

2021-22 Kansas Elk Harvest Report

PERFORMANCE REPORT STATEWIDE WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND SURVEYS

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Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Brad Loveless
Secretary

Prepared by

Matt Peek
Research Biologist

Jake George
Wildlife Division Director

Rich Schultheis
Wildlife Research Supervisor



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Background – Elk were released onto Fort Riley Military Reservation in 1986, and a limited hunting season was initiated in 1990. However, the herd continued to increase until the elk began leaving the Fort and causing significant crop damage on neighboring landowners. The Department responded by allocating almost 200 permits in 1999 and 2000 resulting in the harvest of over 100 elk on and around the Fort and a significant reduction in the population.

As the herd rebounded, the Department's management philosophy changed to try and avoid those situations of conflict with landowners followed by rapid herd reduction. As a result, longer seasons and less restrictive permitting options were progressively authorized as new issues emerged except on Fort Riley and the Cimarron National Grasslands. This framework allows elk that may be causing crop damage or other conflicts on private land to be harvested in a timely manner, giving landowners the ability to control their own elk numbers. However, elk hunting opportunity serves as a big incentive for landowners to maintain some elk. And many have, as evidenced by the herds of elk that have sprung up on private lands around the state. Elk continue to increase under this management approach and now occur at least occasionally though often unpredictably throughout most of the state.

Elk hunting in Kansas is limited to Kansas residents. Any-elk permits valid on Fort Riley are once-in-a-lifetime, and antlerless-only elk permits valid on Fort Riley may only be obtained once every five years. Demand for these permits has really increased over the past several years to over 1700 applications or preference point purchases this season (Figure 1). This includes an average over the past five years of 74 active-duty military personnel stationed at Fort Riley. These individuals are given a preferential draw opportunity for Fort Riley permits. Unit 3 permits are available over-the-counter (OTC) to general residents and landowner/tenants. Hunt-own-land permits are also available OTC in Units 2 and 3, with their advantage over the Unit 3 landowner/tenant permits being their availability to landowners in the buffer area outside of Fort Riley within Unit 2.

Hunters purchased 171 elk permits for the 2021 season (Figure 2). This is the second most elk permits ever sold in Kansas, down just one from last season's record high of 172. The steady increase in the sale of over-the-counter permits is indicative of an elk herd growing in number and distribution in the state. It may also reflect changes in regulations making elk accessible to more hunters, but most of those changes have been in place now for 10 or more years.

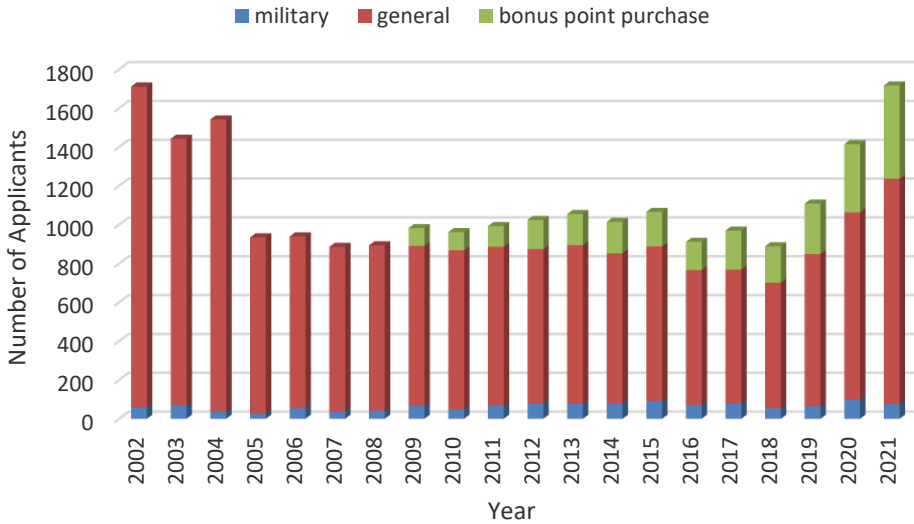


Figure 1. Fort Riley elk permit applications and bonus point purchases in Kansas since 2002. A \$5 bonus point fee was initiated in 2005 and increased to \$10 in 2016.

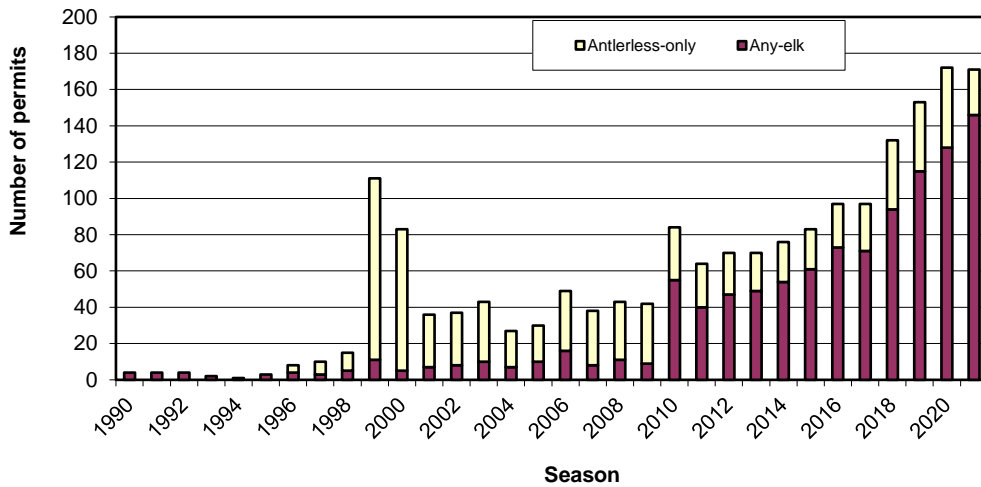


Figure 2. Antlerless-only and any-elk permit sales in Kansas since hunting seasons were initiated on Fort Riley in 1990.

Harvest – Elk harvest and hunter activities are monitored annually through harvest surveys sent to all elk hunters (see Appendix 1). Paper report cards and postage paid tooth envelopes are sent out at the beginning of the season, then paper and e-mail follow-ups are conducted at the end of the season. Fort Riley also has mandatory harvest registration that is incorporated into this report for applicable nonrespondents (i.e. those who reported their harvest to Fort Riley but not KDWP). The harvest survey response rate was 81% this season, just above the 5-year average of 79%.

The reported harvest was 45 elk (Figure 3), including 36 elk taken on 146 any-elk permits (25%) and 9 taken on 25 antlerless-only elk permits (36%). This was the 3rd highest harvest in Kansas since the population reduction effort on Fort Riley in 1999, and was the same number as taken last season. Thirty-two of the 36 elk taken on any-elk permits were antlered. The number of antler points of 21 of these animals can be found in Table 1.

Total permit success was 26%. Eight of 12 hunters (67%) with Fort Riley any-elk permits and seven of 18 hunters (39%) with Fort Riley antlerless-only elk permits harvested elk. Over the past five years, Fort Riley any-elk permit holders have averaged 67% success and Fort Riley antlerless-only permit holders have averaged 39% success. Only 1/3 of the antlerless-only permits are valid during each one-month segment of the any-weapon season on Fort Riley. Five-year average harvest success for the October, November and December segments for antlerless-only permits were 63%, 54% and 63%, respectively. Harvest success rates for these permits since 2013 can be found in Figure 4.

Harvest success rates for permits available over-the-counter (not valid on Fort Riley) are provided in Figure 5. General resident any-elk and antlerless-only elk permit success rates averaged 24 and 11%, respectively, over the past five years. Success rates for landowner permits including landowner/tenant and hunt-own-land permits averaged 23% and 36%, respectively, for any-elk and antlerless only elk permits over the past five years.

Reported harvest and success rates do not include a correction for nonrespondents because Fort Riley has traditionally accounted for most of the harvest, and they have mandatory harvest reporting. In addition, from 2006-2015, harvest reporting was mandatory statewide to facilitate testing for chronic wasting disease (CWD). Consequently, until recently, the number of harvested elk not reported to the Department was presumably very low. More recently, with high permit sales and success outside Fort Riley, nonrespondents potentially had a greater impact on harvest than ever before. Expanding respondent success rates to nonrespondents yields an additional harvest of 10 elk, three of which would have been antlerless.

Elk harvest is spread out fairly evenly throughout the season (Figure 6), but there are a couple of notable points. Two elk were killed during the August firearms season which was established in 2019 as an alternative to issuing depredation tags for damage to corn on private land. Archery and muzzleloader seasons on Fort Riley open September 1. Just one elk was killed on Fort Riley and two on private land during that month. There were also just two elk killed outside of Fort Riley during the Dec. 1-12 regular firearms season (concurrent with firearms deer). Another 10 elk were killed on private lands during the late firearms season off Fort Riley, including four in January, three in February and three in March.

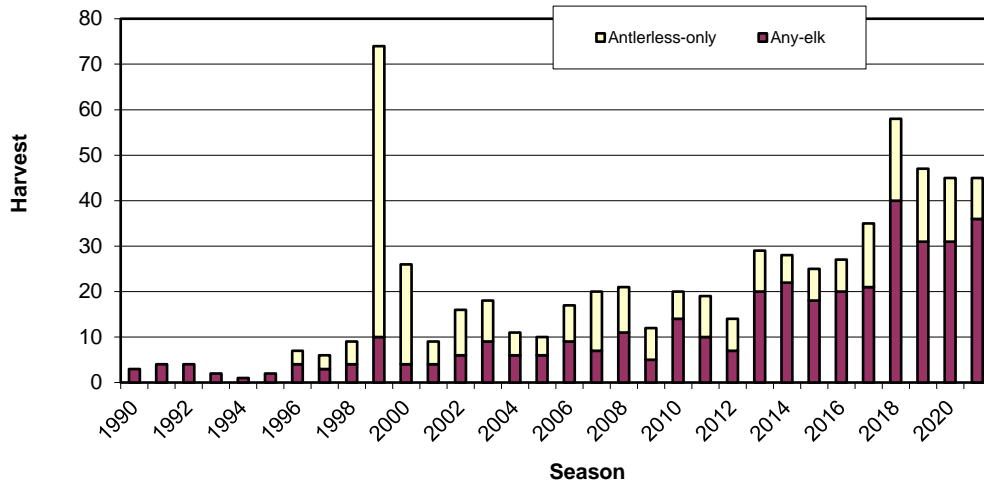


Figure 3. Elk harvest in Kansas by any-elk and antlerless-only elk permit holders since hunting seasons were initiated on Fort Riley in 1990.

Table 1. Antler points of bull elk harvested in Kansas during the 2021-22 season (n=23).

Antler Points	Number of Hunters
1x1	2
4x4	2
4x5	4
5x5	8
6x6	6
7x7	1

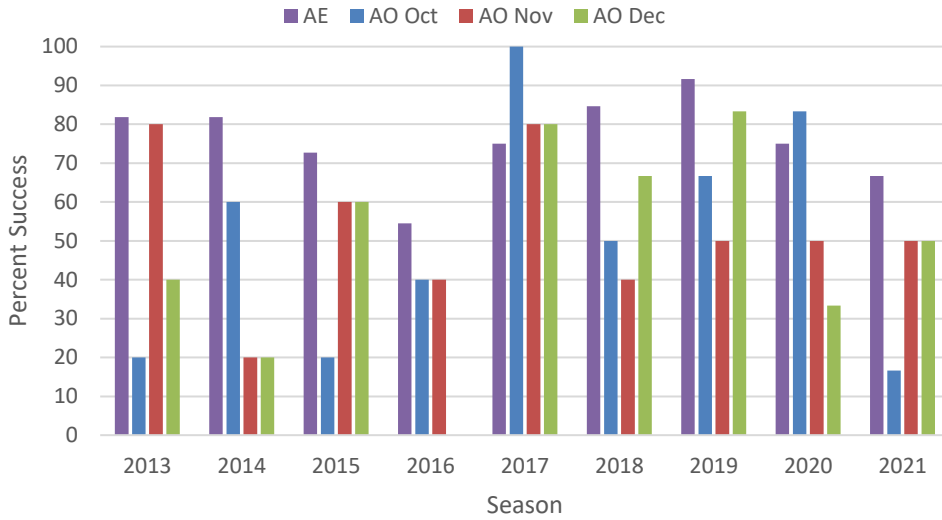


Figure 4. Harvest success rates for permit types valid on Fort Riley for elk in Kansas since 2013. (AE=any-elk, AO=antlerless-only)

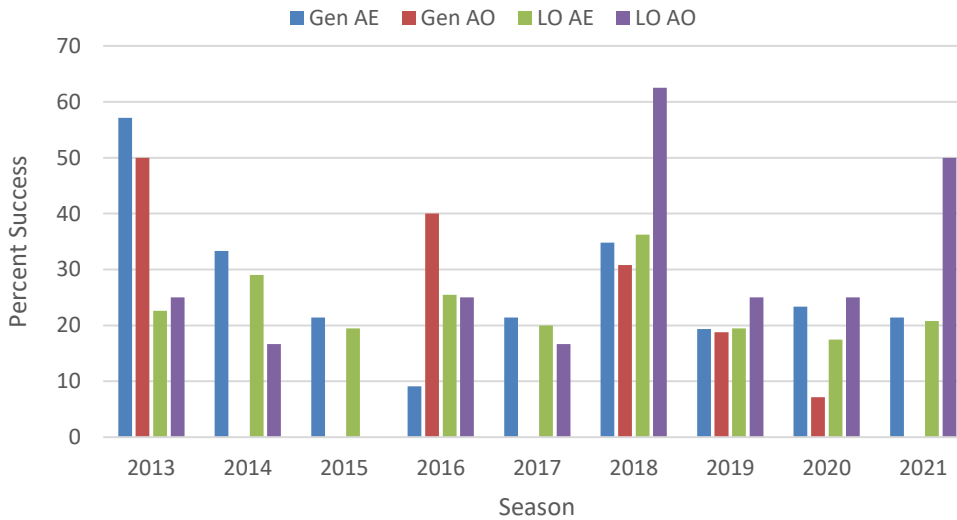


Figure 5. Harvest success rates for general resident (Gen) and landowner/tenant (LO) permit types available over-the-counter for elk in Kansas since 2013. (AE=any-elk, AO=antlerless-only)

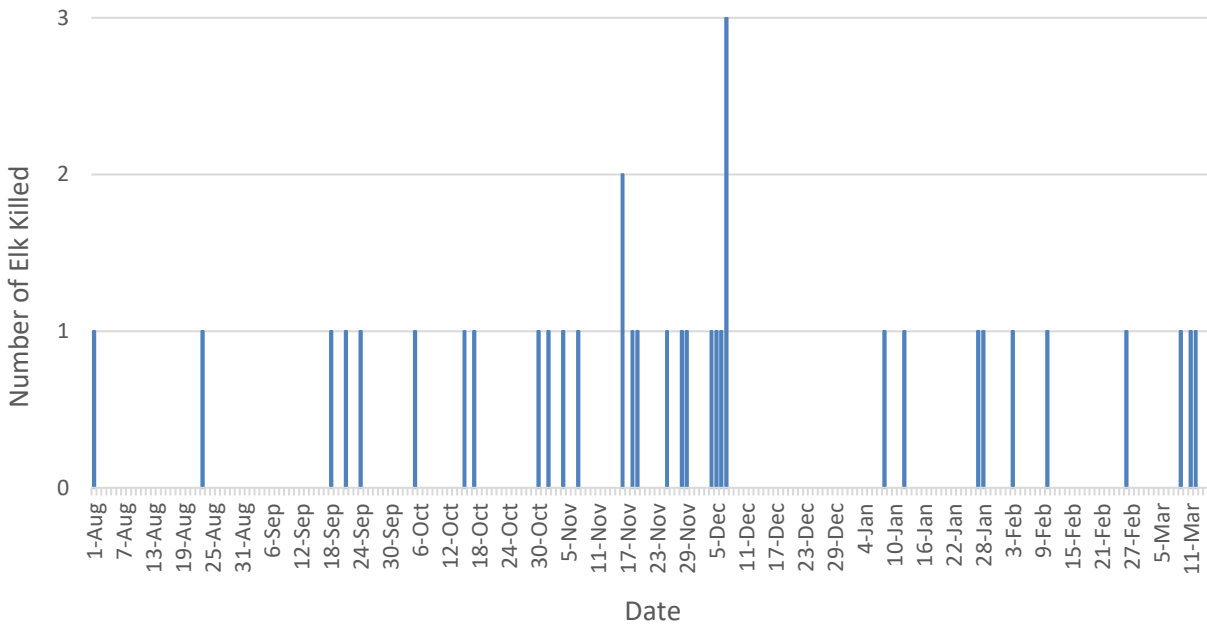


Figure 6. Reported date of harvest of elk taken during the 2021 season (n=35).

Equipment Use - Elk permits are valid during any season with equipment legal for that season. The percent of elk hunters using each equipment type in recent years is provided in Figure 7. Annual totals in this figure exceed 100% as quite a few hunters use more than one equipment type (28% in 2021). The percent of elk harvested with each equipment type is provided in Figure 8. Five-year harvest averages by equipment type are: firearms-75%, muzzleloader-13%, compound bow-9%, crossbow-4%, shotgun-0%, longbow-0%, and recurve bow-0%.

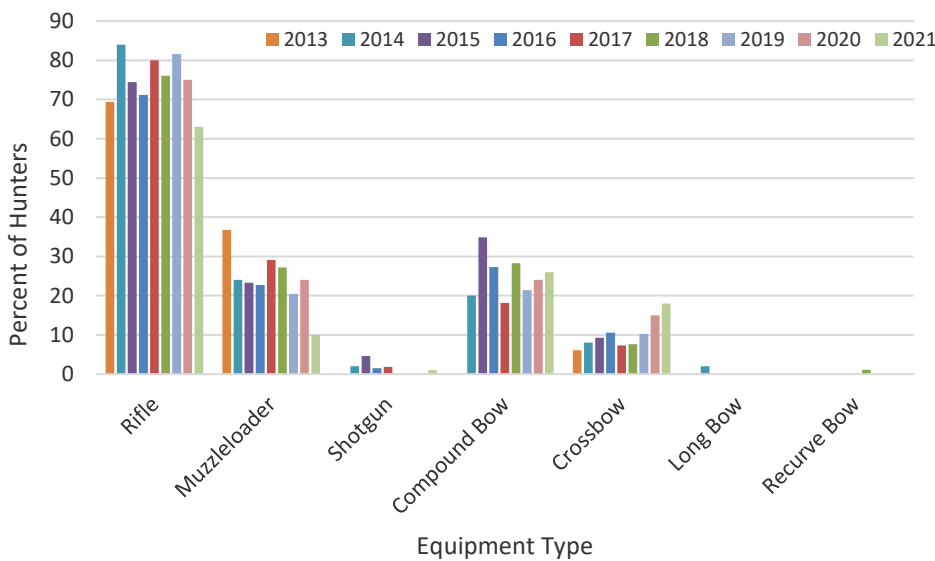


Figure 7. Percent of hunters using each equipment type to hunt elk in Kansas since 2013.

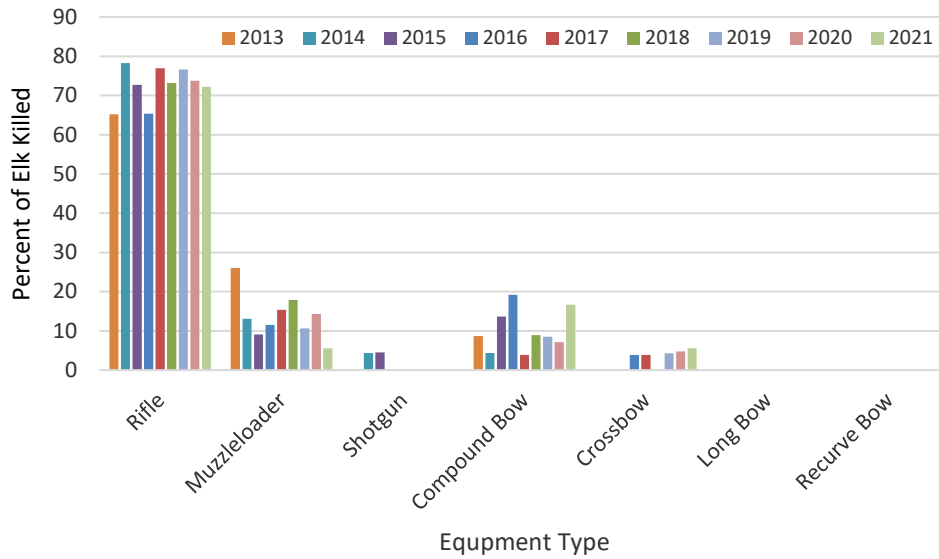


Figure 8. Percent of elk harvested in Kansas with each equipment type since 2013.

Harvest by Location – There are currently three elk management units in Kansas (see page 2 of Appendix 1) of which Units 2 and 3 are open to hunting. These units have been in place since 2011 except the boundary of Unit 2 was adjusted in 2018. Elk harvest in Kansas by management unit since 2013 can be found in Figure 9. Elk harvest by property type since 2013 can be found in Figure 10. Hunters provided county of harvest for 43 of 45 elk harvested. Harvest by county was as follows: Riley-24, Hamilton-4, Barber-2, Greenwood-2, Reno-2, Stafford-2, Wallace-2, Elk-1, Ford-1, Geary-1, Leavenworth-1, and Marshall-1. In the last five years, elk have been harvested in over ¼ of the counties in Kansas (27 of 105).

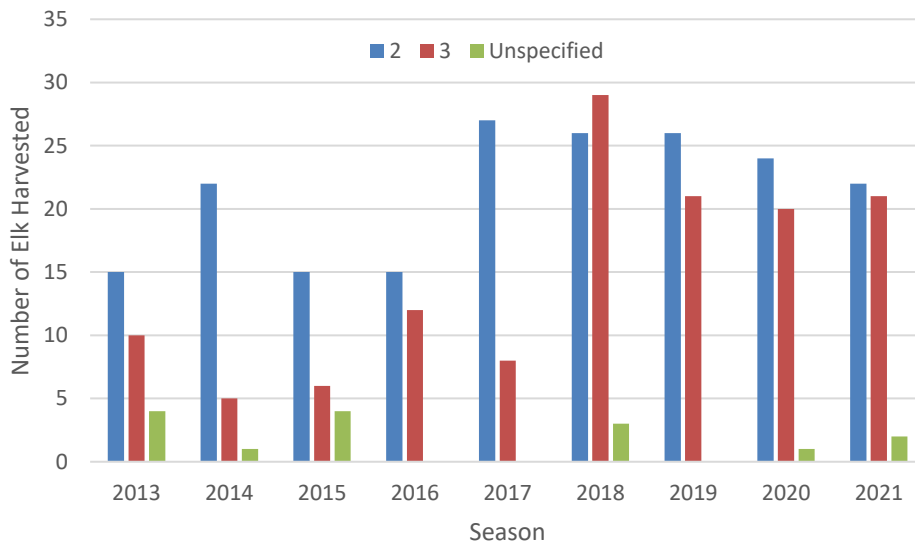


Figure 9. Elk harvest in Kansas by management unit since 2013.



Figure 10. Elk harvest in Kansas by property type since 2013.

Satisfaction - Elk hunters are asked to indicate their hunt satisfaction on a 7–point scale ranging from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied. This serves as a general indicator of hunt quality likely reflecting harvest success, elk numbers, bull quality, access, crowding and various other factors of the hunt. Mean satisfaction by permit type since 2016 is found in Figure 11. Also an indication of satisfaction, elk hunter comments from the harvest survey are provided in Appendix 2.

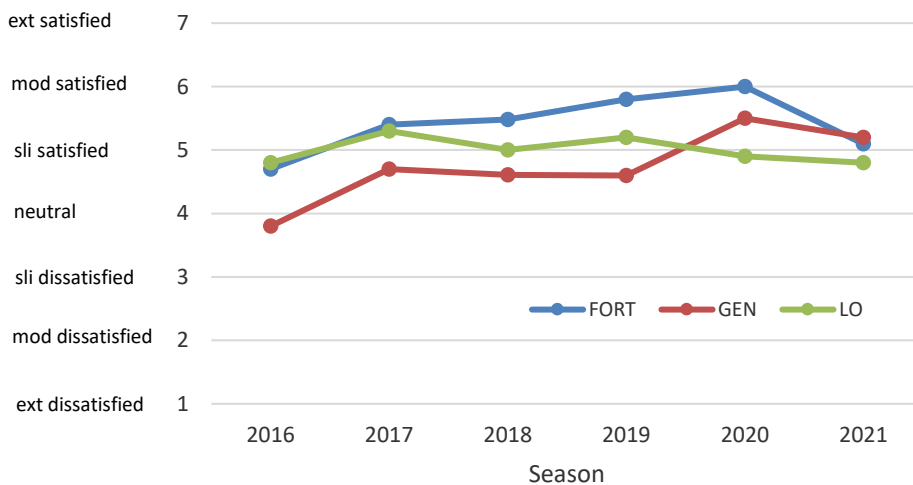


Figure 11. Mean elk hunter satisfaction by permit type in Kansas since 2016. (FORT=Fort Riley, GEN=general resident and LO=landowner/tenant)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, or if you desire further information, please write to:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Diversity and Civil Rights Programs- External Programs, 4040 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 130, Arlington, VA 22203 |

Appendix 1.

2021-22 Elk Hunter Report Card

2021-22 ELK HUNTER REPORT CARD



Please complete this report as soon as you are finished elk hunting for the season. It should be returned in the enclosed tooth envelope. All "b" sections pertain only to those who harvested an elk.

1a. Check the one item that best describes your elk season.

- I harvested an adult bull
- I harvested an adult cow
- I harvested a male calf
- I harvested a female calf
- I hunted but did not harvest an elk
- I did not hunt (If you did not hunt, please [check here](#), sign and return this form.)

b. If you harvested a bull, how many points did it have, for example 5x6?

2a. Describe your elk hunting during each month?

	Days Hunted	Largest Number of Elk Seen in a Day
August		
September	_____	_____
October		
November	_____	_____
December	_____	_____
January		
February	_____	_____
March		

b. If you killed an elk, what was the date? _____ (see calendar page)

3a. Check each land ownership type that you used while hunting for elk.

- Fort Riley
- Public Hunting Areas (i.e. Milford Wildlife Area)
- Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) Lands
- Your Property (you own or lease for ag)
- Private Hunting Lease
- Other Private Property

b. Circle the land ownership above that shows where you killed your elk. If other than Fort Riley, please indicate the county & Elk Unit (see map on back of page).




County: _____ **Elk Unit (2 or 3):** _____

4a. Check each type of hunting equipment you used while hunting elk.

- Centerfire Rifle
- Muzzleloader
- Shotgun
- Compound Bow
- Crossbow
- Long Bow
- Recurve Bow
- Other (list below): _____

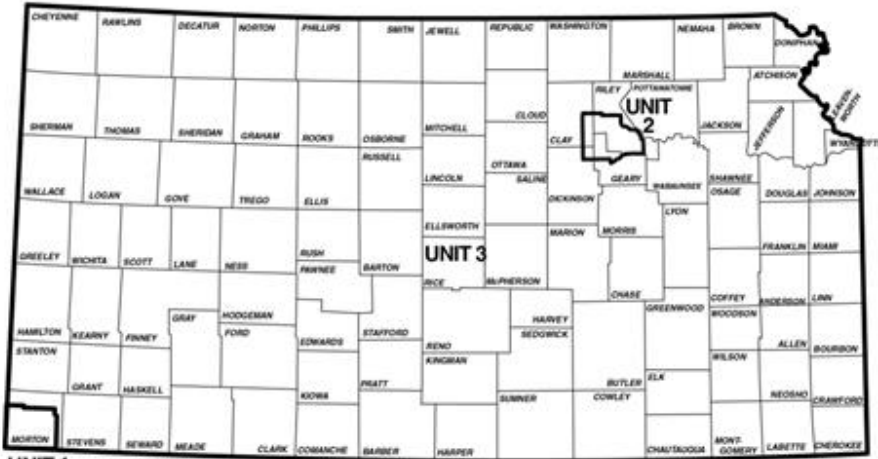
b. Circle the equipment type above that you used to kill your elk.

5. Check the selection that best describes your satisfaction with your elk hunt.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |
| Extremely Dissatisfied | Neutral | Extremely Satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Moderately Dissatisfied | Slightly Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Slightly Dissatisfied | Slightly Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Name: _____

Elk Units



Unit 1 is closed to elk hunting

SEASONS OUTSIDE FORT RILEY (STATEWIDE EXCEPT MORTON COUNTY)

Muzzleloader Season: Sept 1 – 30, 2021
 Archery Season: Sept 13 – Dec 31, 2021
 Firearm Season: Aug 1 – 31, 2021 and Dec 1 – 12, 2021 and Jan. 1 – March 15, 2022

SEASONS ON FORT RILEY

Muzzleloader & Archery Season: Sept 1 – 30, 2021
 Season for Any Elk Permit Holders: Oct 1 – Dec 31, 2021
 Antlerless Only Segments: First Segment, Oct 1-31, 2021
 Second Segment, Nov 1 – 30, 2021
 Third Segment, Dec 1 – 31, 2021

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
31	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
33	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
34	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
35	29	30	31				

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
35				1	2	3	4
36	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
37	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
38	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
39	26	27	28	29	30		

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
39						1	2
40	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
41	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
42	17	18	19	20	21	22	23
43	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
44	31						

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
44		1	2	3	4	5	6
45	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
46	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
47	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
48	28	29	30				

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
48				1	2	3	4
49	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
50	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
51	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
52	26	27	28	29	30	31	

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
52							1
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
3	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
4	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
5	30	31					

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
5			1	2	3	4	5
6	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
7	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
8	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
9	27	28					

W	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
9			1	2	3	4	5
10	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
11	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
12	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
13	27	28	29	30	31		

Appendix 2.

Elk Hunter Comments from the
2021-22 Elk Hunter Harvest Survey

COMMENTS

From 01JAN-15MAR22, I hunted over 16 counties, on WIHA, ACE, and on private with permission. On foot I covered over 170 miles total during this reporting period in pursuit of a Bull Elk. I did find a tremendous amount of sign, mostly older sign / tracks / droppings, some fresh sign yet never did observe an actual elk in glass within Unit 3 during the hunt in the last three months. I did this solo, for the challenge, and had an absolute blast. I did not ever run into any other OTC Unit 3 back country Elk hunters while out and about. Either way, appreciate KS allowing residents to obtain an OTC tag and venture out despite the enormity of challenge, vastness of area vs low density of free ranging Elk in our wonderful state. I'll be entering the Ft. Riley Draw this year for the first time. Thank you again for the opportunity and soliciting feedback.

Hunted hard and walked about 8 miles a day trying to locate elk. I did not see an elk.

I AM SORRY FOR THE DELAY. I APPRECIATE WHAT YOU ARE DOING. I WAS HUNTING ON THE WHITETAIL LEASE OF AN OUT OF STATE HUNTER THAT OFFERED ME AN OPPORTUNITY. HE HAD A COW ON HIS CORN PILE REGULARLY WHILE HE WAS IN A BLIND. BUT SHE NEVER SHOWED AFTER I BOUGHT A TAG :-)

I DID NOT PULL ANY TEETH. IT WAS A SINGLE SPIKE ON EACH SIDE FOR ANTLERS. ELK HAVE BEEN EATING OUR CORN COMING OFF FT RILEY.

I mailed in the survey and the teeth in the provided envelope back in December.

I only bought a tag to hunt Elk in Kansas being I had a Bull Elk showing up on my trail cameras while hunting for whitetail deer on my private lease. I would most definitely buy another tag if I knew there would be regular Elk in the area but was told this was a rare occurrence.

I own property near (city withheld), KS and we have about a half dozen elk that winter in our area every year. I am sure they are escaped elk from Fort Riley. I get tons of trail cam photos of elk but have not seen one yet. They are a great animal but are very destructive. They tear up trail cams and feeders terribly.

I really enjoyed the elk hunt though it was very tough hunting with so much of the fort being closed during entire month of October. Shot the only cow I ever saw next to the last day of season, near impact zone.

I was disappointed I only saw two spike bulls when I had a cow tag.

I was very impressed with hunting opportunity on ft Riley. It was easy to navigate and there seemed to be a healthy heard of elk. We talked to 2 different game wardens and they were very nice and helpful.

I would introduce more of them to give more people an opportunity to hunt them. I was very fortunate to kill mine as I have never seen an elk in our area in the 46 years I have lived there.

If you want to manage and maintain a elk herd , cut the season back. Wildlife department is running a season sooooo long it's obvious they are trying to eradicate and not manage the current elk population, which is beyond ridiculous.

It was really neat to just hear them

Please try to manage and grow this resource instead of attempting to eliminate them from private and public lands outside of fort Riley or the cimarron grasslands.

Seen bull elk on trail camera only. He was gone by the time I got a permit.

Sometimes you see them. It's just when there passing through. I will continue to purchase a license. Respectfully, (name withheld)

Spots open at Fort Riley were limited. Pushed elk off by drills done on same spots day before open. Best spots weren't open till Nov which license was for Oct only.

Thanks for the support of the elk in SW KS.

The entirety of my elk hunt on post (October) the elk range/habitat was shut down due to training. I walked 4-6 miles each day I hunted and saw no elk.

The rules for elk hunting on private land is still unclear to most people. If a person don't own 80 acres or more in one spot can they hunt on that land? My neighbors did. They also let someone with a Ft. Riley tag shoot a bull on that land.

This is a resource that we should be growing not trying to eradicate from our private lands. Private land is by far the largest number of acres within our state and unlimited tags out given out to eliminate any elk that are on them. This is irresponsible on the wildlife and parks behalf. This is an animal that is native to our woods and grasslands, many states are restoring elk to their native habitats as Kansas once did but has now seemingly reversed its goal with reintroduction.

WANT TO KNOW AGE AND GENETIC INFO

Weather too nice for hunting. Guide service out of Milford sucks.