

2009 Elk Harvest Summary
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Introduction

Arkansas held its twelfth modern day elk hunt in the fall of 2009. Two five-day hunt periods were held in September 21-25 and December 7-11. Arkansas' first modern day elk season was held in 1998 and was a significant historic event for the state following the successful restoration of elk in the natural state. The eastern elk (*Cervus elaphus canadensis*) was extirpated from the state by 1840. Between 1981 and 1985, 112 Rocky Mountain Elk (*Cervus elaphus nelsoni*) were stocked near the Buffalo National River in Newton County.

Permits

Elk harvest in Arkansas is managed by issuing permits to public and private land hunters. A total of 27 permits (eight bull, three either-sex, and 16 antlerless) were issued for use in four established elk hunt zones (public land elk zones 1-4). Four bull permits were allocated for the September hunt period and four bull permits, three either-sex permits and sixteen antlerless permits were available for the December hunt period. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) donated two bull permits to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for fundraising purposes. These two permits generated \$17,100 with 85% of the proceeds returned to Arkansas for in-state elk project funding. One youth either-sex permit was donated to the Arkansas Game and Fish Foundation (AGFF) for fundraising purposes. Arkansas residents and holders of Lifetime Sportsman's Permits could apply for elk permits through a standard application process. A total of 7,034 people applied for draw permits. A total of 24 permits were randomly drawn from a squirrel cage in Jasper, Arkansas on June 27, 2009. Applicants were notified by phone or mail and each received an information packet by mail. Each hunter was required to attend a hunter orientation session prior to each hunt period.

Fifty-three (53) permits were issued for private land elk zone A, 17 permits were issued for private land elk zone B, and 39 permits were issued for private land elk zone 4. This results in a total of 109 permits being issued in the private land elk zones. Zone A permits were valid for the September and December elk hunt periods, and private land zone B and 4 permits were only valid for the December elk hunt. Landowner permission was required for applicants to qualify for a private land permit. The private land zone A quota was six either-sex elk (three for each hunt period). The private land zone B quota was 10 elk (three either-sex and seven antlerless). The private land zone 4 quota was seven elk (two either-sex and five antlerless). A potential total of 23 elk (11 either-sex and 12 antlerless) could be harvested on private lands.

Results

A total of 21 elk (14 bulls, six cows, and one calf) were harvested during the 2009 elk season. Sixteen (16) elk were taken in public land elk zones. Hunter success was 59% (number of elk taken/number of permits issued) on public lands. Nine bulls and seven antlerless were harvested with three bulls taken during the September hunt and six bulls and seven antlerless elk taken during the December hunt. A total of five bull elk were harvested from the three private land hunts (private land zones A, B, and 4).

Data and samples collected on harvested elk include weight, a lower incisor for aging, antler measurements, lactation information, reproductive tracts (December hunt only), and tissue samples for disease/parasite analysis. Weights on harvested cows taken ranged up to 370 pounds (dressed weight). Bull weights ranged up to 800 pounds (live weight). Field ages of elk ranged from 1.5 to 7.5 for bulls and 0.5 to 4.5 for cows. Cementum age analysis results have not been received at the time of this report. The bull with the largest antlers was 7X7.

Elk sightings by hunters in the entire elk range totaled 273 and included 65 bulls (eight spikes and 57 branched antlered bulls), 191 cows, and 17 calves. Public land hunters observed a total of 260 elk (57 bulls, 187 cows, and 16 calves). Private land hunters in Zone A counted six total elk (one adult bull, four cows, and one calf). Private land Zone B hunters observed six total elk – all adult bulls. Only one adult bull was observed by private land zone 4 hunters.

