,” any deer without antlers. Generally considered to be a doe (female) or fawn deer.

**Antlerless Elk:** In accordance with NAC 502.009, any elk without antlers. Generally considered to be a cow (female) or calf.

**Antlerless Moose:** Any moose without antlers. Generally considered to be a cow (female) or calf.

**Big Game:** For this policy, big game means all big game mammals except mountain lion.

**Billy:** Any male mountain goat.

**Boar:** Any male black bear.

**Demand\*:** Demand is defined as the measure of interest that a particular hunter group has in attaining a big game tag based on applications from previous years for a given weapon group. Demand is defined as the First Choice of unsuccessful applicants combined with successful applicants for all choices.

\*The definition of demand is provided for historical context.

**Ewe:** In accordance with NAC 502.345, any female bighorn sheep having a horn or horns of at least 5 inches in length each as measured on the outside curve of the horn from the skull to the tip.

**Expand:** Taking a projected number of harvested animals and dividing by the expected hunter success rate to generate a tag allocation.

**Fixed Allocation:** A fixed percentage of desired harvest allocated to any big game species and weapon group.

**Hunter Groups:** Residents of Nevada, resident juniors, and people who are not residents of Nevada.

**Harvest Objectives:** The numbers of male and female big game animals that the Department has determined can be safely removed from a population through harvest without causing detrimental impacts to that population.

**Hunter Success:** Percentage of tag holders reporting they hunted and harvested a big game animal. Hunter success calculations omit those tag holders that did not hunt. This definition is provided merely for clarification purposes as this metric is not used in the Tag-Demand Success formula for developing a quota for any species.

**Junior Hunter:** In accordance with NAC 502.063, generally a person between 12 years and 18 years.

**Management Ram Hunt:** Ram hunts that seek to achieve a specific population management objective beyond a standard hunt and may vary for the type of ram targeted. These may include broken-horn hunts, young ram hunts, hunts in areas where rams are extremely difficult to locate, or hunts designed to remove rams due to disease or rams found in undesirable areas.

**Nanny:** Any female mountain goat.

**Nonresident:** Anyone who does not meet the requirements for residents set in NRS 502.015.

**Projected Male Harvest:** A projected number of males reported to be harvested that will result in a desired post-hunt male to female ratio objective.

**Projected Female (*antlerless deer, antlerless elk, antelope with horns shorter than ears, or bighorn ewe*) Harvest:** A projected number of females reported to be harvested to achieve various management objectives; maintaining population numbers in balance with habitat conditions, optimal levels for a given species, or below a level set in local management plans; optimum sustained yield during periods of average to exceptional environmental conditions; and/or providing for recreational opportunity.

**Ram:** Any male bighorn sheep.

**Resident:** In accordance with NRS 502.015, a person is a resident of the State of Nevada if they are a United States citizen who has maintained his or her principal and permanent residence in Nevada for six months next preceding the application and has not purchased or applied for any resident hunting, fishing, or trapping privileges in another state, country, or province.

**Sow:** Any female black bear.

**Spike Elk:** In accordance with NAC 502.104, spike-only elk hunts are intended to target young bulls (males). A spike elk means any antlered elk having no more than 2 antler points on either antler.

**Tag Success:** Percentage of tag holders responding to their hunt survey stating they were successful in harvesting a big game animal. Tag success calculations treat those that did not hunt as unsuccessful. Tag success, used in the Fixed Allocation-Tag Success formula, will be primarily based on tag success rates from previous years for a given hunter group and unit group. A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates.

**Unit Groups:** A defined geographic area within Nevada where separate or conjoined population assessments, harvest objectives, and other management actions are applied.

**Weapons Groups:** Any legal weapon, muzzleloader, and archery.

### **GENERAL RULES — ALL SPECIES**

Population estimates of males and females (one year-old or older) for each unit group at the pre-hunt period (late summer) will be the basis for determining desired harvest levels for each species class.

The Commission approves the projected male and female harvest levels among those weapons and hunter groups that are identified for each unit group through the public scoping process involving the County Advisory Boards to Manage Wildlife and interested publics and approved by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

### **FIRST COME FIRST SERVED**

Any tag remaining after the big game draws, returned to the Department with no eligible alternate, or returned to the Department with less than 14 days before the season opener may be offered for purchase to both residents and nonresidents in the First Come, First Served program. Returned resident tags will be designated for residents and returned nonresident tags will be designated for nonresidents.

### **FIXED ALLOCATION-TAG SUCCESS**

A Fixed Allocation-Tag Success formula will be used to generate tag quotas for various weapon groups for deer, elk, and antelope.

Tag success, used in the Fixed Allocation-Tag Success formula, will be primarily based on tag success rates from previous years for a given hunter group and unit group. A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates. Tag success must be used in the Fixed Allocation-Tag Success Formula to achieve desired harvest while accommodating tag holders that do not hunt.

### **RESIDENT AND NONRESIDENT TAG ALLOCATION**

The Commission strives to allocate approximately 90 percent of available quota to resident hunters and 10 percent of available quota to nonresident hunters for males of each big game species in the Main Draw.

### **PARTY HUNT QUOTA MINIMUM**

For deer, antlerless elk, and horns shorter than ears antelope hunts, the minimum tag quota will be two to allow applicants who wish to apply as a party to apply and have a chance of drawing those tags.

## **SPECIFIC RULES — BY SPECIES**

### **MULE DEER**

#### **Allocation of Desired Harvest by Weapon Group**

The Fixed Allocation – Tag Success process for determining antlered mule deer hunting quotas will be as follows:

For Standard, Alternative and Non-Standard Hunt Units (see Game Division Big Game Management Objectives)

1. Determine the desired animal harvest for each unit group based on the pre-hunt population estimate and desired male to female ratio (typically 30 bucks per 100 does).
2. Apportion the desired harvest into the various weapon groups based on Fixed Allocation.
3. Apportion the desired harvest of 25 percent to Junior Hunters (Juniors).
  - a. Junior hunts may be divided into Any Legal Weapon, Archery, Muzzleloader, or any combination of the three weapon groups to allow for increased Junior participation.
  - b. Junior deer tags will be considered antlered deer tags except in areas that have open antlerless deer hunts, where they will be considered either-sex tags.
  - c. Juniors can apply for five years before the age of 18.
4. For standard, alternative, and non-standard hunt units, the fixed allocation will be set as follows:
  - Any Legal Weapon = 57 percent
  - Archery = 10 percent
  - Muzzleloader = 8 percent.
5. Determine final quota for each unit group and weapon group by dividing the desired harvest by the previous 3-year average tag success rate.

A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates.

## ELK

### Allocation of Desired Harvest by Weapon Group

1. Modeled changes in population size, bull-cow ratios, and percent of main beams  $\geq$  50-inch reported by hunters from previous years will be assessed to determine desired elk harvest. Using fixed allocations, the projected antlered and antlerless harvest will be distributed among the various weapon groups identified for a given elk class and unit group. The projected harvest, once allocated among the weapon groups, will then be divided by tag success for the appropriate weapon group to determine the recommended tag quota.
2. Apportion the desired harvest into the various weapon groups based on a fixed allocation for all hunt units as follows:

	Any Legal Weapon	Archery	Muzzleloader
Antlered Elk	75%	15%	10%
Antlerless Elk	80%	8%	12%

3. Infrequently, deviations from fixed allocation will occur to accommodate special circumstances (i.e., changing season structures, unit groups without all weapon classes, low tag success, etc.).
4. Weapon groups for depredation hunts and spike-only hunts will be solely Any Legal Weapon. Allocation of spike harvest may be a portion of the desired antlered harvest attributed to Any Legal Weapon or may be independent of desired antlered harvest to meet bull ratio objectives.

## ANTELOPE

### Allocation of Desired Harvest by Weapon Group

The Fixed Allocation-Tag Success process for determining quotas for antelope with Horns Longer than Ears will be as follows:

For standard Hunt Units (see Game Division Big Game Management Objectives)

1. Determine the desired animal harvest for each unit group based on the pre-hunt population estimate and desired male to female ratio (typically 20-30 bucks, 2 years old or greater, per 100 does).
2. Apportion the desired harvest into the various weapon classes based on a fixed allocation for all standard hunt units as follows:
  - Any Legal Weapon = 85 percent

- Archery = 10 percent
- Muzzleloader = 5 percent

Horns shorter than ears harvest will be based on the tag success of the previous 3 years for a given hunter group and unit group. A long-term or statewide average may be used to moderate erratic variations in tag success rates.

## **BIGHORN SHEEP**

### **Weapon, Hunter Groups, and Animal Classes**

Bighorn ram and ewe hunting opportunities will involve any legal weapon and archery weapon groups. Management ram hunts may be implemented in unit groups where broken-horned rams may exist, where reduced ram densities are desired, and where consistently low ram tag success occurs.

### **Allocation of Desired Harvest by Hunter Group**

Tag success rates will not be used to expand either the projected ram or ewe harvest.

## **MOUNTAIN GOAT**

### **Weapon, Hunter Groups, and Animal Classes**

Mountain goat hunting opportunities may consist of any mountain goat (male or female), or billy only. Hunts are any legal weapon only.

### **Allocation of Desired Harvest by Hunter Group**

Tag success rates will not be used to expand the projected mountain goat harvest.

## **MOOSE**

### **Weapon, Hunter Groups, and Animal Classes**

Hunting opportunities for moose may consist of any moose (male or female), antlered-only, or antlerless-only. Initial hunts will only be offered for antlered moose. The designated weapon group will initially be Any Legal Weapon but may be subject to other weapon groups if the population increases sufficiently.



**Allocation of Desired Harvest by Hunter Group**

The Fixed Allocation-Tag Success formula will not be used to expand the desired moose harvest.

This policy shall remain in effect until amended, repealed, or superseded by the Board of Wildlife Commissioners.

*BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF WILDLIFE COMMISSIONERS IN REGULAR SESSION, JANUARY 27, 2024.*



Chairman Tommy Caviglia  
Board of Wildlife Commissioners