Selected Results from a 2011 Montana Mule Deer Hunter Preference Survey
Comparing and Contrasting Resident & Nonresident Results

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The primary goal of the survey was to evaluate Montana’s mule deer management relative to hunting and harvest opportunities.

“I have this awful feeling the deer know we’re here.”
What did we do?

- Mailback survey
- Randomly selected samples of resident and nonresident deer license holders from 2010....identical survey for both groups
- Good response rate; high confidence in the survey results
Survey question areas...

- Importance of mule deer hunting
- Reasons for hunting mule deer
- Perceptions regarding mule deer hunting opportunities in Montana
- Satisfaction with current mule deer hunting regulations
- Opinions regarding timing of the mule deer season
- Opinions regarding how restrictive mule deer regulations should be in Montana
What did we learn?

Nonresidents

Residents
Mule deer hunting is important in Montana!

- 70 percent of the respondents indicated that mule deer hunting is “one of their most important” or “their most important” hunting activity.
It’s not all about trophies

- To enjoy nature and the outdoors (96%) 91%
- To be with friends with similar interests (51%) 77%
- To do something with family (61%) 75%
- To get venison for eating (87%) 69%
- To feel the exhilaration of the hunt (83%) 69%
- To experience solitude (64%) 67%
- To develop my skills and abilities (69%) 64%
- To test my hunting skills (62%) 64%
- To feel a sense of accomplishment (64%) 59%
- To harvest a trophy buck (68%) 47%
What else did we learn?
Hunters rate mule deer opportunities in Montana favorably

- 92 percent of the respondents rated overall opportunities to hunt mule deer in Montana as being better than average

85% Residents
What about regulations?
Hunters are satisfied with regulations ... Really?

- 85 percent of the respondents rated current mule deer hunting regulations in Montana as being satisfactory

77% Residents
Opinions Regarding the Timing of the Mule Deer Hunting Season

- 70 percent of the respondents “support” or “strongly support” hunting mule deer bucks in Montana during the rut.

67% Residents
Most mule deer hunters favor less restrictive mule deer hunting regulations...

- We used **forced-choice** questions to determine this for...
  - Montana as a whole
  - Regions of Montana
  - Favorite hunting districts
Given only one choice...

- Opportunity to hunt mule deer bucks every year (with a lower probability of harvesting a mature buck)  **Non-Restrictive**

-OR-

- Opportunity to hunt mule deer bucks once every several years (with a higher probability of harvesting a mature buck)  **Restrictive**
Across the Board...

- 58 percent selected the non-restrictive option

63% Residents
Respondents who reported that mule deer hunting isn’t very important to them were more likely to select the more restrictive option.
Compared to all resident respondents, those resident respondents who reported that harvesting a trophy buck is an important motivation for going mule deer hunting in Montana were more likely to select the more restrictive option.

That said, the majority of these respondents (55 percent) selected the non-restrictive option... resident data only (insufficient data for nonresidents).
Summary

- Mule deer hunting is very important in Montana!
- A strong majority of mule deer hunters rate mule deer hunting opportunities in Montana favorably.
- A strong majority of mule deer hunters are satisfied with current mule deer hunting regulations in Montana.
- A strong majority of mule deer hunters favor non-restrictive mule deer hunting regulations.
  - Of note, about three-quarters of the hunting districts in Montana do NOT limit buck hunting opportunity.
Questions?

“I was told you two have a love-hate relationship..... Care to elaborate on that?”