

## COTTONTAIL MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Procedure 1: To determine annual cottontail population trends.

- A. Regional and Game Branch personnel may conduct surveys in their respective areas of responsibility. Regional personnel, in coordination with Game Branch, will decide numbers and locations of survey routes. Even 1 route per region is useful to establish long term trends. However, multiple routes are preferred. For efficiency, cottontail trend data may be collected during other survey efforts. To maintain long-term data sets, cottontail data should continue to be collected during any dove or quail call-count surveys.
  - 1. Cottontail data may be collected in conjunction with annual dove or quail call-count data as per dove or quail call-count survey form. AGFD personnel should forward completed call-count-cottontail survey forms to the Game Specialist within 2 weeks of the last surveys. The Game Specialists will monitor the surveys, summarize the routes, and forward the summary to the small game biologist in Game Branch within 4 weeks of the last survey.
  - 2. Regional and Game Branch personnel may collect additional trend data for cottontails using additional methodologies, including spotlight routes. Spotlight counts, if established, should be run using consistent 20 mile routes. All cottontails observed on the route should be recorded. Procedures for forwarding data should follow those outlined above.
- B. Game Specialists should schedule surveys and maintain current up-to-date files with route descriptions and historic survey trends for all established routes.

Procedure 2: To collect annual data on age, sex, hunt success, and condition of harvested cottontails.

- A. Cottontail harvest data may be collected during other check station operations.
  - 1. Data should be forwarded to the regional game specialist within 2 weeks. The game specialist will be responsible for providing this data to the small game biologist in Game Branch within 4 weeks.
- B. Hunt questionnaires will be sent to a random sample of general hunting license holders by February 1. The collection and distribution of questionnaire data and results will be the responsibility of the Game Branch. Data will be tabulated by unit, summarized, and sent to the game specialists within 60 days of the initial mailing.

Procedure 3: To analyze cottontail population indices and correlate these events with climatological data and other phenomena. Predictions of cottontail abundance will be provided to the public concerning upcoming hunting seasons.

- A. Game Branch will examine regional rainfall information, surveys, and other sources of information to estimate cottontail population trends.
- B. Annual harvest statistics will be used to validate predictions.