

2025 Job Completion Reports
Laramie Region
Wyoming Game and Fish Department

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2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR520 - CHALK BLUFFS

HUNT AREAS: 111

PREPARED BY: MARINA MCCAMPBELL

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Hunter Satisfaction Percent	88%	78%	80%
Landowner Satisfaction Percent	67%	22%	60%
Harvest:	146	140	140
Hunters:	163	153	155
Hunter Success:	90%	92%	90%
Active Licenses:	182	180	180
Active License Success:	80%	78%	78%
Recreation Days:	678	787	750
Days Per Animal:	4.6	5.6	5.4
Males per 100 Females:	45	25	
Juveniles per 100 Females	42	39	

Satisfaction Based Objective

60%

Management Strategy:

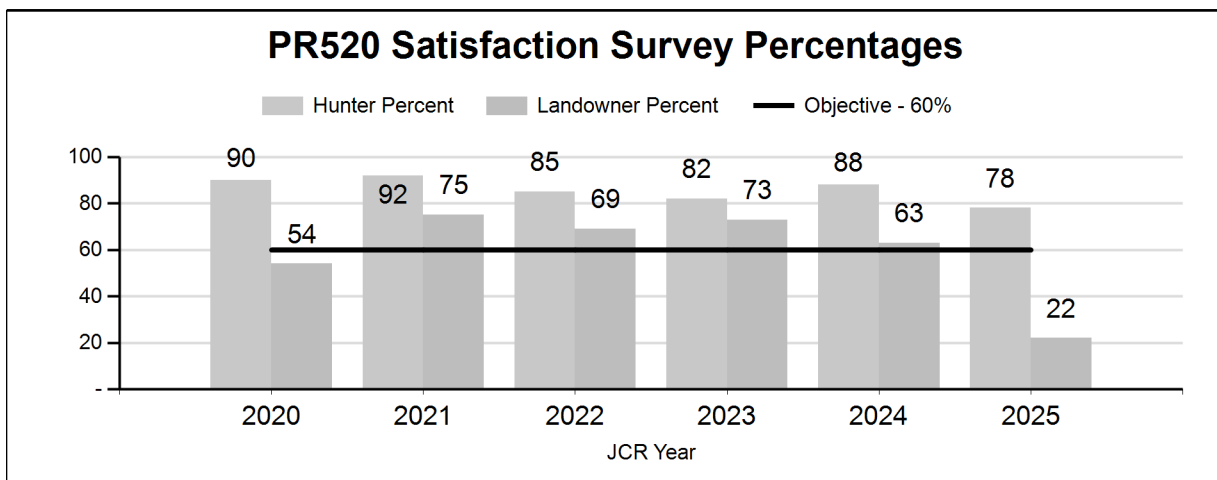
Private Land

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

-10%

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

1



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR520 - CHALK BLUFFS

Year	Pre Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot Cls	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	45	59	104	30%	167	48%	79	23%	350	331	27	35	62	± 0	47	± 0	29
2021	0	17	32	49	23%	102	48%	60	28%	211	0	17	31	48	± 0	59	± 0	40
2022	0	1	18	19	16%	76	64%	23	19%	118	0	1	24	25	± 0	30	± 0	24
2023	0	7	20	27	20%	87	65%	19	14%	133	0	8	23	31	± 0	22	± 0	17
2024	0	0	15	15	19%	43	55%	20	26%	78	0	0	35	35	± 0	47	± 0	34
2025	0	17	26	43	15%	174	61%	67	24%	284	0	10	15	25	± 0	39	± 0	31

2026 Hunting Seasons
Chalk Bluffs Pronghorn Herd Unit (PR520)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
111	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 14	150	Any Antelope
111	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Dec. 31	50	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 78% Satisfied, 11% Neutral, 11% Dissatisfied

2025 Landowner Satisfaction: 42% Above Desired Levels, 42% At Desired Levels, 16% Below Desired Levels

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The Chalk Bluffs pronghorn herd is a private land managed herd with the objective of maintaining 60% landowner and 60% hunter satisfaction. The 2025 hunter satisfaction is 78%. There were 12 complete responses out of 13 responses total for the landowner satisfaction survey. Three responses arrived after the deadline for returning the survey and were included due to low sample size – only nine completed responses were received before or by the deadline. 10 of the 12 responses were evenly split between pronghorn being at or about at desired levels and above desired levels (five responses per category; 42% each). Two responses indicated pronghorn numbers were below desired levels (16%). Prior to including the responses received after the deadline, landowner satisfaction was 22%. All landowner survey results were interpreted with caution given the low complete response rate (12 complete responses out of 32 recipients = 38%) in 2025 compared to 2024 (19 complete responses out of 32 recipients = 59%) and previous five-year (2020-2024) average landowner satisfaction of 67%. Hunter success in 2025 was 77.3% and 79.5% for the Type 1 and Type 6 licenses, respectively.

The 2025 preseason classification fawn ratio is 39:100 does compared to 47:100 does in 2024 (Appendix A). Good precipitation levels in 2025 likely contributed to a second year of increased fawn:doe ratios. Buck to doe ratios are 25:100 for 2025 compared to 35:100 in 2024 (Appendix A). While this is a private land managed herd and does not adhere to specific sex or age ratio objectives, it is worth noting for general reference that the 2025 buck:doe ratios (Appendix A) were below the recreational managed herd minimum objective of 30 bucks per 100 does. Type 6 license harvest of females from 2020-2024 averaged 33 females total and is an opportunity provided to mitigate damage on private land. This amount of female harvest is unlikely to negatively impact the population. Solar energy and transmission lines in addition to urban sprawl and data centers continue to develop in this hunt area and further fragment and degrade habitat for pronghorn. Current winter drought conditions could contribute to challenges in 2026 for landowners when pronghorn utilize farmed areas for forage. However, no damage claims were initiated for Hunt Area 111 in 2025 and any issues were likely addressed through harvest.

The lower fawn:doe ratios for the past two years did not support adding additional doe or fawn licenses in this hunt area despite the landowner satisfaction falling below objective. The

five-year average fawn:doe ratio from 2020-2024 is 41:100 (Appendix A). The small sample size for landowner feedback that indicates the herd could be above desired levels. This perception could be a result of pronghorn groups foraging on specific properties due to otherwise marginal habitat conditions and loss that continue to occur in this herd unit. The current number of licenses and season dates provide options to address damage that may occur on private lands. While public access is limited in the hunt area, the majority of hunters were satisfied (78%) in 2025 and likely secured access prior to their hunt. Given the preseason classification data and harvest results, the 2025 season structure will remain in place for another year to continue offering opportunity while mitigating potential conflicts through the early opening date for the regular season (August 15).

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Chalk Bluffs pronghorn herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2023, and will not be reviewed again until 2028.

Weather and Habitat Data

Total precipitation for the year was reported as normal/average for the Cheyenne National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather station. June and July precipitation levels were much higher than average, with winter and fall periods being drier than normal. Marginal habitat conditions exist for pronghorn in this herd unit. The majority of lands in this area have been converted to cropland or face continued pressures of being converted to housing developments on the outskirts of Cheyenne. Large subdivisions have been plotted south and southeast of Cheyenne, with new home construction and business developments anticipated in the near future.

Subdivisions are often associated with new fence construction, invasive weed infestations, new road construction, and increased disturbance to wildlife by outdoor pets and human activity. Invasive plants such as cheatgrass and Dalmatian toadflax are continual threats to native habitats that support pronghorn, particularly in areas that have been disturbed. Wind and solar facilities, in addition to transmission line projects, continue to fragment habitat south, east, and north of Cheyenne.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR521 - HAWK SPRINGS

HUNT AREAS: 34

PREPARED BY: MARINA
MCCAMPBELL

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	8,660	7,300	7,300
Harvest:	517	391	400
Hunters:	637	514	520
Hunter Success:	81%	76%	77 %
Active Licenses:	672	521	600
Active License Success:	77%	75%	67 %
Recreation Days:	2,433	1,792	2,000
Days Per Animal:	4.7	4.6	5
Males per 100 Females	41	48	
Juveniles per 100 Females	36	45	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 6000 (4800 - 7200)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 22%

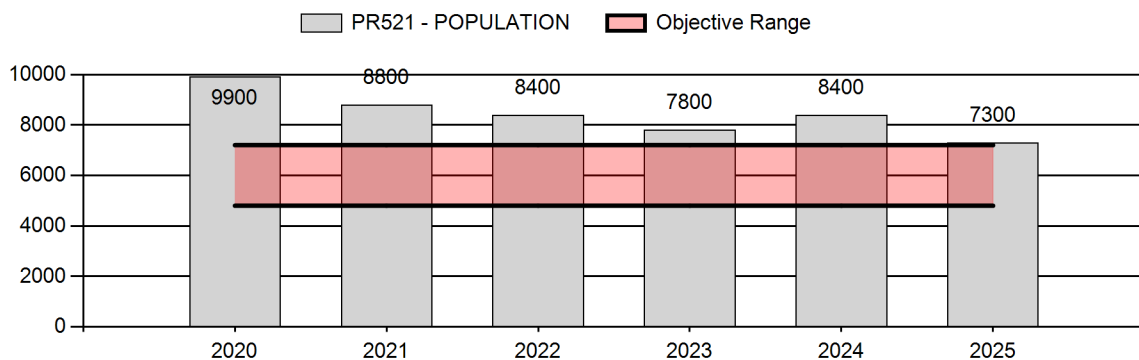
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 13

Model Date: 2/16/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	5%	1%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	18%	20%
Proposed change in post-season population:	-1%	1%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR521 - HAWK SPRINGS

Year	Pre Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot Cls	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	10,500	63	117	180	24%	422	57%	140	19%	742	923	15	28	43	± 6	33	± 5	23
2021	9,600	69	113	182	25%	410	56%	139	19%	731	0	17	28	44	± 6	34	± 5	23
2022	9,100	66	122	188	24%	448	56%	160	20%	796	0	15	27	42	± 6	36	± 5	25
2023	8,600	73	129	202	21%	608	64%	136	14%	946	0	12	21	33	± 4	22	± 3	17
2024	9,500	89	179	268	23%	598	50%	325	27%	1,191	0	15	30	45	± 5	54	± 6	38
2025	0	130	118	248	25%	517	52%	232	23%	997	0	25	23	48	± 0	45	± 0	30

2026 Hunting Seasons
Hawk Springs Pronghorn Herd Unit (PR521)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
34	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 14	600	Any antelope
34	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Nov. 30	25	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 81% Satisfied, 9% Neutral, 10% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The Hawk Springs pronghorn herd is recreationally managed with a prescription of 30-59 bucks:100 does. Buck ratios were within management guidelines for 2025 at 48:100 does (Appendix A). The five-year average for buck ratios from 2020-2024 was 41:100 does (Appendix A). Fawn ratios were 45:100 does in 2025, compared to the five-year average of 36:100 does from 2020-2024 (Appendix A). The postseason population estimate was 7,300 (CI 6,400-8,000), exceeding the postseason population objective of 6,000 ($\pm 20\%$, 4,800-7,200). However, the Type 6 and Type 1 licenses for this hunt unit were continuously reduced from 2019 to 2024 due to harsh winter conditions, late spring snow events, and poor fawn recruitment prior to 2024. Although fawn ratios have increased, the population is likely continuing to experience decline due to low fawn ratios. Since 2019, Type 1 and Type 6 licenses were reduced by 40% and 96%, respectively. Hunter success for Type 1 in 2025 was 75% and 84% for the Type 6 license. Drought and land use changes due to solar, wind, and subdivision development are ongoing in hunt area 34. The hunt area contains a high proportion of private land and hunter feedback expressed concern for mature buck availability and herd abundance. However, hunter satisfaction remains high overall at 81% for 2025. The Hawk Springs pronghorn population has only recently experienced higher fawn recruitment and further assessment is needed before Type 1 and 6 licenses are increased. The quota of 600 Type 1 licenses has been consistent for four years. The license quotas for Type 1 and Type 6 licenses and the season structure remained the same for 2026 to continue to facilitate recruitment while maintaining hunter opportunity. The season opening date of September 20 for both Type 1 and Type 6 licenses will continue to mitigate any early fall damage on crop fields.

In 2025, the percentage of bucks greater than one year old harvested was 18%. The three year average is also 18%. The Hawk Springs herd unit is not meeting the objective of 20-30% harvest for bucks greater than one year old due to poor fawn recruitment and population decline prior to 2024. Managers will address license quotas and season dates accordingly to potentially meet the 20-30% buck harvest objective in 2026 after a third year of classification data and drought and range conditions are analyzed.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Hawk Springs pronghorn herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2023, and will not be reviewed again until 2028.

Weather and Habitat Data

Precipitation in Hunt Area 34 was highly variable throughout 2025. The National Atmospheric and Oceanic Administration (NOAA) weather station data from sites in Cheyenne, Torrington, and Fort Laramie showed variability in annual precipitation totals, and when recordable moisture was received. The biggest departures from normal were recorded at the Torrington site, showing a 37% decline from average, with a total of 8.08". Fort Laramie and Cheyenne sites showed near normal values. Timing of precipitation is important to note, as winter and spring precipitation was lacking in much of this herd unit. Several localized hailstorms occurred again in the Goshen Hole. It is largely unknown whether these hailstorm events impacted big game species. No other significant winter weather events occurred in 2025; very little snow fell, and did not persist for more than a few days in any location. Subzero temperatures were also not recorded for any long stretches of time, which could cause some stress to pronghorn.

Pronghorn depend on non-native vegetation for much of their year-round nutritional requirements due to a large amount of native rangelands being converted to dryland croplands in this herd unit. Most existing U.S. Department of Agriculture Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) stands are in poor condition, lacking vegetative diversity, and are primarily dominated by single cool season introduced grass species. Continued poor fawn survival in this herd unit may be partially attributed to poor mid to late summer forage quality, particularly in areas lacking vegetative diversity, including dryland cropland, introduced monoculture cool season grass pastures, and CRP enrolled lands. Cheatgrass infestations continue to be a cause for concern in native habitats, and also in cropland areas.

A 5,580 acre wildfire occurred on the southern end of the Goshen Rim, near Bear Mountain in Summer 2024. A high intensity fire, it is anticipated that sagebrush and mixed mountain shrub habitats found in the limestone cliff bands will likely experience high mortality rates and will be prone to cheatgrass invasion and severe wind erosion, until perennial vegetation is re-established. This burn scar and some surrounding unburned rangelands were treated with herbicide to control cheatgrass in Fall 2025 with a mix of Imazapic (3 oz/acre) and Indaziflam (5 oz/acre). Due to high soil erosion/soil movement, weed pressure (kochia and lambsquarter) is high in places within this burn scar, and will likely take additional action to stabilize with perennial vegetation seedings at some point in the future.

Subdivision continues to occur on the outskirts of Cheyenne in the southern portions of this herd unit, resulting in permanent loss of habitat. Subdivisions are often associated with new fence construction, invasive weed infestations, new road construction, and increased disturbance of wildlife by outdoor pets and human activity. In addition, a solar farm near Yoder/Goshen Rim is scheduled to begin construction in late Fall 2026 and into 2027 and will encompass more than 1,000 acres. Cheatgrass control pre-construction is planned for the solar field area in Goshen Hole (west of Yoder), as well as 1,000 acres of adjacent rangelands, as part of project mitigation efforts. The impending 2026 construction of the Chugwater Wind and Solar Project includes a project footprint of 40-50,000 acres. This project will likely have the greatest impacts to pronghorn during construction due to the permeability of wind turbines post-construction.

Line Transect Survey

The most recent line transect survey was flown in 2017. The population estimate from that survey was 15,200 (CI 11,084-19,316) pronghorn. The next line transect survey is scheduled for Spring 2026.

Population Modeling

The 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit from the integrated population model (IPM) was 7,300 (CI 6,400-8,000) pronghorn. The model struggled to predict recruitment likely due to the fluctuations in fawn:doe ratios prior to 2024. The model included constant, or fixed effect, structures for reproduction and survival for both juveniles and adults to simplify the model and achieve favorable convergence. The model estimated lower postseason abundance compared to the 2024 post season population estimate of 8,400 (CI 7,000-10,000) while producing point estimates within a narrow range of the confidence intervals for both years. Additional abundance data from future line transect surveys will likely reduce the broad population estimate confidence intervals from the past few years' IPM results. The decreasing amount of buck harvest since 2018 and variability in sex and age ratios are likely informing the current lowered population estimates from the model. While the 2025 postseason abundance estimate is 22% above the herd objective of 6,000 ($\pm 20\%$, 4,800-7,200) pronghorn, it is within approximately 2% of the upper limit of that objective (7,200 pronghorn). Additionally, the herd objective may be low considering resource and social carrying capacity in the herd unit. The general public sentiment is that this population remains below desired levels. The most recent line transect survey was flown in 2017 prior to sequential years of poor fawn recruitment that began in 2016. Additional line transect surveys are needed to better assess trends in the Hawk Springs population and next population objective review in 2028.

Additional Management Data

Managers of the Hawk Springs Herd Unit have expressed concern for this herd's historically poor fawn recruitment. There is speculation that habitat quality has degraded to a point that it is lacking the proper nutrient requirements for lactating does to sustain a fawn to weaning age. Additionally, impacts on pronghorn from land use changes, some informed by drought, and new development projects are unknown. A grant was submitted to the USDA in 2020 for a 3-year survival study and was not granted.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR522 - MEADOWDALE

HUNT AREAS: 11

PREPARED BY: MARINA
MCCAMPBELL

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	6,420	7,400	7,400
Harvest:	357	305	310
Hunters:	438	419	420
Hunter Success:	82%	73%	74%
Active Licenses:	490	453	450
Active License Success:	73%	67%	69%
Recreation Days:	1,790	1,975	1,900
Days Per Animal:	5.0	6.5	6.1
Males per 100 Females	38	42	
Juveniles per 100 Females	41	68	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 5000 (4000 - 6000)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 48%

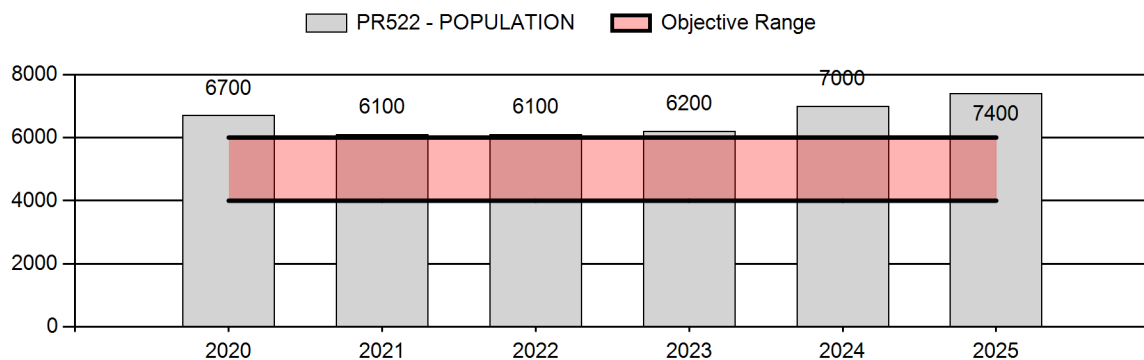
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 13

Model Date: 02/12/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	2%	2%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	14%	14%
Proposed change in post-season population:	3%	0%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR522 - MEADOWDALE

Year	Pre Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	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	7,200	42	148	190	20%	562	59%	207	22%	959	855	7	26	34	± 4	37	± 5	28
2021	6,700	39	101	140	23%	373	60%	108	17%	621	0	10	27	38	± 6	29	± 5	21
2022	6,800	35	134	169	19%	498	57%	204	23%	871	0	7	27	34	± 5	41	± 5	31
2023	7,000	57	135	192	21%	520	56%	211	23%	923	0	11	26	37	± 5	41	± 5	30
2024	7,700	56	104	160	25%	299	47%	183	29%	642	0	19	35	54	± 8	61	± 9	40
2025	8,000	77	148	225	20%	530	47%	362	32%	1,117	0	15	28	42	± 5	68	± 7	48

2026 Hunting Seasons
Meadowdale Pronghorn Herd Unit (PR522)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
11	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	500	Any antelope
11	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	50	Doe or fawn
11	7			Nov. 1	Nov. 30	50	Doe or fawn valid in Converse or Niobrara Counties

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 77% Satisfied, 14% Neutral, 9% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The Meadowdale pronghorn herd is recreationally managed with a prescribed buck ratio of 30-59:100 does. Buck ratios in 2025 were 42:100 does and 54:100 does in 2024 (Appendix A). Fawn ratios increased to 68:100 does in 2025 from 61:100 does in 2024 (Appendix A), for a total of two consecutive years of good fawn production. The 2025 postseason population estimate was 7,400 (CI 6,600-8,300) which is above the postseason population objective of 5,000 ($\pm 20\%$, 4,000-6,000). Favorable weather conditions in 2024 and a late spring rain event in May 2025 likely contributed to the two years of increased fawn production compared to a low three-year average fawn ratio of 37:100 does for 2021-2023 (Appendix A). Additionally, a 28,984 acre fire scar resulting from the 2024 Pleasant Valley wildfire likely increased forage quality for pronghorn in hunt area 11 and facilitated greater recruitment for 2025. However, future increases in recruitment are uncertain given drought conditions from 2025-26. These conditions may continue to exacerbate invasive grass species spread, including in the fire scar, and decrease forage quality. Although buck ratios are within the recreational management guidelines, hunter sentiment from survey feedback indicated mature bucks were difficult to locate and/or scarce, in addition to concerns about overall herd productivity. It is possible that the years prior to 2024-25 with lower buck ratios (2021-2023 buck ratio average was 36:100 does; Appendix A) and poor fawn recruitment created a lag effect with mature buck availability. Additionally, a large proportion of hunt area 11 is private land dominated. Access is limited for public hunts and may contribute to the perception of less mature bucks available. Despite these constraints, overall hunter satisfaction remained high (77%). Private landowner feedback was mixed, with some desire for increases in license quota and varying opinions on herd productivity. Hunter success for Type 1 licenses was 65% and 85.1% for Type 6 licenses in 2025. Due to hunter feedback and possible lags in recruitment of mature bucks, the 2025 Type 1 season dates remained status quo for 2026. The Type 1 quota increased by 100 licenses due to the herd being above objective and two consecutive years of higher fawn:doe ratios. This supported the herd likely being capable of supporting more opportunity while managing toward the population objective. The increase in Type 1 licenses for 2026 was also supported by the current modeled population estimate given

the 2022 line transect survey which indicated the population is likely at objective (4,700 pronghorn, CI 3,400-5,800), while additional data included in the 2025 model supports that the population is above objective (7,400 pronghorn, CI 6,600-8,300). The current and past population estimates are informed by harvest data, pronghorn life history, and ground and aerial line transect surveys. The Type 1 season structure and quota will be reassessed in 2027. Additionally, the hunt area 9 licenses are no longer valid in hunt area 11 due to hunter feedback of crowding on publicly accessible areas in hunt area 11 and issues with harvest reporting when licenses are valid in more than one hunt area. Crop depredation from pronghorn was a consistent issue in the northern parts of hunt area 11 and was mitigated through harvest. In 2025, approximately 27 landowner coupons were turned in from five private landowners in the northern portion of hunt area 11. With hunt area 9 licenses no longer valid in hunt area 11 and a subsequent reduction in hunters, a Type 7 license valid only in Converse and Niobrara counties was added to target damage in that specific portion of hunt area 11. The Type 7 license season is November 1-30 to target timeframes when damage most commonly occurs in that portion of the hunt unit. The Type 6 license remains available area wide to provide opportunities to address damage from October 1 through November 30. The two-year consistent increases in fawn production supported adding the additional 50 Type 7 licenses.

In 2025, the percentage of bucks harvested that were greater than one year old and the three year average were both 19%. Depending on hunter feedback, population surveys, and drought condition updates in 2026, managers will assess updates to Type 1 licenses in 2027 for the 2027-2029 seasons to achieve the goal of harvesting 20-30% of preseason males more than one year old.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Meadowdale pronghorn herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2023, and will not be reviewed again until 2028.

Weather and Habitat Data

Precipitation in Hunt Area 11 was highly variable for the biological year. Annual precipitation data collected in Torrington was 37% below and Douglas was 34% above long term averages. In portions of the hunt area, particularly in the Guernsey, Hartville, Fort Laramie areas, precipitation in the growing season was adequate, and assisted with some recovery of the Pleasant Valley wildfire scar. Cheatgrass invasion into native rangelands continues to be a cause for concern. The Pleasant Valley 28,984 acre wildfire occurred in this hunt area in late July 2024. The fire affected short and mixed grass prairie primarily, with some coniferous forest and mixed mountain shrub habitats affected in the Haystacks Mountains southeast of Hartville. To address cheatgrass infestations in 2025, herbicide applications were completed via fixed wing and helicopter in the burn scar and some surrounding unburned rangelands, Imazapic (3 oz/acre) and Indaziflam (5 oz/acre). Extensive vegetation monitoring efforts are being conducted to monitor herbicide efficacy and perennial plant responses.

Line Transect Survey

The 2022 end of the biologist-year line transect estimate was 4,700 (CI 3,400-5,800) pronghorn. We flew 1,149 miles over 63 transects. Another line transect is scheduled to be flown in the spring of 2026.

Population Modeling

The 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit from the integrated population model (IPM) was approximately 7,400 (CI 6,600-8,300) pronghorn. The model was informed using a random effect structure with reproduction and juvenile survival varying by time and constant adult survival. The effort variable was days per harvest and the years analyzed included 1998-2027. Managers note that data was not available prior to 2000 so the years 1998-1999 are erroneous and do not impact the results. The population estimate represents approximately a 6% increase compared to last year's postseason population estimate (7,000 (CI 6,100-8,200 pronghorn) and is 48% above the objective of 5,000 ($\pm 20\%$, 4,000-6,000) pronghorn. However, the model results were interpreted with care due to continued public concern about the population levels and the most recent line transect survey that estimated 4,700 (CI 3,400-5,800) pronghorn in 2022. This survey represents a more realistic estimate given the robust study design compared to ground classification surveys. While line transect surveys produce more robust data, trends through time for harvest data and ground surveys population estimates in addition to line transect survey data can help inform population estimates. The IPM forecast suggests the population will not increase next year while remaining above the population objective. This is likely informed by sex and age ratios that only recently increased in 2024-2025 compared to the 2021-2023 average fawn ratio of 37:100 does (Appendix A). The recent increases in recruitment and potential population growth overall could be contributing to an inflated postseason population estimate and will be more accurate after additional line transect surveys are completed.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR523 - IRON MOUNTAIN

HUNT AREAS: 38

PREPARED BY: KEATON
WEBER

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	7,394	7,200	7,600
Harvest:	594	497	550
Hunters:	740	649	700
Hunter Success:	80%	77%	79%
Active Licenses:	756	663	700
Active License Success:	79%	75%	79 %
Recreation Days:	2,745	2,387	2,500
Days Per Animal:	4.6	4.8	4.5
Males per 100 Females	37	42	
Juveniles per 100 Females	43	48	

Population Objective (± 20%) : 13000 (10400 - 15600)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -44.6%

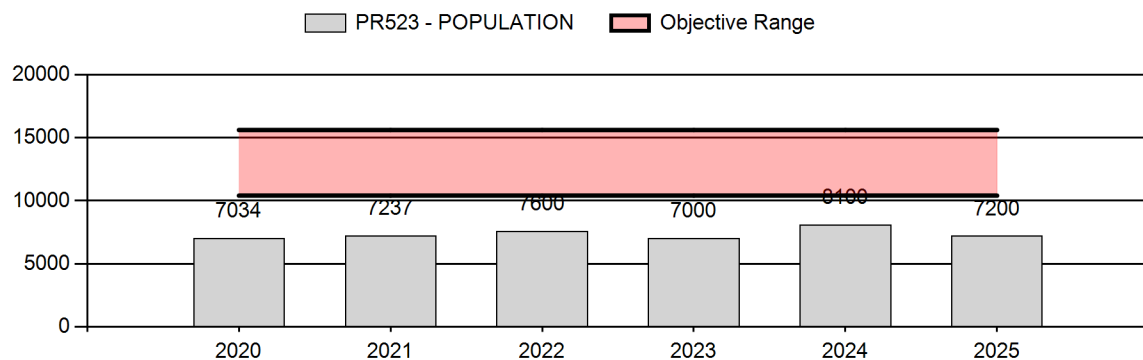
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 7

Model Date: 2/13/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	2%	2%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	34%	37%
Proposed change in post-season population:	5%	6%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR523 - IRON MOUNTAIN

Year	Pre 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	8,743	90	211	301	24%	696	55%	276	22%	1,273	0	13	30	43	± 5	40	± 4	28
2021	8,500	24	189	213	24%	472	53%	199	23%	884	0	5	40	45	± 6	42	± 6	29
2022	8,500	61	157	218	21%	566	54%	268	25%	1,052	0	11	28	39	± 5	47	± 5	34
2023	7,900	31	96	127	16%	510	63%	171	21%	808	0	6	19	25	± 4	34	± 5	27
2024	9,100	33	60	93	15%	326	53%	194	32%	613	0	10	18	29	± 5	60	± 9	46
2025	8,100	75	121	196	22%	464	52%	225	25%	885	0	16	26	42	± 6	48	± 6	34

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Iron Mountain Pronghorn (PR523)**

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
38	1	Aug. 15	Oct. 4	Oct. 5	Oct. 31	400	Any antelope
38	2	Aug. 15	Oct. 4	Oct. 5	Nov. 30	300	Any antelope south of Wyoming Highway 34
38	6	Aug. 15	Oct. 4	Nov. 1	Dec. 31	25	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 84% Satisfied, 12% Neutral, 4% Dissatisfied

**2026 Management Summary
Hunting Season Evaluation**

The management strategy is recreational management which prescribes for a buck ratio of 30 to 59:100 does. Driven by poor fawn recruitment and persistent drought, the Iron Mountain herd remains under its 13,000 objective, with the 2025 population estimated at 7,200 (CI 6,400–8,700). Fawn ratios in 2025 were 48 fawns per 100 does, down from 60:100 in 2024. The 3-year average fawn ratio is 47 fawns per 100 does, indicating this population is still suffering from consistent drought conditions that are suppressing fawn production and fawn survival. On the contrary, yearling buck ratios and adult buck ratios increased in 2025, possibly due to very mild winter and increased adult, over-winter survival. In 2025, the yearling buck ratio was 16 yearling bucks per 100 does, an increase from 10:100 does in 2024. In 2025, the adult buck ratio was 42 bucks per 100 does, meeting recreational management guidelines and an increase from the previous three-year (2022-2024) average of 31 bucks per 100 does.

Significant license reductions have been made from 2,050 licenses in 2018 to 725 in 2025 to address many years of poor fawn recruitment and the population being below the population objective. In 2021, the Type 2 license was introduced to address late season congregations of pronghorn causing damage on private lands South of Highway 34. Hunter satisfaction remains high (84%), but success rates have declined over the past three years for Type 1 and Type 6 licenses, while Type 2 has remained steady (5-year average:82%). Type 1 success dropped from 87% in 2023 to 70% in 2025, and Type 6 declined from 77% to 52% over the same period. The Type 6 license hunter success declined from 77% in 2023 to 52% in 2025. Due to the poor population performance and poor hunter success, the 2025 season will remain status quo to allow the population to continue to rebound. Managers plan to make substantial licenses increases during the next season setting process, which will be the first 3-year season setting cycle.

Male harvest rates were 34% in 2025 and predicted to be 37% in 2026, meeting the goal of 20-30% male harvest in recreationally managed herds.

Management Objective Review

The current objective was set at 13,000 in 1997. The objective and management strategy for the Iron Mountain Pronghorn Herd was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate from the PopR IPM was approximately 7,200 (CI 6,400-8,700) pronghorn. The working model was run using 13 years of harvest and classification data and number of licenses as the effort variable. Adult survival and reproduction was constant while juvenile survival was time varying. Although the model had good convergence, it took some effort to get a working model and we do not have a lot of faith in the estimate. Due to the varying topography in this herd unit, this population has never had a Line Transect flight abundance estimate to provide the model and help refine the population estimate.

Habitat and Weather Summary

Precipitation in Hunt Area 38 was near normal in the hunt area, with NOAA weather station data from Laramie documenting a 7% increase, and Cheyenne a 4% increase from average annual precipitation. No major winter snowstorm events were documented in this hunt area, and persistent snows were lacking in all elevations. May and September precipitation levels were higher than normal and resulted in fair rangeland production. Lack of precipitation in Winter and early Spring resulted in many streams, perennial and ephemeral in this area, to dry up very early in Spring. Additionally springs and seeps in the foothills were also negatively impacted by a lack of significant snowpack in draws. Even with favorable September precipitation in portions of this herd unit, flows in streams did not pick up.

Cheatgrass continues to be a concern for land managers in this herd unit. Proactive steps are being taken to address large infestations associated with previous wildfires. In the Richeau Hills and further south into Laramie County, Dalmation toadflax is another competitive noxious weed that threatens native rangeland habitats. Efforts are underway to inventory and begin to treat large infestations in early 2026. Herbicides effective for Dalmation toadflax control often have negative impacts on mixed mountain shrubs and sagebrush, so caution must be used by land managers to reduce collateral damage to forages utilized by pronghorn. Over 900 acres of mixed mountain shrub habitats in the Richeau Hills will be treated in 2026 to control Dalmation toadflax and cheatgrass. Infestations of these two weeds have occurred, mostly a decade after prescribed fire work was conducted. A 1,500 wildfire occurred in the Bear Creek drainage in September 2024 south of Hwy 34. This area was treated with Rejuvra herbicide in 2025 to control cheatgrass, that was expected to encroach due to fire severity and presence of the annual weed pre-disturbance. An additional 2,100 acres burned in the Richeau Hills, just west of Chugwater in September 2024, affecting mixed mountain shrub and grassland habitats. Surveys of this burn scar showed little to no cheatgrass invasion, so was not treated with herbicide in 2025. Vegetation monitoring plots have been established to monitor herbicide efficacy and perennial plant response.

Subdivision of ranchlands continues to occur on the outskirts of Cheyenne and Laramie, resulting in a loss of habitat. Subdivisions are often associated with new fence construction, invasive weed infestations, new road construction, and increased disturbance of wildlife by outdoor pets and human activity.

Wyoming Game and Fish

IPM Analysis Report

February 13, 2026

Model Definition

- **Species:** Pronghorn
- **DAU:** Iron Mountain 523
- **Years:** 2014 - 2027
- **Effort Variable:** Licenses
- **Trend Count Used:** TRUE

Structure

- **Reproduction:** Constant
- **Juvenile Survival:** Time Varying
- **Adult Survival:** Constant

Model Fitting

- **MCMC Burnin:** 50,000
- **MCMC Iterations:** 20,500
- **Thinning Rate:** 1

Diagnostics

The Brooks, Gelman and Rubin convergence diagnostic (Rhat) is a test used to determine whether the analysis has found a reliable solution. Values < 1.1 generally suggest that the model was run for a sufficient number of iterations while values > 1.1 suggest that the model should be run for more iterations. The maximum values of the point estimate and upper CI are reported below.

- **Rhat Max of Point Est:** 1.05
 - **Rhat Max of Upper CI:** 1.13
 - **Proportion < 1.1 :** 1
 - **Convergence Likely:** Yes, looks good
-

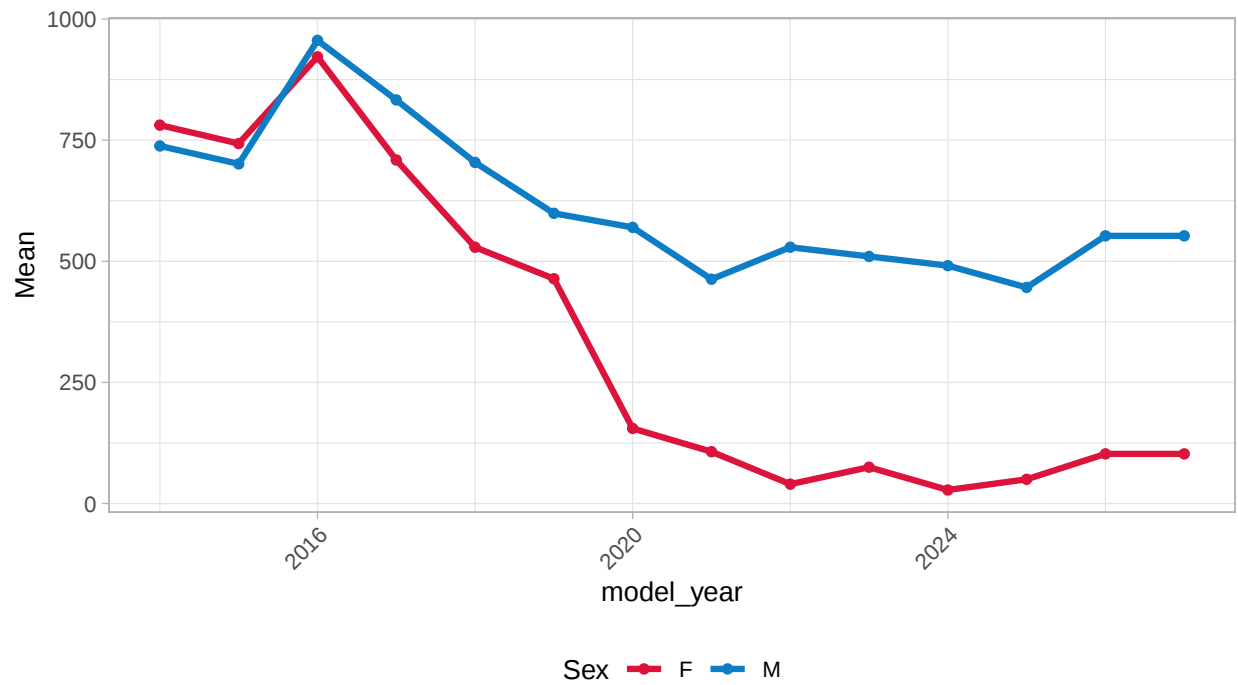
JCR Summary

	2025	2026	3 Year Average
Preseason Population Estimate	8,111 (7,198-9,634)	8,719 (7,654-10,476)	
Total Harvest	496	655	
Postseason Population Estimate	7,247 (6,367-8,707)	7,650 (6,636-9,316)	
Female $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.02	0.022	
Male $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.336	0.368	0.34
Projected Change in Postseason Population	1.05	1.06	

Using this report

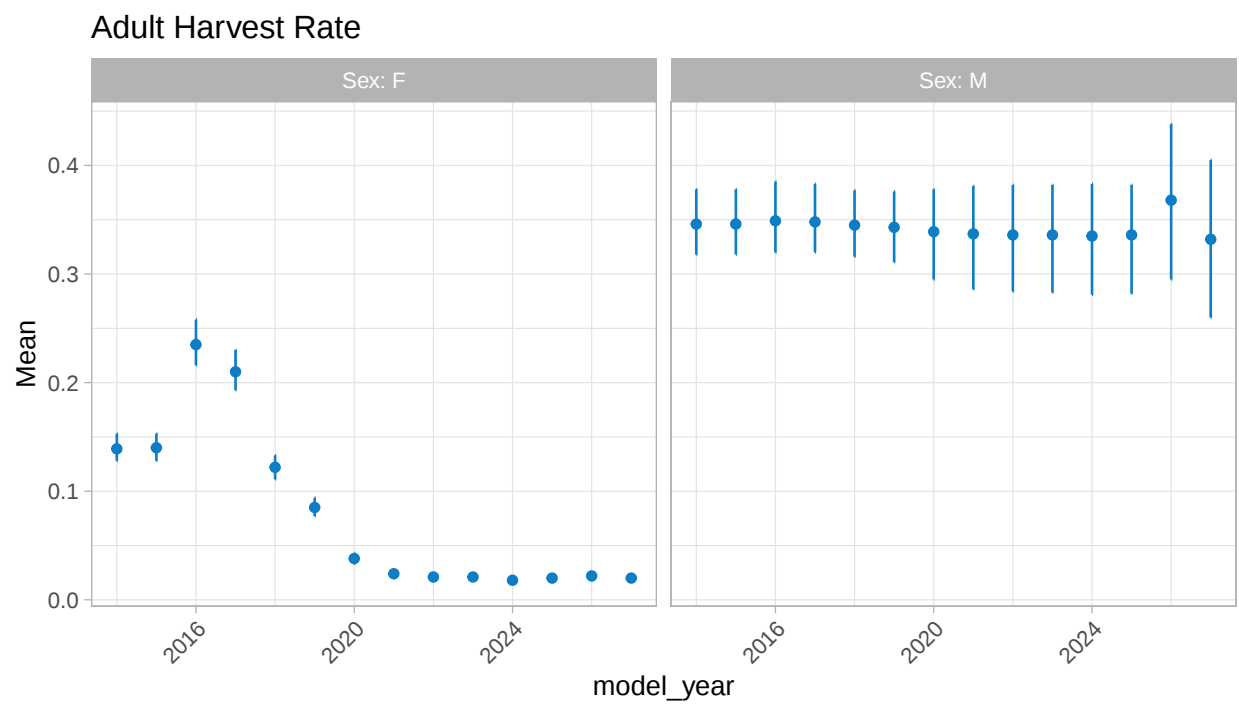
- Estimates v Observations
 - The term *estimate* is used to reference values estimated by the integrated population model (IPM) while *observation* is used to refer to field observations that serve as inputs to the IPM.
-

Harvest

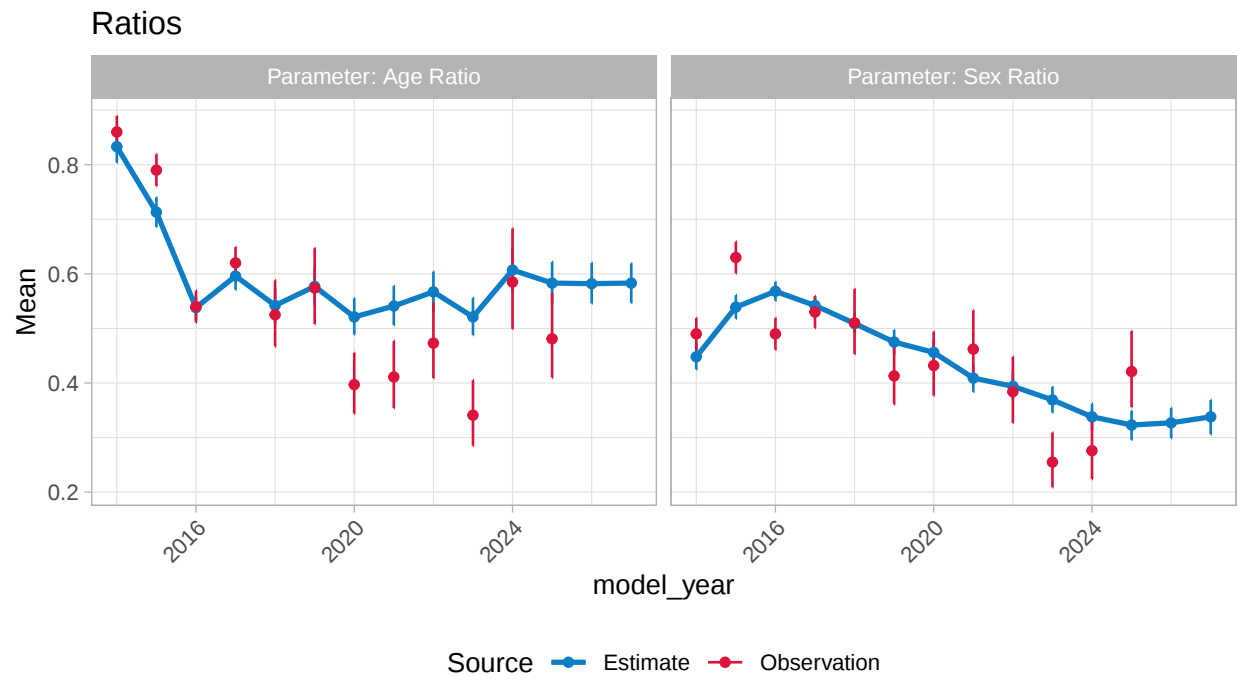


The plot above depicts male (M) and female (F) harvest through time.

Adult Harvest Rate

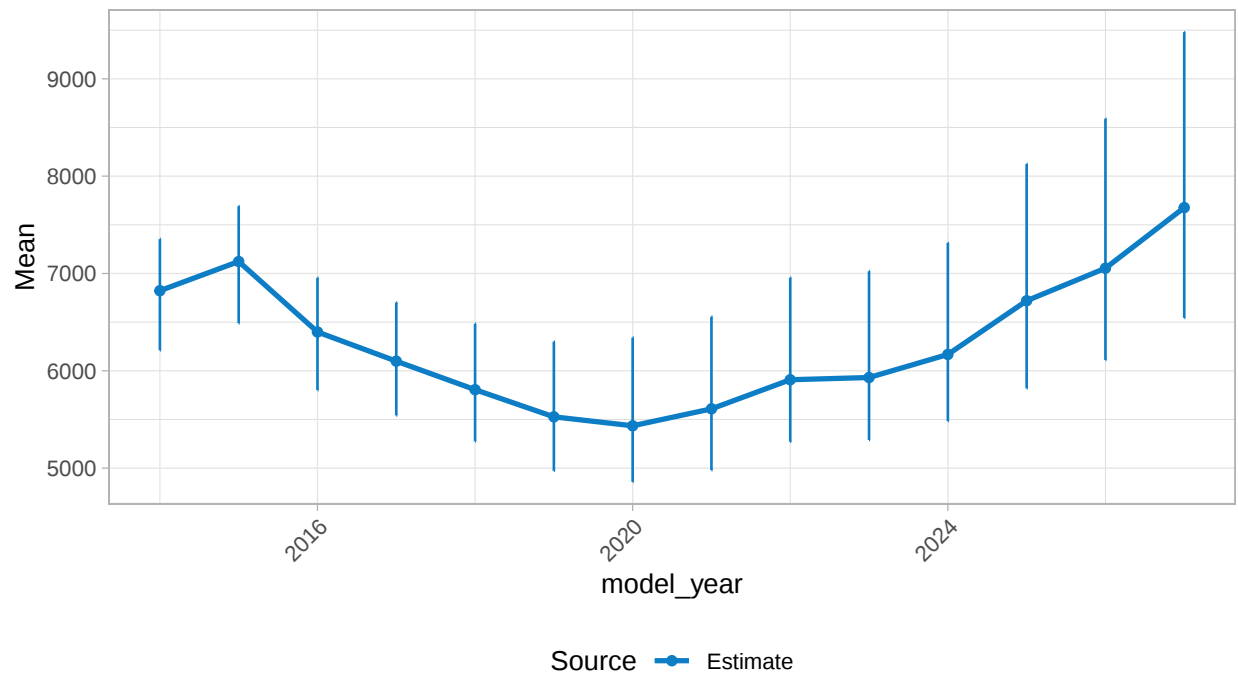


Ratios

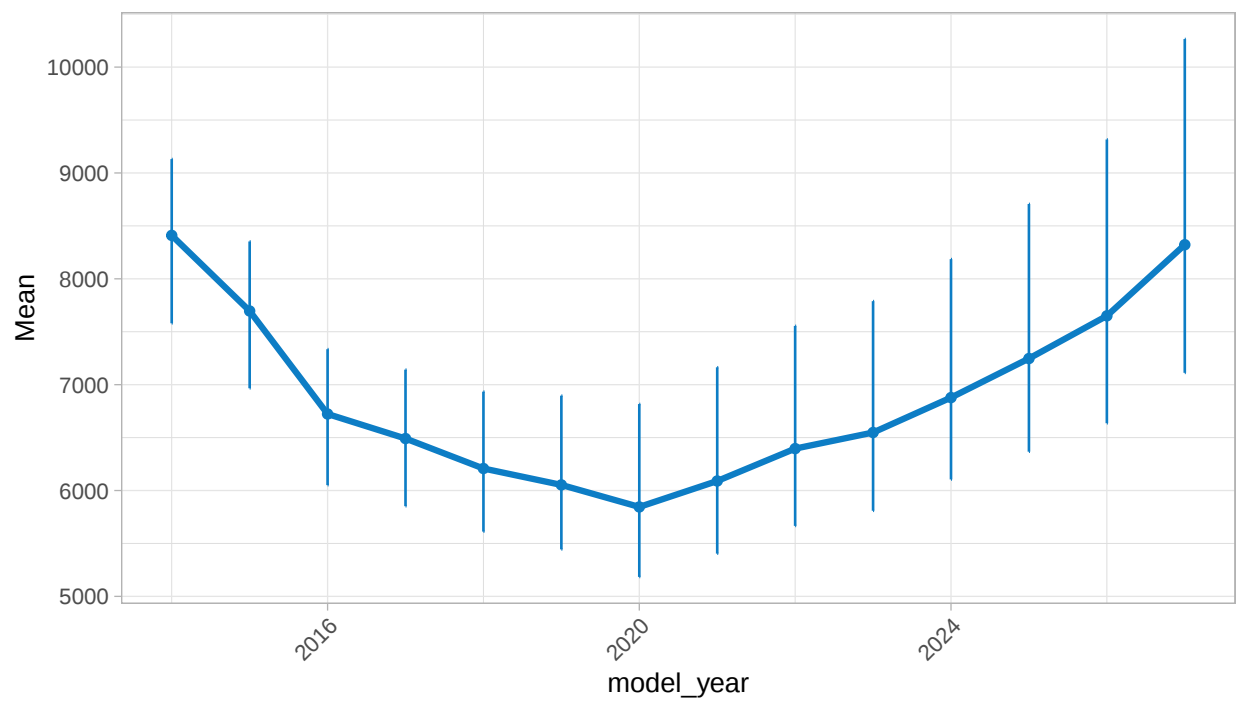


Abundance

Total Abundance May 31st



Total Post Season Abundance



Report prepared using SpeedGoat® software

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn
 HERD: PR524 - DWYER
 HUNT AREAS: 103

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

PREPARED BY: MARINA
 MCCAMPBELL

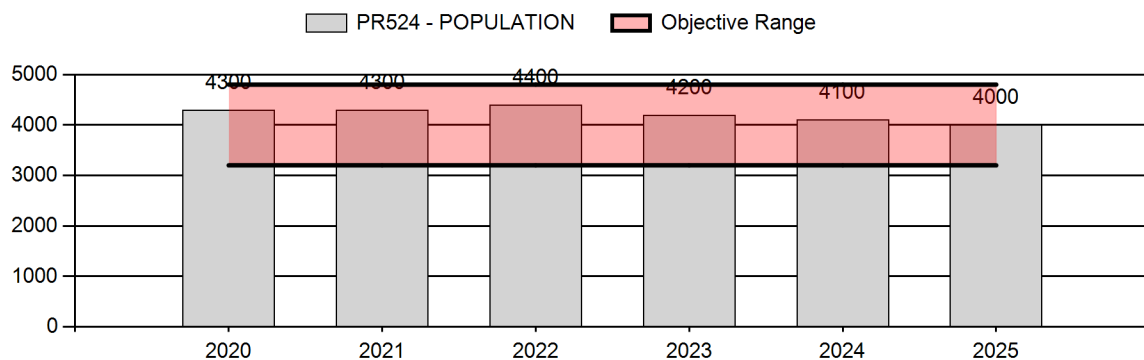
	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	4,260	4,000	4,000
Harvest:	249	183	220
Hunters:	319	240	300
Hunter Success:	78%	76%	73 %
Active Licenses:	355	258	300
Active License Success:	70%	71%	73 %
Recreation Days:	1,217	1,160	1,180
Days Per Animal:	4.9	6.3	5.4
Males per 100 Females	32	51	
Juveniles per 100 Females	28	40	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 4000 (3200 - 4800)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 0%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 26
 Model Date: 2/22/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	4%	2%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	12%	15%
Proposed change in post-season population:	5%	5%

Population Size - Postseason



**2026 Hunting Seasons
Dwyer Pronghorn Herd Unit (PR524)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
103	1	Aug. 15	Oct. 4	Oct. 5	Oct. 31	250	Any antelope
103	6	Aug. 15	Oct. 4	Oct. 5	Nov. 30	25	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 71% Satisfied, 18% Neutral, 11% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The Dwyer pronghorn herd is recreationally managed with a prescription buck ratio of 30-59:100 does. The 2025 buck ratio was 51:100 does and the five-year average buck ratio from 2020-2024 was 31:100 does (Appendix A). The 2025 postseason population estimate was 4,000 (CI 3,500-4,400) pronghorn. The 2025 fawn:doe ratio increased with 40 fawns per 100 does compared to an average fawn ratio of 30:100 does for the previous five years (2020-2024; Appendix A). Due to low fawn ratios, the population has historically struggled to increase. Ongoing drought has likely contributed to continual low recruitment observed in this herd. As a result, the Type 1 and Type 6 license quotas have been reduced by 56% and 94%, respectively, since 2019. Hunter success in 2025 for Type 1 licenses was 71% and 74% for Type 6 licenses. The recent higher number of bucks within management guidelines for 2025 indicates recruitment is occurring, but overall annual fluctuations in recruitment keep the buck ratios on the lower limits of recreational guidelines of 30 to 59 bucks per 100 does. Due to hunter feedback expressing concern for the low numbers of pronghorn and population data, the season dates and Type 1 quota remained the same for 2026. Farming in the area does accrue damage concerns from resident pronghorn and the 25 Type 6 licenses are intended to mitigate these concerns on private lands while minimizing negative impacts to the population.

In 2025, the percentage of bucks greater than one year old harvested was 16% and the three year average is 15%. Due to continued low recruitment in the herd over multiple years, increasing licenses to meet the objective of 20-30% harvest for bucks greater than one year old was not warranted. Managers will assess the herd dynamics in future years for opportunities to adjust the quotas.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Dwyer pronghorn herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Weather and Habitat Data

Precipitation in this herd unit was highly variable in 2025. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather station data collected in Torrington showed a 37% negative departure from average annual precipitation levels. Douglas area precipitation totals were 34% above normal levels, due to significant late summer/early fall precipitation. No significant winter

or spring snow storms were observed, and snow and subzero temperatures did not persist for more than a couple of days at any one time.

Cheatgrass establishment continues to be a concern in native rangeland environments. Efforts to map infestations in this part of the hunt area, and develop long term management strategies with private landowners continue.

Line Transect Survey

The end of the biologist-year 2024 line transect population estimate was 2,900 (CI 2,300-3,700) pronghorn. We flew 790 miles over 53 transects. The next line transect survey will be flown in 2028-2029.

Population Modeling

The 2025 postseason population estimate for the Dwyer herd unit from the integrated population model (IPM) was 4,000 (CI 3,500-4,400) pronghorn. This meets the population objective of 4,000 ($\pm 20\%$, 3,200-4,800). The model converged well and used a random effect structure for reproduction, juvenile survival, and adult survival. Analysis years included 2000-2027 to capture five abundance estimates and variation in sex and age ratio estimates. Recreation days were modeled for the effort variable since they mirrored the harvest data trend well. However, the postseason population estimate was interpreted with caution given the most recent line transect survey estimated 2,900 (CI 2,300-3,700) pronghorn. The line transect survey aligns with the public perception that the herd is struggling to increase to desired levels. The recent increase in buck and fawn recruitment in 2025, decreased harvest trends due to license quota reductions from 2019 to present, and previous surveys estimating $>4,000$ pronghorn are likely informing the postseason population estimate from the IPM of 4,000 pronghorn. Additional information will be incorporated as it becomes available to inform potential population objective changes in 2029.

Appendix A. Dwyer Pronghorn Herd (PR524) Preseason Classification Summary, 2020-2025

2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR524 - DWYER

Year	Pre Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot Cls	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	Adult	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ying	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	4,700	17	117	134	20%	430	64%	111	16%	675	791	4	27	31	± 5	26	± 4	20
2021	4,800	25	61	86	21%	236	58%	84	21%	406	0	11	26	36	± 7	36	± 7	26
2022	4,700	6	20	26	12%	146	66%	49	22%	221	0	4	14	18	± 6	34	± 9	28
2023	4,600	37	63	100	24%	259	62%	61	15%	420	0	14	24	39	± 7	24	± 5	17
2024	4,500	15	28	43	19%	147	63%	42	18%	232	0	10	19	29	± 8	29	± 8	22
2025	4,300	28	48	76	27%	149	52%	60	21%	285	0	19	32	51	± 11	40	± 10	27

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR525 - MEDICINE BOW

HUNT AREAS: 30-32, 42, 46-48

PREPARED BY: KEATON
WEBER

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	38,880	41,800	42,500
Harvest:	2,994	3,642	3,900
Hunters:	3,185	4,111	4,300
Hunter Success:	94%	89%	91 %
Active Licenses:	3,619	4,348	4,500
Active License Success:	83%	84%	87 %
Recreation Days:	10,104	12,353	12,500
Days Per Animal:	3.4	3.4	3.2
Males per 100 Females	43	54	
Juveniles per 100 Females	66	66	

Population Objective (± 20%) : 40000 (32000 - 48000)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 4%

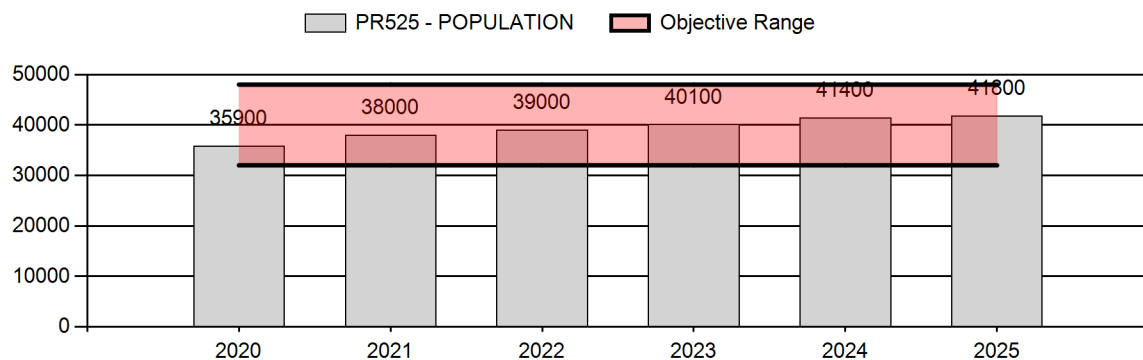
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 3

Model Date: 2/18/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	5%	5%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	24%	22%
Proposed change in post-season population:	5%	2%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR525 - MEDICINE BOW

Year	Pre 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	42,300	260	724	984	19%	2,599	51%	1,560	30%	5,143	0	10	28	38	± 2	60	± 3	44
2021	50,900	253	634	887	18%	2,345	47%	1,724	35%	4,956	0	11	27	38	± 2	74	± 4	53
2022	45,400	400	712	1,112	22%	2,318	47%	1,548	31%	4,978	0	17	31	48	± 3	67	± 3	45
2023	45,900	380	790	1,170	23%	2,392	48%	1,422	29%	4,984	0	16	33	49	± 3	59	± 3	40
2024	47,400	255	548	803	20%	1,870	46%	1,404	34%	4,077	0	14	29	43	± 3	75	± 4	53
2025	47,600	430	690	1,120	25%	2,078	45%	1,370	30%	4,568	0	21	33	54	± 3	66	± 4	43

2026 Hunting Seasons
Medicine Bow Pronghorn Herd Unit (PR525)

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
30	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	500	Any antelope
30	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	50	Doe or fawn
31	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	100	Any antelope
32	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	550	Any antelope
32	2	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Oct. 5	Oct. 31	250	Any antelope
32	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	600	Doe or fawn
32	7	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Nov. 15	150	Doe or fawn valid on or within one-half (1/2) mile of irrigated land
42	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	300	Any antelope
42	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	150	Doe or fawn
46	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	150	Any antelope
46	2	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Oct. 5	Oct. 31	100	Any antelope
46	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	100	Doe or fawn
47	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	600	Any antelope
47	2	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Oct. 5	Oct. 31	500	Any antelope
47	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	700	Doe or fawn
48	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	200	Any antelope
48	2	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Oct. 5	Oct. 31	150	Any antelope
48	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 24	Sep. 25	Oct. 31	100	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 88% Satisfied, 9% Neutral, 3% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The management strategy for this herd unit is recreational which prescribes for a buck ratio of 30-59 bucks per 100 does. Buck ratios in 2025 were 54 bucks per 100 does, slightly above the previous 3-year average of 47 bucks per 100 does and near the high end of recreational management guidelines. Yearling buck ratios drastically increased to 21 yearling bucks per 100 does in 2025 from 14:100 in 2024, likely due to very mild winter conditions allowing for above normal over-winter survival. Despite increased buck ratios, 2025 fawn ratios were 66 fawns per 100 does, matching the previous 3-year average of 67 fawns per 100 does. This possibly indicates poor adult female body conditions in response to severe drought and therefore poor fawn rearing and survival. Hunt area 48 experienced the highest fawn ratio at 73:100 does and hunt area 46 had the lowest fawn ratio at 56:100 does.

Very mild winter conditions during 2024 and 2025 winter have allowed for consecutive years of increased adult survival and are likely driving the population to increase. The 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd was approximately 41,800 (CL = 39,000 – 44,500) similar to last year's model estimate of 41,400 and indicating that the population has been stable to increasing.

Hunter success in 2025 across the herd unit was 84% overall, nearly matching the previous 3-year average of 85% success. Hunter effort in 2025 remained stable at 3.4 days per harvest, aligning with the 3-year average of 3.3 days. These success metrics indicate a positive response to the license increases made the previous year. Male harvest rates were 24% in 2025 and predicted to be 22% in 2026, meeting the goal of 20-30% male harvest in recreationally managed herds.

In the previous season setting year (2025), licenses were increased in each of the 7 hunt areas within the herd unit. Specifically, a total increase of 500 type 1 licenses and 250 type 6 and 7 licenses were made. Hunter saturation is being observed in hunt area 32 and could possibly be having an impact on hunter success. Thus, managers added a Type 2 license with an October 5th start date and October 31st end date to spread out hunter pressure, as well as an addition of 100 tags overall. The Type 7 license limitation was changed to only allow harvest within ½ mile of irrigated land to better target pronghorn causing damage and to match regulation consistency across the state. Type 6 license quotas were increased in hunt areas 42, 46, 47, and 48 by a total of 350 to increase opportunity given the increasing population and to reduce browse pressure on already stressed habitats given prolonged drought conditions and very poor habitat quality. 0. There is an increasing concern regarding hunter saturation on the Type 1 licenses, thus no increases were made for Type 1 license quotas.

Hunt areas in the northern portion of the herd unit (30, 31, & 32) have Type 1, 6, and 7 license opportunities. The Type 1 and 6 licenses have standard season dates to maximize opportunity and the Type 7 license is in place to manage damage situations on private irrigated lands into the middle of November with hunting opportunity. Hunt areas 42, 46, 47 and 48 have Type 1, 2, and 6 license opportunities. The type 1 and 6 seasons have standard season dates; however, the type 2 license has a later opening date to minimize hunter crowding during the opening week for the type 1 and 6 license holders.

Management Objective Review

The current objective was set at 40,000 pronghorn in 2014. The objective and management strategy for the Medicine Bow pronghorn herd was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit from the PopR IPM was approximately 41,800 (CL = 39,000 – 44,500). The 2025 IPM model used a random effect structure, reproduction and juvenile survival were time varying and adult survival was constant. Recreation days was the effort variable, and harvest and classification data were from the years 2000-2027. Model convergence was good.

The 2022 end of bio-year Line Transect estimate was 35,700 (CI 27,900-43,400). We flew 1,472 miles over 110 transects. Total flight time was 25 hours. Another LT is scheduled to be flown in the spring of 2026.

Habitat and Weather Summary

Precipitation levels were normal for the 2025 biological year. The months of May and September saw significant precipitation. Shrub conditions continue to be very poor throughout this herd unit, with this landscape being dominated by late seral shrub plant communities and long term, severe hedging and overutilization by big game. Soil moisture levels must be adequate in Winter/Spring for any annual leader growth to be seen. In most areas, annual leader growth is undetectable.

The Department plans to work with conservation partners to improve habitats in uplands in Area 46, 47 and Area 48 through construction of Zeedyk structures in ephemeral draws, which may improve the availability of summer forage quality and quantity. These structures and subsequent anticipated vegetative responses may result in improved late summer forage quality, and could result in better lactation performance by does and subsequent improved fawn survival. Department personnel will prioritize potential Zeedyk site selection, structure design, planning, and implementation in 2026.

Substantial energy development, including wind power, continues to expand across the herd unit. These developments can limit access or disrupt hunting seasons through construction and increased traffic volumes.

Wyoming Game and Fish

IPM Analysis Report

February 18, 2026

Model Definition

- **Species:** Pronghorn
- **DAU:** Medicine Bow 525
- **Years:** 2000 - 2027
- **Effort Variable:** Recreation Days
- **Trend Count Used:** TRUE

Structure

- Reproduction: Time Varying
- Juvenile Survival: Time Varying
- Adult Survival: Constant

Model Fitting

- **MCMC Burnin:** 50,000
- **MCMC Iterations:** 55,000
- **Thinning Rate:** 1

Diagnostics

The Brooks, Gelman and Rubin convergence diagnostic (Rhat) is a test used to determine whether the analysis has found a reliable solution. Values < 1.1 generally suggest that the model was run for a sufficient number of iterations while values > 1.1 suggest that the model should be run for more iterations. The maximum values of the point estimate and upper CI are reported below.

- **Rhat Max of Point Est:** 1.12
 - **Rhat Max of Upper CI:** 1.36
 - **Proportion < 1.1 :** 0.86
 - **Convergence Likely:** Maybe, try a longer burnin
-

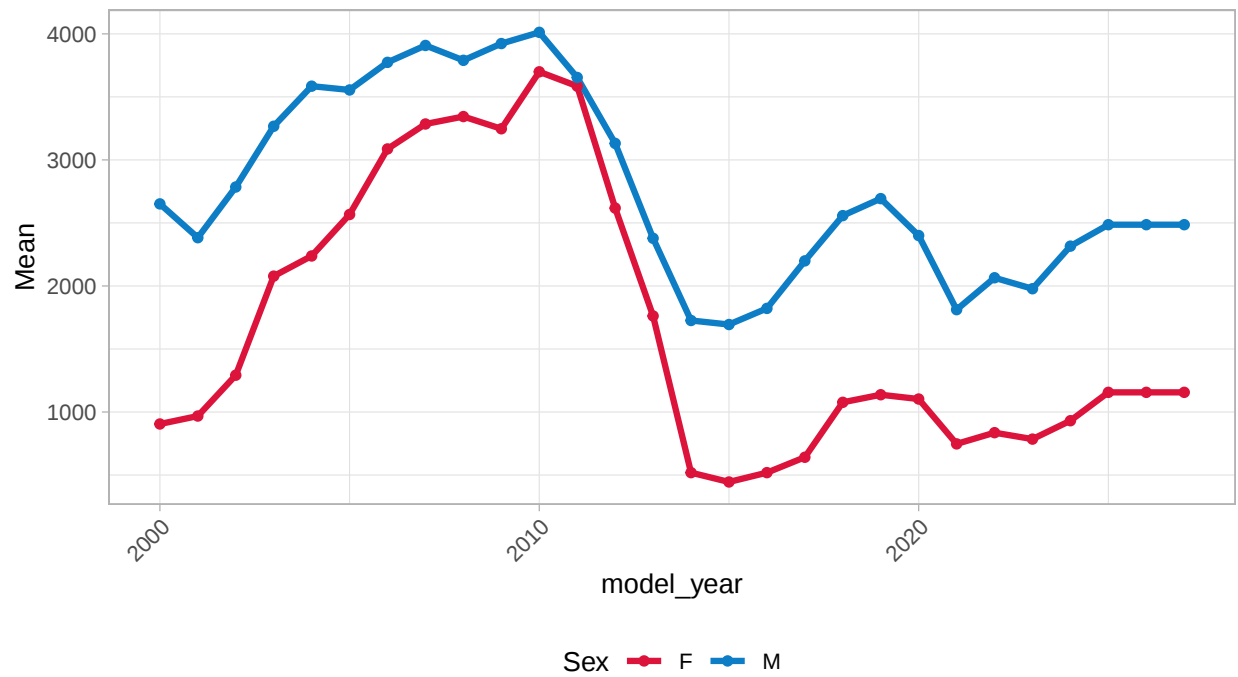
JCR Summary

	2025	2026	3 Year Average
Preseason Population Estimate	47,568 (44,637-50,396)	49,021 (46,074-51,848)	
Total Harvest	3,642	3,642	
Postseason Population Estimate	41,823 (39,044-44,516)	42,535 (39,827-45,132)	
Female $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.05	0.049	
Male $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.241	0.223	0.23
Projected Change in Postseason Population	1.05	1.02	

Using this report

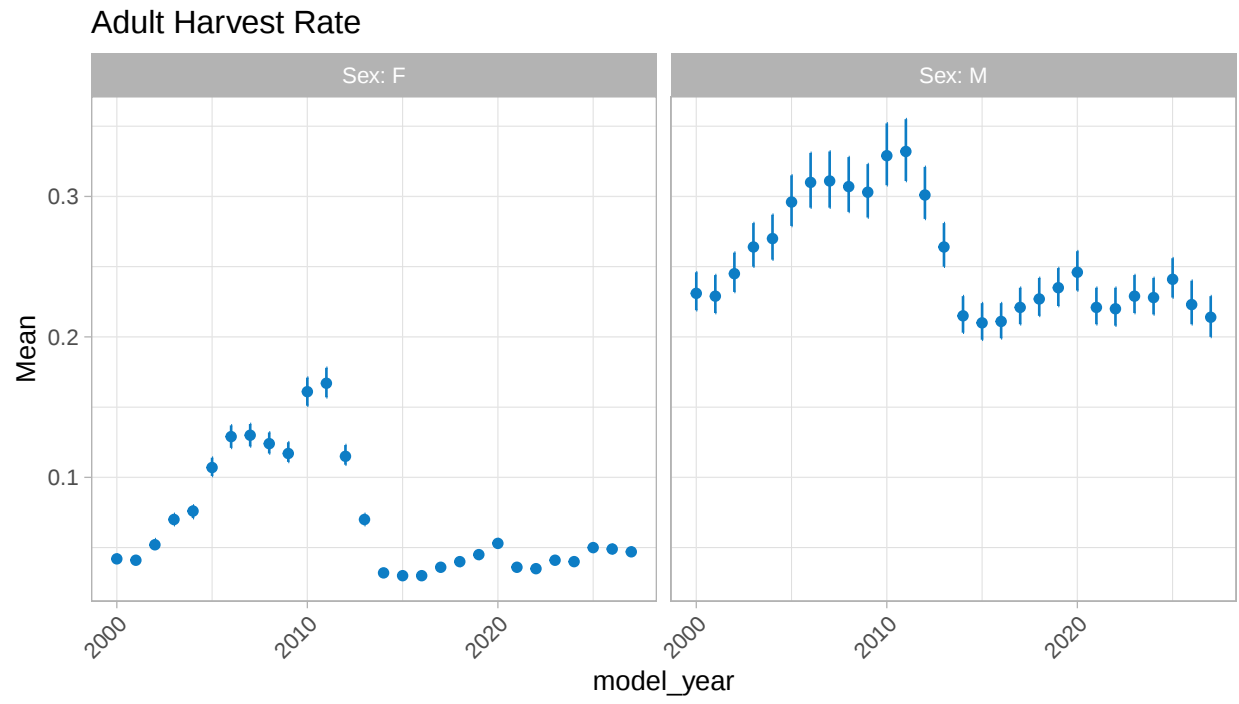
- Estimates v Observations
 - The term *estimate* is used to reference values estimated by the integrated population model (IPM) while *observation* is used to refer to field observations that serve as inputs to the IPM.
-

Harvest

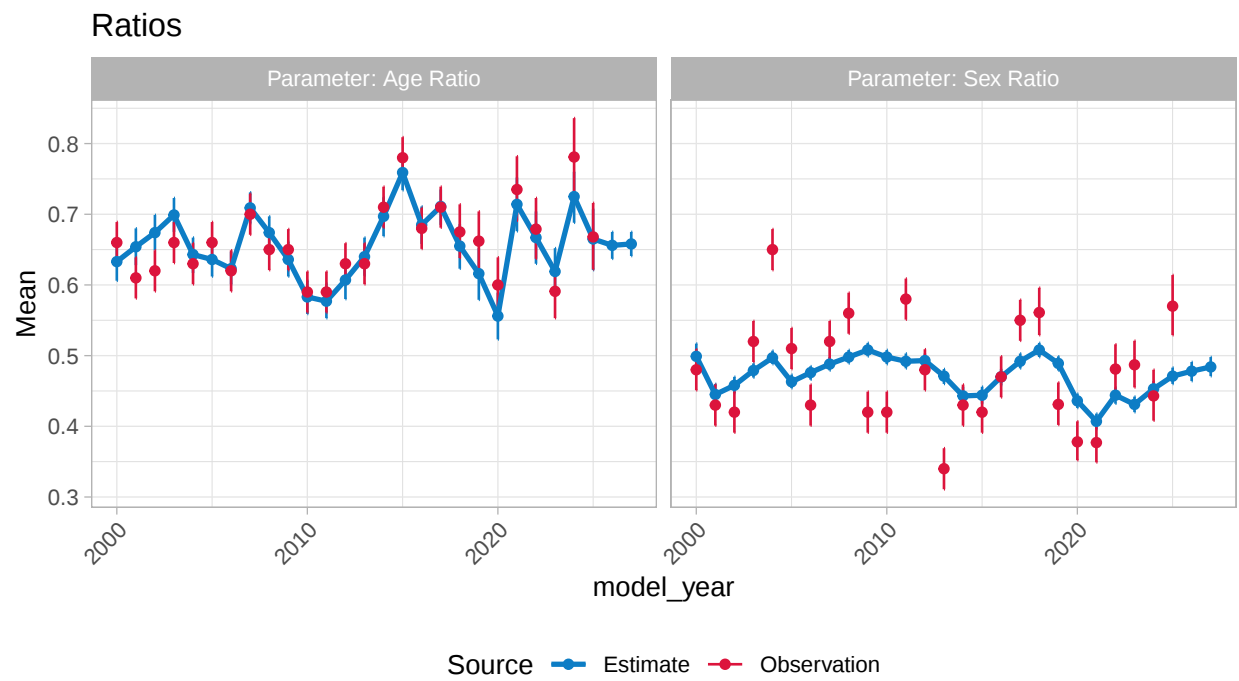


The plot above depicts male (M) and female (F) harvest through time.

Adult Harvest Rate

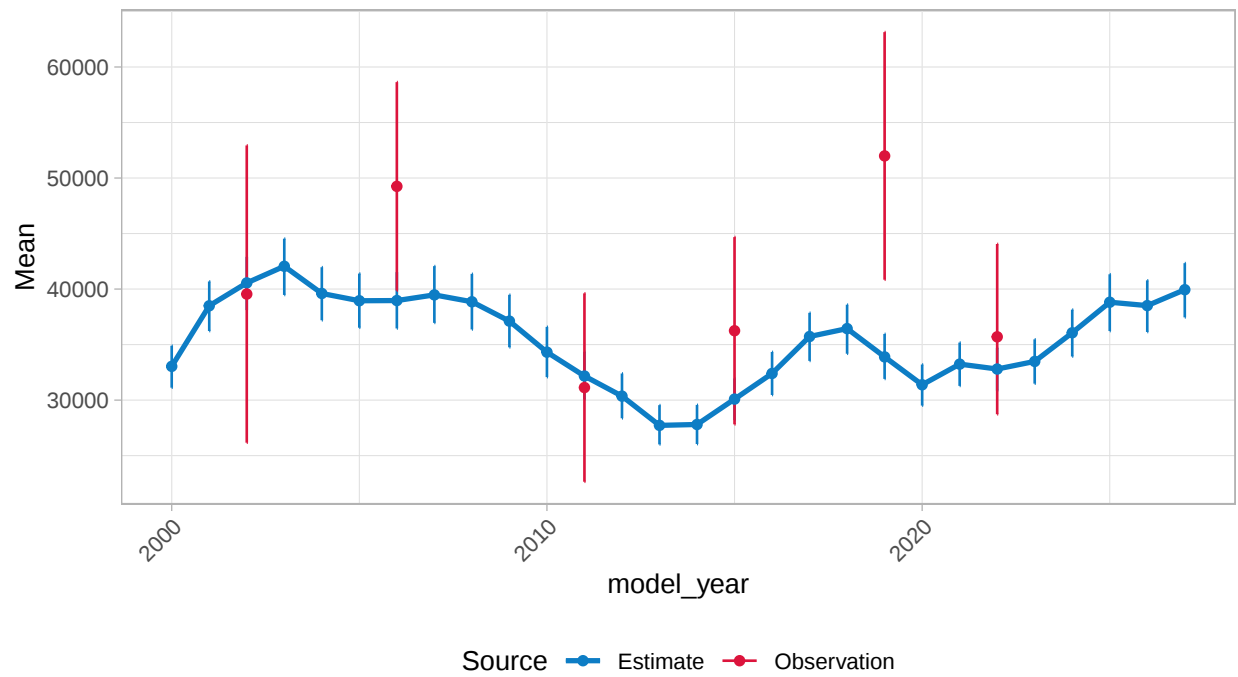


Ratios

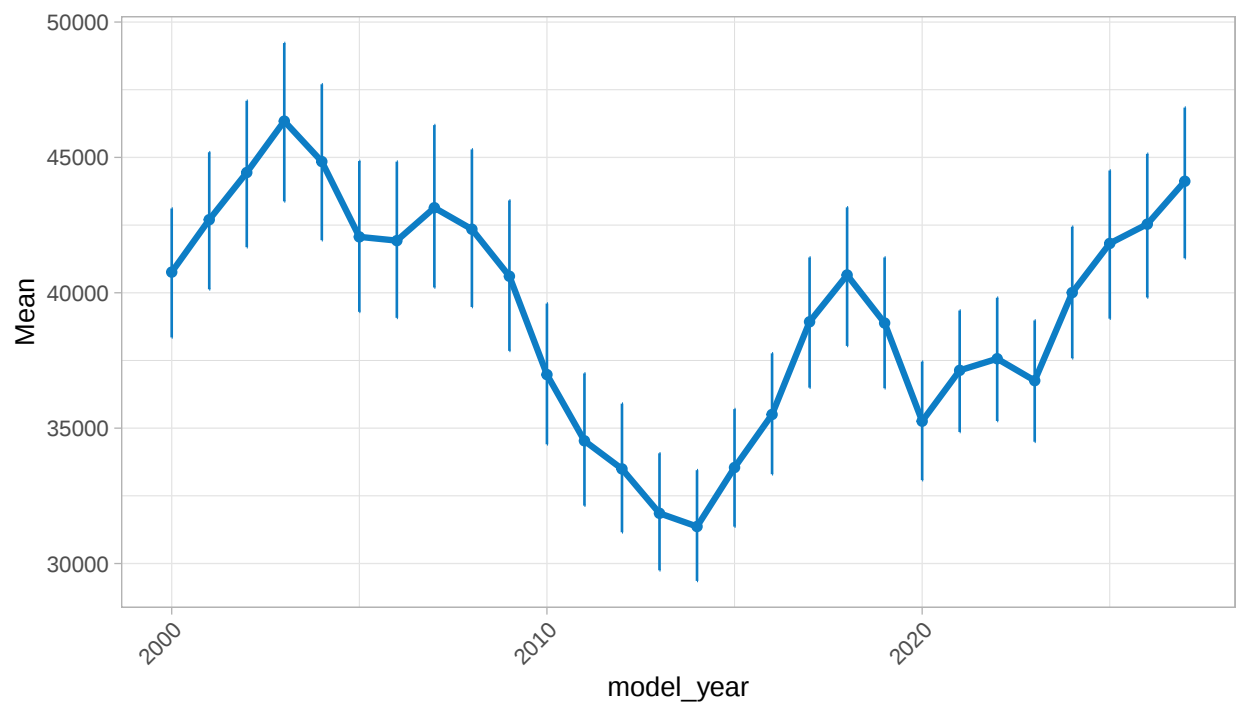


Abundance

Total Abundance May 31st



Total Post Season Abundance



Report prepared using SpeedGoat® software

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR526 - COOPER LAKE

HUNT AREAS: 43

PREPARED BY: LEE KNOX

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	4,430	4,800	5,100
Harvest:	407	195	225
Hunters:	552	227	275
Hunter Success:	74%	86%	82%
Active Licenses:	575	227	275
Active License Success:	71%	86%	82 %
Recreation Days:	1,796	559	700
Days Per Animal:	4.4	2.9	3.1
Males per 100 Females	44	37	
Juveniles per 100 Females	78	75	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 5000 (4000 - 6000)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -4%

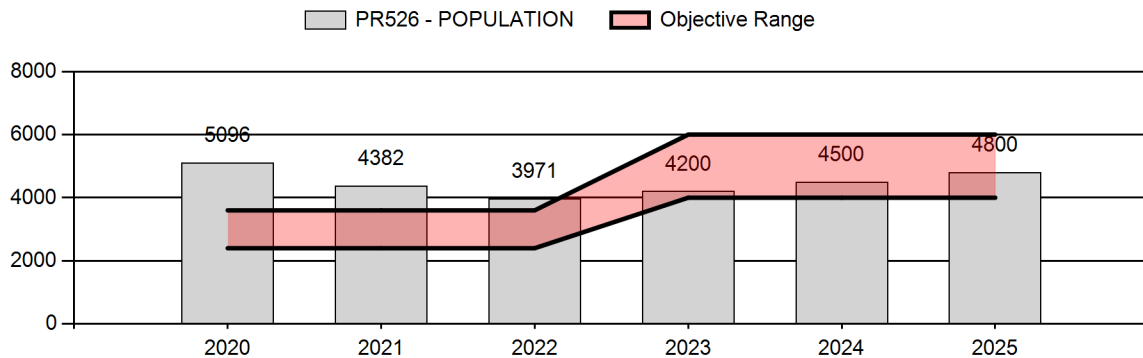
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 0

Model Date: 2/18/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	2%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	17%	19%
Proposed change in post-season population:	6%	6%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR526 - COOPER LAKE

Year	Pre 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	5,447	48	52	100	18%	268	49%	182	33%	550	0	18	19	37	± 7	68	± 10	49
2021	5,400	23	55	78	19%	171	41%	167	40%	416	0	13	32	46	± 10	98	± 17	67
2022	4,392	18	35	53	15%	195	55%	108	30%	356	0	9	18	27	± 7	55	± 10	44
2023	4,800	13	31	44	14%	148	47%	121	39%	313	0	9	21	30	± 8	82	± 16	63
2024	5,100	78	97	175	29%	230	37%	209	34%	614	0	34	42	76	± 12	91	± 13	52
2025	5,500	31	85	116	17%	314	47%	235	35%	665	0	10	27	37	± 6	75	± 10	55

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Cooper Lake (PR526)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
43	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	300	Any antelope
43	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	50	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 93% Satisfied, 6% Neutral, 1% Dissatisfied

**2026 Management Summary
Hunting Season Evaluation**

The management strategy for the Cooper Lake herd is recreational which prescribes for a buck ratio of 30 to 59:100 does. Buck ratios were 37:100 does in 2025. The yearling buck segment of the population was 10:100 does. Fawn recruitment also improved from an all-time low at 55:100 does in 2022, to a high of 91:100 in 2024. Fawn ratios were 75:100 in 2025. The post-season population estimate for 2025 was 4,800 (CL = 4,100 – 5,600), within 20% of the post-season population objective of 5,000 (4,000-6,000). The Cooper Lake herd unit is predominantly a private land herd. The majority of the harvest comes from the Laramie River and Diamond Lake Hunter Management Areas (HMA). The Diamond Lake HMA has greatly been reduced in size during 2023, 2024, and 2025 hunting seasons for the construction of the Rock Creek Wind Energy Project, and will remain at the reduced acreage during the 2026 season. Additionally, significant cuts in licenses were made the last few years from a total of 1,100 licenses in 2021, to 250 licenses in 2023 to address a significant decline in the population. A quota of 250 licenses was sustained over the last three-year period to better evaluate population changes over time. After keeping the quota at 250 for three years, the population is trending upward due to three years of good fawn recruitment and mild winters. The male harvest rate for 2025 was 17%, with a three-year running average of 17%. We increased licenses for 2026 with a quota of 300 type 1 and 50 type 6 licenses to provide more opportunity and increase male harvest rates, while striving to keep high hunter satisfaction. The predicted male harvest rate for 2026 was 19%, which does not meet between 20% – 30% of preseason bucks harvested in recreational management herds, but is an increase from the three-year average.

Management Objective Review

The previous objective of 3,000 was set in 1986. The objective was last reviewed during the 2023 season setting process. The objective was increased to 5,000 based on public input. The objective will be reviewed again in 2028.

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit from PopR IPM was approximately 4,800 (CL = 4,100 – 5,700) pronghorn using the random effect structure. Juvenile and adult survivals were set as constants to reason with the high fawn ratios. The effort variable for this model was licenses, and years of classification and harvest data used was 2015-2027. Model convergence was good.

The 2022 end of bio-year Line Transect estimate was 5,000 (CI 2,500-8,400). The Cooper Lake Line Transect survey was flown in conjunction with the Medicine Bow Herd Unit (See Image 1

below). For the Cooper Lake herd alone, we flew 136 miles over 10 transects. Another LT is scheduled to be flown in the spring of 2026.

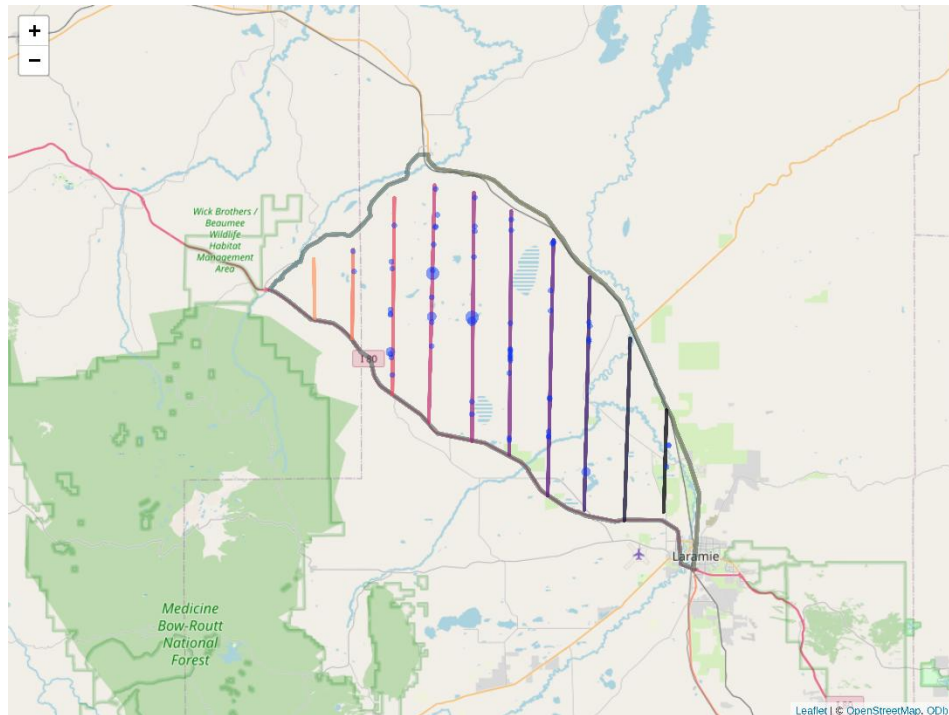


Image 1: Map of transects and detections during 2022 LT survey.

Habitat

Precipitation levels were slightly above normal (+7%) for the 2025 biological year. No significant precipitation events in late winter and early spring were observed that would have impacted adult or fawn survival. May and September saw precipitation totals well above normal for those specific months. This resulted in late season green up of herbaceous vegetation, and with some cooler temperatures did allow for some additional forage production. Annual precipitation has been below normal for 6 of the last 8 years at the Laramie weather station. Seasonal lakes and playas in this herd unit are important for pronghorn as a water source and aid in pronghorn distribution throughout the herd unit. In addition, these areas are sought out for their succulent green forage, as water levels recede in late summer. Long term drought continues to have significant impacts on these relied upon water sources. Wind, solar, etc. Wind energy developments continue to progress in portions of Hunt Area 43, just north of Interstate 80.

Wyoming Game and Fish

IPM Analysis Report

February 18, 2026

Model Definition

- **Species:** Pronghorn
- **DAU:** Cooper Lake 526
- **Years:** 2015 - 2027
- **Effort Variable:** Licenses
- **Trend Count Used:** TRUE

Structure

- **Reproduction:** Time Varying
- **Juvenile Survival:** Constant
- **Adult Survival:** Constant

Model Fitting

- **MCMC Burnin:** 30,000
- **MCMC Iterations:** 55,000
- **Thinning Rate:** 1

Diagnostics

The Brooks, Gelman and Rubin convergence diagnostic (Rhat) is a test used to determine whether the analysis has found a reliable solution. Values < 1.1 generally suggest that the model was run for a sufficient number of iterations while values > 1.1 suggest that the model should be run for more iterations. The maximum values of the point estimate and upper CI are reported below.

- **Rhat Max of Point Est:** 1.04
 - **Rhat Max of Upper CI:** 1.12
 - **Proportion < 1.1 :** 1
 - **Convergence Likely:** Yes, looks good
-

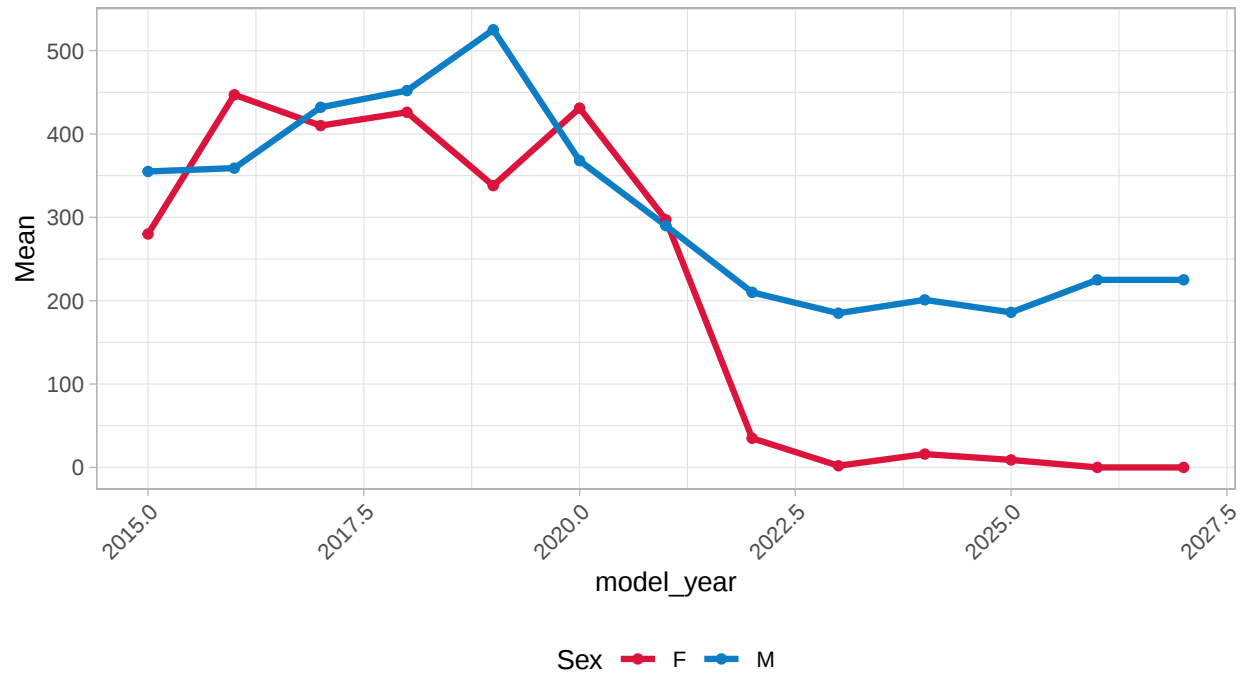
JCR Summary

	2025	2026	3 Year Average
Preseason Population Estimate	5,477 (4,691-6,400)	5,811 (4,948-6,811)	
Total Harvest	195	225	
Postseason Population Estimate	4,833 (4,122-5,667)	5,134 (4,345-6,045)	
Female $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.018	0	
Male $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.172	0.194	0.17
Projected Change in Postseason Population	1.06	1.06	

Using this report

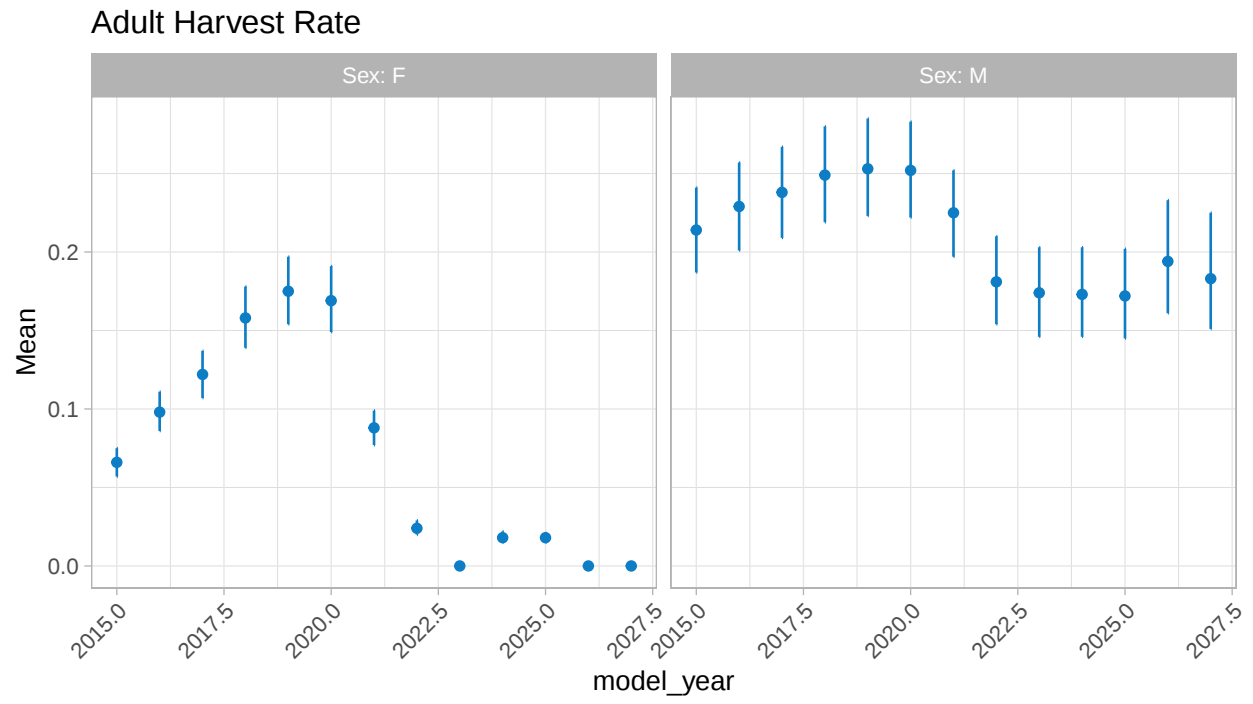
- Estimates v Observations
 - The term *estimate* is used to reference values estimated by the integrated population model (IPM) while *observation* is used to refer to field observations that serve as inputs to the IPM.
-

Harvest

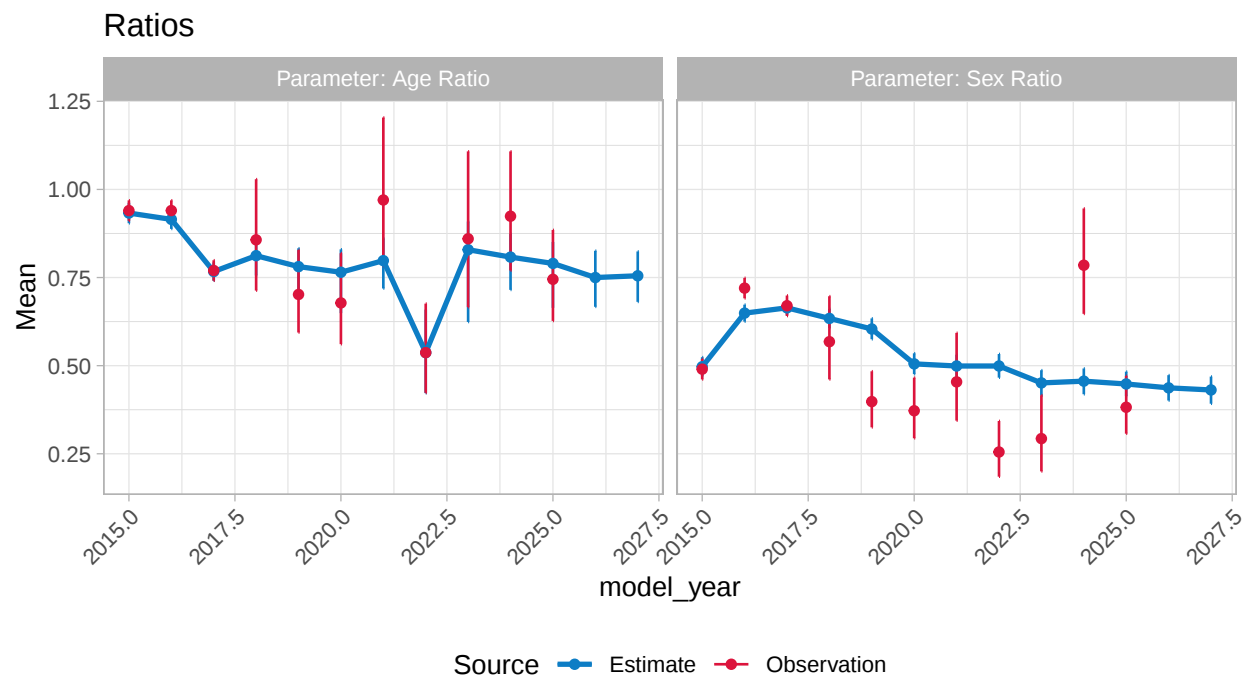


The plot above depicts male (M) and female (F) harvest through time.

Adult Harvest Rate

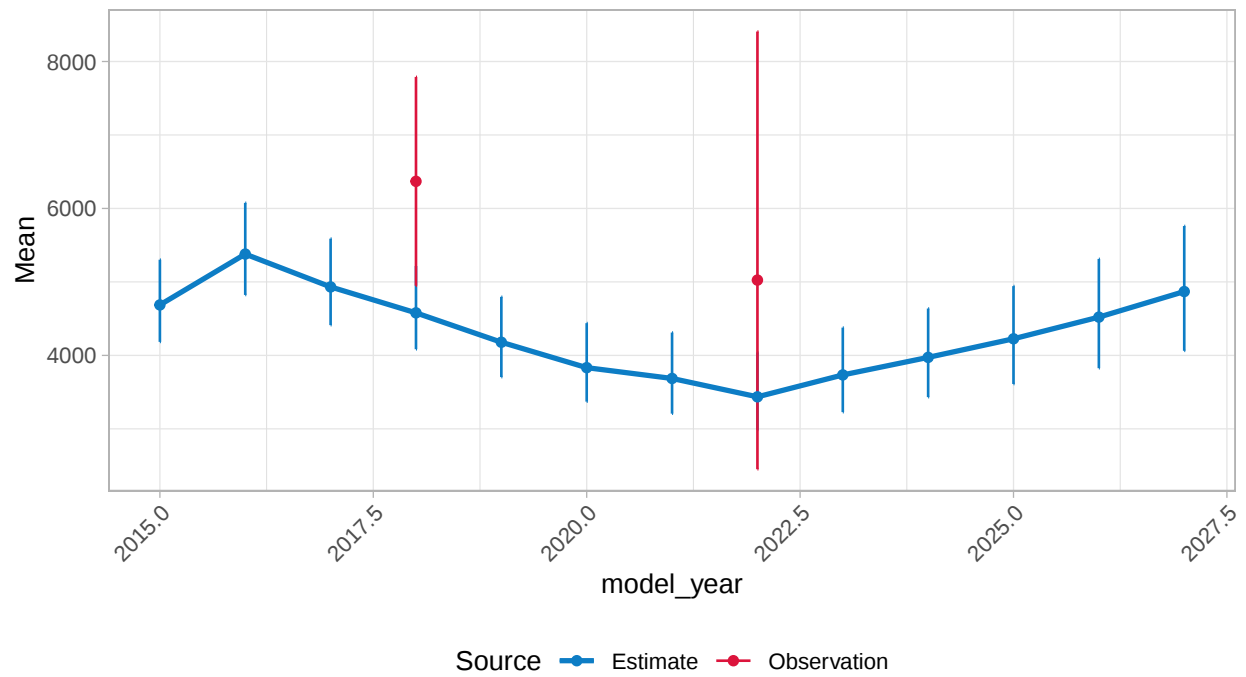


Ratios

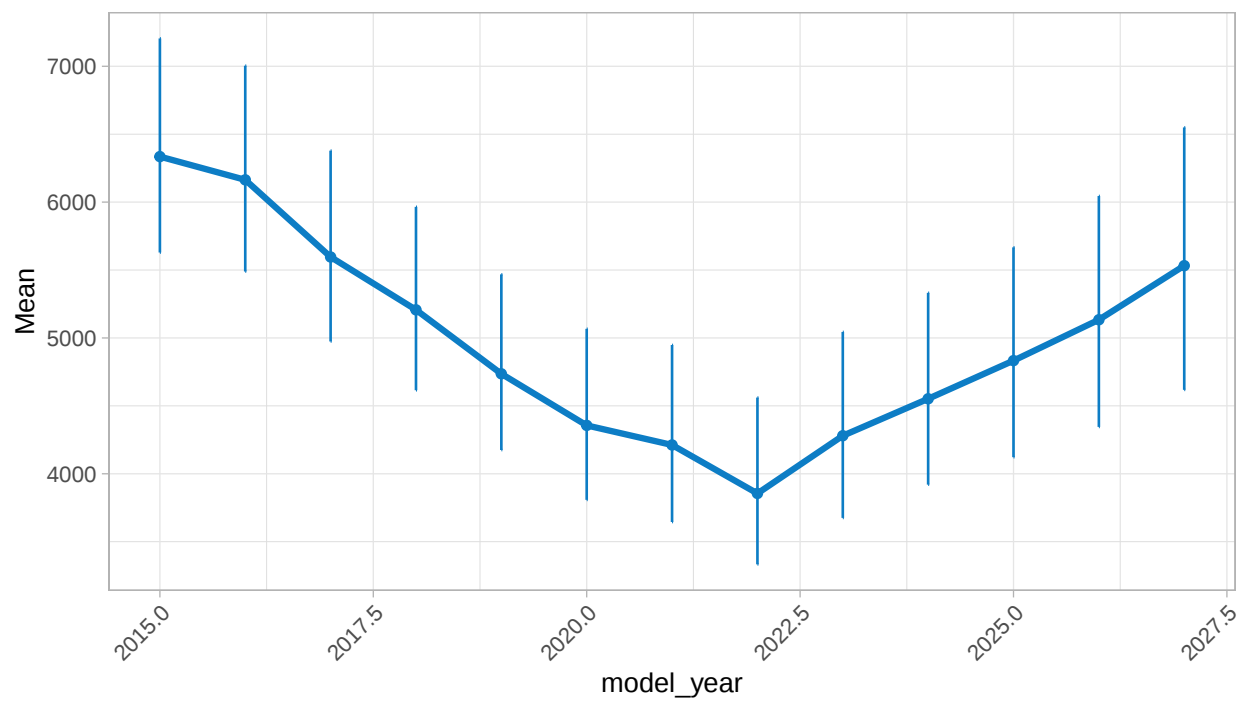


Abundance

Total Abundance May 31st



Total Post Season Abundance



Report prepared using SpeedGoat® software

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR527 - CENTENNIAL

HUNT AREAS: 37, 44-45

PREPARED BY: KEATON
WEBER

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	13,333	16,100	16,000
Harvest:	876	1,102	1,100
Hunters:	1,006	1,219	1,200
Hunter Success:	87%	90%	92%
Active Licenses:	1,116	1,323	1,300
Active License Success:	78%	83%	85%
Recreation Days:	3,978	4,700	5,000
Days Per Animal:	4.5	4.3	4.5
Males per 100 Females	39	31	
Juveniles per 100 Females	58	67	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 14000 (11200 - 16800)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 15%

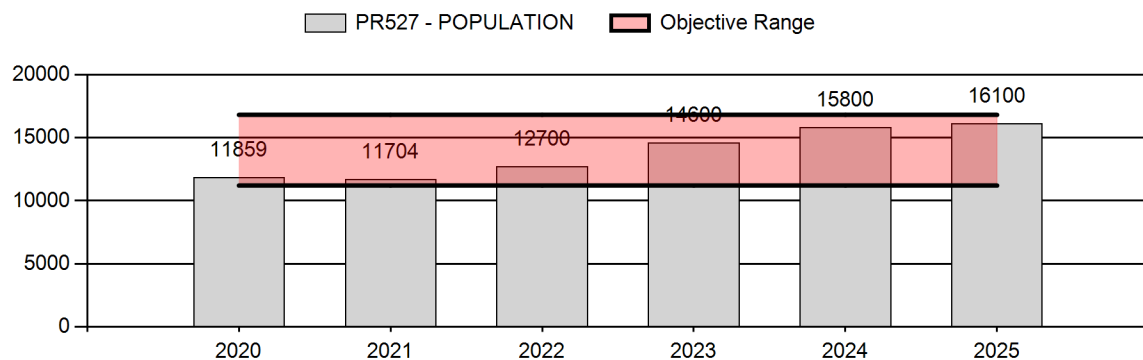
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 3

Model Date: 2/17/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	5%	3%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	18%	21%
Proposed change in post-season population:	2%	1%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR527 - CENTENNIAL

Year	Pre 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	79	207	286	20%	743	53%	383	27%	1,412	0	11	28	38	± 4	52	± 5	37
2021	0	61	170	231	17%	747	54%	400	29%	1,378	0	8	23	31	± 4	54	± 5	41
2022	14,000	106	130	236	19%	627	50%	393	31%	1,256	0	17	21	38	± 5	63	± 6	46
2023	16,673	78	196	274	25%	554	50%	279	25%	1,107	0	14	35	49	± 6	50	± 6	34
2024	17,500	98	185	283	20%	662	47%	471	33%	1,416	0	15	28	43	± 5	71	± 7	50
2025	18,300	58	101	159	16%	518	51%	348	34%	1,025	0	11	19	31	± 4	67	± 7	51

2026 HUNTING SEASONS
Centennial Pronghorn Herd (PR527)

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
37	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 31	400	Any antelope
37	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 31	100	Doe or fawn
44	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	150	Any antelope
44	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	100	Doe or fawn
45	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	600	Any antelope
45	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	200	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 87% Satisfied, 9% Neutral, 4% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

Overall, herd performance in 2025 was slightly below the previous 3 years. In 2025, the pre-season buck ratio was 31 bucks per 100 does, down from the previous 3-year average of 43 bucks per 100 does, but still within recreational management guidelines of 30-59 bucks per 100 does. The yearling buck ratio in 2025 was 11 yearling bucks per 100 does, slightly down from the previous 3-year average of 15 yearling bucks per 100 does. Although buck ratios were slightly lower than previous years, 11 yearling bucks per 100 still indicates good over-winter survival. The slight decline in yearling buck ratios is likely attributed to severe drought conditions. The 2025 fawn ratio was 67 fawns per 100 does, above the previous 3-year average of 61 fawns per 100 does and above the 10-year average of 57 fawns per 100 does. The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit was approximately 16,100 (CL = 15,000 – 17,200) pronghorn, a slight increase from the previous year's estimate of 15,800 pronghorn. The population has steadily increased from 11,700 (2021) to 16,100 (2025).

Hunter success on the Type 1 license in hunt area 37 was 73%, the lowest hunter success since 2017 and below the previous 3-year average of 83% for that hunt area. Days per harvest has also steadily increased in hunt area 37 from 3.2 days per harvest (2022) to 5.5 days per harvest (2025) indicating hunters had a more difficult hunt in 2025, likely attributed to difficult access and possibly hunter saturation. Hunter success on the Type 1 license in hunt area 44 was 92% and 88% in hunt area 45.

Type 1 quotas in hunt area 37 and 45 were increased in previous years. Specifically, in hunt area 37, an additional 150 type 1 licenses were added in 2024, and another 75 in 2025. Within hunt area 45, Type 1 licenses were increased by 50 in 2024 and Type 6 licenses were increased by 150 licenses in 2025 to accommodate the increased population and maximize hunter opportunity. Buck harvest in hunt area 45 has returned to harvest totals experienced prior to the population decline. Type 1 license issuance in hunt area 45 is likely at a saturation point and any further license increase could cause declines in satisfaction and harvest due to hunter crowding on

limited access areas. As a result, Type 1 licenses in 45 will remain status quo. Due to the declines in hunter success and the previous years' license increases in hunt area 37 license issuance will remain status quo and will be reevaluated in 2026.

In 2023, the type 6 license in hunt area 44 was removed to allow this population to rebound from severe winter conditions and population decline at that time. With the population increasing the past three years, the type 6 license was reinstated to allow for maximum opportunity in hunt area 44. Additionally, this increase will reduce browse pressure on already stressed habitat from severe drought conditions. Due to the Department planning to begin multi-year season setting in 2027, managers will monitor the population one more year before making any more changes.

Male harvest rates were 18% in 2025 and predicted to be 21% in 2026. The three-year average is 18%, shy of meeting the goal of 20-30% male harvest in recreationally managed herds.

Management Objective Review

The current objective was set at 14,000 in 1997. The objective and management strategy for the Centennial Pronghorn herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2023, and will not be reviewed again until 2028.

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit from the PopR IPM was approximately 16,100 (CL = 15,000 – 17,200) pronghorn. The 2025 IPM model used a random effect structure, reproduction and adult survival was constant while juvenile survival was time varying. Days to harvest was the effort variable, and harvest and classification data was from years 2000-2027. Model convergence was likely, but not perfect.

The 2023 end-of-bio year Line Transect estimate was 16,500 (CI 15,300-17,700). We flew 602 miles over 60 transects. Total flight time was 13 hours. This abundance estimate is very important to anchor the model and indicates this population has remained relatively stable since that LT survey.

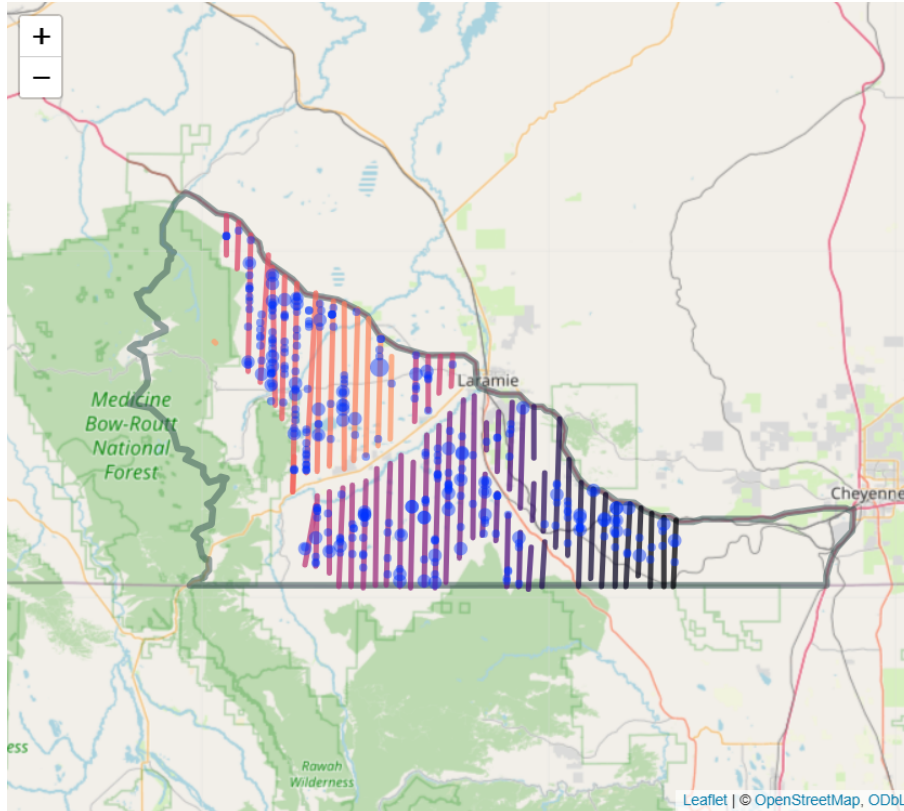


Image 1: Map of transects and detections during the 2023 LT survey.

Habitat and Weather Summary

Precipitation levels were above average for the 2025 biological year. The NOAA weather station in Laramie received 11.32" total precipitation for the year, slightly higher (+7%) than long term averages. Precipitation events through winter and spring were near normal in low elevations. Mountain snowpack was below normal. High precipitation amounts were received in May and September, and are worth noting. Excellent September moisture resulted in temporary, late season green up of herbaceous vegetation. With cooler temperatures, some additional forage was produced. In the Centennial herd unit, private irrigated lands continue to be important for pronghorn by providing green succulent forages late in summer. Irrigation season was much shorter than normal in 2025 due to a lack of snowpack in the Snowy Range. This correlates to a quicker senescence of these important forages and decreased production of hay/irrigated pasture. Again, an unusually wet September aided in some green-up of meadow habitats. Winter 2025, conditions remained mild, and precipitation for this period was well below normal, while temperatures were above normal. Annual precipitation has been below normal in 6 of the last 8 years in this herd unit. It is important to note that timing of precipitation can be a large contributor to annual forage production, and continues to hold evident in this area.

Proposed wind turbine fields and solar facilities in Hunt Area 44 south of Laramie, remain in early stages of permitting and development and are being met with some strong opposition from Albany County residents. Subdivision of ranchlands on the outskirts of Laramie continues. Subdivisions are often associated with new fence construction, invasive weed infestations, new road construction, and increased disturbance of wildlife by outdoor pets and human activity.

Wyoming Game and Fish

IPM Analysis Report

February 17, 2026

Model Definition

- **Species:** Pronghorn
- **DAU:** Centennial 527
- **Years:** 2000 - 2027
- **Effort Variable:** Days per Harvest
- **Trend Count Used:** TRUE

Structure

- **Reproduction:** Constant
- **Juvenile Survival:** Time Varying
- **Adult Survival:** Constant

Model Fitting

- **MCMC Burnin:** 50,000
- **MCMC Iterations:** 30,500
- **Thinning Rate:** 1

Diagnostics

The Brooks, Gelman and Rubin convergence diagnostic (Rhat) is a test used to determine whether the analysis has found a reliable solution. Values < 1.1 generally suggest that the model was run for a sufficient number of iterations while values > 1.1 suggest that the model should be run for more iterations. The maximum values of the point estimate and upper CI are reported below.

- **Rhat Max of Point Est:** 1.11
 - **Rhat Max of Upper CI:** 1.34
 - **Proportion < 1.1 :** 0.99
 - **Convergence Likely:** Pretty likely, but not perfect
-

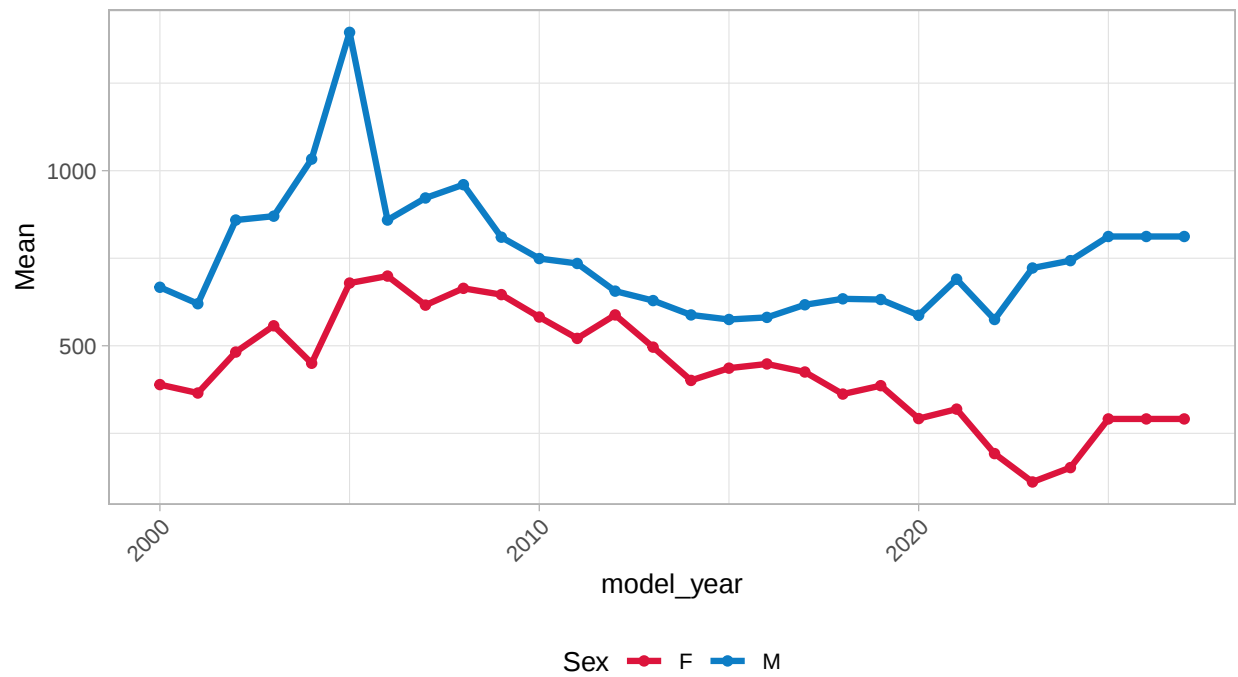
JCR Summary

	2025	2026	3 Year Average
Preseason Population Estimate	18,303 (17,189-19,440)	18,473 (17,298-19,683)	
Total Harvest	1,103	1,103	
Postseason Population Estimate	16,069 (15,007-17,153)	15,998 (14,922-17,107)	
Female $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.045	0.032	
Male $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.18	0.207	0.18
Projected Change in Postseason Population	1.06	1	

Using this report

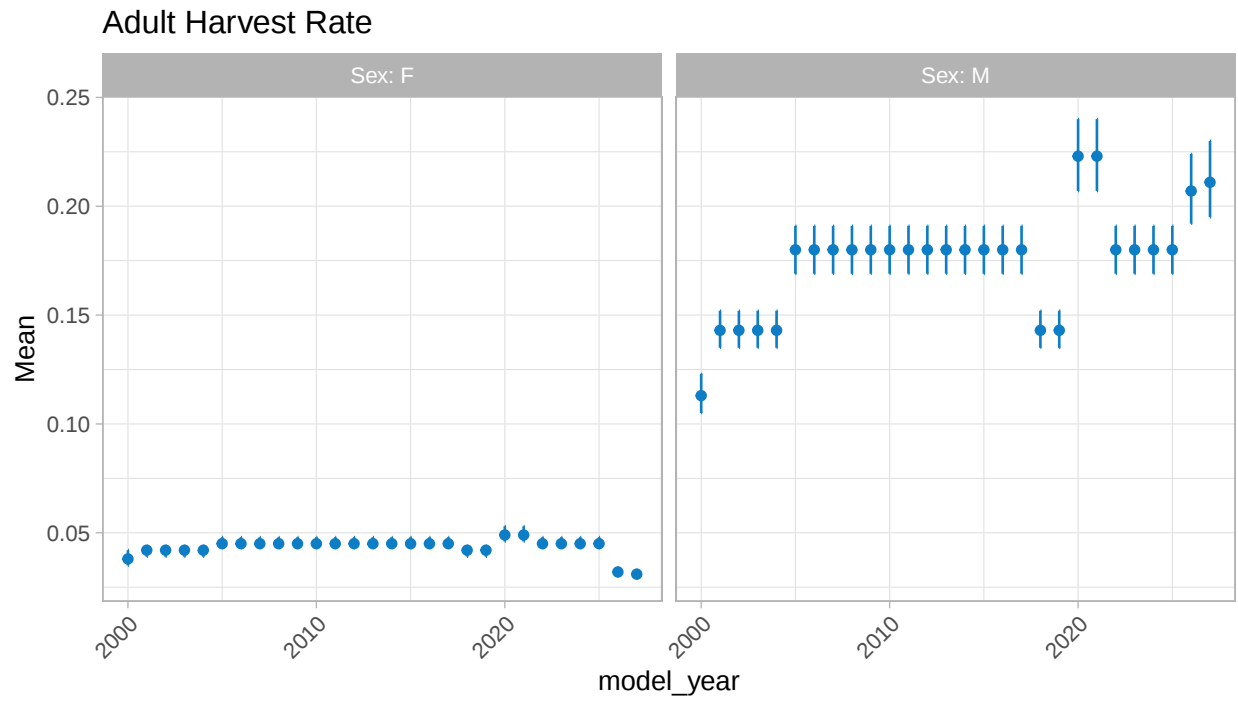
- Estimates v Observations
 - The term *estimate* is used to reference values estimated by the integrated population model (IPM) while *observation* is used to refer to field observations that serve as inputs to the IPM.
-

Harvest

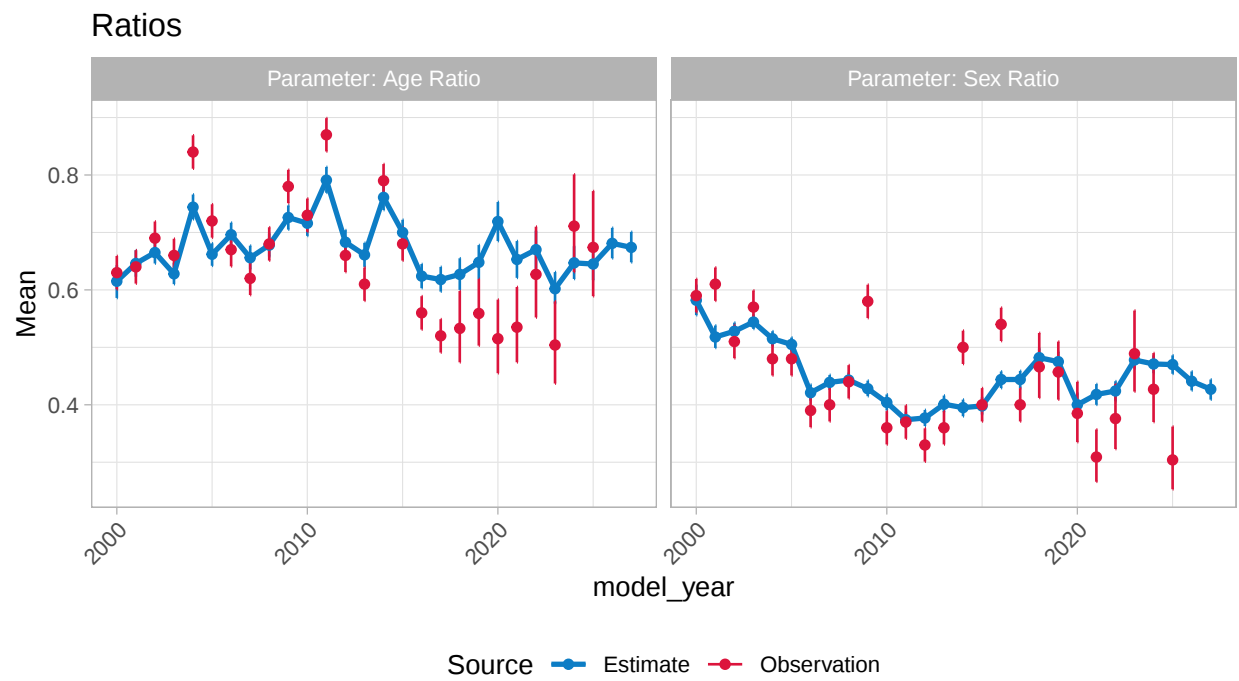


The plot above depicts male (M) and female (F) harvest through time.

Adult Harvest Rate

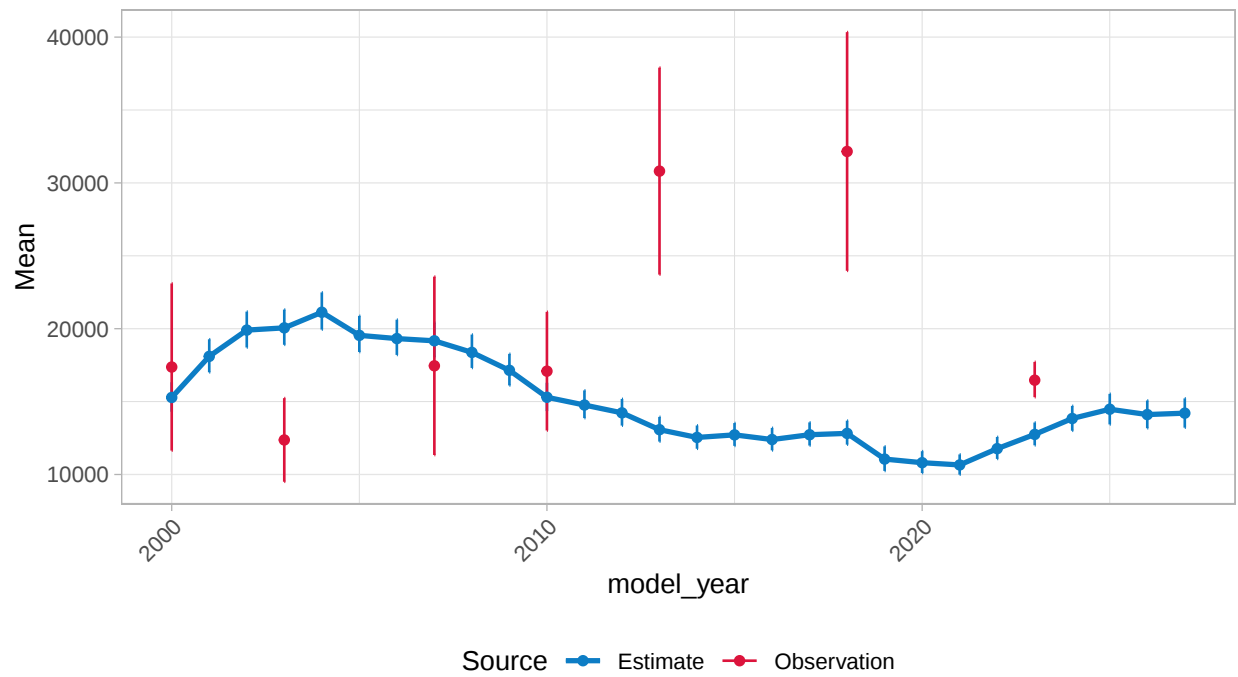


Ratios

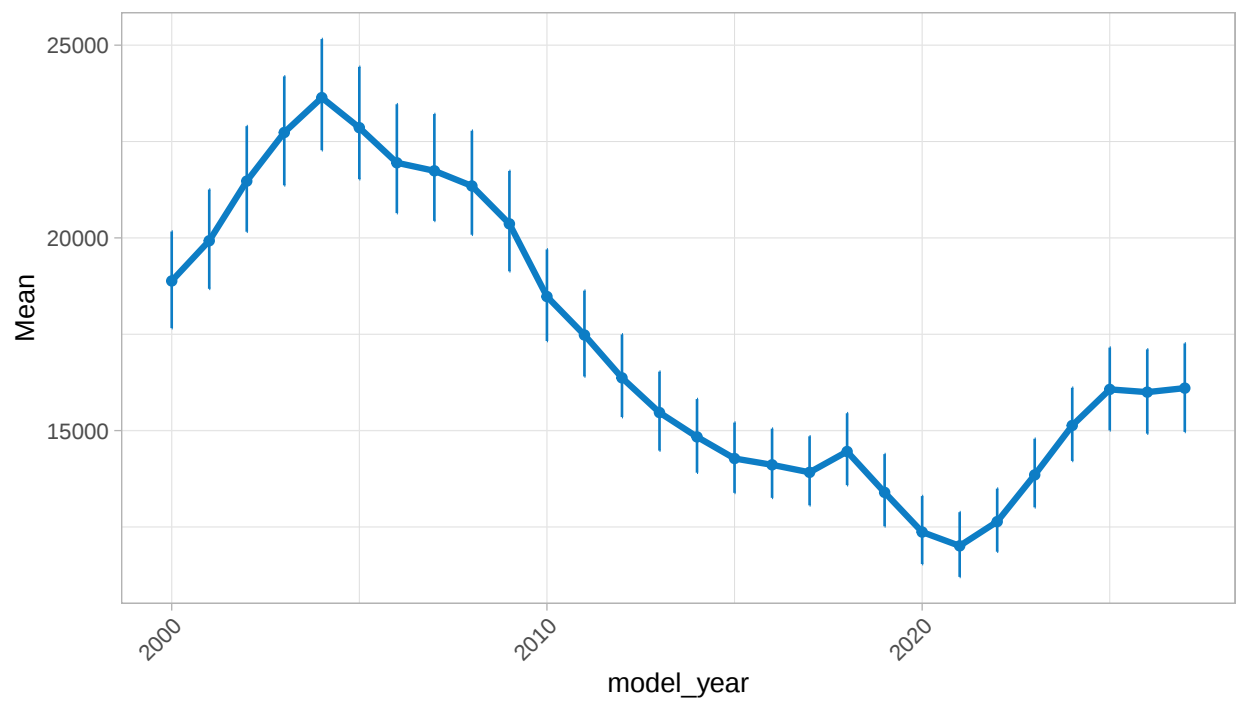


Abundance

Total Abundance May 31st



Total Post Season Abundance



Report prepared using SpeedGoat® software

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR528 - ELK MOUNTAIN

HUNT AREAS: 50

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	6,140	5,600	5,500
Harvest:	365	349	430
Hunters:	394	395	450
Hunter Success:	93%	88%	96 %
Active Licenses:	441	422	480
Active License Success:	83%	83%	90 %
Recreation Days:	1,290	1,139	1,500
Days Per Animal:	3.5	3.3	3.5
Males per 100 Females	43	42	
Juveniles per 100 Females	46	58	

Population Objective (± 20%) : 5000 (4000 - 6000)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 12%

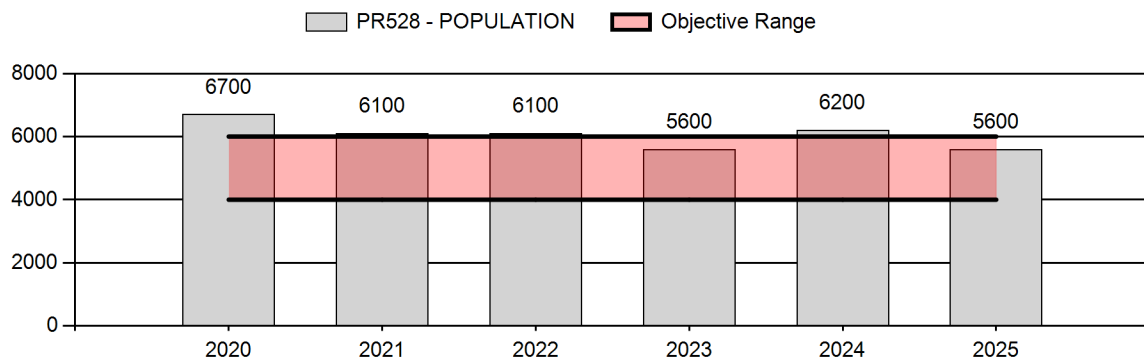
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 6

Model Date: 2/16/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	2%	3%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	18%	26%
Proposed change in post-season population:	-3%	-2%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR528 - ELK MOUNTAIN

Year	Pre 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	85	187	272	21%	677	53%	340	26%	1,289	1,606	13	28	40	± 4	50	± 5	36
2021	0	43	219	262	26%	570	57%	176	17%	1,008	1,220	8	38	46	± 5	31	± 4	21
2022	6,800	30	134	164	24%	359	52%	168	24%	691	1,572	8	37	46	± 7	47	± 7	32
2023	6,300	63	193	256	23%	614	56%	221	20%	1,091	0	10	31	42	± 5	36	± 4	25
2024	7,100	70	202	272	22%	603	48%	388	31%	1,263	1,568	12	33	45	± 5	64	± 6	44
2025	6,200	74	157	231	21%	553	50%	323	29%	1,107	1,251	13	28	42	± 5	58	± 6	41

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Elk Mountain Pronghorn (PR528)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
50	1	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 16	Oct. 31	375	Any antelope
50	6	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 16	Oct. 31	150	Doe or fawn
50	0			Sep. 1	Sep. 15	75	Any antelope, muzzle-loading firearms only

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 91% Satisfied, 7% Neutral, 2% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2025 pre-hunting season buck-to-doe ratio (42/100) was similar to the previous five-year average (43/100) and remained within the recreational management objective parameters of 30-59/100. The yearling buck-to-doe ratio (13/100), indicated improved overwinter fawn survival in 2024-25 and is higher than the yearling buck ratio observed in the previous five years (10/100). The fawn-to-doe ratio (58/100), although lower than 2024 (64/100) exceeded the five-year average of 47/100.

The 2025 harvest survey indicated hunter success on Type 0 (73%), Type 1 (86%), and Type 6 (80%) licenses was similar to 2024. Hunter success on Type 1 licenses exceeded the respective five-year average of 84%, while success on Type 0 and 6 licenses was slightly lower than their respective five-year averages of 74% and 84%. Days to harvest decreased on Type 1 and 6 licenses and increased slightly on Type 0 licenses.

Liberal season structures, periods of severe drought, and the 2022-23 winter all likely contributed to a decrease in the population towards the objective of 5,000 pronghorn in 2023. In 2023, managers were concerned about buck recruitment and the number of bucks available for harvest based on lower fawn survival in 2023, so reduced licensed quotas were maintained for a 3-year period (2023-25). Improved range conditions in summer 2023, followed by mild winters, contributed to the observed improvement in pronghorn recruitment, productivity, and abundance. This herd is expected to have average fawn production in 2026, promoting an increase in population beyond the objective, while range conditions are expected to be poor. Increased harvest rates are intended to support a decrease in post-hunting season abundance from 5,600 in 2025 to 5,500 pronghorn in 2026.

The harvest rate of adult bucks (>1 year) was 20% in 2025, which is similar to the three-year average of 21%. The 2026 pre-hunting season buck ratios are not expected to be at the high end of the recreational management parameters, however there was an opportunity to increase Type 1 and Type 0 licenses to increase the projected harvest rate of bucks to the management goal of 20-30% male harvest for recreational management herds.

Management Objective Review

The management objective for Elk Mountain pronghorn is a post-hunting season population objective of 5,000 pronghorn ($\pm 20\%$) and was last reviewed in 2025. Following an internal evaluation, the current objective and recreational management strategy will be maintained for the next five years.

Weather/Habitat

Precipitation was below normal for the 2025 biological year. The NOAA weather station data from Rawlins reported a 5.3% decrease in average annual precipitation. Early spring precipitation occurred in April and May but diminished by early June, with little to no precipitation occurring in June and July. High amounts of precipitation occurred during September (2.03 inches) and likely resulted in some late season green up of herbaceous vegetation. Winter conditions remained mild with minimal snow accumulation at lower elevations. Snowpack during the 2024-2025 winter was normal.

In 2025, the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) continued its large-scale conifer removal efforts, targeting encroaching junipers within sagebrush and mixed mountain shrub communities. The Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District and the BLM successfully completed 916 acres of mastication treatments along the western slope of Barrett Ridge. Juniper mastication work will continue in this area next year. Approximately 5,170 acres in the Prospect area were aerially treated with Indaziflam to control cheatgrass infestations. The PVHP plans to continue large-scale cheatgrass treatments over the next two years, targeting Pennock WHMA and the Mullen Fire burn scar. Additionally, the PVHP plans to convert 16 miles of HWY 130 right-of-way fence in 2026. The project aims to reduce barriers for pronghorn, mule deer and elk movement and to increase access to important seasonal range habitats.

Line Transect (LT) Survey

A LT was conducted to estimate pronghorn abundance at the end of the 2022 biological year. The population estimate was 5,200 pronghorn (95% CI 2,900-7,400).

Population Modeling

The 2025 post-hunting season population estimate was 5,600 pronghorn (CL 5,000-6,300). Managers chose to model this herd using the default structure for pronghorn, i.e. constant adult survival, time-varying reproduction and juvenile survival. Based on visual comparison of the available effort variables, days per harvest was selected as the variable most predictably related to annual harvest. Trends in harvest from 2000 onward were included in the Integrated Population Model (IPM). With these settings the observed data for the IPM included 26 years of harvest and ratio data along with abundance estimates from LT surveys in 2000, 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2018 and 2022. IPM convergence was good. Fawn and buck ratio estimates produced by the IPM aligned well with recorded data for this herd. IPM abundance estimates also aligned well with the results obtained from the most recent LT (Table 1). The post-hunting season abundance estimate agrees with the perceptions of managers and stakeholders that this herd is recovering after winter 2022-23.

Table 1. Line transect estimate for the Elk Mountain Pronghorn Herd, end of biological year 2022.

	2022
LT Result	5,200 (CL 2,800-7,200)
IPM Estimate	4,400 (CL 4,000-4,900)

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Pronghorn

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

HERD: PR529 - BIG CREEK

HUNT AREAS: 51

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	1,016	1,200	1,100
Harvest:	123	89	120
Hunters:	141	107	140
Hunter Success:	87%	83%	86 %
Active Licenses:	160	115	150
Active License Success:	77%	77%	80 %
Recreation Days:	504	564	600
Days Per Animal:	4.1	6.3	5
Males per 100 Females	65	69	
Juveniles per 100 Females	57	59	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 800 (640 - 960)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 50%

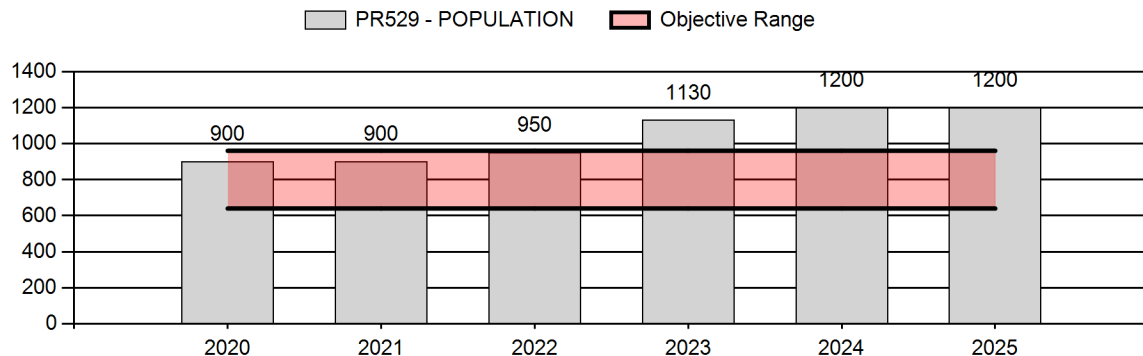
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 2

Model Date: 2/16/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	10%	6%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	17%	23%
Proposed change in post-season population:	+7%	-5%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Preseason Classification Summary

for Pronghorn Herd PR529 - BIG CREEK

Year	Pre 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	38	185	223	36%	245	39%	153	25%	621	587	16	76	91	± 9	62	± 7	33
2021	0	11	155	166	26%	287	44%	197	30%	650	640	4	54	58	± 5	69	± 6	43
2022	0	58	159	217	28%	346	44%	223	28%	786	536	17	46	63	± 5	64	± 5	40
2023	1,285	37	190	227	31%	381	52%	131	18%	739	766	10	50	60	± 5	34	± 4	22
2024	1,400	46	157	203	27%	339	46%	200	27%	742	586	14	46	60	± 6	59	± 6	37
2025	1,300	67	140	207	30%	301	44%	179	26%	687	760	22	47	69	± 7	59	± 6	35

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Big Creek Pronghorn (PR529)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
51	1	Aug. 15	Sep. 15	Sep. 16	Nov. 14	125	Any antelope
51	6	Aug. 15	Sep. 15	Sep. 16	Nov. 14	50	Doe or fawn

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 78% Satisfied, 12% Neutral, 10% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2025 pre-hunting season buck-to-doe ratio (69/100) was higher than the preceding five-year average (66/100) and exceeded the recreational management objective parameters of 30-59/100. The yearling buck-to-doe ratio (22/100) was the highest observed since 2022 and indicated good overwinter fawn survival in 2024-2025. The fawn-to-doe ratio (59/100) was the same as 2024, and was slightly higher than the five-year average of 58/100. Improved range conditions in summer 2023, followed by mild winters, contributed to the observed improvement in pronghorn recruitment, productivity, and abundance.

The 2025 harvest metrics for Type 1 licenses (79% hunter success, 5.5 days to harvest, and reduced hunter satisfaction) indicated pronghorn hunting was more challenging in 2025 compared to the previous five years. Pronghorn can be difficult to access in this herd unit as they often congregate on private land during the hunting season, which agreed with observations during 2025 pre-hunting season classifications. The 2025 Type 6 hunter success (71%) improved slightly from 2024 and was above the five-year average of 67%. License quotas were increased in 2026 due to the expectation of poor range conditions and a projected year-round increase in pronghorn congregating on private lands.

The increased Type 1 license quota is projected to increase the harvest rate of adult bucks to approximately 23% and will meet the management goal of 20-30% male harvest for recreational management herds. The 2026 license allocation is expected to maintain pronghorn numbers slightly above the 800 pronghorn (640-960) objective range.

Management Objective Review

The management objective for Big Creek pronghorn is a post-hunting season population objective of 800 pronghorn ($\pm 20\%$). The objective was last reviewed in 2024 and will be reviewed again in 2029.

Weather/Habitat

Precipitation was below normal for the 2025 biological year. The NOAA weather station data from Rawlins reported a 5.3% decrease in average annual precipitation. Early spring precipitation occurred in April and May but diminished by early June. Higher than normal precipitation occurred in September and October. Winter conditions remained mild with minimal snow accumulation at lower elevations. Snowpack at higher elevations was below normal during the 2024-2025 winter.

In 2025, the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) continued its large-scale cheatgrass treatments with 5,170 acres aerially treated with Indaziflam in the Prospect area (border of Hunt Area 50 and 51) and 4,940 acres in the Encampment River/Blackhall area south of Encampment. Carbon County Weed and Pest, the BLM, and the WGFD plan to continue treating acres south/southwest of Encampment in 2026.

Line Transect (LT) Survey

An LT survey was conducted to estimate pronghorn abundance at the end of biological year 2023. The end of the biological year population estimate was 1,000 pronghorn (95% CI 900 - 1,200).

Population Modeling

The 2025 post-hunting season population estimate for this herd unit from the PopR Integrated Population Model (IPM) was 1,200 pronghorn (1,000-1,300). Managers chose to model this herd using the default structure for pronghorn, i.e. constant adult survival, time-varying reproduction and juvenile survival. Based on visual comparison of the available effort variables, recreation days was selected as the variable most predictably related to annual harvest. Trends in harvest from 2000 onward were included in the Integrated Population Model (IPM). With these settings the observed data for the IPM included 26 years of harvest and ratio data along with abundance estimates from LT surveys in 2004, 2007, 2010, 2012, 2018 and 2023. IPM convergence was excellent, Rhat values were below 1.1, fawn and buck ratio estimates produced by the IPM aligned well with recorded data for this herd. IPM abundance estimates also aligned well with the results obtained from the most recent LT survey (Table 1). The post-hunting season abundance estimate agrees with the perceptions of managers and stakeholders that this herd is increasing after winter 2022-23.

Table 1. Line transect estimate for the Big Creek Pronghorn Herd, end of biological year 2023.

	2023
LT Result	1,000 (CL 900-1,200)
IPM Estimate	1,000 (CL 900-1,100)

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

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

HERD: MD534 - GOSHEN RIM

HUNT AREAS: 15

PREPARED BY: MARINA
MCCAMPBELL

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	6,260	6,400	7,300
Harvest:	676	737	700
Hunters:	1,496	1,438	1,440
Hunter Success:	45%	51%	49%
Active Licenses:	1,568	1,489	1,450
Active License Success:	43%	49%	48%
Recreation Days:	6,747	5,835	5,850
Days Per Animal:	10.0	7.9	8.4
Males per 100 Females	30	32	
Juveniles per 100 Females	51	68	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 20000 (16000 - 24000)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -68%

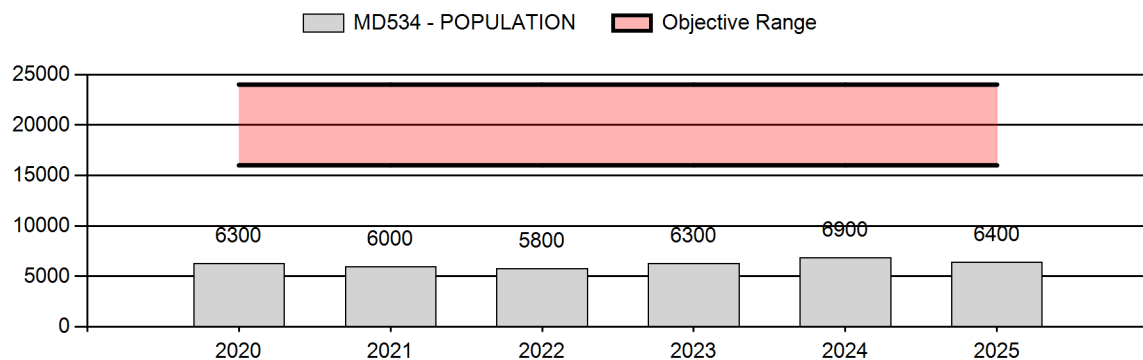
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 14

Model Date: 2/12/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	3%	2%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	32%	33%
Proposed change in post-season population:	3%	14%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Mule Deer Herd MD534 - GOSHEN RIM

		MALES								FEMALES		JUVENILES				Males to 100 Females				Young to		
Year	Post Pop	Ylg	2+ CIs 1	2+ CIs 2	2+ CIs 3	2+ UnCIs	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total CIs	CIs Obj	Yling	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult	
2020	6,300	82	96	37	3	0	218	15%	837	59%	356	25%	1,411	806	10	16	26	± 2	43	± 3	34	
2021	6,000	62	75	30	0	0	167	16%	621	60%	250	24%	1,038	0	10	17	27	± 3	40	± 4	32	
2022	5,800	35	45	26	0	0	106	17%	353	57%	158	26%	617	0	10	20	30	± 4	45	± 5	34	
2023	6,300	79	93	44	2	0	218	16%	736	53%	441	32%	1,395	0	11	19	30	± 3	60	± 4	46	
2024	6,900	94	104	47	7	0	252	18%	696	50%	455	32%	1,403	0	14	23	36	± 3	65	± 5	48	
2025	6,400	65	69	28	2	0	164	16%	509	50%	348	34%	1,021	0	13	19	32	± 3	68	± 6	52	

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Goshen Rim Mule Deer Herd Unit (MD534)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
15	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 20	Oct. 31		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
15	7	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	150	Doe or fawn valid on private land

2026 Region T nonresident quota: 400 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 61% Satisfied, 23% Neutral, 16% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The Goshen Rim mule deer herd is recreationally managed with a prescribed buck ratio of 20-29:100 does (Appendix A). The 2025 buck:doe ratio is 32:100 and the fawn ratio is 68:100 does (Appendix A). The five-year average buck ratio from 2020-2024 was 30:100 does (Appendix A). Comparatively, the five-year average fawn ratio was 51:100 does from 2020-2024 (Appendix A). Prior to 2023, fawn recruitment was poor (2018-2022 average fawn ratio = 45:100 does; Appendix A). Mild winters and abundant spring precipitation likely contributed to two years of higher fawn recruitment from 2024-2025. The 2025 yearling buck ratio was 13:100 does compared to an average of 11:100 does for 2020-2024 (Appendix A). Recruitment into the population overall has increased for two consecutive years from 2024-2025. However, this is the fifteenth year the herd has been below the objective of 20,000 mule deer. The 2025 postseason population estimate is 6,400 (CI 5,600-7,500) mule deer. To continue aligning the season with public input regarding agriculture practices, weather conditions, and desire to reduce harvest on mature age class mule deer, the season dates and license structure did not change for 2026. Irrigated and non-irrigated croplands are heavily selected for by mule deer in September and October for cover and shade, thereby decreasing hunting opportunity. The later season hunt for 2025 increased hunter success from 41% and 39% in 2024 and 2023, respectively, to 48% in 2025. Despite a shorter season, male adult harvest increased from 548 in 2024 to 651 in 2025. The increased recruitment and buck ratios that exceed management guidelines support this level of male harvest. However, the public expressed concern for mature buck availability. Managers will continue to assess the impacts of the shorter General season on the mature buck population once two full seasons of the current harvest structure occur. Given the population is currently 68% below objective, the Type 6 license remained at 150 licenses total to provide an option to address any damage concerns on private land only from October 1 through December 31. Hunter success in 2025 for the Type 6 license remained high at 68%. The number of Type 6 licenses will be assessed again in 2027 since the current drought conditions may exacerbate damage as deer

occupy farmed and irrigated lands. Based on 51 male mule deer aged via cementum annuli analysis in Hunt Area 15, average age was 4.5 years, with a range of 2.5 to 7.5 years of age.

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) continues to present challenges for herd health in Goshen Rim. CWD prevalence in harvested male mule deer was 33% (27 positive out of 82 tested; Table 1) in 2025. CWD testing will continue in 2026 to assess three and will be mandatory in Hunt Area 15 to meet the objective of 200 samples in three or less years to assess prevalence. Additionally, drought and invasive plant species continue to degrade habitat conditions throughout the unit. While current buck and fawn ratios are favorable for population growth, managers will continue to consider habitat conditions, disease, predation, harvest, and other factors that influence the population and potentially inform updated herd objectives in future.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Goshen Rim mule deer herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2023, and will not be reviewed again until 2028.

Weather and Habitat Data

Annual precipitation was highly variable in the Goshen Rim herd unit in 2025. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather station data from several towns within the herd unit including Torrington, Cheyenne, and Fort Laramie, showed a 37% decrease, 4% increase, and 1% increase respectively from average for the year. Favorable moisture and timing of precipitation was witnessed in the northern portions of the herd unit. Further south, spring moisture levels were near or below normal. The eastern half of this herd unit was much drier, as documented at the Torrington NOAA site. Due to the juxtaposition of annual and perennial agricultural croplands intermixed with rangeland habitats, mule deer utilize annual row crops and perennial crops like alfalfa in addition to native rangeland forage to meet their nutritional demands throughout the year. Mixed mountain shrub habitats found on the Goshen Rim remain in late seral stages due to a lack of managed disturbance on the landscape. Annual shrub production and shrub nutritive content are both compromised as plants mature. Cheatgrass remains a large threat in the understory of shrub communities and also in cropland environments. Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) enrolled lands continue their downward spiral and provide very little in the form of hiding, fawning, and thermal cover and exhibit equally poor forage production and nutritive quality for much of the year. Juniper encroachment into riparian areas and upland areas, including Ponderosa pine forests in the northern portion of the herd unit, and mixed mountain shrub habitats throughout the entire herd unit, have resulted in more xeric conditions and a reduction of understory herbaceous forages in portions of this herd unit.

Two large wildfires occurred in the herd unit in 2024, the Goshen Rim Wildfire and Pleasant Valley Wildfire, totaling 5,580 acres and 28,984 acres respectively. Cheatgrass invasion was witnessed in Summer 2025 within the burn scars. Numerous permanent vegetation transects and photo points were established in these areas. Mixed mountain shrub regeneration post-fire appears to be poor, as is often witnessed with summer, high intensity fires. Juniper encroachment and cheatgrass infestations in areas helped to fuel these wildfires. Landowner interest in controlling cheatgrass post-wildfire has been excellent and participation levels have been high. The majority of burned acres were treated with a combination of imazapic (3 oz/acre) and Indaziflam (5 oz/acre) through fixed wing or helicopter applications in Fall 2025. Vegetation

transects within treated areas will be revisited in 2026 to continue to monitor herbicide efficacy and perennial plant responses.

Chronic Wasting Disease Management

The Goshen Rim mule deer herd was last prioritized for CWD sampling in 2020 and 2025. Samples collected in 2024 totaled 22 versus 82 collected in 2025 with priority surveillance sampling efforts. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). Annual sample sizes are low and prevalence estimates for each individual year have wide confidence intervals and should be interpreted with caution. The five-year (2021-2025) average prevalence estimate of 35% is a stronger representative of herd unit prevalence since it has a sample size of 191 samples. The herd will be prioritized for mandatory or priority sampling in 2026 to accrue >200 samples in less than three years to ensure robust estimates in prevalence. Male mule deer are more likely to contract and spread CWD due to their behavior during the rut. Considering prevalence has remained above 20% in adult males for more than five consecutive years, CWD is likely suppressing adult male survival. As seasons are made more conservative and less adult males are harvested, managers will closely monitor prevalence response. Managers are concerned with this high prevalence in the herd unit. However, there is public opposition for implementation of CWD management strategies and thus managers will continue to monitor prevalence and engage in education of CWD management strategies.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in the Goshen Rim Mule Deer Herd, 2021 - 2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	54% (n=28)	0% (5)	0% (1)	5.4
2022	31%(n=36)	0% (1)	0% (6)	7.2
2023	35% (n=23)	0% (1)	25% (4)	4.7
2024	36% (n=22)	0% (4)	25% (4)	4.0
2025	33% (n=82)	0% (4)	0% (7)	12.6
2021-2025	36% (21-43%, n=191)	0% (15)	9% (22)	7.1

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit was 6,400 (CL = 5,600-7,500) mule deer based on the integrated population model (IPM). The model was run using a random effect structure with reproduction and juvenile survival varying by time and adult survival constant. Large sample sizes for classification data are obtained from annual ground surveys versus aerial surveys due to the abundance of public and private access roads in the unit. However, ground survey effort varies each year and can influence the overall trends in sex and age ratios and do not provide robust estimates of population abundance. Although age ratios show variability through time, the lack of robust population survey data to inform abundance translates to less data for the model to analyze and thus a time-varying effect for juvenile survival was selected. Analysis years included 2010-2027 to truncate data from earlier

timeframes that showed high variability year-to-year for age ratios. Days per harvest was set as the effort variable since the hunt unit is a General area and the number of licenses are difficult to quantify through time. Confidence intervals for the population estimates are wide due to lack of population survey estimates to include in the IPM. The model converged well based on the convergence diagnostic test and confidence intervals included 2023 and 2024 postseason population estimates.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

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

HERD: MD537 - LARAMIE MOUNTAINS

HUNT AREAS: 59-60, 64

PREPARED BY: MARINA
MCCAMPBELL

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	8,940	9,900	9,000
Harvest:	815	906	875
Hunters:	1,808	1,740	1,770
Hunter Success:	45%	52%	49%
Active Licenses:	1,857	1,783	1,800
Active License Success:	44%	51%	49%
Recreation Days:	8,810	8,273	8,200
Days Per Animal:	10.8	9.1	9.4
Males per 100 Females	30	52	
Juveniles per 100 Females	56	79	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) :

20000 (16000 - 24000)

Management Strategy:

Recreational

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

-50.5%

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

9

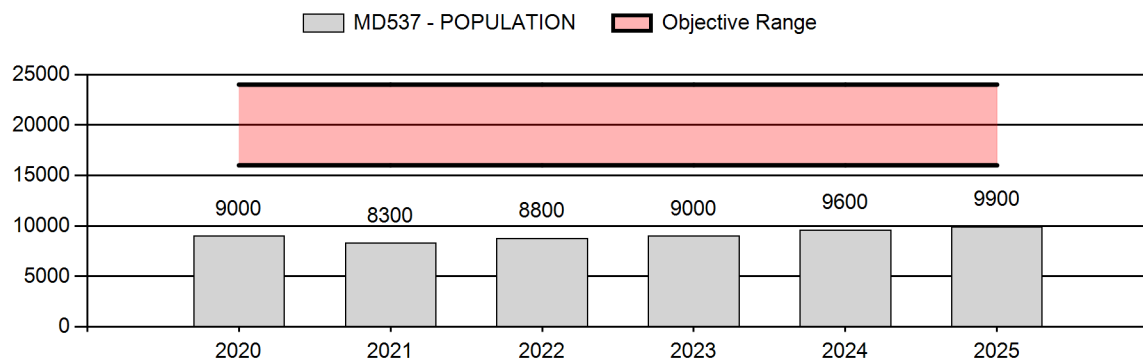
Model Date:

2/27/2026

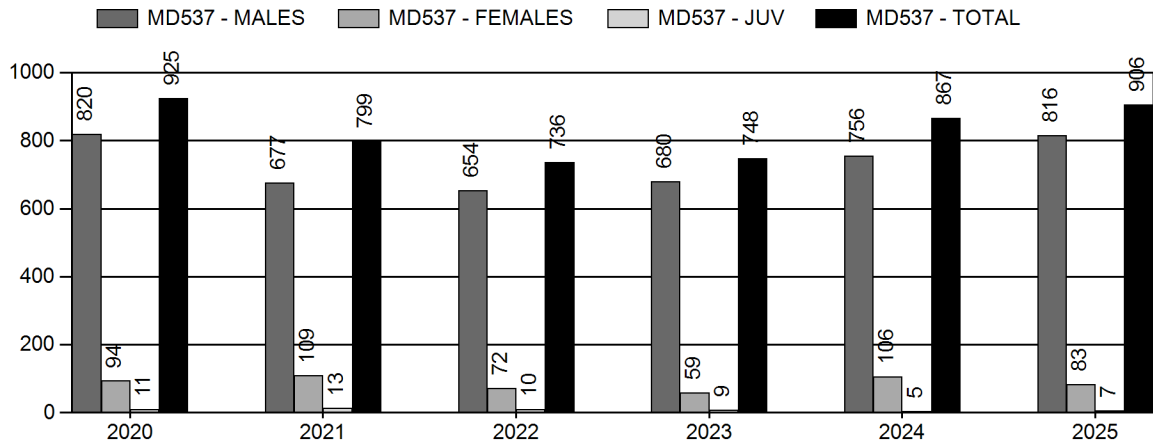
Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	2%	1%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	32%	27%
Proposed change in post-season population:	4%	11%

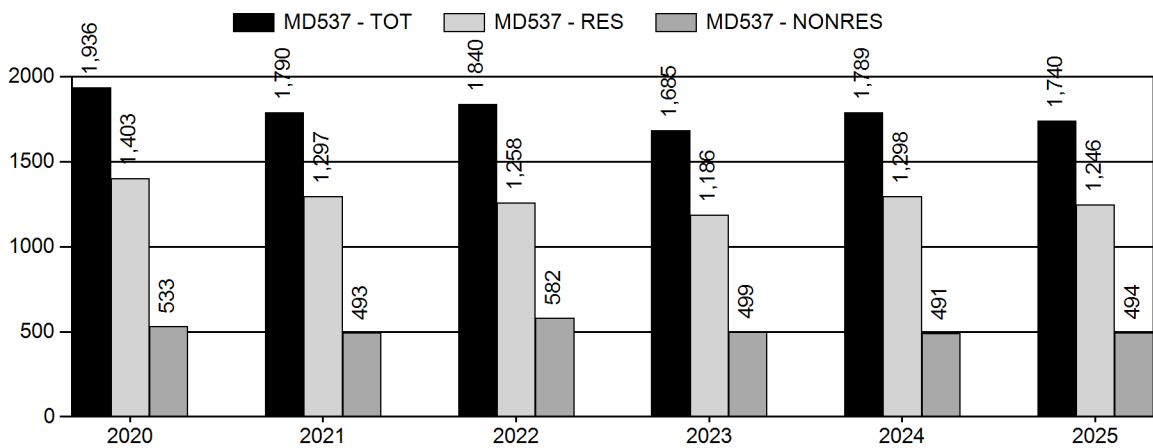
Population Size - Postseason



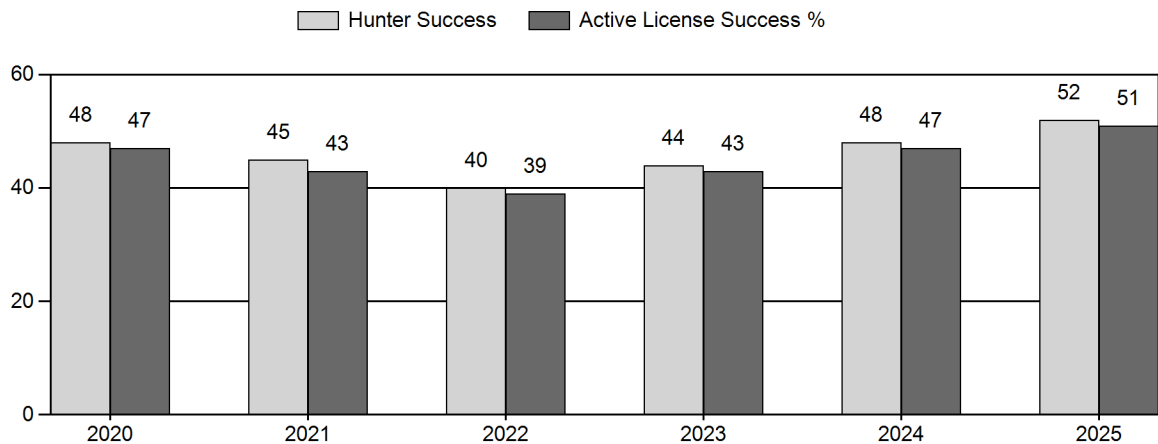
Harvest



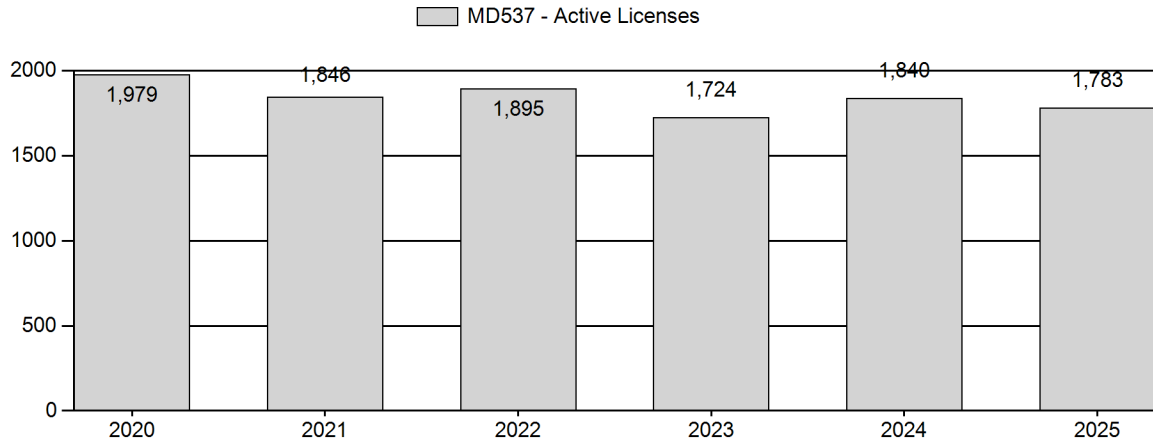
Number of Hunters



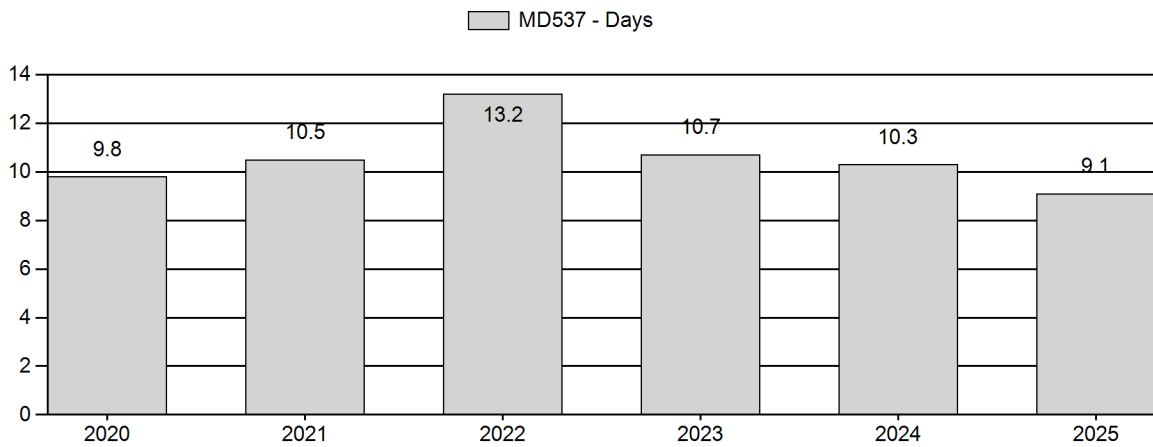
Harvest Success



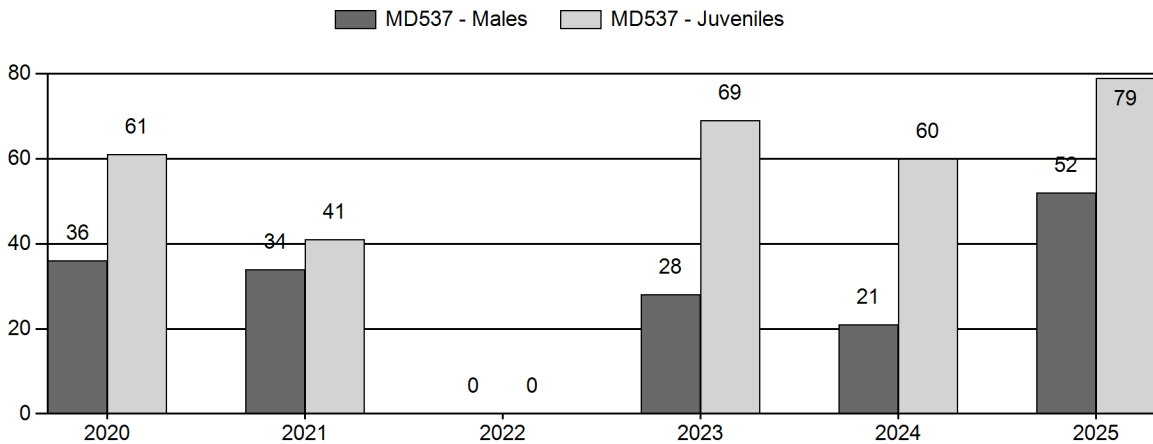
Active Licenses



Days per Animal Harvested



Postseason Animals per 100 Females



2026 Hunting Seasons
Laramie Mountains Mule Deer Herd Unit (MD537)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
59	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 20	Oct. 31		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
59, 64	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 20	Oct. 31	100	Doe or fawn valid on private land
60	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	100	Any deer
60	2	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	200	Any deer off national forest
60	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 30	50	Doe or fawn
64	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30				Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer valid in the entire area
64	Gen			Oct. 20	Oct. 31		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer except the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission's Tom Thorne/Beth Williams Wildlife Habitat Management Area and the Laramie Peak Wildlife Habitat Management Area north of the Tunnel Road (Albany County Road 727) shall be closed
64	2	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 20	Oct. 31	100	Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer

2026 Region J nonresident quota: 750 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 60% Satisfied, 22% Neutral, 18% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The Laramie Mountains mule deer herd is a recreationally managed herd with a prescribed postseason buck ratio of 20-29:100 does (Appendix A). The 2025 buck ratio was 52:100 does compared to a 21 and 28 bucks per 100 does in 2023 and 2024, respectively (Appendix A). The 2025 fawn ratio is 79:100 compared to 69:100 does in 2023 and 60:100 does in 2024 (Appendix A). The 2025 fawn and buck ratios should be interpreted with caution. During composition/abundance survey flights, the warm temperatures and lack of snow meant doe and buck groups were highly dispersed and not on traditional winter range. It is likely that the randomized polygons we flew to collect composition and abundance data were missing deer that would normally be present given the conditions. For example, we detected 163 does in 2025 compared to 326 in 2024. While numbers are likely inflated for buck and fawn ratios, the classification data suggests the population is experiencing recruitment given the 2025 buck ratio was above the recreational management strategy objective and had a three year average of 28:100 does (2021, 2023-2024 data; Appendix A). The three-year average fawn ratio was 57:100 does (2021, 2023-2024 data; Appendix A). In addition, yearling buck ratios were 23:100 does in 2025 and 10:100 does in 2024 (Appendix A). However, the herd unit continues to fall short of the population objective of 20,000 mule deer. The current postseason population estimate is 9,900 (CI=8,700-10,900) mule deer. The public also voiced concern about the decline in numbers and mature bucks. Due to a decade of written feedback during past season-setting comment periods, the 2025 General, Type 6, and Type 2 seasons were shortened by five days to address public concerns with mature buck quality. Hunter success in 2025 with the General licenses was 43% in hunt area 64 and 50% in hunt area 59. Comparatively, hunter success was 35% in hunt area 64 and 52% in hunt area 59 in 2024 with the General license. Current public feedback was mixed based on comments and hunter satisfaction remained steady at 60%. Access constraints, crowding, and lack of mature bucks and deer were consistently reported. The total number of harvested mule deer bucks from the Laramie Mountains herd in 2025 was 816 compared to 756 in 2024. The trend of higher buck ratios and fawn recruitment suggests the current level of harvest is sustainable. However, with current habitat conditions from drought and impacts from chronic wasting disease (CWD), managers will continue to monitor the current season structure as it relates to population dynamics. For 2026, the season structure and dates remained the same given historical public feedback supporting the current structure, the uncertainty with how the warm and dry season in 2025 affected mule deer, and trends that will be better reflected after multiple years. Type 6 licenses are available for private land only in hunt areas 59 and 64 to minimize doe harvest on public lands and provide landowners with a tool to address damage situations. Hunt area 60 allows for additional female harvest with a later season closing date which could mitigate CWD spread after the rut. Hunt area 60 continues to have the lowest CWD prevalence (five-year prevalence is 7.7%, n=104). Comparatively, five-year CWD prevalence was 36% (n=191) in hunt area 15 to the east, 22% (n=296) in hunt area 59 to the north, 20% (n=332) in hunt area 64 to the north, and 10.8% (n=37) in hunt area 61 to the south. Moreover, it is likely that consistent doe and later season mature buck harvest in hunt area 60 is contributing to lower CWD prevalence. Based on cementum annuli analysis of 84 tooth samples from harvested male mule deer in the Laramie Mountains herd unit, average age was 4.9 years old.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Laramie Mountains mule deer herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Weather and Habitat

Annual precipitation in the herd unit was slightly above normal based on weather data analyzed from Cheyenne, Laramie, and Douglas weather stations. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather station data showed a 4%, 7%, and 34% increase from average for the year. Winter and early Spring precipitation was lacking in this herd unit, with little snow. Abnormally high September moisture helped contribute to annual precipitation totals, and resulted in some green up of forages. Big game animals likely headed into winter in good body condition due to availability of green regrowth. With a lack of persistent snows, numerous streams and springs/seeps dried up in 2025, including portions of Sybille Creek and Chugwater Creek, which has not been witnessed in decades. Generally, undisturbed shrub communities throughout the Laramie Range remain mostly in late seral successional stages, with decreased shrub productivity and nutritive content compared to more early seral shrub communities associated with some recent disturbances. Large wildfire scars throughout the Laramie Range, in many places, have not seen mixed mountain shrub recovery due to the timing and severity of the past disturbances. Antelope bitterbrush and sagebrush species have been hit particularly hard by summer wildfires, and historic mixed mountain shrub communities have been significantly altered for the foreseeable future. Aspen response in burned areas has been very good, and provides important fawning and fawn rearing habitats for mule deer. Competition with elk is likely seen in limited aspen habitats, particularly during parturition periods.

Dalmation toadflax and cheatgrass are both present in mixed mountain shrub habitats in the southern portions of the herd unit, south of Hwy 34, causing concern for habitat managers, as herbicides traditionally used for Dalmation toadflax control have resulted in significant non-targeted plant injury. The use of Rejuvra herbicide may aid in control of cheatgrass and Dalmation toadflax in the future, and result in less non-targeted plant injury. Aerial application of herbicides on 900 acres is planned in the Richeau Hills in early 2026 to treat cheatgrass and Dalmation toadflax, in areas burned through prescribed fire over a decade ago.

A 1,500 acre wildfire occurred in the Bear Creek drainage, south of Sybille Canyon in late summer 2024. Those acres were aerially treated with Indaziflam in September 2025 to control anticipated and known cheatgrass infestations. An additional 2,100 acres burned in the eastern flanks of the Richeau Hills outside of Chugwater in September 2024. This fire affected true mountain mahogany shrub stands and grasslands, but has not resulted in cheatgrass invasion to date, and native, perennial vegetation recovery was favorable. No treatment was deemed necessary here.

Fence conversion efforts from woven wire/barbed wire, or 5 and 6 strand barbed wire continue in the Laramie Mountains herd unit. On sites including the Mule Creek PAA, Thorne Williams WHMA, and Laramie Peak WHMA, efforts are ongoing to convert to wildlife friendly line spacings and overall wire heights. Conversion to wildlife friendly fence standards remains a high priority for the Laramie Region on Commission owned lands.

Competition with elk for basic habitat requirements may have negative impacts on mule deer performance within the herd unit. Within deer hunt areas 59 and 60 we continue to see elk herd growth, putting strains on habitats historically and previously occupied largely by mule deer. Dietary overlap in spring, summer, and fall ranges between elk, mule deer, and cattle can, and likely do result in increased competition for resources, particularly in drought years.

Exploration for rare earth minerals in the Laramie Range is on-going, with one mine site working its way through permitting processes now in Halleck Canyon. Mining activity may result in permanent loss of habitat and increased disturbances due to increased human activity, and may be detrimental to mule deer, particularly on crucial winter ranges.

Chronic Wasting Disease Management

The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). The Laramie Mountains mule deer herd was last prioritized for CWD sampling in 2022 in which mandatory sampling was implemented and 390 samples were collected. Mandatory sampling helped increase sample sizes from areas with historically low levels of CWD samples. Specifically, Hunt Area 60 has limited licenses available, so managers have struggled to obtain sufficient sample sizes. The average annual sample size from 1997-2021 in hunt area 60 was 13 samples; in 2022, 67 samples were collected, which is an 81% increase in sample size. Mandatory sampling also enabled managers to collect female samples, which in the past was difficult to accomplish. The average annual sample size from 1998-2021 in the herd unit was 5 female samples, in 2022, 60 female samples were collected throughout the herd unit. This sample size of 60 allowed for managers to obtain a more confident CWD prevalence rate within the female portion of the population (Table 1). This provides a better understanding of how CWD impacts the reproductive portion of the population. In comparison, 93 samples were collected for the Laramie Mountains mule deer herd in 2025.

A local CWD Working Group, comprised of 11 members of the public from the local area, was created in July of 2022. This Local CWD Working Group aimed to formulate CWD management recommendations from the Department's CWD Management Plan. Over the course of 12 months and six meetings, the group reviewed the Department's CWD management plan and what CWD management actions within that plan would be applicable and locally acceptable for implementation within the Laramie Mountains mule deer herd unit.

Below is a summary of the CWD management options within the Department's CWD Management Plan and the Local CWD Working Group's recommendations on those options:

1. Reduce artificial sources of concentration – YES (unanimous)
 1. Reduce concentrations of deer (i.e. exclusion fencing, exclusion from salt/mineral sources, etc.)
2. Hunter Harvest Management
 1. Increase mature male harvest – YES (8 in favor, 3 opposed)
 2. Decrease deer densities in localized areas (“hot spots”) of high prevalence – NO (unanimous)
3. Regulatory and Agency Actions – YES (unanimous)
 1. Regulations on carcass disposal, carcass transport, feeding, etc.
 2. Education, outreach, and research on CWD

3. Inter-agency (State, Federal, Tribal and International) communication on CWD management
4. Mandatory CWD Sampling

In July 2023, managers presented the above recommendations to the WGFD Commission to seek approval to begin implementation of these recommendations. After public comment and deliberation by the Commission, it was decided that there was not enough broad public support to implement harvest management. There was strong public and Commission opposition to a late season to increase mature male harvest to stabilize or reduce CWD prevalence within the herd unit. Managers will begin to implement the other approved management options that were recommended by the working group. In 2024 and 2025, a carcass dumpster was available in Wheatland for carcass disposal throughout the month of October and WGFD will continue to provide a dumpster in the future.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in the Laramie Mountains Mule Deer Herd, 2021-2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	19% (n=83)	0% (6)	25% (4)	12.3
2022	19% (n=390)	8% (37)	3% (60)	59.6
2023	19% (n=88)	0% (7)	0% (10)	12.9
2024	23% (n=78)	0% (4)	8% (12)	10.3
2025	15% (n=93)	0% (7)	0% (7)	11.4
2021-2025	19% (14-22%, n=732)	7% (60)	5% (95)	20.4

Population Modeling

The 2025 postseason population estimate for this herd unit from the integrated population model (IPM) was approximately 9,900 (CI 8,700-10,900) mule deer. The model included a random effect structure with reproduction and juvenile survival varying by time and adult survival constant. While there is some variation in sex and age ratios, the lack of robust abundance data prior to 2022 warranted using a random effects structure to accommodate the available data. The model converged well and the population estimate is within the confidence interval of the 2024 postseason population estimate (9,600 (CI =8,300-11,200) mule deer). The 2022 sightability survey population estimate was 11,800 (CI=6,313-11,757) mule deer and it is possible the current population is closer to this point estimate given robust recruitment. The 2025 model produced an estimated buck ratio of 41:100 does compared to the observed buck ratio of 52:100 does. It is likely that this is closer to what the population is experiencing for buck:doe ratios since the warm and dry weather conditions may have impacted mule deer detections during the composition/abundance flights in 2025.

Additional Management Data

In 2022, the Department began a five-year statewide focal mule deer monitoring research project. Five mule deer herds throughout the state were selected for a robust GPS collaring effort. This includes the following herd units: Laramie Mountains, Sweetwater, Wyoming Range, Upper Shoshone, and North Bighorns. Each herd represents different habitat characteristics, seasonal dynamics, predator communities, disease dynamics, and other aspects that help managers collect realistic and meaningful data across Wyoming. This data will help inform management for all 37 herds that WGFD currently recognizes and manages. The goal of the project is to better understand survival, movement, seasonal ranges, and impacts of disease, predation, and habitat conditions overall on mule deer. In each of the five selected herds, 80 does, 30 bucks, and 100 juveniles (6 month olds) are collared with GPS collars. The doe and buck sample sizes will be maintained throughout the five years and 100 juveniles will be collared each year of the project. Juvenile collars release by June 1 each year to ensure animal welfare standards are maintained and that data is collected in a timely manner before shorter battery life on these smaller collars cause issues.

The Laramie Mountains herd unit is one of two herds that has a cause-specific mortality component, which will provide a clearer picture of what each cohort is susceptible to. In the event of a collar mortality notification, WGFD personnel respond in a timely manner to investigate and determine the cause of death. A summary of preliminary causes of mortality was not available at the time of publication for this Job Completion Report and a thorough summary of the data will be available in future reports.

Mild winter conditions for the past couple of years likely facilitated greater survival for mule deer in the Laramie Mountains compared to survival during winter 2022-2023. The response of mule deer bucks, does, and fawns to reduced winter conditions included high survival for 2025 (Appendix B). Overwinter survival for fawns (Jan 1 to May 31) was 81% for 2025, compared to 92% and 68% in 2024 and 2023, respectively (Appendix C). For does and bucks, survival was 81% and 63%, respectively, in 2025 (Appendix B). Comparatively, doe survival in 2023 was 77% and 86% in 2024 (Appendix D). Please note that this herd unit is large and this data provides a general picture of dynamics that may not be representative of the entire area. Further analysis in future will help determine additional survival details.

Appendix A. Laramie Mountains Mule Deer Herd (MD537) Postseason Classification Summary, 2020-2025

2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary																					
for Mule Deer Herd MD537 - LARAMIE MOUNTAINS																					
Year	Post Pop	MALES							FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	CIs Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	2+ CIs 1	2+ CIs 2	2+ CIs 3	2+ UnCIs	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Yling	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	9,000	27	48	30	3	0	108	18%	302	51%	183	31%	593	955	9	27	36	± 5	61	± 7	45
2021	8,300	20	55	29	4	0	108	19%	321	57%	132	24%	561	0	6	27	34	± 5	41	± 5	31
2022	8,800	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2023	9,000	22	13	11	3	0	49	14%	173	51%	119	35%	341	0	13	16	28	± 6	69	± 10	54
2024	9,600	31	16	23	0	0	70	12%	326	55%	196	33%	592	0	10	12	21	± 4	60	± 7	49
2025	9,600	37	22	23	3	0	85	23%	163	43%	128	34%	376	0	23	29	52	± 9	79	± 12	52

Appendix B.

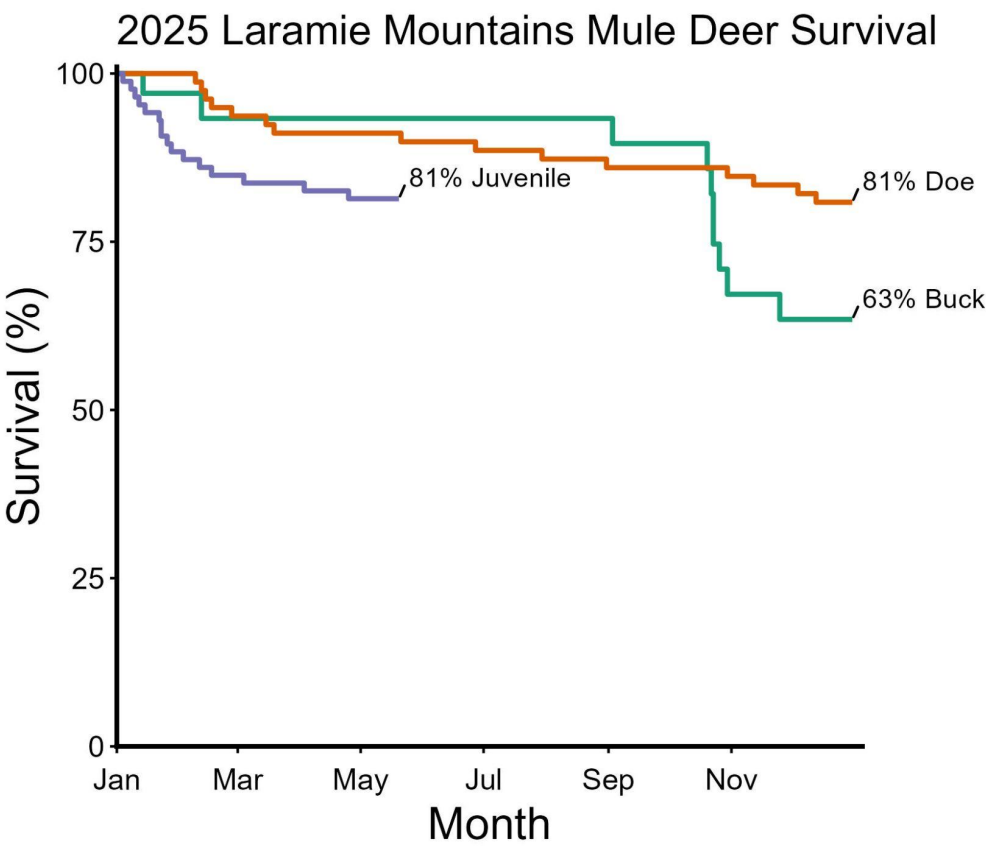


Image 1. 2025 Survival rates for Laramie Mountains mule deer bucks, does, and juveniles.

Appendix C.

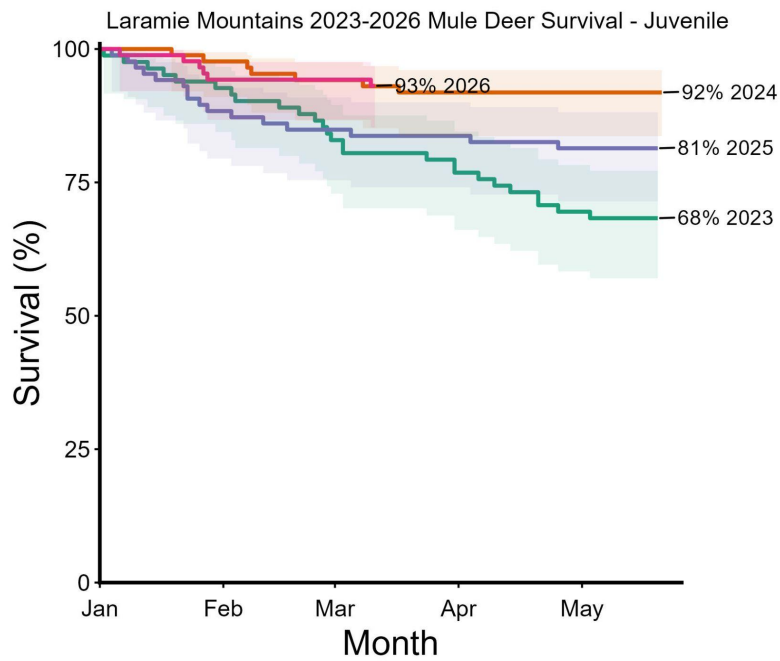


Image 2. Laramie Mountains mule deer juvenile survival rates, 2023-2026.

Appendix D.

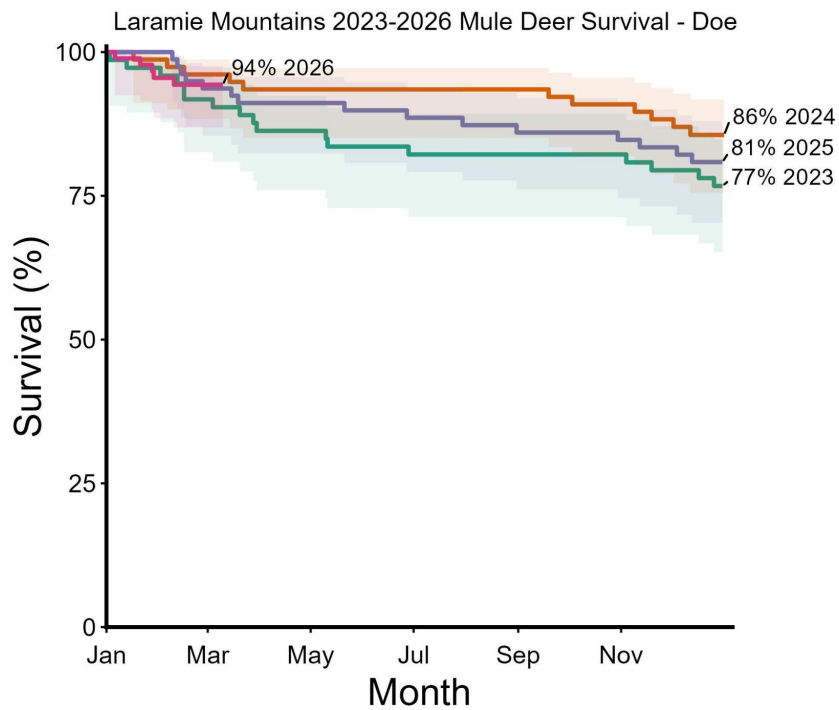


Image 3. Laramie Mountains mule deer doe survival rates, 2023-2026.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

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

HERD: MD539 - SHEEP MOUNTAIN

HUNT AREAS: 61, 74-77

PREPARED BY: KEATON
WEBER

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	4,010	4,200	4,900
Harvest:	375	501	450
Hunters:	1,525	1,832	1,600
Hunter Success:	25%	27%	28%
Active Licenses:	1,525	1,832	1,800
Active License Success:	25%	27%	25%
Recreation Days:	9,094	11,137	10,000
Days Per Animal:	24.3	22.2	22.2
Males per 100 Females	27	25	
Juveniles per 100 Females	62	63	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 10000 (8000 - 12000)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -58%

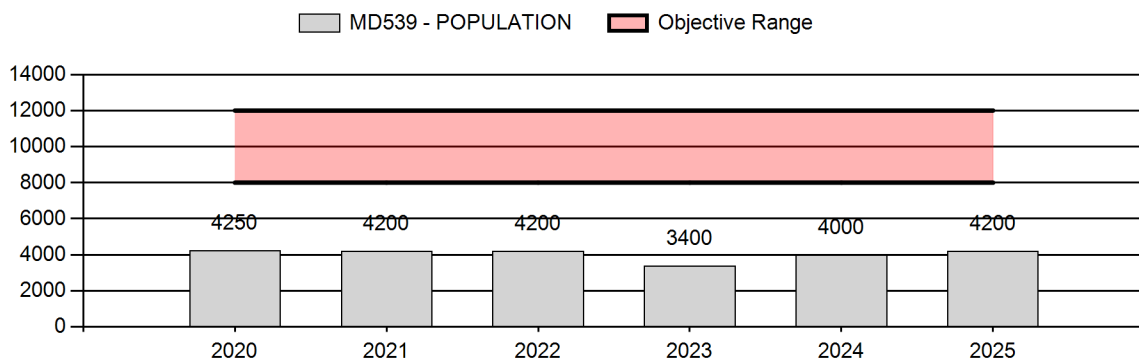
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 11

Model Date: 2/25/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	39%	33%
Proposed change in post-season population:	4%	19%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Mule Deer Herd MD539 - SHEEP MOUNTAIN

Year	Post Pop	MALES							FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs		CIs Obj		Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	2+ CIs 1	2+ CIs 2	2+ CIs 3	UnCIs	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%					Ylng	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	4,250	32	43	26	4	0	105	16%	333	50%	230	34%	668	923	10	22	32	± 4	69	± 7	53		
2021	4,200	36	27	27	7	0	97	15%	361	56%	192	30%	650	0	10	17	27	± 4	53	± 6	42		
2022	4,200	40	37	20	4	0	101	14%	379	54%	221	32%	701	0	11	16	27	± 3	58	± 6	46		
2023	3,400	28	30	24	3	0	85	17%	261	53%	142	29%	488	0	11	22	33	± 5	54	± 7	41		
2024	4,000	46	27	29	5	0	107	11%	513	52%	367	37%	987	0	9	12	21	± 2	72	± 5	59		
2025	4,200	14	4	7	3	0	28	13%	113	53%	71	33%	212	0	12	12	25	± 7	63	± 12	50		

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Sheep Mountain Mule Deer (MD539)**

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
61	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
74	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
75	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
76	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
77	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer

2026 Region D nonresident quota: 300 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 46% Satisfied, 33% Neutral, 21% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The management strategy is recreational management which prescribes for a buck ratio of 20-29:100 does. The Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Herd Unit remains below the postseason population objective of 10,000 ($\pm 20\%$ 8,000-12,000). The 2025 postseason population estimate was 4,200 (CI 3,800 - 4,600) mule deer, which is 58% below the objective. This is not a reflection of a significant loss of the population, but rather driven by the previous two sightability estimates in 2021 (3,300 deer CI = 2,400-4,200) and 2025 (3,300 deer CI = 1,900-4,600). An estimate of 4,000 mule deer is likely a more accurate population estimate than historically estimated.

The 2025 hunting season experienced cold weather and precipitation, providing better than average harvest throughout the herd unit. Hunters harvested 501 buck mule deer in 2025, the highest male harvest since 2008 and above the previous 3-years average of 370 bucks harvested. Hunter success was 27% in 2025, close to the previous 3-years average of 24%. Despite success being low, managers experienced above normal satisfaction while interacting with hunters in the field and at check stations due the favorable hunting conditions and cold temperatures during the season. The 2025 buck ratio was 25 bucks per 100 does, meeting recreational management guidelines of 20-29 bucks per 100 does. The 2025 fawn ratio was 63 fawns per 100 does, down from last years fawn ratio of 72 fawns per 100 does but close to the previous 3-year average of 61 fawns per 100 does (2022 - 2024). Due to extremely mild winter conditions, mule deer were

not concentrated on winter ranges during our classification flight in January. As a result, managers only classified 212 mule deer and ratios have very large confidence intervals. The neighboring herd to the West (Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd), experienced normal fawn ratios (73:100) in 2025, giving managers confidence that the Sheep Mountain herd likely did not experience any major changes in ratios despite the small amount of deer classified.

The 2025 season and nonresident region D quota will remain status quo to continue to provide two weeks of hunting opportunity, and to maintain buck ratios within recreational management guidelines.

Management Objective

This herd has been slated for an objective review in 2026. The Department will develop recommendations for a revised objective in May of 2026 in conjunction with a public review process. This proposed change will be presented to the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission at the September 2026 meeting.

CWD Management

The Sheep Mountain Mule Deer herd was prioritized for CWD sampling from 2019 to 2021. This effort resulted in 170 samples over 3 years and a prevalence estimate of 14.7%. Difficulty retrieving samples during this effort was due to the 2020 Mullen Wildfire that caused hunt areas to be closed. CWD prevalence levels in this herd unit continue to be at concerning levels where exponential increases in prevalence levels above 20% are likely. As a result, decreasing mature buck availability and population level impacts could occur. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1).

This herd unit is up again for priority CWD surveillance in 2026 where managers will strive for 200 adult male mule deer samples within two years. To aid in this effort, mandatory CWD sampling is planned for all hunt areas within the herd unit.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in the Sheep Mountain Mule Deer Herd, 2021-2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	16% (n=80)	0% (17)	0% (7)	18
2022	8% (n=39)	10% (10)	0% (3)	10
2023	19% (n=37)	0% (8)	3% (1)	11
2024	11% (n=27)	0% (8)	0% (3)	7
2025	5% (n=38)	0% (8)	0% (16)	8
2021-2025	13% (8-18%, n=221)	2% (51)	0% (16)	11

Population Modeling

The bio-year 2025 postseason population estimate from the PopR IPM was approximately 4,200 (CL = 3,800– 4,600) mule deer. Classification and harvest data was used from years 2000-2026 and a random structure was selected. Reproduction and Juvenile survival was time varying and adult survival was constant. The effort variable that best matched harvest was licenses. Model convergence was good.

Managers completed a sightability survey this year, resulting in a population estimate of 3,300 mule deer, slightly below the confidence intervals of the 2025 IPM model estimate (4,200 CL =3,800– 4,600). The previous sightability was flown in 2021 and also resulted in an estimate of 3,300 mule deer, indicating this population has been relatively stable and further fine-tuning our IPM model.

Habitat and Weather Summary

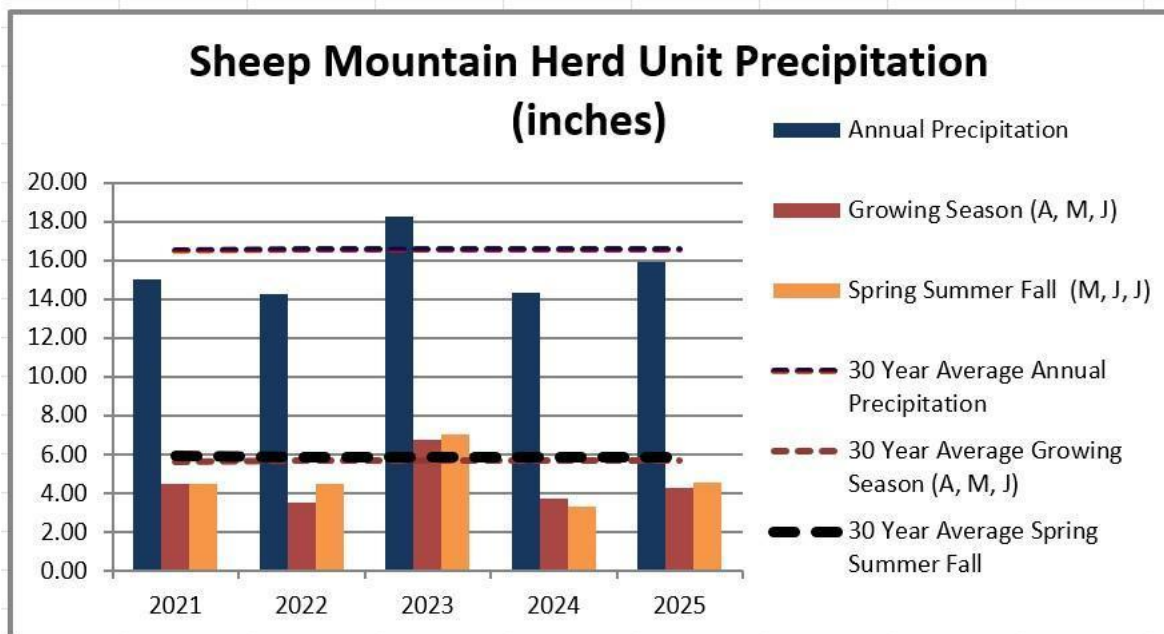


Figure 1. Derived Environmental Variability Indices Spatial Extractor (DEVISE) Models were utilized to estimate precipitation for the Sheep Mountain mule deer herd unit.

Precipitation received in water year 2025 was just slightly below long term 30-year averages. Within the 5 year review period of 2021 – 2025, annual precipitation exceeded the 30-year average in only one of those years.

Precipitation levels during the primary growing season for this herd unit were below normal. Precipitation in the May – July period in Spring, Summer, Fall ranges for mule deer, were also

below the 30 year averages. Precipitation falling in this time period is essential for growth at high elevations in the herd unit. The importance of lush, succulent and nutritious forage availability in summer fawn rearing habitats cannot be overstated. Mountain snowpack was below normal in the higher elevations, above 8,000'. The foothills and plains located adjacent to the Snowy Range experienced very dry conditions through winter months, but some spring moisture allowed for green-up in the spring. Throughout the herd unit, some monsoonal weather patterns developed and continued to bring rain to higher and lower elevations, particularly in the month of September. At Laramie area NOAA weather stations (representing the lower reaches of the herd unit), annual precipitation was slightly above long term averages. Green up of forage was witnessed after September rainstorms, likely aiding big game animals in putting on fat reserves prior to the rut and in preparation for winter.

USFS LaVA project proposals have been largely focused on the northern half of the Snowy Range for future treatments in the near term. Approximately 118 acres of USFS lands adjacent to the Wick WHMA were treated in Summer 2024 to remove encroaching conifers through mastication in the Foote Creek drainage. Excellent aspen regeneration was witnessed in 2025 in treated areas. An additional 280 acres are planned for mastication on the Wick WHMA in the Foote Creek drainage in 2026, adjacent to the 2024 treatment on USFS lands. Masticated acres are planned to be burned in 2028-2029 as a follow-up treatment to further encourage aspen regeneration and mixed mountain shrub resprouting. An additional 47 acres of mastication work in burned timber areas in the Badger Creek wildfire scar area, in crucial winter range areas, was completed in 2025 to encourage aspen and mixed mountain shrub regeneration, and set back lodgepole pine regeneration.

Habitats within the Mullen Wildfire (2020) scar continue to rebound. Aspen regeneration has been excellent, and a delayed but mostly positive response has been seen in mixed mountain shrubs communities. Cheatgrass control efforts continue to “hold” 3 years post-herbicide application and native, perennial plant response has been excellent. Some breaks in treatment have been identified, particularly adjacent to rock talus slopes, adjacent to buffers from the first application, and “misses/skips” from 2021 aerial applications. Late seral habitats in the northern half of the Snowy Range continue to dominate the landscape north of Hwy 130. Disturbance in the form of planned mechanical or prescribed fire habitat treatments or wildfire will likely be necessary to tip the scales in favor of mule deer in transition and summer ranges in this area.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

IPM Analysis Report

February 25, 2026

Model Definition

- **Species:** Mule Deer
- **DAU:** Sheep Mountain 539
- **Years:** 2000 - 2027
- **Effort Variable:** Licenses
- **Trend Count Used:** TRUE

Structure

- **Reproduction:** Constant
- **Juvenile Survival:** Time Varying
- **Adult Survival:** Constant

Model Fitting

- **MCMC Burnin:** 50,000
- **MCMC Iterations:** 40,500
- **Thinning Rate:** 1

Diagnostics

The Brooks, Gelman and Rubin convergence diagnostic (Rhat) is a test used to determine whether the analysis has found a reliable solution. Values < 1.1 generally suggest that the model was run for a sufficient number of iterations while values > 1.1 suggest that the model should be run for more iterations. The maximum values of the point estimate and upper CI are reported below.

- **Rhat Max of Point Est:** 1.05
- **Rhat Max of Upper CI:** 1.16
- **Proportion < 1.1:** 1
- **Convergence Likely:** Yes, looks good

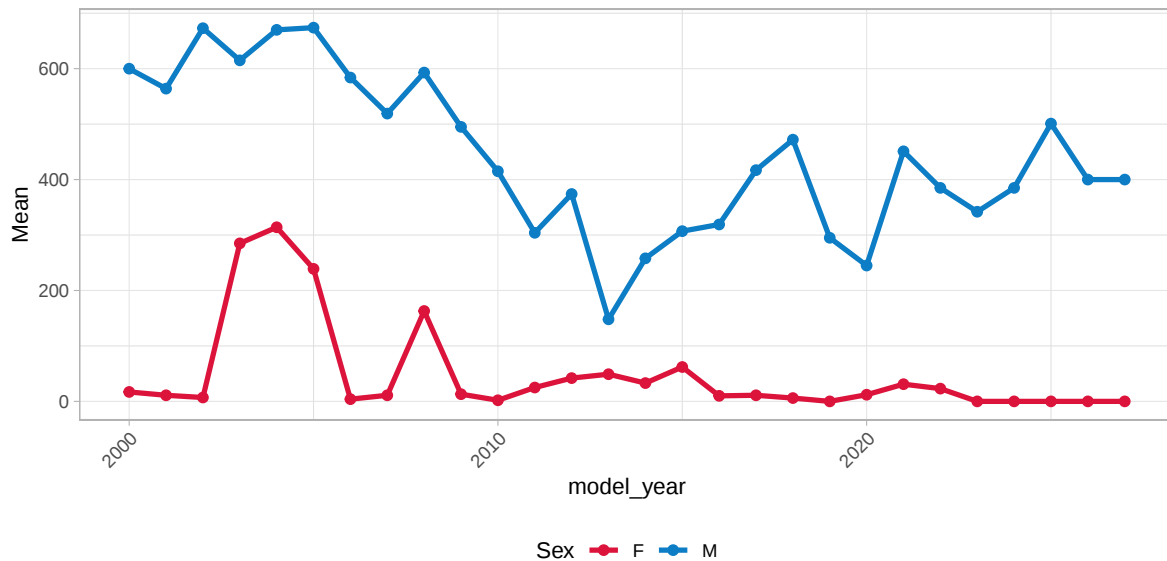
JCR Summary

Metric	2025	2026	3 Year Average
Preseason Population Estimate	4,911 (4,519-5,324)	5,680 (5,206-6,177)	
Total Harvest	501	400	
Postseason Population Estimate	4,170 (3,793-4,567)	4,949 (4,516-5,403)	
Female $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0	0	
Male $\geq$ 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.394	0.329	0.36
Projected Change in Postseason Population	1.04	1.19	

Using this report

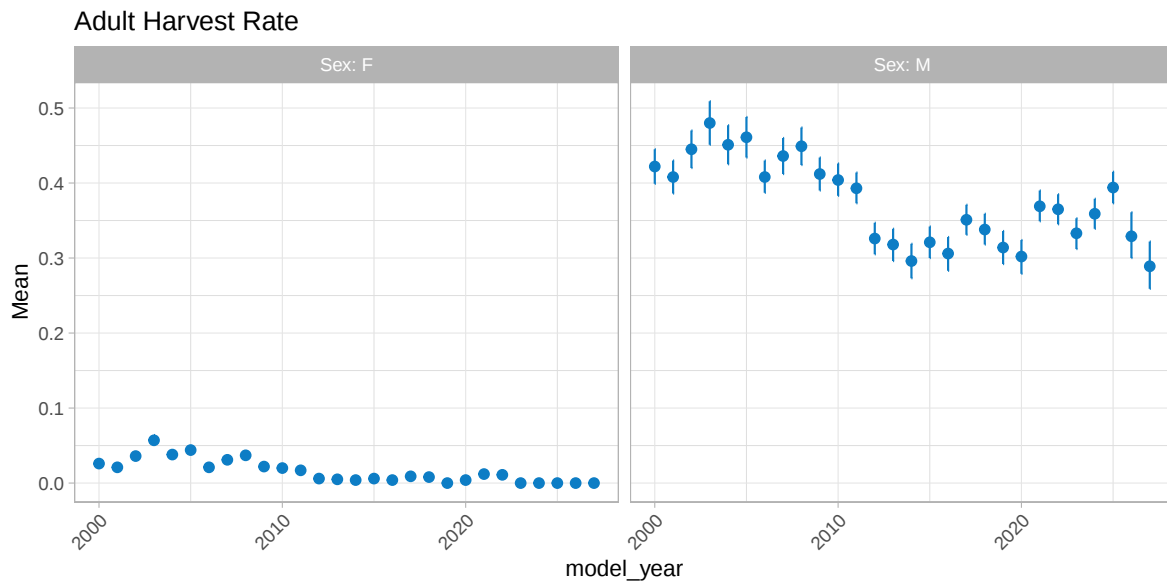
- Estimates v Observations
 - The term *estimate* is used to reference values estimated by the integrated population model (IPM) while *observation* is used to refer to field observations that serve as inputs to the IPM.

Harvest

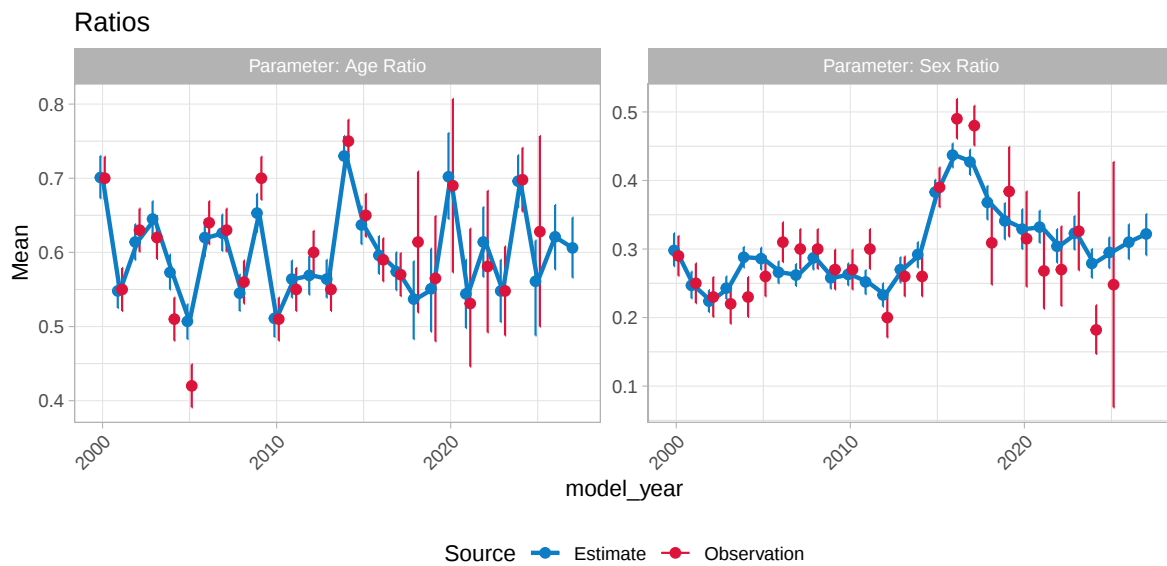


The plot above depicts male (M) and female (F) harvest through time.

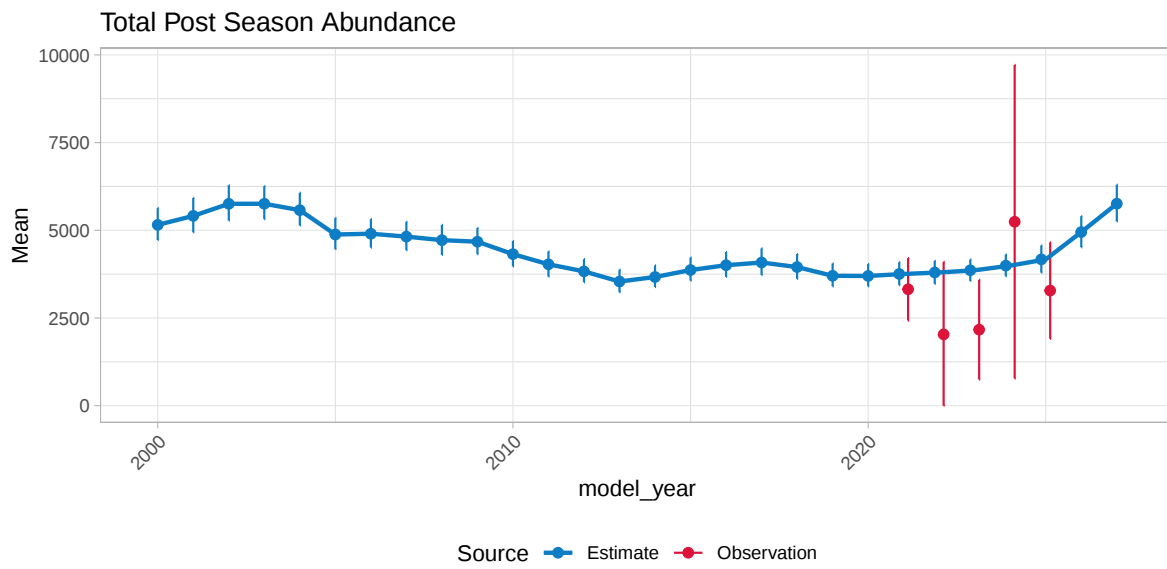
Adult Harvest Rate



Ratios



Total Post Season Abundance



Report prepared using SpeedGoat® software

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

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

HERD: MD540 - SHIRLEY MOUNTAIN

HUNT AREAS: 70

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	2,590	2,100	2,400
Harvest:	187	188	188
Hunters:	543	548	550
Hunter Success:	34%	34%	34 %
Active Licenses:	543	549	550
Active License Success:	34%	34%	34 %
Recreation Days:	2,311	2,245	2,250
Days Per Animal:	12.4	11.9	12.0
Males per 100 Females	37	54	
Juveniles per 100 Females	63	63	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 4500 (3600 - 5400)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -53.3%

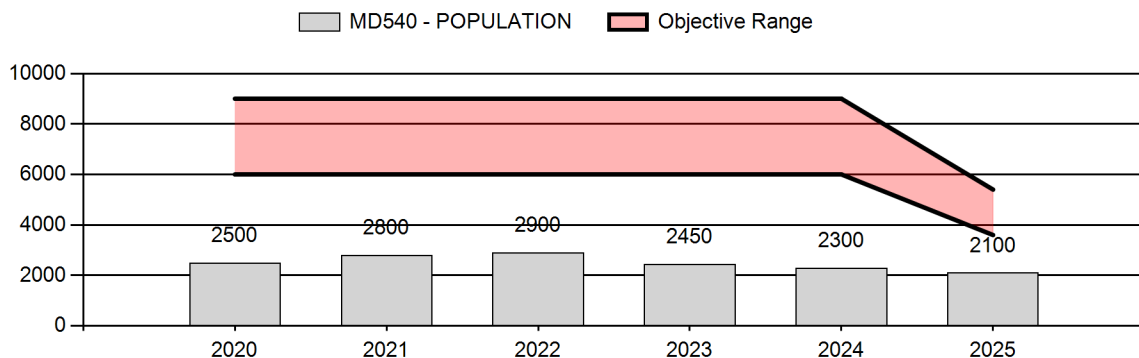
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 1

Model Date: 02/26/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	29%	28%
Proposed change in post-season population:	-4%	+16%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Mule Deer Herd MD540 - SHIRLEY MOUNTAIN

Year	Post Pop	MALES							FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	CIs Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	2+ CIs 1	2+ CIs 2	2+ CIs 3	UnCIs	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ylng	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	2,500	9	26	14	2	0	51	27%	90	48%	48	25%	189	1,024	10	47	57	± 12	53	± 12	34
2021	2,800	8	21	8	2	0	39	17%	117	52%	71	31%	227	894	7	26	33	± 8	61	± 11	46
2022	2,900	26	13	8	1	0	48	14%	182	52%	117	34%	347	0	14	12	26	± 5	64	± 9	51
2023	2,450	7	15	6	0	0	28	25%	52	46%	32	29%	112	643	13	40	54	± 16	62	± 17	40
2024	2,300	9	11	14	2	0	36	16%	110	48%	81	36%	227	872	8	25	33	± 8	74	± 13	55
2025	2,100	13	16	6	0	0	35	25%	65	46%	41	29%	141	796	20	34	54	± 14	63	± 16	41

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Shirley Mountain Mule Deer (MD540)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
70	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 21		Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer

2026 Region D Nonresident Quota: 300 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 48% Satisfied, 36% Neutral, 16% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2025 harvest survey report estimated 473 hunters harvested 188 buck mule deer for an overall success of 34%. Hunter success (34%) and days to harvest (11.9) were similar to the respective five-year averages (34% and 12.7). These harvest metrics, along with slightly improved hunter satisfaction indicated that mule deer hunting was similar to previous years. However, hunter comments suggested that hunting mule deer in the herd unit remained more challenging than hunters desired. Winter severity in 2022-23 was high, and above-average winter mortality across deer age and sex cohorts was expected in this herd unit. After a decrease in deer hunter participation in 2023, the number of active licensed deer hunters in the last two hunting seasons increased to more typical levels.

Limited post-hunting season composition data, including age and sex, was collected during a January aerial survey. The observed fawn-to-doe ratio (63/100) was the same as the preceding five-year average. The observed buck-to-doe ratio (54/100) was higher than the previous five-year average (41/100) and exceeded the recreational management parameters. As in previous years with small classification samples, these observed composition data should be interpreted with caution.

Mean antler spread width, measured on field-checked bucks (n=70), was 15 inches in 2025 which was similar to the mean antler spread observed in the preceding five years. Adult bucks were assigned to antler classes during 2025 post-hunting season surveys. Those surveys indicated that there are Class 2 (20-25" wide) and Class 3 (>26" wide) bucks in the herd unit, however they make up a small proportion of the adult bucks available for harvest.

A seven-day general season for antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer was prescribed in 2026 and the Region D nonresident quota was maintained at 300 licenses. The 2026 season structure should maximize hunter opportunity. With projected harvest similar to 2025 and normal fawn production the predicted 2026 post-hunting season population of 2,400 mule deer (2,000-2,900) will be below the objective of 4,500 mule deer.

Management Objective Review

The 4,500 mule deer ($\pm 20\%$) objective and recreational management strategy was last evaluated and approved in 2025, and will not be reviewed again until 2030.

Weather/Habitat

There are several development projects that have been sited or proposed in this herd unit. A proposed transmission line, called Wyoming Intertie Line, from Wheatland to the Aeolus substation crosses through crucial winter range habitats with a possible phase II line from the Aeolus substation to Rawlins. Both of these powerlines have the potential for temporary disturbance to mule deer during construction along with permanent habitat loss in crucial habitats. The Seminole Pumped Storage project has been proposed for construction and is in the FERC review process. There is the possibility of habitat loss and disturbance to mule deer crucial winter range habitats from the upper reservoir construction, cement plant operation, transmission line construction, and road infrastructure construction. The Department plans to evaluate and comment on both of these projects.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management

CWD was first detected in the Shirley Mountain mule deer herd in 2006. This herd was prioritized for CWD sampling 2023-25. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). During the first year of priority sampling, only 40 adult male mule deer were sampled which is below the desired sample size for estimating prevalence. This was due to lower hunter turnout and lower hunter success. Mandatory sampling in 2024 and 2025 helped increase sample sizes, with 62 and 61 adult male mule deer samples collected.

Considering prevalence has remained above 10% in adult males over the past five years, CWD may be impacting adult male survival. The CWD prevalence in adult males may indicate prevalence is also high enough in adult females to start influencing their survival rates, although sample sizes are insufficient to conclude this definitively.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in Shirley Mountain Mule Deer Herd, 2021-25.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – Hunter Harvest Only			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	22% (n=9)	0% (0)	0% (0)	7
2022	17% (n=18)	0% (3)	100% (1)	8
2023*	16% (n=43)	0% (12)	0% (0)	28
2024**	13% (n=62)	0% (18)	0% (1)	29
2025**	12% (n=61)	14% (14)	0% (0)	32
2021-2025	14% (8-20%, n=193)	4% (47)	50% (2)	21

*Priority CWD sampling effort

**Mandatory CWD sampling effort

Population Modeling

The 2025 post-hunting season abundance estimate from the PopR Integrated Population Model (IPM) was approximately 2,100 mule deer (CL 1,800-2,500). Managers chose to model this herd using constant adult and time-varying reproduction and juvenile survival. Based on a visual comparison of the available effort variables, days per harvest was selected as the variable most predictably related to annual harvest. With these settings the observed data for the IPM included 11

years of harvest and ratio data along with an abundance estimate from a 2023 sightability survey. IPM convergence was excellent, with all Rhat values less than 1.1, and fawn and buck ratio estimates produced by the IPM aligned with recorded data for this herd. The abundance estimate for 2022 did not align perfectly with the substantial overwinter losses we thought occurred. However, the 2023 IPM abundance estimate was within the lower confidence level of the sightability survey for that year:

	2023
Sightability Estimate	2,900 (CL 2,000-4,000)
IPM Estimate	2,100 (CL 1,900 -2,400)

The abundance estimate for 2025 represented a decrease of about 4% from the previous year, however the abundance estimates agree with the perceptions of managers that this herd may be slowly increasing after fair production and improved survival in 2024-25.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

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

HERD: MD541 - PLATTE VALLEY

HUNT AREAS: 78-81

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	12,990	10,500	12,300
Harvest:	431	495	500
Hunters:	913	757	820
Hunter Success:	47%	65%	61 %
Active Licenses:	913	756	820
Active License Success:	47%	65%	61 %
Recreation Days:	5,866	4,315	5,000
Days Per Animal:	13.6	8.7	10
Males per 100 Females	38	31	
Juveniles per 100 Females	72	73	

Population Objective (± 20%) : 16000 (12800 - 19200)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -34.4%

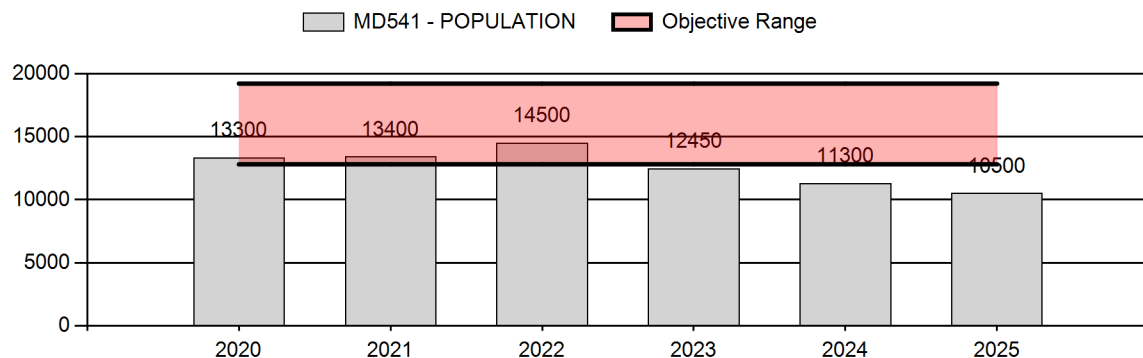
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 2

Model Date: 2/23/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	15%	15%
Proposed change in post-season population:	0%	+18%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Mule Deer Herd MD541 - PLATTE VALLEY

Year	Post Pop	MALES							FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs CIs Obj		Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	2+ CIs 1	2+ CIs 2	2+ CIs 3	UnCIs	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%			Ylng	Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult
2020	13,300	57	104	67	15	0	243	23%	487	46%	340	32%	1,070	1,168	12	38	50	± 5	70	± 6	47
2021	13,400	43	85	50	7	0	185	20%	441	47%	315	33%	941	1,150	10	32	42	± 5	71	± 7	50
2022	14,500	32	50	32	8	0	122	16%	361	48%	275	36%	758	1,414	9	25	34	± 4	76	± 8	57
2023	12,450	33	52	26	6	0	117	14%	426	52%	275	34%	818	1,104	8	20	27	± 4	65	± 6	51
2024	11,300	13	68	29	17	0	127	17%	352	46%	285	37%	764	1,365	4	32	36	± 5	81	± 8	59
2025	10,500	89	68	46	8	0	211	15%	690	49%	501	36%	1,402	1,365	13	18	31	± 3	73	± 5	56

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Platte Valley Mule Deer (MD541)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
78	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14	250	Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
79	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14	250	Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
80	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14	150	Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer
81	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 14	175	Antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 70% Satisfied, 18% Neutral, 12% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

According to the harvest survey report, an estimated 756 hunters harvested 495 buck mule deer in 2025. Improved deer hunting conditions in 2025 was evident as hunter success (65%) and satisfaction both increased compared to 2024 and 2023. Additionally, the average number of days to harvest a mule deer decreased to nine.

For all four Platte Valley mule deer hunt areas in 2025, hunter success improved, exceeding both the preceding five- and ten-year averages and the number of days to harvest decreased compared to the preceding five- and ten-year averages. Hunt Area 78 harvest was 161 deer, with 69% success, a significant increase from 2024 (78 deer, 35% success). Hunt Area 78 days to harvest (8.5) was the lowest reported since 2017. Hunt Area 79 harvest was 129 deer, with 56% success, an increase from 2024 (100 deer harvested, 44% success). Hunt Area 79 days to harvest (11.2) was the lowest reported since 2017. Hunt Area 80 harvest was 90 deer, with 67% success, an increase from 2024 (60 deer, 48% success). Hunt Area 80 days to harvest (8.4) was the lowest reported in 10 years. Hunt Area 81 harvest was 115 deer, with 74% success, an increase from 2024 (49 deer, 31% success). Similar to Hunt Area 80, days to harvest (6.6) in Hunt Area 81 was the lowest reported in 10 years. Improved success was mostly attributed to favorable weather during the hunting season that made deer more visible and vulnerable to harvest.

Mule deer antler spread measurements increased in 2025, reaching a median of 19.25 inches, the largest recorded since 2018. The mean antler spread, based on 100 field-checked bucks, was 19 inches, which surpassed the five-year average of 18 inches. Overall, antler spreads measured in 2025 ranged from a minimum of six inches to a maximum of 33 inches.

Post-hunting season we conducted a composition survey to assess age and sex ratios. The 2025 observed fawn-to-doe ratio of 73/100 exceeded the five-year average (72/100). The fawn-to-doe ratio was above the ratio (66/100) needed to maintain a population. The post-hunting season buck-

to-doe ratio of 31/100 exceeded recreational management strategy parameters of 20-29/100, but was lower than the average buck-to-doe ratio observed the previous five years (37/100). The yearling buck-to-doe ratio (13/100) indicated above normal recruitment from 2024 to 2025, which was expected given record productivity in 2024 and mild winter conditions resulting in excellent overwinter survival.

Adult (>1.5 years of age) bucks were assigned to antler classes during post-hunting season composition surveys. The total adult buck classification sample (n=122) resulted in the following: 56% Class 1 (<20" wide) bucks, 37% Class 2 (20-25" wide) bucks, and 7% Class 3 (>26" wide) bucks. The proportion of Class 3 bucks was similar to previous years, indicating larger, older-age class bucks were available but made up a smaller proportion of all adult bucks.

The 14-day limited quota seasons for antlered mule deer or any white-tailed deer were retained for 2026. License quotas remained conservative in each hunt area for a third year to assess trends in hunter success and observed post-hunting season buck ratios. If hunter success holds and approximately 500 buck mule deer are harvested and normal fawn production is attained in 2026 the predicted post-hunting season population of 12,400 mule deer (CL11,300-13,500) will still be below the objective of 16,000 mule deer. The population trajectory is projected to increase, according to the population model, regardless of whether buck harvest stays at the 2025 level or rises to similar levels reported when license quotas were higher. Even with stable hunter participation and success in 2026, we estimated only 15% of pre-hunting season bucks would be harvested and no female mule deer would be harvested.

The 2025 post-hunting season buck and fawn ratios along with the projected population trajectory indicated that maintaining or increasing license quotas were appropriate, however concerns of quality of hunt metrics and public comment in support of maintaining quotas continue to prompt careful consideration of license quotas across the herd unit. We continue to monitor the quality of hunt metrics within the Platte Valley Mule Deer Plan, however future considerations will also be given to disease prevalence and reduced carrying capacities of deer habitats in the herd unit. Hunt areas in this herd unit have limited quota seasons to improve hunt quality, however, the hunting season and quotas are intended to also maximize recreational opportunity. The 2026 license quotas maintain reduced hunter opportunity and may not align with the guidelines of recreational management strategy.

Management Objective Review

The 16,000 mule deer ($\pm 20\%$) objective and recreational management strategy was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Weather/Habitat

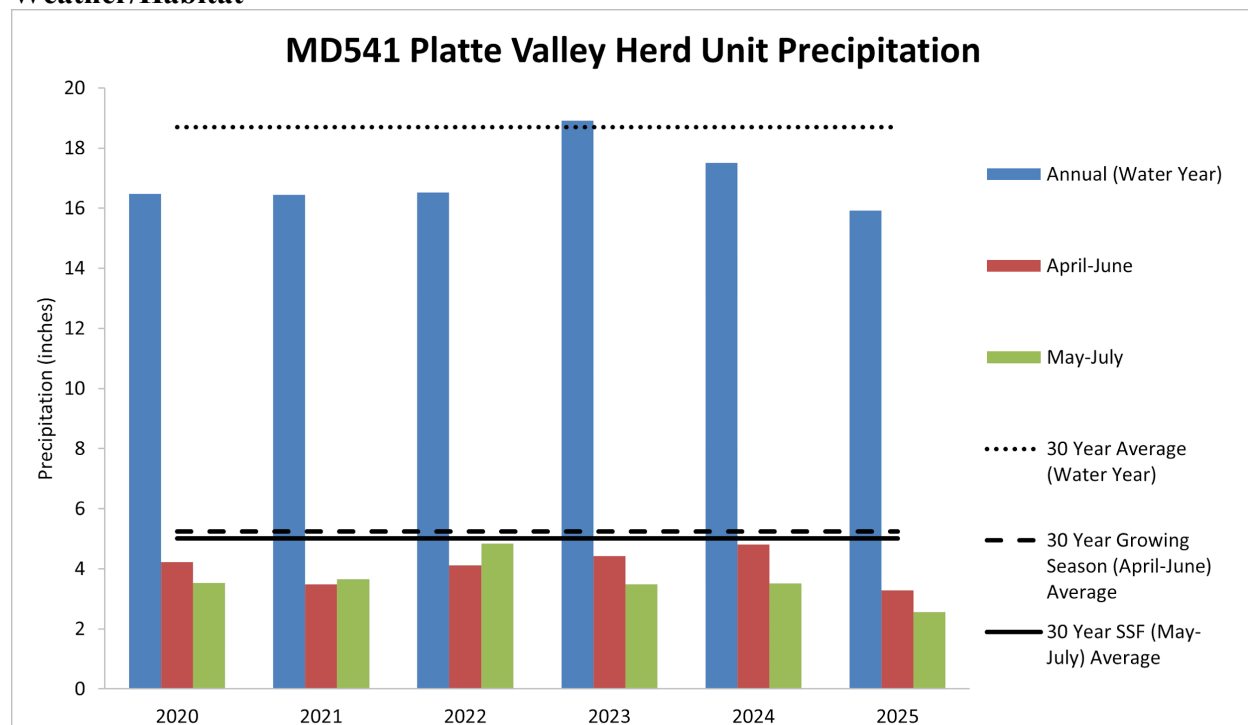


Figure 1. Parameter-Elevation Relationships on Independent Slopes Model (PRISM) estimate of annual, growing season, and spring/summer/fall (SSF) precipitation from 2020-25 for the Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit in Carbon County, Wyoming.

We used the Derived Environmental Variability Indices Spatial Extractor (DEVISE) interface to extract precipitation metrics for the Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit. We selected monthly temporal precipitation data using Parameter-Elevation Relationships on Independent Slopes Model (PRISM) data to estimate annual, growing season, and high elevation (spring/summer/fall; SSF) precipitation (PRISM Climate Group, Oregon State University, <http://prism.oregonstate.edu>, created 4 Feb 2004). Within the 6-year review period of 2020-25, annual precipitation during 2023 was the only year that precipitation was at or exceeded the 30-year average (Figure 1). During that period, the largest deficit in annual and growing season (April – June) precipitation occurred in 2025. Precipitation during the 2025 water year (October 2024 through September 2025) was below the 30-year average of 18.69 inches.

In addition to a 14.8% deficit in annual precipitation in 2025, moisture events in the critical growing months for herbaceous and woody vegetation were below normal. Growing season and SSF precipitation were 37.4% and 49% below their respective 30-year average. Limited precipitation occurred during the crucial growing season period in April, June, and July. Increased precipitation occurred in May and likely provided much needed moisture for herbaceous and woody vegetation. Precipitation falling during April - July is essential for plant growth at high elevations in this herd unit. Lack of summer precipitation in 2025 led to earlier senescence of herbaceous forages across all seasonal ranges. Higher than normal amounts of precipitation occurred in September (1.64 inches) and October (1.80 inches).

The majority of precipitation in the Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit occurs outside of the primary growing season, generally in the form of snow. The 2024-25 winter started mild, with no persistent snow accumulations through fall and early winter at lower elevations. SNOTEL sites at higher elevations on the west side of the Snowy Range and the east side of the Sierra Madres reported below-average snowpack during late 2024. As of February 2025, SNOTEL sites at higher elevations on the west side of the Snowy Range reported snow water equivalent (SWE) values ranging from 94-120% of average, while sites on the east side of the Sierra Madres reported SWE values ranging from 83-105% of average. Due to a lack of snow in the lower elevations, relatively mild temperatures, and early snowmelt, the 2024-25 winter likely resulted in high overwinter survival.

In 2025, the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) continued its large-scale conifer removal efforts, targeting encroaching junipers within sagebrush and mixed mountain shrub communities. The Saratoga-Encampment-Rawlins Conservation District and the BLM successfully completed 916 acres of mastication treatments along the western slope of Barrett Ridge. Juniper mastication work will continue in this area next year. Approximately 5,170 acres in the Prospect area were aerially treated with Indaziflam to control cheatgrass infestations. An additional 4,940 acres in the Encampment River/Blackhall area south of Encampment were also treated in 2025. Carbon County Weed and Pest, the BLM, and the WGFD plan to continue large-scale cheatgrass treatments over the next two years, continuing efforts south of Encampment and then targeting Pennock WHMA and the Mullen Fire burn scar. Additionally, the PVHP plans to convert 16 miles of HWY 130 right-of-way fence in 2026. The project aims to reduce barriers for pronghorn, mule deer and elk movement and to increase access to important seasonal range habitats.

Habitat biologists continue to monitor the recovery of the Mullen Fire (2020) burn scar and the presence of cheatgrass. Over 10,334 acres on the western slope of the Snowy Range were aerially treated with the herbicide Rejuvra in 2021. Annual monitoring since the initial treatment shows promising recovery of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs. However, cheatgrass persists in areas where soil movement has occurred, and remains dense within the no-spray buffer around the North Platte River. Additionally, post-treatment monitoring has documented “breaks” in the original treatment, indicating the need for a re-treatment.

Past large-scale wildfires within the Sierra Madre Range (Snake fire – 2016, Beaver Creek fire – 2016, and Ryan fire – 2018) are recovering at varying rates. These fires have returned plant communities to earlier seral stages and increased the age-class diversity of mixed mountain shrubs and aspens. Through the USFS LaVA project, several large-scale timber sales and fuels reduction treatments have occurred throughout the Sierra Madres, mainly on the eastern side of the mountain and north of HWY 70, near Aspen Alley and the Sandstone work station. These treatments should improve transition and summer ranges for mule deer, elk, and moose.

In 2015, we initiated the Rapid Habitat Assessment (RHA) methodology to survey important mule deer habitats. This method strives to capture large-scale habitat quality metrics to better understand how the habitat is providing for the current population of mule deer. The overall result of this effort is to provide a standardized habitat component for discussions about how mule deer objectives should or should not be adjusted based on the general concept of carrying capacity. Rapid Habitat Assessments conducted throughout the herd unit from 2019-24 suggest that many important shrub habitats continue to underperform due to maturity and decadence caused by a lack of disturbance.

Only a few of the surveyed aspen stands were found to be in Proper Functioning Conditioning, with the majority of surveyed stands ranging from early to late seral stages. Moderate to severe levels of herbivory could be limiting aspen regeneration in important summer and transitional ranges. In 2025, WGFD personnel surveyed nine RHHAs in the Platte Valley herd unit, totaling 415 acres. Of the nine surveys completed, 6 were aspen, 2 were rangeland, and one was a riparian survey. These data will provide population managers and the public with documentation of the current state of mule deer habitat conditions in the Platte Valley.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management

CWD was first observed in the Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd Unit in 2002. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). The 2025 prevalence and 2021-25 prevalence are similar to those observed in hunter-harvested mule deer in Colorado's D-3 Mule Deer, Baggs Mule Deer, and Sheep Mountain Mule Deer.

Considering prevalence increased above 10% in adult males over the past five years, CWD may be impacting adult male survival. The CWD prevalence in adult males may indicate prevalence is also high enough in adult females to start influencing their survival rates. We are concerned with this increasing prevalence and continue to gather public input on feasible disease management strategies through the WGFD CWD Management Plan guidelines.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested mule deer in Platte Valley Mule Deer Herd, 2021-2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	6% (n=67)	9% (11)	0% (1)	11
2022	7% (n=42)	0% (3)	0% (0)	8
2023*	13% (n=113)	16% (6)	0% (0)	36
2024	13% (n=38)	33% (3)	0% (0)	13
2025	16% (n=50)	0% (9)	1% (1)	10
2021-2025	11% (7-15%, n=310)	9% (32)	50% (2)	14

*Priority sampling year

Population Modeling

The 2025 post-hunting season population estimate from the PopR Integrated Population Model (IPM) was 10,500 mule deer (CL 9,800 -11,400). This indicated a stable population from the IPM predicted 2024 post-hunting season population. Managers chose to model this herd using fixed effect and constant adult survival, reproduction and juvenile survival. Based on visual comparison of effort variables, active licenses was selected as the variable most predictably related to annual harvest. With these settings, the observed data for the IPM included 26 years of harvest and ratio data, along with an abundance estimate from a sightability survey at the end of biological year 2024. IPM convergence was good, with Rhat for maximum point estimate less than 1.1. Fawn and buck

ratio estimates/confidence levels aligned with recorded data for this herd. IPM abundance estimates are also within the confidence limits for the survey performed at the end of the biological year 2024:

	2024
Sightability Estimate	12,000 (CL 8,900 - 15,200)
IPM Estimate	10,600 (CL 9,700 -11,400)

Additional Management Data

In 2012, Wyoming Game and Fish Department (WGFD) collaboratively developed the Platte Valley Mule Deer Plan. We began to implement strategies to improve the quality of the hunting experience in this herd unit. These strategies included: 1.) change hunting season structure from traditional general seasons to limited quota seasons; 2.) achieve a buck harvest success rate of 40%; 3.) set a goal of at least 20% of field-checked harvested bucks meeting an antler spread of 24 inches or more; and 4.) 60% of the harvest survey respondents replied they were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with their hunting experience. During the development of these harvest parameters, we recognized that each could be affected by annual events unrelated to management decisions, such as weather during hunting seasons. To lessen the effect of these variables, these management objectives were based on a three-year running average. In 2025, the buck harvest success rate was 65%, and the three-year average was 47%. In 2025, 20% of all field-checked bucks (including yearlings) had ≥ 24 -inch antler spread. Yearling bucks made up 13% ($n = 13$) of the field-checked bucks. The 2023-25 average percentage of field-checked bucks ≥ 24 -inch antler spread was 14%. Seventy percent of harvest survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with their 2025 hunting experience, and the three-year average satisfaction was 51%. The secondary management objectives were met in 2025.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: White tailed Deer

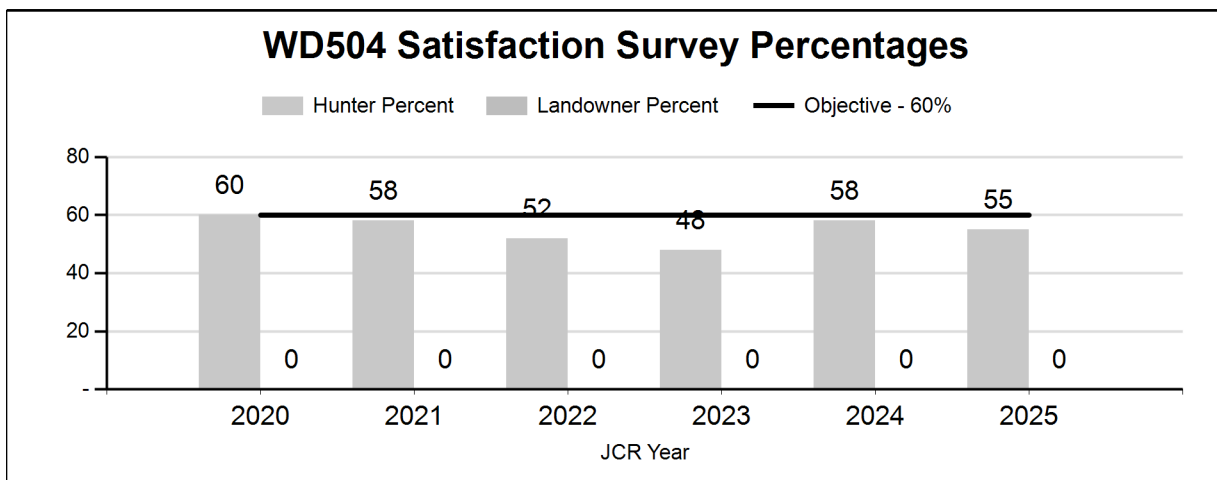
PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026

HERD: WD504 - SOUTHEAST WYOMING

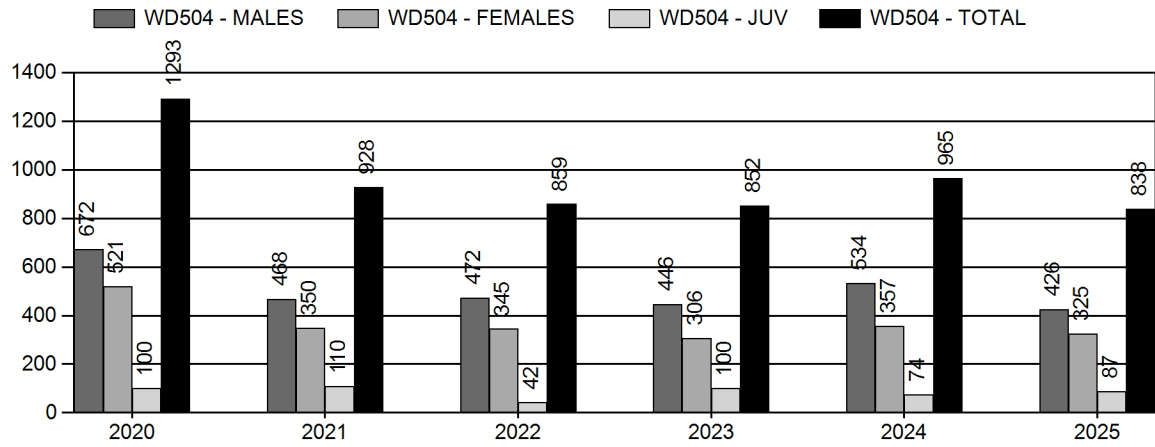
HUNT AREAS: 15, 59-64, 70, 73-81, 83, 161

PREPARED BY: MARINA MCCAMPBELL

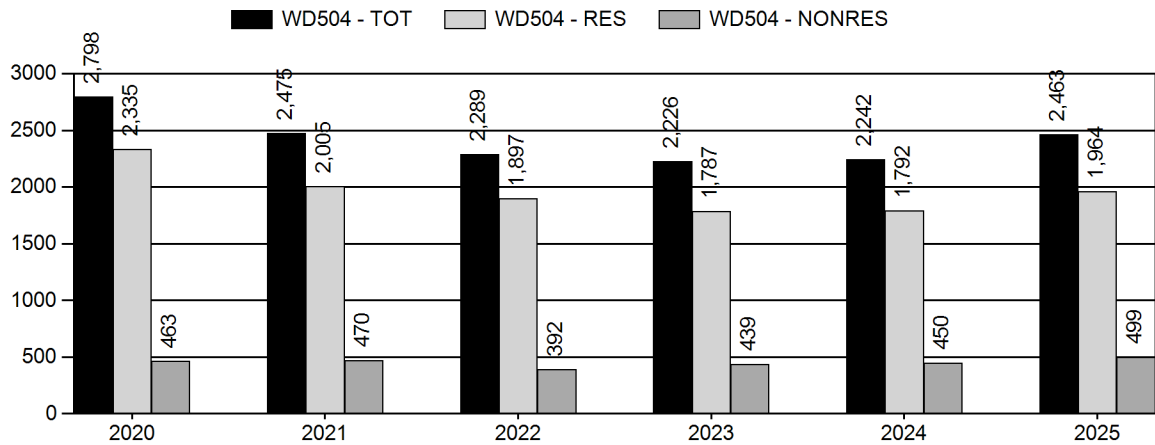
	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Hunter Satisfaction Percent	56%	55%	55%
Landowner Satisfaction Percent	0%	0%	0%
Harvest:	979	838	850
Hunters:	2,406	2,463	2,400
Hunter Success:	41%	34%	35%
Active Licenses:	2,856	2,819	2,800
Active License Success:	34%	30%	30%
Recreation Days:	13,268	14,168	13,500
Days Per Animal:	13.6	16.9	15.9
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:			5



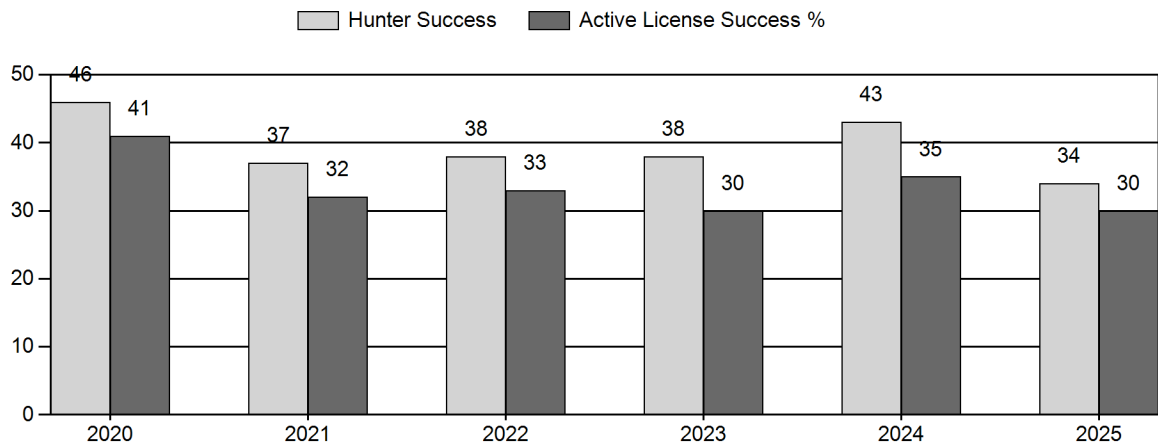
Harvest



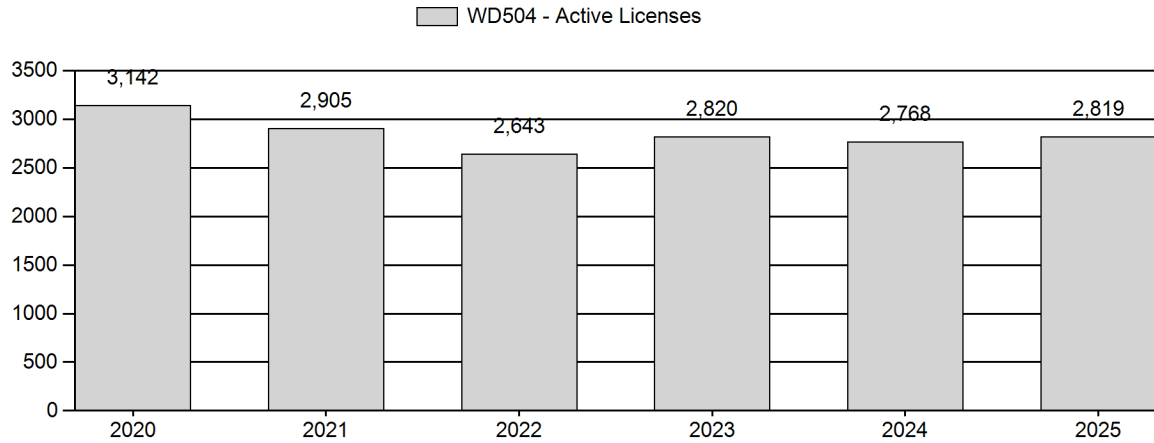
Number of Hunters



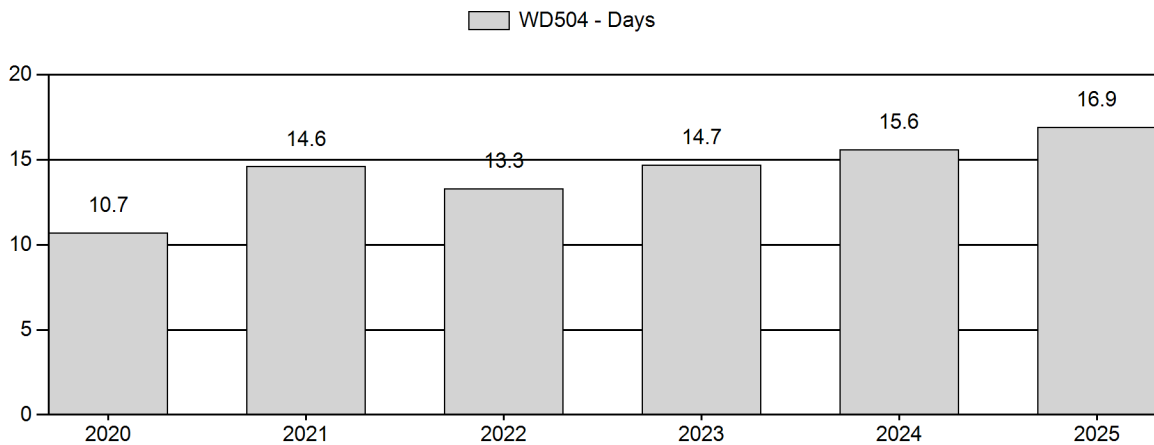
Harvest Success



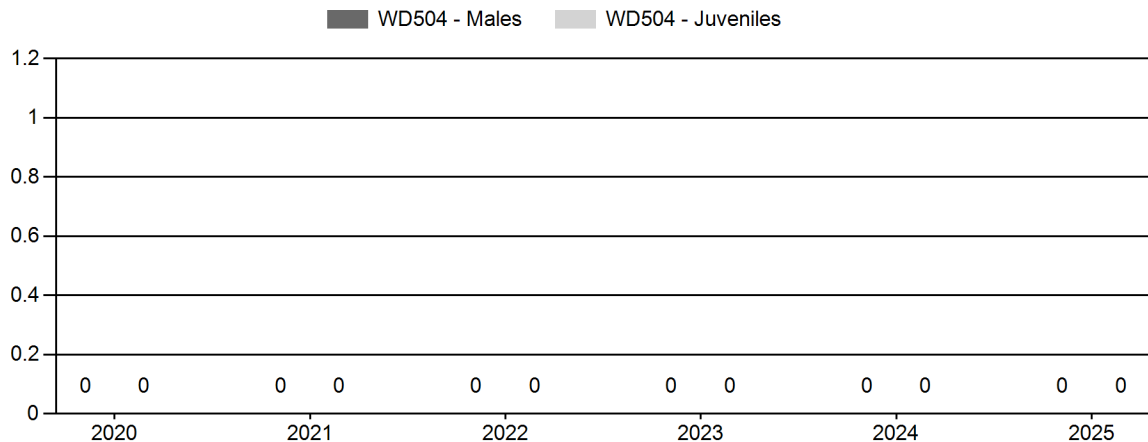
Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested



Preseason Animals per 100 Females



2026 Hunting Seasons
Southeast Wyoming White-tailed Deer Herd Unit (WD504)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
15	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	500	Any white-tailed deer
15	3			Dec. 1	Dec. 31		Antlerless white-tailed deer
15	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	450	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer
59, 64	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	250	Any white-tailed deer
59, 64	3			Dec. 1	Dec. 31		Antlerless white-tailed deer
59, 64	6			Nov. 1	Dec. 31		Doe or fawn white-tailed deer valid in the entire area
59, 64	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Nov. 1	Dec. 31	350	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer
60	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	100	Any white-tailed deer
60	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	100	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer
70, 74	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	50	Any white-tailed deer
70, 74	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	75	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer
75, 76, 77	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	75	Any white-tailed deer
75, 76, 77	3			Dec. 1	Dec. 31		Antlerless white-tailed deer

75, 76, 77	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	100	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer
78, 79, 80, 81	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	50	Any white-tailed deer
78, 79, 80, 81	8			Sep. 1	Dec. 31	125	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 55% Satisfied, 27% Neutral, 18% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

White-tailed deer are managed towards a hunter satisfaction objective of 60% in the Southeast Wyoming white-tailed deer herd unit. The harvest structure is designed to maximize harvest as anecdotal evidence suggests white-tailed deer abundance is increasing in southeast Wyoming. The season is designed to take advantage of high densities of white-tailed deer as access allows. Total harvest for the southeast Wyoming herd unit in 2025 was 838 white-tailed deer across all hunt areas. The total includes 426 bucks, 325 does, and 87 juvenile white-tailed deer. Hunter success across the herd unit was 34% and is not reported as an average per hunt area due to small sample sizes and reporting for certain hunt areas. 2025 hunter satisfaction was 55%, just short of the satisfaction objective of 60%. This is likely due to the perception of fewer deer on the landscape and access challenges. There were several detections of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in the fall of 2025 in hunt areas 15, 59, 60, and 64. Portions of these hunt areas likely experienced lower white-tailed deer densities as a result and these concerns were reflected in hunter survey feedback. Additionally, localized outbreaks of hemorrhagic diseases in 2021-2022 likely contributed to hunter feedback concerning lower availability of white-tailed deer. Lower densities may persist in future until fawn recruitment can replace cohorts that were lost. Managers within hunt areas 75, 76, and 77 hope to reduce hunting pressure on males to improve quality and quantity of older age class bucks while still providing opportunity throughout the late season to harvest females. White-tailed deer in the Platte Valley (hunt areas 78-81) have increased in population and expanded their range in recent years based on anecdotal evidence. Additional management by the Department of white-tailed deer is limited in southeastern Wyoming due to private land dominating most habitat areas where white-tailed deer are commonly detected.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Southeast Wyoming white-tailed deer herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Weather and Habitat

Annual precipitation across southeast Wyoming in areas occupied by white-tailed deer was varied. Based on National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather station data from Cheyenne, Fort Laramie, Douglas, and Laramie, precipitation levels were 4%, 1%,

34%, and 7% above long term averages for the year. NOAA data from the Torrington weather station showed a 37% decrease below long term average annual precipitation levels. Timing of precipitation events can be as or more important than actual amounts received. Precipitation was well below normal during winter and early spring periods. Most locations received September precipitation well above normal monthly levels. This resulted in green up of forages, aiding animals in preparing for onset of the rut and winter. Winter conditions in the Laramie and Centennial Valley, eastern flanks of the Laramie Range, and lowland areas of Platte and Goshen counties, were very mild with little persistent snow cover or subzero temperatures at any time during the winter months.

White-tailed deer are typically associated with riparian habitats and irrigated annual and perennial crop areas, and in drier years, their use of these habitats is likely increased. Forage production and associated cover heights in riparian areas, favored by white-tailed deer, were normal across southeast Wyoming. Some irrigated and dryland crop failures were observed, and affected forage and cover for deer. We have observed several perennial streams dry up during the summer months. Flows in ephemeral stream segments and upland springs and seeps were also shortened significantly from normal levels. No significant EHD events were reported this year in any portions of the herd unit although individual dead deer were collected and tested positive for EHD.

Wind and solar facilities, in addition to transmission line projects, continue to fragment habitat south, east, west, and north of Cheyenne. Large subdivisions have been plotted south and southeast of Cheyenne, with new home construction and business developments coming in the near future. Subdivisions are often associated with new fence construction, invasive weed infestations, new road construction, and increased disturbance of wildlife by outdoor pets and human activity. This will likely contribute to reduced habitat availability in future for white-tailed deer and potentially negatively impact populations in the southern portion of this herd unit.

Chronic Wasting Disease

CWD samples are collected on white-tailed deer opportunistically. Results from the Southeast Wyoming White-tailed Deer Herd Unit are below (Table 1). The majority of deer tested and that are positive come from Hunt Areas 15, 59, 60, and 64.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested white-tailed deer in the Southeast Wyoming White-tailed Deer Herd, 2021-2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Adult Males Sampled
	Adult Males (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	25% (n=24)	0% (0)	13% (16)	5.1
2022	7% (n=42)	0% (3)	15% (20)	8.8
2023	15% (n=27)	0% (3)	20% (10)	6.0
2024	4% (n=23)	0% (0)	0% (4)	4.3
2025	15% (n=27)	0% (5)	9% (11)	3.8
2021-2025	8% (n=143)	0% (11)	8% (61)	6.1

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk
 HERD: EL530 - RAWHIDE
 HUNT AREAS: 3

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

PREPARED BY: MARINA
 MCCAMPBELL

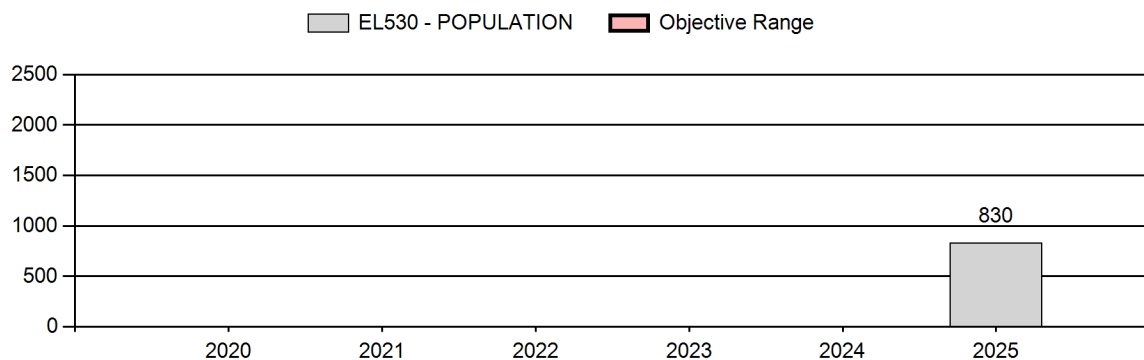
	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	0	830	900
Harvest:	175	253	250
Hunters:	425	613	550
Hunter Success:	41%	41%	45%
Active Licenses:	458	631	600
Active License Success:	38%	40%	42%
Recreation Days:	3,393	4,721	4,000
Days Per Animal:	19.4	18.7	16
Males per 100 Females	0	0	
Juveniles per 100 Females	0	0	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 1800 (1440 - 2160)
 Management Strategy: Recreational
 Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -53.9%
 Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 1
 Model Date: None

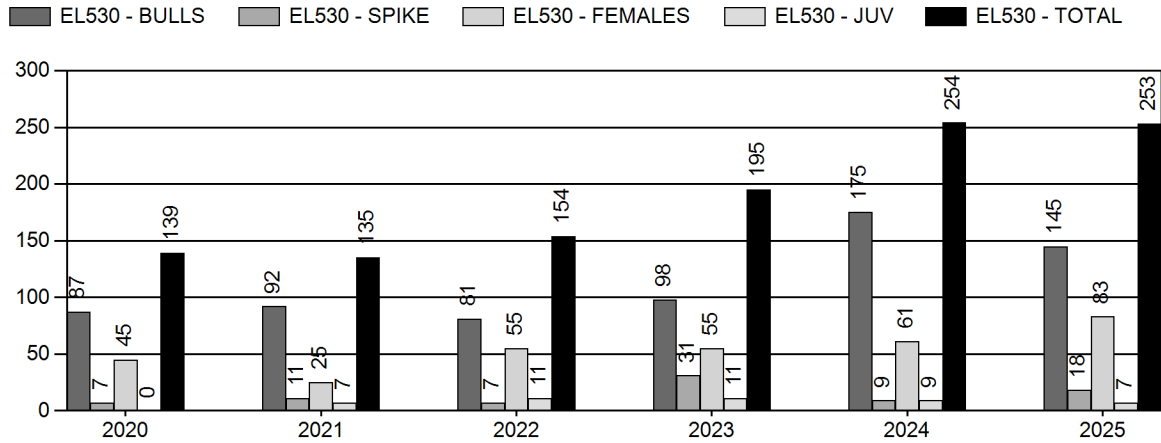
Proposed harvest rates (percent of pre-season estimate for each sex/age group):

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Proposed change in post-season population:	0%	0%

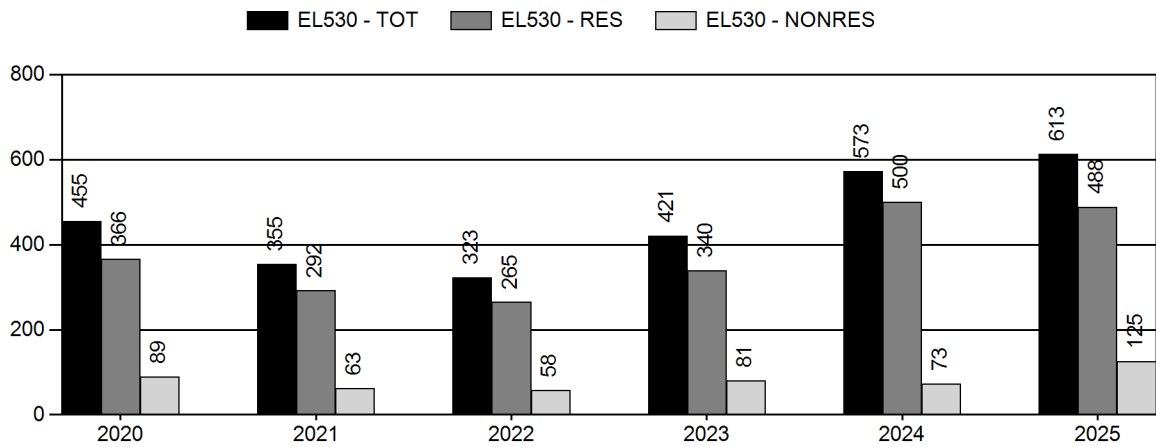
Population Size - Postseason



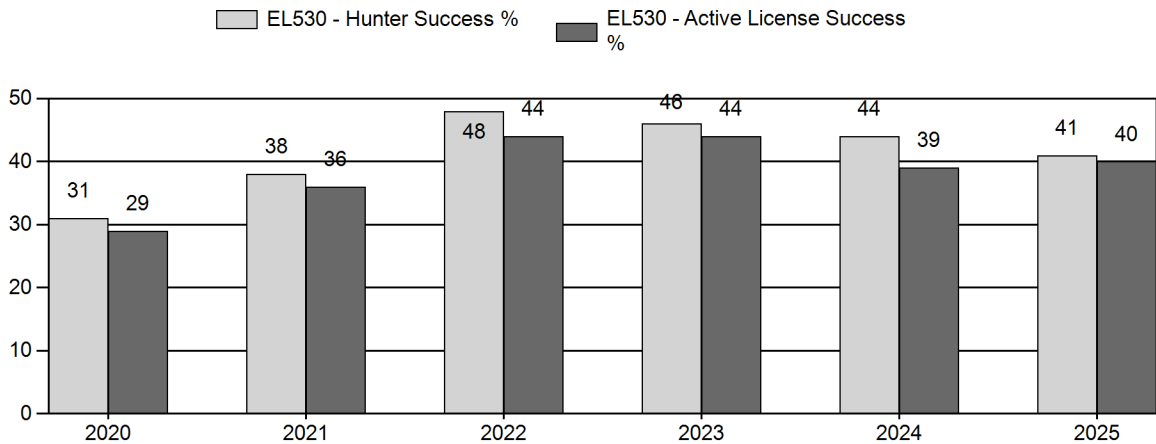
Harvest



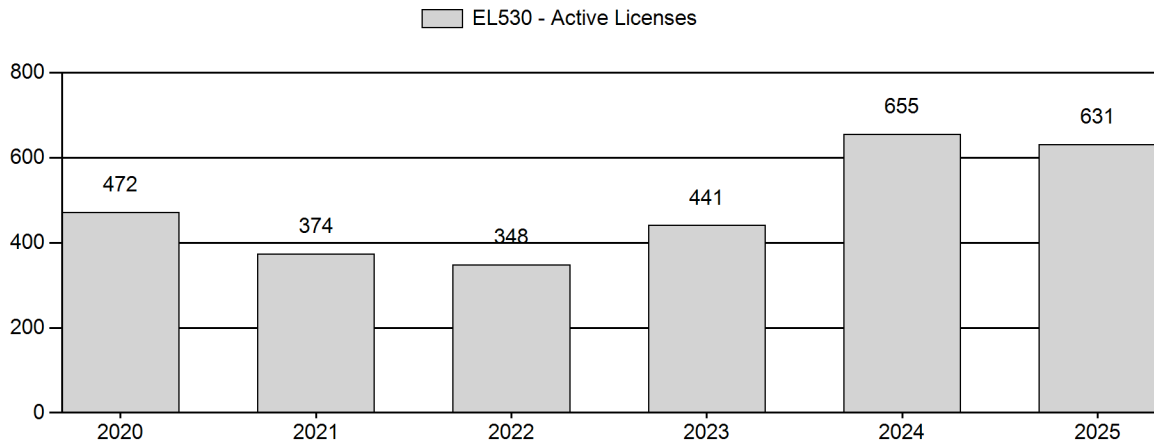
Number of Hunters



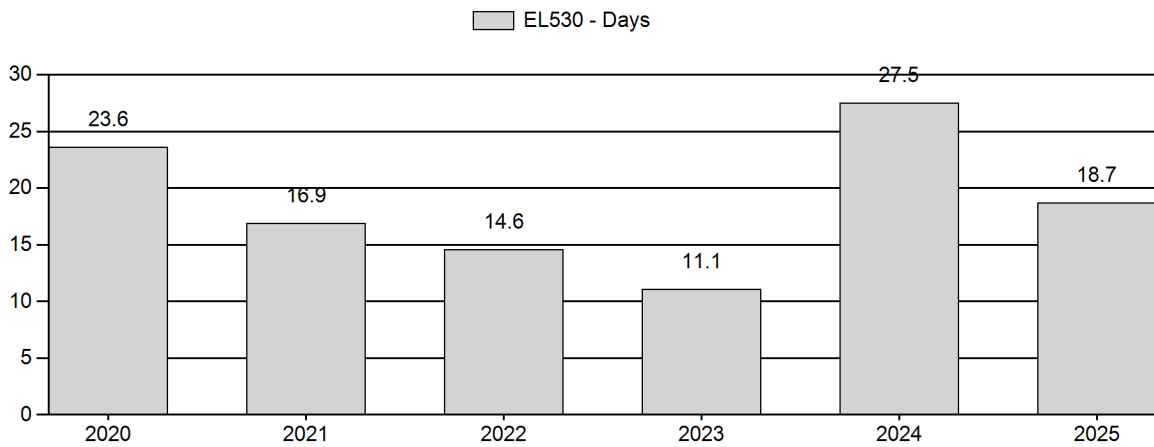
Harvest Success



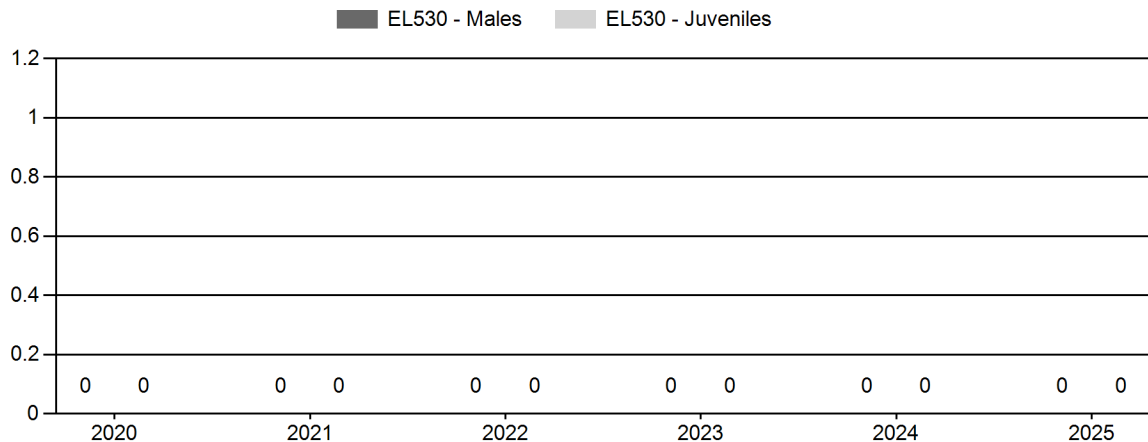
Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested



Preseason Animals per 100 Females



**2026 Hunting Seasons
Rawhide Elk Herd Unit (EL530)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
3	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30		Any elk
3	Gen			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk
3	8			Aug. 1	Jan. 31	Unlimited	Cow or calf

Rawhide Elk Herd Unit (EL530)2026 Region E Nonresident elk quota: 1,000 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 47% Satisfied, 25% Neutral, 28% Dissatisfied

2024 Landowner Satisfaction: 39% Above Desired Levels, 35% At Desired Levels, 26% Below Desired Levels

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

As of 2025, the Rawhide elk herd is managed based on a postseason population objective. It was previously managed for landowner and hunter satisfaction based objectives. The postseason population objective was set to 1,800 elk. A sightability survey was conducted in 2025 and resulted in a postseason population estimate of 830 (CI 350-1,300) elk. This result is interpreted with care due to the survey design precluding inclusion of some large cow groups and being the sole sightability survey conducted for this herd to date. Future sightability surveys will inform postseason population estimates using an integrated population model (IPM). Hunter success in 2025 was 41% and 38% for the General license and Type 8 license, respectively. The season structure is designed to maximize harvest to address damage situations and general social carrying capacity concerns. Current drought conditions could exacerbate elk damage on farms and areas with water resources. Additionally, elk are utilizing forage opportunities on early seral stage vegetation from the 2024 Goshen Rim and Pleasant Valley wildfires which may lead to increased population recruitment. The hunt area is predominantly private land and the nonresident quota is 1,000 licenses to facilitate license acquisition since demand to reduce the elk population is high. Due to continued and increasing damage concerns, the Type 8 season will shift from opening on August 15 to August 1 in 2026. The General elk season will still close on November 30 to ensure harvest focuses solely on female elk beginning December 1. The Type 8 licenses are available to provide maximum opportunity to address damage situations as they arise and increase cow/calf elk harvest as well. In 2025, 145 bulls, 18 spikes, 23 cows, and seven calves were harvested on the General license in the Rawhide herd unit. A total of 60 elk, all cows, were harvested on the Type 8 license in 2025 compared to 56 harvested in 2024. 125 nonresidents and 488 residents hunted the Rawhide herd unit in 2025. 68 nonresidents purchased a Type 8 compared to 152 residents. The amount of private land and crowding on available public land can limit public hunting opportunities. However, herd dynamics vary each year and private access, in addition to public land segments, still provide opportunity for hunters. Therefore, the 2025 license types remained in place for 2026 and season structure only differed with the Type 8 license opening date of August 1.

During the 2025 hunting season, there were no authorizations for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd unit under the Chapter 56 permit.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Rawhide elk herd was last evaluated and approved in 2025, and will be reviewed in 2029.

Weather and Habitat Data

NOAA weather stations in Cheyenne, Torrington, Fort Laramie, and Douglas demonstrated high variability in precipitation levels in 2025. Torrington was 37% below normal, while Douglas was 34% above normal annual precipitation averages. Cheyenne and Fort Laramie were very close to average. Native rangeland habitats in the herd unit largely remain in late seral stages due to a lack of natural or managed disturbances on this landscape. Due to the close proximity of perennial and annual agricultural crops to the security cover provided by steep canyons and timber stands, elk are likely to shift their diets and utilize these forage resources in this intensive agricultural environment, especially when native rangeland forage resources lack productivity or forage quality. Cheatgrass remains a major threat in native rangeland plant communities, as well as in cropland environments.

Two large wildfires occurred in this herd unit in 2024. The Goshen Rim and Pleasant Valley wildfires burned 5,580 acres and 28,984, acres respectively. High wind erosion occurred over the winter of 2024-2025, resulting in significant soil movement. Over time, we have witnessed cheatgrass become well established in disturbed areas, oftentimes as a delayed response following wildfires.

Numerous vegetation monitoring plots were established in 2025 to evaluate post-fire vegetation responses, assess risks of cheatgrass invasion, and plan further herbicide treatments with willing landowners. The majority of the burned acres were treated with imazapic (3 oz/acre) and Indaziflam (5 oz/acre) in early fall 2025.

Potential for livestock-elk competition for forage resources remains high in portions of this herd unit due to drought conditions, and should be anticipated.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Management

Due to the nature of this herd being located predominately on private land, managers have struggled to obtain adequate sample sizes in this herd unit to accurately estimate CWD prevalence. Sample collection was voluntary in 2025 and most hunters were interested in results for personal knowledge. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). Percent of harvested adult elk sampled is calculated by dividing the number of hunter harvest only elk sampled (n) by the total number of adult female and male elk harvested.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Rawhide elk herd unit, 2021 - 2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=5)	5.4
2022	0% (n=9)	11.0
2023	17% (n=6)	6.1
2024	8% (n=13)	7.4
2025	0% (n=7)	2.8
2021-2025	5% (0-17%, n=40)	4.6

Additional Management Data

The WGFD partnered with the Wyoming Military Department (Camp Guernsey) and captured 42 female elk from 2018-2022 in the Rawhide herd unit. All 42 cow elk were fitted with GPS collars. Animals were captured on Camp Guernsey and lands adjacent to Camp Guernsey. Collars were programmed to collect a GPS location every two (2) hours and to drop off after three (3) years. As elk died, collars were collected and redeployed the following January. Western EcoSystems Technology, Inc (WEST) was contracted to evaluate and summarize all of the collar data and results. This project was finalized in 2022 and the final report was completed in June of 2022.

The goal of this project was to identify 1) key winter, summer, and parturition ranges, 2) potential movement barriers, 3) important habitat components that elk select or avoid, and 4) assess whether elk are affected by military training activities or hunter activity.

Spatial location data indicated that this herd of elk is very nomadic and does not select for seasonal winter range or summer range habitats. However, data suggests most elk within this herd do have distinct parturition areas. This herd was thought to have potential movement barriers from Interstate 25 and the North Platte River. Collar data confirmed that Interstate 25 does limit natural elk movements westward across the interstate; however, elk did cross the interstate occasionally. It was also found that the North Platte River did not inhibit elk movements whatsoever. Results clearly indicated that elk were being displaced from various military training (aerial activities, range fire, personnel on site etc.) disturbance events and the elk selected for more rugged terrain during these disturbance events. There was no detection of elk being displaced due to hunter activity; however, this was likely due to the lack of fine scale hunter activity data. Managers will ultimately use these results to help minimize disturbances to the elk during military activities, identify and maintain critical habitat areas, and assist in making informative environmental comments for proposed industrial development in the area.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

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

HERD: EL531 - IRON MOUNTAIN

HUNT AREAS: 6

PREPARED BY: KEATON
WEBER

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	3,960	4,200	4,200
Harvest:	619	614	600
Hunters:	1,301	1,236	1,200
Hunter Success:	48%	50%	50%
Active Licenses:	1,383	1,314	1,300
Active License Success:	45%	47%	46%
Recreation Days:	8,138	8,387	8,200
Days Per Animal:	13.1	13.7	13.7
Males per 100 Females	30	31	
Juveniles per 100 Females	46	46	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 1800 (1440 - 2160)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 133%

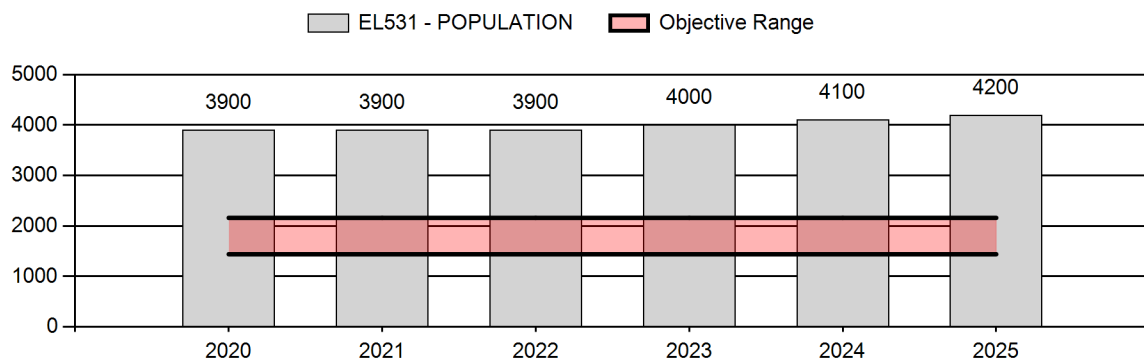
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 21

Model Date: 2/27/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	12%	14%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	29%	32%
Proposed change in post-season population:	1%	1%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Elk Herd EL531 - IRON MOUNTAIN

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	3,900	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2021	3,900	87	105	192	17%	638	57%	295	26%	1,125	0	14	16	30	± 3	46	± 4	36
2022	3,900	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2023	4,000	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2024	4,100	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2025	4,200	53	96	149	18%	475	56%	217	26%	841	0	11	20	31	± 3	46	± 4	35

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Iron Mountain Elk (EL531)**

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
6	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31		Any elk valid off national forest
6	Gen			Nov. 1	Dec. 31		Antlerless elk valid off national forest
6	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	50	Any elk
6	1			Nov. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk
6	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Jan. 31	25	Antlerless elk
6	8			Aug. 1	Jan. 31	Unlimited	Cow or calf valid off national forest

2026 Region E Nonresident Elk quota: 1,000 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 72% Satisfied, 20% Neutral, 8% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

A total of 614 elk were harvested during the regular season in 2025. Hunters harvested 255 cow elk - the lowest female harvest total for the hunt area since 2018 (253) and significantly below the three-year average of 323. As a result of increased flight survey efforts in other parts of the Laramie region, classification data was not collected during the previous 3 years. However, in 2025 managers were able to classify 841 elk. Results indicated that ratios remain very close to those observed during the last classification effort in 2021. Bull ratios in 2025 (31:100) nearly matched the 2021 bull ratio (30:100). Similarly, the calf ratio in 2025 was the same as 2021 at 46 calves per 100 cows, further demonstrating that this population remains extremely productive.

The season structure is designed to maximize cow elk harvest and hunter opportunity in a private land-dominated area. In 2024, the Type 6 license was replaced with the unlimited Type 8 license for the 2024 season to allow more flexibility to harvest elk. Type 1 and Type 4 licenses remain valid area-wide to allow for a higher-quality public land hunt within the limited National Forest in the southern portion of the hunt area. The Type 8 license opens August 1st to allow for damage situations to be addressed with hunters as early as possible and help reduce the population towards the objective.

In 2022, we started utilizing Chapter 56 permits to increase cow elk harvest. We harvested an additional 129 elk in 2022, 304 elk in 2023, 156 elk in 2024 and 175 elk in 2025. We will continue to utilize Chapter 56 permits in 2026 to help reduce the population toward the objective.

In biological year 2025, there was one chapter 56 permit authorized in hunt area 6. Details are as follows:

Chapter 56 Permit - Elk Hunt Area 6

- Albany, Platte, and Laramie Counties - 30 participating landowners
- Permit Dates: July 25, 2025 - March 31, 2026
- 30 ranches were identified, with 25 landowners participating
- Authorization for removal of up to 600 antlerless elk to be harvested
- Total Harvest = 175 cow elk

Management Objective Review

The management objective for the Iron Mountain elk herd was set in 1997 as a postseason population objective of 1800 elk. The objective and management strategy for the Iron Mountain Elk herd was last evaluated and approved in 2022, and will not be reviewed again until 2027.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring and Management

The Iron Mountain elk herd was prioritized for CWD sampling from 2019 to 2021 (completed multiple years). The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). This is a Tier 2 surveillance herd and is scheduled for priority sampling again in 2026 – 2027.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter harvested elk in the Iron Mountain Elk Herd Unit, 2021-2025.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	15.2% (n=92)	15
2022	9.0% (n=111)	21
2023	7% (n=227)	38
2024	11% (n=135)	22
2025	10% (n=67)	12
2021-2025	9.8% (6.9-12.4%), n=632)	20

Population Modeling

In 2026, managers transitioned from the spreadsheet model to the Integrated Population Model (IPM). In 2023, a sightability estimate was conducted, resulting in an estimate of 4,800 elk and anchoring the IPM estimate. The 2025 postseason population estimate from the IPM was 4,200 (CL = 3,400 – 5,100) above the postseason population objective of 1,800 ($\pm 20\%$ 1,400- 2,200) elk. The IPM estimate reflects a more realistic population estimate than the spreadsheet model. Targeted harvest had to be increased to 400 females to achieve population stability and no increase in abundance. Reproduction and Juvenile survival were Time Varying while adult survival was constant. Licenses were used as the effort variable, as it most closely matched harvest metrics. Model convergence was good.

The Laramie region conducted an elk sightability survey in the Iron Mountain Herd Unit May 4th through May 8th of 2023. A fixed wing flight was conducted on April 23rd to determine if elk had distributed from winter range, and broken into smaller groups. We selected 963 of 977 possible subunits as occupied habitat. Of the 963 subunits, we randomly selected 300 to fly. We observed 1,403 elk and flew 37 hours to complete the survey. The sightability model used was the Elk Sightability Model for the Bell 47G by Mark A. Hurley. The estimate was 4,894 with the lower confidence interval at 2,987 and the upper confidence interval at 6,801 (p 0.920).

Habitat and Weather Summary

Precipitation in the herd unit area was slightly above average (+7%) at the NOAA weather station in Laramie. A lack of late-winter and early-spring moisture was observed, yet late-spring and late-summer precipitation amounts were above normal. Cheyenne weather station data showed average annual precipitation levels. Green-up of forage was witnessed in September and resulted in some late-season forage production. High population numbers of elk and their use of private lands continues to create conflicts with domestic livestock producers in this herd unit.

Dalmation toadflax and cheatgrass are both present in mixed mountain shrub habitats in portions of the herd unit, causing concern for habitat managers, as herbicides traditionally used for Dalmation toadflax control result in significant non-targeted plant injury. The use of Rejuvra herbicide may aid in control of cheatgrass and Dalmation toadflax in the future, and result in less non-targeted plant injury. Approval of this herbicide for use by BLM in 2024 was important for large-scale control efforts going forward in landscapes consisting of mixed ownerships. Rejuvra will be the product of choice for cheatgrass control going forward. Herbicide applications slated for early 2026 will target Dalmation toadflax and cheatgrass infestations that have shown up in prescribed fire scars from treatments conducted over a decade ago.

Two wildfires occurred in the herd unit in 2024, 1,500 acres within the Bear Creek drainage south of Sybille Canyon, and 2,100 acres northwest of Chugwater at the edge of the Richeau Hills. High fire severity in the Bear Creek area caused concern for cheatgrass invasion, and

Rejuvra herbicide applications were conducted in early Fall 2025 to control cheatgrass within the fire scar. Due to the timing of and lower severity seen in the Richeau Hills wildfire, we remain more optimistic about potential recovery of native, perennial vegetation at this site, and at this time does not require follow-up herbicide application.

Wyoming Game and Fish Department

IPM Analysis Report

February 27, 2026

Model Definition

- **Species:** Elk
- **DAU:** Iron Mountain 531
- **Years:** 2015 - 2027
- **Effort Variable:** Licenses
- **Trend Count Used:** TRUE

Structure

- **Reproduction:** Time Varying
- **Juvenile Survival:** Time Varying
- **Adult Survival:** Constant

Model Fitting

- **MCMC Burnin:** 50,000
- **MCMC Iterations:** 55,000
- **Thinning Rate:** 1

Diagnostics

The Brooks, Gelman and Rubin convergence diagnostic (Rhat) is a test used to determine whether the analysis has found a reliable solution. Values < 1.1 generally suggest that the model was run for a sufficient number of iterations while values > 1.1 suggest that the model should be run for more iterations. The maximum values of the point estimate and upper CI are reported below.

- **Rhat Max of Point Est:** 1.08
- **Rhat Max of Upper CI:** 1.21
- **Proportion < 1.1:** 1
- **Convergence Likely:** Yes, looks good

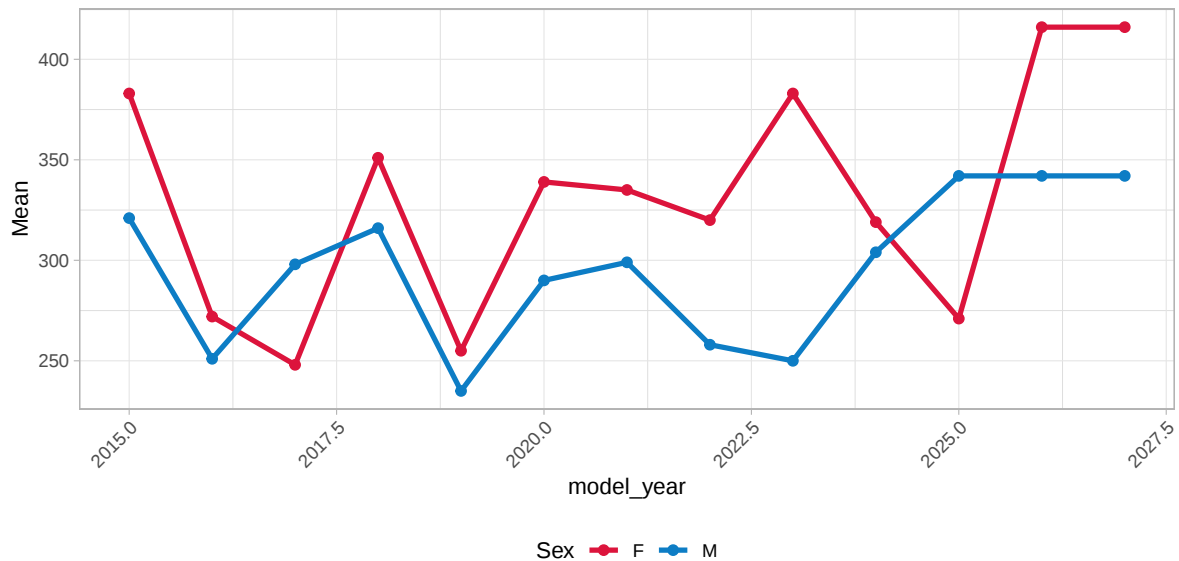
JCR Summary

Metric	2025	2026	3 Year Average
Preseason Population Estimate	5,020 (4,230-6,044)	5,205 (4,325-6,351)	
Total Harvest	613	758	
Postseason Population Estimate	4,177 (3,441-5,127)	4,198 (3,386-5,243)	
Female >= 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.115	0.143	
Male >= 1 year old Harvest Rate	0.29	0.318	0.28
Projected Change in Postseason Population	1.01	1.01	

Using this report

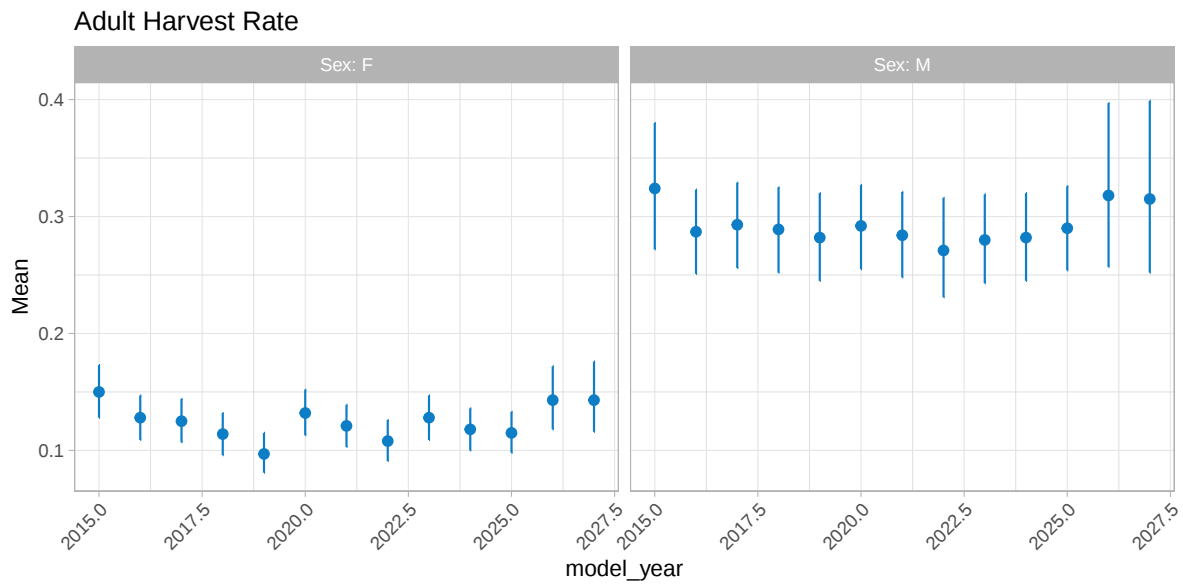
- Estimates v Observations
 - The term *estimate* is used to reference values estimated by the integrated population model (IPM) while *observation* is used to refer to field observations that serve as inputs to the IPM.

Harvest

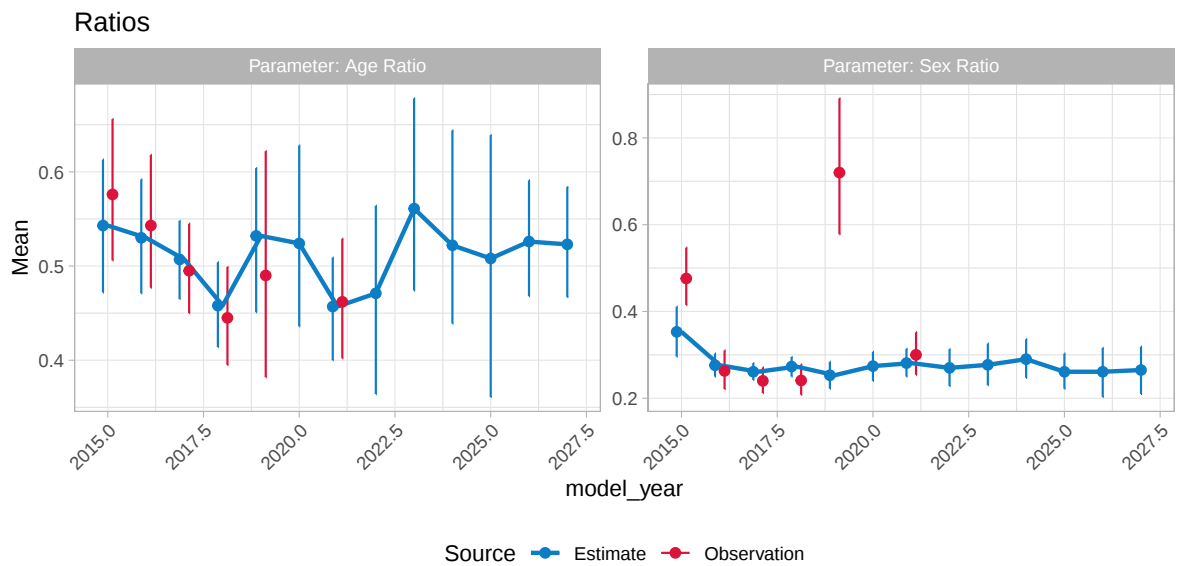


The plot above depicts male (M) and female (F) harvest through time.

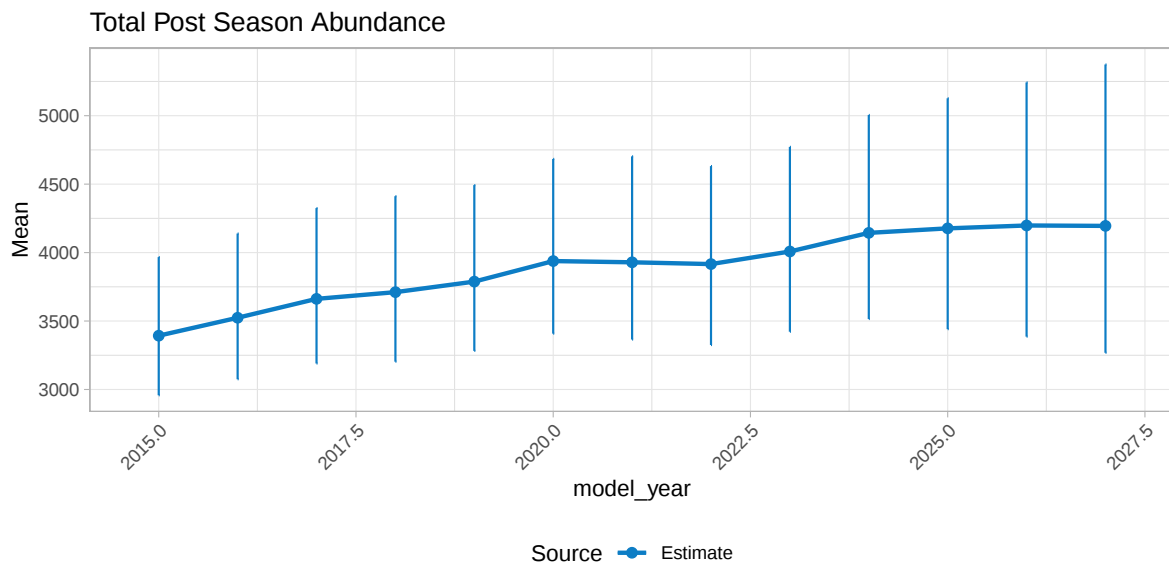
Adult Harvest Rate



Ratios



Total Post Season Abundance



Report prepared using SpeedGoat® software

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

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

HERD: EL533 - SNOWY RANGE

HUNT AREAS: 8-12, 110, 125

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	9,836	10,200	8,900
Harvest:	2,296	2,529	2,600
Hunters:	5,724	6,587	6,750
Hunter Success:	40%	38%	39 %
Active Licenses:	6,453	7,400	7,500
Active License Success:	36%	34%	35 %
Recreation Days:	49,888	62,702	65,000
Days Per Animal:	21.7	24.8	25
Males per 100 Females	28	23	
Juveniles per 100 Females	39	41	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 6000 (4800 - 7200)

Management Strategy: Recreational

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 70%

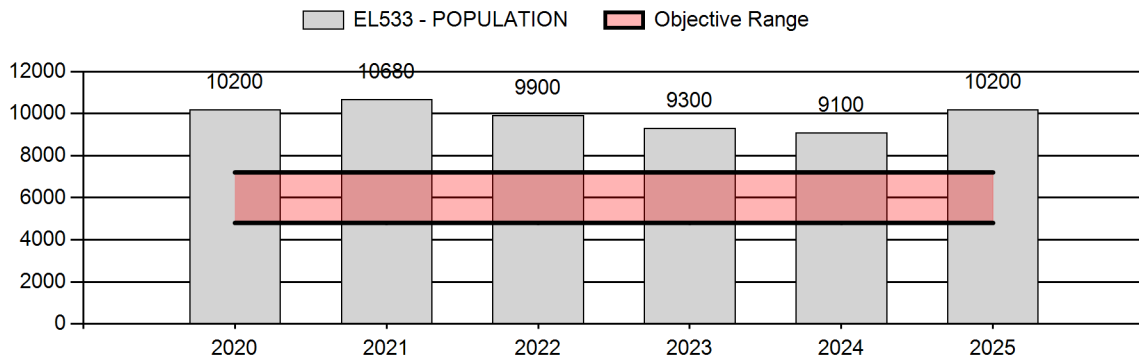
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 11

Model Date: 2/26/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	17%	19%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	49%	57%
Proposed change in post-season population:	-9%	-13%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Elk Herd EL533 - SNOWY RANGE

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	10,200	41	46	87	13%	384	60%	174	27%	645	573	11	12	23	± 3	45	± 5	37
2021	10,680	155	234	390	19%	1,170	58%	462	23%	2,022	556	13	20	33	± 2	39	± 3	30
2022	9,900	90	184	274	19%	855	58%	350	24%	1,479	475	11	22	32	± 3	41	± 3	31
2023	9,300	143	123	266	13%	1,317	65%	447	22%	2,030	560	11	9	20	± 2	34	± 2	28
2024	9,100	108	212	321	18%	1,031	58%	413	23%	1,765	0	10	21	31	± 2	40	± 3	31
2025	10,200	217	122	339	14%	1,448	61%	588	25%	2,375	474	15	8	23	± 2	41	± 2	33

2026 Hunting Seasons
Snowy Range Elk Herd Unit (EL533)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
8	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Jan. 31	150	Any elk
8	8			Aug. 1	Jan. 31	Unlimited	Cow or calf
9	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
9	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 7		Antlerless elk
9	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	250	Cow or calf
9, 10	7			Aug. 15	Jan. 31	350	Cow or calf valid off national forest
10	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
10	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 7		Antlerless elk
10	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	300	Cow or calf
11	1	Sep. 15	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	150	Any elk
11	2			Nov. 1	Nov. 30	100	Any elk
11	2			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Any elk valid off national forest
11	4	Sep. 15	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Jan. 31	100	Antlerless elk
11	6			Aug. 15	Sep. 30	450	Cow or calf valid off national forest and off the Wick Wildlife Habitat Management Area
11	6			Oct. 1	Jan. 31		Cow or calf
11	9			Sep. 1	Sep. 30	75	Any elk, archery only
12	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
12	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 7		Antlerless elk
12	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	300	Cow or calf
12, 13, 15, 110	7			Aug. 15	Jan. 31	400	Cow or calf valid on private land
110	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
110	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 7		Antlerless elk
110	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	300	Cow or calf
125	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Dec. 31	250	Any elk
125	1			Jan. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk
125	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Jan. 31	300	Cow or calf

2026 Nonresident General Elk Region S Quota: 1,050 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 58% Satisfied, 25% Neutral, 17% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2025 harvest survey reported that 6,587 hunters harvested 2,529 elk. While this harvest was comparable to 2024 (2,740), it exceeded the five-year average of about 2,300 elk. Despite an increase in available licenses, hunter success declined to 38% (down from the five-year average of 40%), and the average number of days required to harvest an elk rose to 25 (up from the five-year average of 22). Overall elk hunting in 2025 was considered fair, though the mild weather conditions during the season likely contributed to the lower success rate.

Antlerless elk continued to comprise over 50% of the total elk harvest in 2025. Despite implementing longer season dates for antlerless elk hunters and increasing the number of available licenses, the total harvest was slightly lower than in 2024. This decrease was likely due to the mild weather conditions, which made elk less susceptible to harvest in lower-elevation, private land areas. Bull harvest (including yearling and branch antlered bulls) saw an increase, totaling 1,182 bulls harvested in 2025. This figure is higher than the five-year average of 1,063 and represents the largest bull harvest since 2013. Branch antlered bulls remained the majority of the bull harvest reported on the harvest survey. Approximately 13% of the total elk harvested in the Snowy Range Herd Unit were harvested using archery equipment.

During 2025, there was one authorization for auxiliary elk harvest in this herd unit under the Chapter 34 Regulation and one Chapter 56 permit. In total, 14 antlerless elk were harvested under these authorizations and permits in addition to the totals reported in the harvest survey. Details are as follows:

Auxiliary Hunt H (AUX2025-H) - Elk Hunt Area 11

- Carbon County - 1 participating landowner
- Permit dates - July 25, 2025 - August 14, 2025
- 20, auxiliary antlerless elk licenses authorized
- Hunters- 18 licenses, 15 hunters
- Total harvest - 12 cow elk

Chapter 56 permit - Elk Hunt Area 8

- Albany County - 1 participating landowner
- Permit dates – January 1, 2025 – December 31, 2025
- Authorization for removal of up to 25 elk
- Hunters- 18 licenses, 15 hunters
- Total harvest – 2 cow elk

The 2025 post-hunting season male (branched antlered and yearling) to female ratio (23/100) was below the five-year average (28/100) and the juvenile to female ratio (41/100) was slightly above the five-year average of 40/100. Classification data were collected opportunistically during December and January aerial surveys. Sparsity in data may have contributed to the change in ratios. Mild winter conditions may have also affected the number of adult bulls observed, as they were likely still dispersed at higher elevations that were not surveyed as intensely. As expected, productivity as indicated by calf-to-cow ratios, continues to be good because of successive mild winters. The 2025 hunting seasons provided recreational elk hunting opportunities while reducing

the overall elk population toward the objective. The 2025 post-hunting season population estimate of 10,200 elk remained above the objective of 6,000 elk ($\pm 20\%$)

To address issues of hunter crowding and improve hunt quality for Type 1 and Type 9 licenses, managers made several adjustments to Hunt Area 11 in 2024 and 2025. The Type 1 license season dates were adjusted to close on October 31 and no longer include a late season option. To ensure a late-season opportunity remains available for addressing bull elk damage, 50 licenses were shifted from the Type 1 quota to the Type 2 quota. This reduction in the Type 1 quota is expected to ease crowding and enhance the quality of the Type 1 and Type 9 hunts. The 2025 Type 1 and Type 2 hunts yielded high hunter success rates of 64% and 78%, respectively. This success was likely the result of the late season dates and good access to private lands where elk are causing damage. Despite this high success, quotas were not increased due to the season date changes. Managers plan to monitor success in 2026 and will use the data from the new season dates to inform future quota adjustments.

For the 2026 season, Hunt Areas 9, 10, 12, and 110 maintained general elk licenses, while Hunt Areas 8, 11, and 125 remained limited quota. The unlimited Type 8 antlerless elk license was successful in Hunt Area 8 in 2025, contributing to an increased cow harvest. This unlimited Type 8 was continued in 2026 to further boost cow harvest, address damage concerns, and work toward the management objective. To address damage situations as early as possible with hunters the Type 8 license will open on August 1.

Following high hunter success over the previous three years and landowner feedback, quotas for Type 1 and Type 6 licenses in Hunt Area 125 were increased in 2026.

Discussions regarding implementing a general elk license in Hunt Area 8 took place but implementation is scheduled for 2027 at the earliest. This change is intended to give landowners greater flexibility to address elk damage issues earlier in the season.

The number of Type 7 antlerless licenses, which are valid on private land in Hunt Areas 12, 13, 15, and 110, has seen several increases over the past five years. These increases were intended to help reduce the elk population toward the objective and mitigate damage on private lands. For the 2027 season, consideration will be given to allocating separate Type 7 quotas for each hunt area to more accurately track hunter and harvest distribution. While this change might reduce hunter flexibility, it could allow more licenses to be available for sale later in the season when private land damage issues emerge, rather than selling out during the leftover draw or before the hunting season begins.

The 2025 extension of the firearm season for antlerless elk, in general hunt areas, was designed to boost cow harvest. While some cow elk were taken during this period, the overall effectiveness may have been limited due to unfavorable elk hunting conditions. To provide more licensed hunters with increased opportunity to harvest cow elk, this season extension (November 1-7) will be continued in 2026.

In 2024, nonresident region general elk hunt areas and general elk license quotas were established. The Nonresident General Elk Southern Region (Region S) had a quota of 1,050 licenses. The license quota was based on the 2019-21 average number of nonresident hunters in the general license hunt areas that comprise Region S. Geographically, Region S encompasses several limited quota hunt

areas, however nonresidents with general elk region licenses are only permitted to hunt in areas designated as general and not within limited quota hunt areas. Region S license holders may have contributed to slightly higher nonresident hunter numbers, as the proportion of nonresident participation across all license types was 19% in 2024 and 18% 2025 compared to an average nonresident participation of 16.6% from 2020-23.

Management Objective Review

The 6,000 elk ($\pm 20\%$) postseason population objective and recreational management strategy were last evaluated in 2023 and will not be reviewed again until 2028.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management

The Snowy Range Elk Herd was prioritized for CWD sampling in 2024. The five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1).

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Snowy Range Elk Herd, 2021-25.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=142)	8
2022	3% (n=98)	5
2023	2% (n=107)	5
2024*	1% (n=207)	9
2025	4% (n=137)	5
2021-2025	2% (1-3%, n=691)	6

*Priority CWD sampling effort

Population Modeling

Managers used the “Constant Juvenile and Constant Adult” (CJ, CA) Spreadsheet Model to simulate population dynamics. The other models in the spreadsheet model suite had either higher AIC scores or were not biologically realistic. Without other important information such as an independent abundance estimate or historical survival data to incorporate into the model, accuracy of estimates will continue to be unknown. A decreasing trend in the annual estimate continued with the CJ, CA model and was considered to be consistent with the observations by field managers.

In 2025, managers attempted to model the Snowy Range elk herd with an Integrated Population Model (IPM) using the default structure for elk, i.e. constant adult survival, time-varying reproduction and juvenile survival. Based on visual comparison of the available effort variables, licenses was selected as the variable most predictably related to annual harvest. Trends in harvest and effort before 2010 are less predictable in this herd, so only data from 2010 onward were included in the IPM. With these settings the observed data for the IPM included 16 years of harvest and ratio data. IPM convergence was excellent, with all Rhat values less than 1.1, and calf and bull ratio estimates produced by the IPM

aligned well with recorded data for this herd. The 2025 post-hunting season abundance was estimated at 13,300 elk (CL 12,300–14,700). This model projected a decrease in post-hunting season abundance if current harvest levels are maintained. The observed trend suggests that the increased female harvest may be achieving the desired population control effect. To enhance confidence in the population model, an independent abundance estimate is needed and is currently being considered for the 2026 biological year. Following this effort, managers will decide whether we will switch to estimating population based on IPM and how that may affect the herd objectives.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

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

HERD: EL534 - SHIRLEY MOUNTAIN

HUNT AREAS: 16

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	1,284	1,961	1,300
Harvest:	534	562	575
Hunters:	834	990	1,000
Hunter Success:	64%	57%	58 %
Active Licenses:	881	1,033	1,050
Active License Success	61%	54%	55 %
Recreation Days:	6,483	8,475	8,500
Days Per Animal:	12.1	15.1	14.8
Males per 100 Females:	46	0	
Juveniles per 100 Females	34	0	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm$ 20%)

1,200 (960 - 1440)

Management Strategy:

Special

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

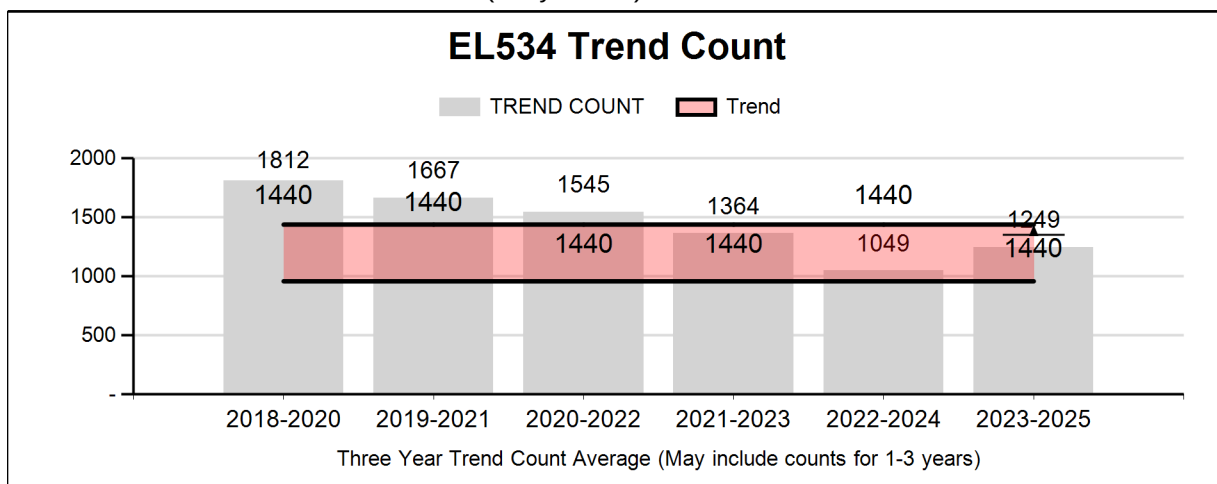
63%

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

1

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females $\geq$ 1 year old:	N/A%	N/A%
Males $\geq$ 1 year old:	N/A%	N/A%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	N/A%	N/A%



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Elk Herd EL534 - SHIRLEY MOUNTAIN

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	40	223	263	17%	997	63%	317	20%	1,577	390	4	22	26	± 0	32	± 0	25
2021	0	124	164	289	24%	679	56%	252	21%	1,220	0	18	24	43	± 0	37	± 0	26
2022	0	138	213	351	26%	708	52%	303	22%	1,362	0	19	30	50	± 0	43	± 0	29
2023	0	68	254	322	31%	550	54%	152	15%	1,024	519	12	46	59	± 0	28	± 0	17
2024	0	44	185	229	47%	210	43%	46	9%	485	0	21	88	109	± 0	22	± 0	10
2025	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	451	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Shirley Mountain Elk Herd Unit (EL534)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
16	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	275	Any elk
16	1			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk
16	2	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Nov. 1	Nov. 30	125	Any elk
16	2			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk
16	4			Aug. 15	Sep. 30	300	Antlerless elk valid on private land; also valid on or within one-half (1/2) mile of irrigated land
16	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid in the entire area
16	6			Aug. 15	Sep. 30	300	Cow or calf valid on private land; also valid on or within one-half (1/2) mile of irrigated land
16	6			Oct. 1	Nov. 30		Cow or calf valid in the entire area
16	7			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	200	Cow or calf

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 68% Satisfied, 17% Neutral, 15% Dissatisfied

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The harvest survey report estimated that 1,033 hunters harvested 562 elk in 2025, resulting in a 54% success rate. Of the total harvest, cows accounted for 53%, antlered elk for 41%, and calves made up the remaining 6%. The percentage of branch-antlered bulls (99%) in the antlered elk harvest and the high bull ratio observed during the trend survey met special management parameters.

The mid-winter trend count to estimate the wintering population of elk in the herd unit was conducted in January 2026, during which 1,961 elk were counted. Approximately 500 elk were counted along US Highway 30 within the herd unit. Three cows in this group had been collared in the Snowy Range Elk Herd Unit (Hunt Area 125) in 2025. This group of elk appears to frequent the area between the two herd units during the late hunting season and post-hunting season, though they may not always be detected during the annual trend count. The three-year (2023-25) trend count average of 1,249 elk was within the objective range of 1,200 elk (960-1,440).

Type 1 and 2 license success has exceeded 60% over the last three years. Over the past five years, Type 1 and 2 license quotas were increased in 2021 (Type 1), 2022 (Type 1), and 2023 (Type 1 and 2). These licenses are highly coveted, difficult to draw, and license holders expect a high-quality

hunt experience. Hunter success has been high however, comments on the harvest survey report and field interviews indicated that public lands are becoming increasingly crowded and could contribute to reduced success in the future by putting disproportionate hunting pressure on “public land elk.” A large portion of this herd unit can be unavailable to Type 1 and 2 hunters due to the checkerboard land ownership pattern and limited private land access, therefore, we prefer to take a conservative approach to increases in the Type 1 and 2 license quotas in 2026.

Access to private lands for antlerless elk hunters in 2025 was similar to 2024, resulting in fair hunter success on Type 4, 6, and 7 licenses. Access is not expected to improve significantly in 2026. The Type 4 and 6 “within one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) mile of irrigated land” limitation was retained to address elk damage. The opening date for the Type 4 private land firearm season was adjusted to August 15. This change was implemented to better align with earlier damage situations, thus providing more opportunity for antlerless elk harvest on private property. The special archery season for Type 6 licensed hunters was removed in 2026. This change is not anticipated to impact the overall success rate for this license type, as the proportion of the annual harvest during this specific season has historically been low. However, this adjustment is expected to improve the perceived quality of the hunt for individuals with Type 1 and 2 licenses.

The Type 7 license valid from December to January was retained to increase cow elk harvest, while minimizing hunter crowding concerns during the popular Type 1 and 2 hunting seasons. Given the location of winter ranges elk typically occupy in December, hunters will likely need private land access to be successful on this license. Landowners who have provided late-season hunter access have expressed that current antlerless elk license quotas are sufficient and are concerned about significant increases in access requests.

We would like to maintain high antlerless elk hunter success, while also meeting the expectations of hunters who hold the hard-to-draw Type 1 and 2 licenses. The 2026 hunting seasons were prescribed to maintain bull-to-cow ratios that meet the special management parameters and reduce elk numbers.

Management Objective Review

The mid-winter trend count objective of 1,200 elk ($\pm 20\%$) and special management strategy were last evaluated and approved in 2025, and will not be reviewed again until 2030.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management

CWD was first detected in this herd unit in 2006. The Shirley Mountain elk herd has limited CWD prevalence data available, and no CWD management actions have occurred. Despite limited data, the five-year annual and average prevalence estimates, sample sizes, and percent of harvest sampled for CWD are presented below (Table 1). This herd has not been prioritized for CWD surveillance because of the challenges associated with collecting a statistically valid sample of hunter-harvested elk.

Table 1. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Shirley Mountain Elk Herd, 2021-25.

Year(s)	Percent CWD-Positive and (n) – <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=16)	3
2022	0% (n=15)	3
2023	8% (n=24)	4
2024	0% (n=20)	4
2025	0% (n=15)	4
2021-2025	2% (0.3-8%, n=90)	4

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep

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

HERD: BS516 - DOUGLAS CREEK

HUNT AREAS: 18

PREPARED BY: KEATON
WEBER

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:		N/A	N/A
Harvest:	2	3	3
Hunters:	2	3	3
Hunter Success:	100%	100%	100%
Active Licenses:	2	3	3
Active License Success:	100%	100%	100%
Recreation Days:	33	38	30
Days Per Animal:	16.5	12.7	10

Limited Opportunity Objective:

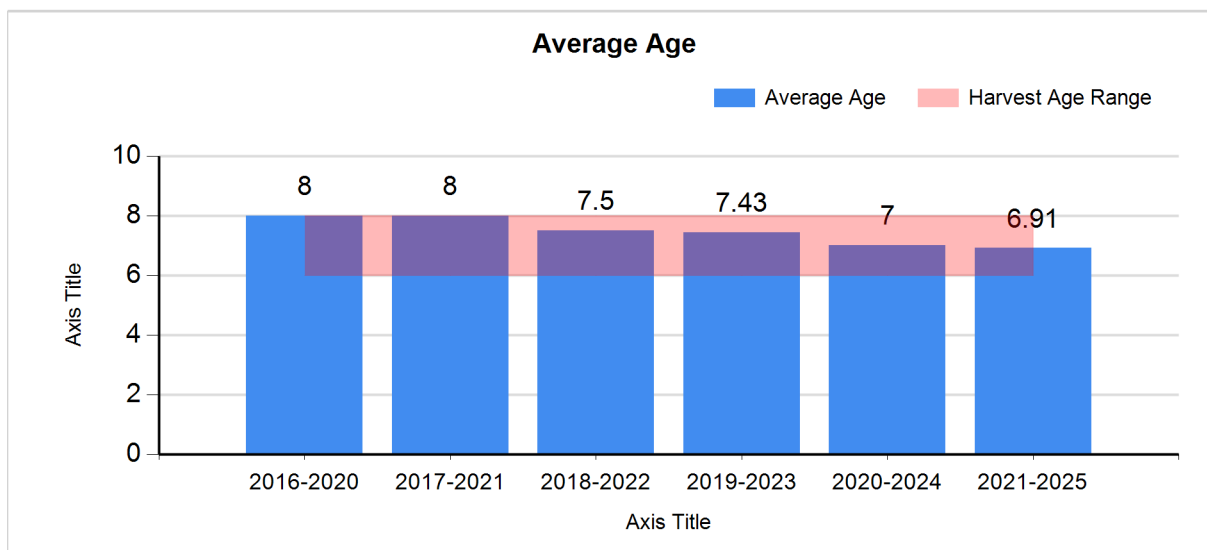
5-year average of > 75% hunter success

5-year average harvest age of 6-8 years

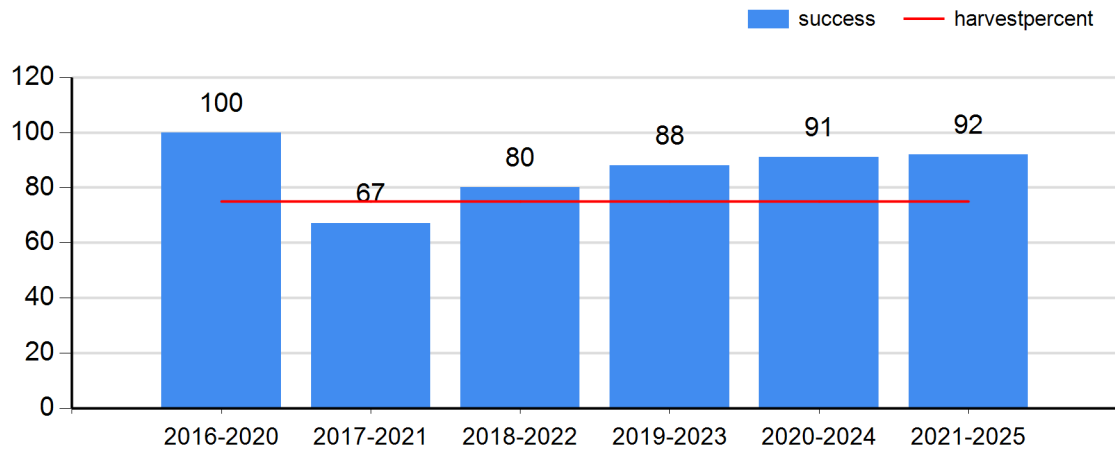
Secondary Objective:

Management Strategy:

Special



Hunter Success



**2026 Hunting Seasons
Douglas Creek Bighorn Sheep Herd Unit (BS 516)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Season Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
18	1	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Nov. 30	3	Any ram

Current Management Objective: Bighorn Sheep Limited Opportunity

1) 5-year running average of >75% hunter success

☐ Currently Met: 2021-2025 Hunter Success - 100%

2) 5-year running average age of harvested rams between 6 and 8 years of age

☐ Currently Met: 2021-2025 Harvest Mean Age- 7 years of age

3) Documented occurrence of at least three times more adult rams in the population than the number of licenses issued.

☐ Currently Met: 10 adult rams observed in 2025

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2025 hunting season structure provided three resident hunters with the opportunity to harvest mature rams in Hunt Area 18. Based on frequent observations of mature rams in Douglas Creek (Hunt Area 18) and Encampment River (Hunt Area 21), managers continued to forgo the traditional season structure and provide additional opportunity by allocating separate license quotas for each hunt area. For the 2026 season, Hunt Area 18 will again have three licenses: one nonresident and two residents. We expect hunters will have a high likelihood of success and this herd will continue to meet the bighorn sheep limited-opportunity management objectives.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Douglas Creek Bighorn Sheep Herd was last evaluated and approved in 2021, and will not be reviewed again until 2026. The management objective for the Douglas Creek Herd Unit is a limited opportunity.

Research

Managers deployed nine GPS collars on ewes within the Douglas Creek herd in 2019 as part of the statewide disease surveillance effort for bighorn sheep populations. Although the focus of this collaring effort was to monitor disease within the herd, valuable information on movement and habitat selection was also an added benefit.

In the fall of 2020, the Mullen Wildfire burned over 176,800 acres in the Snowy Range and burned nearly all occupiable bighorn sheep habitat within the Douglas Creek Herd Unit. The wildfire increased line-of-sight visibility and created more open travel corridors for bighorn sheep, aiding their movements to escape terrain and lambing habitats. This wildfire presented managers with a unique opportunity to study whether bighorn sheep expand their home ranges post-wildfire to capitalize on these newly opened habitats.

In 2022, managers deployed an additional 19 GPS collars on ewes, of which four collared individuals from 2019 were re-captured and fitted with new GPS collars. These additional collars enabled biologists to monitor movement, habitat selection, and home-range size for the same individuals pre- and post-fire.

Preliminary results from pre- and post-fire analyses suggest that Douglas Creek bighorn sheep are expanding their use within the Mullen Wildfire burn scar. Home-range comparisons for four individual ewes show significant increases in home range size and habitat use shifted from less desirable bighorn sheep habitat to more suitable habitat within the wildfire burn scar. Managers will continue to monitor the Douglas Creek bighorn sheep herd to determine how improved habitat quality and availability affect population performance.

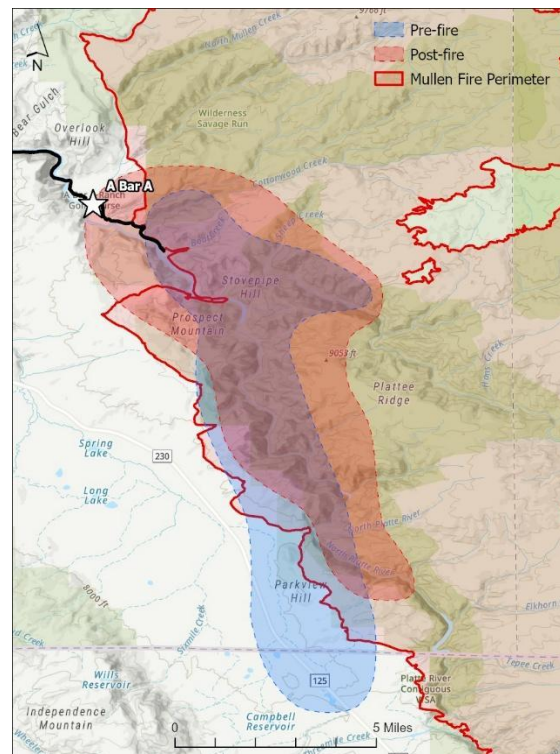


Image 1. Douglas Creek Bighorn sheep herd population home range pre-Mullen wildfire (blue) and post Mullen wildfire (red). This image demonstrates how this population of bighorn sheep increased their home range post fire and also shifted their use from sage brush flats around

Parkview Hill/Colorado Stateline to the steep, rocky slopes of the N. Platte River drainage.
Image credit, Erik Newkirk – WGFD Science, Research, & Analytical Support Unit.

Habitat and Weather Summary

Annual precipitation in Hunt Area 18 was below average in 2025. While no NOAA weather stations are in close proximity to occupied bighorn sheep habitats in Hunt Area 18, the nearest weather stations in Rawlins reported a 5.3% decrease in annual precipitation while the Laramie station reported slightly above normal annual precipitation. Early spring precipitation occurred in April (1.2 inches) and May (2.31 inches) but diminished by early June. Higher than normal precipitation occurred during September (2.03 inches) and likely resulted in some late season green up of herbaceous vegetation. Winter conditions on the western slopes of the Snowy Range remained mild for most of 2025. SNOTEL sites in the Snowy Range reported below-average to slightly above-average (84-116%) snowpack from January through March 2025.

In September 2020, the Mullen Fire burned over 176,800 acres in the Snowy Range, including two wilderness areas. The western third of the burn area encompasses occupied bighorn sheep habitat. The wildfire likely increased line of sight visibility and created more open travel corridors for bighorn sheep, aiding their movements to escape terrain and lambing habitats. High fire severity in places is a continued cause for concern for cheatgrass invasion in Savage Run and Platte River wilderness areas, as well as other areas adjacent to North Platte River. In 2021, 10,334 acres on the western slope of the Snowy Range were aerially treated with the herbicide Rejuvra. Annual monitoring since the initial treatment shows promising recovery of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs. However, cheatgrass persists in areas where soil movement has occurred, and remains dense within the no-spray buffer around the North Platte River. Additionally, post-treatment monitoring has documented “breaks” in the original treatment, indicating the need for a re-treatment.

In 2025, the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) aerially treated 5,170 acres in the Prospect area with Indaziflam to control cheatgrass infestations. The PVHP is planning to re-treat a significant portion of the Mullen Fire burn scar in 2026 and 2027 to continue efforts to control cheatgrass infestations post-fire.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep

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

HERD: BS517 - LARAMIE PEAK

HUNT AREAS: 19

PREPARED BY: MARINA
MCCAMPBELL

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:		N/A	N/A
Harvest:	7	10	10
Hunters:	8	11	10
Hunter Success:	88%	91%	100 %
Active Licenses:	8	11	10
Active License Success:	88%	91%	100 %
Recreation Days:	119	151	130
Days Per Animal:	17	15.1	13

Limited Opportunity Objective:

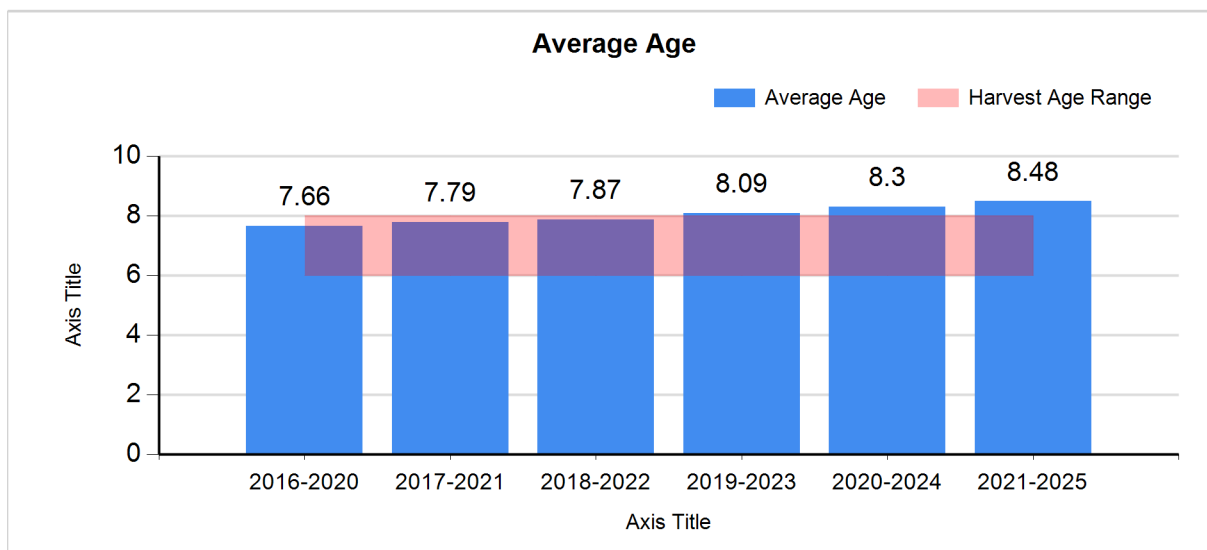
5-year average of > 75% hunter success

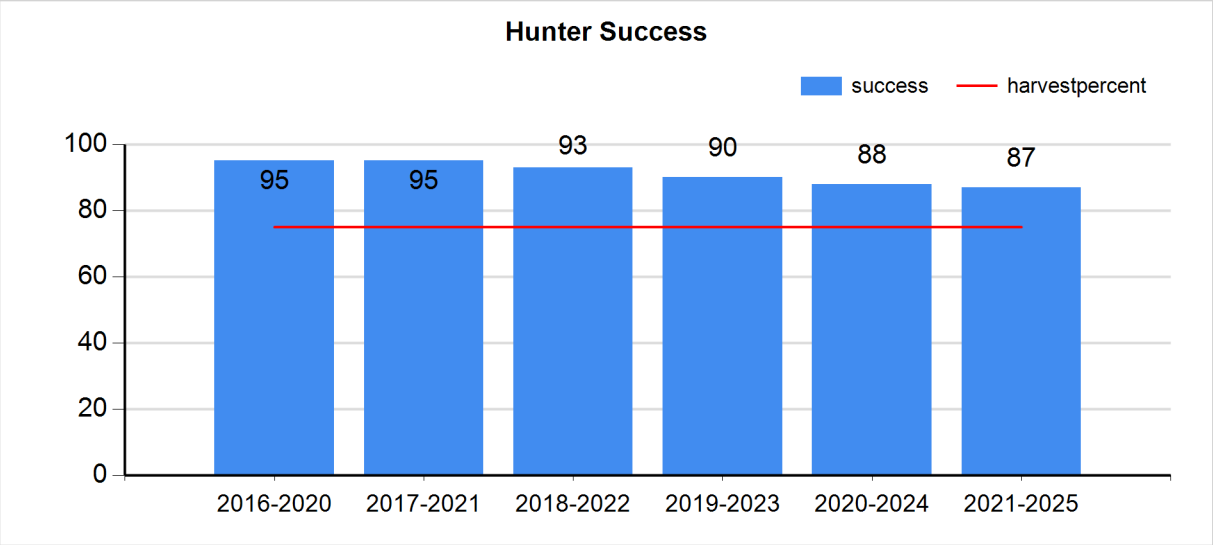
5-year average harvest age of 6-8 years

Secondary Objective:

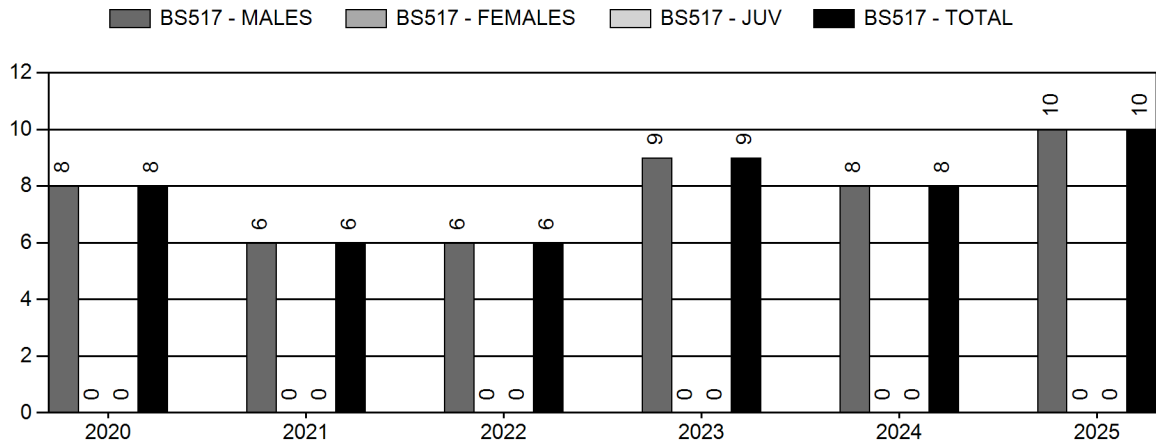
Management Strategy:

Special

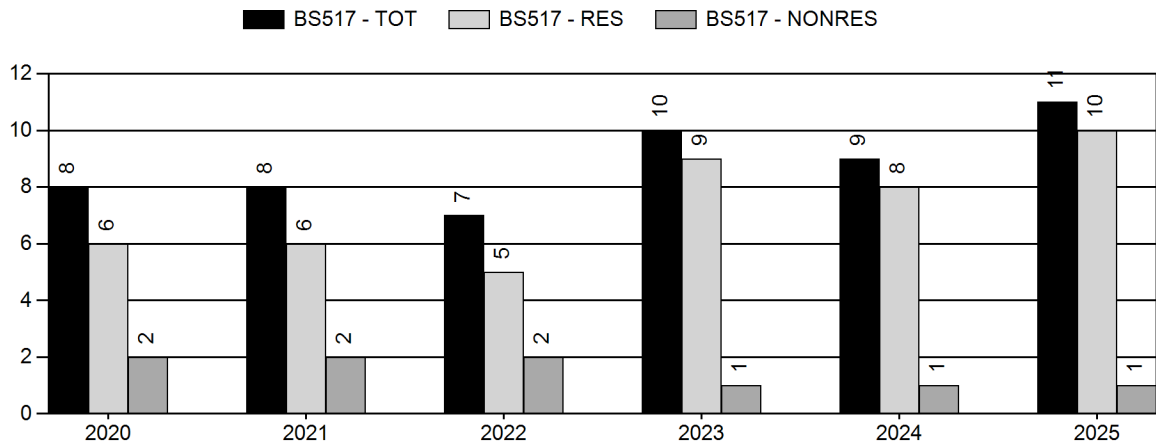




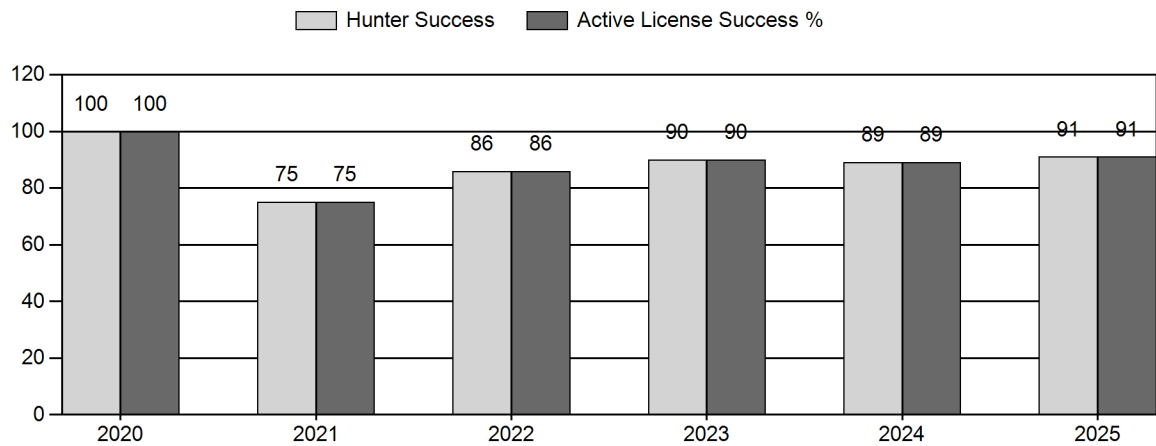
Harvest



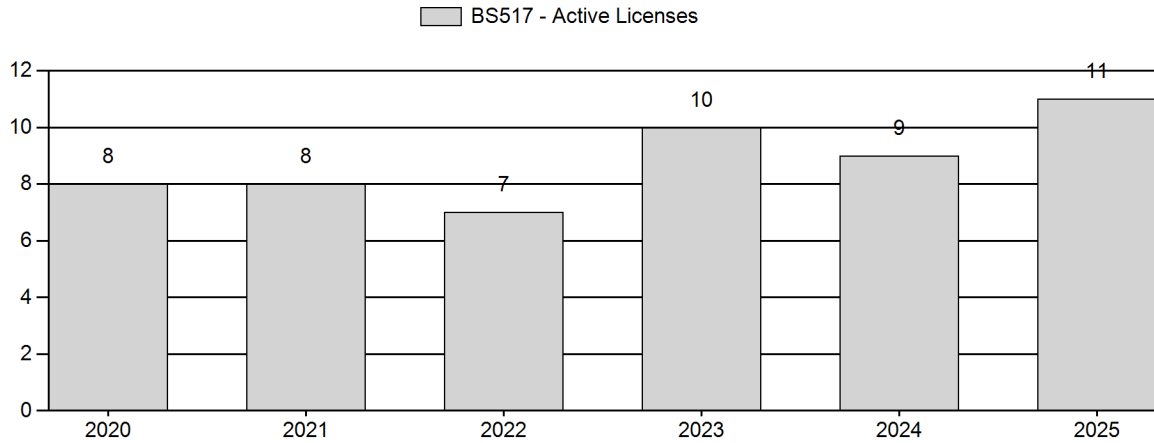
Number of Hunters



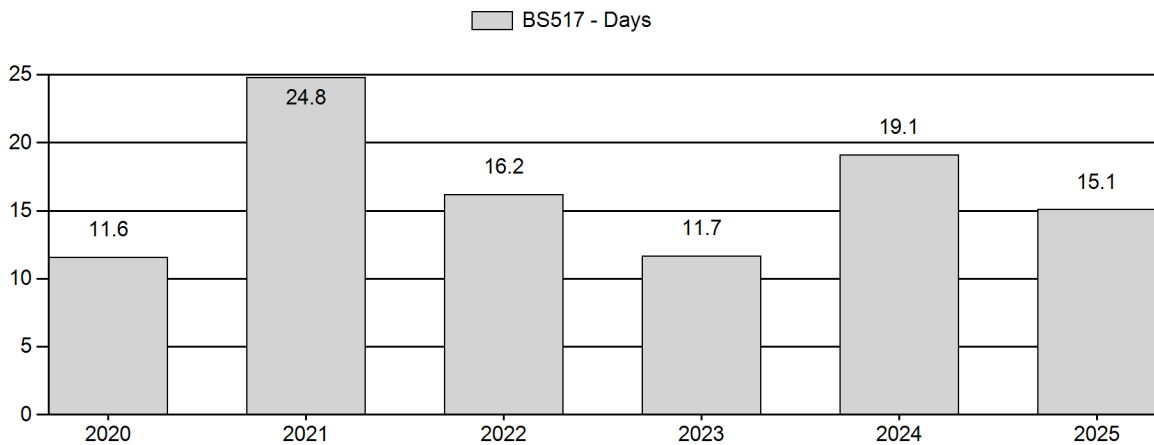
Harvest Success



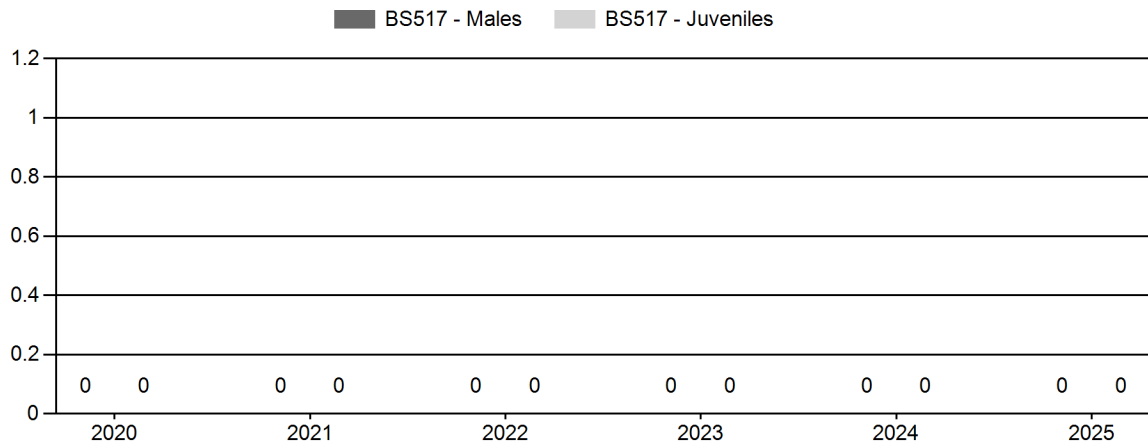
Active Licenses



Days Per Animal Harvested



Preseason Animals per 100 Females



**2025 Hunting Seasons
Laramie Peak Bighorn Sheep Herd Unit (BS517)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
19	1	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Oct. 31	10	Any ram (9 residents, 1 nonresident)

Current Management Objective:

- 1) **5-year running average of >75% hunter success**
 - a) **Currently Met:** 2021-2025 Hunter Success = 86%
- 2) **5-year running average age of harvested rams between 6 and 8 years of age**
 - a) **Currently Met:** 2021-2025 Harvest Mean Age = 9
- 3) **Documented occurrence of adult rams in the population 3x the number of licenses issued.**
 - a) **Currently Not Met:** 27 adult rams observed in 2025 (29 total including yearling rams)

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

To meet the requirement of the 90/10 split in license allocation for residents and nonresidents, the quota was increased to 10 licenses (9 resident, 1 nonresident) in 2023. In 2025, there were 11 of 10 licenses active, including one carryover license from 2024. Of those 11 active licenses, 10/11 hunters were successful (91% hunter success). The 2026 season will maintain the same season structure and quota.

Access to wild sheep remains difficult due to large tracts of private land within occupied sheep habitat. In recent years, wild sheep have increasingly utilized the burnscar of the 2018 Britania Fire and continue to use the burn scar of the 2012 Arapahoe Wildfire. Hunter success and hunter crowding are being closely monitored to determine whether the increase in licenses causes overcrowding on the limited public lands and consequently a decrease in hunter success.

The 2025 ground survey failed to meet the third management objective of documented occurrence of adult rams in the population equaling or exceeding three times the number of licenses issued. However, it is likely that this was due to coincidence given that 27 mature rams were detected after extensive searches. Additionally, 27 mature rams falls well within the range of 30 rams needed to issue 10 licenses. The ground survey was completed in one day with multiple observers in geographically distinct areas to minimize double-counting. Sex and age ratios are not reported here due to the lack of robust classification data. A summary of classifications from the past 6 years (2020-2025) is included for general reference above.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy for the Laramie Peak bighorn sheep herd unit was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Weather and Habitat

Precipitation in this herd unit was normal in 2025. While no National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) weather stations are close to the vicinity of occupied bighorn habitats in Area 19, weather stations in Laramie reported normal precipitation levels, Cheyenne slightly above, and the Douglas station reporting a 34% increase in precipitation from long term averages. Winter severity, periods of subzero temperatures, and snow loading in the higher elevations of this herd unit were well below normal.

Cheatgrass control efforts completed in the last 5 years in Sybille Canyon and other areas directly west of Wheatland, continue to show promise in recovery of native vegetation in areas burned by wildfire. The herbicide, Rejuvra, is mainly used for control of cheatgrass at a rate of 5 oz/acre. Many areas impacted by the Britania wildfire are now dominated by or co-dominated by cheatgrass. This is continued cause for concern and future monitoring and surveillance is necessary. Future treatments will be planned where necessary and funding and time allows for proper project planning and implementation.

A 1,500 acre wildfire occurred in the Bear Creek drainage, south of Hwy 34, in September 2024. This area provides year-round important habitat for bighorn sheep, and we anticipate bighorn sheep use in this area may increase with a reduction of coniferous cover and regeneration of grasses and forbs post-fire. This area was treated for cheatgrass thru herbicide application (Indaziflam) in late Summer 2025. Due to the timing of the wildfire, high shrub mortality is anticipated and was observed in the first year following the disturbance. Monitoring of this site will continue for the next several years.

Fence conversion efforts continue in occupied bighorn sheep habitats on the Thorne/Williams and Laramie Peak WHMA's. Unnecessary and unmaintained fences were removed on the WHMAs in 2025. Conversions from woven wire / barbed combination fences to 4 wire barbed/smooth wire will result in improved movement ability for all wild ungulates, including bighorn sheep in the Laramie Range.

There is strong potential for rare earth mineral mining in the foothills of the Laramie Range. Exploratory activities in the Halleck Canyon area show some promise for potential future mining operations. While active mining has yet to begin, there is considerable talk and hype concerning this proposed operation. Permanent loss of habitat and/or disturbance and displacement of big game species, including bighorn sheep, is possible with this activity.

Population Modeling

This year was the first that an integrated population model (IPM) was used to model the bighorn sheep herd based on available data from years of ground classification count and harvest data. The model was run with a random effect structure. Specifically, the time-varying inputs included reproduction and juvenile survival while adult survival was modeled as constant. The effort variable was days per harvest due to the trend over time similarly reflecting harvest trends. The model convergence was good and the analysis years included 2007-2027 to maximize the amount of ratio data and harvest trends in the analysis. The postseason population estimate was 310 (CI=175-552) bighorn sheep for 2025. This estimate is within the anecdotal population

estimate range of 300-500 sheep per Laramie managers who have worked with this herd for decades. However, the sex and age ratios are not reflective of the population due to ground counts stopping as soon as 30 rams are detected. Despite the shortcomings of the ground counts, the sex and age ratios remain relatively stable through time. Trend counts from ground surveys were not included in the model to ensure bias from chronic undercounting during ground counts did not influence the IPM results. The IPM forecasted increases in postseason abundance over time due to consistent high harvest success and stable sex and age ratios.

Additional Management Data

The Laramie Peak bighorn sheep herd is part of a statewide project to conduct disease surveillance and collect baseline information on the various respiratory pathogens within Wyoming's wild sheep populations. For the Laramie Peak herd unit, the primary goal is to better monitor respiratory disease outbreaks that could potentially cause large or small-scale die-offs. This herd has tested positive for respiratory pathogens and continued surveillance is necessary to manage the population. Specifically, the herd has tested positive for respiratory pathogens that include *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*, *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida*, and *Bibersteina trehalosi*. Additionally, this collar data will assist in identifying seasonal movement patterns, crucial winter ranges, habitat selection, and inform future population estimate research and surveys. This project has been funded through grants from Wyoming Governors Big Game License Coalition and the Wyoming Wild Sheep Foundation.

The following captures have taken place within the Laramie Peak Herd Unit:

- **2017:** Six ewes in the Iron Mountain sub-herd collared
- **2019:** 16 ewes captured, 15 collared, five from the Sybille Canyon sub-herd and 10 from the Duck Creek sub-herd
- **2021:** Seven ewes, three from Sybille Canyon sub-herd and four from the Duck Creek sub-herd, collars released in January 2024
- **2022:** 10 ewes, three from Sybille Canyon sub-herd and seven from the Duck Creek sub-herd, collars released in February 2025
- **2023:** 10 new collars and two redeployments, collars will release in January 2026
- **2026:** 10 new collars, five deployed ewes in Sybille Canyon sub-herd and five deployed on five ewes from the Duck Creek sub-herd. Collars will release in April 2029

There were three total mortalities throughout 2024 from mountain lion predation and no mortalities in 2025. The primary concern with this herd unit is outbreaks of respiratory pathogens. In 2019, there was a small-scale die-off due to a pneumonia outbreak within the Sybille Canyon sub-herd and these collars will aid in monitoring future disease outbreaks and mortalities. Mortality notifications from collars will alert managers if die-offs occur. As of February 27, 2026, there are 14 collars online. As current online collars reach the end of their battery-life in coming years, managers plan to deploy additional collars to maintain a sufficient number to monitor the herd for die-off events and inform population dynamics research.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep

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

HERD: BS519 - ENCAMPMENT RIVER

HUNT AREAS: 21

PREPARED BY: TEAL
CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:		N/A	N/A
Harvest:	1	2	5
Hunters:	1	2	5
Hunter Success:	100%	100%	100 %
Active Licenses:	1	2	5
Active License Success:	100%	100%	100 %
Recreation Days:	18	84	150
Days Per Animal:	18	42	30

Limited Opportunity Objective:

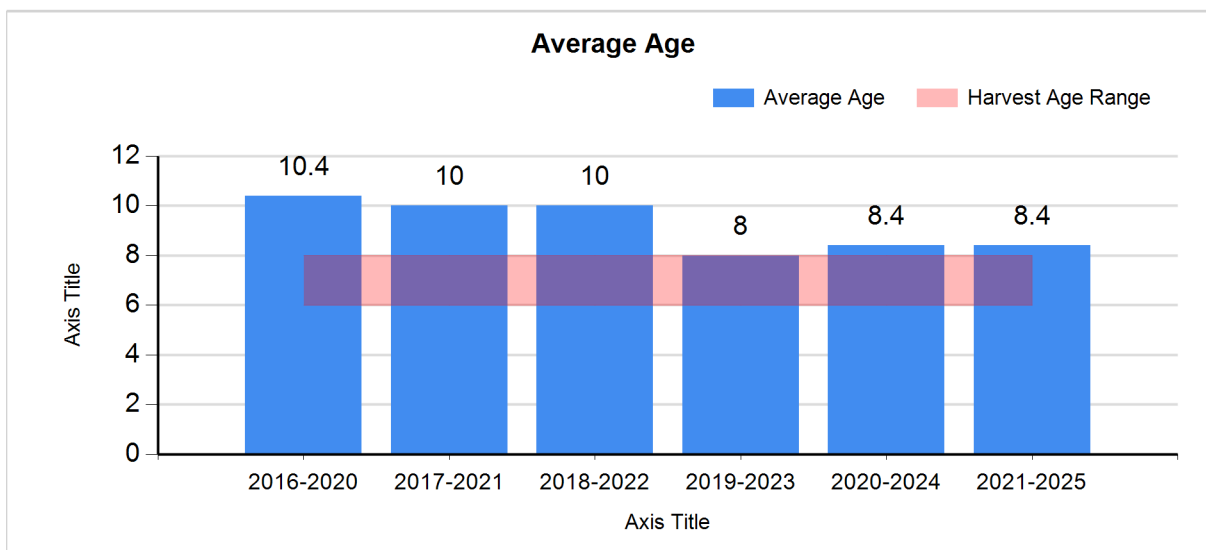
5-year average of > 75% hunter success

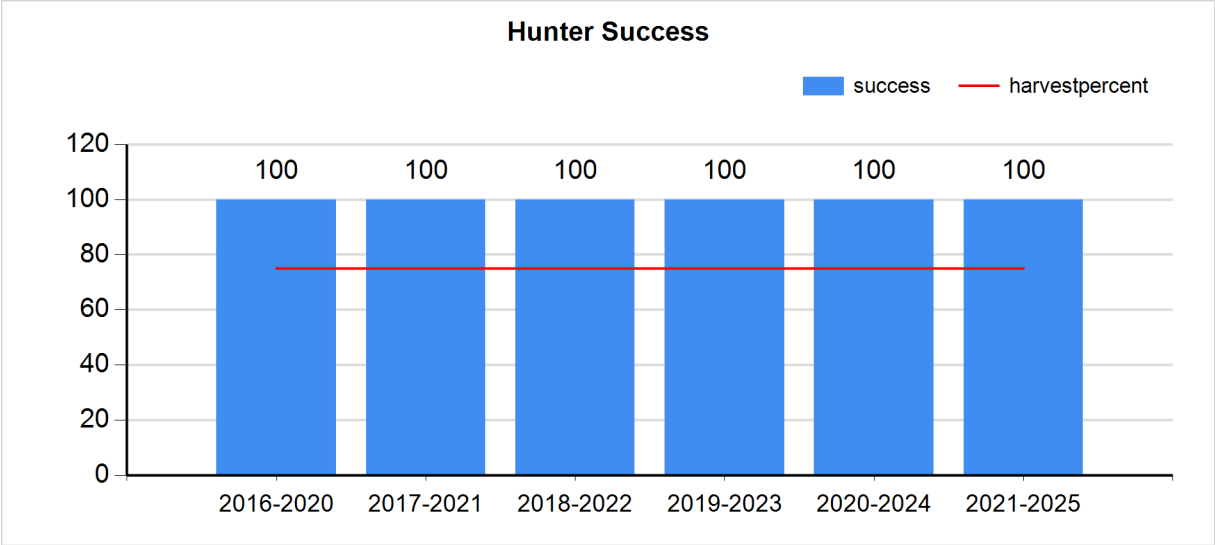
5-year average harvest age of 6-8 years

Secondary Objective:

Management Strategy:

Special





2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Bighorn Sheep Herd BS519 - ENCAMPMENT RIVER

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	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2021	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2022	0	0	0	11	13%	47	54%	29	33%	87	76	0	0	23	± 0	62	± 0	50
2023	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2024	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0
2025	0	0	0	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	68	0	0	0	± 0	0	± 0	0

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Encampment River Bighorn Sheep (BS519)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
21	1	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Oct. 31	2	Any ram (2 residents)
21	2	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Oct. 31	1	Any ram less than three-quarter (3/4) curl
21	6	Aug. 15	Aug. 31	Sep. 1	Oct. 31	2	Ewe or lamb

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2026 hunting season structure provided two resident hunters the opportunity to harvest mature rams in Hunt Area 21 on Type 1 licenses. Based on frequent observations of mature rams in Douglas Creek (Hunt Area 18) and Encampment River (Hunt Area 21), we have maintained separate license quotas for each hunt area since 2023. One hunter was allocated a Type 2 license to have the opportunity to harvest a less than three-quarter curl ram. Two hunters were allocated Type 6 licenses to have the opportunity to harvest ewes or lambs. Although this herd was previously considered stagnant, productivity and survival have recently improved. Due to the estimated population growth, bighorn sheep, particularly young rams, are being observed more often outside their usual occupied ranges and closer to domestic sheep. This increased proximity is a significant concern because of the risk of disease transmission. Hunters are expected to have good success, and this herd will continue to meet the bighorn sheep limited opportunity management objectives.

Management Objective Review

The objective and management strategy were last evaluated and approved in 2026. For the 2026 objective review, the limited opportunity objective will be maintained for the next five years following an internal evaluation.

Weather/Habitat

Annual precipitation was below average in 2025. While no NOAA weather stations are in close proximity to occupied bighorn sheep habitats, the nearest weather stations in Rawlins reported a 5.3% decrease in annual precipitation. Early spring precipitation occurred in April and May but diminished by early June. SNOTEL sites on the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre Mountain range reported below-average to average (78-105%) snowpack from January through March 2025.

No major disturbances were documented in 2025. The lack of natural disturbances has resulted in shrub communities trending towards late seral stages with older, decadent age classes and conifer encroachment, which may be limiting habitat availability. In 2025, the Platte Valley Habitat Partnership (PVHP) treated 4,940 acres in the Encampment River/Blackhall area south of Encampment throughout much of the occupied bighorn sheep habitat. High winds prohibited completion of the treatment in 2025 so efforts in this area will continue in 2026. The PVHP is planning conifer removal and mixed mountain shrub treatments along the eastern slope of the Sierra Madre mountains south/southwest of Encampment over the next several years. These treatments

aim to diversify age classes and improve the quality of important shrubs for bighorn sheep and mule deer by mimicking natural disturbances.

Additional Management Data

This is a limited opportunity objective herd and the three goals associated with this objective are: five-year average hunter success rate greater than 75%, five-year average age of harvested rams between 6 and 8 years old, and a documented occurrence of adult rams in the population. Currently, all three of these goals are being met. Casual/opportunistic observations in early 2026 documented over twelve adult rams within the herd unit.

For the 2026 hunting season, all Hunt Area 21 Type 1, 2, and 6 licenses were allocated to resident hunters.

In 2025, there were several observations of bighorn sheep in close proximity to bands of domestic sheep west of the Continental Divide. There remains a high risk of commingling with domestic sheep herds in this area. We will continue to monitor and respond to any reports of bighorn sheep west of the Continental Divide.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Moose

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

HERD: MO545 - SNOWY RANGE

HUNT AREAS: 38, 41, 45

PREPARED BY: TEAL CUFAUDE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	200	1,100	1,000
Harvest:	47	65	75
Hunters:	51	74	80
Hunter Success:	92%	88%	94 %
Active Licenses:	51	74	80
Active License Success:	92%	88%	94 %
Recreation Days:	433	595	700
Days Per Animal:	9.2	9.2	9.3
Males per 100 Females	88	120	
Juveniles per 100 Females	42	44	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 950 (760 - 1140)

Management Strategy: Special

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: 16%

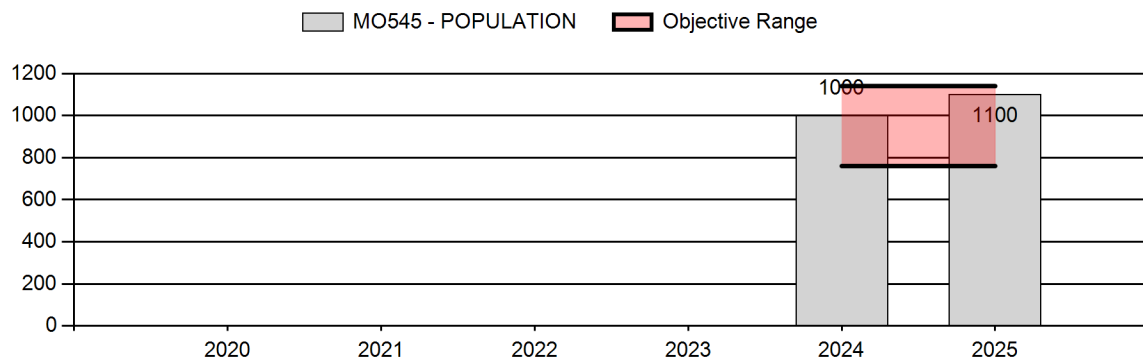
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 2

Model Date: 2/22/2026

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	4%	5%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	11%	13%
Proposed change in post-season population:	0%	-2%

Population Size - Postseason



2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary

for Moose Herd MO545 - SNOWY RANGE

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	7	8	25	37%	28	42%	14	21%	67	0	25	29	89	± 0	50	± 0	26
2021	0	10	72	96	34%	133	47%	54	19%	283	0	8	54	72	± 0	41	± 0	24
2022	0	5	38	44	38%	56	48%	16	14%	116	0	9	68	79	± 0	29	± 0	16
2023	0	14	84	152	43%	140	39%	64	18%	356	0	10	60	109	± 13	46	± 7	22
2024	1,000	13	36	73	38%	84	43%	37	19%	194	0	15	43	87	± 16	44	± 10	24
2025	1,100	14	45	65	45%	54	38%	24	17%	143	671	26	83	120	± 27	44	± 13	20

**2026 Hunting Seasons
Snowy Range Moose (MO545)**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
38	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	30	Any moose, except cow moose with calf at side
38	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	35	Antlerless moose, except cow moose with calf at side
41	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	5	Any moose, except cow moose with calf at side
41	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	3	Antlerless moose, except cow moose with calf at side
45	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	5	Any moose, except cow moose with calf at side
45	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	2	Antlerless moose, except cow moose with calf at side

2026 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

In 2025, 74 moose hunters harvested 65 moose with an overall success of 88%. This represented the highest harvest level since moose hunting began in the herd unit. Hunter success in 2025 was slightly lower than the five-year average (91%), due to reduced success on Type 4 licenses. Lower success on Type 4 licenses was likely due to antlerless hunters avoiding cows with calves, which are illegal to harvest. Type 1 hunter success in Hunt Areas 41 and 45 was 100%. Type 1 success in Hunt Area 38 was 97%, with only one of 32 hunters not harvesting a moose.

A total of 53 moose (31 adult bulls, 19 cows, and 3 calves) were harvested in Hunt Area 38. Five moose (adult bulls) were harvested in Hunt Area 41 and seven moose (4 adult bulls and 3 cows) were harvested in Hunt Area 45.

Sex and age ratios from moose classified during a January aerial survey, yielded 44 calves/100 cows and 26 yearling bulls/100 cows. The adult bull-to-cow ratio was 83/100. Productivity was excellent in 2025, and the observed bull-to-cow ratio remained strong at 120/100.

In 2023, the Hunt Area 38 boundary was modified and a new Pole Mountain Hunt Area (Hunt Area 45) was added. To improve distribution of moose hunters and provide additional moose hunter opportunity, separate Type 1 license quotas were maintained for each of the three hunt areas in

2026. Thirty (30) Type 1 licenses were allocated in Hunt Area 38, five (5) Type 1 licenses were allocated in Hunt Area 41, and five (5) Type 1 licenses were allocated in Hunt Area 45. High hunter success is expected on all Type 1 licenses in 2026. The observed adult bull-to-cow ratio, tooth age data, and 2024 sightability survey estimate indicated that even with this increased bull harvest there would still be a high number of mature bulls in the population. Hunter comments indicated there is a preference by some to maintain or increase the quality of males rather than see a significant increase in bull moose licenses, so we continue to consider that when prescribing license quotas. Two raffle tag hunters and up to five Governor's Moose License holders could choose to hunt in Hunt Area 38, as they did in 2025. The moose Super Tag and Super Tag Trifecta were awarded to two nonresidents in 2026. Bull ratios observed in Hunt Area 38 suggest that the area can sustain more bull harvest than the 30 Type 1 licenses allotted in the 2026 draw.

In 2026, Type 4 licenses were allocated in each of the hunt areas with 35 in Hunt Area 38, three (3) in Hunt Area 41, and two (2) in Hunt Area 45. The hunt areas specific license allocation will improve hunter distribution and allow increased opportunity for female harvest in Hunt Area 38. Improved harvest reporting accuracy and a better understanding of harvest distribution are anticipated as a result of implementing separate Type 4 license quotas. Only one antlerless moose has been harvested on a Type 1 "any moose" license since 2010, so antlerless moose licenses are necessary to keep the population within the objective range.

For the 2026 hunting season, the closing date for all moose license types was extended from November 14 to November 30. This extension aims to provide Type 1 and Type 4 licensed hunters with more time to harvest moose, potentially maintaining or improving their success rates. Accessing certain areas after November 14 will likely require travel by foot or horseback, as several roads in the herd unit are closed to motorized vehicular travel after that date to protect crucial big game ranges.

Habitat data, specifically in the Snowy Range portion of the herd unit, indicated the current moose herd is at or slightly above carrying capacity and localized overutilization may be occurring. Maintaining a moose population larger than the objective could exceed carrying capacity and cause density dependent responses such as decreased calf survival, lower pregnancy rates, and decreased body and antler size. The 2026 license quotas are expected to maintain the population at the high end of objective range and keep the age of harvested males within the secondary management objective ranges. Managing this herd to the objective may necessitate more aggressive short-term harvest regimes to balance annual population increases. With simulated increases in both bull and cow harvest the IPM predicted the 2026 post-hunting season abundance would be 1,000 moose (CL 700-1,500).

Management Objective Review

The objective for the Snowy Range Moose Herd is a post-hunting season population objective of 950 moose ($\pm 20\%$). The objective was last evaluated and approved in 2024, and will not be reviewed again until 2029.

Weather/Habitat

PRISM data, extracted from the Derived Environmental Variability Indices Spatial Extractor (DEVISE) interface, for the Snowy Range Moose Herd Unit was analyzed to estimate precipitation

across the herd unit. Annual precipitation was below the 30-year average. Most of the early spring precipitation during the critical growing months for herbaceous and woody vegetation occurred in May (2.04 inches) while April, June, and July received limited precipitation. Higher than normal precipitation occurred in September (1.81 inches). The NOAA weather station in Rawlins reported a 5.3% decrease in annual precipitation while the Laramie station reported slightly above normal annual precipitation. SNOTEL sites in the Snowy Range reported below-average to above-average (79-123%) snowpack from January through March 2025, with the highest percentages occurring in late February/early March. SNOTEL sites in the Sierra Madres reported mostly below-average to average snowpack from January through March 2025.

The Mullen Fire (2020) burned over 176,800 acres in the Snowy Range, comprising the southern half of moose Hunt Area 38. Over 10,300 acres on the western half of the Snowy Range mountains were aerially treated with the herbicide Rejuvra in 2021. Annual monitoring since the initial treatment shows promising recovery of native grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Habitats within the burn scar continue to rebound; aspen regeneration has been excellent, and a delayed but positive response has been seen in mixed mountain shrubs communities. Cheatgrass persists in areas where soil movement has occurred, and remains dense within the no-spray buffer around the North Platte River. Additionally, post-treatment monitoring has documented “breaks” in the original treatment, indicating the need for a re-treatment. Managers are currently developing a plan to re-treat significant portions of the burn scar in 2026 and 2027.

Past large-scale wildfires within the Sierra Madre Range (Snake fire – 2016, Beaver Creek fire – 2016, and Ryan fire – 2018) are recovering at varying rates. These fires have returned plant communities to earlier seral stages and increased the age-class diversity of mixed mountain shrubs and aspens. Through the USFS LaVA project, several large-scale timber sales and fuels reduction treatments have occurred throughout the Sierra Madres, mainly on the eastern side of the mountain and north of HWY 70, near Aspen Alley and the Sandstone work station. Additionally, the Little Snake River Conservation District and the Mule Deer Foundation masticated 490 acres of mixed mountain shrubs on USFS and State land near Battle Mountain. Another 1,300 acres are slated for treatment in 2026. These treatments should improve transition and summer ranges for moose, mule deer, and elk.

The Laramie biologist team established a long-term willow monitoring program in 2021 to monitor willow production and utilization within the Snowy Range and surrounding areas of available moose habitat. We evaluated willow community conditions using the Keigley Live- Dead Index (LD Index). The LD Index is a quantitative measure of browse intensity calculated by subtracting the height dead (H_D) from the height of the base of current year growth (H_{BCYG}).

$$LD = H_{BCYG} - H_D$$

Positive values indicate the willow is escaping browsing pressure, values near zero indicate the current level of browsing is preventing vertical plant growth, and negative values indicate the willow is being suppressed by browsing. We completed 18 Live-Dead Index surveys in 2025 from late July to early September. Data will be analyzed along with past years data to evaluate the health of willow communities throughout the Snowy Range Moose Herd Unit.

A 3-acre riparian enclosure was constructed in the Fall Creek drainage, west of Centennial Ridge in Summer 2023. The multi-wire electric fence is designed to exclude all wildlife and livestock. Due to its remoteness, it has been difficult at best to maintain the fence. Trespass wildlife, not yet accustomed to the electric fence, routinely break into the enclosure. WGFD personnel check on the fence throughout the summer and early fall and attempt to keep it maintained. Willow species preferred by moose are found within and outside of the enclosure area. Finally, in 2025, wildlife began to respect the electric fence a little better, and browse use inside the enclosure was reduced significantly. Preferred willows responded favorably to a lack of browse pressure. We are pleased with these findings, as we were concerned severely hedged willows may not respond to a reduction in browse use. Willow browse is being measured inside and directly outside of the enclosure to see if a reduction in browse pressure results in willow regeneration.

Beavers play an important role in maintaining hydrologic function in riparian areas in the Snowy Range, Pole Mountain, and the Sierra Madres. Inventory and assessment of riparian habitats within the Snowy Range is on-going. Maintaining hydrologic function in riparian areas has the potential to maintain or expand hydrophytic vegetation, including a diversity of willow species that are important browse for moose. Improving hydrologic function has the potential to increase annual forage production of grass, forb, and woody browse vegetation. Funding applications were submitted to WGBGLC to help support trap and transplant efforts. We are still actively searching for potential populations to utilize for transplant efforts, and have identified several release sites.

Disease

In 2025, six hunter-harvested moose and six other moose were tested for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD). No sampled moose tested positive for CWD. Carotid artery worms were not detected in hunter harvested moose (n=3).

Population Modeling

In 2023, we began using PopR Integrated Population Model (IPM) to estimate population indices for Snowy Range moose. The 2025 post-hunting season population estimate for this herd unit was 1,100 moose (CL 700-1,400). Managers chose to model this herd using the default structure for moose, i.e. constant adult survival, time-varying reproduction and juvenile survival. Based on visual comparison of the available effort variables, active licenses was selected by managers as the variable most predictably related to annual harvest. Data from 2018 onward were included in the IPM. With these settings the observed data for the IPM included 8 years of harvest and ratio data along with abundance estimates from a composition abundance survey in 2022 and a sightability survey at the end of biological year 2023. IPM convergence was excellent, with all Rhat values less than 1.1, and calf ratio estimates produced by the IPM aligned very well with recorded data for this herd. IPM abundance estimates also aligned well with the results obtained from aerial surveys:

	2022	2023
Survey Result	1,300 (CL 400 - 2,200)	1,100 (CL 800 - 1,300)
IPM Estimate	1,000 (CL 800 - 1,300)	1,100 (CL 800 - 1,300)

The 2025 post-hunting season abundance estimate is unchanged from the previous year. This agrees with the perceptions of managers and stakeholders that this herd is stable and performing well even with increased harvest.

Additional Management Data

Secondary management objectives are monitored to help ensure we balance the opportunity to hunt moose with the ability for hunters to harvest mature bulls. These management objectives are as follows:

Ensure the average age of harvested male moose over a three-year period remains at or above four years old. This metric focuses on the median age of harvested bulls to assess the bull age structure. Based on 28 teeth submitted in 2025, the median age of harvested bulls was five. Median age of bulls harvested in Hunt Areas 38, 41, and 45 was 5, 6, and 7 respectively. Data from teeth submitted 2023-25 indicated that the objective was met and the three-year average median age of harvested bulls was five.

Maintain a harvest composition where at least 40% of bull moose are five years old or older, averaged over a three-year period. This goal promotes age diversity within the harvested population and helps ensure the presence of mature bulls for breeding. This objective is currently being met. Data from teeth submitted 2023-25 shows that 67% of harvested male moose were five years old or older, exceeding the 40% target.

Ensure the long-term sustainability of willow communities preferred by moose for browsing. Willow species play a critical role in moose habitat by providing essential food resources and thermal cover. The current status of willow habitat is addressed in the Habitat Section.

While hunters are often interested in secondary management objectives related to population age structure, they also frequently inquire about antler measurements of harvested moose. Based on information provided by hunters on tooth envelopes, harvested moose had an average antler spread width of 42 inches, ranging from a minimum of 30 inches to a maximum of 53 inches.

For the 2026 hunting season, Hunt Area 38 Type 1 moose licenses were allocated to 28 resident hunters and 2 nonresident hunters (one of which is a nonresident random license). Additionally, Hunt Area 38 Type 4 licenses were allocated to 31 resident and 4 nonresident hunters. Hunt Areas 41 and 45 Type 1 and Type 4 licenses were allocated to resident hunters.

The Snowy Range moose population has been monitored through several studies over the past 15 years (2005-2006, 2015-2017, 2018-2020), allowing us the unique opportunity to compare moose habitat use, movement, and behavior pre- and post- wildfire. Since 2022, 40 female moose have been captured via helicopter darting on winter habitats within and surrounding the Mullen Creek Fire perimeter. Moose were fitted with GPS-enabled collars that are set to collect hourly fixes (locations). The fix-rate is identical to the previous Snowy Range moose studies, which will allow us to compare movement strategies and resource use of moose prior to and following the fire. These collars will be deployed for a period of three years, during which we will gather information on the status of each moose and their response to recently burned habitats. In addition, we will be able to

track animals' survival and juvenile recruitment rates. This research addresses five primary objectives. These objectives include 1) quantifying movement and distribution of female moose; 2) evaluating the effects of the Mullen Creek fire on habitat selection; 3) assessing changes in habitat quality post-burn; 4) measuring female moose survival; and 5) opportunistically assessing the health of captured moose.