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Acknowledgement

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2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: MD101 - TARGHEE

HUNT AREAS: 149

PREPARED BY: ALYSON COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Hunter Satisfaction Percent	61%	64%	65%
Landowner Satisfaction Percent	n/a	n/a	n/a
Harvest:	21	13	20
Hunters:	86	61	80
Hunter Success:	24%	21%	25 %
Active Licenses:	86	61	80
Active License Success:	24%	21%	25 %
Recreation Days:	365	375	350
Days Per Animal:	17.4	28.8	17.5
Males per 100 Females:	0	0	
Juveniles per 100 Females	0	0	

Satisfaction Based Objective

60%

Management Strategy:

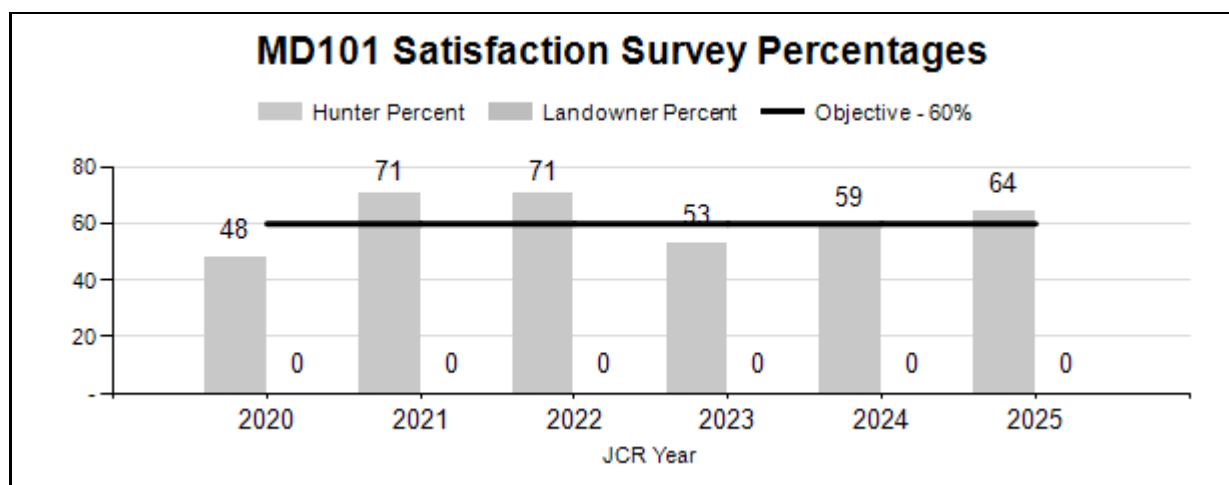
Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

N/A%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

1



2026 Hunting Seasons Targhee Mule Deer (MD101)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
149	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler-or any white-tailed deer
149	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30	25	Any white-tailed deer
149	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30	25	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer

2026 Regional H Non-Resident Quota: 350 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 64% Satisfied, 27% Neutral, 9% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

This herd is managed with a hunter satisfaction objective (60%) instead of a trend count or population model because the majority of deer migrate to winter ranges in Idaho. Hunter satisfaction was 64% in 2025. Hunter satisfaction was below objective in 2023 and 2024, which is likely due to the severe winter conditions in 2022/2023 and associated population decline. The deer population has started to recover, which explains the higher satisfaction in 2025. Hunting opportunity in this herd unit is limited due to few access points to public lands, steep terrain, and fall migration of mule deer to Idaho. A total of 61 active hunters harvested 13 mule deer in the herd unit in 2025.

This mule deer herd is recovering from the severe winter in 2022/2023, similar to other herds in Region H. In 2026, the season length was extended by 2 days to close October 2. There are no other changes to the antler point restriction or the non-resident license quota for 2026. These will be evaluated again for the 2027 season.

Ten white-tailed deer were harvested in 2025. Hunter satisfaction for Type 3 and Type 8 white-tailed deer licenses was 74%. Keeping white-tailed deer numbers low in this area is a priority for managers. There are no changes to white-tailed deer licenses in 2026.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Targhee Mule Deer Herd was last evaluated in and approved in 2024, and will be reviewed again in 2029.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Management

The Targhee Mule Deer Herd has limited CWD prevalence data available, and no CWD management actions have occurred. The annual and five-year average CWD prevalence estimates, sample sizes, confidence intervals, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below

for 2020-2024 (Table 1). This herd has not been prioritized for CWD surveillance because deer harvest is very low and widely dispersed in the herd unit, which makes encountering hunter-harvested deer to sample very difficult. CWD has not been detected in this herd.

Table 1. Chronic wasting disease prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in the Targhee Mule Deer Herd, 2021-2025

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (<i>n</i>) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of harvested adult males sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	3.6
2022	0% (n=2)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	5.3
2023	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	0
2024	0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	5.9
2025	0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)	7.7
2021-2025	0% (0-52.2%, n=5)	0% (0-100%, n=0)	0% (0-100%, n=0)	4.7

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: MD131 - WYOMING RANGE

HUNT AREAS: 134-135, 143-145

PREPARED BY: CHEYENNE
STEWART

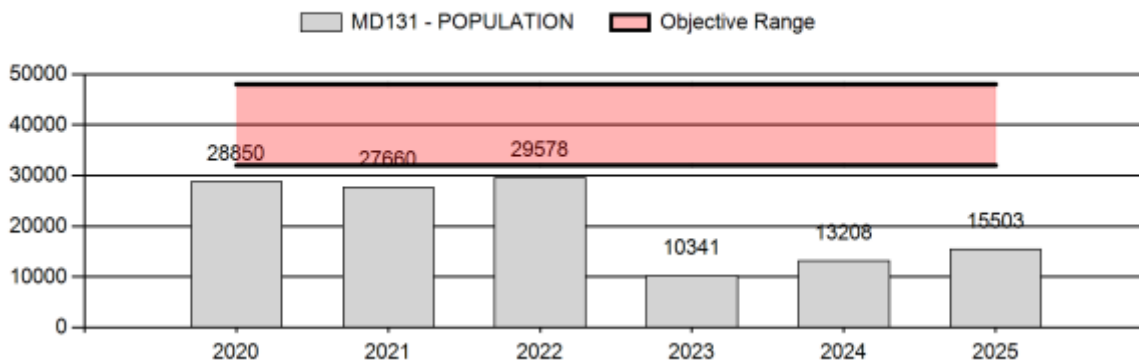
	2020 - 2024 Average	2025	2026 Proposed
Population:	21,927	15,503	18,300
Harvest:	1,210	952	1,150
Hunters:	4,121	3,546	4,000
Hunter Success:	29%	27%	29 %
Active Licenses:	4,121	3,546	4,000
Active License Success:	29%	27%	29 %
Recreation Days:	23,024	19,216	23,000
Days Per Animal:	19.0	20.2	20
Males per 100 Females	31	38	
Juveniles per 100 Females	67	81	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 40000 (32000 - 48000)
 Management Strategy: Special
 Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -61.2%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 8
 Model Date: 02/23/2026

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	JCR Year	Proposed
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	25%	20%
Proposed change in post-season population:	1%	1%

Population Size - Postseason

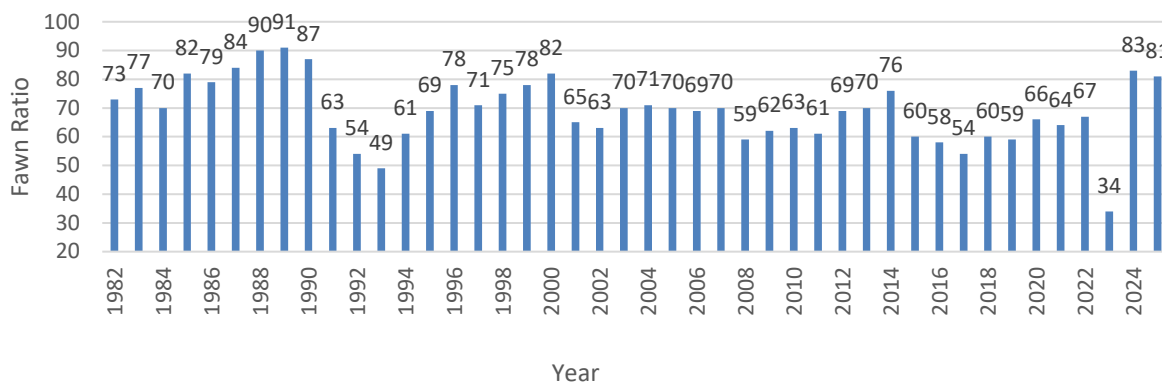


2015 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

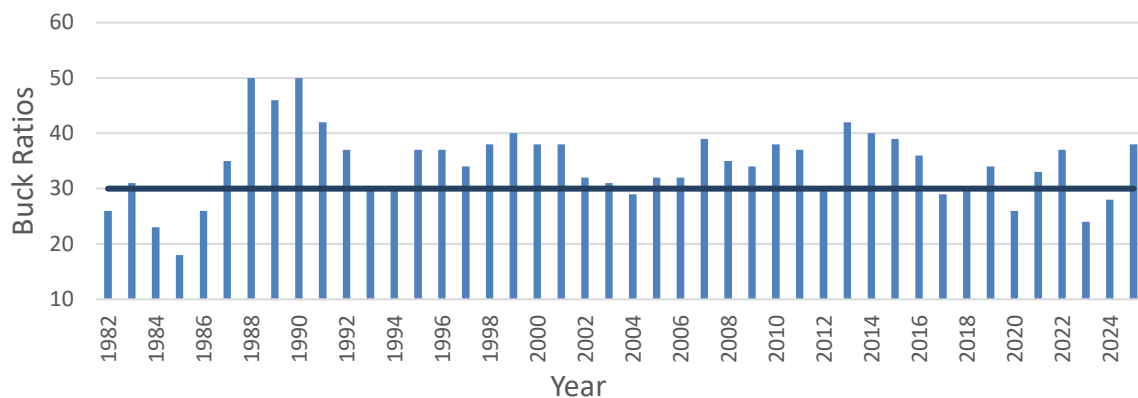
for Mule Deer Herd MD131 - WYOMING RANGE

Year	Post Pop	MALES								FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot Cls	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	2+ Cls 1	2+ Cls 2	2+ Cls 3	UnCls	Total	%		Total	%	Total	%			Ylg	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2015	38,000	672	408	308	158	0	1,546	20%		3,930	50%	2,381	30%	7,857	0	17	22	39	± 1	61	± 2	43
2016	37,000	533	420	303	107	0	1,363	18%		3,810	52%	2,220	30%	7,393	0	14	22	36	± 1	58	± 2	43
2017	30,500	172	428	281	74	0	955	16%		3,324	55%	1,791	30%	6,070	0	5	24	29	± 1	54	± 2	42
2018	30,200	509	287	313	149	0	1,258	16%		4,252	53%	2,533	31%	8,043	0	12	18	30	± 1	60	± 2	46
2019	31,000	463	364	291	114	0	1,232	18%		3,572	52%	2,105	30%	6,909	0	13	22	34	± 1	59	± 2	44
2020	28,850	184	265	231	71	0	751	14%		2,874	52%	1,902	34%	5,527	0	6	20	26	± 1	66	± 2	52
2021	27,660	281	137	119	44	0	581	17%		1,739	51%	1,110	32%	3,430	0	16	17	33	± 2	64	± 3	48
2022	29,578	594	364	259	118	0	1,335	18%		3,652	49%	2,450	33%	7,437	0	16	20	37	± 1	67	± 2	49
2023	10,341	37	90	50	13	0	190	15%		795	63%	271	22%	1,256	0	5	19	24	± 2	34	± 3	28
2024	13,208	213	172	162	115	0	662	14%		2,311	47%	1,929	39%	4,902	0	9	19	29	± 1	83	± 3	65
2025	15,503	308	141	106	62	0	617	17%		1,629	46%	1,316	37%	3,562	0	19	19	38	± 2	81	± 3	59

WYOMING RANGE MULE DEER HERD
Fawns:100 Does



WYOMING RANGE MULE DEER HERD
Bucks:100 Does
(Management Minimum 30 Bucks:100 Does)



2026 HUNTING SEASONS
WYOMING RANGE MULE DEER HERD (MD131)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
134	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 10		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
134	Gen-Youth only	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer; youth only
135	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 10		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
135	Gen-Youth only	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer; youth only
143	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
144	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
145	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
145	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30	25	Any white-tailed deer
145	3			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless white-tailed deer
145	8			Nov. 1	Jan. 31	25	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer

2025 Region G Nonresident Quota: 250 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 50% Satisfied, 31% Neutral, 20% Dissatisfied

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The deer population in the Wyoming Range has been rebounding since the severe winter of 2022/23. In 2024 and 2025, fawn:doe ratios (>80%) and adult doe survival (>80%) were very high, which are the keys to population recovery. The herd is again meeting buck:doe ratio objectives. However, it will take more time to fully recover deer numbers in this herd.

While still at record lows, buck harvest in 2025 (952) increased from 2024 (620) and 2023 (416) commensurate with an increase in the number of hunters (3,546, 2,978, 2,588, respectively). Days per harvest, hunter satisfaction, and hunter success have improved each year since 2023.

Data from the annual aerial classification surveys, long-term on-going research, harvest survey, and population modeling all indicate that additional buck hunting opportunity is warranted. The 2026 seasons are designed to manage toward the population (40,000) and special management (30-45 bucks:100 does) objectives, while providing higher quality hunting opportunity.

Seasons were lengthened to align with the Sublette herd season structure, a long-term management priority, and to increase hunter experience (spread hunters out over time) since the population is growing, and we are meeting the buck:doe ratio objective. Given the high recruitment of juveniles in 2025 (81 fawns: 100 does) managers anticipate buck ratios to increase towards the upper limit of the objective range. This will demand future increases to the Region G nonresident quota if the population continues to rebound.

Bucks in the northern portion of the Wyoming Range Herd (areas 143, 144, and 145) are more vulnerable to harvest during fall migration, which is why the season starts and ends earlier than the southern portion of the herd (areas 134 and 135). The season dates have historically aligned with Sublette Deer hunt areas and for 2026, the closure dates overlap with the opening dates for the southern portion of the herd. This should alleviate concern from some constituents regarding hunters switching areas.

In the southern portion of the herd, rifle hunts do not open until October because buck vulnerability is greater in September. Quality deer habitat in the southern areas is at low elevations and within easy access to roads. Differences in deer behavior between September and October would increase buck vulnerability to harvest if September rifle seasons were in place in the south.

The boundary change between hunt areas 143 and 138 was proposed based on substantial GPS collar data, expertise from regional managers, and two season setting cycles of public outreach. The purpose is to improve management with an expectation of very minimal impacts to hunters. The updated boundary goes into effect this year.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy was last evaluated and approved in 2021. For the 2026 (5-year) objective review, the current objective (40,000 post-season population) and special management strategy (30-45 bucks:100 does) will be maintained for the next five years following an internal evaluation. There is concern that habitat conditions on winter range may not be able to consistently support 40,000 deer. However, given current numbers and public desire for more deer a change was not proposed in 2026. Future work will be necessary to better understand and report the relationships between habitat condition, deer numbers and herd productivity.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Management

The Wyoming Range mule deer herd is prioritized for CWD sampling every year. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). Sampling over the last three years has suffered due suppressed population numbers since 2023, resulting in not obtaining the goal of 200 samples over the most recent 3-year period. Over the last five years, CWD was detected in a total of 3 harvested deer out of 427 tested, resulting in a prevalence estimate of 0.7% (0.1-2.0%).

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in the Wyoming Range Herd, 2021 - 2025.

Year	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	All Adult Male Deer (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	0.6% (n=176)	0% (n=30)	0% (n=17)	10.5
2022	1.4% (n=140)	0% (n=20)	0% (n=7)	7.9
2023	0 (n=27)	0% (n=1)	0% (n=0)	6.5
2024	0 (n=36)	0% (n=1)	0% (n=1)	5.8
2025	0% (n=48)	0% (n=9)	0 (n=3)	5
2021-2025	0.7% (n=427)	0% (n=61)	0% (n=28)	8.1

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit was 15,503 (15,047-19,944) mule deer (February 23, 2026 IPM Analysis Report). Model parameters were largely unchanged from the previous year. IPM convergence is likely, with all Rhat values for the point estimate and upper CI only slightly higher (1.12 and 1.35, respectively) than the desired level (<1.1).

The model is data-rich, with three sightability survey abundance estimates in the last ten years and annual survival data from on-going research projects. In the absence of doe harvest, however, the model struggles without harvest data for does. Given the combined increase in buck harvest and buck ratios in 2025, the model infers that the population recruited more bucks relative to fawns. This results in the model slightly underestimating the fawn ratios in 2025, and therefore the estimated population increase from 2024 to 2025 is nominal. However, the 2025 population estimate from the 2025 JCR (15,503) relative to the 2024 population estimate reported in the 2024 JCR (13,208) demonstrates population growth that better aligns with expectations.

An identical model was run to simulate an additional 200 bucks harvested in 2026, based on the proposals to liberalize the seasons commensurate with biological availability of adult bucks. In both models, the predicted 2026 post-season buck ratios were over 35:100 does. Providing further confidence that the 2026 seasons strikes an appropriate balance between adult buck availability and hunter opportunity.

Additional Management Data

Precipitation: The Parameter-Elevation Relationships on Independent Slopes Model (PRISM) was utilized to estimate precipitation by calculating a climate-elevation regressions for each Digital Elevation Model grid cell (4km resolution) for the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd Unit during the period from October 2024 through September 2025 (water year). Annual precipitation (14.6 inches) was lower than the 30-year (Oct-Sept) average (18.5 inches), and the lowest observed during the past 5 years. Precipitation during the growing season (April-June) was 2.8 inches and below the 30-year average of 5.2 inches, and precipitation during the spring-summer period (May-July) was 1.3 inches and also well below the 30-year average of 4.1 inches. The 2024-2025 monthly winter precipitation was below average during November and January, and above average during December and February. Precipitation was near average during March. Monthly 2025 spring precipitation was below average across the herd unit during both April and May. Summer 2025 precipitation was below average during June, July, and August. Herd unit precipitation during fall 2025 was below average during September and above average in October.

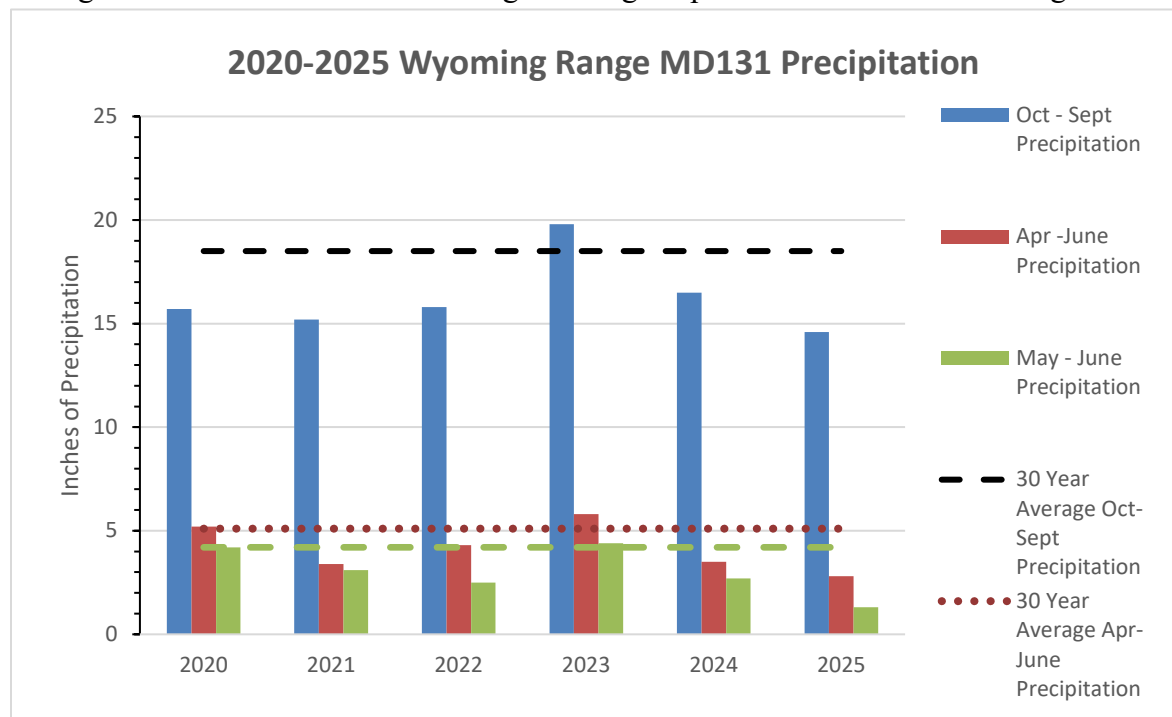


Figure 3. A summary of precipitation (inches) in the Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd Unit, 2020-2025

Winter Severity: Winter 2025-2026 conditions on most winter ranges have been mild and have remained relatively open. Shrubs were consistently available and snow depths did not impact movement or accessibility. Most low elevation winter ranges experienced well below average monthly snow fall accumulation between November 2025 and April 24, 2026. Reporting locations recorded the following snowfall as a percentage of their long-term average snow accumulation: Randolph Utah 38%, Afton 56%, Fossil Butte 80%, and Fontenelle Dam 10%. SNOWTEL sites at higher elevations showed the snow water equivalent ranging from 0% to 90% of the median as of April 24, 2026. Moreover, 8 of the 9 SNOTEL monitoring stations in the herd unit recorded < 90% average snow water equivalent, suggesting lower soil moisture and impacts to summer range forage growth unless precipitation increases during the late spring months. Average winter 2025-2026 monthly temperatures recorded from locations near winter ranges showed warmer temperatures than the long-term monthly averages. Average monthly temperatures ranged from 2^o - 16^o F warmer during the period between November 2025 and April 24, 2026. Milder temperatures and less than average snow accumulation on winter ranges is expected to result in better than normal mule deer survival over the 2025-2026 winter. However, continued dry weather and lack of early spring moisture are a concern for forage conditions entering the 2026 summer growing season.

Significant Events: Two notable wildfire events occurred in the herd unit during the summer months. The Willow Creek Fire occurred during August in the area northwest of Salt River Pass, burning 4,059 acres of aspen and mixed conifer. The Horse Fire burned 2,713 acres of mixed conifer stands and meadow edge habitat in the Prospect Mountain area between North and South Horse creeks during mid-June.

Several habitat improvement efforts occurred within the herd unit during 2025. Approximately 130 acres were cut/pile burned and 120 acres were broad cast burned in aspen conifer mixed stands located in the Calpet foothills area to promote aspen regeneration. BLM completed a prescribed burn to regenerate aspen on 134 acres of previously lopped and scattered fir/aspen in upper Rock Creek drainage of the Tump Range. Approximately 760 acres of conifer/aspen mixed stands were lopped and scattered in preparation for prescribed burning on BLM lands near the forest boundary in the Dry Fork and Smith's Fork drainages. Twelve wildlife friendly fence crossing structures were installed on winter range near Calpet. Five and eight tenths' miles of net-wire and 5-wire fencing were replaced with wildlife friendlier fences along migration routes between Coal and Sawmill creeks, along the upper Smith's Fork River, and in Schuster Basin. Aerial Rejuvra herbicide treatments to control cheatgrass occurred on 1,700 acres in the Grey's River and Afton Front, 3,581 acres along LaBarge Creek in Lincoln County, 18,240 acres in the Calpet area, 17,569 acres on the west slope of Raymond Mountain, 8,935 acres on Sillem Ridge, and 6,384 acres along the Sheep Trail Road near Leed's Creek. Mosaic sagebrush mowing treatments occurred on 808 acres of winter and transitional ranges near lower Leed's Creek and the Dry Fork drainage. More details about these projects can be found in the Statewide Habitat Plan database.

Habitat Monitoring: Winter range shrub transects were monitored at five locations through the Calpet/Little Colorado winter range during 2025 to evaluate trends in annual leader growth of true mountain mahogany. The average annual mahogany leader growth of all five sites during 2025 was 2.52 inches, which was less than the long-term average leader growth of 2.68 inches. Department personnel also conducted monitoring associated with past and future cheatgrass control and sagebrush mowing treatments throughout the herd unit during 2025.

Rapid Habitat Assessments: Rapid Habitat Assessments (RHA) were first implemented by the Department in 2015 to generally characterize conditions of important habitat types on the landscape within Mule Deer Initiative Herd Units. Summarized RHA data are used as a habitat component during herd population objective reviews to evaluate whether or not deer numbers are in balance with sustaining habitat at an acceptable level or higher quality condition.

Department personnel completed 646 acres of rangeland RHAs, 464 acres of special feature (tall forb communities) RHAs, and 577 acres of aspen RHAs within the Wyoming Range Herd Unit during 2025. Surveys were conducted in summer, transitional, and migration mule deer habitats. Approximately 30% of the acres surveyed in 2025 met objectives for good quality mule deer habitat, 15% of acres surveyed partially met habitat objectives with an upward trend, 24% of the acres were partially meeting habitat objectives, 31% of surveyed acres were partially meeting habitat objectives with a downward trend, and 0% of acres were not meeting habitat condition objectives.

Change-in-Ratio Surveys:

An Estimation of Winter Fawn Loss Based on the December – April Change-In-Ratio Metric: A systematic survey has been conducted since 1986 in the Wyoming Range herd to estimate minimum winter fawn mortality. The objective has been to determine the percent change in the proportion of fawns to adults from December to April as a relative index of winter fawn mortality on the largest and most expansive sagebrush-dominated winter ranges near LaBarge, Kemmerer, and Evanston. The comparative change in the proportion of fawns:100 adults from the late fall to the following spring provides a relative minimum estimate of the proportion of fawns lost over the winter. Since 1993 the highest years of winter fawn mortality have occurred, on average, approximately every four years (Figure 4). The years with the high estimated fawn mortality occurred in 1993, 2002, 2004, 2011, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2023 respectively. The highest estimated fawn mortality occurred in 2017 (-86%) and 2023 (-92%), respectively. The estimated losses observed in 2023 are unprecedented in the history of the Wyoming Range mule deer herd. The Wyoming Range herd was conceptualized in 1982.

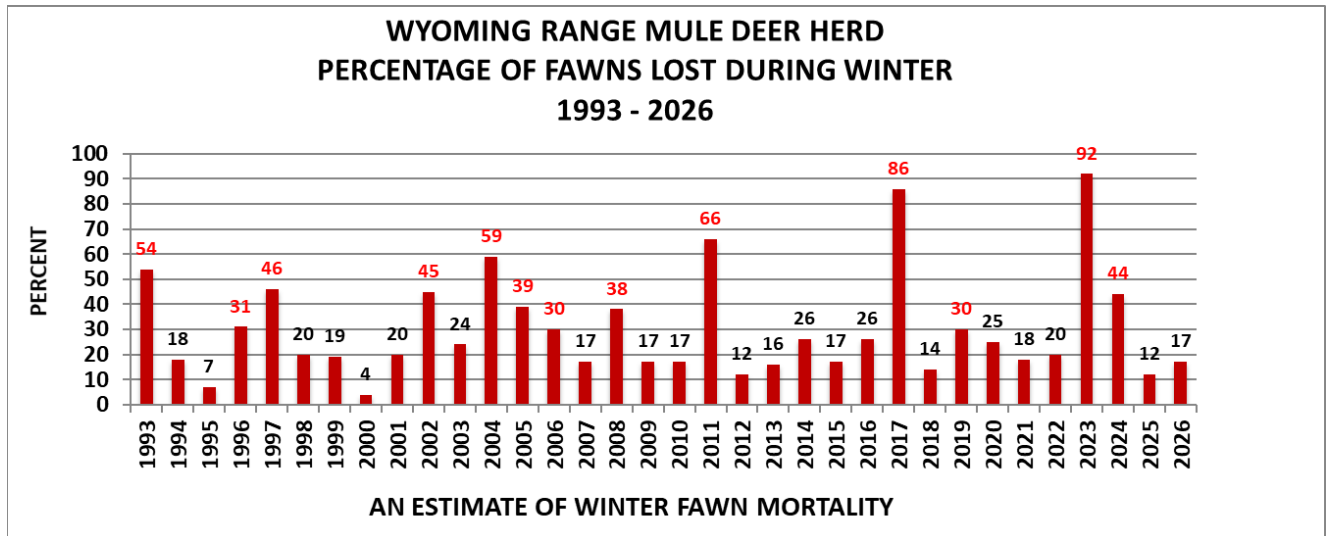


Figure 4. An estimate of minimum winter fawn mortality based on the change of fawns:adults ratio from December to April, 1992 – 2026.

Research – Focal Herd and University of Wyoming/Haub School

Focal Herd Research

The Focal Herd research program and captures commenced on December 19, 2022. In continuation with this initial effort the Department conducted additional captures on December 5, 2023 on LaBarge, Cokeville, Evanston, and Kemmerer winter ranges to supplement the sample size initiated in 2022 (2022 Job Completion Report, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, Wyoming Game and Fish Department).

In December 2024, a total of 73 collars (7 bucks, 5 does, and 61 fawns) were deployed on mule deer captured on Wyoming Range herd winter ranges to supplement deer mortality observed in 2024. On the Big Piney winter ranges, 3 bucks, 2 does, and 15 fawns were captured and collared. The remaining 4 bucks, 3 does, and 46 fawns were captured on the southern winter ranges located near Kemmerer, Evanston, and Cokeville. Deer were not captured on the Star Valley/Salt River winter ranges because the low percentage of mule deer, typically < 5% of the Wyoming Range population, is not representative of annual population survival of mule deer that spend the winter on the expansive low-elevation, sagebrush-dominated winter ranges.

As expected, annual mule deer survival increased during the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 winters above the extreme losses observed during the 2022-2023 winter (Figures 5, 6, 7). During the 2022-2023 winter, survival was estimated to be the lowest in herd unit history. Winter conditions reflected persistent sub-zero, ambient temperatures and well-above normal snow accumulations on core, sagebrush-dominated winter ranges. Consequently, over winter survival for collared Focal Herd deer was estimated at 39%, 31%, and 0 for bucks, does, and fawns, respectively (Figure 5).

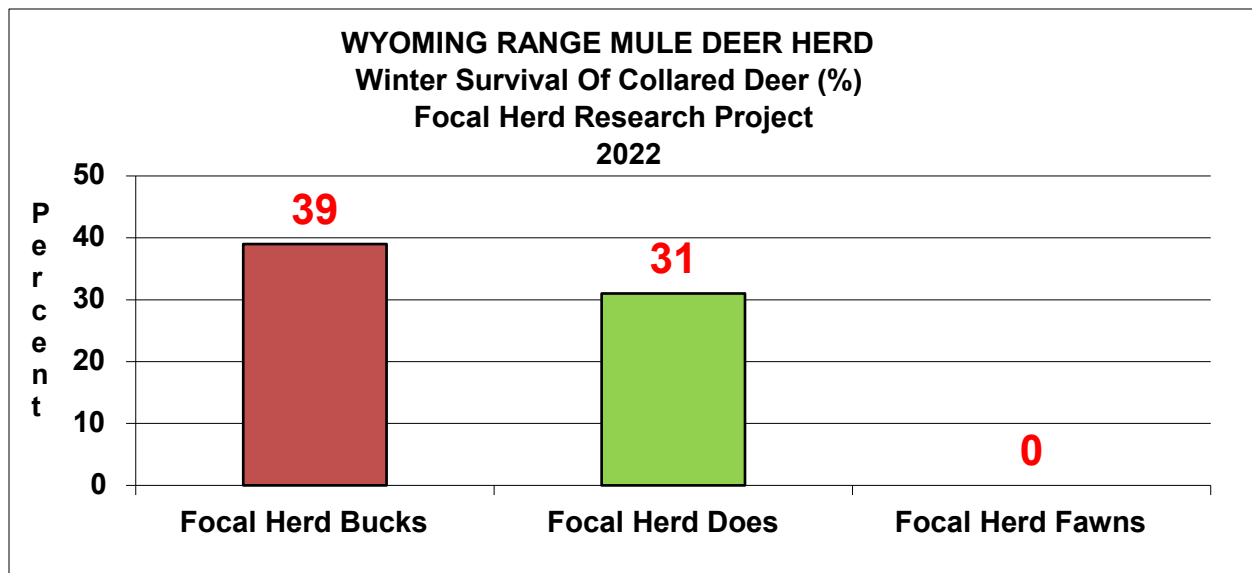


Figure 5. A summary of over-winter survival of bucks, does, and fawns, Wyoming Range Focal Herd research program, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2022.

In 2023 (Figure 6) and 2024 (Figure 7) over-winter survival for males and females exceeded 90%, respectively. During the same two-year period, fawn survival was estimated at 56% (Figure 6) and 73% (Figure 7), respectively.

In years of low snow accumulations and general absence of prolonged subzero temperatures during the winters of 2023-24 and 2024-25, the open, snow-free conditions allowed deer to access forage that is not covered by snow. Consequently, deer dispersed over the entire winter range to utilize forage at 9,000 feet in elevation. Additionally, high precipitation zones that approach 30" or more on Wyoming Range mule deer summer ranges allow a diversity of plants to grow which enables doe deer to produce and care for viable and healthy fawns before they migrate to winter ranges

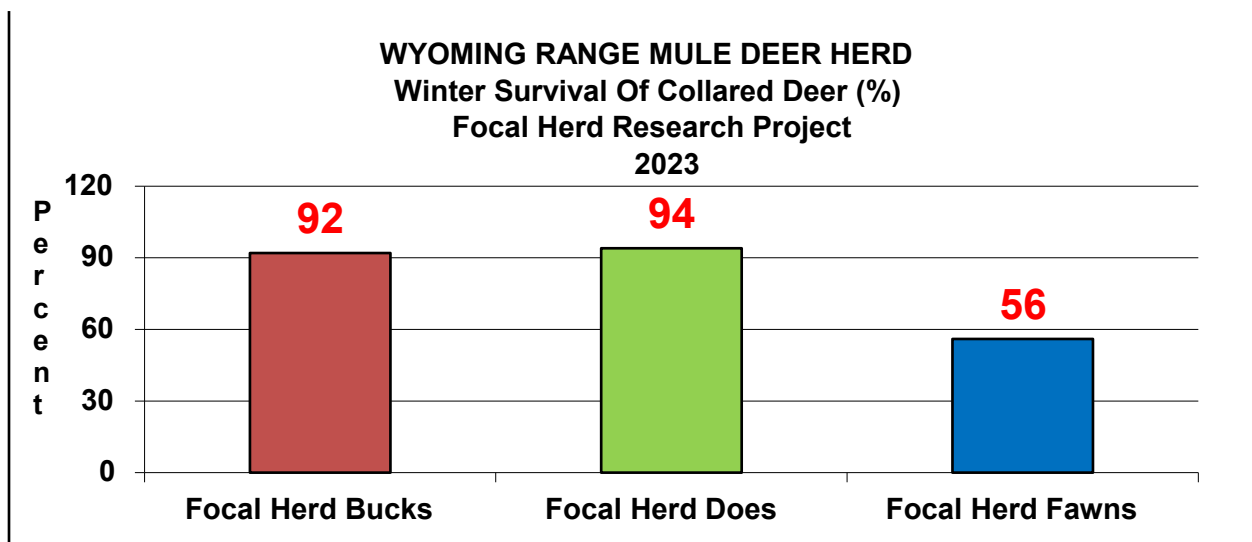


Figure 6. A summary of over-winter survival of bucks, does, and fawns, Wyoming Range Focal Herd research program, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2023.

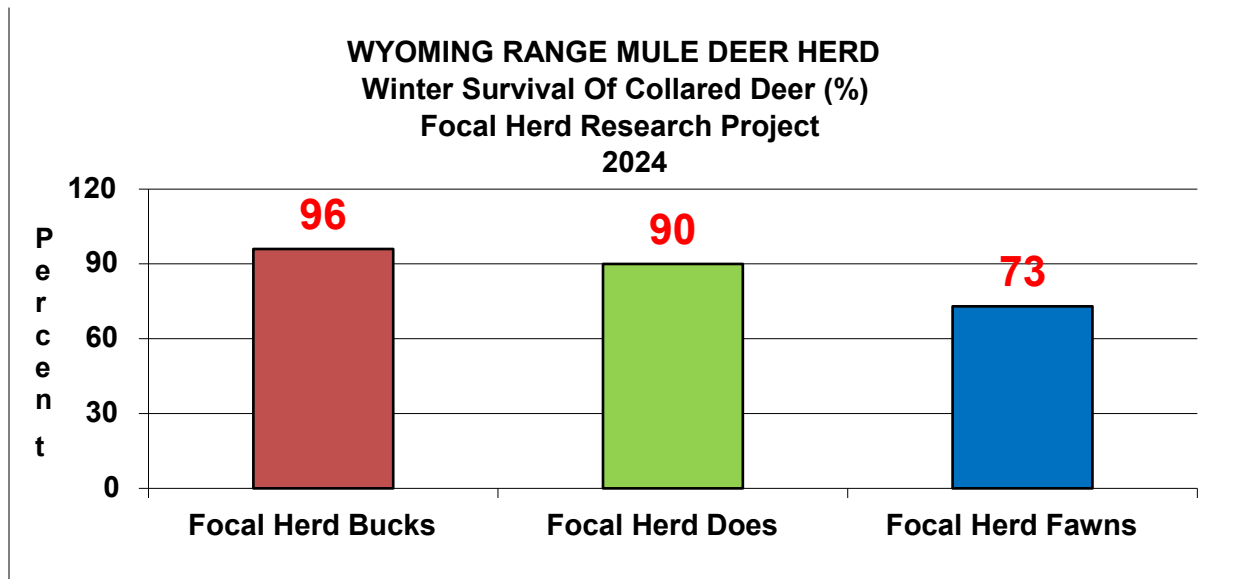


Figure 7. A summary of over-winter survival of bucks, does, and fawns, Wyoming Range Focal Herd research program, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2024.

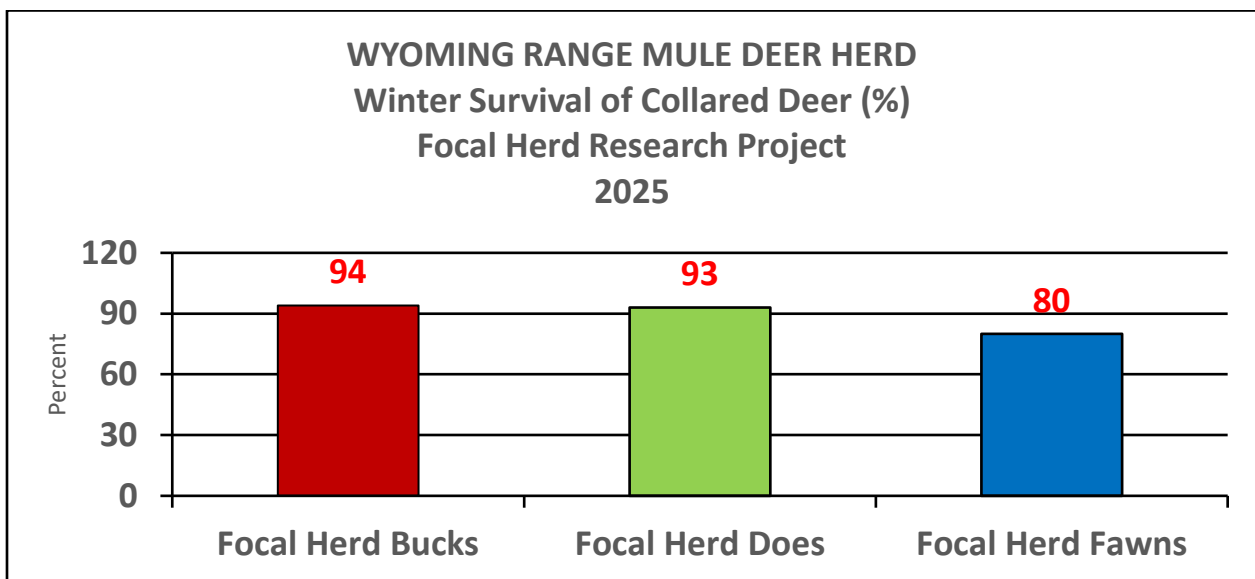


Figure 8. A summary of over-winter survival of bucks, does, and fawns, Wyoming Range Focal Herd research program, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2025.

Concurrent with the collaring operation was an effort to quantify the weight of fawns at time of capture. Those data are provided in Table 2, and summarize the weights of fawns since that metric was first collected in 2024.

December fawn weights reflect body condition of the dam and summer range conditions, among other factors associated with the biotic and abiotic environment. During fall captures, mean weights of male and female fawns were slightly heavier in 2024 versus 2023, respectively (Table 2).

Table 2. Juvenile mule deer weights at time of capture, Focal Herd research project, Wyoming Range mule deer herd, 2023-2025.

Sex	Winter	n	Capture Start	Capture End	Mean Wt (lbs)	Min	Max	95% CI
F	2023/24	22	2023.12.2	2023.12.5	74.73	63	88	71.53-77.93
F	2024/25	21	2024.12.5	2024.12.6	76.03	61	100	71.92-80.14
F	2025/26	20	2025.12.3	2025.12.8	76.2	64	86	73.34-79.06
M	2023/24	21	2023.12.2	2023.12.5	76.05	57	92	72.2-79.9
M	2024/25	24	2024.12.5	2024.12.6	82.44	66	102	79.28-85.6
M	2025/26	19	2025.12.3	2025.12.8	80.74	65	96	76.51-84.97

Wyoming Range Mule Deer Research Project – University of Wyoming/Haub School

Body Condition Metrics

Fall body condition and survival metrics were measured for 89 adult females, 38 adult males, and 53 juveniles during the current winter. The body condition metrics are presented in Figures 8. Annual winter survival estimates for the age and sex cohorts for the period 2013-2026 are presented in Figures 9, 10, and 11.

Ingesta Free Body Fat (IFBF) is a representation of the total fat content, excluding digestive content, within a deer's body. Consequently, the December 2025 body fat percentages, for female deer captured on the North and South Winter ranges were 11% and 12%, respectively (Figure 8).

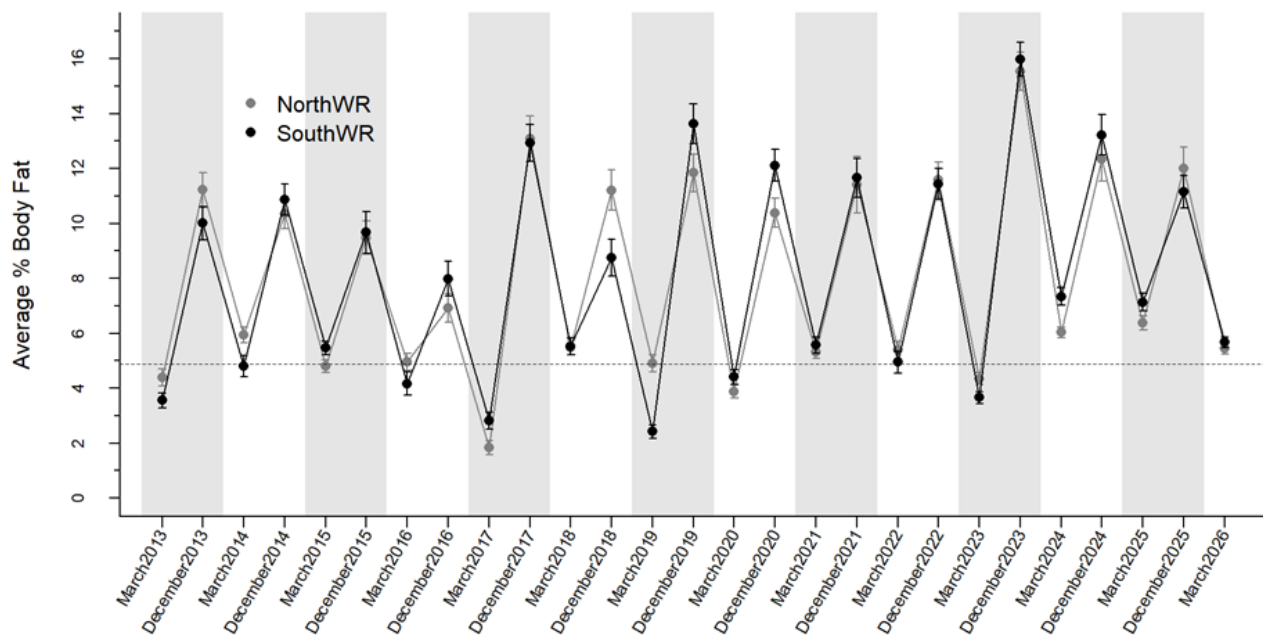


Figure 8. Average IFBF (%) estimates of adult female mule deer, December and March, University of Wyoming/Haub School mule deer research project, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2013 – 2026.

IFBF percentages in December that exceed 13% are indicative of substantial population decline as a result of the previous winter’s severity. Evidence of this phenomenon are reflected in December 2023 when IFBF approached 20% (Figure 8), which was the highest December metric on record since inception of the project in 2013.

These metrics are indicative of not only substantial population decline; but on a female deer’s ability to maintain growth of a viable fetus and produce a healthy fawn. Ultimately the females’ inability to produce, provision and recruit fawns into the fall population were observed in postseason herd composition surveys and in the annual over-winter survival metrics (Figures 9, 10, and 11).

While record high December IFBF percentages may project future positive population performance, there were more immediate and sobering impacts of the 2022-2023 winter. Those impacts were associated with historic population level effects. Those effects were: a). loss of at least two age/sex cohorts, b) population decline, c) low post-season doe:fawn ratios, d). low sex/age specific survival estimates, and e) all-time low population estimate.

These metrics provide a foundation for Wyoming Range deer managers to consider in the overall management of the herd. The degree to which deer managers interpret and understand the complex interactions of the biotic and abiotic conditions that result in IFBF and survival metrics are essential components of population and habitat management. Moreover, management-specific data that pertain to harvest statistics, herd composition data, public sentiment, and habitat

management are the foundational components of the management program that guides the research.

Overwinter Survival Metrics

Concurrently with December body fat percentages of female deer, winter survival estimates of mule deer were monitored from November 1 – April 30 for the period from 2013 – 2026. Survival estimates for females, males, and juveniles are provided in Figures 9, 10, and 11, respectively. Survival estimates describe specific outcomes of radio-collared males, females, and juveniles that spend the winter on the large, expansive sagebrush-dominated winter ranges near Big Piney/LaBarge and Cokeville/Kemmerer/Evanston.

Over-winter adult female survival and subsequent fawn production and recruitment reflects winter severity, and provides a key indicator on the population's potential to affect positive growth. Consequently, sustained annual population growth, as a function of adult female survival and reproductive potential, has been severely compromised by high to extreme winter mortality during 2016-2017, 2018-2019, and 2022-2023 winters (Figure 9).

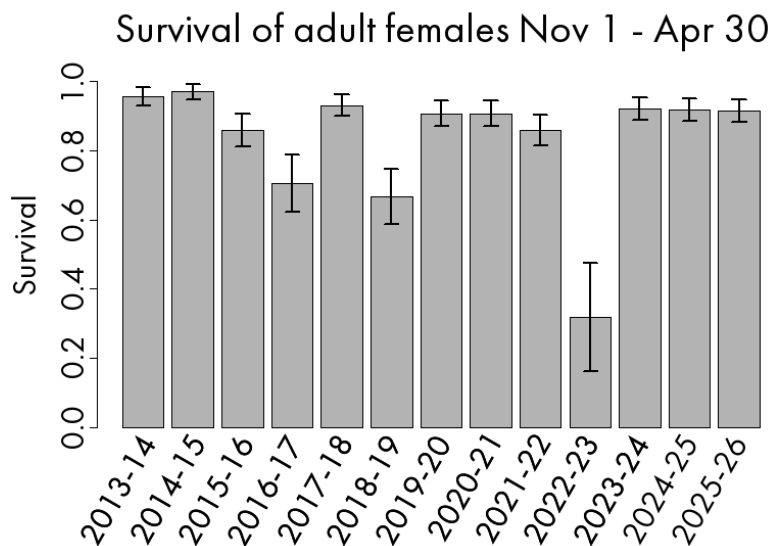


Figure 9. Survival (%) estimates of adult female mule deer from November 1 – April 30, University of Wyoming/Haub School mule deer research project, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2013 – 2026.

There are currently 39 radio-collared adult males that are alive and being followed by University of Wyoming personnel. During the most recent 2025-26 winter adult male survival was observed at approximately 93%, which is reflective of daily ambient air temperatures that are consistently above 0 degrees Fahrenheit as well as open and snow-free conditions on core winter ranges (Figure 11).

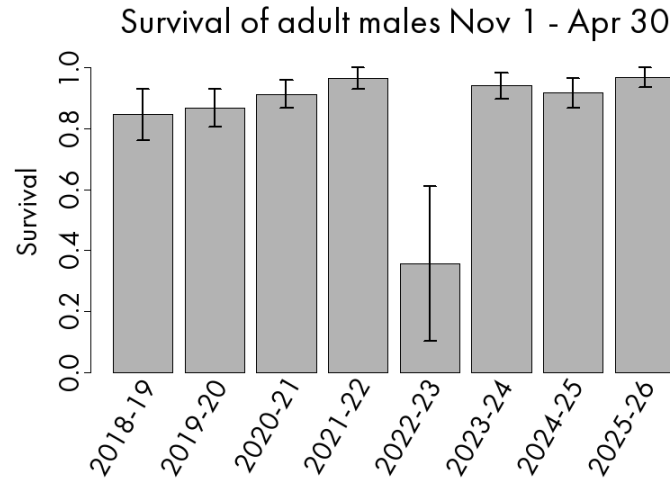


Figure 10. Survival (%) estimates of adult male mule deer from November 1 – April 30, University of Wyoming/Haub School mule deer research project, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2018 – 2026.

There are currently 27 radio-collared juveniles still alive and being followed by University of Wyoming personnel. During the most recent 2025-26 winter juvenile survival was observed at approximately 56% (Figure 11).

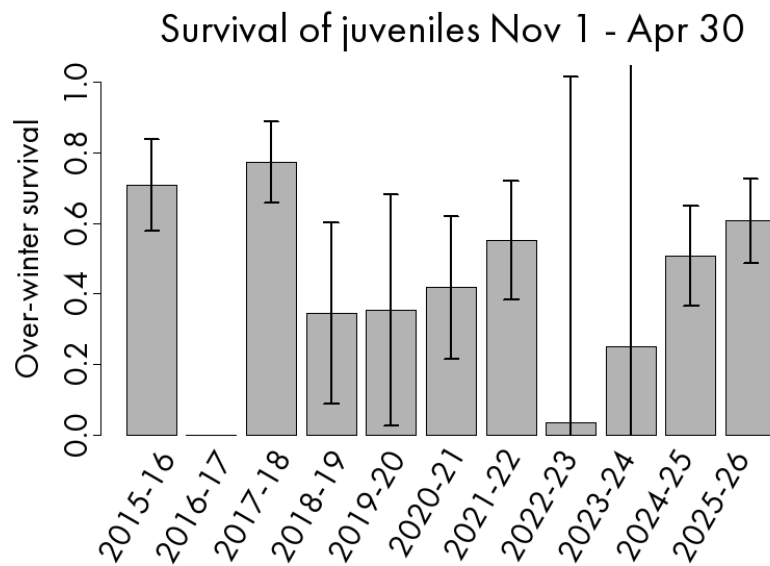


Figure 11. Survival (%) estimates of juvenile mule deer from November 1 – April 30, University of Wyoming/Haub School mule deer research project, Wyoming Range Mule Deer Herd, 2015 – 2025.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: EL101 - TARGHEE

HUNT AREAS: 73

PREPARED BY: ALYSON COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	0	0	500
Harvest:	52	57	55
Hunters:	133	143	140
Hunter Success:	39%	40%	39%
Active Licenses:	146	154	140
Active License Success	36%	37%	39%
Recreation Days:	1,023	1,198	800
Days Per Animal:	19.7	21.0	14.5
Males per 100 Females:	0	0	
Juveniles per 100 Females	0	0	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$)

500 (400 - 600)

Management Strategy:

Recreational

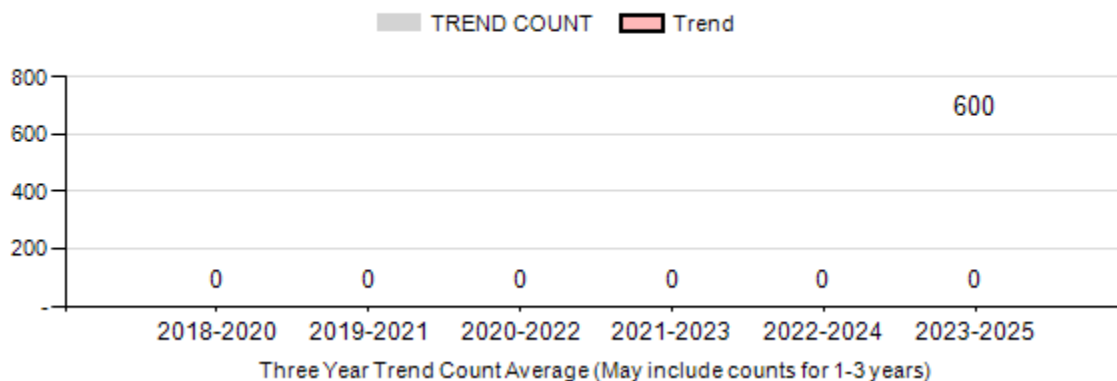
Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

N/A%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

1

EL101 Trend Count



2026 Hunting Seasons Targhee Elk (EL101)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
73	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 25		Any elk
73	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 19				Cow or calf
73	6			Aug. 15	Jan. 31	35	Cow or calf valid on private land

2026 Nonresident Western Elk Region Quota: 2,775 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 68% Satisfied, 25% Neutral, 8% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

From 2014-2024, this herd was managed with a hunter satisfaction objective (60%) instead of a mid-winter trend count because the majority of elk migrate to winter ranges in Idaho. However, the Department proposed an objective change in 2025 which was approved by the Commission. The herd objective is now a mid-winter trend count on winter ranges in the Alta, Wyoming area of 500 elk +/- 20%. The Department conducted a ground-based trend count on these winter ranges on February 5, 2026 and did not find any elk. Due to the interstate movements of this herd, elk may or may not be present on winter ranges in Wyoming during these surveys.

There were no changes to the 2026 seasons. Many of these elk migrate into the Island Park Hunting Zone in Idaho, which is above Idaho's management objectives. Due to private lands damage issues, Idaho has relatively liberal late season elk hunting to reduce both cows and bulls in this herd. The numbers and composition of elk in Hunt Area 73 are largely driven by Idaho's elk management. Therefore, Wyoming managers changed the General license season for Hunt Area 73 from an antlered elk, spikes excluded limitation to be valid for any elk beginning in 2024. Restricting harvest in Hunt Area 73 to antlered elk, spikes excluded will not affect herd numbers or composition since the majority of these elk migrate into Idaho during their open hunting seasons. During 2024 and 2025, General license hunters harvested a total 32 cows, 2 calves, and 16 yearling bulls. We will continue to monitor how this change affects elk harvest and hunter satisfaction in Hunt Area 73 in future years and adjust if necessary.

Management Objective Review

The Department proposed an objective change for this herd in 2025, changing from a Satisfaction Based objective to a Mid-Winter Trend Count. Public meetings were held in summer 2025 and the Commission approved the change in fall 2025. The Mid-Winter Trend Count objective is 500 elk +/- 20% and elk will be surveyed annually using ground-based counts in the Alta, Wyoming area. This objective change is not expected to change the current management of the Targhee Elk Herd. The objective is scheduled to be reviewed again in 2030.

Chapter 34 and Chapter 56 Harvest Reporting

There were no authorizations for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd unit under the Chapter 34 or Chapter 56 regulations.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Management

The Targhee Elk Herd has limited CWD prevalence data available, and no CWD management actions have occurred. The annual and five-year average CWD prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and confidence intervals, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below for 2021-2025 (Table 1). This herd has not been prioritized for CWD surveillance because elk harvest is low and widely dispersed in the herd unit, which makes encountering hunter-harvested elk to sample very difficult. CWD has not been detected in this herd, however sample size is low, which results in wider confidence intervals and more uncertainty about prevalence.

Table 1. Chronic wasting disease prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Targhee Elk Herd, 2021-2025

Year(s)	Percent CWD-positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of harvested adult elk sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=2)	5.6
2022	0% (n=3)	5.0
2023	0% (n=1)	2.9
2024	0% (n=6)	9.1
2025	0% (n=2)	3.5
2021-2025	0.0% (0-23.2%, n=14)	5.4

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: EL102 - JACKSON

HUNT AREAS: 70-72, 75, 77-83

PREPARED BY: ALYSON COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	10,198	10,029	10,500
Harvest:	1,006	898	900
Hunters:	2,378	2,283	2,300
Hunter Success:	42%	39%	39 %
Active Licenses:	2,523	2,336	2,300
Active License Success	40%	38%	39 %
Recreation Days:	15,378	14,386	13,800
Days Per Animal:	15.3	16.0	15.3
Males per 100 Females:	39	127	
Juveniles per 100 Females	20	31	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$)

11,000 (8800 - 13200)

Management Strategy:

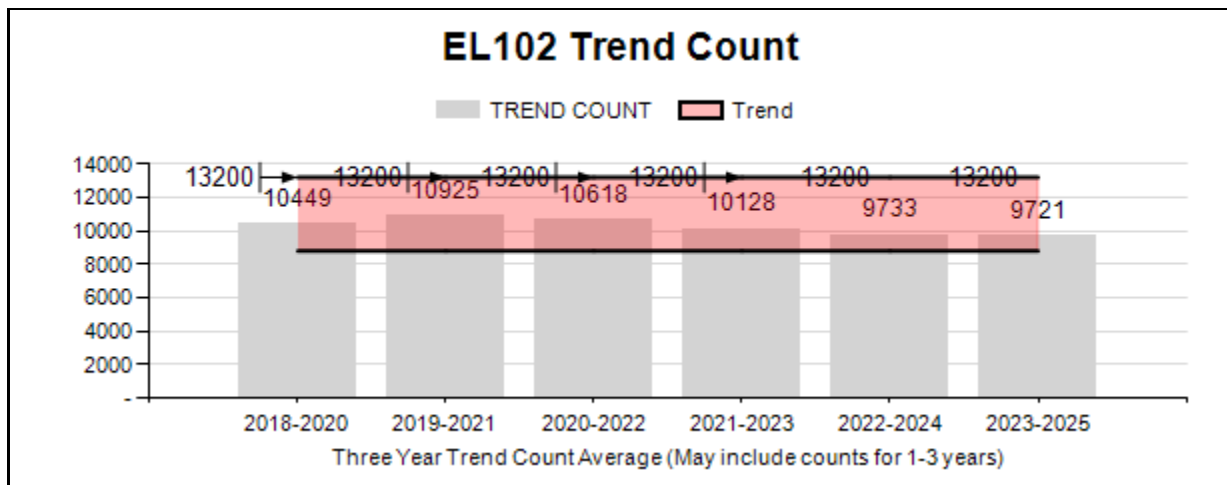
Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

-8.8%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

8



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary																		
for Elk Herd EL102 - JACKSON																		
		MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES				Males to 100 Females				Young to		
Year	Post Pop	Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Tot	Cls	Yng	Adult	Total	Conf	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020*	0	160	527	687	34%	1,051	52%	287	14%	2,025	290	15	50	65	± 0	27	± 0	17
2021	0	627	1,855	2,482	23%	6,936	64%	1,474	14%	10,892	484	9	27	36	± 0	21	± 0	16
2022	0	527	1,660	2,187	22%	6,373	64%	1,414	14%	9,974	446	8	26	34	± 0	22	± 0	17
2023*	0	173	1,281	1,454	41%	1,697	48%	384	11%	3,535	448	10	75	86	± 0	23	± 0	12
2024*	0	366	1,440	1,806	21%	6,109	69%	892	10%	8,807	339	6	24	30	± 0	15	± 0	11
2025*	0	321	1,326	1,647	49%	1,300	39%	403	12%	3,350	373	25	102	127	± 0	31	± 0	14

*During these years, large numbers of elk were counted but not classified. This was due to various reasons that affected ground classifications on the National Elk Refuge, including COVID restrictions (2020), elk not being fed at the time of the classification due to mild winter conditions (2023, 2025), and elk being fed but large groups not coming to the feedlines due to mild weather conditions at the time of the classification (2024).

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Jackson Elk (EL102)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
70	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 19				Any elk
70	Gen			Sep. 20	Oct. 31		Antlered elk, spikes excluded
71	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 19				Any elk
71	Gen			Sep. 20	Oct. 31		Antlered elk, spikes excluded
72							Closed
75	4			Nov. 14	Dec. 6	20	Antlerless elk; except the Snake River Bottom and Antelope Flats portions shall be closed
75	6			Nov. 14	Dec. 6	20	Cow or calf; except the Snake River Bottom and Antelope Flats portions shall be closed
77				Nov. 1	Nov. 25		General license and unused limited quota licenses; antlerless elk
77	Youth only			Nov. 26	Nov. 29		National Elk its shall be issued only for those in possession of a full price youth elk license, any elk; youth only
77				Nov. 30	Dec. 6		General license and unused limited quota licenses, antlerless elk
77	6			Dec. 7	Dec. 18	100	Cow or calf; permission slip required
77	6			Jan. 5	Jan. 14		Cow or calf; permission slips for the National Elk Refuge may be available through the Department's Jackson Regional Office until the season closes or conditions dictate that supplemental feeding is necessary
78	Gen			Aug. 15	Oct. 31		Antlerless elk valid on private land

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
78	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25				Any elk valid in the entire area
78	1			Aug. 15	Sep. 25	75	Any elk valid off national forest
78	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Jan. 31		Any elk valid in the entire area
78	2			Aug. 15	Oct. 31	50	Any elk valid on private land
78	2	Sep. 1	Sep. 25				Any elk valid in the entire area
78	6			Aug. 15	Sep. 25	175	Cow or calf valid off national forest
78	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Jan. 31		Cow or calf valid in the entire area
79							Closed
80	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Oct. 31		Any elk
80	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Oct. 15	Nov. 30	25	Cow or calf
81	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25				Any elk
81	Gen			Sep. 26	Oct. 25		Antlered elk, spikes excluded
82	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25				Any elk
82	Gen			Sep. 26	Oct. 25		Antlered elk, spikes excluded
82	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 9	Sep. 10	Nov. 5	40	Antlerless elk
82	4			Nov. 6	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid on private land; also valid on private land in Areas 70 and 81
83	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30				Any elk
83	Gen			Oct. 1	Oct. 25		Antlered elk, spikes excluded

2026 Nonresident Western Elk Region Quota: 2,775 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 68.9% Satisfied, 18.8% Neutral, 12.3% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

This herd is managed using a mid-winter trend count of 11,000 elk +/-20%. The 2025 mid-winter trend count was 10,029 elk and the 3-year average is 9,721 elk. This is the fourth year that the herd has been below the 11,000 objective, but it remains within the 20% objective range. Due to very mild winter conditions this year, neither the National Elk Refuge (NER) nor the Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) provided supplemental feed to elk in the Jackson Herd. Therefore, all elk were counted from the helicopter instead of a portion being counted from the ground on feedlines. This resulted in very large groups of elk (1,000+ individuals) being counted from videos but not able to be classified into age/sex categories. A total of 3,350 elk were classified this year while 6,679 elk were counted but not classified. Therefore, the calf and bull ratios are not accurate this year.

Despite the mild winter conditions and low snow depths throughout the herd's winter and transitional ranges, the majority of the herd was on the NER and in Hunt Area 80 (9,568 elk; 95%). There were a total of 127 elk in the Gros Ventre drainage and 334 on other winter ranges (primarily Buffalo Valley, Elk Ranch area, and southern Grand Teton National Park on Blacktail Butte, Blacktail Bench, and East Gros Ventre Butte). This is the second year in a row that elk numbers have been very low in the Gros Ventre drainage (417 elk in 2024). Elk distribution was similar to winter 2017/2018 which was also very mild and was the last time the NER did not feed. In that winter, 96% of the herd was also on the NER and Hunt Area 80 with only 86 elk in the Gros Ventre drainage.

Overall harvest success in the Jackson Elk Herd in 2025 was 39%. A total of 898 elk were harvested, which is slightly lower than the previous 5-year average of 1,005 elk. This is primarily due to mild fall and early winter conditions that delayed elk migration to the southern hunt areas. Cow elk licenses have also been reduced in recent years since the herd has been trending below the 11,000 objective. Bull harvest this year was the highest in the past 10 years (767 bulls). The previous 5-year average was 562 bulls. During the 2025/2026 hunting season, there were two authorizations for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd unit under the Chapter 34 Regulation (see below for details).

The changes to hunting seasons in 2026 include 1) Type 4 and Type 6 licenses in Hunt Area 75 in Grand Teton National Park were increased slightly due to a higher count in the Jackson Herd this year, 2) Hunt Area 77 dates shifted slightly, 3) Hunt Area 82 Type 4 closing date for the first part of the season (before the license shifts to private lands only) changed to November 5 with the intention this will be used as a standard date going forward in future years, and 4) the Type 6 season in Hunt Area 77 was lengthened to include additional dates in January (January 5 – 14). The changes to the Type 6 in Hunt Area 77 (NER) reflect a continued shift in cow elk management in Hunt Area 77 toward more limited quota seasons later in the winter in order to target harvest pressure on short-distance migrants and less harvest pressure on long-distance migrants and Gros Ventre elk. Short-distance migrants are typically the last elk to migrate to the NER in the fall/winter but their herd segment is increasing and requires additional harvest pressure. In contrast, long-distance migrants from Yellowstone National Park and Teton Wilderness as well as the Gros

Ventre herd segment are often some of the first elk to migrate to the NER in the fall/winter, however their herd segments have lower productivity and calf recruitment. Shifting hunting seasons later will result in harvesting more short-distance migrants. The Type 6 season will also incorporate experimental harvest strategies in the Hunter Management Area (HMA) in Hunt Area 77 that will aim to further target harvest on short-distance migrants based on GPS-collared elk data by adaptively opening and closing portions of the HMA based on real-time elk distribution data. If this approach is successful, managers plan to expand these harvest strategies in future years.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Jackson Elk Herd was last evaluated in 2016. The review was scheduled for 2021, however herd unit managers decided to postpone the objective review until the Wyoming Elk Feedgrounds Plan (2024) and Jackson Elk Herd Feedgrounds Management Action Plan (FMAP) were completed. The FMAP is expected to be completed in 2026 with a herd unit objective review to follow.

Chapter 34 and Chapter 56 Harvest Reporting

During the 2025 hunting season, there were 22 authorizations for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd under the Chapter 34 Regulation and zero Chapter 56 permit. In total, five cow elk were harvested under these authorizations in addition to totals reported in the harvest survey. Details are as follows:

- **Auxiliary Hunt – Elk Hunt Area 78**
 - 10 Auxiliary licenses issued
 - Harvest = 0 elk
- **Auxiliary Hunt – Elk Hunt Area 82**
 - 12 Auxiliary licenses issued
 - Harvest = 5 cow elk

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Management

The Jackson Elk Herd is prioritized for CWD sampling every year. The annual and five-year average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, confidence intervals, and percent harvest sampled for CWD are presented below for 2021-2025 (Table 1). The first CWD-positive elk in this herd unit was detected in 2020 in Hunt Area 75. No additional positive elk had been detected until April 2026 when two elk from the NER tested positive. These two elk were not hunter-harvested and therefore are not included in Table 1. One elk appeared very sick and was euthanized by NER staff and one elk was found dead from predation and sampled.

Sample sizes are consistently high in this herd due to mandatory hunter harvest sampling in Hunt Areas 75 (Grand Teton National Park) and 77 (NER) and efforts by Department personnel in the Jackson Region to collect samples from meat processors, head barrels, and from hunter contacts in the field. However, sample distribution is skewed to the southern hunt areas that are primarily antlerless harvest where access is easier. Samples are limited from backcountry hunt areas, however Department personnel are working to improve this by prioritizing time spent contacting backcountry camps and trailheads. Currently, CWD management activities are focused on proper

carcass disposal and surveillance through hunter-harvested elk, road-kills, and elk that are exhibiting signs of sickness.

Table 1. Chronic wasting disease prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Jackson Elk Herd, 2021-2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of harvested adult elk sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=201)	29.8
2022	0% (n=545)	46.1
2023	0% (n=137)	16.7
2024	0% (n=166)	21.6
2025	0% (n=114)	13.0
2021-2025	0.0% (0-0.3%, n=1163)	26.9

Feedgrounds and Disease Management

The winter of 2025-2026 was historically mild, resulting in no feedground operation in the Jackson Elk Herd (Table 2). Decades of work to address and mitigate elk damage and co-mingling concerns in this herd unit factored considerably into the ability to abstain from feeding in the Jackson Elk Herd this winter. A total of 101 elk were captured on the NER within the Jackson Herd Unit this winter, including 73 yearling and older females and 28 2-year old and older males. Of the 73 females captured, 69 were sampled for exposure to *Brucella abortus*, the bacteria responsible for causing brucellosis, with 32 samples testing positive indicating a 46% seroprevalence. Of the 28 males captured, 28 were sampled for exposure to *Brucella abortus*, with 13 samples testing positive indicating a 46% seroprevalence. (Table 3).

A large-scale shift in elk distribution within the Jackson Elk Herd was documented during the winter of 2025-2026. Close to 95% of the elk that would typically winter in the Gros Ventre drainage (including Patrol Cabin and Fish Creek Feedgrounds) wintered primarily on the NER and surrounding federal lands. This phenomenon has occurred three times in the last decade, 2017-2018 winter, 2024-2025 winter and 2025-2026 winter. No elk were fed in the Jackson Elk Herd during the winter of 2025-2026.

Table 2. 2025-2026 Feedground start and end dates.

Feedground	Start Date	End Date	Days fed
Gros Ventre (Patrol Cabin and Fish Creek)	Did Not Operate		
National Elk Refuge	Did Not Operate		

Table 3. 2026 Jackson Elk Herd Brucellosis Surveillance.

Feedground	Capture Method	GPS collars deployed	# Captured	# Tested	# Seropositive	% Prevalence (2025)
National Elk Refuge (female)	Helicopter/Dart	72	73	69*	32	46%
National Elk Refuge (male)	Helicopter	28	28	28	13	46%
2026 Totals		100	101	97	45	46%

*statistically significant *n* for estimated prevalence to be within +/- 15% of true prevalence

A total of 154 elk were sampled for CWD within the Jackson Elk Herd Unit from the beginning of hunting season through the end of the feeding season, with 114 samples from hunter-harvested adult elk. An additional 40 samples were collected from juvenile elk (11), road kill (6), and animals found dead/euthanized (23), and were therefore not included in prevalence estimates. Two samples collected by NER staff in April of 2026 tested positive for CWD. Chronic wasting disease was first detected in elk within this herd in 2020 with a positive hunter-harvested sample from Hunt Area 75. No additional elk in this herd unit had tested positive until April 2026. The Jackson Elk Herd is currently a priority herd for CWD sampling, with the goal of collecting at least 200 samples from adult elk over three consecutive years. Currently in year 3, CWD samples now total 417, allowing for a reliable estimate of prevalence of CWD in this herd.

Ear tags are permanently attached to all elk that are captured and released as part of brucellosis surveillance and research initiatives and are retrieved when an animal is harvested or when a carcass is discovered. This undertaking enhances our understanding of elk distribution and dispersion, and improves our knowledge of how diseases may potentially spread among elk herds. Ear tag returns from elk captured at Jackson Elk Herd feedgrounds (NER, Patrol Cabin and Fish Creek Feedgrounds) were reported from 11 elk in 2025, with 9 harvested within the Jackson Elk Herd boundary, and 2 found dead within the same area.

Feedgrounds Management Action Plan (FMAP)

The Wyoming Elk Feedgrounds Plan was adopted by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in 2024. This plan directed the Department to develop a Feedgrounds Management Action Plan (FMAP) for each elk herd that contains feedgrounds. Each FMAP will use the best available science, expertise, and local knowledge on how to uniquely implement the strategies identified in the Wyoming Elk Feedgrounds Plan (2024) as appropriate at each feedground and herd. FMAPs are intended to be a concise, straightforward playbook that are tailored to the unique characteristics of each herd and feedground that identifies obstacles and solutions to implement actions to accomplish the Plan goals.

The Jackson Elk Herd and Pinedale Elk Herd were selected as the first herds for which to develop FMAPs. Jackson regional staff met many times between October 2024 and August 2025 to review the strategies in the Plan to determine how they could or should apply to the Jackson Elk Herd and its feedgrounds and develop a list of actions to address them. From August-December 2025, staff worked on condensing the list of 41 actions into Tier 1 (30) and Tier II (11) actions, prioritize them, estimate costs, and summarize their status. A draft of the Jackson Elk Herd FMAP was

presented to affected stakeholders beginning in fall 2025 and at a public workshop in February 2026. A final version of the Jackson Elk Herd FMAP is expected to be completed in 2026. Of the 30 Tier I actions identified in the draft Jackson Elk Herd FMAP, 6 have been started or completed (Table 4).

Table 4. Identified actions from the draft Jackson Elk Herd FMAP that had accomplishments in 2025-2026.

Identified Action	Accomplishments
Conduct a radio-collaring effort to assess the status and trends of different migratory herd segments of the herd.	Started in winter 2026 with collaring 92 elk
Use collar data to inform harvest strategies on the National Elk Refuge. Focus harvest on short and medium distance migrant elk.	WGF Commission-approved 2026 hunting seasons include these strategies
Work with Bridger-Teton National Forest on opportunities within the current winter human presence closures to affect Gros Ventre elk distribution with the goal of encouraging Gros Ventre elk to winter in the Gros Ventre drainage as opposed to the National Elk Refuge.	Started discussions with BTNF in spring 2026 to explore these options
Develop a “ Living in Elk Country ” brochure for non-traditional agricultural landowners to help provide strategies to prevent conflicts.	Completed in fall 2025
Analyze Gros Ventre elk wintering patterns as they relate to feeding, weather, wolf metrics, etc. Try to understand why and when elk leave the Gros Ventre for the winter.	Started in winter 2026
Compare elk winter range density and distribution between feedground and unfed elk populations in Wyoming.	Started in fall 2025

Research

A new research project in the Jackson Elk Herd began in winter 2025/2026. The project will provide reliable estimates of herd segment sizes, bull and cow survival rates, and calf ratios to inform integrated population models. It will also provide fine scale movement data to inform new changes to hunting seasons and track their effects on the different herd segments. This information is critical as chronic wasting disease prevalence increases in the herd. The project is being led by WGFD with close collaboration and support from the other agency partners in the Jackson Hole Cooperative Elk Studies Group. Project objectives include:

1. Estimate abundances of the four herd segments of the Jackson Elk Herd and trends over time;
2. Utilize fine scale movement data from short-distance migratory elk during the fall and early winter to target harvest on these elk, while protecting other herd segments from over-harvest;

3. Evaluate how management changes such as additional harvest on short-distance migrants affects numbers in all four population segments over time;
4. Estimate adult vital rates (cow survival, bull survival, calf ratios, pregnancy, etc.) to help develop an integrated population model for the herd, which would inform harvest targets for the different herd segments, including Grand Teton National Park's Elk Reduction Program; and
5. Track the influence of chronic wasting disease on elk survival in the different herd segments as prevalence increases over time.

The project successfully began in February 2026 with the capture and collaring of 92 elk (64 cows and 28 bulls) on the NER and other winter ranges on Bridger-Teton National Forest to the east. Winter conditions were exceptionally mild, which resulted in abnormal elk distribution, making captures challenging. A total of 77 elk were captured with a helicopter and 15 were ground-darted by WGFD and NER staff with the assistance of the Elk Refuge Sleigh Rides. The NER did not feed this winter due to mild conditions, therefore the planned elk ground-darting on feedlines did not occur. We are planning to capture and collar additional elk in winter 2026/2027 to reach the goal sample size of 150 cows and 60 bulls.

Journal Publications

- Cotterill, G.G., E.K. Cole, P.C. Cross, S.R. Dewey, B.L. Wise, and T.A. Graves. 2025. Elk personality and anthropogenic food subsidy: Managing conflict and migration loss. *Ecosphere* 16(8):e70344.
- Janousek, W.M., G.G. Cotterill, O.J Lobo, E.K. Cole, S.R. Dewey, and T.A. Graves. 2026. Estimating GPS-based social aggregation metrics using collar data. *PLOS One* 21(4):e0345546.
- Robb, B.S., J. Shapiro, K. Smith, E.K. Cole, A.B. Courtemanch, S.R. Dewey, M.J. Kauffman, A.D. Middleton, T.W. Mong, and J.A. Merkle. 2026. Space between houses influences movement and habitat selection of ungulates: Width as a novel metric of development. *Journal of Applied Ecology* 63(5):e70395.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: EL103 - FALL CREEK

HUNT AREAS: 84-85

PREPARED BY: CHEYENNE STEWART

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	4,442	3,526	4,250
Harvest:	669	757	700
Hunters:	1,647	1,874	1,700
Hunter Success:	41%	40%	41 %
Active Licenses:	1,798	2,101	1,900
Active License Success	37%	36%	37 %
Recreation Days:	11,182	13,999	12,000
Days Per Animal:	16.7	18.5	17.1
Males per 100 Females:	19	21	
Juveniles per 100 Females	28	28	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$)

4,400 (3520 - 5280)

Management Strategy:

Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

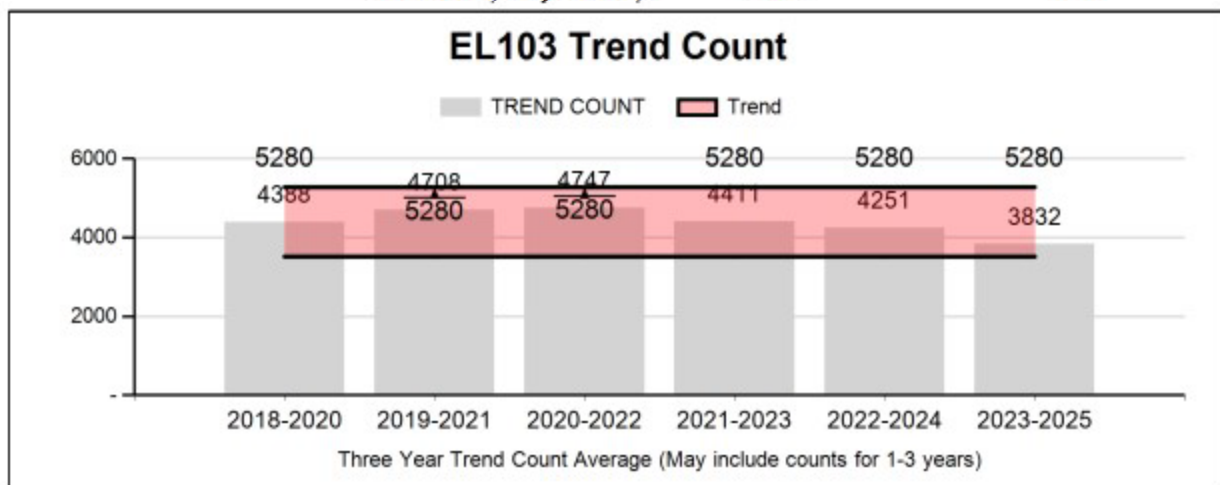
-19.9%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

0

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	NA%



2021 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Elk Herd EL103 - FALL CREEK

Year	Post Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females			Conf Int	Young to		
		Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ylng	Adult	Total		100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2021	0	278	315	593	12%	3,201	67%	981	21%	4,775	0	9	10	19	±0	31	±0	26
2022	0	255	426	681	14%	3,023	64%	993	21%	4,697	0	8	14	23	±0	33	±0	27
2023	0	199	346	545	13%	2,836	69%	755	18%	4,136	0	7	12	19	±0	27	±0	22
2024	0	191	354	545	12%	3,039	69%	826	19%	4,410	0	6	12	18	±0	27	±0	23
2025	0	282	211	493	14%	2,371	67%	662	19%	3,526	0	12	9	21	±0	28	±0	23

2025 Posthunt Classification and Trend Survey

Fall Creek Herd Unit - E103 (February 15-February 19, 2026)

Total Males:100 Females: 21
 Adult Males:100 Females: 9
 Yrlg. Males:100 Females: 12
 Juveniles:100 Females: 28

Trend Count Objective: 4400 +/-20% (3520-5280)

HERD COMPOSITION COUNTS IN THE FALL CR. ELK DAU 2017-2025

Location	2017*	2018*	2019*	2020*	2021*	2022*	2023*	2024	2025	Quota
Horse Creek F.G.	1102	1258	1778	1043	1934	1733	1326	1620	xxxx	1250
Camp Creek F.G.	510	708	801	1249	955	948	1182	1020	1126	900
South Park F.G.	942	846	871	786	864	949	793	681	xxxx	1000
Dog Creek F.G.	689	873	975	518	1014	877	789	930	xxxx	800
Native Range	513	405	240	812	285	274	306	321	2400	
Herd Unit Total	3756	4090	4665	4408	5052	4781	4396	4572	3526	4400

Classification

Tot.Males:100 Cows	16	15	18	16	18	22	19	18	21
Ad. Males:100 Cows	10	9	11	10	10	14	12	12	9
Yrl.Males:100 Cows	6*	6*	7*	6*	8*	8*	7*	6*	12*
Juveniles:100 Cows	22	29	30	23	31	33	27	27	28

Total Count

Total Bulls	409	407	571	450	593	681	545	545	493
Adult Bulls	251	241	353	293	315	426	346	354	211
Yrlng Bulls	158	166	218	157	278	255	199	191	282
Cows	2501	2719	3073	2769	3201	3023	2836	3039	2371
Calves	547	789	920	645	981	993	755	826	662
Unclassified	299	175	101	544	277	84	260	162	0

* Any elk, spikes exclude
 XXXX Did Not Feed

**2026 HUNTING SEASONS
FALL CREEK ELK HERD (EL103)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
84	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25				Any elk
84	Gen			Sep. 26	Oct. 31		Any elk, spikes excluded
84	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 15		Antlerless elk
84	1			Nov. 1	Jan. 31	100	Any elk valid on private land west of U.S. Highway 191 and north and east of the Snake River starting at the South Park Bridge
84	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Nov. 30	400	Cow or calf; that portion of Area 84 east and south of Shoal Creek to the Hoback River shall be closed after Nov. 20
84	6			Dec. 1	Dec. 31		Cow or calf valid south of Hoback River
84, 85	7			Aug. 15	Jan. 31	250	Cow or calf valid on private land in Area 84; also valid in that portion of Area 85 on or within 200 yards of irrigated land north of Fall Creek
85	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25				Any elk
85	Gen			Sep. 26	Oct. 31		Any elk, spikes excluded
85	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Nov. 15	100	Cow or calf

2026 Nonresident Western Elk Region Quota: 2,775 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 69% Satisfied, 21% Neutral, 10% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The mild winter conditions resulted in very minimal feeding across the herd unit over the 2025/2026 winter. Normally, most elk are counted and classified on feedgrounds, with supplemental data from aerial surveys of elk on native winter range. This year, due to the broad distribution of elk on native winter range within the herd unit, most elk were counted and classified from helicopter surveys. We attribute this year's lower count (3,526) to the mild winter conditions affecting our survey technique, and not a biological reduction in the herd. The population remains within objective.

Bull-to-cow ratios continue to hover at or below the management minimum threshold of 20 bulls:100 cows. This reflects a chronically low bull:cow ratio that has persisted in this herd unit for at least 15 years, despite the spikes excluded limitation. Calf ratios continue to exhibit a generally stable trend over the last three years, with 27 calves:100 cows observed.

Total harvest over the last three years (average = 788) has generally increased from previous years (2015-2022 average = 509), which reflects seasons designed to address recent trends of above desired elk numbers of elk on the Camp Creek and Horse Creek feedgrounds, and increased participation. Hunter satisfaction remains high, with 69% of hunters surveyed in 2025 indicating they were satisfied with their elk hunt experience. However, we continue to hear concerns raised regarding bull quality and numbers every year.

The "any elk, spikes excluded" restriction, in which hunters may select antlerless elk, can decrease hunting pressure on the antlered segment of the population and thereby potentially increase the number of antlered elk observed in the postseason population. However, we have not seen a meaningful response in adult bull ratios.

The Department proposed shortening the "any elk, spikes excluded" general seasons for Hunt Areas 84 and 85 from Oct. 31 to Oct. 26, to address chronically low bull numbers as reflected in our survey data and hunter comments. Based on public comment in opposition to the proposal the Department did not carry that proposal forward. Opening the season later than the Sept. 26, would provide a more meaningful reduction in bull harvest, but managers anticipate strong stakeholder resistance to adjusting the long-standing Sept. 26 opener. The Department will continue to assess the data and public sentiment on this topic.

The Type 6 limitation to close the area east and south of Shoal Creek to the Hoback River on November 20 is targeted at preventing elk damage to private property in Dell Creek (Hunt Area 87). Based on elk radio-collar data and field personnel observations, managers from the Jackson and Pinedale regions are developing a Herd Unit and Hunt Area boundary change proposal that would move the Area 84/87 boundary to Shoal Creek. This would improve herd unit and hunt area alignment with elk movements, improve management, reduce confusion from hunt area limitations, and improve enforcement. The 84-6 extension through December south of Hoback River is targeted at preventing elk damage.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy was last evaluated and approved in 2017, and will not be reviewed again until after the Fall Creek Feedground Management Action Plan is complete (anticipated 2027 or 2028).

Disease Management

The winter of 2025-2026 was historically mild, resulting in minimal feedground operation in the Fall Creek Elk Herd (Table 1). Decades of work to address and mitigate elk damage and co-mingling concerns in this herd unit factored considerably into the ability to abstain from feeding in the Fall Creek Elk Herd. Due to minimal feedground operation in the Fall Creek Elk Herd, no elk were captured or sampled during the winter of 2025-2026

Table 1. 2025-2026 Feedground start and end dates.

Feedground	Start Date	End Date	Days Fed
South Park	Did not operate		
Horse Creek	Did not operate		
Camp Creek	1/14/2026	3/3/2026	49
Dog Creek	Did not operate		

Ear tags are permanently attached to all elk that are captured and released as part of brucellosis surveillance and research initiatives and are retrieved when an animal is harvested or when a carcass is discovered. This undertaking enhances our understanding of elk distribution and dispersion, and improves our knowledge of how diseases may potentially spread among elk herds. Ear tag returns from elk captured at Fall Creek elk herd feedgrounds (South Park, Horse Creek, Camp Creek and Dog Creek Feedgrounds) were reported from 13 elk, with 7 harvested in hunt area 84, 3 harvested from hunt area 85, 1 road killed on HWY 89, and 2 natural mortalities (cause undetermined). Outside the Fall Creek Elk Herd, 1 ear tag return from an adult cow elk that was captured at South Park Feedground and harvested in hunt area 78 and 1 ear tag return from an adult cow elk that was captured at Dog Creek Feedground was recovered in the Little Greys River Drainage (hunt area 89) from lion predation.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring

The Fall Creek elk herd is a Tier 2 surveillance herd. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates for CWD are presented below (Table 1). Robust sampling over the last 5-years has surpassed the 200 goal, with zero CWD detections and an average of 14% of harvested adult elk being tested. A total of 138 elk were sampled for CWD within the Fall Creek elk herd unit from the beginning of hunting season through the end of the feeding season, with 101 samples from hunter harvested adult elk. An additionally 37 samples were collected from juvenile or unaged elk (23), road kill (10), and animals found dead (4), and were therefore not included in prevalence estimates. No additional CWD positive samples were collected during this reporting period. The Fall Creek elk herd is currently a priority herd, with the goal of collecting 200 samples from adult elk over three consecutive years. Currently in year 3, CWD samples now total 259; allowing for a reliable prevalence estimate of CWD in this herd.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Fall Creek Elk Herd, 2020 – 2025.

Years	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvest Adult elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=63)	15
2022	0% (n=101)	19
2023	0%(n=74)	10
2024	0% (n=84)	11
2025	0% (n=101)	15
2020 - 2025	0% (n=423)	14

Chapter 34 and Chapter 56 Harvest Reporting

During the 2025 hunting season, there were 23 authorizations for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd unit under the Chapter 34 Regulation and zero Chapter 56 permits. In total, 16 cow elk were harvested in Hunt Area 84 under these authorizations in addition to totals in the harvest survey.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk
 HERD: EL105 - AFTON
 HUNT AREAS: 88-91

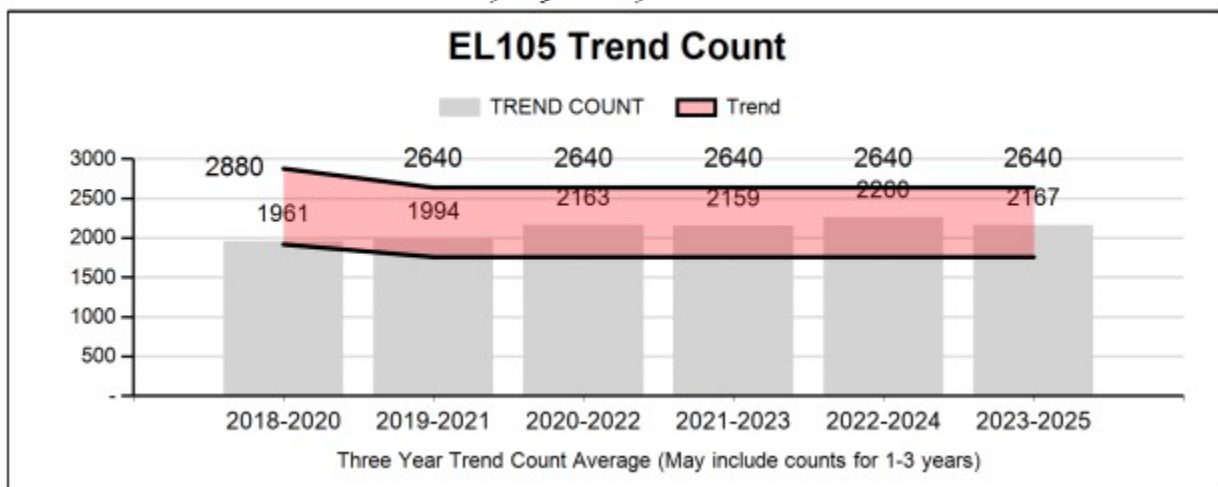
PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026
 PREPARED BY: CHEYENNE STEWART

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	2,226	1,862	2,000
Harvest:	837	917	900
Hunters:	2,329	2,568	2,450
Hunter Success:	36%	36%	37 %
Active Licenses:	2,467	2,703	2,600
Active License Success	34%	34%	35 %
Recreation Days:	15,572	19,044	17,500
Days Per Animal:	18.6	20.8	19.4
Males per 100 Females:	22	25	
Juveniles per 100 Females	34	34	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$) 2,200 (1760 - 2640)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: -15.4%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 0

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	NA%



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Elk Herd EL105 - AFTON

Year	Post Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ylg	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	0	63	153	216	15%	955	66%	276	19%	1,447	0	7	16	23	± 0	29	± 0	24
2021	0	78	101	179	15%	657	54%	376	31%	1,212	0	12	15	27	± 0	57	± 0	45
2022	0	74	109	183	13%	903	66%	288	21%	1,374	0	8	12	20	± 0	32	± 0	27
2023	0	71	103	174	14%	867	68%	233	18%	1,274	0	8	12	20	± 0	27	± 0	22
2024	0	60	161	221	14%	1,025	65%	332	21%	1,578	0	6	16	22	± 0	32	± 0	27
2025	0	114	156	270	16%	1,073	63%	369	22%	1,712	0	11	15	25	± 0	34	± 0	27

2025 Posthunt Classification and Trend Survey Afton Elk Herd - E105 (February 15 - 19, 2026)

Total Males:100 Females: 25
 Adult Males:100 Females: 15
 Yrlg. Males:100 Females: 11
 Juveniles:100 Females: 34

Trend Count Objective: 2200 +/-20% (1760-2640)

HERD COMPOSITION COUNTS IN THE AFTON ELK DAU 2016-2025

Location	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	2022	2023*	2024	2025	FG Quota
Greys River FG	476	519	488	544	583	471	404	495	XXXX	1000
Forest Park FG	579	467	489	399	650	703	709	695	616	750
Native Range	1312	881	659	1436	735	968	1044	1083	1080	
Herd Unit Total	2690	2413	1867	1636	2379	1968	2142	2273	1696	2200

Classification

Tot.Males:100 Cows	24	15	17	23	19	20	20	22	25
Ad. Males:100 Cows	19	10	11	16	11	12	12	16	15
Yrl.Males:100 Cows	5	5	6	7	8	8	8	6	11
Juveniles:100 Cows	22	36	36	29	40	32	27	32	34

Total Count

Total Bulls	197	161	152	216	179	183	174	221	270
Adult Bulls	159	104	96	153	101	109	103	161	156
Yrlng Bulls	38	57	56	63	78	74	71	60	114
Cows	812	1042	875	955	942	903	867	1025	1073
Calves	176	379	314	276	376	288	233	332	369
Unclassified	650	1228	285	295	932	472	1092	695	166

• Includes HA 91 west along Idaho Stateline

^ WGF Commission votes to eliminate FG Quotas in March 2024

XXXX Did Not Feed

**2026 HUNTING SEASONS
AFTON ELK HERD (EL105)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
88	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	40	Any elk
88	1			Nov. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid south of Peterson Lane and south and west of the Greys River Wildlife Habitat Management Area elk fence
89	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 26		Any elk
90	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 26		Any elk
90	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 26	50	Cow or calf
91	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
91	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 15		Antlerless elk
91	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	100	Any elk
91	1			Nov. 1	Dec. 31		Antlerless elk
91	1			Jan. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid off national forest
91	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	350	Cow or calf
91	6			Jan. 1	Jan. 31		Cow or calf valid off national forest
91	7	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Jan. 31	100	Cow or calf valid off national forest west of U.S. Highway 89 and south of Wyoming Highway 239

2026 Nonresident Western Elk Region Quota: 2,775 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 64% Satisfied, 24% Neutral, 12% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The mild winter conditions resulted in very minimal feeding across the herd unit over the 2025/2026 winter. Normally, most elk are counted and classified on feedgrounds, with supplemental data from aerial surveys of elk on native winter range. This year, due to the broad distribution of elk on native winter range within the herd unit, most elk were counted and classified from helicopter surveys. We attribute this year's lower count (1,862) to the mild winter conditions affecting our survey technique, and not a biological reduction in the herd. The population remains within objective.

The observed calf ratio in 2025 was 34, which is on par with the average for the ten years prior (35 calves:100 cows from 2015-2024). The calf ratios in the Afton herd may be sensitive to severe winters, as the ratios dipped following the 2016-17 (22 calves:100 cows) and 2022-2023 winters (27 calves:100 cows). Total bull ratios increased in 2025, due to an increase of yearling bulls classified. It is unclear if this is a true biological indicator or a result of the mild winter conditions affecting our survey technique.

Harvest in the herd has been relatively stable since 2020, with an uptick in cow harvest in 2025 (372) compared to the five years prior (2020-2024 average was 295), which can likely be attributed to liberalizing some areas to address damage and an increase in resident hunters since the implementation of nonresident regions in 2024.

In Greys River, Hunt Areas 89 and 90, the management strategy has been to reduce harvest pressure on the antlered segment of the population in order to promote bull numbers and ratios that approach or exceed the recreational management minimum of 20 bulls:100 cows.

We have heard public sentiment expressing concern about low bull numbers and the general absence of 3+ bulls in the population in recent years. As a result, we proposed shortening the general archery seasons by closing on Sep. 25, five days earlier than the Sep. 30 closure date of prior years for Areas 89, 90, and 91. From harvest success data, archery seasons in Areas 89 and 90 take a substantial proportion of adult bulls harvested (18% and 19% in 2025, respectively), which is corroborated by the Timing of Harvest data (Figure 1 below). Past efforts to bolster bull ratios have resulted in increased restrictions on the regular season, so this is an effort to have a meaningful approach to bolster adult bull numbers without further restricting General elk hunters during the regular season. While archery accounts for less bull harvest in Area 91 (16% of adult bulls harvested), Area 91 was included for herd unit consistency. Area 88 archery seasons were not included in the archery date change proposal to maintain maximum flexibility to prevent bull and cow damage. With near 70 comments submitted, public sentiment was overwhelmingly opposed to the proposal, so it was not carried forward. The Department will continue to assess the data and public sentiment on this issue.

Hunt Area 91 encompasses a major area of public/private land interface and the Idaho-Wyoming Stateline. As such, management has focused on persistent and chronic elk damage to stored crops

and comingling with domestic livestock. The Type 7 season opening date was moved from Dec. 1 to Oct. 1 with the goal of having harvest as a management tool available to prevent and address damage.

Area 88 is one of the smallest hunt areas and most conservative hunting seasons in Wyoming. The extended antlerless opportunity is designed to address a small but persistent group of elk. The quota was increased from 40 to 80 in 2025, which resulted in low participation (57 active hunters) and hunter crowding, albeit good success (56%). The 2026 season will return to the 40 quota in an effort to maintain pressure on the target group of elk while minimizing crowding.

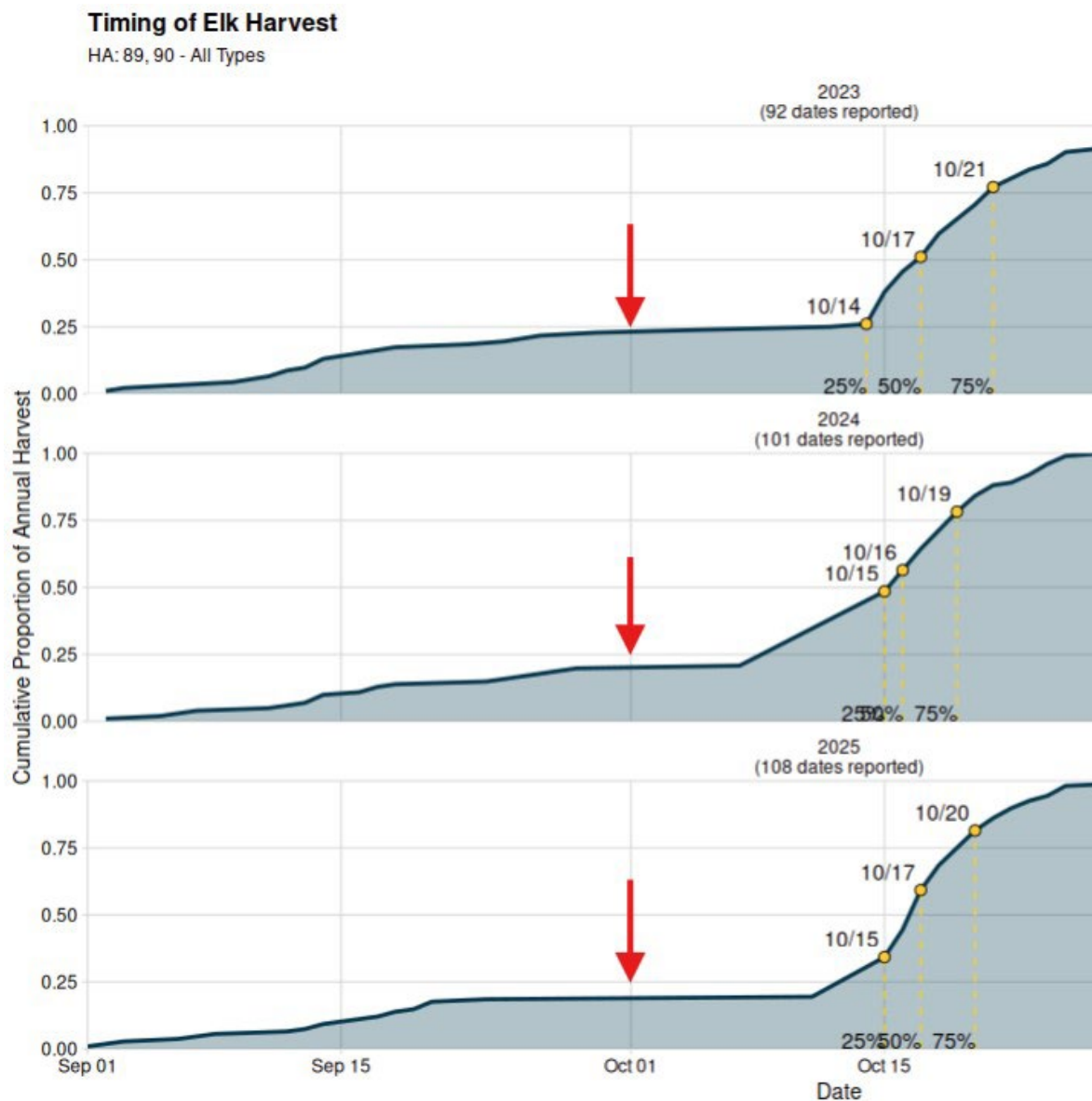


Figure 1. Cumulative proportion of annual harvest in Hunt Areas 88 and 89 in 2023, 2024, and 2025. Yellow hashed lines indicate date corresponding to 25, 50, and 75 percent of total harvest

occurring. Red arrows indicate the point on the figure where 25% of the harvest would have occurred on the date that the Archery season ended.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy was last evaluated and approved in 2018, and will not be reviewed again until after the Afton Feedground Management Action Plan is complete (anticipated 2027 or 2028).

Disease Management

The winter of 2025-2026 was historically mild, resulting in minimal feedground operation in the Afton Elk Herd (Table 1). Decades of work to address and mitigate elk damage and co-mingling concerns in this herd unit factored considerably into the ability to abstain from feeding in the majoring of the Afton Elk Herd. Due to minimal feedground operation in the Afton Elk Herd, no elk were captured or sampled on feedgrounds during the winter of 2025-2026.

Elk were captured via helicopter net gunning in the Greys River Drainage in March of 2026. Collars were deployed and biological samples collected on these individuals. This capture event was part of an ongoing effort to collect data on distribution, movement and disease status (Table 2) of unfed, native winter range elk in the Afton elk herd. This information will be valuable for upcoming Feedground Management Action Plan (FMAP) development, animal abundance survey development and helping to monitor survival rates of unfed elk in western Wyoming.

Table 1. 2025-2026 Feedground start and end dates.

Feedground	Start Date	End Date	Days Fed
Greys River	Did Not Operate		
Forest Park	1/10/2026	3/15/2026	64

Table 2. 2026 Afton Elk Herd Brucellosis Surveillance.

Feedground	Capture Method	GPS collars deployed	# Captured	# Tested	# Seropositive	% Prevalence (2026)
Greys River NWR	Helicopter	7	7	7	0	0%

Ear tags are permanently attached to all elk that are captured and released as part of brucellosis surveillance and research initiatives and are retrieved when an animal is harvested or when a carcass is discovered. This undertaking enhances our understanding of elk distribution and dispersion, and improves our knowledge of how diseases may potentially spread among elk herds. Ear tag returns from elk captured at Greys River feedground were reported from 11 elk, with 6 harvested in hunt area 88, 3 harvested in hunt area 89, 1 harvested in hunt area 91 and 1 found dead (hunt area 89). Ear tag returns from elk captured at Forest Park feedground were reported from 6 elk, 5 were harvested in hunt area 90, and 1 was harvested in hunt area 89.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring

A total of 58 elk were sampled for CWD within the Afton elk herd unit from the beginning of hunting season through the end of the feeding season, with 56 samples from hunter harvested adult elk. An additionally two samples were collected from animals found dead, and were therefore not included in prevalence estimates. However, all samples tested negative and CWD has not been detected in elk within this herd. The Afton elk herd is currently a priority herd, with the goal of collecting 200 samples from adult elk over three consecutive years. Currently in year 3, CWD samples now total 151. An additional 107 CWD samples are needed to be collected during the 2026-27 hunting seasons in order to reliably estimate prevalence of CWD in this herd for the 3-year period. The Afton elk herd is a Tier 2 surveillance herd. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates for CWD are presented below (Table 1). The target sample size of 200 was achieved cumulatively over the last five years, with zero CWD detections and an average of 9% of harvested adult elk being tested.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Afton Elk Herd, 2020 – 2025.

Years	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=86)	11
2022	0% (n=57)	7
2023	0% (n=58)	7
2024	0% (n=37)	5
2025	0% (n=56)	8
2020 - 2025	0% (n=294)	9

Chapter 34 and Chapter 56 Harvest Reporting

There were no authorizations for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd unit under the Chapter 34 or Chapter 56 regulations.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Moose

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 -
5/31/2026

HERD: MO101 - TARGHEE

HUNT AREAS: 16, 37

PREPARED BY: ALYSON
COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:		N/A	N/A
Harvest:	4	2	5
Hunters:	5	5	5
Hunter Success:	80%	40%	100%
Active Licenses:	5	5	5
Active License Success:	80%	40%	100%
Recreation Days:	67	43	60
Days Per Animal:	16.8	21.5	12

Limited Opportunity Objective:

5-year median age of > 4.5 years for harvested moose

5-year average of <= 12 days/animal to harvest

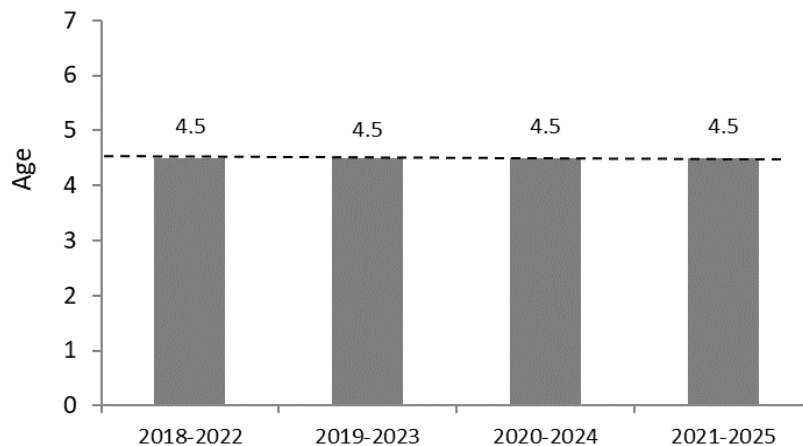
Secondary Objective:

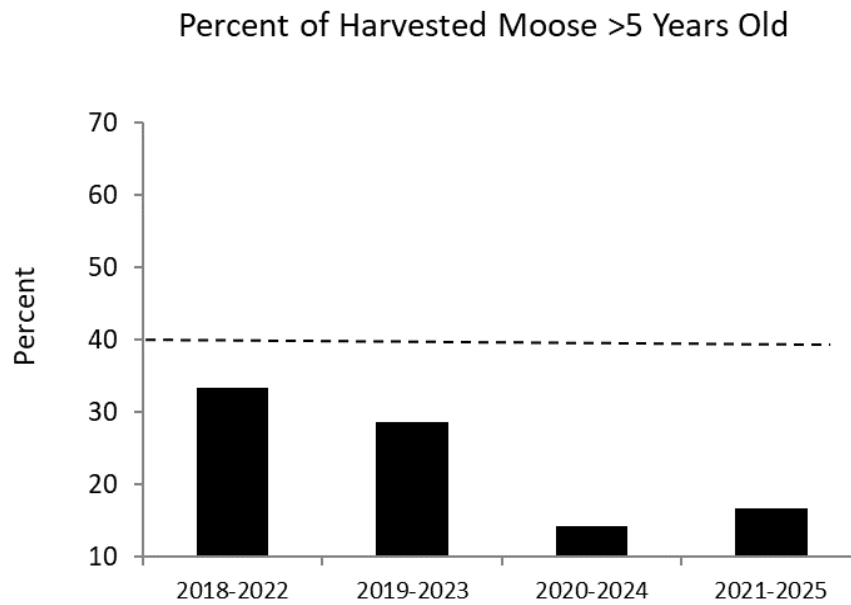
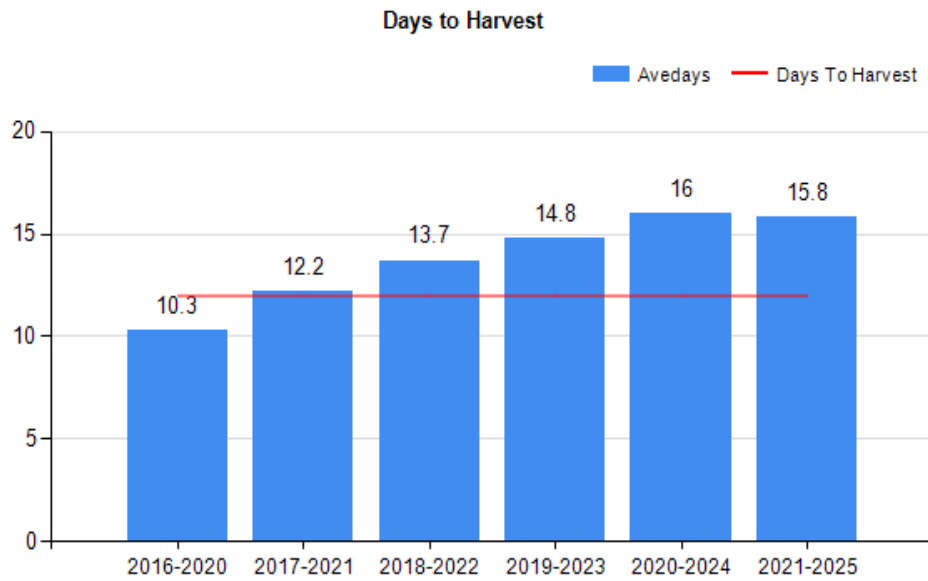
5-year average of 40% of harvested moose are > 5 years of age

Management Strategy:

Special

Median Age of Harvested Moose





2026 Hunting Seasons Targhee Moose (MO101)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
16, 37	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 15	5	Antlered moose

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

Management of this herd is not based on a mid-winter trend count because the majority of moose migrate to winter ranges in Idaho and small areas of winter ranges in Wyoming are difficult to survey due to forest cover. Herd objectives are based on 1) median age of harvested moose ≥ 4.5 years, 2) at least 40% of harvested moose over 5 years old, and 3) average days to harvest less than 12. This herd met objective #1 this year but not objectives #2 or #3. Harvest success was 40% in 2025, which is low for this herd. Typically harvest success is 100%. One of the two successful hunters submitted teeth for aging. The median harvest age for the past 5 years is 4.5 years old, however, the trends in age have been steadily decreasing since 2015. Days to harvest was 21.5 (5-year average is 15.8) and has been steadily increasing. Only 16% of harvested moose over the past 5 years have been over 5 years old, and this has been trending down over time. These declining trends in age of harvested moose and increasing days to harvest may indicate this population is declining. Managers will continue to monitor the herd and may consider a reduction in licenses in the future.

The majority of data for this herd comes from tooth ages from harvested moose. Voluntary tooth submission from hunters has declined despite hunter contacts by Department personnel. Over the past 10 years, 17 hunters have submitted teeth out of 41 moose harvested (41%). In some years, no hunters submit teeth. **Therefore, the Department will require mandatory tooth submission from harvested moose beginning in 2026 in this herd unit.** These data will be especially important considering a possibly declining moose herd. Data would be used to evaluate the need for potential changes to licenses in the future.

The hunting seasons remained the same in 2026, except for the license allocation to residents and nonresidents. One license will go to a nonresident this year and 4 licenses to residents. Due to the 90% resident/10% nonresident license split, one nonresident license will be issued every other year in this herd unit (every 10th license), as long as license allocations remain consistent.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Targhee Moose Herd was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will be reviewed again in 2029.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Moose

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: MO103 - JACKSON

HUNT AREAS: 7, 14-15, 17-19, 28, 32

PREPARED BY: ALYSON COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	272	289	350
Harvest:	8	13	10
Hunters:	9	13	10
Hunter Success:	89%	100%	100 %
Active Licenses:	9	13	10
Active License Success	89%	100%	100 %
Recreation Days:	95	146	115
Days Per Animal:	11.9	11.2	11.5
Males per 100 Females:	91	96	
Juveniles per 100 Females	44	41	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%)

800 (640 - 960)

Management Strategy:

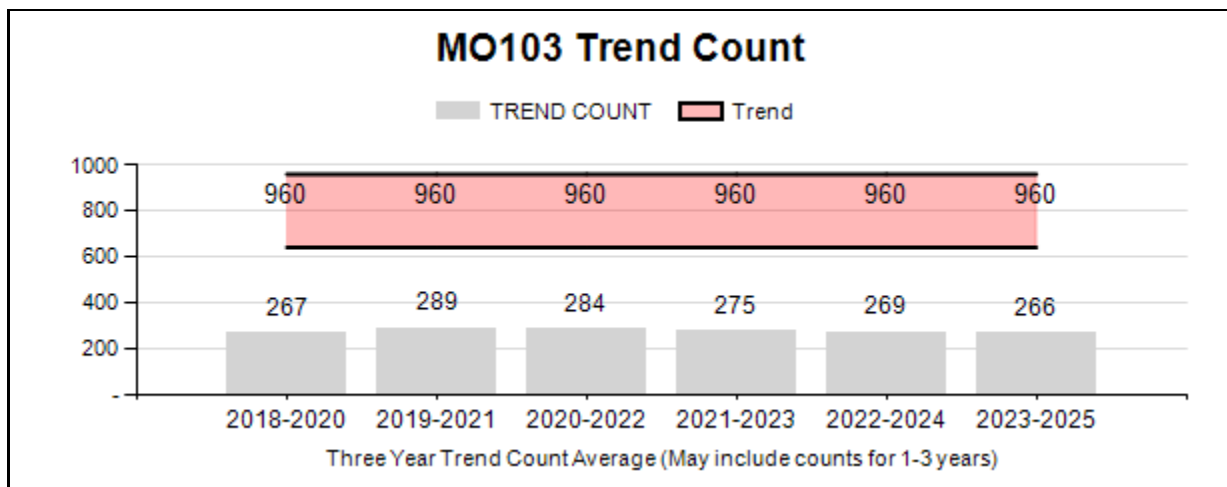
Special

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

-63.9%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

25



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Moose Herd MO103 - JACKSON

Year	Post Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot Cls	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females				You	
		Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ylg	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Cc li
2020	0	0	77	77	35%	91	42%	51	23%	219	210	0	85	85	± 0	56	±
2021	0	0	118	118	36%	130	40%	76	23%	324	291	0	91	91	± 0	58	±
2022	0	0	121	121	41%	125	43%	48	16%	294	271	0	97	97	± 0	38	±
2023	0	0	82	82	42%	83	43%	29	15%	194	189	0	99	99	± 0	35	±
2024	0	0	117	117	39%	135	45%	46	15%	298	265	0	87	87	± 0	34	±
2025	0	0	111	111	40%	116	42%	48	17%	275	265	0	96	96	± 0	41	±

2026 Hunting Seasons Jackson Moose (MO103)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
7							Closed
14							Closed
15							Closed
17, 28	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 15	5	Antlered moose
18	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 15	5	Antlered moose
19							Closed
32							Closed

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

A total of 289 moose were counted during the 2025 mid-winter trend count. The 3-year average is 267 moose. The calf:cow ratio was 41 and the bull:cow ratio was 96. This herd has had low, but stable numbers ranging from 250-350 moose for the past 20 years. The calf:cow ratio was high from 2016-2021 (45-58 calves per 100 cows), dropped to 34-38 calves per 100 cows from 2022-2024 and then rose again this year to 41. This year's survey was thorough due to good weather conditions however there was very low snow throughout all of the moose winter ranges, causing moose to be dispersed into forested areas where sightability is significantly reduced. However, a relatively high number of moose were also in sagebrush/bitterbrush flats near Kelly Hayfields, Blacktail Butte, and the Jackson Airport, which is very unusual during winter.

The 2024 hunting season was very challenging due to a large wildfire (Pack Trail Fire) that burned approximately 90,000 acres and impacted the open hunt areas. Due to the fire and associated area closures implemented by Bridger-Teton National Forest, hunters were offered to apply for either

a license carry-over to 2025 or a license refund. Due to some carryover licenses, there were 13 hunters in 2025 instead of the normal 10 licenses. All 13 hunters were successful this year. The impacts of the Pack Trail Fire on moose habitat and distribution are yet to be seen, however 100% hunter success in 2025 is a good sign that moose hunter opportunity remains high. The average days to harvest in 2025 was 14 days in Hunt Area 17/28 and 9.5 days in Hunt Area 18. These average days to harvest are similar to pre-fire averages, which were 15.7 days in Hunt Area 17/28 and 9 days in Hunt Area 18. Fortunately, a moose collaring study in cooperation with the Wyoming Cooperative Research Unit at the University of Wyoming was already underway in this area when the fire burned. Collared moose distribution and movements did not change significantly pre and post fire. We will continue to monitor collared moose movements and habitat use in the burned areas for the next several years.

Even though the herd continues to be well below the objective of 800 moose, managers feel that limited antlered moose hunting in some areas is still sustainable due to high bull ratios (96 bulls per 100 cows). Even though the bull ratio during winter surveys is high, feedback from hunters is that bulls are very difficult to find during the hunting season. Since a total of 10 licenses are typically issued for this herd unit, managers are alternating the one nonresident license between Hunt Area 17/28 and Hunt Area 18 annually. In 2026, the nonresident license will be in Hunt Area 18.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Jackson Moose Herd was last evaluated in 2025. It is scheduled to be reviewed again in 2030.

Research

There are two research projects currently occurring in the Jackson Herd Unit. Managers initiated a moose GPS-collaring project in collaboration with Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT) in the southern end of the herd unit and northern end of the Sublette Moose Herd Unit in winter 2019 to evaluate moose movements around roadways in relation to moose-vehicle collisions. The areas surrounding the Snake River Bridge on Highway 22 have the highest rate of moose-vehicle collisions in Teton County. For that reason, four wildlife underpasses were incorporated into the design for the Snake River Bridge replacement project, which was completed in summer 2025. Since 2019, a total of 29 cow moose have been GPS-collared to provide movement data for the wildlife crossings project. Funding support has been provided by WYDOT, Teton Conservation District, Greater Yellowstone Coalition, U.S. Geological Survey at Montana State University, Veterinary Initiative for Endangered Wildlife, and Teton County Government. The first phase of this collaring project was completed in 2024. A second phase was started in winter 2025 to monitor moose movements post-construction. Managers deployed 4 new collars on cow moose in the project area in January 2025. Attempts were made to deploy an additional 4 collars in winter 2025/2026, however due to mild winter conditions, no cow moose were found in the study area during the search period. We plan to attempt to deploy these collars in winter 2026/2027. We also partnered with WYDOT to install cameras in the new wildlife underpasses in spring 2025 to monitor wildlife use. A preliminary summary of wildlife use during the first year post-construction will be completed in 2026.

We are currently partnering with the Wyoming Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit at the University of Wyoming to study how moose learn to migrate and survival/cause-specific mortality during early years of life. This project will also provide data on moose seasonal ranges and movements in portions of the Jackson Herd Unit where collaring has never occurred (the Gros Ventre drainage). This project began in March 2023 with a small pilot project capturing and collaring 5 cow and calf pairs to test the fit of expandable calf collars. The main project began in January 2024 with the capture and GPS-collaring of moose cow and calf pairs in the Buffalo Valley and Gros Ventre River drainages. Captures occurred again in January 2025 and February 2026. In total, 38 cows and 50 calves have been collared. There are no additional captures planned for this project. Analyses, reports, and journal publications are expected in 2026-2027.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: BS106 - TARGHEE

HUNT AREAS: 6

PREPARED BY: ALYSON
COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:		N/A	N/A
Harvest:	1	0	1
Hunters:	1	1	1
Hunter Success:	100%	0%	100%
Active Licenses:	1	1	1
Active License Success:	100%	0%	100%
Recreation Days:	23	7	20
Days Per Animal:	23	0	20

Limited Opportunity Objective:

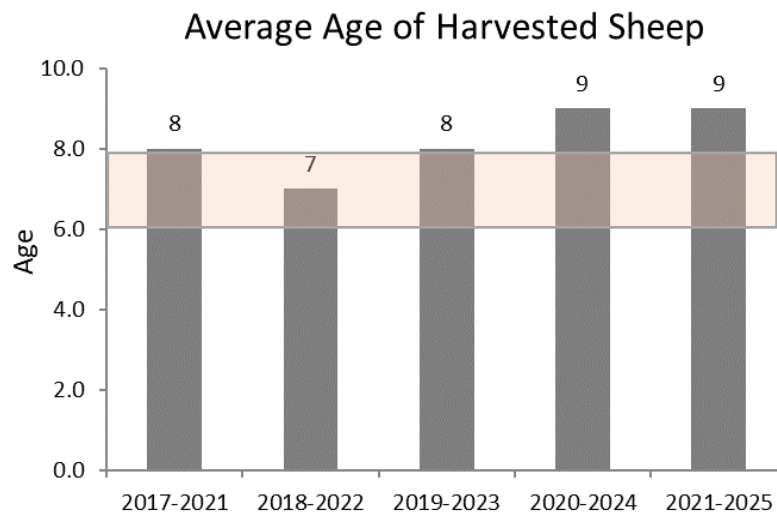
5-year average harvest age of 6-8 years

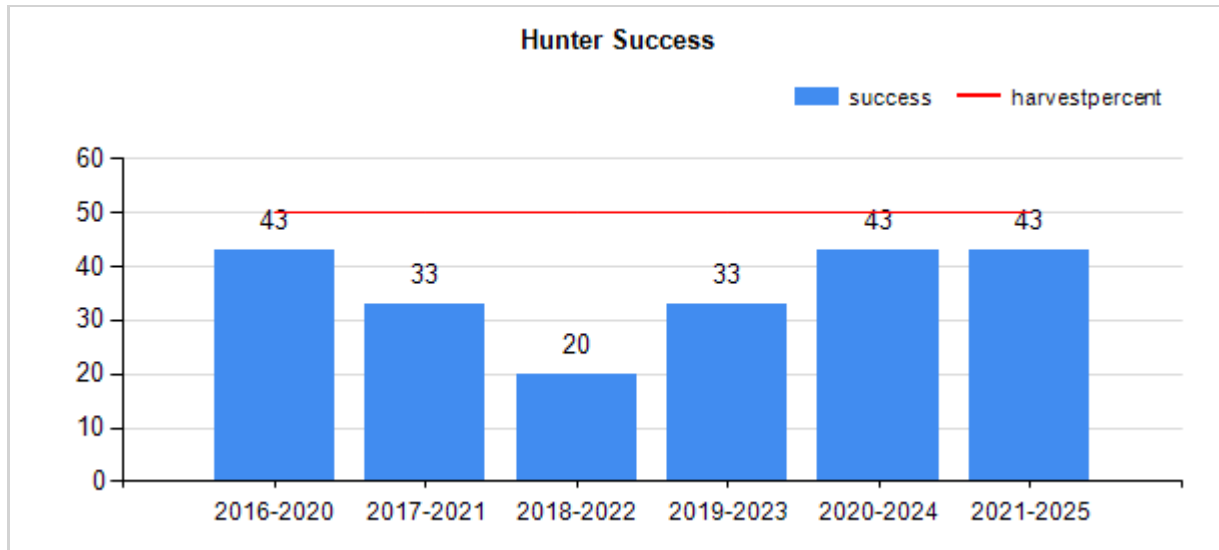
5-year average hunter success of $\geq 50\%$

Secondary Objective:

Management Strategy:

Special





2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary																		
for Bighorn Sheep Herd BS106 - TARGHEE																		
		MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES				Males to 100 Females				Young to		
Year	Post Pop	Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Tot	Cls	Yng	Adult	Total	Conf	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
										Cls	Obj				Int			
2020	0	0	32	32	36%	44	49%	14	16%	90	86	0	73	73	± 0	32	± 0	18
2021	0	2	37	39	39%	40	40%	20	20%	99	101	5	92	98	± 0	50	± 0	25
2022	0	4	29	33	46%	33	46%	5	7%	71	69	12	88	100	± 0	15	± 0	8
2023	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2024	0	0	21	21	26%	48	60%	11	14%	80	72	0	44	44	± 0	23	± 0	16
2025	0	1	19	20	34%	29	50%	9	16%	58	56	3	66	69	± 0	31	± 0	19

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Targhee Bighorn Sheep (BS106)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
6	1			Aug. 1	Aug. 31	1	Any ram valid north of South Badger Creek
6	1			Sep. 1	Oct. 31		Any ram valid in the entire area

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: no data

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

This herd is managed using a limited opportunity objective that consists of three parts: 1) 5-year average harvest age of 6-8 years, 2) 5-year average hunter success of at least 50%, and 3) documented occurrence of mature rams available in the hunt area. The average age of harvested sheep over the past 5 years is 9 years old. The average hunter success during the past 5 years is 43%. Therefore, this herd is not meeting its first two objectives. A very limited number of mature rams have been documented in this hunt area during summer and winter surveys during the past 5 years. The one hunter in 2025 was unsuccessful.

A mid-winter trend count is also flown in this herd when weather conditions allow. This year, adverse weather conditions prevented this survey from being flown during its typical window or February of March, however it was flown in May 2026. Due to relatively mild winter conditions and an early spring, sheep had shifted their distribution from high elevations to mid and low elevations in the Teton Range during the May time period. Unfortunately, this led to difficult sightability conditions due to sheep being widely dispersed, in habitats with more tree and shrub cover, and in areas with now snow for tracking. The survey found a total of 58 sheep (29 ewes, 9 lambs, 19 adult rams, and 1 yearling ram). The lamb:ewe ratio was 31 and the adult ram:ewe ratio was 66. Of the 58 sheep, 35 were in the north herd segment and 23 in the south. Of the 19 adult rams, 10 were $\frac{3}{4}$ curl or larger and 9 were half curl. Of the 10 $\frac{3}{4}$ curl rams, 4 were in the north and 6 were in the south. Due to the relatively poor sightability conditions, managers believe that this trend count is biased lower than normal compared to typical trend count conditions. Last year's trend count (February 2025) found 80 sheep, and managers believe that count likely better represents actual herd numbers.

The number of licenses was reduced from 2 to 1 in 2025. This was due to low numbers of mature rams observed during recent surveys. In 2022, managers increased the number of licenses from 1 to 2 in this herd due to more sightings of ram groups reported in Hunt Area 6 and slightly higher ram numbers observed during winter trend counts (27 rams $\frac{3}{4}$ curl or larger). However, since then ram numbers appear to have decreased by about half. The February 2025 trend count only found 14 rams that were $\frac{3}{4}$ curl or larger and the May 2026 trend count found 10. For the past 20 years, all harvest in Hunt Area 6 has occurred in the southern segment of the herd. Genetic data from the herd shows that the north and south herd segments are genetically isolated from one another. Due to these reasons, there are not enough $\frac{3}{4}$ curl or larger rams currently available in the southern herd segment to allow for sustainable harvest of up to 2 mature rams annually. Therefore, licenses were decreased to 1 in 2025 and will remain the same for 2026.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Targhee Bighorn Sheep Herd was last evaluated and approved in 2024. It is scheduled to be reviewed again until 2029.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: BS107 - JACKSON

HUNT AREAS: 7

PREPARED BY: ALYSON COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	446	467	450
Harvest:	14	51	45
Hunters:	22	58	52
Hunter Success:	64%	88%	87 %
Active Licenses:	22	58	52
Active License Success	64%	88%	87 %
Recreation Days:	204	267	250
Days Per Animal:	14.6	5.2	5.6
Males per 100 Females:	44	55	
Juveniles per 100 Females	38	41	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%)

400 (320 - 480)

Management Strategy:

Special

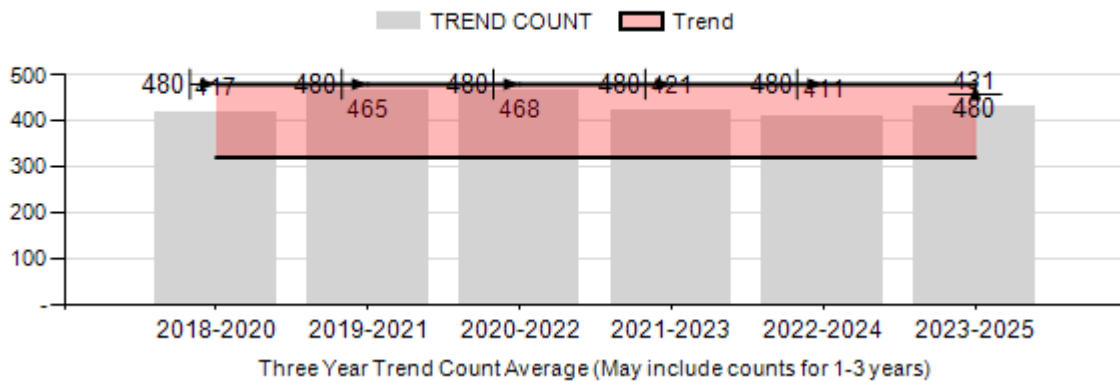
Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

17%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

6

BS107 Trend Count



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary
for Bighorn Sheep Herd BS107 - JACKSON

Year	Post Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES				Males to 100 Females				Young	
		Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Tot Cls	Cls Obj	YIng	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int
2020	0	0	102	102	22%	260	55%	111	23%	473	295	0	39	39	± 0	43	± 0
2021	0	12	109	121	25%	265	54%	103	21%	489	326	5	41	46	± 0	39	± 0
2022	0	8	93	101	27%	206	56%	61	17%	368	275	4	45	49	± 0	30	± 0
2023	0	5	78	83	25%	177	53%	71	21%	331	268	3	44	47	± 0	40	± 0
2024	0	6	98	104	22%	265	56%	102	22%	471	273	2	37	39	± 0	38	± 0
2025	0	9	122	131	28%	238	51%	98	21%	467	327	4	51	55	± 0	41	± 0

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Jackson Bighorn Sheep (BS107)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
7	1	Aug. 1	Aug. 14	Aug. 15	Oct. 31	12	Any bighorn sheep
7	6			Oct. 15	Nov. 15	20	Ewe or lamb valid within the Gros Ventre River drainage
7	7			Oct. 15	Nov. 15	20	Ewe or lamb valid within the Flat Creek drainage east of Highway 89/191/26

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 93% Satisfied, 5% Neutral, 2% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

This herd is managed using a 3-year average mid-winter trend count objective of 400 sheep. The 2025 mid-winter trend count was 467 sheep, which is a slight decrease from last year when 477 sheep were counted. The lamb:ewe ratio was 41 and the ram:ewe ratio was 55. Sixty-four rams with at least $\frac{3}{4}$ curl horns were observed during this year's winter trend count. Survey conditions were favorable this year and a comprehensive survey was flown including both low elevation and high elevation winter ranges.

In 2025, 9 of 10 Type 1 active hunters harvested (90% success). Average age of harvested rams was 7.5 years with a range of 6 years to 8 years. Average days to harvest was 17.2 for residents and 2 days for nonresidents. Most of Hunt Area 7 has very challenging terrain and is difficult to access. Ram groups are sparsely distributed in the hunt area and much of it is extremely difficult or inaccessible by horseback and requires off-trail hiking. Furthermore, ram groups are often found below treeline, making them difficult to locate. This is reflected in the number of days to harvest in this area. However, surveys consistently indicate mature rams are available and therefore there are no changes to the Type 1 licenses in 2026.

In 2025, 41 of 48 Type 6 active hunters harvested (85% success). Average days to harvest was 3.1 for residents and 2.2 for nonresidents. This was the fourth year of offering the Type 6 license and hunter success was significantly higher than previous years, likely due to running the season later into November when ewes are more available at lower elevations with easier access. Previous years have had 39% (2022), 43% (2023), and 60% (2024) success. The valid area was also expanded in 2025 to include both the Gros Ventre drainage and Flat Creek drainage. The majority of the Type 6 harvest occurred in the Gros Ventre drainage (34 sheep) with only 5 sheep harvested in the Flat Creek drainage. The mid-winter trend count in 2025 showed approximately equal numbers of ewes between these two winter ranges. In order to improve the harvest distribution

across these areas, a Type 6 license valid for the Gros Ventre drainage and a Type 7 license valid for the Flat Creek drainage will be offered in 2026 with 20 licenses each. Feedback from Type 6 hunters is consistently positive and demand is high for these licenses.

The Type 6 harvest successfully curbed population growth in 2025, however additional reduction is necessary to bring the herd closer to objective and avoid a pneumonia die-off. Lower densities of bighorn sheep and healthier ewes are expected to increase the lamb ratio, which will necessitate additional ewe harvest to prevent the herd from increasing again. This herd has a history of pneumonia die-offs when numbers approach or surpass 500 sheep. The last pneumonia die-off occurred in 2011-2012. Since then, the herd has steadily increased before being checked by the severe winter of 2022/2023. Research led by the University of Wyoming has shown that ewe body condition and reproduction decline and *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* prevalence increases when the herd is above objective. Therefore, maintaining herd numbers close to objective should help prevent a pneumonia die-off. This research project will continue to evaluate how ewe harvest management affects herd health and reproduction.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Jackson Bighorn Sheep Herd was last evaluated and approved in 2025, and will be reviewed again in 2030.

Research

Managers continued the research project with the University of Wyoming on bighorn sheep nutrition, disease, and population dynamics this year. This research began in 2015 and has provided valuable information that has guided bighorn sheep management in this herd. Data from this collaborative project have clearly shown that body condition decreases and disease prevalence increases when the herd is above its population objective (above its carrying capacity). This project is scheduled to continue for another 3 years to track these metrics while ewe harvest is implemented to manage the herd at its population objective and evaluate ewe harvest as a tool to manage disease in bighorn sheep. A project update is attached (Appendix I).

Journal Publications

Blum, M.E., T.N. LaSharr, K.M. Stewart, J.T. Hogg, B.L. Wagler, R.A. Smiley, K.S. Huggler, R.P. Jakopak, M.J. Brunet, R.L. Levine, R.T. Rafferty, S.P.H. Dwinell, B.M. Regan, M. Cox, B.F. Wakeling, D. Brimeyer, G.L. Fralick, B. Scurlock, R.C. Kaiser, M. Thonoff, P.W. Burke, A.B. Courtemanch, D. Lutz, T.J. Robinson, and K.L. Monteith. 2026. Lack of capture-induced mortality of neonates associated with variation in handling protocols. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 50(1):e70020

Huggler, K.S., R.A. Smiley, B.L. Wagler, A.B. Courtemanch, Z. Gregory, K.L. Monteith, L.A. Shipley, C. Stewart, P. Wik, E.F. Cassirer, and R.A. Long. 2025. Should I stay or should I go? Causes and consequences of intraspecific variation in site fidelity. *Movement Ecology* 13(80).

Huggler, K.S., R.A. Smiley, B.L. Wagler, A.B. Courtemanch, Z. Gregory, D. Lutz, K.L. Monteith,

L.A. Shipley, C. Stewart, P. Wik, E.F. Cassirer, and R.A. Long. 2025. Causes and consequences of life history variation in a long-lived mammal. *Wildlife Monographs* 220(1):e70009

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mountain Goat
 HERD: MG101 - PALISADES
 HUNT AREAS: 2

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

PREPARED BY: CHEYENNE STEWART

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	65	44	55
Harvest:	9	1	2
Hunters:	23	1	21
Hunter Success:	39%	100%	10%
Active Licenses:	23	1	2
Active License Success	39%	100%	100 %
Recreation Days:	188	21	40
Days Per Animal:	20.9	21	20
Males per 100 Females:	15	0	
Juveniles per 100 Females	40	0	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$)

80 (64 - 96)

Management Strategy:

Special

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

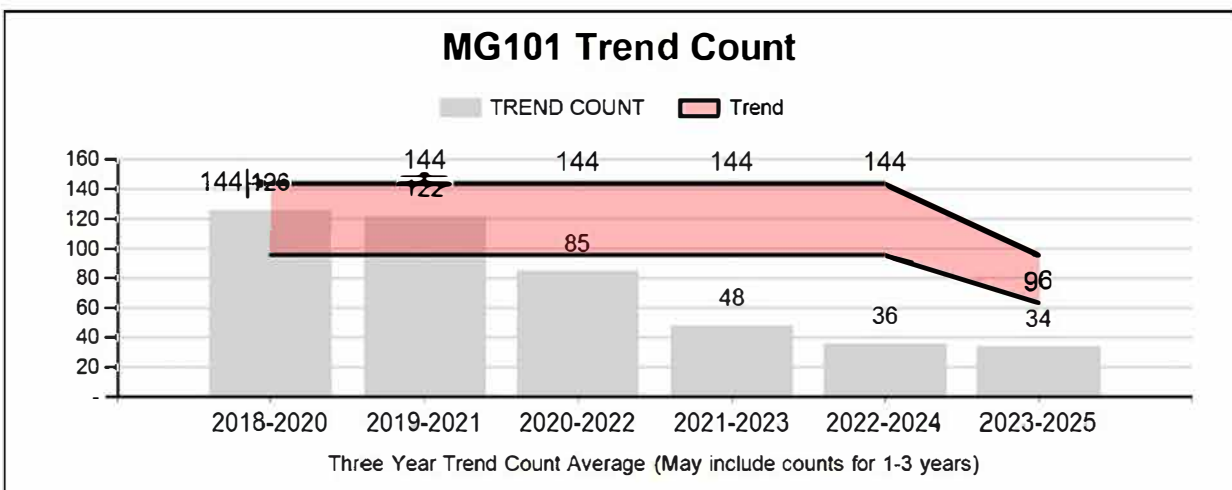
-45%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

4

Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	0%



**2026 HUNTING SEASONS
PALISADES MOUNTAIN GOAT HERD (MG101)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
2	1	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Oct. 31	2	Any mountain goat

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 100% Satisfied

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

This herd experienced a substantial decline in the number of goats counted following the 2020 mid-summer pre-season trend count and classification survey. The cause(s) of the population decline are unknown, but suspected to be related to a disease outbreak. Idaho Fish and Game detected a population decline over the same time. Trend counts have since stabilized, but not rebounded.

As a result of the population decline, the Department has reduced license quotas substantially, while maintaining opportunity. The quota was reduced from eight in 2022 to five in 2023 and 2024, to one in 2025. The quota was increased to two in 2026 to achieve the statewide 90/10 nonresident allocation.

The Department has increased survey efforts. Normally this herd is classified every other year, in consort with Idaho Game and Fish' mountain goat surveys. An additional 2025 survey was conducted after the 2024 counts continued to trend down. The 2025 count was conducted midkidding season in May, so the 2025 kid ratio is likely an underestimate, and therefore not reported in the classification summary table. The next survey is scheduled for June 2026.

Production and recruitment of juveniles drives this mountain goat population performance. The extremely low recruitment of kids in 2022 and 2024 would result in suppressed population growth. We will continue to monitor trend counts in relation to the objective and kid ratios as key population indices. We expect the hunting opportunity to continue to be minimal until these indices rebound.

The Palisades herd offers hunters the opportunity to harvest trophy class billies that typically are at least 5 years old. As a result, the harvest trends for this area include a high degree of hunter satisfaction, exceptionally high hunter success, low days/animal harvest, and trophy class males being harvested in most years. For example, the 2025 harvested billie was 12 years old.

2018 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary					
Year	Adults	Kids	Unknown	Total	Kids:100 adults
2018	96	33	0	129	34
2020	91	31	0	122	34
2022	34	14	0	48	41
2024	19	5	0	24	26
2025	41	3	0	44	NA

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy was evaluated and approved in 2025, and the next review is scheduled for 2030.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bison

PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: BI101 - JACKSON

HUNT AREAS: 2

PREPARED BY: ALYSON COURTEMANCH

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	479	592	550
Harvest:	82	58	80
Hunters:	111	72	100
Hunter Success:	74%	81%	80 %
Active Licenses:	111	72	100
Active License Success	74%	81%	80 %
Recreation Days:	1,002	890	950
Days Per Animal:	12.2	15.3	11.9
Males per 100 Females:	59	47	
Juveniles per 100 Females	43	47	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%)

500 (400 - 600)

Management Strategy:

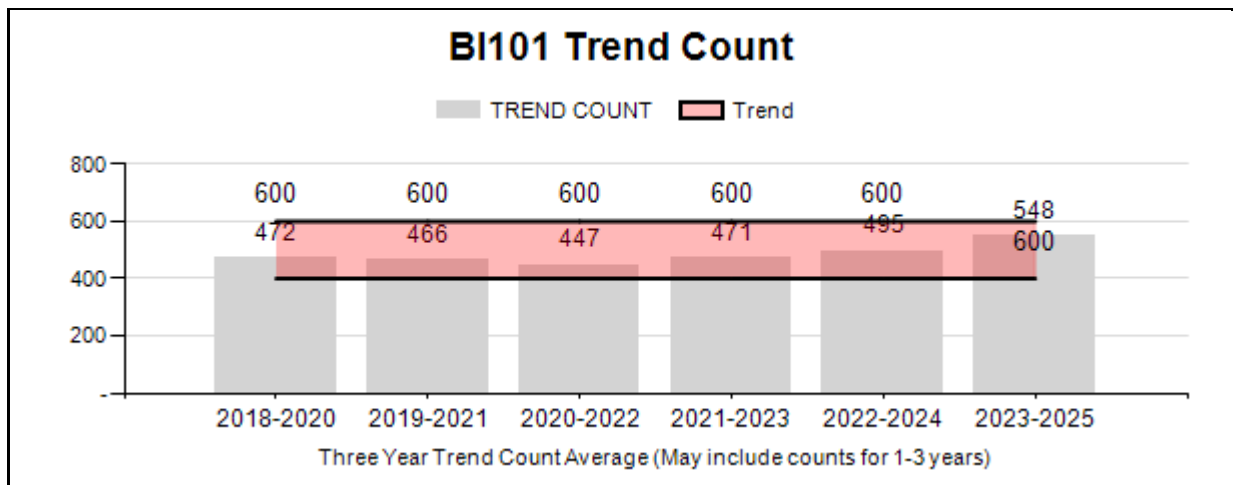
Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective:

18%

Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend:

1



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Bison Herd BI101 - JACKSON

Year	Post Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot Cls	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ylng	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	0	31	123	154	35%	194	44%	95	21%	443	0	16	63	79	± 0	49	± 0	27
2021	0	13	102	115	28%	236	56%	67	16%	418	0	6	43	49	± 0	28	± 0	19
2022	0	20	92	112	26%	219	51%	100	23%	431	0	9	42	51	± 0	46	± 0	30
2023	0	41	95	136	30%	224	49%	100	22%	460	0	18	42	61	± 0	45	± 0	28
2024	0	30	121	151	29%	257	49%	121	23%	529	0	12	47	59	± 0	47	± 0	30
2025	0	73	64	137	24%	289	52%	135	24%	561	0	25	22	47	± 0	47	± 0	32

2026 Hunting Seasons Jackson Bison (BI101)

Hunt Area	Type	Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes		
2	1	Aug. 15	Jan. 31	30	Any wild bison; from Jan. 2 - Jan. 31 limited alternate permits for the National Elk Refuge may be available through the Department's Jackson Regional Office on a first-come first-served basis until the season closes or conditions dictate that supplemental feeding is necessary. Also valid in Area 1 within the Clark's Fork River and Soda Butte Creek drainages from Aug. 15 - Dec. 31. Valid in other parts of Area 1 upon authorization by the Department.
2	4	Aug. 15	Jan. 31	70	Any female or calf wild bison; from Jan. 2 – Jan. 31 limited alternate permits for the National Elk Refuge may be available through the Department's Jackson Regional Office on a first-come first-served basis until the season closes or conditions dictate that supplemental feeding is necessary. Valid in Area 1 upon notification by the Department.
3					Closed

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

This herd is managed with a mid-winter trend count objective of 500 bison +/-20%. A total of 592 bison were counted during the 2025 mid-winter trend count. The 3-year trend count average is 548. The majority of the herd was on the National Elk Refuge (NER) (560 bison; 95%) even though the NER did not feed this winter due to mild winter conditions. The remainder of bison were on native winter range in Grand Teton National Park (32 bison). The calf:cow ratio was 47 and the bull:cow ratio was 47 (adult bull:cow ratio of 22 and yearling bull:cow ratio of 25). The herd has been trending above objective in recent years and is now close to the upper end of the +20% objective range. The number of cows has been increasing and the number of mature bulls has been decreasing. Managers have been aiming for maintaining approximately 200 cows and 150 adult bulls in this herd at objective, however cows numbered 289 and adult bulls numbered 64 this winter. Due to mild winter conditions and minimal snow depth, it is possible some bison were missed during the mid-winter trend count, however, the overall number counted was relatively high, therefore few bison were missed. Unless cow harvest is increased, the herd is expected to grow to over 600 bison next year.

Annual hunter success in this herd is highly variable depending on when and if bison migrate to the NER during the open season. Despite the mild winter conditions in winter 2025/2026, bison migrated to the NER during the hunting season and were available. The hunter success this year was relatively high at 81% on Type 1 licenses. A total of 58 bison were harvested in Hunt Area 2 (48 bulls and 10 cows) and 1 bull bison in Hunt Area 1.

Bull numbers in this herd are declining, especially older bulls, due to harvest. The herd reached objective in 2016 and at that time had approximately 200 adult bulls. Since then, adult bull numbers have decreased by about 70%. Continuing to provide sustainable, quality mature bulls for once-in-a-lifetime bull bison hunting will require reducing Type 1 licenses for a period of time. Therefore, Type 1 licenses were reduced in 2026 to 30 licenses.

Managers removed the Type 4 cow/calf bison license in 2023 and went to all Type 1 licenses valid for any bison due to 1) the herd trending below or close to the objective at the time of 500 bison, and 2) several years of very limited cow bison opportunity in the open hunt area due to late migration to the NER. For the past 3 years, the majority of harvest on Type 1 licenses has been bull bison with few cows harvested. There were 2 cows harvested on Type 1 licenses in 2023, 20 in 2024, and 10 in 2025. Because of this very low cow harvest, cow numbers have been steadily increasing over the past 3 years and as a result, calf numbers are increasing as well. Therefore, 70 Type 4 licenses are being offered in 2026 to curb population growth and maintain the herd within its objective.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the herd was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and is scheduled to be reviewed again in 2029.



Bighorn Sheep Nutrition- Disease Project

Exploring how nutrition and disease affect western Wyoming's bighorn sheep.

Large herds of bighorn sheep were once common across the rugged landscapes of western North America, but today's populations are far smaller and more restricted. Pneumonia, a respiratory disease originally introduced by domestic sheep and goats over a century ago, contributed to the population decline of bighorn sheep and remains one of the greatest conservation challenges for bighorn sheep across their range.

The effects of pneumonia, however, are far from uniform. Some herds decline rapidly and fail to ever recover, others cycle through variable crashes and recoveries, while some can tolerate infection with little loss. At the individual level, too, unique traits of the animal may shape how a sheep experiences disease. Bighorn sheep in high-quality habitats that are able to gain a lot of fat are more likely to clear their infections than animals who live in low-quality habitat and aren't able to pack on as much fat. Untangling the complex web of ecological factors that drive these differences is essential for developing effective management strategies and advancing our understanding of disease in complex wildlife systems.

Through collaboration with our partners at the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and Shoshone and Arapaho Fish and Game, we are investigating how nutrition, sociality, and disease interact to influence population dynamics.

Project goals

Understand how ecological factors including nutrition, habitat quality, and social behavior influence the effect of pneumonia on bighorn sheep populations.

Work with collaborators to understand the impact of management strategies aimed at combating pneumonia.

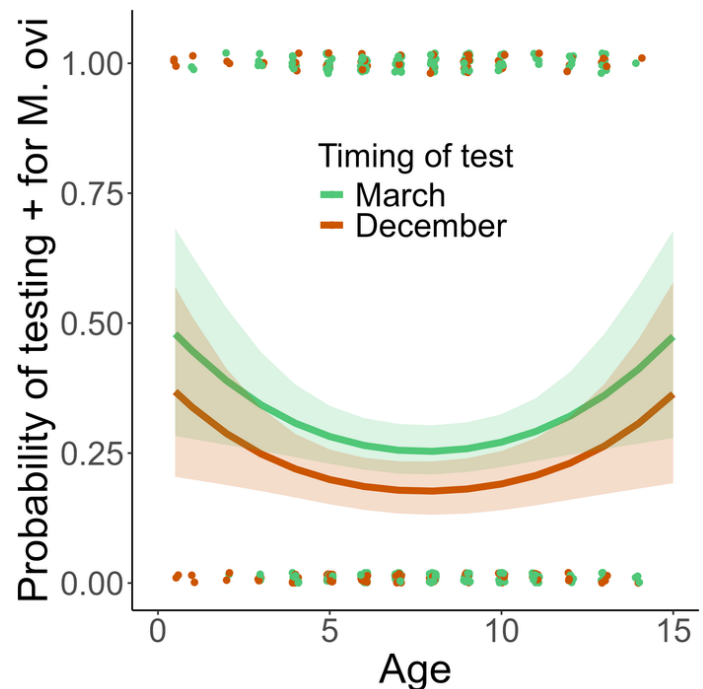
Approach

We use GPS collars, remote sensing, and intensive fieldwork to study bighorn sheep behavior, life history and the habitats they depend on. Our monitoring strives to span the lifetime of each sheep, tracking disease status, nutritional condition, survival of both adults and lambs, and causes of mortality. By following individuals throughout their lives, we gain insights into how bighorn sheep persist in the face of disease and how this knowledge can guide management efforts.

Research finding 1: Pathogen prevalence is seasonal and has implications for management.

Wildlife managers across the West combat the devastating effects of pneumonia by judiciously removing chronically infected bighorn sheep, a strategy commonly known as “test and remove.” This strategy has been a promising tool to mitigate pneumonia, but more information will help managers implement the most effective test and remove strategies.

Using our long-term dataset of pathogen prevalence that was collected from multiple populations across Wyoming in both spring and fall, we learned that pathogen prevalence was seasonal. Bighorn sheep were over 1.5 times more likely to test positive in the spring than in the fall. Although, an animal that tested positive in the spring was less likely to test positive again the next season than an animal that tested positive in the fall. These findings show that timing is an important consideration in test and remove programs, which can limit removals of animals that may be likely to clear their infections.



The u-shaped curve shows that younger and older animals are more likely to test positive for *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* (M. ovi; a pathogen strain that causes pneumonia), than animals in their prime. Across all ages, animals are more likely to test positive for M. ovi in March than in December.



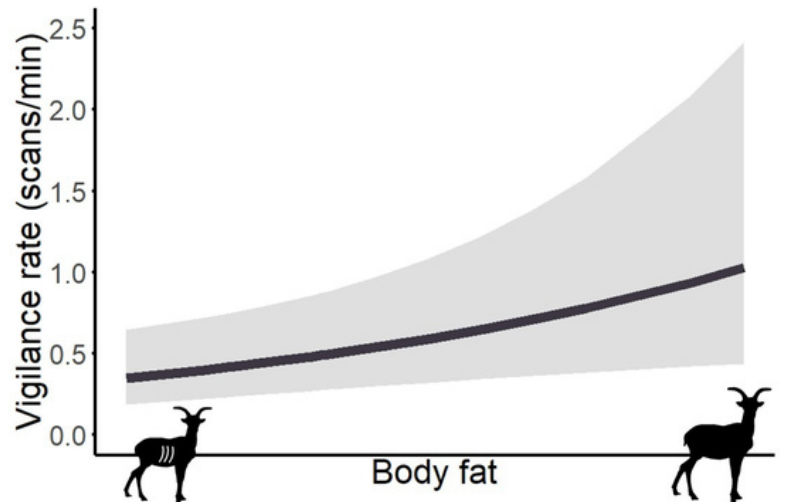
Hults

Recent finding 2: Bighorn sheep adjust how they feed depending on their fat reserves.

When bighorn sheep and other large herbivores eat, they lift their head periodically to check their surroundings. This behavior, known as vigilance, helps bighorn sheep stay aware of any approaching threats, but it presents a tradeoff. If bighorn sheep never looked up they would be sitting ducks for nearby predators, but if they are always on the look out they won't eat enough to stay alive and raise their lambs.

Bighorn sheep adjusted their vigilance behavior depending on their energetic needs, which varied based on their nutritional condition. Bighorn sheep that entered summer with more body fat had higher vigilance rates, suggesting that they are able to devote more time to predator detection while still getting all the food they need. This finding highlights the flexibility bighorn sheep have in adjusting their behavior, which is an encouraging sign for populations that contend with disease.

We are excited to continue exploring the relationship between behavior and disease and whether or not bighorn sheep use behavior as a tool to cope with the burden of fighting off disease.



Bighorn sheep that start summer with greater fat reserves are more vigilant than skinny sheep. These fat sheep are able to devote more time to predator detection while still getting enough food.



These findings result from hours and hours of observing bighorn sheep from afar. The photo to the right shows a collared ewe and her collared lamb through a spotting scope!

⋮ Upcoming work.

Bighorn sheep undergo seasonal shifts in fat reserves driven by changing food resources and environmental conditions. Building on our previous work examining how summer-range habitat influences fat reserves, we now turn to the winter period, where far less is known about how forage, varying environmental conditions, and differences in winter ranges affect pathogen prevalence, fat reserves, and ultimately survival during this harsh time of year. To tackle this gap in knowledge, we are studying what food resources are available to sheep and how sheep use those resources over winter, coupled with how bighorn sheep navigate fine-scale habitat features such as snow depth. By examining fine-scale habitat features,

we aim to reveal how winter environments influence disease vulnerability, overall health, and resilience of both individual bighorn sheep and their populations.



Wagler

Project leads



This project is led by master's student Jack Gavin (left) and master's student Ty Hults (right).

Partners and collaborators

The Bighorn Sheep Nutrition Disease Project benefits from being highly collaborative in development, operations, and funding. We are fortunate to partner with the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Shoshone and Arapaho Fish and Games, collaborations through which we can pull expertise from managers, disease specialists, and ecologists. Funds have been provided by the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, Wyoming Game and Fish Commission, Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resource Trust, National Wild Sheep Foundation, Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation, Wyoming Governor's Big Game License Coalition, Bureau of Land Management, Wyoming Animal Damage Management Board, Wyoming Wildlife Livestock Disease Research Partnership, Teton Conservation District, and Bowhunters of Wyoming Inc. Special thanks to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, United States Forest Service, Wyoming State Veterinary Lab, Bureau of Land Management, National Elk Refuge, Pinto Ranch, Steve Kilpatrick, Sara Bridge, Steve and Kara Losik, and Des Brunette for assistance with logistics, lab analyses, field housing, and fieldwork.