

BUFFALO MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Procedure 1: To determine annual recruitment rates and male to female ratios; to note the general condition of buffalo and their habitat.

- A. Buffalo herds generally occupy habitats in which the majority of the herd is visible during the calving to breeding season. Classification surveys will be conducted during this period (June-August) to determine annual calving, recruitment, and gender ratios.
- B. If the majority of the buffalo populations do not occupy open habitats where they are visible during the survey period, a supplemental fixed-wing or helicopter survey may be used to collect the calving, recruitment, and gender ratios.

Procedure 2: To collect data on hunt success and on the age classes and condition of harvested buffalo.

- A. A combination of mandatory check out and questionnaires will be used to ascertain harvest statistics from buffalo hunters on the House Rock Wildlife Area. Data will be collected by the Wildlife Area manager at Raymond Wildlife Area because all hunters are accompanied by a Department employee.
- B. Information on age class and condition of harvested buffalo will be ascertained through mandatory check out procedures at House Rock Wildlife Area and by the accompanying Department employee at Raymond Wildlife Area. Hunters will be asked to collect blood samples from the harvested animals for brucellosis testing.

Procedure 3: To index changes in abundance in buffalo population levels and estimate the size of individual populations.

- A. Population levels will be estimated through annual direct counts. Changes in populations will be monitored by comparing annual direct counts. Population estimates may be developed based on aerial surveys as described in Procedure 1 if necessary.

Procedure 4: To use survey and hunt data to determine an appropriate level of harvest in each herd unit and formulate hunt regulations to accomplish that harvest.

- A. Buffalo population numbers at House Rock Wildlife Area should be managed at about 100 individuals. Ratios of 10 mature (>4 years old) bulls to 100 cows should be maintained. Hunt structures should be designed to remove excess animals while maintaining the desired age and gender ratio.

- B. Buffalo population numbers at Raymond Wildlife Area should be managed at about 70 individuals. Ratios of 10 mature (>4 years old) bulls to 100 cows should be maintained. Hunt structures should be designed to remove excess animals while maintaining the desired age and gender ratio.
- C. Hunt unit recommendations and survey data must be submitted to the Game Branch for review in accordance with the Hunt Recommendations Guideline schedule.

Procedure 5: To improve and enhance buffalo habitat.

- A. Protect and maintain current water sources. Where water is lacking and the distribution and abundance of buffalo can be influenced, develop new water sources.
- B. Plan and coordinate with land management agencies to implement prescribed fires where important forage will be improved. Provide input for rehabilitation efforts after wild fires to assure habitat needs of buffalo are considered.
- C. Work in cooperation with land management agencies to assure forage use levels are appropriate and provide for the nutritional needs of buffalo.
- D. Work with land management agencies and private landowners to protect and enhance key buffalo habitat.