

CENSUS



A spotlight survey is an effective method to track deer populations, as well as rabbits and furbearers. This can also bring neighbors together in a common activity.

This activity provides an estimate of species numbers, population trends, population density, age structure, or sex ratio using accepted survey techniques. Results of annual surveys should be recorded on appropriate forms as evidence of completion of this practice. Selection of specific survey techniques should be appropriate to the species of interest and at a level of intensity to achieve proper

management of the resource in connection with a comprehensive wildlife management plan.

Note: For census activity to qualify for deer, a combination of methods must be used to obtain a reasonable assessment of the deer herd for habitat and harvest management. For most properties, this will require spotlight surveys, daylight or incidental observations, and harvest data for all deer (age, weight, and antler measurements). Similar intensity should be applied for other species to qualify in this activity.

SPOTLIGHT COUNTS

Counting animals at night along a predetermined route using a spotlight. Spotlight counts should follow accepted methodology. **A minimum of three counts, or a minimum of 15 surveyed miles, must be completed annually.**

STANDARDIZED INCIDENTAL OBSERVATIONS

Using standardized observation methodology, this technique is used to supplement data gathered from other sources (eg. spotlight deer counts) to strengthen composition information (eg. buck/doe/fawn ratios). Such observations are collected during daylight hours incidental to routine activities on the property. Observations may also be collected by driving about the property, sitting in blinds, watching feeders and food plots, or engaging in any other activity that would increase the sample size. Data may be collected starting July 15th. **(Not the same as Daylight Deer Herd/Wildlife Composition Counts.) Observations from may be from feeders, food plots, blinds, or vehicles. A minimum of 100 observations of adult deer plus fawns required.**

STAND COUNTS OF DEER

This method is suitable for properties of less than 1,000 acres or where spotlight routes are not at least two miles long. **One stand is required per every 100 acres (i.e. 150 acres requires two stands). Five counts are conducted at each stand. One hour of observation is required during each count** (i.e. one hour after sunrise or one hour before sunset). Deer are recorded by spike bucks, three to five point bucks, bucks with six points or more, does, and fawns. Counts may begin as early as July 15th.

AERIAL COUNTS

Use of a fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter to count animals. **Counts should employ accepted methodology for the region and be performed by a trained individual annually.**

TRACK COUNTS

Standardized track counts at scent stations are used to census predators and furbearers. Deer numbers may be estimated by counting exit tracks on bare dirt transects that are dragged and counted for 3 continuous days. Primarily used where other accepted deer survey methods are not effective (i.e. thick woods).

DAYLIGHT DEER HERD/WILDLIFE COMPOSITION COUNTS/PHOTO STATIONS

Counts used to census deer in daylight hours to enhance information of sex/age structure (buck/doe/fawn), as well as determine annual trends in populations through dove, quail, and turkey sightings. **Counts should be conducted on standardized transects along 5 mile minimum lines and run at least 3 times (if shorter lines or used, a total of at least 15 miles must be surveyed), or through other standardized methodology to obtain at least 100 observations. On smaller tracts, as least five separate, two hour counts during early morning or late afternoon from deer stands (blinds) may be used.**

HARVEST DATA COLLECTION/RECORD KEEPING

Collect all age, weight, and antler development data from harvested deer. Age and sex information should be obtained from game birds and waterfowl to determine sex ratios and annual production.

BROWSE UTILIZATION SURVEYS

Annually (normally during the winter) examine deer browse species for degree



Keeping good harvest records is essential to understanding effects on target populations. Lower jaw bones are used to age deer, and deer aging publications may be obtained from Texas Parks and Wildlife or your County Extension Agent.

of utilization on each major vegetative site on the property through vegetation analysis and stem counts.

CENSUS OF ENDANGERED, THREATENED, OR PROTECTED WILDLIFE

Regular, periodic counts of the target species used to enhance management or increase knowledge of local, regional, or state status.

CENSUS AND MONITORING OF NONGAME WILDLIFE SPECIES

Regular, periodic counts of nongame wildlife species used to enhance management or increase knowledge of local, regional, or state status. This practice would also include developing checklists of wildlife diversity for the property, and should be a part of a comprehensive wildlife management plan.



MISCELLANEOUS COUNTS:

Specific species may require special survey techniques. These may include the following and should be addressed in the management plan:

- Time/area counts
- Roost counts
- Song bird transects and counts
- Quail call and covey counts
- Point counts
- Drift fences and pitfall traps
- Small mammal traps
- Bat census (ex. Departures)
- Other. Describe: _____

