

# Two Seasons—4,000 Deer

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With the advent of Kansas' third firearms deer season upon us, let's look back and reflect briefly on the past and also, gaze into the proverbial crystal ball to see where deer herd management "Midway U. S. A." is headed. In the last decade the Kansas deer herd has come into its own, exhibiting a remarkable growth rate similar to that which produced "deer population explosions" in many midwestern states years earlier.

Deer were considered extinct in Kansas from about 1904 to 1933. In the years that followed, limited introductions were made by private individuals and the Fish and Game Commission. Trapping and transplanting programs in adjacent states contributed to these initial population "nuclei". Small herds began to be seen on the major drainages. As the number of deer increased, movement away from streams populated

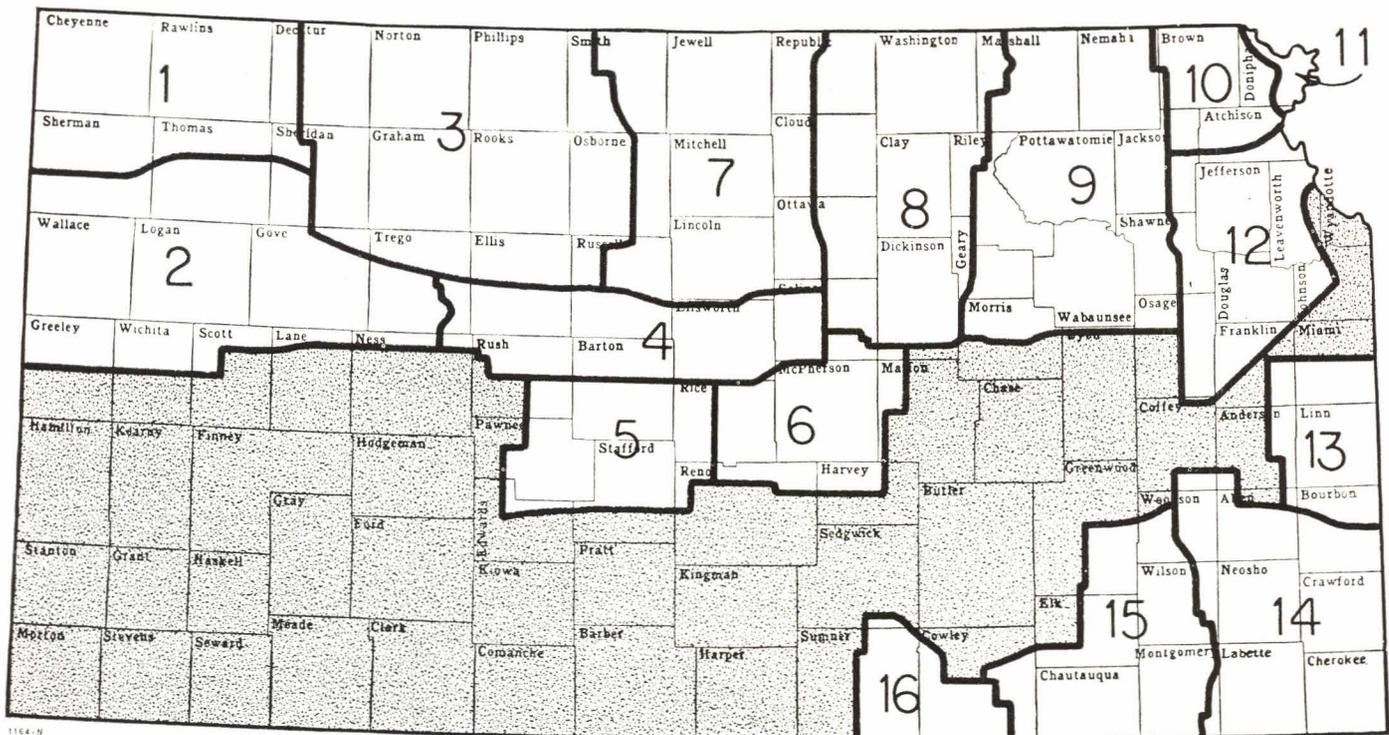
the smaller tributaries and available upland habitat. By 1956 the Commission estimated that there were 3,000 deer in the state. Nine years and 35,000 deer later, Kansas sportsmen were again hunting these animals.

Almost daily we hear about the human "population explosion". Administrators and economists are aware of the fact that as more people are produced they must be fed and provided with a "secure" place to live. These days, the meaning of "secure" appears to be lost in

the din of "demonstrations, riots, and bombs". However, steps are being taken to control the number of new individuals that are being born. The "pill", other contraceptive devices and family planning are all gaining world-wide impetus. Does it not make sense that deer, like livestock and people, must have enough to eat and a secure place to live? Who is going to tell Mr. and Mrs. Deer how many fawns to have or not to have? What kind of a "pill" are they going to take?

The rapid build-up of Kansas' deer herds is evidence that they enjoy a high level of nutrition. They appear to be relatively secure in their woodland-prairie home, but the warning signs are out. Some of our deer range is fast approaching, if not al-

## FIREARMS DEER MANAGEMENT UNITS, 1967



□ OPEN      ■ CLOSED

- |                   |                     |                     |                        |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1. High Plains.   | 5. Pawnee.          | 9. Tuttle Creek.    | 13. Marais des Cygnes. |
| 2. Smoky Hill.    | 6. Middle Arkansas. | 10. Delaware.       | 14. Neosho.            |
| 3. Kirwin-Webster | 7. Solomon.         | 11. Missouri River. | 15. Chautauqua Hills.  |
| 4. Kanopolis.     | 8. Republican.      | 12. Kaw.            | 16. Lower Arkansas.    |

ready surpassing, carrying capacity. If not biological, then economic. In a recent study of deer food habits conducted with stomach samples obtained from road-killed deer in north-eastern Kansas, researchers Dr. Robert Robel and students Phillip Watt and Gerald Miller from Kansas State University, found that 49 percent of the year-around diet of deer in that area consisted of agricultural crops with corn, sorghum, winter wheat, alfalfa, soybeans and apples of major importance. A similar study in Missouri revealed that the utilization of approximately 50 percent agricultural crops in the deer diet was the breaking point between crop depredation complaints or the lack of them.

The number of highway deer mortalities have continued to increase each year since records were maintained with 300 deer ending up on bumpers, fenders and windshields during the first six months of this year compared to 259 for the same period in 1966. A total of 569 deer were killed by motorists last year costing an average of \$200 per collision.

When range becomes over-stocked with livestock and deer, both the animals and the range suffer. The farmer or rancher can sell or move

some of his stock to new pasture if it is available—what happens to the deer? They will continue to increase with reduced productivity. Inferior physical specimens will result, and as the herd increases they will eat, and eat, and eat. Just what and how much they eat is fast becoming a matter of concern for farmers and ranchers raising crops in prime deer range. What will happen when the aesthetics of seeing deer no longer balance the concern caused by loss of crops and dollar values?

**The only logical way to reduce the deer population to "levels" that are compatible with agricultural, biological and other human interests is through hunting seasons. Both antlered and antlerless deer must be harvested. This is the only "pill" that deer populations understand.**

ARCHERY seasons can provide hunters with many hours of recreation with little drain on the deer resource. In two years of bow hunting the record speaks for itself. In 1965 with a 46-day season, 1,151 archers killed 164 deer. In the process they "logged" 7.4 days afield per man. That same year, 563 deer were killed by motorists on Kansas highways.

A record 1966 harvest of 376 deer is proof positive that Kansas archers

have developed a keen interest in the sport. It is even more amazing when considering hunting conditions that prevailed throughout much of the state last fall. In general, it was dry and the woods were very "noisy," making it difficult to stalk deer and almost impossible to trail a wounded animal. "Any deer" were legal targets for bow and arrow hunters.

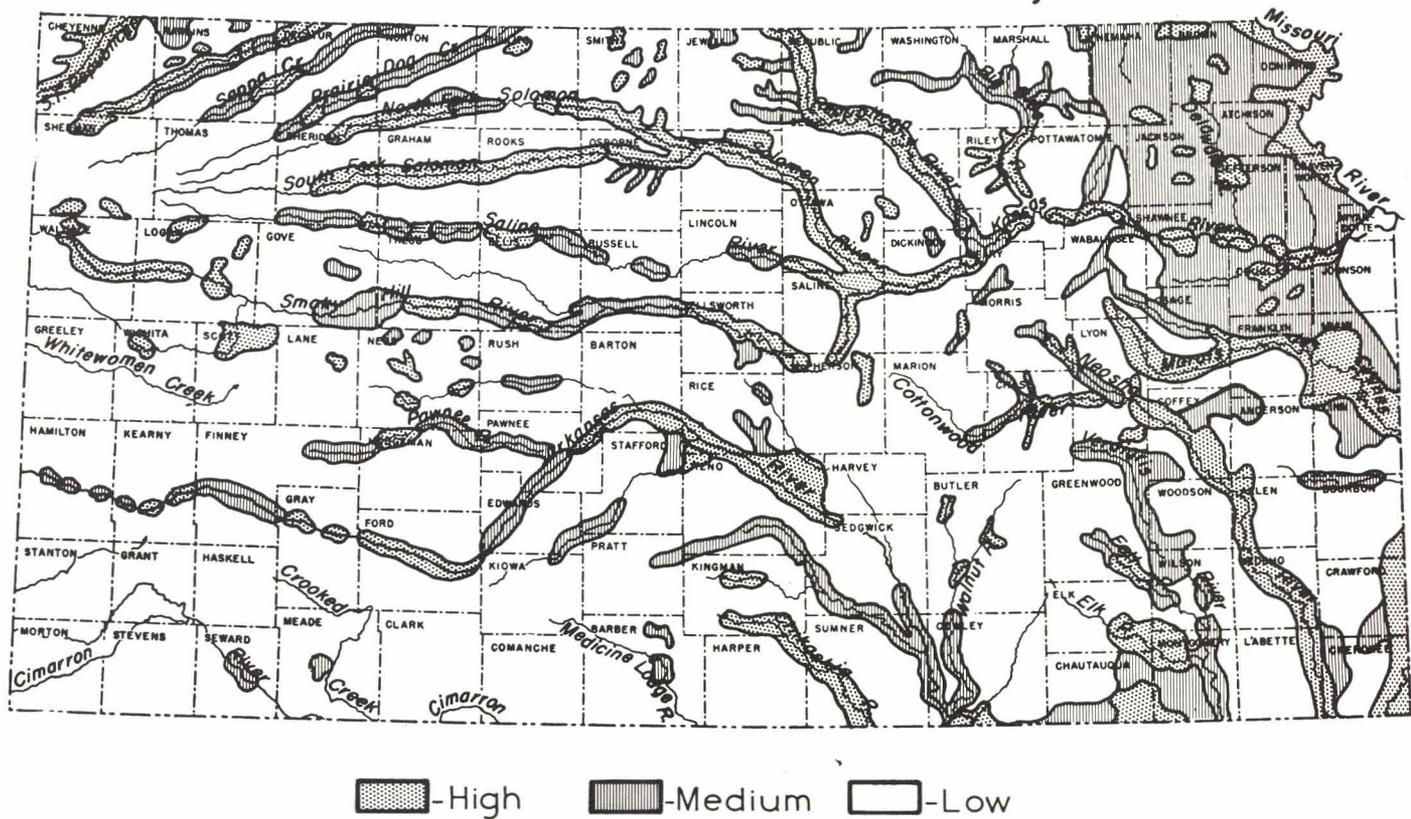
**FIREARMS deer hunting in the Sunflower State comprises three basic types of regulations: (1) The harvest of antlered deer only, (2) the harvest of antlered deer, except on the last day of the season a previously unsuccessful hunter may take "any deer," and (3) the harvest of "any deer" throughout the season. By controlling the number of permits that are authorized and the type of season by deer management unit, the desired number of deer can be effectively harvested.**

The deer-management-unit concept currently utilizing a system of limited permits based on a knowledge of the deer population and local conditions within each unit, appears best suited for Kansas. Generally, management units comprise one or more major drainages and/or ecological areas such as the "Chautauqua Hills" and the "Missouri River Bluffs." Within



A pair of fine buck mule deer, their antlers shining in an early-morning sun, race across a draw in a Northwest Kansas pasture. They'll be targets for Kansas hunters in the state's third firearms deer season, December 8-12.

## DISTRIBUTION and DENSITY of DEER, 1967



each unit, regulations can be enacted to "fit the needs" of that area. Where the deer population can be allowed to increase unchecked, and in portions of predominantly mule deer range, "bucks only" restrictions will be authorized initially. However, consistently "good" harvests can be maintained by killing a number of antlerless deer each year. In management units where it is desirable to limit the yearly increase and/or "stimulate" production, antlerless deer will be legal targets on one or more days of the season. Still, there will be other areas where, because of difficult hunting conditions or where it is necessary to stabilize the population by actually harvesting the annual increment, antlerless deer will be legal game throughout the hunting season.

In two years of firearms hunting rifles were used by approximately 96 percent of the permittees with the remaining 4 percent using shotguns. There were no known hunting accidents in 1965 or 1966 attributed to deer hunters. Approximately 87 percent of all deer killed were taken within 200 yards

of the hunter. At those ranges a deer hunter should know his target and be relatively certain that the bullet will strike where aimed.

Simple arithmetic will tell even the inexperienced hunter that under the existing regulations, number of permits authorized and legal kill, we are not taking as many deer as could be harvested. In most management units we are allowing the deer population to increase and extend their range. Actually, 8,000 to 10,000 deer could have been removed from the herd in 1966 without adversely affecting the hunting prospects for 1967. However, it would have required the efforts of at least three times as many permittees as were in the field last winter and excessive hunting pressure would have resulted in certain localities.

Hunter success in 1966 was 37 percent with 5,806 permittees harvesting 2,139 deer. Whitetails comprised 75 percent of the kill with 1,608 carcasses ending up in the freezer. A total of 531 mule deer was harvested as compared to 514 in 1965.

Kansas deer are healthy. This has

been shown by the impressive weights of adult bucks, a relatively "high" rate of productivity, and by the fact that three diseases common to domestic livestock leptospirosis, brucellosis and anaplasmosis—were found in only 1 percent of 1,243 deer tested by the Diagnostic Laboratory, Kansas State University.

Our deer herds are becoming more widespread as shown by the deer distribution map. Two years of hunting have made deer more secretive and has influenced movement to new range previously unoccupied. The 1965 and 1966 deer kill distribution is closely correlated with the "high," "medium" and "low" density areas indicated on the map.

With a growing deer population, Kansans can look forward to an annual deer season when a portion or all of the yearly increase can be harvested. Continued liberalization of the regulations will be needed to keep deer populations below the problem level. With proper herd management, we can look forward to many a good fall hunt and an ample supply of venison for the table.