

Realities of hunting as a population control: Why there are so many deer today

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Monday, 29 November 2010 20:28 - Last Updated Monday, 29 November 2010 20:29

Although counterintuitive, the truth is hunting isn't much of a population control tool. There are a number of reasons why this is the case, the most significant being the fact that once a portion of a wildlife herd is removed, the remaining animals have more food to eat. This rather straightforward reality has some subtle implications.

Hunting simply decreases the competition for food among the animals that survive a hunt. As the potential for malnutrition is reduced, the incidence of death and disease is reduced. The animals left behind will be better fed, become stronger and their potential for reproduction will increase. As quite clearly stated in the college textbook "Wildlife Ecology and Management" (Fifth Edition, Pearson Education, Inc. 2003), "[h]unting mortality is frequently compensatory because it usually increases the life expectancy of individuals surviving the hunt, promotes higher reproductive rates, or does both..."

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