

Midwest Deer and Wild Turkey Study Group Meeting
Ransburg Boy Scout Camp, Bloomington, IN
August 20-23, 2006

Purdue University has been studying wildlife damage to crops in northcentral Indiana. They compared results of a mail survey of landowners to field inspections, telemetry studies of animal use of farm fields, and videos of animals causing damage. They have produced a video showing various species caught in the act. About 1/3 of landowners reported enjoying deer in their farms, about 1/3 had mixed feelings about deer, and about 1/3 considered deer a nuisance. Raccoons caused more damage to corn than did deer, but deer caused more damage to soybeans than did woodchucks. Little damage by wild turkeys was documented. Forest area was the main predictor of damage. Most landowners over-estimated damage, most fields had less than \$100 in observed damage but landowners estimated damage at about \$500. Landowners blamed deer for much of the damage done by raccoons.

Terry Hyndman, IN Conservation Law Enforcement, gave a report on Operation Orion, an undercover investigation of Bellar's Place. Russ Bellar was a game breeder who conducted hunts for specific bucks that had been drugged and placed in a 6 acre killing pen with bait. Two undercover agents booked a hunt for 2 bucks for \$24,000. A self-narrated PowerPoint presentation was distributed that documented the investigation and court case. Also distributed was a DVD that included video of drugged deer being propped up for hunters to shoot, hunting over bait, etc. Bellar pleaded guilty just before case went to the jury and was sentenced to 1 year in federal prison and fined >\$500,000.

Indiana has developed a new exotic animal law. It prohibits the taking of white-tailed deer possessed under a game breeder's license and the taking, possessing, and releasing of exotic mammals. Prohibited mammals are identified by 26 family names. It allows the taking of wild boar for disease control and protection of property from damage. It allows for humane slaughter. It prohibits the release and requires the reporting of escapes. The state is being sued.

Pat Ruble, formerly with the Ohio DNR, is the new midwest representative for WMI. He stressed the importance of sporting industries knowing where the PR dollars are going, to states for land acquisition, research, etc. Given the recent federal registration of a drug for immunocontraception he felt it was important for states to gain the authority to regulate the use of such drugs. He expressed an interest in working with states in the midwest on CWD.

A roundtable discussion was held on the topic of leased hunting land and trophy management. In Wisconsin some large forest industry landowners are pulling out of the Forest Crop Law and leasing their land for hunting. In Kansas about 12% of landowners make money from leasing while about 8% got compensation from hunters in the form of labor on the farm. Kansas has a hunter access program where the state is leasing land. This may be setting a minimum price. Kansas has transferable non-resident permits that are issued to landowners who can sell them for whatever the market will bear. Kansas

would like to discontinue these permits and have the state issue them over-the-counter. Kansas thinks leasing helps to keep people on the land and the land from being developed. About 50% of non-resident deer hunters pay for access compared to about 5% of residents. In Illinois there are large leases in the west-central part of the state and the lease holders are restricting access and harvest and are not accountable for deer damage on surrounding farms. ~500,000 acres under lease in Illinois, more land than in public ownership. In Missouri about 3-4% of landowners claim they lease while 18% do not allow deer hunting. Under Minnesota's landowner liability protection law, landowners who lease can be held liable but landowners who grant access for free are not liable. The study group agreed to develop a position statement on leasing that would be forwarded to the Midwest directors.

State Reports.

Illinois: Used Telecheck statewide for deer registration except in 7 CWD counties. The system handled 4,000 calls/hour during peak periods. There were some problems with an overflow bank of computers that were not properly programmed. Despite this generating some missing data, they felt the system worked fairly well. Had a youth season in October in 43 counties with surplus deer, about 1,000 deer killed. Total harvest ~190,000. Plan to use meat processors to conduct 2nd round of statewide CWD surveillance. Recruiting 20-25 processors who would collect 100-250 heads per county.

Indiana: Concern about numbers of deer-vehicle accidents by the new agency director resulted in additional pressure on antlerless deer. The agency attempted to develop an incentive to harvest additional deer by a program to give deer to prisons. However, logistic difficulties resulted in very few deer being donated. With increased antlerless kill the overall harvest of 125,000 was a new record. They are 4 years into their 1 buck rule and yearling buck percent has dropped from 55% to 50%, but change is not significant. Surveyed hunters love the rule but agency would like to restore the 2 buck rule. They are discounting costs of 2nd and 3rd antlerless licenses. The bag limit has been increased to 8 in some counties. Sampled ~1,200 deer last year for CWD and plan a similar level of sampling this year. Report that some meat processors are being told by Ag Department that they will be shut down if a CWD positive deer goes through their business. This is negatively affecting cooperation with sampling.

Iowa: It appears that they are reducing their population, all surveys were down. ~2/3rd of deer killed were antlerless. Allowed rifle use in January season in southern Iowa for first time. About 6,000 deer were donated to the statewide food pantry program, exceeding the available funding. Program was very popular. ~4000 deer were sampled for CWD, mostly in northeastern region. Plan to use telecheck with voice recognition for registration with cross checks at pantry donations and meat processors. Are requiring landowners to preregister to be eligible for free landowner-tenant permits. Are experimenting with use of distance sampling to estimate density as part of their spotlight surveys.

Kansas: Deer populations have been stable since late 1990s or early 2000s. Had first CWD positive deer, a 3.5 year old female white-tailed deer in the northwestern-most county near Colorado and Nebraska. Collected 52 additional animals and none were positive. Used GPS linked to GIS on laptops to document sharpshooter locations and prove that they were only working on lands where they had permission. This helped to convince one outfitter who opposed their sampling to grant access. This area of the state has a low deer density; hunters killed only 54 deer in that county in 2005. Plan to sample ~3,500 deer using contractors-volunteers. Contractors are entering data directly into a web site. They accept that there will be problems with data accuracy. There is legislative pressure to simplify deer regulations. A committee of agency personnel has developed preliminary recommendations. Will collect public opinion over the next year. Agency would like to discontinue transferable non-resident permits. Proposing to reduce number of management units for bucks from 19 to 2 but keep 19 units for antlerless deer. They are evaluating the use of distance sampling with spotlight surveys.

Kentucky: Harvest was down, warm and lots of acorns. There is increasing interest in antler point restrictions. Already producing 30 Boone and Crocket deer/year and yearling buck percents have dropped from 60% to 48% in 2005 but hunters want more. State attempted to expand crossbow season to be concurrent with the archery season. Contracted with Cornell to do a HD survey, most hunters were neutral. But bowhunter organizations were strongly opposed and it turned into a nasty fight. Bowhunter groups went to the legislature who told the agency and bow groups to compromise. The compromise they developed was an on-again, off-again, on-again crossbow season that is very complicated. Governor banned the import of live deer and initially banned new permits for captive deer. State had only 80 farms and 4 shooting preserves. DNR has joint jurisdiction with Ag, industry asked legislature to transfer all authority to Ag. The legislature was not happy that hunters lobbied to keep DNR in the game but for now they still have regulatory authority. New facilities will be permitted but ban on imports remains in place. Testing about 2,500 deer/yr. SE Disease coop is doing the test. Will test only obexes this year.

Michigan: Total harvest was about 415,000, down 10% from 2004. Believe this reflects reduced populations, the agency is happy, hunters are not. UP population is down by 50%, northern lower is down, southern lower is up by 30%, this is the region of farms and urban. The southern lower now supports 50% of the population and 50% of the harvest. Bovine TB prevalence in deer is down to 1.2%, but had several new cattle herds infected. It is getting harder to get samples for TB testing. Had several deer that were showing symptoms suggestive of CWD but they turned out to have Eastern Equine Encephalitis. Not doing random CWD testing, just targeted surveillance. Legislature lowered minimum hunting age from 12 to 10 on private land but not on public land. Also approved an apprentice license that does not require hunter education but must hunt with a mentor. Have approved a \$1 voluntary fee to fund a venison donation program. There continues to be pressure for antler point restrictions statewide, but the commission has imposed a 2 year moratorium on new QDM initiatives. In 6 experimental QDM management units, 5 year evaluations were completed and 2 areas was dropped due to lack of hunter/landowner support and 4 continue. In UP the deer population is much

reduced and antlerless permits have been greatly reduced. One commissioner proposed a 1 buck rule that would have saved 2,500 bucks. The vote was tied and it did not pass, but expect to see the proposal again. They are still allowing supplemental feeding in the Lake Superior watershed. Lots of feed (100 tons) to support only 1,200 deer. The agency is looking at its authority to regulate the activities of the World Hunting Association who proposed catch and release dart gun hunts. Michigan has recently published a JWM article on fawn survival and a WSB article on baiting regulations. MS theses have been completed on deer-vehicle accidents and hunter/landowner tolerance for deer.

Minnesota: In the process of testing early antlerless seasons (selected DMUs), antler-point restrictions (3 state parks), and earn-a-buck regulations (6 state parks) as ways of increasing antlerless harvest. They are expanding the use of electronic registration, approx. 70% of about 1000 deer registration stations were online in 2005, using POS license terminals. Costs ~\$1.08/deer registered. Saves considerable staff time. Bills were introduced in the legislature to mandate antler-point restrictions in selected DMUs. Hunter surveys showed that most hunters opposed the regulations. CWD was confirmed in a 3rd captive facility in 2006 in a 10-year-old female white-tailed deer. The herd was depopulated with no additional positives found. About 400 deer were sampled near the facility in 2006, none were positive. Future CWD monitoring will be limited to targeted surveillance. Bovine TB was confirmed in 5 beef cattle herds in northwest Minnesota. The TB strains were similar to those found in cattle from the southwest US and Mexico. A total of 574 wild white-tailed deer were tested in the vicinity of these farms during fall and spring 2005-06, 2 tested positive for TB. Recreational feeding of deer has been banned in the 4 counties that encompass the TB surveillance zone. The agency plans to sample 1,000 hunter-killed deer in the surveillance area during the next 3-5 years. Are still in the process of reviewing deer population goals using a roundtable process. Research is evaluating distance sampling and aerial surveys for population monitoring. Total harvest was 255,736 deer.

Missouri: Used Telecheck for deer and turkey registration statewide in 2005. Overall worked well but there were a few glitches. Most LE officers liked it. Total harvest was 287,536, down 9% from 2004. Believed the drop in harvest was due to a large acorn crop. Through 2004 have tested 21,700 deer for CWD. Now only testing targeted suspects, <50/year. This will be the 3rd year of testing the use of antler-point restrictions to shift harvest from bucks to antlerless deer. Pressure on the commission for APR is growing. Are evaluating the use of more restrictive regulations on public lands to reduce harvest pressure on does. Are evaluating the use of trail cameras to monitor deer populations on the public lands. Received a donation from Whitetails Unlimited for purchase of cameras. Together with the University of Missouri, received a \$1 million grant to develop a deer cam that would be worn by deer to assess deer behavior.

Nebraska: Total harvest was 61,000, a new record. They are looking to move to telecheck but wanted automatic verification of hunter id and contractor would not provide this. Tested 7400 deer for CWD, 19 new positives. Agency staff culled 221 deer in 4 areas. Received numerous reports of mortality believed to be associated with EHD, primarily in eastern part of the state. Mange in coyotes is widespread. Believed it is

reducing the population and may result in increased fawn recruitment. The percentage of 2.5+ year old buck has been increasing, 56% in WTD and 62% in MD. Generally there is good access for non-residents but are having some issues with leasing and outfitting.

North Dakota: 2005 harvest was 91,272 WTD and 8,322 MD. The total was a record. Are reducing populations in NW and SE parts of the state toward goals, populations are high in NC region due to series of mild winters. The demand for permits is less than the supply. Are sampling ~1,500 deer/year for CWD, none detected yet. May do some TB surveillance near Minnesota outbreak. Baiting is starting to become an issue. It is banned on state land but allowed on private land.

Ohio: 2005 harvest was 209,513 WTD. Based on a hunter survey the greatest barrier to hunting participation is lack of time. Therefore have added a weekend in December for firearm hunting. Also adding 4 more days to their 4 month long archery season. Have added an apprentice license without hunter safety. Harvest by archery and muzzleloader is increasing. Plan to sample 1,500 deer for CWD this year, up from 700 last year. They have ~600 captive cervid facilities. Have been issuing in-season deer damage permits since 1998. Feel that this is resulting in abuse just to avoid cost of a permit.

South Dakota: 2005 harvest was ~70,500 WTD and ~16,500 MD. A record harvest. Have been increasing the number of double tags issued. Are using APRs in the Black Hills, limiting the number of licenses. Success is increasing and hunters are happy. They have a \$5 surcharge on all licenses and generate ~\$1million/year that is split between a walk-in-access program and depredation control program. Paying for lots of fencing of hay yards and silage. Their sportsman-against-hunger program is providing \$30 coupons to partially offset the cost for processing to encourage the harvest of additional antlerless deer. Sampled 3,252 deer and elk for CWD testing in 2005, 14 new positives bring the total to 47.