

Fact Sheet

Antler Point Restrictions



Antler Point Restrictions (APRs)

- Where they are used:
 - Originally used in the West for mule deer
 - Gained popularity as white-tailed deer management practice in recent decades, primarily in eastern states but also some parts of the Midwest
- Why they are used:
 - In most cases, to protect yearling bucks and increase their survival
 - Yearling bucks in most of these instances accounted for ~75-85% of buck harvest
 - Relative to deer in Northeast WA:
 - Proportion of spikes, 2-pt., and 3-pt bucks (bucks most likely to be yearlings) harvested in northeast WA has averaged ~52% over the past 10 years, which suggests yearling escapement in WA is likely higher
 - 52% is a min. estimate, some 4-pt bucks are yearlings
 - To produce more older-aged bucks
 - Primarily a social hunting issue; hunters may prefer to protect young antlered bucks in hopes of increasing opportunity to harvest larger-antlered bucks in following years
 - In some instances, to shift harvest pressure to does for population management
- Effects of APRs:
 - Survival of yearling bucks increased in all instances
 - Proportion of 2.5 and 3.5 year old bucks in harvest increased
 - Many states did not see a significant improvement in overall age structure after implementation until they implemented additional restrictions
 - Ex: min. inside or outside spread, min. antler length, antler beam diameter
 - Consistently resulted in lower overall buck harvest
- Hunter support:
 - Consistently been supported by the majority of hunters in states that have APRs
 - Other states strongly advise that management agencies conduct substantial outreach and survey efforts to gauge public support prior to implementing APRs
- Other considerations:
 - Concerns about reducing the survival of older aged bucks (e.g., >3.5 years old)
 - Some concern about yearling buck APRs affecting genetic potential for antler growth
 - Some states are re-evaluating the use of APRs due to recent research indicating greater prevalence of CWD in mature bucks in some populations
 - Other states are re-evaluating CWD management implications of protecting yearling bucks because the majority (>70%) disperse, which could increase the potential of CWD spreading to new areas



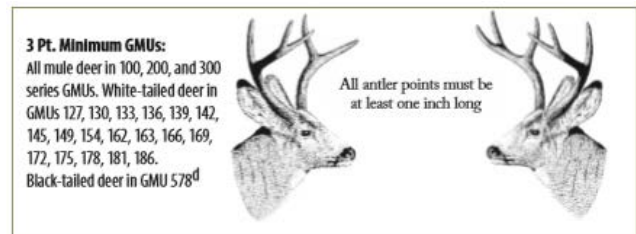
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Antler Point Restrictions (APRs) in Washington

- Current use of APRs in WA:
 - Implemented for mule deer due to very low buck escapement (survival through a hunting season), surveys consistently indicated chronically low buck:doe ratios below management objective of 15:100
 - 3-pt min APR is in place for mule deer throughout the state
 - To simplify hunter compliance with harvest regulations, 3-pt min APR in place for white-tailed deer in areas with open terrain where management is focused on both species
 - APRs successfully improved buck recruitment if that is needed
- White-tailed deer APRs in northeast WA: Past use
 - APRs implemented in GMUs 117 and 121 during 2011-2014 hunting seasons
 - Legal buck required minimum of 4 points on at least one antler
 - Implementation of APRs was not due to low buck:doe ratios
 - Buck:doe ratios were consistently above management objective
 - Difficult to evaluate biological effects of APRs due to lack of age estimates for harvested bucks (teeth were not collected)
 - APRs undoubtedly resulted in a higher proportion of older-aged bucks (i.e., 2.5 and 3.5 year-olds) represented in harvest
 - APRs significantly reduced opportunity and hunter participation
 - Hunter numbers declined by 30-35%
 - Hunter numbers in neighboring GMUs did not increase suggesting hunters chose to stop hunting in NE Washington altogether
- White-tailed deer APRs in northeast WA: Considerations
 - APRs are not universally supported by hunters in Washington
 - APRs are not consistent with the Department's goal of maximizing opportunity
 - APRs have been cited by some members of the public as the reason white-tailed deer populations increased during 2011-2015, but similar increases were observed during that same period in GMUs that did not have APRs
 - The Department should conduct extensive outreach efforts before considering APRs for white-tailed deer in northeast WA



2018 WA State Big Game Hunting Pamphlet. Deer APRs, Pg. 16.