

## Deer Hunting (The Overlooked Strategy)

Deer hunters use a lot of different strategies to create that opportunity to be able to shoot a deer. (Both Bucks and Does) With over 10 million deer hunters in North America I'm sure a list of the various strategies would be many pages long. My intentions for this article are not to list all of the various strategies (which would be impossible) but rather to point out what I consider one of the most important strategies that most hunters don't even consider. Let me point out a handful of strategies that many hunters use just so you can understand what I am talking about.

1. Always try to position yourself downwind from where you expect the deer to be.
2. Try to find trails leading to and from a bedding area so you can set up accordingly.
3. Utilize the location of rubs and scrapes to help you determine a good stand location.
4. Utilize food plots and/or agricultural crops to catch deer coming to feed.
5. Use scent attractants to lure that elusive Buck in.

**And this list goes on and on and on.**

All of these strategies are good but they depend on you having deer on your property. (Duh!)

Well, approximately how many deer do you have on your property or in your area?

How many Does?

How many Bucks?

Is your property or area capable of carrying more deer than it currently is?

Do you have too many deer on your property or in your area? (Deer become less healthy because of this)

What is the approximate Doe to Buck ratio on your property or in your area?

What is the approximate fawn recruitment rate on your property or in your area?

The questions above are all valid questions and should be addressed for every hunting property out there. You've probably heard the saying "Don't put the cart before the horse". It is important to have a good feel for the dynamics of your deer population on your property or in your area. If we can manipulate the dynamics of our deer population which in turn will allow us to shoot more deer, bigger deer or make our deer healthier then we are going to do that. For example;

1. If we can determine that we could safely increase our deer population then we are going to do that. If this would increase our chances to shoot a deer and possibly an older or bigger deer then this is important to us. If we now have 3 big Bucks in the area instead of 2 the odds of us seeing and/or shooting a big Buck just went up.
2. If we determine that we have a high Doe to Buck ratio and that by reducing the Doe to Buck ratio we just may improve our Buck hunting then we are going to do this. We may have lots of Bucks on our property but if they don't move around during daylight then they might as well not even exist since we won't see them.
3. If we see a lot of deer and we determine that our property or area is overpopulated then we will adjust our harvest guidelines to bring the deer population to a more healthy level. These unhealthy Bucks are probably not reaching their full antler potential and the

unhealthy Does may not be introducing the number of fawns into the herd that they could be if they were in good health. Plus these fawns may not be as healthy as they could be.

Consider the following sports (professional, college, high school etc.) and do the managers and coaches utilize the statistics that they get to make decisions?

1. **Football** Avg.yards per carry. If you have a running back with a 1.6 yard average and a running back with a 3.5 yard average which back will probably get more playing time?
2. **Baseball** Batting average. If you have two comparable fielders and one is hitting .375 and the other is averaging .175 who do you think will be in the starting lineup?
3. **Basketball** If you have two forwards and they both are comparable on defense but one is shooting 65% and the other is shooting 50% who do you think will be in the starting lineup?

The point I'm trying to make is that just about every sport out there depends on statistics and statistical averages to maximize the performance of not just the individual players but especially the team as a whole. Hunting properties should also keep track of certain information so that their deer hunting experience is maximized. If it was really difficult to determine all of this information I would understand why many hunt groups don't want to be bothered with keeping some records. But, this stuff isn't that difficult as I outline below. Also, many hunters feel that records don't mean anything. Well, tell this to the coaches involved in the various sports and the deer managers throughout the world. Even though smaller acreage properties may not be able to determine all of the stuff below, properties with 1000+ acres are missing out on a great opportunity to monitor and manage their deer population and also maximize their hunting experience. Remember, if you have smaller acreage try to round up some neighbors so collectively you can represent more acreage and thus keep track of the information for the entire area.

Here is a brief summary of the information that is important for your hunting property:

*Please read the "Quick Overview of the Software" or watch the instructional videos on our website for more details.*

1. Keep track of how many Does and Bucks you and your hunt group harvest each season. Since we all come back to camp or go home and share this information with someone it is simple to just write down the information so it can be entered into the computer later. In our software you will then be able to see exactly how many deer you are harvesting season by season. You will know exactly how many deer are being shot each season and you will know if your deer harvests are stable, increasing or decreasing. You have the ability to analyze your deer harvests by moon phase, AM/PM, age, section and hunter.
2. You have the option of keeping track of actual observation counts or a camera survey counts if you prefer. We actually keep track of our actual sightings so we can compare our average sightings per hunt season by season. This allows us to see if our deer sightings are going up, going down or remaining about the same. All of our members do this and because we all know how valuable this information is we all gladly participate in writing down our sightings. We are

not under a high fence so it is important to keep track of our sightings in case our neighbors are shooting too many or too few deer. If you have no desire to write down your actual sightings then you should at least do a camera survey. Please read my article "Should I track my sightings or do a camera survey" for more details. These methods may allow you to estimate your Doe to Buck ratio and your Fawn recruitment rate which can be valuable information.

3. Use your trail cameras to determine how many individual Bucks you have on your property. This would be interesting even for smaller acreage properties. Even if I only had 50 acres I would do this just so I could compare the count season to season. This certainly doesn't mean that Buck is living on your property but it lets you know that he is in the area. If I have averaged 10 different Bucks the last 5 years and then suddenly I only get pictures of 5 different Bucks this year then I want to know this so we can make some harvest adjustments if we deem that necessary. If our property was in the north and we had a horrific winter then could this indicate that maybe we lost 50% of our Bucks to winter kill? That's certainly possible. On the other hand if I have averaged 5 different Bucks the last 5 years and then suddenly I get pictures of 10 different Bucks this year, again I want to know this so we can make some harvest adjustments if we deem that necessary.

In summary, we hunters spend a lot of money on hunting and we do our best to hunt strategically so we have an opportunity at seeing and/or shooting a deer. We should also do our best to keep track of our deer populations, deer harvests, deer sightings or camera counts? If manipulating our Doe to Buck ratio might improve our hunting then we want to try doing that. If we need to reduce our deer harvests one season so we can improve our hunting in subsequent seasons then we will gladly do that as well. If we can influence our deer population so our hunting will improve then that is a high priority for us. So, instead of just focusing on shooting a deer on your property, put a little effort into analyzing your deer population and you may determine that you can change the dynamics of your deer population and in turn improve your hunting!