ELK MANAGEMENT ACTIONS IN RESPONSE TO BRUCELLOSIS RISK

FWP REGION 3, SPRING 2014

(Note: Each of five management actions is detailed separately below; some commingling situations may have received multiple management actions.)

FWP REGION 3 – MANAGEMENT ACTION #1

1. Type of action (dispersal hunt, hazing, fencing, etc.): Hazing

2. Brief description of commingling: Wintering elk from the Dome Mountain WMA habitually move into areas of cattle production in the 6-Mile Creek area. At times there may be over 500 elk in close proximity to cattle operations.

3. General location(s) of landowner(s) involved: Two cattle operations in 6-Mile Creek/Dome Mountain WMA/Paradise Valley (HDs 313/317)

4. Do landowners allow public hunting access during general hunting season? One producer allows public hunting however elk are generally scarce or not present during the general season, the other producer does not have elk during the hunting season.

5. Elk population status (below, at or above objective): HD313: below objective
HD317: within objective (commingling primarily in HD313)

6. Start and stop date for action implementation (identify if fencing was permanent or temporary): 01/11/14 - 06/15/13.

7. Brief summary of action (include fence delivered, cost/cost shares, number of hunters involved, number/classification of elk harvested, etc.): Hazer #1 was on the payroll and available to haze during 1/11/13-6/15/13. We hired a second hazer beginning April 25 through June 15. The 2 hazers combined worked a total of 125 hours over 21 days; cost for both hazers for hourly pay and travel expenses was $2086.17.

8. Number and results of elk blood collections, if any: None collected

9. Did action reduce commingling? For most of the risk period hazing was effective at maintaining separation, during early spring there were some elk remaining in the area after spring migration that were difficult to manage.

10. General summary consensus by cooperators, collaborators and participants: Hazing is an effective tool for most of the risk period. Both producers contributed to hazing efforts in addition to FWP hazing. Additional tools may be necessary to maintain separation during spring and discourage elk calving within cattle occupied areas.

11. Issues, concerns, short/long term circumstances or other comments: Elk can become less responsive to hazing and more persistent in their movements into cattle occupied areas in late winter/early spring, especially in more severe winters. Commingling is especially challenging to manage during spring as some small groups of elk tend to move into nearby areas where hazing is not feasible (higher elevations/private lands with no access permission) instead of moving out of the vicinity towards the Wildlife Management Area. These elk then move back into the cattle occupied areas shortly after hazing. It is likely that some elk are calving within the cattle occupied areas. At various times during the winter there can be well over 500 elk in the vicinity of cattle; most of these elk leave the area before calving season, however there are several dozen that remain to calve in the area. These are a big concern for the producers and can be difficult to haze. A kill permit was requested by 1 of the producers in anticipation of need, however no kill permit was issued.

FWP REGION 3 – MANAGEMENT ACTION #2

1. Type of action (dispersal hunt, hazing, fencing, etc.): Hazing

2. Brief description of commingling: A herd of approximately 500 elk congregate on a small winter range in close proximity to numerous cattle operations just north of Mill Creek. Elk have become habituated to irrigated pastures used for wintering cattle, and commonly commingle with cattle among several adjacent cattle operations.

3. General location(s) of landowner(s) involved: Two cattle operations near Mill Creek, Paradise Valley (HD 317)

4. Do landowners allow public hunting access during general hunting season? Hunting access was allowed on one of the ranches.

5. Elk population status (below, at or above objective): Within objective

6. Start and stop date for action implementation (identify if fencing was permanent or temporary): 03/20/14 – 06/15/14.

7. Brief summary of action (include fence delivered, cost/cost shares, number of hunters involved, number/classification of elk harvested, etc.): Hazer #1 was on the payroll and available to haze 1/11/14-6/15/14. A second hazer was hired and available to haze 4/25/14-6/15/14. Hazing efforts began on March 20 and continued into late May. The 2 hazers worked a total of 43 hours over 10 days. Total costs for hours worked and travel expenses were $720.66.

8. Number and results of elk blood collections, if any: None collected.

9. Did action reduce commingling? Yes, hazing was effective in the short term for separating elk from cattle, however elk returned habitually to commingle,

10. General summary consensus by cooperators, collaborators and participants: Hazing is an effective short-term tool, however it does not entirely prevent commingling. Once elk calving begins elk tend to be dispersed and not easily located so hazing is not an effective option.

11. Issues, concerns, short/long term circumstances or other comments: There is limited conflict-free winter range for hazing elk into, and the conflict-free range is in close proximity to the cattle occupied areas. Hazing elk is effective in the short term however elk return within a short period of time. There are also concerns with pushing elk into adjacent cattle operations and damage to fences on adjacent properties when large numbers of elk are hazed. A larger than usual number of elk (~60) remained in the area through the Spring and are still remaining. Some of these elk likely calved in cattle occupied areas. This is a big concern for the producers. Participating producers said that hazing this year was comparable in effectiveness to the combination of lethal removal and hazing last year, however the issue of elk remaining in the area to calve has not been effectively addressed with either method.

FWP REGION 3 – MANAGEMENT ACTION #3

1. Type of action (dispersal hunt, hazing, fencing, etc.): Hazing

2. Brief description of commingling: A herd of 300-500 elk returned to an area where they had depredated on haystacks last winter. Though the haystack had been secured, elk found a second haystack that had not been secured on this same property. After being hazed from this area elk moved onto a second producer and began depredating on haystacks. In order to access the haystack on the first producer the elk moved through pastures occupied by cattle, with evidence of elk lingering within the cattle pasture at night. The haystacks on the second producer were adjacent to and within a cattle occupied pasture, and a large number of elk commingled with a large number of cattle while feeding on the haystacks.

3. General location(s) of landowner(s) involved: Two cattle operation in the Trail Creek area, Paradise Valley (HD 314)

4. Do landowners allow public hunting access during general hunting season? Producer #1: Yes, however elk are scarce during general season and hunting options are limited due to proximity of roads. Producer #2: Yes, liberal public access is provided on the hayfields where commingling occurs. Public access is limited on the remainder of the property as it is outfitted, however the landowner has been taking public hunters free of charge between paying clients in order to increase antlerless harvest to reduce overall elk numbers and concentrations in the area. This producer plans to continue with this for the 2014 season.

5. Elk population status (below, at or above objective): Elk population is within objective for this hunting district, but above objective for this population subunit. Elk tend to winter in large aggregations in this subunit.

6. Start and stop date for action implementation (identify if fencing was permanent or temporary): 1/24/14 - 3/1/2014

7. Brief summary of action (include fence delivered, cost/cost shares, number of hunters involved, number/classification of elk harvested, etc.): Hazer was on the payroll and available to haze 1/11/14-6/15/14. Hazing efforts began on 1/24 and continued into early March after which elk moved out of the area. With great effort the hazer was able to divide the concentration of elk into several smaller groups, which significantly decreased the commingling. The hazer worked a total of 47 hours over 11 days. Total costs for hours worked and travel for hazer was $757.22.

8. Number and results of elk blood collections, if any: None collected.

9. Did action reduce commingling? Response was effective, commingling was reduced and aggregation of elk was dispersed into several smaller groups.

10. General summary consensus by cooperators, collaborators and participants: Response was effective, commingling was reduced

11. Issues, concerns, short/long term circumstances or other comments: Once elk move into this area they are very persistent and must be hazed frequently to maintain separation. Hazing was logistically challenging given multiple adjacent landowners, many fences, and late night/early morning commingling; the effectiveness here is particularly a reflection of the dedication and competence of the hazer. There is an adjacent landowner who runs a sheep operation; elk moved onto his operation when being hazed away from the cattle occupied areas. We may need to address in the future whether we can provide hazing assistance and/or fence repair when our brucellosis risk efforts result in elk movements onto an adjacent property.

FWP REGION 3 – MANAGEMENT ACTION #4

1. Type of action (dispersal hunt, hazing, fencing, etc.): Fencing

2. Brief description of commingling: A herd of over 300 elk began depredating on haystacks that had not been previously depredated upon. One haystack is directly adjacent to a cattle pasture, the other haystack is within the cattle pasture. In order to access the haystacks the elk moved into the pasture occupied by cattle. Because the haystack is located in the area where cattle are fed there was a concentration of cattle and elk within a small area.

3. General location(s) of landowner(s) involved: Cattle operation in Trail Creek, Paradise Valley (HD 314)

4. Do landowners allow public hunting access during general hunting season? Yes, liberal public access is provided on the pasture and adjacent hayfields where commingling occurs. Public access is more limited on the remainder of the property as it is outfitted, however during the 2013 season the landowner took public hunters free of charge between paying clients in order to increase antlerless harvest to reduce overall elk numbers in the area. The landowner plans to continue this during the 2014 hunting season.

5. Elk population status (below, at or above objective): Elk population is within objective for this hunting district, but above objective for this population subunit. Elk tend to winter in large aggregations in this subunit.

6. Start and stop date for action implementation (identify if fencing was permanent or temporary): Permanent stackyard fencing was provided.

7. Brief summary of action (include fence delivered, cost/cost shares, number of hunters involved, number/classification of elk harvested, etc.): Total cost for fencing supplies was $2,000.00.

8. Number and results of elk blood collections, if any: None collected.

9. Did action reduce commingling? Materials were provided however the fencing was not completed during the risk period due to frozen ground.

10. General summary consensus by cooperators, collaborators and participants: Landowner was satisfied with FWP response.

11. Issues, concerns, short/long term circumstances or other comments: Elk in this area are persistent and likely to return to the area next winter. The funding FWP provided ($2,000) is insufficient to fully secure all haystacks. The producer will contribute funds to supplement those provided by FWP in order to secure the haystack that is within the cattle feedlot, however there is an additional large haystack adjacent to the feedlot that they will not have funds to fence this summer, and this will very likely result in elk commingling next winter.

FWP REGION 3 – MANAGEMENT ACTION #5

1. Type of action (dispersal hunt, hazing, fencing, etc.): Fencing

2. Brief description of commingling: A herd of over 300 elk returned to an area where they had successfully foraged on an unprotected haystack last year. The original haystack was secured last spring with FWP brucellosis risk funds; however a different unsecured haystack a

half mile away was discovered and depredated upon. In order to access the second haystack elk moved through an occupied cattle pasture and lingered within this pasture en route to and from the haystack.

3. General location(s) of landowner(s) involved: Cattle operation in Trail Creek, Paradise Valley (HD 314)

4. Do landowners allow public hunting access during general hunting season? Yes, however elk are scarce during the general season and hunting options are limited due to proximity of roads.

5. Elk population status (below, at or above objective): Elk population is within objective for this hunting district, but above objective for this population subunit. Elk tend to winter in large aggregations in this subunit.

6. Start and stop date for action implementation (identify if fencing was permanent or temporary): Permanent stackyard fencing was provided.

7. Brief summary of action (include fence delivered, cost/cost shares, number of hunters involved, number/classification of elk harvested, etc.): Total costs for fencing supplies $2,000.00

8. Number and results of elk blood collections, if any: None collected.

9. Did action reduce commingling? Landowner was satisfied with FWP response. Fencing is likely to be effective in that the attractant for elk has been secured. There are no additional unsecured haystacks on the property.

10. General summary consensus by cooperators, collaborators and participants: Landowner was satisfied with FWP response. Materials were provided however the fencing was not completed during the risk period due to frozen ground. The fencing is likely to be effective in that this attractant has been secured.

11. Issues, concerns, short/long term circumstances or other comments: Elk in this area are persistent and likely to return to the area next winter. If all haystacks are secure hazing is likely to be more effective at deterring elk from returning to the cattle inhabited area.