

## The High Fence Advantage

In this article I just want to talk a little bit about the advantages that a high fenced property has over an unfenced property. One thing I always try to avoid is using the words, always, never, can't, everyone etc. There are always exceptions to everything. (Did I say *always* and *everything*? Oops) In relation to all of the hunting properties out there, high fenced properties represent a very small percentage of the total. I think it would be safe to say that most high fenced properties take their hunting serious and that they have made a significant personal and financial investment in their property and its hunting.

### Now let me review some of the advantages of a high fenced property.

1. First and foremost is the fact that they don't have to deal with the neighbor influence like we unfenced properties do. I will cover some specifics below. But, let me point out that some high fenced properties do have to deal with someone climbing their fence, cutting a hole in their fence or people shooting through their fence. I'm being polite using the word "people". They dislike trespassers just as much as we unfenced properties do. But overall in most cases the trespassing if it exists has a minimal effect on their deer population.
2. Because of the high fence they in effect have their own deer herd. As a result of this many of them can come up with a good estimate of their individual number of Bucks, their Doe to Buck ratio and their fawn recruitment rate. As a result of this they can then come up with a good estimate of their deer population and even the number of deer they need to harvest in order to either maintain, increase or decrease their existing deer population.
3. They can establish food plots, supplemental feed stations and enhance their natural habitat so it is capable of carrying the number of deer that they would like to keep on their property. Unfenced properties can do this as well but we usually end up feeding our neighbor's deer in addition to our own resident deer. Providing food plots and supplemental feed can get expensive. For those properties that have to deal with frequent drought conditions then they are probably erring on the side of caution so they don't try to carry more deer than their habitat can sustain. Most people would rather have fewer and healthier deer instead of many and unhealthy deer.
4. When they let that Buck walk they don't have to worry about one of the neighbors shooting him. He should be around next season unless he succumbs to natural mortality (fighting, disease, etc.).
5. Even though they can pressure their deer as much as an unfenced property can, they don't have to worry about pushing the deer off of their property. But, their deer are just as capable of becoming nocturnal as deer on an unfenced property.

Even though I cover the use of our software in a couple of different articles and videos I have been asked to detail the steps on how a property can estimate their deer population and harvest requirements. I will list each of the factors that you need and how you can determine them. If you have your own methods for determining each of the following factors then that is just fine. The important thing is that you can come up with a good estimate of each of the following factors.

1. Estimate the *number of individual Bucks* that you have on your property. With the use of trail cameras you can probably get a good estimate of the number of individual Bucks on your property. Please read

my article “How do you determine how many different Bucks you have” where I cover this process in detail.

2. Estimate your *Doe to Buck ratio*. This is the ratio of Does to Bucks. You can use observation counts or camera counts or both. If you and some of your other members are out on your property prior to the season and most of your Does and Bucks are moving around then your visual sightings can give you a good estimate of your Doe to Buck ratio. This doesn't mean that three guys can go out for one afternoon and use those counts to determine the Doe to Buck ratio. You need several people with several days of sightings. Use some common sense here. You probably have a good feel for the movement of your deer. If they don't move or especially if the older Bucks don't move until dark then your observation counts will probably not work. In this case you should do a trail camera survey. Please read my article “How I use my Trail Cameras” where I cover this process in detail.
3. Estimate your *Fawn recruitment rate*. This is the ratio of Fawns to Does. You can use observation counts or camera counts or both. If you and some of your other members are out on your property prior to the season and most of your Does and Fawns are moving around then your visual sightings can give you a good estimate of your fawn recruitment rate. This doesn't mean that three guys can go out for one afternoon and use those counts to determine the fawn recruitment rate. You need several people with several days of sightings. Use some common sense here. You probably have a good feel for the movement of your deer. If the Does and Fawns don't move until dark then your observation counts will probably not work. In this case you should do a trail camera survey. One word of caution is, do not do these counts too early in the year since the Fawns will usually remain secluded in the woods for a few weeks right after they are born. The momma Doe may go moving around but her fawn(s) may stay in their bedding area. Please read my article “How I use my Trail Cameras” where I cover this process in detail. In many areas late September and after is probably best for doing your observation counts and/or camera survey.

Once you have determined the above factors you are now ready to estimate the deer population and the harvest requirements. I am using a hypothetical situation where it was determined that there are approximately 41 different Bucks, an estimated Doe to Buck ratio of 2.20 to 1 and an estimated Fawn recruitment rate of .68. I am using an estimated mortality rate of 10% for Does and 15% for Bucks. In this first scenario I am also indicating that we want to keep the same number of Bucks and the same Doe to Buck ratio which will result in the deer population remaining the same for next hunting season. Please note that Fawns are not included in the Doe to Buck ratio. When we estimate our Doe to Buck ratio it always excludes fawns. **Remember, you will be using your own factors that you have determined for your own property or area.**

## Example 1

### Burke County Tract Deer Population & Harvest Estimate

[Print Report](#)

Number of Individual Bucks Counted	41
Doe to Buck Ratio x.xx:1	2.20 to 1
Fawn Recruitment Rate	.68
Estimated Total Deer Population	192
Mortality Rate for Does i.e. 10% = .10	.10
Mortality Rate for Bucks i.e. 15% = .15	.15
Desired # of Individual Bucks next Summer	41
Desired Ratio next Summer (x.xx:1)	2.20 to 1
Total Deer Population Desired next Summer	192

Bucks	Does	Fawns
41	90	61

Bucks Wanted	Does Wanted	Fawns Wanted
41	90	61

[Calculate](#)

	Does	Bucks	Total
Beginning Population (Including Fawns)	121	71	192
Estimated Mortality	12	11	23
Harvest Estimate	19	19	38
Ending Population	90	41	131
Fawns added next year	31	30	61
Next Summer Population	121	71	192

The beginning population of 192 includes 32% Fawns Approximately

**Hypothetically if no Fawns are shot this coming season:**

The ending population next summer of 192 includes 32% Fawns Approximately  
 The ending population next summer of 192 includes 28% Yearlings Approximately

In the example above we have approximately 192 deer of which 41 are Bucks, 90 are Does and 61 are Fawns. Since I have indicated that I want to have the same number of Bucks next season and the same Doe to Buck ratio my estimated population will be the same next season. The formula will tell you the estimated mortality and the estimated number of deer you should harvest for both Bucks and Does. In the example above it says that we should shoot 19 Does and 19 Bucks. Because I frequently hear hunters say that they always seem to have a lot of young deer I added the information at the bottom to give an estimate of the percentage of Fawns and Yearlings (1 ½ year old deer). It is interesting to see that our starting population includes approximately 32% Fawns. But, what's more interesting is seeing the estimated population next season includes 32% Fawns and 28% Yearlings. That's a total of 60% of the deer population will be Fawns and Yearlings. This would definitely explain why it appears there's a lot of young deer!

I have always understood the effects that mortality can have on a deer population but seeing it quantified above has been very interesting. In the same token I understand Fawn recruitment rate but I was never able to put a number on it. Seeing the calculation of Fawns being added to the deer population has really opened up my eyes.

Do you know approximately how many Does you should shoot to get your Doe to Buck ratio down to a tighter ratio? What if you want to decrease your Buck population? Do you know someone that wishes their Fawn recruitment rate was a lot higher? Take a look at the next three examples to see the effects of changing the

Doe to Buck ratio, decreasing your deer population and how a Fawn recruitment rate can drastically affect the dynamics of your deer population.

### Example 2

#### Burke County Tract Deer Population & Harvest Estimate

[Print Report](#)

Number of Individual Bucks Counted	41	
Doe to Buck Ratio x.xx:1	2.20	to 1
Fawn Recruitment Rate	.68	
Estimated Total Deer Population	192	
Mortality Rate for Does i.e. 10% = .10	.10	
Mortality Rate for Bucks i.e. 15% = .15	.15	
Desired # of Individual Bucks next Summer	41	
Desired Ratio next Summer (x.xx:1)	1.5	to 1
Total Deer Population Desired next Summer	145	

Bucks	Does	Fawns
41	90	61

Bucks Wanted	Does Wanted	Fawns Wanted
41	62	42

[Calculate](#)

New Population is Approximately 24% Lower

	Does	Bucks	Total
Beginning Population (Including Fawns)	121	71	192
Estimated Mortality	12	11	23
Harvest Estimate	47	19	66
Ending Population	62	41	103
Fawns added next year	21	21	42
Next Summer Population	83	62	145

The beginning population of 192 includes 32% Fawns Approximately

**Hypothetically if no Fawns are shot this coming season:**

The ending population next summer of 145 includes 29% Fawns Approximately  
 The ending population next summer of 145 includes 37% Yearlings Approximately

In the example above we have decided to reduce the deer population by tightening the Doe to Buck ratio. We want to keep the same number of Bucks though. The top part still shows us starting with approximately 192 deer but notice the change to the "Desired ratio next summer". We are now trying to bring the ratio down closer to a 1.5 to 1 Doe to Buck ratio. This in turn will bring our population down closer to 145 deer which as indicated above is approximately a 24% decrease in the population. Take a look at the new harvest estimate which indicates that we should shoot approximately 47 Does and 19 Bucks for a total harvest of 66 deer. Getting the ratio down requires that we shoot some additional Does. Ten years ago we were basically just guessing how many Does we needed to shoot.

### Example 3

#### Burke County Tract Deer Population & Harvest Estimate

[Print Report](#)

Number of Individual Bucks Counted	41	
Doe to Buck Ratio x.xx:1	2.20	to 1
Fawn Recruitment Rate	.68	
Estimated Total Deer Population	192	
Mortality Rate for Does i.e. 10% = .10	.10	
Mortality Rate for Bucks i.e. 15% = .15	.15	
Desired # of Individual Bucks next Summer	35	
Desired Ratio next Summer (x.xx:1)	1.5	to 1
Total Deer Population Desired next Summer	124	

Bucks	Does	Fawns
41	90	61

Bucks Wanted	Does Wanted	Fawns Wanted
35	53	36

[Calculate](#)

New Population is Approximately 35% Lower

	Does	Bucks	Total
Beginning Population (Including Fawns)	121	71	192
Estimated Mortality	12	11	23
Harvest Estimate	56	25	81
Ending Population	53	35	88
Fawns added next year	18	18	36
Next Summer Population	71	53	124

The beginning population of 192 includes 32% Fawns Approximately

**Hypothetically if no Fawns are shot this coming season:**

The ending population next summer of 124 includes 29% Fawns Approximately  
 The ending population next summer of 124 includes 43% Yearlings Approximately

In the example above we have decided to reduce the deer population by reducing the number of Bucks. We want to keep the same Doe to Buck ratio as in the previous example. The top part still shows us starting with approximately 192 deer but notice the change to the "Desired # of individual Bucks next summer". We are now trying to bring the Buck population down to approximately 35 different Bucks. (excluding fawns) This in turn will bring our population down closer to 124 deer which as indicated above is approximately a 35% decrease in the population. Take a look at the new harvest estimate which indicates that we should shoot approximately 56 Does and 25 Bucks for a total harvest of 81 deer. Getting the population and the number of Bucks down requires that we shoot some additional Does and Bucks. Ten years ago we were basically just guessing how many deer we needed to shoot.

## Example 4

### Burke County Tract Deer Population & Harvest Estimate

[Print Report](#)

Number of Individual Bucks Counted	41	
Doe to Buck Ratio x.xx:1	2.2	to 1
Fawn Recruitment Rate	1.00	
Estimated Total Deer Population	221	
Mortality Rate for Does i.e. 10% = .10	.10	
Mortality Rate for Bucks i.e. 15% = .15	.15	
Desired # of Individual Bucks next Summer	41	
Desired Ratio next Summer (x.xx:1)	2.2	to 1
Total Deer Population Desired next Summer	221	

Bucks	Does	Fawns
41	90	90

Bucks Wanted	Does Wanted	Fawns Wanted
41	90	90

[Calculate](#)

	Does	Bucks	Total
Beginning Population (Including Fawns)	135	86	221
Estimated Mortality	14	13	27
Harvest Estimate	31	32	63
Ending Population	90	41	131
Fawns added next year	45	45	90
Next Summer Population	135	86	221

The beginning population of 221 includes 41% Fawns Approximately

**Hypothetically if no Fawns are shot this coming season:**

The ending population next summer of 221 includes 41% Fawns Approximately  
 The ending population next summer of 221 includes 35% Yearlings Approximately

In the example above I went back to example 1 where we had 41 Bucks and a 2.2 to 1 Doe to Buck ratio. What I changed was the Fawn recruitment rate from .68 to 1.00 so I could show you the effect that a high recruitment rate can have on your deer population. Instead of approximately 192 deer there would be approximately 221 deer. The fawn estimate went from 61 to 90. The thing that I want to point out is the percentage of fawns and yearlings in next season's deer population. Yes, approximately 76% of next season's deer population will be fawns and yearlings. I hope this opens your eyes to the effect that the recruitment can have on a deer population.



## Example 5

### Macon County Tract Deer Population & Harvest Estimate

[Print Report](#)

Number of Individual Bucks Counted	25
Doe to Buck Ratio x.xx:1	2.2 to 1
Fawn Recruitment Rate	.68
Estimated Total Deer Population	117
Mortality Rate for Does i.e. 10% = .10	.10
Mortality Rate for Bucks i.e. 15% = .15	.15
Desired # of Individual Bucks next Summer	30
Desired Ratio next Summer (x.xx:1)	2 to 1
Total Deer Population Desired next Summer	131

Bucks	Does	Fawns
25	55	37

Bucks Wanted	Does Wanted	Fawns Wanted
30	60	41

New Population is Approximately 12% Higher

	Does	Bucks	Total
Beginning Population (Including Fawns)	74	43	117
Estimated Mortality	7	6	13
Harvest Estimate	7	7	14
Ending Population	60	30	90
Fawns added next year	21	20	41
Next Summer Population	81	50	131

The beginning population of 117 includes 32% Fawns Approximately

**Hypothetically if no Fawns are shot this coming season:**

The ending population next summer of 131 includes 31% Fawns Approximately  
 The ending population next summer of 131 includes 24% Yearlings Approximately

In my final example above I am showing a completely different scenario where we determined that we could safely increase our deer population by at least 10%. The example above shows that we currently have approximately 25 different Bucks and a 2.2 to 1 Doe to Buck ratio. We have an approximate recruitment rate of .68 and a total estimated deer population of 117 deer. By indicating that we would like to have 30 different Bucks next season and a Doe to Buck ratio closer to 2 to 1 the harvest recommendation is 7 Does and 7 Bucks. The new population estimate is 131 deer which as indicated above is a 12% increase in the deer population.

I apologize for getting carried away with all of the examples but I have learned more from using this formula than I have the numerous books and articles that I have read. I have written thousands of computer programs through the years but I have to admit this formula is my all time favorite. Having this visual presentation makes it much easier for people to understand how the various factors can affect a deer population. What's really cool is I can tweak my factors again and again and the results are shown almost instantly.

In summary, every high fenced property should be able to establish their own estimates so they can determine what will work best for them. Let me assure you that the factors will vary from property to property. These factors are:

1. Number of different Bucks.
2. Doe to Buck ratio.
3. Fawn recruitment rate.
4. Doe mortality rate.
5. Buck mortality rate.
6. Carrying capacity of the property.

Since you have chosen to make a big investment in your hunting property you should also commit a little bit of time and effort to keeping some records of your deer population and harvests. Even though a high fenced property has some great advantages they have to be careful with their deer herds. An overpopulation of deer in a high fence environment can be disastrous. By keeping some records you can experiment with your Doe to Buck ratio and you may find a certain ratio that will maximize your Buck sightings. You can also track your fawn recruitment rate to see how it fluctuates as your deer population changes. **So start keeping some simple records and be as knowledgeable as you can about your own deer population.**