

Try to think long term Results (*Not just short term Reasons*)

First of all let me start out by saying what I have said in many of my other articles. Everyone's situation is different. From the guy that hunts on 25 acres to the group that hunts on 25,000 acres. Do you have one hunter for every 50 acres or one hunter for every 200 acres? What is the deer population on your property or around the area that you are hunting? In addition to that what is the carrying capacity around the area that you are hunting? Is the area you hunt, at, above or below its carrying capacity? Are you trying to grow some older Bucks? Are you trying to grow some bigger antlered Bucks? Would you just like to see more deer? Are you trying to shoot your first ever Buck? Do your neighbors shoot every deer that they see? Are you leasing property where the lease is going to expire in a year or two? Are you perfectly content with your existing situation? And the situations go on and on! *Please remember that the more property you can accumulate, including your property and your neighbors, the better chance you'll have at improving your hunting. On smaller acreage working with your neighbors is essential.*

There are probably *some* hunters that would love to be in our situation. We have a good healthy deer population, a good age structure and each member can shoot a couple of deer each season. It would be easy for us to want to just stay status quo but my brother-in-law and I are always trying to improve our hunting. We're at the point where we just want to do whatever we can to improve our percentage of bigger antlered Bucks. The thing that I want everyone to realize is that it took us several years to get our deer hunting where it is today. The reality is that we could turn our property over to another group of hunters and in a couple of years the hunting could be drastically worse because they may not monitor and manage the deer population like we do. (Please read my article "*Are you shooting too many Deer?*")

One of the problems that I see is when people hear deer management they immediately have a preconceived idea that it means that you have to let certain Bucks walk. If you read my articles "*Deer Management Phase I*" and "*Deer Management Phase II*" you will see how I don't even discuss letting a Buck walk. The focus should be on monitoring your deer population. We've experienced tough deer hunting on property where we might just see a couple of deer throughout the whole season and we've experienced good deer hunting where we average seeing 4 deer on every hunt. (Remember this is based on our own experiences) The best possible deer density in one area might be 10 deer per square mile while in another area it might be 75+ deer per square mile. One property might have sightings of one deer every ten hunts while another property may have sightings of 30+ deer every single hunt. Each property needs to be analyzed based on its own criteria and limitations.

I strongly believe that many deer hunters would like to improve their deer hunting if they felt that it was possible. The problem is that it may take a few years to make this improvement. By analyzing their own (and possibly neighboring) property they have more control of their deer population than what they think they have. I have seen decisions made where it was determined that no deer should be shot the next hunting season and other decisions made where they needed to shoot

a whole bunch of deer. These hunters decided that they were willing to do whatever was best for their deer populations and their hunting experience. They didn't guess at these decisions. They made their decisions by keeping track of their properties deer harvests, deer sightings and possibly even their deer population. Most every decision we make is based on the results of the records that we keep.

What do I mean by short term reasons?

- Many hunters can only think about the current season and not future seasons.
- It can be difficult for someone to not shoot a deer if they hardly see any deer throughout the entire season.
- It can be difficult for someone to not shoot a deer if they have been shooting a deer (possibly every deer they see) ever since they started hunting.
- Maybe their fathers and forefathers have all shot deer every season and have passed the tradition along even if the deer population is real low.
- If there's no guarantee that their hunting is going to improve then they're not interested in following any new guidelines.
- If they're paying money to be able to hunt a property then they are going to shoot a deer if they see one.
- One of the more common reasons: "If I don't shoot him someone else will".
- They treat each hunting season like it's their last. (I hope this isn't your actual situation because if it is you definitely have my understanding for whatever the reason is)

It's very easy to come up with reasons why you *should* shoot a deer. I was good at it many years ago. My favorite reasons were "If I don't shoot him someone else will" and "It's Fun" and "I need some venison for the table". These were legitimate reasons for me!

Today our reason is as follows:

- **We want to shoot enough deer to maintain a healthy desired deer population.**

As a result of this we are having fun and it's exciting to see that we as hunters can affect our deer population by establishing and following certain guidelines!

We are getting venison for the table!

Every member in our group knows that we are establishing guidelines for the improvement of our and our neighbors hunting experience!

Our neighbors are very understanding of what our management goals are and we are actually making a joint effort which benefits all of us!

So for those of you that may think that we have taken the fun out of hunting you couldn't be more wrong. If I can go out in the woods away from what we call civilization I enjoy every minute even if I don't see a deer. If I see a deer then it's even more fun. If I can shoot a deer then it's even more fun than that. So by us making the effort to make our hunting the best we can we are having more fun than ever. Twenty five years ago I would have thought that this monitoring and managing stuff was a

bunch of crap *but* as often happens things aren't always as difficult or as ridiculous as they may seem once you try it out!

In summary, start thinking about your deer hunting a few years out and not just for the current season. I always felt that as long as we were seeing an improvement in our deer sightings and/or harvests then we were making some headway which was our main objective. But remember that we didn't guess or assume that we were making improvements. We proved it by keeping some simple records. These records just might make the difference in having the full cooperation of your hunt group and possibly even your neighbors. Showing someone some documented information is a lot more convincing than just telling them what you feel or think is happening.