

WAFWA Survey Questions December 2020

The following response are from the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (Department)

For additional information, contact:

Scott Edberg, Deputy Chief, Wildlife Division

Scott.edberg@wyo.gov

307-473-3404 (office)

NOTE Big game in Wyoming means elk, moose, mule deer, white-tailed deer, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep and mountain goat.

1. Does your agency give landowners big game permits or vouchers that they can use or sell to compensate landowners or offset crop damage? If so, are the permits for antlerless animals, bucks/bulls, or both? Please explain the details of these permits or vouchers?

No

2. Are landowners allowed to remove big game animals depredating on private lands in an effort to protect their agricultural resources? If so, under what circumstances?

Yes in accordance with Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Chapter 56 Regulation Governing Lethal Taking of Wildlife (https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/REGULATIONS_CH56). Landowners or their agents & be included as a person who may take big animals causing damage under the direction and supervision of the Chapter 56 permittee. In most instances, the permittee is the appropriate regional wildlife supervisor where the damage is occurring and provides all oversight, direction and permit implementation.

3. Does your agency call depredation hunts to target populations on private lands?

Yes, in accordance with Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Chapter 34 Depredation Prevention Hunting Seasons (https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/REGULATIONS_CH34) Note this regulation is currently being revised and will be updated sometime in late spring/early summer 2021.

The Department has not implemented a depredation hunting season for many years. It currently uses annual hunting season dates, license issuance and license limitations as a primary means to reduce big game animals causing damage on private and adjacent public lands.

similar program that promotes hunting on private property?

Yes, several of our deer, elk and pronghorn hunt areas/seasons have seasons/limitations to address big game damage. Some examples are: valid on _____, valid on or within one (1) mile of irrigated _____ & _____ -half (1/2) mile of _____,

, antlered deer off private land; any deer on private &
. Most of these season are for antlerless animals and are reduced price doe/fawn deer and antelope licenses and cow/calf elk licenses.

Examples can be found at the following:

2020 Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Chapter 5 Antelope Seasons

https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/REGULATIONS_CH5.pdf

2020 Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Chapter 6 Deer Seasons

https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/REGULATIONS_CH6.pdf

2020 Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Chapter 6 Elk Seasons

https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/REGULATIONS_CH7.pdf

5. What type of landowner incentive programs does your agency have that promotes wildlife and allows public hunters on private property (e.g., ranching for wildlife in CO or - programs where landowners financially benefit from big game)?

Wyoming Access Yes Program (<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/public-access>), which for hunting, is comprised of Walk-In Hunting Areas (WIHA), Hunter Management Areas (HMA) and Hunter/Landowner Assistance.

The goal of the Access Yes Program is to enhance and/or maintain public hunting and fishing access onto Wyoming private and landlocked public lands. This is accomplished by enrolling private landowners into one of these access programs mentioned above. The landowner and Department personnel negotiate the terms of an agreement including: agreement length (one to five years), the species that can be harvested, the geographic location, dates access will be allowed, and any other specific rules or stipulations. In return for public hunting access, landowners benefit in several ways including:

- A modest monetary payment based on the number of acres enrolled;
- Increased Department law enforcement presence;
- Increased wildlife management (population control and damage prevention); and,
- Management of sportsmen, alleviating phone calls and other disruptions to landowners (access maps, hunter instruction on ranch rules, etc.).

The Access Yes Program assists landowners through management of hunters, providing sportspersons places to hunt, and reducing agricultural damage through hunter harvest. The Department benefits through increased wildlife management opportunities, increased license sales, reduced agricultural damage, and providing quality hunting access to the public. During 2019, the Access Yes Program experienced many successes, including, but not limited to:

- Providing access to 2,649,457 acres (1,719,697 acres of enrolled private and state lands, and 929,760 acres of public lands) for hunting within the boundaries of the WIHA and HMA programs. This included land in every county within Wyoming.
- Providing additional access to 168,603 acres of public lands located outside the boundaries of the WIHAs and HMAs, which would not have been accessible without the Access Yes Program.

- Starting work with the Department IT personnel to develop a new online permission slip database. The internal challenge of setting up permission slips online is becoming more complex. However, the process continues to be user friendly for sportspersons and current difficulties associated with obtaining permission slips for HMAs and the National Elk Refuge (NER) will be reduced in the future.
- Issued 27,808 online permission slips to 25,466 individual hunters for access to the HMA program and the NER.
- Provided free hunting access on WIAs and HMAs to anyone with the proper licenses. Many of the participants are families, contributing to the maintenance and enhancement of hunting traditions.
- Hunters surveyed during the 2018 hunting season for harvest results indicated 22% of antelope hunters (25% nonresident, 17% resident), 17% of deer hunters (17% nonresident, 17% resident), and 14% of elk hunters (12% nonresident, 15% resident) used either a WIHA or HMA to hunt on. This would equate to an estimated 11,744 antelope, 10,796 deer, and 8,684 elk hunters having hunted either a WIHA or HMA.
- Increased hunting access translates into improved wildlife population management and decreased agricultural damage through harvest.
- Continued the Access Yes Patrol Enhancement (AYPE) plan. Regional Access Coordinators provided patrol assistance and hunter/landowner contacts to other regions during high use periods on Access Yes areas. Time spent by visiting Access Coordinators during high use periods were in the following counties: Goshen, Park, Big Horn, Lincoln, Uinta and Crook.
- Increased license sales in hunt areas with difficult public access.
- Hunters surveyed during the 2018 hunting season who indicated they were satisfied or very satisfied with the opportunity provided through the WIHA or HMA programs were 87% for antelope, 76% for deer, and 73% for elk.

The 2019 Access Yes Annual Report can be found at:

<https://wgfd.wyo.gov/WGFD/media/content/PDF/Public%20Access/2019-Access-Yes-Report-FINAL.pdf> Note: The 2020 Access Yes Annual Report should be posted on the Department website by mid-February 2021.

In some locations, the Department has implemented a Hunter Management and Access Program (HMAP) and hired a seasonal Hunt Management Coordinator (HMC). The HMAP goal is to reduce elk numbers to mitigate damage to growing crops, pasture land and improvements on specific ranches, as well as increase hunter success. The HMC is responsible for implementing and running the program, and works to concentrate elk harvest efforts on private property and adjacent public lands where applicable. The HMC also works to secure increased public hunting access to private lands, communicates regularly with landowners, coordinates hunts, guides and assists hunters, and locates elk for potential harvest. Landowners in the HMAP are not provided monetary payments from the Department.

The Department also manages a Hunter/Landowner Assistance Program, which matches landowners who desire additional harvest with hunters looking for a place to hunt. This program was developed as an avenue to assist landowners who wanted increased harvest of big game animals on their private property without having to enroll in one of the existing access programs.

where hunters can contact them directly to secure their own access. Landowners do not receive any compensation from the Department, and all details pertaining to access to their property is arranged between the landowner and the hunter. Once a landowner obtains the desired harvest, their information is removed from the website.

6. Does your agency provide damage payments or fencing for big game on private lands? If so, how much per year is paid and how is it funded?

Yes, Wyoming has a very comprehensive damage prevention and compensation program that provides both fencing and damage payments pertaining to big game. Damage prevention and compensation are in accordance with Wyoming Statute § 23-1-901 (<https://wyoleg.gov/statutes/compress/title23.pdf>) and Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Chapter 28 Regulation Governing Big or Trophy Game Animal or Game Bird or Gray Wolf Damage Claims(https://wgfd.wyo.gov/Regulations/Regulation-PDFs/REGULATIONS_CH28.pdf)

Our annual damage prevention/fencing/supply budget is \$277,150 (this does not include damage compensation payments). These funds are budgeted through M & O (license sales) monies. Additionally, APHIS grants the Department \$24,134 to construct stackyards to minimize elk/cattle commingling and associated brucellosis concerns in western Wyoming.

In Fiscal Year 2020, the Department paid \$349,456.53 to landowners for big game damage on private lands. These payment funds are in accordance with Wyoming Statute § 23-2-101(e). This statute provides a funding source for the payment of big or trophy game animal and game bird damage claims. That source of money is generated from a nonresident application fee of \$15 and a resident application fee of \$5 for any limited quota big or trophy game license issued through a drawing or for a wild bison license. The statute provides for 25% of the fees collected from license applications to be set aside to establish and maintain a fund of \$500,000 to compensate landowners or lessees for property damaged by big or trophy game animals and game birds. The Department uses M&O (license sales) monies to cover the additional damage claims costs when it exceeds the \$500,000 (which it has for many years).

7. What mitigation measures does your agency employ to reduce big game damage (e.g., provide temporary fencing, hazing animals, agency removals of big game)?

Permanent stackyards The Department provides stackyard materials and each landowner is responsible for construction and maintenance of stackyards. Stackyard issuance is based on available funding and determined by the district game warden.

Temporary fencing The Department provides various types of temporary fencing to include hog panels, plastic fence, electric fence and wood fence.

Lethal removal Lethal removal is implemented through the issuance of a Chapter 56 permit (see above). However, we prefer to use licensed hunters through hunting seasons for animal removal vs Department removal.

Hazing/Other & Tube units (<https://featherflagnation.com/inflatable-tube-man-categories/>) and on the ground drives using trucks, ATVs, horses, foot and snow machines.

In some situations, it is best just to let the damage occur and pay the damage claim vs creating additional damage situations and other conflicts/issues.

8. Does your agency have an urban deer program? If so, what does that entail?

Yes, while the Department does not do the actual lethal removal, it issues a Chapter 56 Lethal Take Permit to municipalities for them to do the lethal removal. This has worked well.

This lethal removal is in accordance with the D - Urban Big Game Reduction April 2010 (available upon request). In 2020, the Department issued eight Chapter 56 permits for urban deer removal.

Local wildlife biologists and game wardens work with the requesting municipality to determine the need/conflict type, deer numbers and population count ratios, permit stipulations, and if needed, the development of a big game feeding ban ordinance. A mandatory requirement for a permit to be issued is that the municipality must have a big game feeding ban ordinance in effect. Other requirements include reporting on animals taken, mandatory CWD testing, approval by local game warden on who will do the lethal removal, donation of all edible carcasses, antlers are turned into local game warden, may use artificial light/bait/firearm cartridge types for public safety and effective/efficient animal removal. Most permits are issued to the Chief of Police or Mayor. All expenses associated with the lethal removal are covered by the permitted municipality.

9. What other programs does your agency have in place to promote tolerance of big game on private lands?

Landowner Coupons

Wyoming Statute 23-3-105 Antelope, deer and elk coupons; payment to landowner; kill on federal or state land.

(a) Antelope, deer and elk licenses shall have two (2) coupons attached, each bearing the same serial number as the body of the permit, one (1) designated "antelope, deer or elk coupon" and one (1) designated "landowner's coupon".

(b) The landowner's coupon shall promptly be detached, dated, signed and delivered to the landowner. The landowner, on or before March 1 following the close of the hunting season for which the license was issued, shall deliver to the department the coupon and an affidavit that the antelope, deer or elk for which the coupon was delivered was killed on his land. Upon receipt of the coupon and affidavit the department shall pay the landowner sixteen dollars (\$16.00) for each coupon from an antelope, deer or elk license. Landowner's coupons are not transferable. Any unauthorized person attempting to collect any sum for any landowner's coupon is guilty of a high misdemeanor punishable as provided in W.S. 23-6-202(a)(ii). Effective January 1, 2000, the department shall provide a checkoff box on each landowner coupon affidavit claim form that

offers the claimant the opportunity to designate the animal damage management board to receive his payment amount for landowner coupons claimed on that form. For each claim made where the landowner has designated his payment to the animal damage management board, the department shall transfer that amount to the animal damage management account created by W.S. 11-6-306 and the department shall retain the fees related to those administrative costs of the transfer.

In 2019, the Department approved 32,632 landowner coupons and paid \$522,112 to private landowners in landowner coupon redemption.

Landowner Licenses

Wyoming Statute 23-1-302(h): For purposes of promoting the maintenance of wildlife habitat and attaining wildlife management objectives pursuant to W.S. 23-1-103 and in addition to duties prescribed under paragraph (a)(xiv) of this section, the commission shall promulgate rules and regulations governing the issuance of elk, deer, antelope and turkey hunting licenses to Wyoming landowners without subjection to prescribed means of competitive public issuance. Fees assessed for licenses authorized under this subsection shall be equal to fees prescribed under W.S. 23-2-101(j) for each species for which the license is issued.

Chapter 44 Wyoming Game and Fish Commission Regulation for Issuance of Licenses, Permits, Stamps, Tags, Preference Points and Competitive Raffle Chances - Section 9:

Landowner licenses shall only be issued to those landowners who own land which provides habitat for antelope, deer, elk or wild turkeys and meets the requirements as set forth in this section. Any lands purchased or subdivided for the primary purpose of obtaining landowner licenses shall not be eligible for landowner licenses. The Wyoming Game and Fish Commission authorizes the issuance of landowner licenses in order to provide the opportunity for a landowner applicant or member of the landowner applicant & &

limited in number and only available through a competitive drawing.

In order to qualify for a landowner license, the deeded land qualifying the landowner applicant shall be located in the hunt area for which applied, shall consist of a minimum of one hundred sixty (160) contiguous acres and shall be utilized by the type of big game or wild turkeys for which the applicant applied to the extent the land provides food, cover and water. The landowner applicant shall demonstrate that the species of wildlife for which the license application has been made utilized the described land for a minimum of two thousand (2,000) days of use during the twelve (12) month period immediately preceding the date of application. In no case shall more than two (2) big game licenses per species or more than two (2) spring wild turkey or no more than two (2) fall wild turkey licenses be issued for a parcel of deeded land meeting the above qualifications in a calendar year.

10. Does your agency respond to all wildlife conflict calls or is it limited to specific species or guilds of species?

For the most part, Department personnel respond to a wide variety of wildlife conflict calls excluding those that involve predatory animals (coyotes, gray wolves where classified as a predatory animal, skunks, raccoons, jackrabbit, porcupine, red fox and stray cat). The majority of our wildlife calls involve big game, trophy game (grizzly bears, black bears, mountain lions and gray wolves where classified as a trophy game animal) and wild turkeys.

11. What program(s) in your agency provide response to negative wildlife interaction (wildlife conflict) complaints and depredation. If the responsibility is split or shared between programs (i.e. Wildlife Program/Enforcement Program) or contracted or referred to another agency or private party, please describe how the work is assigned or shared. (e.g. by species, commercial agriculture versus residential, public safety versus property damage, etc.)

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and handled/shared between game wardens, wildlife biologists and seasonal wildlife/damage technicians. Specifically, injured/nuisance/public safety wildlife calls are the shared responsibility of game wardens and wildlife biologists. Damage/depredation (in accordance with law/regulation) by big game and game birds is the responsibility of the district game warden with assistance from seasonal wildlife/damage technicians. Depending on location within Wyoming, trophy game damage is handled by the district game warden, Department Large Carnivore Section biologists and at times, assistance from USDA-Wildlife Services in accordance with a contract the Department has with them.

For home/residential/urban conflicts and depending on the species, the Department provides traps for public use, as do several municipal animal control agencies and in some cases, refers them to private contractors and Wildlife Services.

12. Please describe what funding sources support wildlife conflict response and depredation payments if applicable in your agency. Please include specifics regarding where the funding comes from for expenses such as staff and equipment, commercial crop loss compensation, livestock predation compensation, non-lethal deterrent programs, outreach and education, or any other services or materials provided in response to wildlife conflict issues.

(license sales) monies.

Currently the Department is responsible for trophy game conflict management activities throughout the state with the goal of reducing conflict potential on the landscape. Annually, the Department obtains approximately \$100,000 (annual monies obtained vary) through two federal grants (Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act, and Conservation Strategy Funds). These funds are used to assist in personnel contracts, carcass removal program, aerial surveys, on the ground supplies (electric fencing materials, immobilization drugs and tracking gear) and

outreach and education and represent <10% of annual expenditures for grizzly bear management in Wyoming. We obtain smaller grant donations from several groups (Western Bear Foundation, Wyoming Outdoorsmen, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Bowhunters of Wyoming) to purchase bear spray canisters that are distributed in local communities free of charge in northwest Wyoming. In addition we obtain local grant monies to assist with our carcass removal program and local Bear Wise Community outreach programs. This past year we collaborated with USDA-Wildlife Services for their non-lethal specialist to erect multiple electric fences in areas of recurring conflict with grizzly bears and black bears as well as obtaining \$5,000 from Defenders of Wildlife for the purchase of electric fencing supplies.

The Department also receives annual funding (\$25,000) Management Board (ADMB) that is used to partially USDA Wildlife Services. Additionally, the ADMB provides annual funding at various levels to the Department (based on submitted and approved project proposals) on various wildlife conflict/damage issues.