



2002 Elk Harvest

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Introduction

Arkansas held its fifth modern day elk hunt in the fall of 2002. Two five-day hunt periods were held September 23-27 and December 9-13 in 4 hunt zones. Two seven-day hunt periods were held September 23-29 and December 9-15 in one hunt zone. Arkansas' first modern day elk season was held in 1998 and was a significant

historic event for the state following the successful restoration of Rocky Mountain elk. The eastern elk (*Cervus elaphus canadensis*) was extirpated from the state by about 1840. Between 1981 and 1985, 112 Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus nelsoni*) were stocked near the Buffalo National River in Newton County. The herd has grown to an estimated 400-450 animals.

Permits

A total of 20 permits (7 bull, one either-sex and 12 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 three bull permits, one either-sex permit and twelve antlerless permits were available for the December hunt period. The Arkansas Game and Fish Commission (AGFC) donated two bull permits (two of 20 total permits available) to the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (RMEF) for fundraising purposes. These two permits generated \$38,750.00 with 85% of the proceeds returned to Arkansas for in-state elk project funding. Only Arkansas residents could apply for elk permits through a standard application process. Almost 6700 (6653) people applied for draw permits and voluntarily donated \$2168.20 for elk project work in Arkansas. Eighteen permits were randomly drawn from a squirrel cage in Jasper, Arkansas on June 29, 2002. Applicants drawn 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. One hundred (100) permits were issued for elk zone A (private land elk zone). These permits were valid for the September and December elk hunt periods. Landowner written permission was required for applicants to qualify for a zone A permit and the permit cost was \$35.00 with a limit of one either-sex elk. The zone A elk limit was 5 for the September hunt period and 5 for the December hunt period.

Results

Sixteen elk (Table 1) were taken in public land elk zones 1-4 with 20 hunters participating. Hunter success was 80%. Eight bulls and eight antlerless elk were harvested with four bulls taken during the September hunt (four hunters participating) and four bulls and eight antlerless elk taken during the December hunt (16 hunters participating). Five elk (5 antlerless) were taken from the private lands hunting zone, none in the September hunt and five in the December hunt. Total harvest decreased from 31 elk taken in 2001 to 21 (8 bulls, 13 antlerless) in 2002 (Figure 1) with a total of 120 hunters having an opportunity to hunt elk.

Data and samples collected on harvested elk included weight, a tooth 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 520 lbs (live weight). Bull weights ranged up to 895 lbs (live weight). Ages of elk ranged from .5 to 7.5 years for bulls and 2.5 to 17.5 years for cows. Two of 8 bulls (1.5 years of age and older) were over 5.5 years of age. The bull with the largest antlers was a 6X6. Reproductive tracts were taken from 9 cows to determine reproductive rates and conception dates. Reproductive data collected from 1998 through 2001 indicates an average conception date of October 13 and an average calving date of June 17. Tissue samples from animals were tested for chronic wasting disease, tuberculosis, brucellosis, Johne's disease, pneumonia, lungworm infection, and meningeal worm infection. No significant health problems were detected.

As in previous years most harvested elk were taken during the first 3 days of the hunt periods (71%). Elk sightings by successful hunters in elk zones 1-4 included 69 bulls (10 spikes and 59 branch antlered bulls), 267 cows and 50 calves (average 24.1 sightings/hunter, range 1-72). Elk sightings by successful hunters in elk zone A included one branched bull, seven cows and six calves (average 2.8 sightings/hunter, range 1-5). Undoubtedly some of the elk sighted were counted more than once. A post-season survey of all hunters (100) in elk zone A indicated that 43 (78%) of 55 (response rate of 55%) respondents hunted in 2002. Forty-three respondents (78%) participated in the September season and 21 (38%) respondents participated in the December

season. Most (12) of the 21 reported elk sightings by participating hunters were for the December season. Respondents who hunted averaged 2.7 days in September and 1 day in December (elk harvest quota of 5 reached on first day of December season).

Table 1. Elk harvest for the 2002 September and December hunts

Hunters	Bull	Antler-less	Age (yrs)	Wt.	Hunters	Bull	Antler-less	Age (yrs)	Wt.
Edna Watts	6x6		5.5		Shannon Marlin*		F	2.5	470L
Cheryl Haralson	6x6		7.5	895L	Jerry Nanney*		F	2.5	345D
Walton Short	5x6		7.5		Justin Anderson*	5x5		3.5	465D
Chris Layne	5x5		4.5	320D	Alice Shipley*		F	5.5	520L
Dennis Tauber*		M	.5	190D	James Massey*		F	3.5	
Steve Cavendar*		F	17.5	398D	Randy Boyce*	6x6		4.5	665D
Charles Magness*		F	11.5	420D	James Foreman*	1x1		1.5	
Del Ramsey*		M	.5	200D	Richard Garrison*		F	5.5	300D
Jerry Dean*		M	.5	200D	Chuck Fehlig*		F	7.5	375D
Bart Jennings*		F	4.5	345L	David Edwards*	5x6		3.5	
Bradley Mobley*		F	2.5	365D					

* December 2002 Elk Harvest (F - Female, M - Male, L - Live Weight (lbs), D - Dressed Weight (lbs))

Figure 1. Elk harvest summary, 1998-2002

