

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
Game Division

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1960 Controlled Hunt in Cusino Deer Enclosure

For the seventh consecutive year a controlled hunt was conducted in the Cusino deer enclosure to remove surplus deer and provide further information on the mechanics of hunting where the deer population was known. The hunt was held over a 4-day period November 7-10, with interested local sportsmen participating for the second year. Each hunter was covered by a Scientific Collector's Permit and all deer shot were presented to local public school hot lunch programs.

In following last year's plan of hunting in advance of the regular November 15-30 season, the assumption was that hunting conditions would be somewhat more favorable than those at the end of the season. Thus, information gained on a pre-season hunt could be evaluated in relation to that collected on the post-season hunts operated prior to 1959. Last year, however, a considerable depth of snow was present on the 2-day hunt of November 9-10, and in general hunting conditions were more typical of mid-season. This year's conditions were more characteristic, with bright, clear skies and 3-4 inches of excellent tracking snow on the November 7 opening. The next three days were less pleasant, with wet snow in the air part of the time and visibility fair to poor.

The pre-hunt deer population in the enclosure was at least 30 deer, consisting of 14 adult does, 5 adult bucks, and 11 fawns. The quota of deer to be removed was 2 adult bucks and 7 antlerless deer. Eight hunters showed up the first day, and with hunting conditions nearly ideal, they bagged five deer. This seemingly high kill, however, resulted from the multiple kills (more than one deer from a group) allowed the first day. Had only one deer been taken at a time, only 3 deer would probably have been killed in approximately the same number of hunting hours. On the second and third days, with fewer hunters afield and hunting conditions less favorable, only two deer were removed. On the fourth and final day the remaining two deer were taken.

If multiple kills had not been allowed the first day, average hunting success would have more closely approached that of other years. Actual success based on the nine deer bagged in a total of 96 man-hours of hunting was 10.7 hours per deer. Adjusting this figure to the total of six deer that would have been taken had multiple kills not been permitted would have given a success figure of 16.0 man-hours per deer.

Although two bucks were removed, one 1½-year-old animal with "nubbin" antlers, which could not be recognized readily in the field as a legal (3-inch spikes) buck, was taken by "antlerless deer" hunters. The one buck taken by hunters assigned to shoot bucks only required 43.5 man-hours of hunting. The success figure on both bucks and antlerless deer nevertheless was somewhat higher than in the years prior to 1959 when hunting was done at the end of the regular November season. Last year's hunt, in which only three bucks and no "antlerless deer" were taken, was not strictly comparable and will not be discussed here.

The improved success this year was due largely to two factors. One was the generally favorable tracking and shooting conditions. The first day was about as near perfect as any hunter could wish. The three remaining days, although with some snow falling to cut down visibility, were still much better than the near blizzard and deep snow conditions often prevailing in the early December hunts of 1954-58. Furthermore, firm ground with little snow made walking much less tiring than in the earlier years when hunters had to wallow through 1-2 feet of snow.

A second factor may have been the presence of a very few highly-skilled hunters. While most of the local hunters probably were not much better than average, our observations are that even one or two expert marksmen and woodsmen can make a big difference when only a few deer are involved. Despite the "plus" conditions in effect this year, it still took a lot of hunting effort, on the average, to bag the nine deer removed.

Pertinent data on the 1960 controlled hunt follow:

Details of 1960 Enclosure Hunt

Average number of hunters per day	5 (8-3)
Total gun-hours	96
Gun-hours of buck hunting	43.5
Gun-hours of "antlerless" hunting	52.5
Total deer shot	9
Number of bucks shot	2
Antlerless deer shot	7
Gun-hours per buck shot (buck-only hunting)	43.5
Gun-hours per antlerless deer shot ("antlerless" hunting)	6.6 *
Gun-hours per deer shot	10.7
Man-hours per deer seen	.7
Man-hours per buck seen	16
Average gun-hours per deer shot adjusted from multiple kills to single kills (assuming six deer only would have been killed if hunters had not been allowed to shoot more than one from each group of deer encountered).	16

* Includes one sub-legal (nubbin-antlered) buck.

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