

Deer and Elk – HD 260



Draft Changes for 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations (boundary types, LPT changes, species, etc.):

Boundary Change: Create a new, smaller Hunting 260 in the Missoula Valley, that is a bit different from the former “Bitterroot river bottom” HD 260.

White-tailed Deer: Remove 260-20 B License for a second buck. Make 260-01 for antlerless white-tailed deer also valid in Rattlesnake National Recreation Area South Zone. Otherwise, retain existing regulations for former HD 260.

Mule Deer: Retain existing regulations for former HD 260 (archery-only on the general license for either-sex from beginning of archery season-Jan. 15).

Elk: Retain the general license opportunity for brow-tined bull or antlerless Elk from beginning of archery season through Jan. 15, archery only. Introduce an unlimited, over the counter, antlerless B License for primitive weapons in the early shoulder season (Aug. 15-Sep. 3), archery-only in the archery-only season, and primitive weapons in the general rifle season through Jan. 15. Replaces former 262-01 and 201-01.

Biological Implications:

Boundary Change: The Missoula valley has unique concentrations of deer/elk and hunter safety concerns that make it simpler to create a smaller HD in order to address, rather than lumping with the Bitterroot, which led to a very complicated set of regs in the past. The high concentrations of urban deer increase the risk/concern of Chronic Wasting Disease spreading widely if it gets into the population.

White-tailed Deer: The intent is to expand the population management strategies of HD 260 to include the Rattlesnake National Recreation S. Zone, where deer numbers need management.

Mule Deer: Encouraging some harvest (although limited) is helpful to urban deer management. Harvest is appropriately conservative.

Elk: These regulations aim to increase elk harvest and adjust elk distribution where elk cause damage and find security on protected parcels within an intensively farmed and developed landscape.

Social Implications:

This HD focuses the competing needs and desires of landowners, rifle hunters, homeowners, and archers within a relatively small and confined area, and strategies are layered and there are many opinions on the best strategies. The clearer distinction and separation made between the Missoula and Bitterroot hunting regulations should help improve management efficiency in each landscape.

Contact: Liz Bradley, Wildlife Biologist, Missoula-West, lbradley@mt.gov, 406-542-5515