

# The Outdoorsman

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## Idaho F&G Comm. Approves Biologists' Unlawful Plan to Decimate Magic Valley Mule Deer Herd

Biologists Use Same Excuses to Justify December Slaughter of Pregnant Breeding Females as They Did Following Unit 39 "Foothills Fire" Nineteen Years Ago

By George Dovel

The few mule deer hunters in Southwest Idaho who are old enough to remember the destruction of the famous Unit 39 mule deer herd of the late 1940s to mid 1960s, still recall when more than 5,000 mule deer were harvested annually by hunters in the once famous 2,615 square mile unit. The general either-sex season began on the first Saturday in October and ended when 2,500 deer had been checked through just the Mores Creek big game check station North of Boise on Highway 21.

That usually happened by the first week in November at which time a shorter "bucks only" season allowed hunters to kill several hundred more Unit 39 bucks during the rut.

### Biologists Replace Tools With "Exciting" Theory

But, as always happens when biologists try to use the same season and bag limits year-after-year instead of changing either or both to fit changing conditions, the Unit 39 deer population began to decline. Then, instead of using the tools wildlife managers had used for the preceding 70 years to rebuild the herd, they listened to the "exciting" theories promoted by Durward Allen, the Craighead brothers, and their fledgling graduate students (David Mech and Maurice Hornocker).

In 1968, to allegedly "increase mule deer fawn production in Unit 39," the biologists allowed 3,638 deer to be checked at Mores Creek before the either-sex season was halted. In 1969 the cut-off quota was set at 2,900, and was upped to 3,000 in 1970.

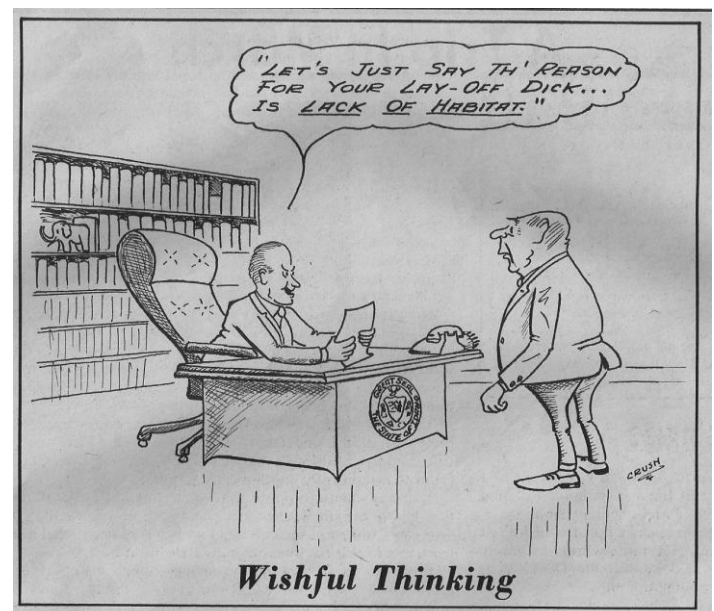
After the 1970 bucks-only season would normally have begun and ended in November, hunters still had not reached their quota of either-sex deer. Instead of admitting they had killed off most of the Unit 39 Deer, biologists extended the either-sex season until the end of November and erroneously claimed in the local paper that the 3,000 deer either-sex quota would be met by that time.

By the time the hunting season ended, starving deer were traveling the roads searching for food in

abnormally deep early snow. Instead of conducting a proper emergency feeding program immediately, Idaho F&G Director Dick Woodworth waited until mid-winter to authorize token feeding efforts.

Woodworth and his biologists knew nothing about wild ruminant nutrition or how to feed properly, yet he published a booklet falsely claiming that feeding deer would kill them. I explained to them that delaying feeding until deer and elk had destroyed the microorganisms in their rumen with a diet of pine needles, bark and woody stems destroyed the deer's ability to digest anything.

IDFG followed my suggestion to purchase a pellet deer formula used effectively by Washington biologists for many years, yet continued to insist the problem was lack of habitat rather than the abnormal deep snow that prevented deer from accessing the feed.



Cartoon published 40 years ago in the Mar. 1971 *Outdoorsman*.

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### F&G Decimates Mule Deer – *cont. from page 1*

The cartoon, captioned “Wishful Thinking”, depicts newly elected Governor Cecil Andrus terminating Dick Woodworth’s employment as IDFG Director. Forty years ago, the tabloid-size monthly *Outdoorsman* we published had many thousands of readers, and Gov. Andrus accepted Woodworth’s resignation less than two months after we published the cartoon.

Woodworth joined a list of Idaho F&G Directors who have been forced to resign because they, and/or their employees whose actions they are responsible for, ignored their legal mandate to preserve, protect, perpetuate and manage Idaho wildlife. In every instance, their willingness to kill female breeding stock – rather than feed to help them survive a crisis – was the catalyst that caused outraged citizens to demand they be replaced.

But even after Woodworth resigned, his Assistant Director, Bob Salter, refused to stop killing does and fawns. The 3,000 either-sex quota was cut in half for 1971 but in November, new Director Joe Greenley was forced to shut it down before it was filled, when the November mule deer buck rut hunt began.

The total kill for both seasons was only 1,204 deer but IDFG biologists claimed the mule deer population would “bounce back in a couple of years.” Their claim was just as false then as it had been following the 1949-52 winters, would later be following the 1992-93 winter, and will be again following the current Magic Valley slaughter.

#### **It Took 18 Years to Restore Harvests**

Despite Greenley’s: 1) radically reducing season lengths and limiting the number of nonresident hunters; 2) ending most antlerless harvest for several years; and 3) his successor charging deer, elk and antelope hunters several million extra dollars for emergency winter feeding; it took **eighteen years** (until 1987) to reach the statewide mule deer harvest level that was common during the 1950s and 1960s!

Director Greenley knew that restoring predator control was needed to expedite restoring deer populations. But when the 1972 coyote bounty bill passed the Idaho House by 44 to 22 he promised Senator John Peavey that IDFG would control predators aggressively if Peavey would vote against the bill in the Senate.

During the debate on the Senate floor, Peavey said he would have voted for the bill if Woodworth were still Director, but said he trusted Greenley to keep his word. The bounty bill failed by one vote in the Senate but after the session ended, Greenley reneged on his promise and told the *Idaho Statesman* that “Wildlifers” (wildlife biologists) did not agree with reducing one species to benefit another.

#### **Alaska Reduced Predators to Restore Harvests Quick**

The Idaho Legislature forced Greenley to fund killing coyotes that engineers insisted were killing many deer on the snow and ice covering Dworshak Reservoir,

and insisted he keep his commitment to increase IDFG funding for coyote control. But F&G refused to designate the extra predator funding to help rebuild deer herds and simply donated it to control predators of livestock.

The disaster caused by three extreme winters also occurred in Idaho’s neighboring states as well as in Alaska where the same severe winters and the increased predation continued to decimate their caribou and moose populations. But extensive Alaska studies led by Gasaway and later by Boertje reported the following:

“Deep snow in the mid-1960s and early 1970s and overharvest in the early 1970s led to a grave management situation. Overharvest occurred because the increased effect of wolf predation on ungulates was underestimated and because severe winters reduced ungulates. Adult female ungulates were harvested in excess of yearling recruitment.

“This overharvest was allowed, in part, because of the belief that poor range condition was the major factor causing low yearling recruitment. Biologists patiently awaited a compensatory rebound in yearling recruitment from improved range that would offset harvest.

“However it was a futile vigil – calf moose and caribou became increasingly scarce until 1976 (when predator control was finally initiated). Mortality from severe winters, hunting and wolf predation were largely additive.”

Now compare the carefully researched underlined statement above with the current unsupported claim by the Mule Deer Working Group that killing adult female mule deer in a special late season hunt before a severe winter is “**compensatory**” rather than “additive” (claiming the deer are going to die anyway). They conclude this will leave fewer deer to eat the limited forage and wrongly claim the remaining deer (which are further malnourished by stress from hunters) will then produce more replacement fawns.

#### **Same Excuses Used to Destroy Mule Deer in 2011**

That is also what IDFG Wildlife Bureau Chief Jeff Gould told the F&G Commissioners on November 10, 2011 when he outlined the biologists’ plan to issue 250 extra deer lottery permits (plus 25 landowner appreciation tags) in each of two hunts, allowing 550 permit holders to kill pregnant does and their unborn fawns. The first hunt began on Dec. 1<sup>st</sup> and will end Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>, and the second will run from Dec. 20-31.

The excuse IDFG is using now to destroy deer is the 38,000 acre Blair fire that burned in the Bennett Hills north of King Hill and Glenns Ferry in August of 2011. IDFG surveys indicate that 5,000 deer from Units 43, 44, 45, 48 and 52 winter there. Gould’s presentation to the Commission and to the public claimed the antlerless hunts would help minimize deer crowding on remaining winter ranges, lessen deer use of private lands and roadways, and provide hunting opportunity. (emphasis added)

He also claimed the hunts would “help” bring herd numbers into balance with the remaining habitat. But

very little he said is factual, and allowing the malnourished deer to be hunted, instead of feeding them when fire has temporarily destroyed their winter forage, violates Idaho law.

#### **Laws Did Not Prevent Repeating Disaster in 1992-93**

I.C. Sec 36-103 **Wildlife Policy** states: wildlife shall only be "...taken in such manner, as will preserve, protect, and perpetuate such wildlife, and provide for the citizens of this state and, as by law permitted to others, continued supplies of such wildlife for hunting, fishing and trapping." It also states: "The commission is not authorized to change such policy but only to administer it."

I.C. Sec. 36-104 **General Powers and Duties of Commission**, requires the Commission to hold hearings to determine when taking a species will deplete it and requires it to close the area to hunting if that condition exists.

Despite these laws which have existed since 1938, and despite the disaster in the early 1970s discussed above, IDFG biologists used the very same excuses to hold a December doe hunt following the "Foothills Fire" along the Boise front in 1992. Hundreds of hunters took advantage of the opportunity to kill an extra pregnant doe when they were concentrated on winter range – a "hunt" that calls to mind the phrase: "shooting fish in a barrel."

They failed to realize that for every deer they shot, they killed several more by stressing them and causing them to use up fat reserves prematurely that were critically needed to survive the winter. The biologists were aware then, as they are now, that mule deer burn about 11.5 times as much fat reserves trotting away from hunters as they do standing, yet they refused to feed them and continued to stress them.

The starving deer that hunters shot in the Foothills burn area did not prevent thousands of other malnourished deer from invading farms and creating a serious hazard on roads – not only along the Boise Front but all across southern Idaho and northern Utah. Several years of drought and a severe winter had the same effect on their forage and body condition as the Foothills Fire.

Most of Idaho's mule deer starved to death that winter but instead of ending antlerless mule deer hunting and holding only a short buck hunt in 1993, F&G biologists added more than 2,000 additional antlerless deer permits to the 1993 season. When that season ended, former IDFG Director Joe Greenley publicly accused State Big Game Manager Lon Kuck of destroying Idaho's mule deer.

Thousands of angry hunters signed petitions demanding IDFG Director Conley's resignation, and during the 1994 Legislative Session IDFG was under intense scrutiny. But F&G continued to claim 1992-93 deer losses were normal and Conley lasted nearly two more years until he was finally forced to resign and moved to Missouri.

#### **Mandatory Feeding Rules Adopted as Law**

Following the failed 1992-93 F&G attempt to feed starving deer and elk, Legislators ordered IDFG to prepare

a set of feeding rules approved by the Commission, and enacted by the legislature. If obeyed, these rules prevent IDFG from allowing such a disaster to ever happen again.

IDAPA Rules 13.01.18 Governing Emergency Feeding of Antelope Elk and Deer were approved by The Idaho Legislature and became law on April 3, 1995. Those with internet access can read them by clicking on the link: <http://www.idahoforwildlife.com/Outdoorsman.html> and selecting [No. 19 June-July 2006 Emergency big game feeding part Two](#) beginning near the bottom of Page 1.

To expedite feeding, these rules give sole authority to each IDFG Regional Supervisor to declare a feeding emergency and expend funds on feeding if **any** of the following four criteria exist: 1) Actual or imminent threat of depredation to private property; 2) Threat to public safety, including traffic hazards; 3) Excessive mortality which would affect the recovery of the herd; 4) Limited or unavailable winter forage caused by fire or unusual weather.

#### **Wildlife Chief Says Kill Breeding Stock**

When Bureau Chief Gould claimed that killing some of the pregnant females would lessen (not halt) deer use of private land and roadways, and help minimize deer crowding on remaining winter range, it was an admission that at least three criteria requiring the Regional Supervisor to institute emergency feeding existed. His frank admission in writing that excessive mortality will still occur admits the other criterion for feeding also exists.

Pretending that killing some of the deer will reduce the total mortality is not true. Gould's plan to leave road access open for hunters through mid-December will stress all of the deer and cause more pregnant females to either: a) die; b) abort or absorb their fetuses; or c) produce a generation of stunted deer (see "Feeding Facts" on Pg. 4).

#### **Commission Rubber Stamps Illegal Deer Destruction**

This is why many Idaho officials became involved from late 1992 through early 1995 in the emergency feeding rules based on advice from bona fide experts. If feeding had been initiated in the Bennett foothills in November of 2011, there would be no deer invading the roads and farms or damaging the burned area before rejuvenation begins.

Minutes of the Aug. 24, 2011 F&G Commission meeting reveal that Region 4 Commissioner Wayne Wright said staff discussion of possible actions to take were population reduction, depredation hunts, fencing haystacks and hazing or baiting deer to other locations. No mention was made of the legal requirement to feed the deer instead of killing some and letting others die, and the fact that no feed is even stockpiled on location (IDAPA 13.01.18.103) shows F&G's ongoing intent to ignore the IDAPA Rules.

This Commission's decision to disobey the law and generate tens of thousands of additional dollars in lottery fees and license and tag fees, and tens of thousands more in dedicated emergency feeding funds by starving the deer, reflects contempt for the resource, the citizens who own it, Idaho lawmakers and the hunters who pay the bills.

# Emergency Big Game Winter Feeding Facts

By George Dovel

In Idaho, and in neighboring states with similar cold winter climates, the natural forage that is normally available to deer and elk from late spring through early fall provides a surplus of TDN (total digestible nutrients) – a measure of energy – in each animal’s daily diet. That is because the ratio of highly digestible cell contents to the difficult-to-digest cell walls is very high at that time.

This allows the animal to expend extra energy when required, plus store fat reserves in order to survive a normal winter. But beginning with the first killing frosts in the fall, the formerly succulent forage on north slopes and at higher elevations quickly deteriorates until it no longer provides even the required daily TDN.



A large mule deer buck killed during the first week of rifle hunting season exhibits the abundant external body fat necessary to survive the rutting season and the winter that follows. But once the forage quality declines during late fall, it no longer supplies enough nutrients to meet daily energy requirements and the fat reserves are utilized to make up the difference.

At this point, unlike livestock that are fed supplements to maintain body weight, the slowly starving deer and elk move to what is referred to as “intermediate” or “transition” range where they utilize nutritive south slope grasses (e.g. bluebunch wheatgrass), forbs (arrowleaf balsamroot), or shrubs (bitterbrush or mahogany). These may be the same forage species that inhabit the lower elevation winter ranges which are also not used heavily unless/until snow depths force the animals lower.

*The Outdoorsman* published Canadian research findings that when late season hunters invade intermediate range occupied by mule deer and/or elk at this time of year, it forces many animals to return to the poor quality forage. This in turn forces them to burn more of their stored fat reserves early, which decreases their odds of surviving an extended or even a moderately severe winter.

This is the same phenomenon that occurs when wolves threaten elk cows and calves, forcing them to leave high quality forage and slowly starve in better escape cover that will no longer provide their daily energy requirements. The highly publicized Montana studies by Creel et al show that more cow elk escaped being killed by wolves then, but calf recruitment was severely reduced.

## **IDFG Ignores Wildlife Health, Sells “Longest Seasons”**

In 1996 former I&E Chief, now IDFG Director, Virgil Moore conducted a workshop for a new Director and four new Commissioners, insisting they must offer “the longest big game hunting seasons in the lower 48” in order to compete with other western states for nonresident license dollars. He told them this would eliminate the need to increase license fees and all agreed – without even discussing its violation of Idaho law or its ultimate destruction of big game herds.

At the same time, Wyoming chose to do just the opposite, and also cut expensive non-hunter/fisherman programs that did not benefit big game conservation. Unlike Idaho, with only a handful of necessary exceptions Wyoming refused to allow so-called “trophy” mule deer hunts during the rut or later because they result in both staggered conception and poor winter survival caused by forcing premature use of the animals’ energy reserves.

## **Idaho Pushes Bonus Hunts**

By 2004, IDFG was bragging about its bonus\* controlled deer hunt success rate of 60%, yet its total success rate for all deer hunters who reported hunting was only 32%. By comparison, Wyoming’s general success rate for all deer hunters was a whopping 66% - slightly more than double that of Idaho and with far more deer harvested! (\* “bonus” hunts are special privilege lottery hunts in units where there is also a general season hunt for the same species and sex)

Wyoming and Alaska eventually joined other states in supporting the new emphasis on wildlife watching and other non-game activities, yet continued their primary role of perpetuating wild game populations and harvests. But since then, every time even a slightly severe winter occurs in Idaho excessive numbers of mule deer die from malnutrition by spring green-up.

IDFG Biologists' stock excuse that the deer are dying because there are too many deer for the available winter range is the lie that is used to hide their guilt for causing the deer abnormal stress and dying with extended late season hunts. For example, With the exception of a five-day period in mid-December when the first hunters are packing out deer and camps and the second are setting up camps, most of the reported 5,000 mule deer that winter in the Blair fire area will have been stressed by hunters for **123 consecutive days!**

The last two months of that harassment includes the rut, and the extended period when mule deer that are not being hunted, normally slow their metabolism in order to require less food (calories) and use less stored energy to survive. Yet Idaho and Montana biologists continue to destroy their mule deer herds with late "bonus" hunts in Idaho and a 37-day general rut hunt season in Montana.

Declining mature mule deer bucks and a declining percentage of mule deer in the deer harvest in both states confirm what deer expert Dr. Valerius Geist said would happen when biologists allowed hunters to harvest too many mature mule deer bucks by hunting them in the rut. (see article beginning on Page 6 for further details).

### Idaho's Declining Big Game Harvests

Although Wyoming Game and Fish does not feed deer or antelope during extreme winters and suffers heavy losses when they occur, the deer rebound much faster than in Idaho. Hunter success in Wyoming is double what it is for the same species in Idaho, yet in 2009 Wyoming hunters harvested 45% more elk, 57% more mule deer, 14% fewer white-tails and 4,131% more antelope!

In 2009 the "estimated" total harvest of all four primary big game species in Idaho was 59,273 while it was a whopping 132,720 in Wyoming! All three states have wolves but the undeniable evidence indicates that Wyoming is still managing its big game herds for harvest by present and future hunters while Idaho and Montana are deliberately exploiting the game for thousands of extra dollars as they systematically destroy it.

### Why Extended Late Hunting Decimates Mule Deer

Abundant research has concluded that mule deer are more vulnerable to hunting and predation, and more severely impacted by extended drought, extreme winter conditions or other changes in local forage than whitetails. With a small rumen (fore-stomach) that allows no forage to pass until it is partially digested, declines in forage quality dramatically increase how long it remains in the rumen before it is digested.

Although the deer still fills its rumen with the same volume of forage, the ratio of indigestible cell walls to digestible cell contents is now much higher and may take many hours or even days to digest. When this happens, protozoa numbers in the rumen quickly decline and the animal can no longer digest the high quality forage it will encounter at green-up.

With the rumen not warming properly, more stored body fat is also used prematurely until it no longer keeps the animal warm when its hair is wet. Loss of that stored back fat insulation can increase the amount of energy needed by 35 to 50%.

Then, instead of properly feeding the malnourished deer – or at least providing them wildlife energy blocks to restore their ability to digest a variety of forage – biologists tell the public the deer are in good shape. Even if they are finally forced to provide feed, it is always too little too late and the only animals that are saved are the ones that were initially fed earlier by private citizens.



Fat mule deer doe and twin fawns, part of several thousand deer and several hundred elk that were properly fed on the South Fork of the Payette winter range during the extreme 1949-50 winter.

In spring of 1950, as near all-time record snow melted from the south facing slopes along the South Fork of the Payette River, teams of game wardens and citizen volunteers traveled the winter range and located remains of 124 dead deer and elk. That was fewer dead animal remains than they observed following a normal winter.

The feed was distributed with surplus military 4WD vehicles over several miles to insure that every animal, including fawns, had adequate feed and to prevent transmitting disease by unhealthy crowding. The program was a huge success biologically and economically.

If you have internet access, for more information about emergency feeding, click on the following link: <http://www.idahoforwildlife.com/Outdoorsman.html>, select and read Bulletin No. 1 and then No. 19.

# Scientific Facts about the Destruction of Mule Deer

By Dr. Charles E. Kay and Dr. Valerius Geist

(NOTE: In the winter of 1992-93 various state F&G biologists contributed to the destruction of a large percentage of the mule deer in the western United States. Since then, hunters in those and other states have paid them several hundred million dollars to restore healthy mule deer herds for all to enjoy and for hunters to harvest.

The biologists have ignored that trust and used the money to restore large carnivores to a mythical system of "wildlands" and connecting corridors they claim existed before Columbus landed on this continent. Although no harvest data has been provided for the 2011 deer seasons, the mule deer harvest actually reported by Idaho hunters in 2009 was the lowest it has been since World War II.

Instead of convincing their elected officials to restore honesty and sanity to mule deer management for all to enjoy, most hunters who haven't quit hunting pay their wildlife agencies millions of dollars extra to compete in lottery drawings or special weapons hunts for a better chance to harvest the rapidly declining species.

Two top wildlife experts in North America have granted me permission to publish: a) Dr. Kay's informal response to an editor who published biologists' excuses rather than the cause of the mule deer decline; and b) Dr. Geist's informal additional explanation of how biologists are causing mule deer to be replaced by whitetails.

Although the scientists did not mention it, Dr. Kay was the lead researcher in a published 1990-1992 study of Mule Deer X Whitetail hybrids in the Wyoming area he discusses below, and Dr. Geist provided input. – ED)

December 1, 2011

Dear ---- Editor:

One of us knows very little about mule deer management in Montana. The number one problem facing mule deer in the Montana is not subdivisions, but Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks for allowing a 5 week general rifle season with no limit on the number of resident tags.

Montana is the only state in the nation that allows an open rifle season on rutting mule deer with no limit on the number of hunters----there is a quota on non-resident tags but NONE on residents. The number two problem facing mule deer in Montana is MTFW&P's managing mule deer and white-tailed deer AS ONE SPECIES.

Various scientific studies have shown that mule deer are more susceptible to coyote predation, mountain lion predation, and hunters than are whitetails, which is why the harvest in western Montana has gone from 10 mule deer for every one whitetail during the 1950-1960's to 10 whitetails for every one mule deer today.

It has next to nothing to do with habitat. In fact, what biologists have told the public about habitat being of

over-riding importance is TOTALLY WRONG----please see the attached articles I wrote on "The Landscape of Fear" and "Predator-Mediated Competition".

The number three problem facing mule deer in Montana is thoughtless resident "sportsmen" who have allowed one and two above to continue unabated for more than 50 years. This is why when I lived in Montana I switched to hunting white-tailed deer. For according to MTFW&P, the whitetail resource was under-utilized, which means there was something left besides 2-point bucks.

Finally, your blaming the 60% decline of mule deer near Pinedale, WY on gas field development is absolutely WRONG – please see the attached article I wrote on "The Mesa". Apparently you have never read the published scientific reports on that research – or if you did, you lack the expertise to understand them.

When I first moved to Utah to work on my Ph.D. in Wildlife Ecology, I met an undergraduate who lived near La Barge, WY, which is where the famous Wyoming mule deer herd winters. Between Christmas and New Years, I used to visit Ed and we would go out on the winter range and see 5,000-10,000 or more mule deer in a day, half of which were bucks – some with Boone and Crockett size antlers – and all of which were standing in a huge, active oil and gas field!

Despite the winter range that some would have you believe is destroyed by energy development, that mule deer herd was way above population objective – and in fact, there were so many mule deer, and had been for so long, that the deer themselves had severely overgrazed the winter range.

Wyoming, unlike Montana, does NOT have a 5-week general rifle season on mule deer and just about all the Wyoming's general mule deer rifle seasons are over before Montana's mule deer rifle season EVEN STARTS. That is to say, Wyoming, unlike Montana, does not hunt its mule deer during the rut!

What with the recent increase in non-resident license fees and the ever-increasing number of wolves----which hunting and trapping WILL NEVER CONTROL, out-of state-hunters would be crazy to hunt in Montana.

Personally, I no longer hunt in Montana. Instead I save my hard-earned money and hunt Plains Game in South Africa, which is the most cost-effective big-game hunting in the world. Moreover, you get to hunt in what the locals call "winter" in shorts! And the trophy quality is OUTSTANDING, unlike Montana.

**Charles E. Kay**  
**Ph. D in Wildlife Ecology**

December 1, 2011

Dear Charles,

I am at the stage when I hear "habitat" I cringe. It is, invariably, surrounded by ignorance - like the term "family values" in politics. Ask a proponent what it is, as some clever TV reporters did, and see, nay, enjoy, the hapless stammering! Habitat? Best habitat from a grizzly bear's perspective is a garbage dump liberally supplied by a luxury hotel.

Cheers, **Val Geist**

December 2, 2011

Dear Charles,

One of the best ways to destroy or eradicate mule deer, is to hunt the male segment so heavily, as to remove the older males (3years or older). It so happens that white-tailed deer are greatly attracted to the opposite sex of mule deer. Estrous white-tailed does will avidly court large mule deer bucks - to little avail (as male mule deer X female white-tailed doe hybrids make up less than 1% of mule deer x white-tailed deer hybrids.

99% of hybrids have a white-tailed buck as their father). When mule deer are mating, white-tailed bucks notoriously sneak around, only to be chased away by large mule deer bucks. Mule deer dominate white-tailed deer, except when a large white-tailed buck moves in on a young mule deer buck. Such a one he does displace - and may go on to breed the mule deer doe.

The resulting hybrid has a fair chance of surviving, but only as long as it is with its mule deer mother. However, that ends once the hybrid is chased off prior to its mother's next birth. When on its own, its totally mixed up, non functioning anti-predator strategies become evident. We worked on this experimentally, the study being done by Dr. Susan Lingle who went on to do very fine work on predation where - un-hunted - mule and white-tailed deer are sympatric (occupy the same range).

In essence, and I will forgo the details, the hybrid has a hopelessly non-functional mixture of mule and white-tailed deer anti-predator tactics as well as strategies. Consequently, they are coyote meat, except where predators have been removed, or they are in a zoo with human care. Therefore, if you shoot off the big mule deer bucks, more and more big white-tailed bucks will breed estrus mule deer does. Each such breeding is a loss of a mule deer fawn to the mule deer population. Ergo, mule deer fade away, going extinct, as they did in Canada's prairie provinces.

Fortunately, Alberta apparently reversed itself just over a decade ago. Now there are beautiful trophy mule deer bucks, on draw, mind you! And, lo and behold, with many large mule deer bucks present, mule deer are making a comeback, displacing white-tails!

Cheers,

**Val Geist**

(NOTE: What Dr. Geist describes is exactly what has happened in the units that converge near my house. General seasons and bonus controlled hunts running from August 15 through December 16 have resulted in the near elimination of mature mule deer bucks in several of the nine units in this DAU. The minimum buck-to-doe ratio of 15 in early winter has little bearing on how many are mature bucks and survive until the next Nov. rut. - ED)

## Then and Now



A new Safari Club International world record typical mule deer buck recently scored by SCI. However this buck with a 42-inch spread was shot by Max Johnson on opening day, Oct. 19, 1968, while hunting with his son and two of their friends on his farm in SE Utah. His brother shot a buck with a 46-inch spread during that period but Utah hunters were harvesting about 90,000 deer for meat each year and the antlers weren't considered valuable.



The scarcity of mule deer caused by state game biologists and the auction tags Utah and some other F&G agencies give to groups to auction while they raffle a second tag, represent the death of hunting for all but the rich. Former biologist, now Mule Deer Foundation President, Miles Moretti auctioned off this tag to shoot a mule deer in Utah's Antelope Island State Park to W.D. Martin for \$265,000. In late November 2011 this area was closed to Park visitors and Martin's guide was required to cover the carcass when it was transported to hide it from the public. Despite loud public objections, similar killings are planned for 2012.

# The Predator Death Spiral

By Guy Eastman



The Western States management systems are not set up to handle uncontrolled "Super Predators".

We're continuing to see an alarming trend in Western wildlife management. I am calling it the "Predator Death Spiral." The underlying cause of this phenomenon is when a wildlife agency attempts to hide or "pad" their big game population estimates when over predation begins to take hold.

This in turn creates a downward spiral that cannot easily be avoided, and is often not even noticed until the state hits both a financial and PR rock bottom. Idaho was the first state to hit the wall with the "Spiral" followed by Montana and now Wyoming has begun to slip into the Spiral's grip. The wolf situation has caused these three Western states to slide down the jagged slope of diminishing herds, shrinking revenues and bad PR among their customers and financial lifeline...out-of-state hunters.

The details of the spiral start out very subtle. The wolves, cougars and grizzly bears start to take a few more elk and moose each year as their unchecked populations grow and expand.

The state does not react at first with cuts in the tag quotas. This would mean a decrease in revenue that would have to be met with either more tags somewhere else or even worse, budget cuts. So they do what most Government agencies would do in this situation...nothing!

After a few years of turning a blind eye to the situation a bad winter like the winter we had in 2006 and 2011 hit and further accelerated the problem. But, the bad winter was even worse than imagined from a wildlife management perspective. The increased snowpack and cold temps caused far more than the usual winter kill.

The predators did extremely well because of the increased snowpack that gathered the herds even tighter than usual, on heavy snow accumulations that created a wolves' dream come true scenario. A concentrated food source stuck in a snow bank that cannot escape...perfect.

After the long cold winter is over the elk and deer that did survive go into the spring in tough shape. Many of the cows and does have aborted their young in order to survive.

The post winter mortality counts come back into the department as an alarming number. But budgets have to be met. So being ever optimistic the state decides to give the remaining quotas just one more year to see if they might bounce back. After-all, the counts could have been flawed, there is no way we could have lost that many big game assets in one year, right?

The next fall the hunters are complaining, the harvest stats are coming back very low and things are not looking good on the PR front. Many non-resident hunters are threatening not to apply the following year and the outfitters are starting to make their voices heard.

The state reacts, and cuts the elk tags inside the wolf and winter zones. But the money has to be made up somewhere, after all a few hundred non-resident elk tags equate to big money. So the state moves to increase the quotas on elk outside the wolf zone and increase the deer and antelope tags substantially in an effort to compensate for the loss in revenue.



As wolves continue to take their toll, state Game and Fish Departments struggle to make their budgets as big game populations plummet and demand for nonresident licenses crash.

A second harsh winter strikes and wipes out the antelope and deer herd excesses. Things are looking bad, but the state budgeteers don't give up easily. Someone recommends the idea of raising license costs to all hunters, after all supply and demand economics formulas say a non-



resident elk tag should go for over \$2,500. But the resident tag increases get shot down by the commission but everyone likes the idea of sticking it to the non-resident hunter a bit more. They can afford it, have you seen how much a house in California is worth? (pre-2008 of course).

The following fall the hunters don't see near the game they did even the previous year. Things are getting bad. Thanks to the internet the word gets out and many of the non-resident hunters move their camps and non-resident dollars to Colorado and New Mexico to hunt elk and deer.

The next thing the state knows they are sitting on millions of dollars worth of unclaimed and unwanted non-resident tags. Now with the wildlife resource in shambles and a multi-million dollar budget shortfall the state is finally forced to wake up and smell the coffee.

This isn't the 1970's...it's no surprise to us that a non-resident hunter who pays over \$1,000 for an elk tag expects a good elk hunt, why should it come as a surprise to the state Game and Fish Commission? But it does.

What the state fails to realize is, that once they began to charge that kind of money for tags and preference points they in effect gave up the option to simply brush it off as a "bad winter, try again next year" excuse that worked so well in the past. In the information age non-resident hunters no longer accept excuses easily.

This is the bottom. A state is stuck to come clean and admit they are in a real hole. They don't have the wildlife any longer to support their budgetary needs and their customers know it.

This is the type of situation where a little fudge in numbers here and there has created a beast that cannot be controlled and is getting bigger, badder and uglier every year until the bottom is hit. Why?

Because it would mean that the states would have to admit to contributing to their own financial demise. Some Western Fish and Game Departments have in fact become a wolf in sheep's clothing to their constituents.

Some inside the departments have, although reluctantly in some cases, gone along with the Federal Government's master plan to re-introduce super predators back into the ecosystem to eventually control big game herds without the use of hunters. It's almost as if the state neglected to realize that this would, in fact, slit their own throats by gutting their departments of the necessary funding to run.

And this is not just a Wyoming, Montana and Idaho problem. Wolves have already begun to take hold in Washington, Oregon and Utah. Nevada, and Colorado are certainly next.

And for all of you midwest whitetail hunters out there, sorry, you're not safe either. The government has devised a plan to expand the Mexican wolf North from Arizona and New Mexico into Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa,

North and South Dakota and Nebraska to connect with the upper Midwest wolf populations in Minnesota and Wisconsin. This would give super predators a way to control whitetail deer populations minus the use of hunting as a management tool.

This is a critical situation but all is not lost yet. There have been huge strides made in the recent wolf debate and wolves are starting to be controlled now in Montana and Idaho. We all as hunters need to keep pressure on our politicians and state agencies to make sure they do the right thing for our wildlife.

We pay them to manage our wildlife resource in a responsible manner, make them earn their money. Taking the easy way out is not good enough. They need to do better...our big game wildlife resource depends on it.

Drop me a line and let me know what your thoughts are...maybe I'm just a conspiracy theorist...who knows? I know what I've heard and seen first hand so far, though, and it's not looking good.

## Guy

(NOTE: Guy, Mike and Ike Eastman all have blogs at their *Eastman Hunting Journal* website and more than 175 responses to this article by Guy can be accessed at: <http://www.eastmans.com/guy/2011/11/the-predator-death-spiral/> I am grateful to Guy for allowing me to publish this material.

When I read the comments, I found that only one respondent disagreed with Guy's observations and claimed Idaho elk populations were "awesome this year". He also made derogatory remarks about people being too fat and lazy to pursue either elk or wolves, and crudely suggested "rednecks" should not have children.

The emphasis Guy placed on these state agencies publishing inflated harvest and population data rather than address declines as they occur certainly applies to Idaho. The accuracy of Idaho's mandatory hunter harvest report was quietly compromised when Idaho mule deer harvests began to nose-dive.

The requirement that every hunter who failed to report timely is required to make a report to a vendor before any new license, tag or permit could be purchased was discontinued without notice. Then biologist Dr. Bruce Ackerman added an unreasonable 34% to the reported deer kill and called it an "estimated" kill.

Similar highly exaggerated statewide deer and elk population figures (which exceed the known density of deer and elk in game management units with the highest counts) are being repeated by Idaho F&G biologists in an effort to convince nonresident hunters to spend thousands to hunt in Idaho with nothing to show for their effort.

I applaud Guy Eastman for having the courage to expose the wanton destruction of our wildlife by the people who are paid millions to protect and preserve it. – ED)

# Three Wolves Taken from Man Eating Pack

*By Wildman Lake Lodge*



Alaska Master Guide and Bush Pilot, Butch King with two of the three big Alaska wolves that his hunting client shot yesterday.

The large wolf pack stalked the hunter and his guide near Chignik Lake Alaska, where this pack was responsible for the horrific killing of a young school teacher last winter.

With the pack of man killers circling to get down wind from the hunter and guide, who were in a remote tent camp on the Chignik River, the hunter took this 187 pound Alpha Male at 27 yards with his first shot, then continued shooting until the wolf pack finally dispersed. "I feel sure that this is the same bunch of wolves that has been terrorizing the villagers at Chignik Lake, not only because of the close proximity, but led by this huge Alpha Male, they were obviously not afraid of man and would not break their stalk on the hunter and guide until the client had shot the third wolf with the last round in his rifle" said Butch King who has guided on the Alaska Peninsula for more than forty years.

Lack of predator control on the Alaska Peninsula has allowed several large wolf packs to flourish, leaving nothing but death in their wake. Namely, the once great Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd, which King has seen go from 30,000 animals to less than 3,000 head in the past ten years, where hunting had to be closed for both sport hunters and rural village residents who have subsisted on these caribou for centuries. "Everything that is born is eaten by the wolves in this country anymore," says Butch. "It is a sad state of affairs for the villagers and sportsmen alike. I am glad we were able to save a few caribou today."

## Deputy Idaho Fish and Game Director Says Agency May Have to Cut Seasons, Services to Hunters

*By George Dovel*

Beginning in mid-November 2011, a series of TV, radio and newspaper stories and blogs reported that IDFG Deputy Director Jim Unsworth told the media they may have to cut season lengths and services to hunters. This is the same tactic used whenever the Department is forced to reign in its spending.

Letter writers charged IDFG had brought this on itself by supporting wolves destroying the game and then trying to deceive hunters into believing the game herds were healthy. They said Unsworth should admit the truth that hunters would not pay thousands of dollars to hunt game herds that had been destroyed.

We received a copy of the following letter the day before it was printed in the Lewiston Morning Tribune which documents the situation that exists:

"I would state a few comparisons in response to Idaho Department of Fish and Game's woes as printed Nov. 13 in the Lewiston Tribune.

My wild game processing plant has a large five-rail cooler for elk and a large five-rail cooler for deer.

Hunting season 2008 started with a loaded elk cooler (40-60 elk) and 60-70 deer out back. Long hours of cutting did not empty the refilling rails for six weeks.

Hunting season 2009 yielded only 60 percent compared to 2008 and in 2010 the numbers dropped another 20 percent.

Hunting season 2011 did not fill two rails of elk and only two rails of deer. From 2008 through 2011, wild game carcass numbers have dropped more than 60 percent.

My son has guided hunters on the South Fork, Middle Fork and Main Salmon River. In the last 15 years, he has witnessed the disappearance of elk in Chamberlain Basin and very depleted elk numbers on all main forks of the Salmon River hunting areas.

Hunters coming into the plant from Elk River and the Clearwater Drainage are not finding elk and most hear wolves howling at night."

“It would seem the reason license sales are down is because there is no game left to hunt. I feel that Fish and Game and government have nobody to blame but themselves.

I hope the Lewiston Tribune's Nov. 28 front-page doesn't prove to be Washington's trophy elk demise before some young hunters get to harvest one.

**Terry Gregory  
Moscow”**

### More Feeding Photos



Energy block stations used where IDFG refused to feed elk.



6-point bull elk near death with its fat reserves used up and its rumen full of indigestible woody branches on March 9, 2002. This is one of several hundred elk that died in the Garden Valley area when IDFG and USFS prohibited feeding by private citizens on public lands during the 2001-02 winter.

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## IDAHO FOR WILDLIFE – News Bulletin No 12

Idaho for Wildlife is a young but strong wildlife group that is completely committed to the preservation and protection of Idaho’s wildlife. Our chapters have hit the ground running and continue to improve our local communities - one project at a time. With this in mind, we need to focus now more than ever on what separates Idaho For Wildlife from the rest of the pack of groups available out there. Idaho for Wildlife members are the ONLY group out there that work on our in-state agencies, especially the one called Idaho Department of Fish and Game. With this task, We All should know, on a first name basis, each of our Idaho Fish and Game Region Supervisors, and our Idaho Fish and Game Region Commissioners. I would urge each member to know your Legislators as well.

Idaho For Wildlife would like to remind its members that we have not yet won 100% on the wolf issue in Idaho. Even though we are very grateful for our wonderful Idaho Senator Simpson being smart enough to attach a rider on the budget bill, we are still dealing with Wolves that aren't "truly" delisted. Everyone should remember that we simply went back to the 2009 Federal Ruling and we are on a probation period with the feds. Hence the 2009 ruling of maintaining 150 wolves for 5 more years. We have much more work to do as the war is not over yet. We would like to remind our members that we still have certain biologists in the IDFG that believe predators don't negatively affect our game herds and that the problem is based on weather and the economy.

Many areas of the state are still having issues with the IDFG not providing feed to our precious wildlife in their greatest time of need as well as an over zealousness and eagerness to destroy what is left of our producing cow elk herds. Even though we seem hard on the Biologists of the IDFG, our only concern in the end is that this agency use the best possible science to manage Idaho's most valuable resource, and follow Idaho code 36-103.

We also would like to thank the progress from our Idaho Fish and Game Commissioners for understanding the need to control wolves so we can try to save our big game herds by allowing an extended hunting season, multiple tags, reduced prices for nonresident wolf tag holders, and allowing a trapping season.

The last but final note is something that has been brought to our attention and we feel we need to address. Since most don't understand that we are not truly de-listed on our wolves, there has been much attention from some of the bigger groups sticking their chests out and displaying a rather alarming ego trip of saying...“It was I who got them de listed.” Once again this should NOT be about egos. This IS about Elk restoration and saving Idaho's Wildlife. There is no “I” in teamwork. Let’s stop bickering and focus once again on what is best for Idaho and her wildlife.

# Notice to all Outdoorsman Donors/Subscribers

1. In order to protect the citizens whose donations pay at least some of the costs involved in preparing, printing and mailing each issue to them, we no longer provide an internet copy to the IFW website until the issue that follows has been printed and mailed to those who support it financially. For those who do not help support this publication or are otherwise entitled to receive issues by mail, this will mean waiting from one to several months for each issue to appear on a website once it has been mailed.

2. With the massive losses of elk and especially mule deer last winter over much of the West, it should be clear that what you have been reading in *The Outdoorsman* about the real agenda of state wildlife management agencies is accurate. Regardless of your negotiation skills you will never change that agenda unless you and your friends do it through your elected officials.

If you don't do it now, in the upcoming 2012 legislative session, you're not going to like what will happen when your State Fish and Game officials "partner up" with radical non-hunting extremists to further reduce your ability to hunt and harvest wild game. I realize that times are hard for some of you – just as they are for me and my family – but we care enough to take the necessary steps to make the changes before it's too late. Will you help?

## What Does a Subscription Cost?

A donation in any amount will help defray our cost of printing and mailing *The Outdoorsman* to several hundred state and federal elected or appointed officials. A donation of \$25 or more will pay our cost of printing and mailing *The Outdoorsman* to you for one year.

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Deer and elk were fed properly during the 1948-49 winter, with feed spread over long distances to provide every animal access.

IDFG has collected more than \$11 million from resident and non-resident deer, elk and antelope hunters and it is required by law to keep a minimum of \$400,000 in the dedicated set-aside account expressly for feeding emergencies. Yet it ignores its own mandate and refuses to feed when the Idaho Code and IDAPA Rule requires it.

It always finds an excuse to circumvent the law and use the money to promote non-hunting and even anti-hunting agendas.

The former IDFG employee who drafted the Emergency Feeding Rules strongly recommended that private citizens in each area be paid to conduct the feeding but that recommendation was not approved by his supervisor. The most logical solutions are either to: a) distribute all of the money to each Board of County Commissioners where feeding occurs; or b) eliminate the fee and let hunters and concerned citizens donate the out-of-pocket costs.

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