2011 Pronghorn Production Surveys

PERFORMANCE REPORT
STATEWIDE WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND SURVEYS

A Contribution of Pittman-Robertson Funds
Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration
Grant W-39-R-18

Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

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September 2011
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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
2011 Pronghorn Production Surveys

Matt Peek
Pronghorn program coordinator

The 2011 aerial pronghorn production surveys have been completed. Total numbers of pronghorn observed in each pronghorn hunting unit and their respective buck:doe:fawn ratios are presented in Table 1, and data from Chase County can be found in Table 2. Survey routes and location of pronghorn observations for each hunting unit are provided in Figures 1-3. Trends in buck:doe and doe:fawn ratios since 2001 can be found in Figures 4 and 5, respectively.

Buck:doe ratios averaged 35 per 100 within the three hunting units. This falls between the published ratios for maximum recruitment (25:100) and maximum trophy production (50:100), and is on target with our current objectives. The current ratios are lower than they have been in over the past several years, partly as a result of increased firearm and muzzleloader permit allocations intended to better meet demand for permits (currently seven or eight preference points are required to obtain a permit to firearm hunt unit 2), which was done with the knowledge that buck ratios would be reduced. Another likely factor in this year’s decreased ratios is increasing archery permit sales and abnormally high harvest success by archery hunters in 2010. From 2009 to 2010, success rates increased from 11 to 23% and harvest increased from 27 to 60 pronghorn. Buck ratios in unit 18 fell to about ½ of what they were the previous season. This decline cannot be adequately explained by legal hunting pressure. The area is under extreme drought, and the change in ratios may partly be the result of natural pronghorn movements.

Fawn:doe ratios were fair on average (48:100), but ranged from good (69:100) in the northernmost unit (2) to very poor (10:100) in the southernmost unit (18). These ratios are probably reflective of precipitation levels, which increased from south to north. Fawn ratios don’t greatly influence hunter satisfaction with the current year’s hunt, but are a predictor of things to come. Such poor production in the south will likely need to be accounted for in future years’ permit allocations.

The small Flinthills population continues to persist, and production has been fair to good in that unit. Six of the seven times this population has been surveyed since 2003, production ratios have been at or over 50 fawns per 100 does. Plans are in place to survey this population in the winter to get a better idea of its actual size.

Table 1. Results of summer 2011 aerial pronghorn production survey for each pronghorn hunting unit.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Bucks</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Fawns</th>
<th>Actual Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Does</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bucks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Does</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Fawns</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2. Results of summer 2011 aerial pronghorn production survey for the Chase County (Flinthills) population.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Ratio</th>
<th>Actual Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bucks</td>
<td>Does</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Unit 2 – Survey route and pronghorn observations (Sherman, Wallace, Thomas and Logan Counties).
Figure 2. Unit 17 – Survey route and pronghorn observations (Hamilton and Greeley Counties).
Location and number of pronghorn observed

2011 Summer Route

Figure 3. Unit 18 – Survey route and pronghorn observations (Morton County).
Figure 4. Number of pronghorn bucks per 100 does for each unit since 2001, and total annual buck harvest.

Figure 5. Number of pronghorn fawns per 100 does for each unit since 2001.