

APR STUDY IN THE CWD ZONE
REGARDING THE AMENDMENT TO STOP THE STUDY IF A SPECIFIC METRIC IS NOT MET
By Dick Zook 11/4/19

The MDNR has been trying to reduce the deer density and stabilize the deer population below the carrying capacity of the land for an extended period of years without much success. The only reasonable option available are harvest regulations to encourage the hunting community to play a bigger role in effectively managing the deer population. Is there any history in the state or a DMU achieving any antlerless deer license quotas with any consistent success? Quality Deer Management as the primary mission of the QDMA has, as a comparison, has been emphasizing extending the age structure of the bucks in the herd and balancing the adult buck-to-doe ratio with expanding success over the past 25 years. This is primarily protecting 1 ½ year old bucks from harvest and reducing the doe population. This is the effective deer management that the deer hunting community in Michigan has been transitioning to over the past 25 years. This is what a number of large hunt clubs, somewhere over 100 deer hunting cooperatives, and the northwest twelve support with success. This is also supported by over 50% of the hunting community as shown in surveys for proposed antler point regulations. When considering the alternatives, there is no logic that supports establishing a metric that would shut the APR/CWD study down before there are sufficient results to evaluate. From an academic standpoint, this would violate all logic in doing a study. Why do Co-Ops, clubs, private land owners, and places like the northwest 12 never turn away from improved and effective deer management, it is effective deer management that produces results. Is doing nothing a better alternative?

The Antlerless deer harvest quota of 13,000 for the APR/CWD study **IS NOT A METRIC THAT WILL GAUGE THE AFFECT OF APRs.** The 13,000 quota for an antlerless harvest is a good target for the hunting community to keep track of during the season but harvesting a specific number of does is not the critical objective. The quota needs to be adjusted annually in respect to the bucks harvested. It's important to understand that does live longer than bucks and outnumber bucks. Density control is not something that can be realistically achieved in one year, the practice of harvesting more does than bucks must be continuous.

APR's by themselves are unlikely to have any effect on the prevalence of CWD but certainly, when paired with balancing the adult buck-to-doe ratio, there is a positive effect in controlling deer density. As this is initiated by the DNR and not from within the hunting community, the communication effort and sharing knowledge to gain support from the hunting community is extremely critical. In the final analysis the prevalence rate from within the APR area within the CWD zone should be compared to the remaining area in the zone. Also history indicates that the prevalence rate of CWD is likely to increase and expand without effective management and utilization of the hunting community.

The rationale for studying the effect an APR may have on the prevalence rate of CWD is essentially a two part process. One, expand the age structure of the bucks in the herd by protecting only the 1½ year old age class bucks, and two, harvest more does to reduce the adult buck-to-doe ratio. A more easily understood measurement is "annually harvest more does than bucks to stabilize the population". This

level of harvest is a minimum needed to stabilize the population and a higher harvest ratio is probably needed to reduce the population. Providing this knowledge to the hunting community then becomes the most important step in implementation of the plan and execution of the plan in the field

The study must run for at least three years as the results will not be clear in less than three years and is likely to improve after that. The antlerless deer harvest quota is not a reliable metric of the effort or the results. Deer density reduction and control is the primary objective by harvesting more does than bucks. The buck to doe harvest ratio of greater than one could be a study objective but not a study breaker. A comparison of CWD prevalence ratios from the APR area within the CWD zone to the remaining area in the CWD could be a significant factor in determining the effectiveness of APRs in managing CWD. There are far too many variables to consider and the tie to one metric that is needed primarily for the hunting community does not relate to the objective or results.

What is the objective of the APR study and who is responsible for managing and reporting on it? The MDNR is the only qualified party fully capable of that responsibility. They are the recognized experts at the table with the knowledge, experience, and scientific background. Do not handcuff them from the management responsibility of thoroughly evaluating results of the APR/CWD study before reliable results can be evaluated. The MDNR has been very thorough at identifying adverse deer conditions, reporting to the NRC, and proposing appropriate measures for the NRC to decide on. There is NO BENEFIT FOR STOPPING THE STUDY when a certain metric is not met. What benefit would there be to any of the stakeholders including many other state wildlife agencies, academics, CWD Alliance, QDMA, and the hunting community.

Consider the risk to our wild and free ranging whitetail deer herd from CWD, what we do not know, and what measures warrant trying to stem the prevalence and spread of CWD.
LET THE STUDY RUN ITS COURSE AND LET THE MDNR RESPONSIBLY MANAGE IT, which is what they are there for.