

## State of the Herd

### First QDM report focuses on whitetail deer

By Dick Ellis

Far and away, more hunters pursue whitetail deer than all other game species combined. As waterfowl and small game hunting participation continues to decline, the ranks of deer hunters in America continued to swell. Far and away, more money is spent by deer hunters than by any other type of hunter. In 2006, deer hunters spent \$12.4 billion on their favorite pastime, or 52 percent of the total expenditures from all hunters for every species pursued.

Overall, those all-species hunters spend more, \$23 billion, than the total revenue of McDonald's. They, as one example, also spend more on lodging, \$614 million, than the annual revenues of Comfort Inn, Comfort Suites, Quality Inn, Econolodge, Ridgeway Inn and Sleep Inn combined.

A first-ever 68 page whitetail deer report unveiled to outdoor media at the SHOT ( Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade) show in Orlando January 15 through 18 by the Quality Deer Management Association and available on-line to the general public, evaluates topics including CWD, record book books, the 'modern' deer hunter, deer management strategies, lead in venison, deer-vehicle collisions and much more. As no surprise, Wisconsin takes a prominent role in the report, including a reference



A 68-page report issued to outdoor media at the SHOT ( Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade) show in Orlando this weekend and available on-line to the general public, evaluates topics including CWD, record book books, the 'modern' deer hunter, and deer-vehicle collisions.

to "Anywhere, Wisconsin" as the #01 place in the nation to go for a chance at a record book buck.

QDMA's Whitetail Report-2009, is the first of what will be an annual effort to help educate deer hunters by the 20 year old organization now with 53,000 members nationwide driven by 3,000 wildlife biologists. Thousands of hunters and landowners are enrolled in Wisconsin. The organization states that QDMA is

dedicated to promoting sustainable, high-quality, white-tailed deer populations, wildlife habitats and ethical hunting experiences through education, research and management in partnership with hunters, landowners, natural resource professionals, and the public.

In the section entitled Deer Management Reference and Research, the report details and contrasts deer management strategies, discusses antlerless deer harvest,

protecting yearling bucks, habitat management, culling, aging bucks "on the hoof" and defines in great detail carrying capacity. According to QDMA presenter Brian Murphy Thursday, the organization's hunting philosophy includes the protection, or non-harvest of young bucks he called 1.5 to 2.5 years of age and an "adequate" harvest of female deer that is dependent on each specific area to produce healthy deer herds in balance with existing habitat conditions.

He called any idea that QDMA would without exception endorse an aggressive harvest of does a "misconception" and said, in fact, that the carrying capacity and other factors in some areas call for no harvest of does at all. He also called it a misconception that young hunters are not given the opportunity to fill tags under QDM management practices and encouraged a thorough reading of this first report to gain a true understanding of QDMA and its beliefs.

When the expertise gained by QDM deer biologists is embraced and put into practice by landowners or groups of adjacent landowners and hunters who have control of property and other necessary factors to area-specific healthy deer herds, one result is the opportunity to harvest mature, very large bucks. In the section entitled Top-10 Hot Zones for Record-Book Bucks



Many Wisconsin deer hunters, like the Hart family near Wisconsin Dells shown with 2008 buck archery kills, implement Quality Deer Management practices and reap the benefits. Pictured top to bottom: Mike Hart, Jim Hart and Jason Hart.



Deer biologists for the Quality Deer Management Association got their hands dirty in compiling an extensive report on whitetail deer.

looking at Boone & Crockett and Pope & Young Whitetail entries from 1996 to 2005, Wisconsin ranks number one.

“The Badger State is amazing for its sheer number of entries,” the report states in directing big deer enthusiasts to Anywhere, Wisconsin. “Although Illinois has more B&C entries in the 10 years covered, 540 to Wisconsin’s 437, Wisconsin has 4,976 total entries including P&Y entries compared to Illinois 3,699. Wisconsin also dominated the top-50 county table, with 26 counties. Whether it’s the northern lake country or the southern farmland, every region of the state has high potential. Buffalo County, bordering the Mississippi River in the west central part of the state claims the title as the highest-ranking county in the nation with 520 total entries!”

In the report’s Top-10, Illinois is number two and eastern/southern Iowa number three. Murphy also told journalists at SHOT, billed as the largest gathering of professional outdoor media in the world, that major news stories in 2008 related to whitetail deer included “Lead in Venison” concerns propelled by anti-hunting interests, and deer-vehicle collisions. Each story is given extensive attention in QDMA Whitetail Report-2009.

An intriguing section of the report entitled “Did You Know” makes for fun reading. Did you know, in fact, that deer sleep in short bouts alternating between a doze and full alertness and that they can sleep with their eyes open or closed and with their head up or in a resting po-

sition? That fawns are not scentless; their scent is how mother recognizes them. That 20 to 25 percent of all twin fawns have different fathers? During their lifetime most bucks sire fewer than five fawns that reach six months of age?

Did you know that you can determine the peak of the rut in your area by measuring fetuses from harvested does? That fawns average about 300 white spots? Except for nursing two to four times a day, a fawn spends the first four weeks of life in hiding, separate from its mother? That healthy fawns can outrun a man when only a few days old but will generally take three to six weeks before it can outrun most predators?

Young bucks, according to the report, sire 30 percent of all fawns even in populations where mature bucks comprise over 50 percent of the bucks. Up to 85 percent of all scraping activity occurs at night. Deer antlers can grow an inch or more each day, making them the fastest growing tissue known to man. In photo-period controlled experiments, deer grew up to three sets of antlers per year or retained their antlers for more than one year.

You didn’t know? Well the QDMA Whitetail Report-2009 is a place for questions, and many, many answers too numerous to address in a single outdoor column. Read the entire report at [www.QDMA.com](http://www.QDMA.com). The organization’s national headquarters are located at 170 Whitetail Way, P.O. Box 160, Bogart GA 30622. Call 800-209-3337. *QW*