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2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Bighorn Sheep
 HERD: BS121 - DARBY MOUNTAIN
 HUNT AREAS: 24

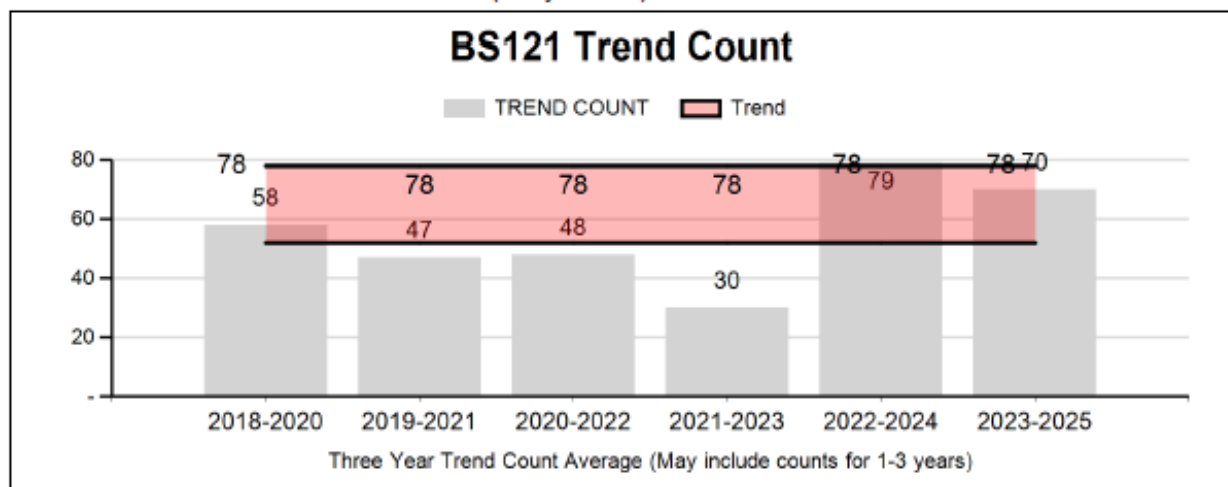
PERIOD: 6/1/2025 - 5/31/2026
 PREPARED BY: GARY FRALICK

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	59	61	65
Harvest:	1	1	1
Hunters:	1	1	1
Hunter Success:	100%	100%	100%
Active Licenses:	1	1	1
Active License Success	100%	100%	100%
Recreation Days:	7	2	7
Days Per Animal:	7	2	7
Males per 100 Females:	57	85	
Juveniles per 100 Females	39	50	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm 20\%$) 65 (52 - 78)
 Management Strategy: Special
 Percent population is above (+) or (-) objective: -6.2%
 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 ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	0%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	0%



**2026 HUNTING SEASON
DARBY MOUNTAIN HERD UNIT - BS121**

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
24	1	Aug.15	Aug.31	Sep. 1	Oct.31	1	Any ram

2026 Management Summary

1.) Hunting Season Evaluation: The 2026 bighorn sheep hunting season will be open for the eleventh consecutive year in the Darby herd. The number of licenses issued in 2026 will be one (1) license issued to a resident hunter, likely resulting in the harvest of an adult ram. The post-hunt 2026 population trend count is projected at approximately 65 sheep. The resident hunter in 2024 did not harvest a ram, thus the 2021-2025 license success was 80%.

2.) Management Objective Review: The 3-year trend-based objective of 65 sheep was approved by the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in 2016. The objective was reviewed in 2021, and again in 2026, and no changes are recommended.

3.) Herd Unit Evaluation: A 2025 post-hunt aerial survey was flown on February 14, 2026 to document sheep on winter ranges in the Darby herd. During that survey a total of 61 sheep were observed in hunt area 24. The number, location, and age/sex of the sheep are provided in Table 1. A sufficient number of rams were observed to justify the continued issuance of one (1) license for any ram in the 2026 hunting season.

Table 1. Aerial trend count summary for the Darby Mountain bighorn sheep herd, February 14th, 2026.

Location:	Adult Rams	Yearling Rams	Ewes	Lambs	Total
N. Fish Creek Mtn	4	0	10	6	20
S. Straight Creek	2	0	0	0	2
S. Lake Creek	3	1	2	1	7
N. Mount Coffin	5	0	0	0	5
S. Box Canyon/Lunch Cr	0	0	2	2	4
N. Box Canyon	0	2	3	1	6
S. Roaring Fork Peak	0	0	2	0	2
Roaring Fork Peak	0	0	1	1	2
N. Marten Creek	1	1	6	2	10
Triple Peak South	3	0	0	0	3
Total	18	4	26	13	61

In 2024, the single licensed hunter in the Darby sheep herd did not harvest a ram. This is the first year since the hunting season was re-opened in 2016, after being closed since 2013, that at least one ram was not harvested in hunt area 24. For the 2025 hunting season, a 9-year-old ram was harvested within two days. During the period from 2016–2023, all hunter harvested rams have been at least 7.5 years old.

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

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

HERD: EL106 - PINEY

HUNT AREAS: 86, 92, 94

PREPARED BY: Dalton Brauer

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	3,762	3,987	3,500
Harvest:	1,008	1,272	1,350
Hunters:	2,788	3,346	3,400
Hunter Success:	36%	38%	40%
Active Licenses:	3,130	3,759	3,900
Active License Success	32%	34%	35 %
Recreation Days:	24,509	31,043	31,500
Days Per Animal:	24.3	24.4	23.3
Males per 100 Females:	28		
Juveniles per 100 Females	32		

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

3,100 (2480 - 3720)

Management Strategy:

Recreational

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

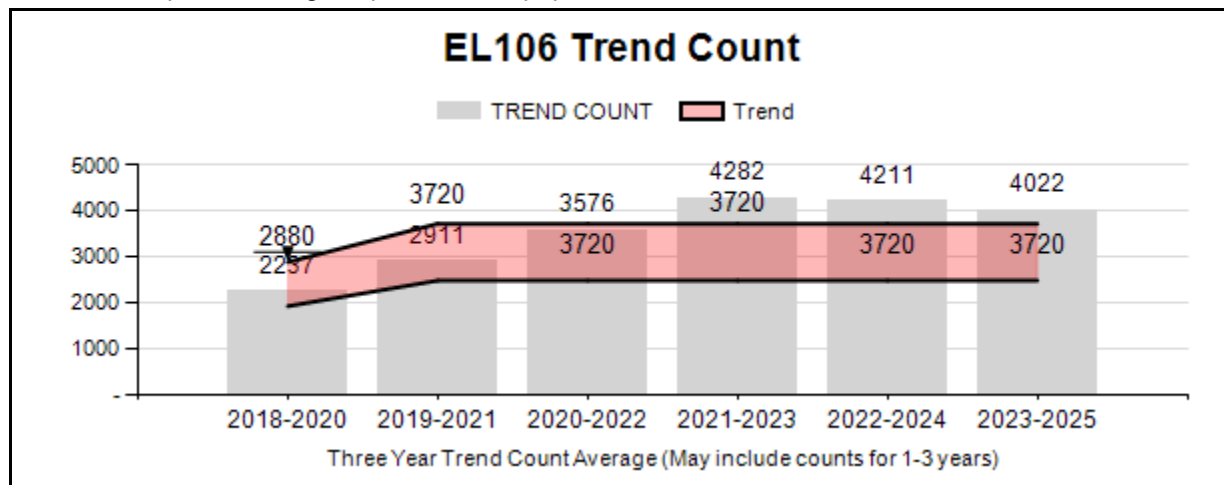
29%

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

5

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

	<u>JCR Year</u>	<u>Proposed</u>
Females ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Males ≥ 1 year old:	NA%	NA%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	NA%	NA%
Total:	NA%	NA%
Proposed change in post-season population:	NA%	NA%



2026 HUNTING SEASONS PINEY ELK HERD UNIT (EL106)

Hunt Area	Type	Archery Dates		Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
86	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Oct. 31		Any elk
86	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
86	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 25	Sep. 26	Nov. 30	150	Cow or calf
92	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
92	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
92	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	500	Cow or calf
92	6			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Cow or calf valid north of Wyoming Highway 354 and Sublette County Road 112, east of Sublette County Road 115, and south of South Beaver Creek
94	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
94	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
94	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	500	Cow or calf
94	7	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Nov. 1	Dec. 15	150	Cow or calf; except that portion of Area 94 between Middle Piney Road (Sublette County Road 23-111) and South Piney-Fish Creek Road (Sublette County Road 23-142) west to Forest Road 10046 shall be closed
94	7			Dec. 16	Jan. 31		Cow or calf valid on private land north of Middle Piney Creek

2026 Region W Nonresident Quota: 2,775

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 38% Satisfied, 28% Neutral, 8% Dissatisfied

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

Liberal elk hunting opportunities are again warranted in 2026 as elk numbers in the Piney herd remain above the population trend objective of 3,100 elk, with 3,987 counted on feedgrounds and native winter ranges during February, 2025 (Tables 1 and 2). Bull and calf:cow ratios were unable to be calculated for postseason 2025 Piney elk herd counts, due to difficulties classifying large elk groups located on native winter ranges in hunt areas 92 and 94 (Table 1), but the previous 5 year average of 28 bulls:100 cows is within the management objective for a recreational herd. Hunter success and harvest in 2025 dropped slightly from 2024 largely due to warm temperatures and a general lack of snow accumulation during the hunting seasons (Tables 3 and 4). Consequently, general license hunting for antlerless elk into November, and the liberal issuance of type 6 and 7 cow/calf licenses will continue to be used as the primary management strategy in the Piney elk herd during 2026 hunting seasons.

The emphasis to harvest adult female elk in hunt areas 92 and 94 will continue for the 19th consecutive year by opening the limited quota antlerless elk hunting season on October 1 and continuing general license and limited quota hunting opportunity into November. The general any elk seasons will open October 15th and run through the end of October in hunt areas 92 and 94, and general license antlerless elk hunting season will close on November 20, similar to previous years. This season structure should allow general license hunters to maximize the November segment of the hunt to harvest elk that have moved to lower, more accessible areas. The number of type 6 licenses in both hunt areas 92 and 94 will each remain at 500 licenses and both will close on November 30 to allow elk harvest during the Thanksgiving holiday. A total of 150 hunt area 94 type 7 licenses will again be offered in 2026, restricting harvest to outside of the greater Finnegan feedground area from November 1 through December 15, converting to private lands only north of Middle Piney Creek until the end of January to address damage and elk/cattle co-mingling issues.

In hunt area 86, the effort to harvest antlerless elk in November with general license hunting will continue in 2026. The general license any elk hunt in area 86 will open September 26th and run through October, switching to antlerless elk general license hunting through November 20. In addition, 150 type 6 cow/calf licenses will be valid September 26th through November 30th to affect a desired population decrease on the McNeel feedground.

Table 1: Piney elk herd classification results and totals by hunt area and feedground, postseason 2025

Hunt Area	Location	AB	YB	F	Calves	Unclassified	Total	Notes
92	Franz FG	150	37	236	90		513	
92	McNeel FG	11	16	502	142		671	
92	Jewett FG	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Elk left FG early winter, no count
92	Winter Range	67	17	12	6	670	772	
94	Finnegan FG	3	0	0	0	0	3	Elk left FG during classifications
94	Bench Corral FG	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Elk not fed due to open winter conditions
94	North Piney FG	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Elk fed during December and then released to native winter ranges
94	Winter Range	303	74	160	49	1442	2028	
	Totals	534	144	910	287	2112	3987	

Table 2. Piney elk herd winter trend counts, 2021-2025

2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
4170	4554	4123	3957	3987

Table 3: Piney elk herd hunter success by hunt area and license type, 2021-2025

Hunt Area	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
86 (General)	NA	31%	30%	32%	28%
86 (Type 6)	NA	NA	42%	38%	40%
92 (General)	18%	27%	36%	30%	29%
92 (Type 6)	33%	29%	36%	40%	48%
94 (General)	30%	24%	34%	30%	30%
94 (Type 6)	36%	42%	33%	47%	26%
94 (Type 7)	24%	46%	43%	45%	41%
Avg. Hunter Success	28%	33%	36%	37%	35%

Table 4. Piney elk herd hunter harvest by sex and age, 2021-2025

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Adult Males	281	380	488	462	485
Yearling Males	78	75	52	101	69
Cows	290	388	509	739	626
Calves	68	62	108	129	92
Total Harvest	717	905	1157	1431	1272

Management Objective Review

Upon the dissolution of the Hoback elk herd unit in 2021, hunt area 92 now encompasses portions of the former hunt area 87 south of U.S. Highway 189/191. After public and federal agency personnel review, the Wyoming Game and Fish Commission in July of 2022 approved adding 700 elk from the former Hoback elk herd (old objective of 1,100 elk) to the Piney herd, and the remaining 400 elk were absorbed into the Upper Green herd. Thus, the new Piney elk herd trend-based objective is 3,100 elk, and will next be reviewed in 2027.

Disease Management

Ear tags are permanently attached to all elk captured and released as part of brucellosis surveillance and related research initiatives. These tags are later retrieved when animals are harvested or carcasses are recovered, providing valuable insights into elk distribution, dispersal patterns, and potential disease transmission pathways within elk populations. GPS collars are routinely deployed to facilitate efficient monitoring of elk populations throughout the brucellosis transmission season. The management goal is to always maintain at least five active collars per feedground. These collars record elk locations at two-hour intervals for up to four years, enabling detailed assessment of elk movements, identification of high-risk areas for elk-to-cattle brucellosis transmission, and evaluation of elk responses to modifications in feeding strategies intended to reduce disease transmission. Data from GPS collars continually inform and refine spatial risk models and management practices. A total of 4 elk were handled at feedgrounds this season within E106, with all 4 sampled for exposure to *Brucella abortus*, the bacteria responsible for causing brucellosis. Three of the samples tested positive (Table 5). The sample size was not large enough to estimate seroprevalence in the herd unit.

Table 5. Winter 2025-26 Big Piney Elk Herd Unit Capture Summary

Feedground	# GPS collars deployed	# Captured	# Tested	# Positive	Seroprevalence
Franz	2	2	2	1	50%
McNeel	2	2	2	2	100%
Jewett	0	0	0	0	N/A
North Piney	0	0	0	0	N/A
Bench Corral	0	0	0	0	N/A
Finnegan	0	0	0	0	N/A
Totals =	4	4	4	3	75%

Winter 2025-26 was a very mild winter season, and supplemental feeding was reduced throughout the herd unit. Feeding did not occur at Bench Corral feedground, was minimal at Jewett feedground for the third consecutive year, and was shorter than normal at Finnegan, Franz, and McNeel feedgrounds. The shortened or absent feeding seasons reduced the duration of high-density elk aggregation during the brucellosis transmission period and are expected to reduce disease transmission risk relative to more severe winters with extended feeding periods. Numerous game-proof fencing materials, purchased through cooperative funding agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, have been distributed across the Piney elk herd unit over the past several decades. Two were distributed within the herd unit during the reporting period. Once installed, stackyards eliminate food rewards for elk in areas of elevated brucellosis transmission risk, thereby reducing elk presence and minimizing the potential for elk-cattle commingling.

Franz Feedground

Two elk were captured at the Franz feedground to deploy two GPS collars. One elk tested positive for exposure to *B. abortus* (Table 1); however, the small sample size is insufficient to accurately estimate population seroprevalence. Feeding at Franz was shorter than normal during the mild winter season.

Feedground mortality records this winter included two carcasses found during post-feeding searches at Franz; no CWD-positive results were reported.

McNeel Feedground

Two elk were captured at the McNeel feedground to deploy two GPS collars. Both elk tested positive for exposure to *B. abortus* (Table 1); however, the small sample size is insufficient to accurately estimate population seroprevalence. Feeding at McNeel was shorter than normal during the 2025-26 winter. One carcass was found on the feedground and tested negative for CWD. Two additional elk were either targeted or dispatched due to illness or injury, and both tested negative for CWD.

Jewett Feedground

No elk were captured at the Jewett feedground during winter 2025-26. Jewett is typically one of the longer-duration feedgrounds due to its higher precipitation zone, but feeding was minimal for the third consecutive winter due to mild conditions.

North Piney Feedground

North Piney is considered a 'staging area' as opposed to a traditional feedground. Up to 400 elk are typically fed for less than a month, then migrate to the Bench Corral feedground, usually prior to January 1. The North Piney staging area was not operated this season.

Bench Corral Feedground

Due to mild winter conditions and low snow levels experienced during winter 2025-26, the Bench Corral feedground was not operated and elk were allowed to free-range throughout the winter.

Finnegan Feedground

No elk were captured at the Finnegan feedground during winter 2025-26. The feeding period was shorter than normal due to the mild winter season. Feedground mortality records included five carcasses found at Finnegan; no CWD-positive results were reported. Laboratory results from two sampled carcasses retrieved from Finnegan this winter identified *Mannheimia haemolytica*, with *Trueperella pyogenes* also detected in one of those animals.

CWD Monitoring

CWD has been documented in elk in hunt area 92, and CWD positive mule deer have been identified within the Piney elk herd unit boundary. Because the Piney herd is on the western edge of CWD in Wyoming, opportunistic sampling of hunter-harvested and targeted (i.e., apparently sick and euthanized) elk occurs annually. Prevalence estimates and sample sizes are presented in Table 6. To obtain a greater sample size for prevalence, effort should be put forward to increase check station and field presence, diversify check station locations, lead CWD collection tutorials for the general public and outfitters, and look into acquiring volunteers for use at check stations and other locations, like gas stations or convenience centers.

A total of 67 elk were tested for chronic wasting disease (CWD) within the Piney herd during the 2025 hunter surveillance period. No samples tested positive. The five-year summary for 2021-2025 includes 291 elk tested and 1 CWD-positive elk, resulting in a five-year apparent prevalence of 0.34%. The single documented positive occurred during the 2023 hunting season in Hunt Area 92 and remains the only documented CWD-positive elk in this herd unit. A total of 8 elk died on feedgrounds within the Big Piney herd unit, with no CWD-positive results reported from those carcasses. Carcasses recorded as hunter kills, targeted removals, or wounded/dispatched animals were not counted as feedground carcasses unless they were recorded as found dead on the feedground; these records are noted where relevant below.

Table 6. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Piney herd, 2021-2025

Years	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0% (n=39)	6
2022	0% (n=37)	4
2023	1.3%, n=1 (n=77)	7
2024	0% (n=71)	5
2025	0% (n=67)	5
2020-2025	0.3% (n=291)	5

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

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

HERD: EL107 - UPPER GREEN RIVER

HUNT AREAS: 87, 93, 95-96

PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	3,024	2,611	3,000
Harvest:	538	618	650
Hunters:	1,525	1,830	1,800
Hunter Success:	35%	34%	36%
Active Licenses:	1,714	2,090	1,800
Active License Success	31%	30%	36%
Recreation Days:	13,999	16,925	16,500
Days Per Animal:	26.0	27.4	25.4
Males per 100 Females:	34	29	
Juveniles per 100 Females	31	37	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%)

2,900 (2320 - 3480)

Management Strategy:

Recreational

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

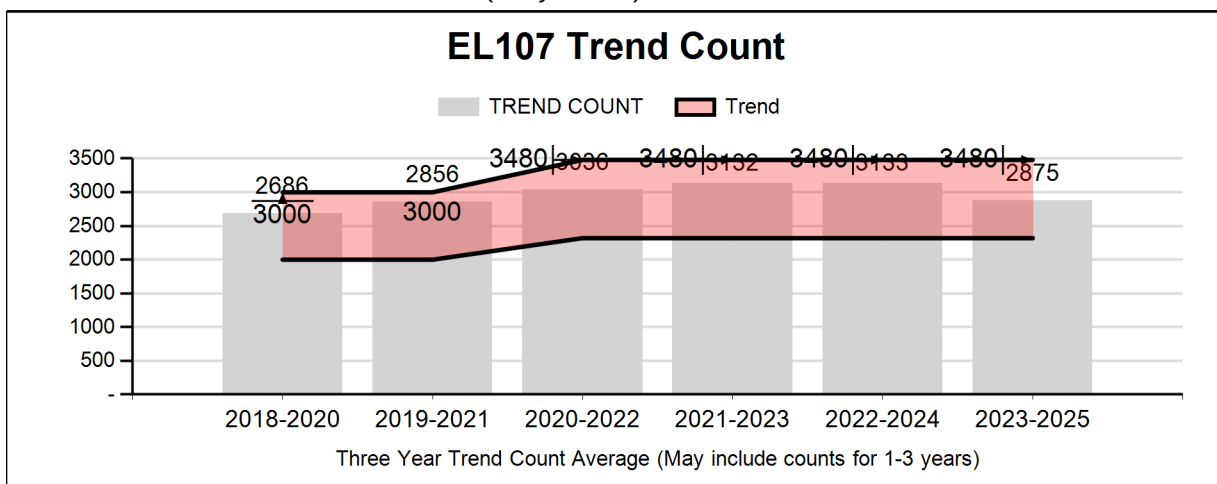
-10.0%

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

0

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

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



**2026 Hunting Seasons
Upper Green River (EL107)**

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
87	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
87	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
87	1			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	10	Antlered elk valid within the interior of the Dell Creek Loop Road (Forest Road 30580 and Sublette County Road 23-114)
87	6			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	50	Cow or calf valid south and east of Dell Creek, and west of North Fork Fisherman Creek
87	7	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 20	150	Cow or calf; also valid in that portion of Area 84 south and east of Shoal Creek
93	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	200	Any elk
93	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 30		Antlerless elk
93	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	275	Cow or calf
93	8			Oct. 1	Nov. 30	Unlimited	Cow or calf valid on private land
95	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	225	Any elk
95	2	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 5	20	Any elk valid within the Green River Drainage upstream from the outlet of Lower Green River Lake, including that portion east and south of Mill Creek
95	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	150	Antlerless elk

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
95	5	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 5	25	Antlerless elk valid within the Green River Drainage upstream from the outlet of Lower Green River Lake, including that portion east and south of Mill Creek
95	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Nov. 5	25	Cow or calf
96	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31		Any elk
96	Gen			Nov. 1	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
96	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	275	Any elk
96	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 30		Antlerless elk
96	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	150	Antlerless elk
96	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	150	Cow or calf
96	8			Dec. 1	Jan. 31	Unlimited	Cow or calf valid on private land west of the elk fence and south of the New Fork Lake Road

2026 Region W Nonresident quota: 2,775

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 56% Satisfied, 24% Neutral, 20% Dissatisfied

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

Hunting seasons in the past years have remained similar and successful in maintaining this herd unit within management goals. As with most hunt areas in western Wyoming, weather drives harvest trends, especially with antlerless elk later in the hunting season. Although hunter numbers, harvest and success typically don't reflect much annual variation for the Upper Green elk herd as a whole, each hunt area is unique, resulting in different hunting strategies and seasons. This herd is managed as a "recreational herd" for a bull:100 cow ratio of 15-29 and has remained above this objective in recent years. The addition of hunt area 87 to the Upper Green River herd unit occurred in 2022 upon the elimination of the Hoback elk herd (EL104).

The proposed 2026 hunting season will remain the same as in 2025 in providing liberal opportunities for both antlered and antlerless harvest within this herd by using a combination of general and limited quota licensed hunters. Hunt area 87 (Raspberry Ridge), new to this herd

in 2022, will have similar season structures as in the past allowing some additional harvest opportunities near the Dell Creek feedground by allowing 87-7 licenses to also be valid in a small portion of hunt area 84 south and east of Shoal Creek. Elk GPS collar data gathered from elk attending the Dell Creek feedground indicate that Shoal Creek would be a better hunt area and herd unit western boundary instead of the Riling Draw Road to the divide between Dell Creek and Shoal Creek, and changes will be vetted with interested publics during the season setting process. A late season antlered hunt, 87 type 1 (10 licenses) along with 87-6 licenses for antlerless elk will be maintained to address annual private land hay damage in a small portion of the area. Hunt area 93 will be similar to past years, along with 93 type 8 licenses (unlimited in number) valid on private land to encourage harvest, reduce damage and encourage re-distribution where large numbers of elk congregate on private lands. Hunt area 95 will offer similar seasons and licenses for limited quota hunters as in 2025, with a slight reduction in 95 type 2 licenses to address hunter crowding comments and take into account 14 carryover licenses from 2025 due to the Dollar Lake fire. Despite high hunter success with hunt area 95 type 2 licenses (75%) and hunt area 92-5 licenses (85%) in 2025, license allocations remain modest to maintain a high-quality hunt. In hunt area 96, the combination of general and limited quota seasons and licenses will remain similar, along with 96 type 8 licenses valid on private land in a portion of the area to address damage and elk/cattle co-mingling issues.

Managers believe a high proportion of elk in this herd typically attend feedgrounds during most winters and are counted during big game surveys. Large carnivores (wolves and grizzly bears) have likely contributed to reduced hunter participation in the northern portion of this herd unit (hunt area 95), and are likely influencing elk productivity and survival. Lack of public access on private lands in hunt area 93 limits harvest and compromises female harvest goals within this herd. Additionally, a large portion of occupied elk habitat in hunt area 96 overlaps the Bridger Wilderness, limiting hunter accessibility and resulting in poor harvest rates during years with mild fall conditions when elk remain at higher elevations. Hunt area 87 is predominately national forest with good overall access, although persistent damage and elk/cattle co-mingling during the winter months remains a problem on some private lands. Two recent fires, Pack Trail (2024) located just north of this herd unit along with the Dollar Lake (2025) located within hunt area 95 may possibly change elk behavior and distribution within this herd unit in future years, as have been documented in surrounding herd units in the past.

Management Objective Review

The Upper Green River elk herd unit's population objective of 2,900 elk was last reviewed in 2022, when the objective was increased from 2,500 elk due to the dissolution of the Hoback elk herd based on movement data. A total of 400 elk that typically winter on the Dell Creek feedground were added to the Upper Green River herd's objective. This objective will be reviewed again in 2027.

Population and Trend Evaluation

Since 2012 a mid-winter trend count has been utilized to manage this herd instead of hand-derived population model estimates. This is a 'leaky' herd unit and as a result, a functional model has never been developed. The mid-winter trend objective for this herd is 2,900 elk (+/- 20%) for a range of 2,320 to 3,480 elk. The postseason 2025 winter trend count was 2,611 elk observed on Department-operated feedgrounds and native winter ranges (Table 1). The 3-

year average (2023-2025) winter trend count is 2,875 elk, within the management objective. The 2025-26 conditions were very mild with below average snow conditions resulting in lower dependence on feedgrounds, elk scattered on native winter ranges, and an overall lower 2025 trend count. Winter and habitat conditions, wolf activity and timing of classification surveys have resulted in fluctuating trend count data on all four feedgrounds and native winter ranges in past years.

Table 1. Herd Composition Counts in the Upper Green River Herd Unit, 2016-2025.

<u>Location</u>	<u>2016</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2018</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>*2022</u>	<u>*2023</u>	<u>*2024</u>	<u>*2025</u>
Dell Creek F.G.	-	-	-	-	-	-	588	577	481	380
GR Lakes F.G	667	515	626	755	698	774	729	725	750	625
Black Butte F.G	904	553	580	1014	918	1263	937	1115	888	651
Soda Lake F.G.	1478	1144	1179	960	0	0	944	0	781	0
<u>N.W.R.</u>	<u>30</u>	<u>332</u>	<u>127</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>1085</u>	<u>984</u>	<u>188</u>	<u>572</u>	<u>124</u>	<u>955</u>
Herd Unit Total	3079	2544	2512	2845	2701	3021	3386	2989	3024	2611

*Hunt Area 87 (Dell Creek FG) added to the herd unit in 2022 and new objective = 2900

Disease Management

Ear tags are permanently attached to all elk captured and released as part of brucellosis surveillance and related research initiatives. These tags are later retrieved when animals are harvested or carcasses are recovered, providing valuable insights into elk distribution, dispersal patterns, and potential disease transmission pathways within elk populations.

GPS collars are routinely deployed to facilitate efficient monitoring of elk populations throughout the brucellosis transmission season. The management goal is to always maintain at least five active collars per feedground. These collars record elk locations at two-hour intervals for up to four years, enabling detailed assessment of elk movements, identification of high-risk areas for elk-to-cattle brucellosis transmission, and evaluation of elk responses to modifications in feeding strategies intended to reduce disease transmission. Data from GPS collars continually inform and refine spatial risk models and management practices.

A total of 14 elk were handled at feedgrounds this season within the Upper Green River elk herd, with all 14 sampled for exposure to *Brucella abortus*, the bacteria responsible for causing brucellosis. 10 of the samples tested positive (Table 2). The sample size was not large enough to estimate seroprevalence in the herd unit.

Table 2. Winter 2025-26 Upper Green River Elk Herd Unit Capture Summary

Feedground	# GPS collars deployed	# Captured	# Tested	# Positive	Seroprevalence
Soda Lake	0	0	0	0	N/A
Black Butte	2	2	2	2	100%
Green River Lakes	0	0	0	0	N/A
Dell Creek	12	12	12	8	67%
Totals =	14	14	14	10	71%

Winter 2025-26 was a very mild winter season, and elk redistribution efforts were limited compared to more severe winters with extended feeding. Pinedale Region's drone was used only once early in the season to haze a small group of elk from private property near the McNeel feedground, and one cow elk was lethally removed due to brucellosis concerns.

Numerous game-proof fencing materials, purchased through cooperative funding agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, have been distributed across the Upper Green River elk herd over the past several decades. Two were distributed within this herd unit during the reporting period. Once installed, stackyards serve to eliminate food rewards for elk in areas of elevated brucellosis transmission risk, thereby reducing elk presence and minimizing the potential for elk-cattle commingling.

Soda Lake Feedground

No elk were fed at the Soda Lake feedground during winter 2025-26. One carcass was found between Little Soda and Soda Lake on January 26, and CWD was not detected. Because the Soda Lake feedground is generally managed for shorter feeding seasons, facilitated by relatively low risk of elk-cattle interaction in conjunction with high access to native forage in late winter and early spring, the transmission rate of *B. abortus* on the feedground is likely low.

Black Butte Feedground

Two adult female elk were chemically immobilized at the Black Butte feedground to deploy two GPS collars. Both elk tested positive for exposure to *B. abortus* (Table 2); however, the small sample size was insufficient to accurately estimate population seroprevalence. Feedground mortality records this winter included 26 carcasses found at Black Butte; none tested positive for CWD. The feeding season this winter was much shorter than normal due to mild conditions.

Green River Lakes Feedground

No elk were captured at the Green River Lakes feedground during winter 2025-26. One adult female elk was found dead on November 20 on U.S. Forest Service-managed lands near the feedground and tested negative for CWD. No CWD-positive carcasses were reported for Green River lakes feedgrounds this winter, and the feeding season was much shorter than normal due to mild conditions.

Dell Creek Feedground

Twelve adult female elk were captured at the Dell Creek feedground to deploy twelve GPS collars. Eight elk tested positive for exposure to *B. abortus* (Table 2); however, the sample size was insufficient to accurately estimate population seroprevalence. Trapping for routine brucellosis surveillance for this feedground was scheduled this season, but was not implemented due to mild conditions. Feedground mortalities included twelve carcasses found at Dell Creek; none tested positive for CWD.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring & Management

Due to a lack of wild game processors, sample collections have been challenging and rely mainly on field checked animals. From 2021-2025, 226 CWD samples have been collected/tested from adult, hunter-harvested elk with one positive animal, a cow elk harvested near the Dell Creek feedground in November, 2025, for an overall herd CWD prevalence of 0.4% (Table 3). A total of 62 elk were tested for CWD within the Upper Green River elk herd during the 2025 hunter surveillance period beginning September 1, 2025. One sample tested positive, resulting in a prevalence of 1.6% for the year (Table 3). During the winter of 2024-25, six elk that died on the Dell Creek feedground in hunt area 87 were positive for CWD, and a bull that died on Black Butte feedground in hunt area 93 was also positive. This bull was tagged at Dell Creek feedground during the 2023-24 winter.

Table 3. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Upper Green River Herd, 2021-2025.

Years	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	0.0% (n=24)	6
2022	0.0% (n=49)	4
2023	0.0% (n=33)	7
2024	0.0% (n=58)	5
2025	1.6%, 1, (n=62)	10
2021-2025	0.4%, 1, (n=226)	9

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Elk

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

HERD: EL108 - PINEDALE

HUNT AREAS: 97-98

PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	2,017	1,814	2,000
Harvest:	513	532	550
Hunters:	1,340	1,534	1,500
Hunter Success:	38%	35%	37 %
Active Licenses:	1,485	1,700	1,500
Active License Success	35%	31%	37 %
Recreation Days:	10,725	12,458	11,500
Days Per Animal:	20.9	23.4	20.9
Males per 100 Females:	27	0	
Juveniles per 100 Females	30	0	

Trend Based Objective (± 20%)

1,900 (1520 - 2280)

Management Strategy:

Recreational

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

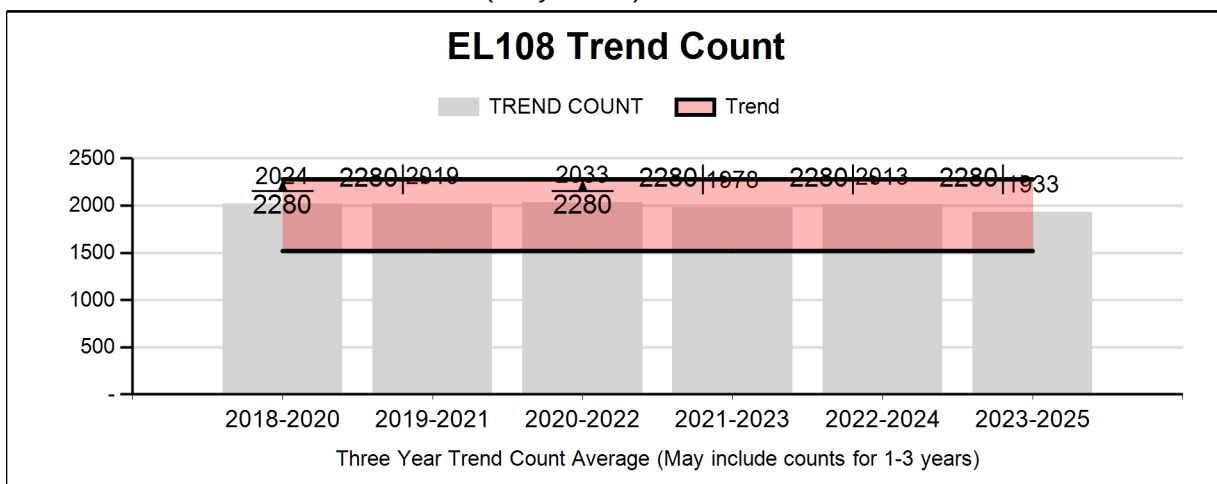
-4.5%

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

0

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

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



2026 HUNTING SEASONS
Pinedale Elk (EL108)

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
97	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Oct. 1	Oct. 15		Any elk
97	Gen			Oct. 16	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
97	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 31	250	Any elk
97	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 30		Antlerless elk
97	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Nov. 30	200	Cow or calf
98	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Oct. 1	Oct. 15		Any elk
98	Gen			Oct. 16	Nov. 20		Antlerless elk
98	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 31	350	Any elk
98	1			Nov. 1	Nov. 30		Antlerless elk
98	1			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid between Scab Creek and the East Fork River
98	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Nov. 30	125	Antlerless elk
98	4			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Antlerless elk valid between Scab Creek and the East Fork River
98	6	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Nov. 30	300	Cow or calf
98	6			Dec. 1	Jan. 31		Cow or calf valid between Scab Creek and the East Fork River
98	8			Nov. 1	Nov. 30	Unlimited	Cow or calf valid on private land

2026 Region W Nonresident quota: 2,775

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 58% Satisfied, 24% Neutral, 18% Dissatisfied

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

Harvest strategies using a combination of limited quota and general licensed hunters combined with lengthy seasons have been successful in maintaining this herd unit within management goals. Snow accumulation at higher elevations during the hunting seasons greatly influences antlerless harvest in this herd, and hunter success is reflectively variable. Bull harvest (type 1 licenses) success is typically higher due to seasons opening early (Sept. 20) during the end of the rut. Mild fall weather conditions during 2021 resulted in low hunter success, increased hunter effort (days/harvest), and poor female harvest. Conversely, 2022 seasons had much better success and harvest due to more conducive fall hunting conditions (i.e., more snow). Although mild

conditions persisted throughout most of the 2023 and 2024 seasons, hunting success increased with a record estimated harvest of 660 total elk in this herd unit during 2024. Mild conditions resulted in lower but near average harvest in 2025. Increased elk harvest during the past four years coincides with liberalization in seasons since 2021.

The proposed 2026 hunting seasons remain similar to past years for this herd unit, using a combination of general and limited quota licensed hunters for both hunt areas 97 and 98. Limited quota license holders will be provided antlerless opportunities to Nov. 30 for the fifth consecutive year. Additional opportunities will be provided for general licensed hunters for antlerless elk after the any elk season closes on October 15, as in past years. A late season hunt will remain in hunt area 98 to keep elk out of stored hay and reduce co-mingling with livestock on private lands. Unlimited type 8 licenses in hunt area 98 will remain to provide additional harvest opportunities and damage suppression actions on private lands where landowners allow access.

Managers believe a high proportion of elk in this herd typically attend feedgrounds during most winters. Some interchange (~10%) of elk has been documented between the Pinedale herd and the adjacent South Wind River herd to the southeast via GPS collars and ear tags. More than half of the U.S. Forest Service lands in this herd are designated as Wilderness (Bridger Wilderness) where access is limited to foot or horseback travel. The remaining Forest Service lands outside Wilderness have moderate vehicle and trail access. Lack of public access on private lands in hunt area 98 along Scab and Silver Creeks provides a refuge for elk and limits harvest opportunities. Years with persistent deep snow at higher elevations results in elk distributing to lower elevations where access is easier for hunters, resulting in increased harvest. Weather is a very influential factor on harvest rates, especially for antlerless elk, in this herd unit.

Management Objective Review

The mid-winter trend count objective for the Pinedale elk herd is 1,900 elk, with a range of 1,520-2,280 (+/- 20%) animals. The objective was last reviewed in 2022, at which time no change was recommended. The Pinedale elk herd's objective will be reviewed again in 2027.

Population and Trend Evaluation

The mid-winter trend count objective for the Pinedale elk herd is 1,900 elk, with a range of 1,520-2,280 (+/-20%) animals. The 2025 trend count was 1,814 elk observed on Department-operated feedgrounds and native winter ranges (Table 1). Winter conditions were very mild resulting in lower elk dependence on feedgrounds and poor classification counts on elk away from feedgrounds on native winter ranges. Mild winter conditions can also be attributed to the lower documented trend count in 2025. The 2023-2025 three-year winter trend count average is 1,933 elk, which is within the herd objective. This herd unit is designated as a 'recreational' herd with a bull:100 cow ratio management objective for 15-29 bulls:100 cows. The 2025 bull:cow ratio could not accurately be assessed due to a large number (n=951) of unclassified elk. The 2020-2024 average bull:100 cow ratio was 27:100.

Table 1. Herd Composition Counts in the Pinedale Elk Herd Unit, 2016-2025

Location	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Fall Creek F.G	828	610	641	710	0	160	708	0	719	0
Scab Creek F.G	553	769	700	723	745	792	862	840	691	767
Muddy Creek F.G.	643	479	479	471	515	466	368	416	448	342
<u>N.W.R.</u>	<u>109</u>	<u>119</u>	<u>134</u>	<u>107</u>	<u>847</u>	<u>520</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>687</u>	<u>184</u>	<u>705</u>
Herd Unit Total	2133	1977	1954	2011	2107	1938	2054	1943	2042	1814

DISEASE MANAGEMENT

Ear tags are permanently attached to all elk captured and released as part of brucellosis surveillance and related research initiatives. These tags are later retrieved when animals are harvested or carcasses are recovered, providing valuable insights into elk distribution, dispersal patterns, and potential disease transmission pathways within elk populations.

GPS collars are routinely deployed to facilitate efficient monitoring of elk populations throughout the brucellosis transmission season. The goal is to always maintain at least five active collars per feedground. These collars record elk locations at two-hour intervals for up to four years, enabling detailed assessment of elk movements, identification of high-risk areas for elk-to-cattle brucellosis transmission, and evaluation of elk responses to modifications in feeding strategies intended to reduce disease transmission. Data from GPS collars continually inform and refine spatial risk models and management practices.

Winter 2025-26 was mild throughout the Pinedale elk herd, and no feeding was conducted at the Fall Creek feedground, while feeding at both the Scab Creek and Muddy Creek feedgrounds ended in mid-February, much earlier than average. Reduced feeding duration and lower elk dependence on feedgrounds likely reduced the duration of dense elk aggregation and associated opportunities for disease transmission compared to more typical winters.

Numerous game-proof fencing materials, purchased through cooperative funding agreements with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, have been distributed across Pinedale elk herd over the past several decades. One was distributed within this herd unit during the reporting period. Once installed, stackyards serve to eliminate food rewards for elk in areas of elevated brucellosis transmission risk, thereby reducing elk presence and minimizing the potential for elk-cattle commingling.

Muddy Creek Feedground

No elk were captured at the Muddy Creek feedground during winter 2025-26, though routine brucellosis surveillance through trapping had been planned. Due to the mild winter, feeding was terminated in mid-February, much earlier than average. Three carcasses were found during feeding operations at Muddy Creek feedground this winter, all of which were sampled and tested negative for CWD. One additional juvenile male elk was lethally removed and also tested negative. However, during end-of-season carcass grid searches, 12 additional carcasses were located on or near the feedground, samples from 9 of the carcasses were testable, and one carcass (brain material in skull) tested positive for CWD. This is the first documented case of CWD at

the Muddy Creek feedground, although CWD had previously been detected within the associated hunt area.

Scab Creek Feedground

No elk were captured at the Scab Creek feedground during winter 2025-26. Feeding ended in mid-February, much earlier than average, and feedground dependence by elk remained low even during the period when feeding occurred. Feedground mortality data documented one predator-killed juvenile elk during the feeding season for which no sample could be collected. End-of-season carcass grid searches documented 12 additional carcasses within 1-mile of the feedground; no samples tested positive for CWD. Continued monitoring remains important given the confirmed CWD-positive cases documented at this feedground during previous winters.

Fall Creek Feedground

No elk were captured at the Fall Creek feedground during winter 2025-26. Mild winter conditions and low snow levels resulted in no supplemental feeding at Fall Creek, and elk were allowed to free-range throughout the winter season.

Chronic Wasting Disease Monitoring & Management

Due to somewhat limited Forest Service access points, a large amount of Wilderness, and low harvest due to mild conditions in recent years, sample collections have been challenging in the Pinedale elk herd. During the previous five years (2021-2025), 226 CWD samples were collected and tested from hunter harvested elk with 2 positive animals for a 0.9% prevalence (Table 2). A GPS-collared cow elk died on the Scab Creek feedground in hunt area 98 and subsequently tested positive for CWD in December of 2024, the first elk documented to have died from CWD on a feedground in Wyoming. Two cow elk that died on the Scab Creek feedground during the winter of 2024-2025 also tested positive for CWD. During end-of-season carcass grid searches in March of 2026, one carcass recovered at the Muddy Creek feedground tested positive for CWD. This is the first documented CWD case at the Muddy Creek feedground. CWD was previously documented at the Scab Creek feedground during winter 2024-25, and no CWD-positive results were documented from Scab Creek mortalities during the 2025-26 season.

Table 2. CWD prevalence for hunter-harvested elk in the Pinedale herd, 2020-2024

Years	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>	Percent of Harvested Adult Elk Sampled
	All Adult Elk (CI = 95%)	
2021	1.6%, 1, (n=64)	6
2022	2.7%, 1, (n=37)	8
2023	0.0% (n=41)	9
2024	0.0% (n=38)	7
2025	0% (n=46)	9
2021-2025	0.9%, 2, (n=226)	9

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Moose

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

HERD: MO105 - SUBLETTE

HUNT AREAS: 3, 5, 10, 20-25

PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Trend Count:	1,143	1,028	1,300
Harvest:	142	131	130
Hunters:	152	138	145
Hunter Success:	93%	95%	90 %
Active Licenses:	152	138	140
Active License Success	93%	95%	93 %
Recreation Days:	1,251	1,317	1,250
Days Per Animal:	8.8	10.1	9.6
Males per 100 Females:	68	68	
Juveniles per 100 Females	43	49	

Trend Based Objective ($\pm$ 20%)

1,500 (1200 - 1800)

Management Strategy:

Special

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

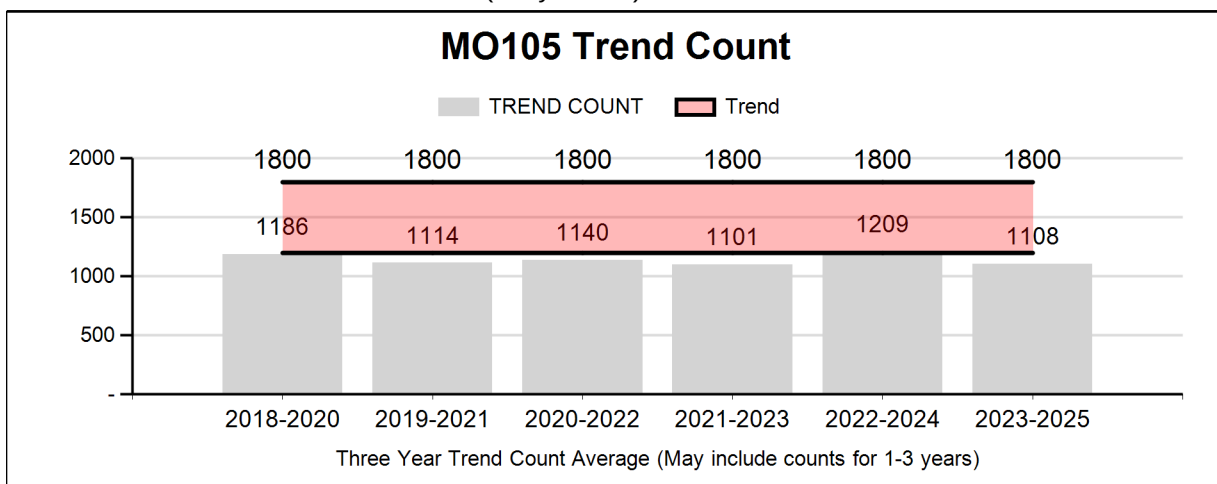
-31.5%

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:	0%	0%
Males $\geq$ 1 year old:	0%	0%
Juveniles (< 1 year old):	0%	0%



2026 HUNTING SEASONS
Sublette Moose (MO105)

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
3	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 19	Sep. 20	Oct. 31	15	Antlered moose
5	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	20	Antlered moose
10	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	8	Antlered moose
20	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	15	Antlered moose
21	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	2	Antlered moose
22	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	5	Antlered moose
23	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	10	Antlered moose
24	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 31	20	Antlered moose
25	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	45	Antlered moose
25	4	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 31	5	Antlerless moose, except cow moose with calf at side

License Summary: Type 1 = 140 licenses; Type 4 = 5 licenses

2025 Management Summary
Hunting Season Evaluation

Moose harvest during the 2025 season continued to maintain high success at 95% with hunter effort around 10 days/harvest for the Sublette herd unit. Hunt areas within the herd ranged from 70% to 100% success and varied from 8 to 16 days/harvest for bulls. Managers attempt to maintain an average age of harvest for bulls around 4.0 years or higher to provide hunters with opportunities to harvest ‘trophy’ class bulls. The 5-year average age for harvested bulls is 4.4 years old. An average antler width of 38 inches was reported in this herd during 2025.

Success, hunter effort and bull quality vary among individual hunt areas somewhat due to weather conditions, license allocations and moose densities. Although license allocations have remained near 145 the past few years, the total number of licenses issued has declined from a total of 630 licenses in 2002, to 145 in 2025, a total decrease of 485 (77%). These reductions by license type since 2002 equate to declines of 98% (230 to 5) cow/calf (type 4) licenses and 65% (400 to 140) bull (type 1) licenses. The 2026 moose seasons in this herd unit will be the same for a total of 140 type 1 licenses. Five type 4 licenses will again be available in hunt area 25, for a total herd quota of 145 licenses.

Herd Unit Evaluation

Undetermined moose deaths have been documented within this herd during past years. The significance of these spring mortalities is currently unknown, and it appears other factors besides hunter harvest is slowing population growth. A study conducted during 2011-2014 within a portion of this herd unit documented moose demographics, body condition and survival rates to help managers better understand issues and problems within this moose population. Findings from this study indicate lower than expected adult female survival, fluctuating pregnancy rates, and high calf survival rates. Fat measurements from study animals indicated overall poor body condition, suggesting poor quality habitat. A combination of factors such as habitat conditions, disease, parasites and predation may all be attributing to limited population growth in this herd.

Population and Trend Evaluation

Data for this herd unit suggest this moose population declined during the late 1990's, stabilized in 2004 and 2005, slowly increased through 2013, and has stabilized to present. Starting in 2013, a mid-winter trend count was approved as the management objective for this herd unit instead of post-hunt population estimates. The mid-winter trend objective for this herd is 1,500 moose (+/-20%), with a range of 1200–1800 animals. The postseason 2025 mid-winter trend count of 1,029 moose can largely be attributed to below average snow conditions and scattered moose distributions, and was indeed lower than the 1,317 moose trend count in 2024 with average winter conditions, but similar to the count of 979 in 2023 with below average snow conditions (Table 1). The most recent 3-year average (2023- 2025) trend count of 1,108 moose is below the trend objective. Moose classification data from the 2025 postseason survey flights documented a bull ratio of 68:100 cows and calf ratio of 49:100 cows, similar to the previous 5-year average bull:cow:calf ratio of 68:100:43 (Table 1). Maintaining comparable classification survey efforts (flight time) compared to previous years can provide managers a reliable data set that reflect population trends in this herd. Mid-winter trend counts do not reflect the actual moose population, as not all areas with wintering moose are surveyed and not all moose are observed in those areas that are surveyed.

Table 1. Postseason moose classifications in the Sublette herd, 2020-2025

2020 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary																		
for Moose Herd MO105 - SUBLETTE																		
Year	Post Pop	MALES				FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	CIs 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	345	345	31%	519	47%	241	22%	1,105	712	0	66	66	± 0	46	± 0	28
2021	0	0	337	337	34%	456	46%	192	19%	985	644	0	74	74	± 0	42	± 0	24
2022	0	0	407	407	32%	644	50%	241	19%	1,292	736	0	63	63	± 0	37	± 0	23
2023	0	0	314	314	32%	450	46%	205	21%	969	635	0	70	70	± 0	46	± 0	27
2024	0	0	415	415	32%	603	47%	275	21%	1,293	784	0	69	69	± 0	46	± 0	27
2025	0	0	321	321	31%	471	46%	232	23%	1,024	779	0	68	68	± 0	49	± 0	29

Population Management Objective Review

The mid-winter trend count objective of 1,500 moose for the Sublette moose herd was last reviewed in 2023, when no change was recommended. The Sublette moose herd objective will again be reviewed in 2028.

Harvest Age and Antler Width Data

A total of 93 teeth representing approximately 70% of the reported 2025 harvest were aged using cementum annuli analysis. Tooth sample size over the past 10 years has ranged between 55% and 73% of the total harvest. The 2025 tooth ages from the WGFD lab tallied an average age of 4.2 (median age = 4.0), remaining relatively similar at approximately 4.0 years during the past two decades (Figure 1). The low sample sizes used to derive female ages in recent years results in erratic and unreliable trends. The average antler width of hunter harvested bull moose was 38 inches in this herd during 2025, derived from 70% of successful bull moose hunters that submitted both antler information and tooth collections, and is identical to the long-term average antler width.

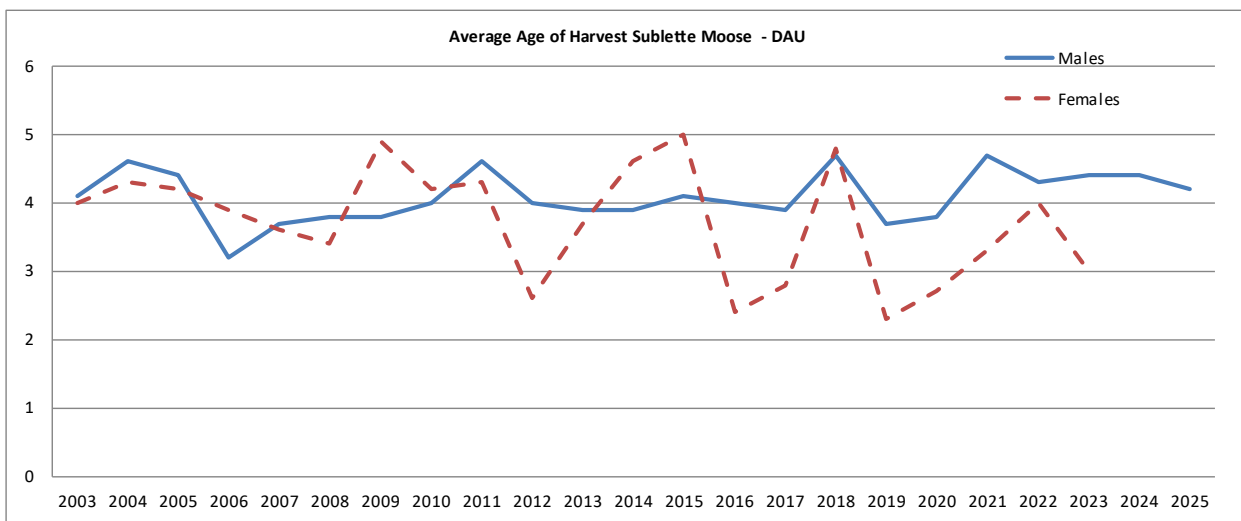


Figure 1. Average age of harvest moose in the Sublette herd, 2003-2025

2025 - JCR Evaluation Form

SPECIES: Mule Deer

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

HERD: MD104 - SUBLETTE

HUNT AREAS: 130-131, 138-142, 150-155

PREPARED BY: DEAN CLAUSE

	<u>2020 - 2024 Average</u>	<u>2025</u>	<u>2026 Proposed</u>
Population:	20,357	22,437	25,591
Harvest:	1,149	888	1,120
Hunters:	3,563	3,087	3,300
Hunter Success:	32%	29%	34%
Active Licenses:	3,598	3,094	3,300
Active License Success:	32%	29%	34%
Recreation Days:	19,080	17,372	18,500
Days Per Animal:	16.6	19.6	16.5
Males per 100 Females	34	43	
Juveniles per 100 Females	70	77	

Population Objective ($\pm 20\%$) : 32000 (25600 - 38400)

Management Strategy: Special

Percent population is above (+) or below (-) objective: -29.9%

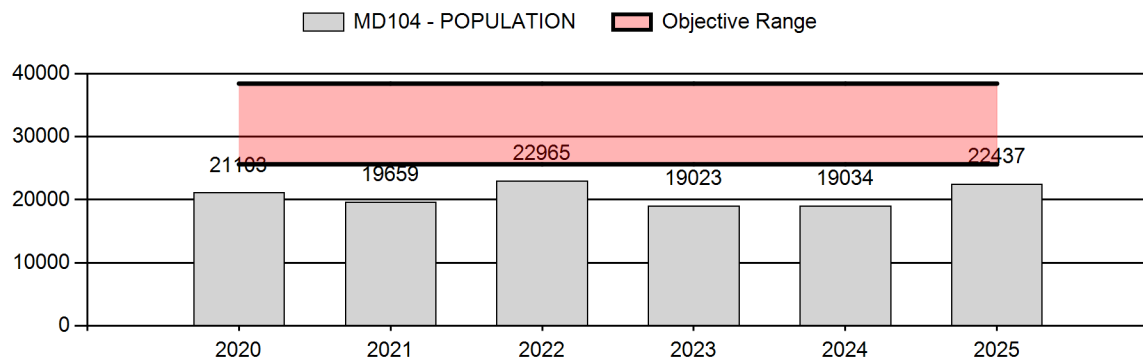
Number of years population has been + or - objective in recent trend: 9

Model Date: 02/24/2026

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:	17%	17%
Proposed change in post-season population:	+18%	+14%

Population Size - Postseason



2026 HUNTING SEASONS
Sublette Deer (MD104)

Hunt Area	Type	Special Archery Dates		Regular Season Dates		Quota	Limitations
		Opens	Closes	Opens	Closes		
130	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
130	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 15	Oct. 31	5	Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
131	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 6		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
131	7	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 9	Oct. 31	50	Doe or fawn valid on or within one-half (1/2) mile of irrigated land west of the Blue Rim (Sweetwater County Road 5) and Old Stauffer Roads (Sweetwater County Road 7) and south of the OCI Entrance Road (Sweetwater County Road 6)
138	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
138, 139, 140, 142, 143	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Nov. 30	50	Any white-tailed deer

139	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
140	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
141	1	Sep. 1	Sep. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 21	75	Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
141	1			Oct. 22	Oct. 31		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer on national forest
142	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
148, 150, 151, 152, 155,	3	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30	75	Any white-tailed deer
148, 150, 151, 152, 155,	8	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Nov. 30	75	Doe or fawn white-tailed deer
150	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer

151	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
152	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
153	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
154	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer
155	Gen	Sep. 1	Sep. 14	Sep. 15	Oct. 2		Antlered mule deer four (4) points or more on either antler or any white-tailed deer

*hunt areas with green font are not part of the Sublette herd.

2026 Region H nonresident quota: 350 licenses

2025 Hunter Satisfaction: 55% Satisfied, 28% Neutral, 17% Dissatisfied

2025 Management Summary

Hunting Season Evaluation

The 2023-2025 hunting seasons in the Sublette mule deer herd were more conservative in comparison to previous years in response to above average winter deer losses due to harsh conditions during the 2022-23 winter. The 2025 hunting season had a 16-day general season with an antler point restriction (APR) of 4-points or better. The Sublette herd has demonstrated growth since 2024, yet remains below the population objective range of 25,600 to 38,400 deer. The buck ratio objective (range of 30-45 bucks:100 does) has been maintained and increased to 43 bucks:100 does in 2025. For 2026, general license hunting opportunities will be slightly more liberal than the 2023-2025 seasons, opening on September 15 and closing Oct 2 (2 days longer than in 2025), and keeping the APR of four points or better in most hunt areas within the herd. The type 3 and type 8 licenses provide limited white-tailed deer harvest opportunities in the herd. Limited quota licenses (type 1) in hunt area 130 will be the same and hunt area 141 will be increased to 75 (+25 licenses) in 2026, and non-resident Region H licenses will be maintained at 350.

Winter survival, habitat condition and quality on winter ranges, and habitat loss (direct and indirect) from energy and residential development are the primary issues influencing population dynamics in the Sublette mule deer herd. During the past 10 years, this herd experienced three winters that resulted in above average fawn mortality (> 50% loss). During the winter of 2010-11, fawn mortality estimates exceeded 70%, and during the winter of 2016-17 fawn losses were estimated near 85% and adult mortality near 35%. Winter conditions experienced in 2018-19 resulted in winter fawn losses of 50+%. The 2022-23 winter was similar to 2016-17, although harsh winter conditions persisted much longer into spring, and the number of days recorded with below zero (F) temperatures broke long-term records. The severe 2022-23 winter resulted in a fawn loss around 70%, and estimated adult female mortality neared 30%. This winter loss and foreseeable reduction in buck ratios triggered managers to implement an APR, shorten seasons, and reduce quotas in 2023-2025 to maintain buck ratios. Winter fawn mortality estimates average around 30% on most years when winter severity is moderate to average. Fawn production has steadily improved during the past two years with good over winter survival since 2024. Current annual growth on key winter browse species has varied among years, but the overall habitat conditions remain poor with some improvement on certain years.

Gas field development has and will continue to impact deer numbers within the Sublette herd. The Pinedale Anticline gas field development overlaps with crucial winter range located on the Mesa, where annual population estimates indicate deer numbers have declined by roughly 40% from 2001–2017. Studies have demonstrated that deer avoid areas with intensive winter gas development, resulting in less forage available for wintering deer within and adjacent to gas development. Overall hunter satisfaction has been good within this herd in most years, even following years with above average winter mortality and fewer deer.

Management Objective Review

The Sublette mule deer herd has approached or maintained a population near the objective of 32,000 only three times since 1993. When the population has approached the objective, the next hard winter typically results in above average mortality and a decreased population. Intensive oil and gas development on winter ranges, and an increasing human population and concomitant urban development and associated habitat fragmentation have all contributed to reduce the carrying capacity of Sublette mule deer habitat. Managers believe lowering the population objective is likely warranted, and could help sustain a more stable population, but did not propose an objective change during 2024 when the last review occurred. The next objective review will occur in 2029.

Chronic Wasting Disease Management

The Sublette mule deer herd has been identified as an ongoing priority area for CWD sampling. A total of 469 hunter-harvested CWD samples were collected from mule deer in this herd from 2021-2025 (Table 1). During this 5-year period, 9 adult male mule deer have tested positive for CWD for a 1.9% (9/469) prevalence. An adult female mule deer was the first deer to test positive in this herd in April, 2017, and two hunter-harvested adult male white-tailed deer have tested positive for CWD, one in 2024 and one in 2025.

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

Year	Percent CWD-Positive and sample size (n) <i>Hunter Harvest Only</i>			Percent of Harvested Males Sampled
	All Adult Male Deer (CI = 95%)	Yearling Males	Adult Females	
2021	0%, (n=149)	0% (n=22)	0.0% (n=7)	10.5
2022	3.5%, 4, (n=113)	0% (n=25)	0.0% (n=5)	7.9
2023	6.3%, 4, (n=63)	0% (n=3)	0.0% (n=2)	6.5
2024	0%, (n=72)	0% (n=4)	0.0% (0)	5.8
2025	1.4%, 1, (n=72)	0% (n=10)	0% (n=1)	8.6
2021-2025	1.9%, 9, (n=469)	0% (56)	0.0% (15)	10.1

Population and Trend Evaluation

The post-season population objective for the Sublette mule deer herd is 32,000 deer (+/- 20%). An Integrated Population Model (IPM) is utilized annually using harvest, sex and age ratios, and survival data to project population estimates and trends for this herd. The 2025 post-season IPM population mean estimate is 22,417 deer using a random effect structure where adult survival is constant (Table 2). This model tracks the population trend, but appears to lag behind a year in showing positive growth during 2024. Tough winter conditions during 2022-23 resulted in known winter losses estimated at 30% for adult females and 70% for fawns. Overall, the 2025 post-season IPM estimates an 18% increase in the population, although this population likely experienced a greater increase in 2024 than the model indicated. The 2025 post-season classification ratio data resulted in the highest fawn ratios (77:100) documented since 2006, and the overall buck ratios increased to 43:100 which is the highest in the past 10-year period (Table 2). The high fawn ratios in the past two years, along with good overwinter survival should likely result in a greater 2025 post-season abundance estimate than what the IPM determined.

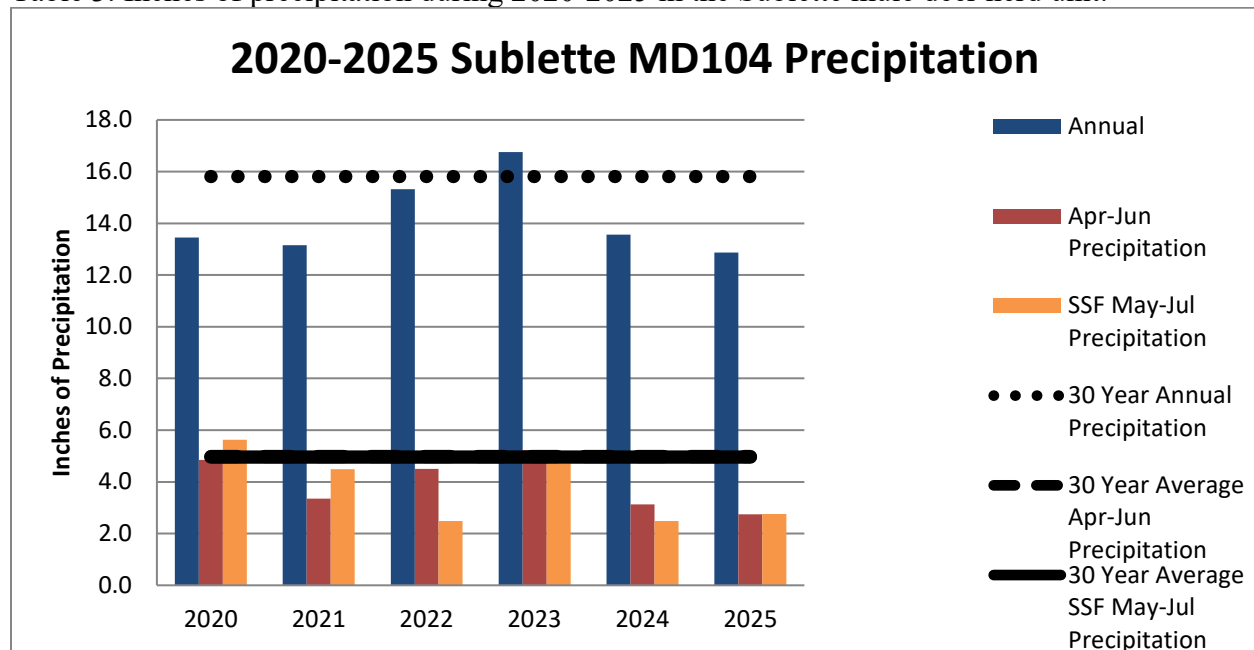
During February and March of 2022, a sightability survey was conducted for the first time in the Sublette herd, and estimated a 2021 post-season population of 20,025 deer (raw count = 15,153 X 1.19 (sightability inflation) X 1.11 (sampling inflation)). Sightability surveys can be very useful for grounding abundance estimates in the models, and for evaluation of past and current models. Another sightability survey, currently planned for 2027, should help align the IPM following the uncertain population decline from the 2022-23 winter, and assist managers with tracking the herd's recovery. Trend counts from post-season classification aerial surveys also reflect the population trends quite well in this herd, as survey time and coverage has remained mostly similar from year to year.

Table 2. Postseason classification summary for the Sublette mule deer herd, 2016-2025

2016 - 2025 Postseason Classification Summary																						
for Mule Deer Herd MD104 - SUBLETTE																						
Year	Post Pop	MALES								FEMALES		JUVENILES		Tot CIs	Cls Obj	Males to 100 Females				Young to		
		Ylg	2+ CIs 1	2+ CIs 2	2+ CIs 3	2+ UnCIs	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Ying			Adult	Total	Conf Int	100 Fem	Conf Int	100 Adult	
2016	28,509	660	646	647	231	5	2,189	20%	5,285	49%	3,207	30%	10,681	1,248	12	29	41	± 1	61	± 1	43	
2017	17,299	178	503	480	142	0	1,303	18%	3,907	55%	1,902	27%	7,112	1,123	5	29	33	± 1	49	± 1	37	
2018	19,838	430	338	405	157	0	1,330	18%	3,663	49%	2,491	33%	7,484	1,444	12	25	36	± 1	68	± 2	50	
2019	20,846	263	385	390	142	0	1,180	18%	3,130	49%	2,086	33%	6,396	1,402	8	29	38	± 1	67	± 2	48	
2020	21,103	276	301	326	111	0	1,014	17%	2,884	49%	1,945	33%	5,843	1,425	10	26	35	± 1	67	± 2	50	
2021	19,659	194	195	159	57	0	605	15%	2,044	50%	1,427	35%	4,076	1,499	9	20	30	± 2	70	± 3	54	
2022	22,965	571	452	336	134	0	1,493	17%	4,155	48%	2,934	34%	8,582	1,536	14	22	36	± 1	71	± 2	52	
2023	19,023	156	323	280	63	0	822	18%	2,403	52%	1,438	31%	4,663	1,107	6	28	34	± 2	60	± 2	45	
2024	19,034	378	332	383	129	0	1,222	16%	3,641	48%	2,782	36%	7,645	1,691	10	23	34	± 1	76	± 2	57	
2025	22,417	517	344	354	157	0	1,372	20%	3,179	45%	2,452	35%	7,003	1,822	16	27	43	± 1	77	± 2	54	

Weather

Table 3. Inches of precipitation during 2020-2025 in the Sublette mule deer herd unit.



The Parameter-Elevation Relationships on Independent Slopes Model (PRISM) was utilized to estimate precipitation by calculating a climate-elevation regression for each Digital Elevation Model grid cell (4km resolution) for the Sublette mule deer herd unit during the water year from October 2024 through September 2025. Data reported that annual precipitation was below the 30-year average and the lowest in the last 5 years (Table 3), largely due to lower-than-normal winter snowpack and spring/summer precipitation. Precipitation during the growing season (April – June) across the entire herd unit and precipitation that fell between May and July on higher elevation summer and transitional ranges were considerably lower than average.

Winter 2025-2026 conditions on most winter ranges have been mild and have remained relatively open, and snow depths did not impact movement or accessibility for wintering mule deer. Most low elevation winter ranges experienced well below average monthly snow fall accumulation between November 2025 and April 30, 2026. Remaining snowpack (expressed as a percentage of the long-term snow-water equivalent on this date for the last 30-years) was 64% of median as of April 7, 2026. Snowpack is the primary driver of runoff and stream flows in western Wyoming, so these patterns are concerning and portend a summer of likely low flows. Despite snow data being of considerable concern, total precipitation across Sublette County stations suggests near average for the 2026 water year (which started October 1, 2025). In contrast to lower elevations (<8,000), soil moisture in montane habitats is near average presently.

Average winter 2025-2026 monthly temperatures recorded from locations near winter ranges indicated warmer temperatures than the long-term monthly averages, ranging up to 15°F warmer during the period between November 2025 and April 30, 2026. Warmer temperatures and less than average snow accumulation on winter ranges likely resulted in higher than average mule deer survival during the 2025-2026 winter. However, continued dry weather and lack of early spring moisture are concerns for forage conditions entering the 2026 summer growing season. Additionally, annual production on winter range shrubs during 2026 is anticipated to be low unless meaningful moisture events occur during the growing season.

Habitat

Two wildfires occurred in the Sublette mule deer herd unit during 2025; the Horse Fire burned 2,713 acres of mixed conifer and meadow edge habitat in the Prospect Mountain area between North and South Horse creeks during mid-June, and the Dollar Lake Fire burned 19,500 acres of mixed conifer, mountain shrub and meadow habitat in the Upper Green from August to late September. Several habitat improvement efforts occurred within the herd unit during 2025. Approximately 45,788 acres were treated with aerial herbicide to control cheatgrass along the west slope of the Wind River Mountains from the Prospect Mountains north to New Fork Lake. A total of 31 miles of fencing was improved for wildlife passage with an additional 10 crossing structures installed, and over 300 Zeedyk structures were installed to improve approximately 32 acres of wet meadow communities.

Winter range shrub transects were monitored at 3 locations throughout the Mesa and Long Draw winter ranges, and in the north Superior area between Deer and Cabin Buttes during fall of 2025 to evaluate trends in annual leader growth of Wyoming big sagebrush and antelope bitterbrush. Results indicate that growth was below the long-term average for all sites. The mean annual bitterbrush leader growth in 2025 was 2.2 inches, down from 3.9 inches in 2024.

In 2015, Department personnel initiated the Rapid Habitat Assessment methodology to survey important mule deer habitats. This method strives to capture large-scale habitat quality metrics to better understand how the habitat is functioning for the current population of mule deer. In the Sublette Herd during 2025 department personnel completed 623.62 acres. Of these acres, 20% were meeting objectives, 1% were considered partially meeting objectives, and the remaining 79% were considered to not be meeting objectives.