

## Can you manage your property?

**Note:** If your property is under high fence or you control thousands of contiguous acres, in addition to this article please read the special article for high fence operations since you have more control of your property than unfenced properties have. This article is intended more for unfenced properties such as ours where we continuously have deer coming onto and going off of our property.

First of all let me explain the three phases of what we do. The *first phase* which every hunting group should be doing is **monitoring** your deer population. This **monitoring** is accomplished in the Basic Version of our software. Every property should be keeping track of all of the deer that have been harvested on their property. You should also keep track of your deer sightings or camera counts. Even though some properties like to keep track of their actual deer sightings most properties prefer to do a Trail Camera Survey. This allows them to estimate their Doe to Buck Ratio and Fawn Recruitment Rate. I can't emphasize how important this information is. Please read my two articles where I review the Importance of knowing your Doe to Buck Ratio and Fawn Recruitment Rate.

Now for the *second and third phases*, the management phases where you are trying to selectively harvest deer whether it be to grow bigger antlered bucks, grow older Bucks, change your doe to buck ratio, maintain or maybe increase or decrease your deer population. I think many of you feel that you can manage your own property but the problem is you can't manage your neighbor's property. We became quite frustrated letting some nice antlered Bucks walk and seemingly they were never to be seen again. We were certain that a lot of these nice antlered Bucks were being shot by our neighbors. Even though we had this concern we just couldn't bring ourselves to shoot these Bucks that we knew had great potential. We had been using trail cameras since 2004 and were using them to get pictures of many of our deer prior to hunting season. In 2007 it hit me that why don't we put out our trail cameras right after hunting season with some corn (legal in Georgia) to see if we could tell which Bucks had survived the season. Well, to say we were pleasantly surprised is an understatement. Seventy percent (yes 70%) of the non yearling Bucks that we let walk had actually survived the season. This held true for 2008 through 2010 as well. In 2011 through 2014 over 80% of the non yearling Bucks that we let walk showed up in our post season pictures. I specify non yearling meaning 2 ½ year old and older Bucks that we were concerned about. We and our neighbors do NOT shoot yearling Bucks. I am not saying that 80% of the Bucks that you let walk will survive because again everyone's situation is different. I am saying that you shouldn't assume that every Buck you let walk will be shot by someone else. If you can put out cameras after the season like we do you may be able to get a better feel for your own situation. Also, because we didn't get a picture of the Buck after the season doesn't guarantee that he was shot or is dead. He may have just moved on. Just make sure you watch our video of the Buck we nicknamed "Piebald" and you can see that it only takes one of these Bucks that have potential to survive and you'll have that trophy you're hoping for.

Every year I see and hear about more hunters getting interested in managing their deer populations. Whether you are interested in managing your deer population or not I do understand that everyone's situation is different so you have to be able to adapt to your own specific situation. Some of these differences may include:

1. How many acres do you control?
2. How many members do you have in your group or club?
3. Will all of your members agree to a management plan?
4. Do you have neighbors that practice if it's brown its down?
5. How long do you anticipate owning/leasing the property you're hunting?
6. Do you have the determination and willpower to shoot no deer if necessary or several deer if deemed necessary for the success of your deer management plan?
7. Maybe you don't hunt a specific property often enough to justify trying to manage it.
8. Do you even care if you have any Bucks older than 1 ½ years old? **Even if this is the case you should care about how many deer you are seeing and can you improve your sightings!**

I'm sure there are several other reasons why you feel you can't manage your property but I want to show you on this website what we have accomplished and how we accomplished it. Even when we became concerned that the Bucks we were letting walk were getting shot somewhere else we refused to give up. I kept reminding myself that if I have the attitude that I might as well shoot this Buck because our neighbor is going to shoot him then "I" simply become the neighbor that shot the Buck.

Needless to say the more acres that you control the more success you can have managing your deer population. I assure you that if we only controlled 100 acres we would be trying to share information with our neighbors and we would be showing them what we were doing as well as showing an interest in what they are doing. One year we met with a few of our neighbors (totaling 3000+ acres) before hunting season and we reviewed our management practices. We showed them trail cam pictures and video. We put together pictures showing them how to age a Buck on the hoof. We showed them the 2 ½ and 3 ½ year old Bucks that we were going to let walk and we showed them the 3 ½ year old and older Bucks that we were hoping to shoot. A few of them brought pictures as well so it was interesting and exciting to see their pictures and to use the pictures to try to age the deer on the hoof. You will see some of our pictures and some of our video on this website. Now prior to that did we want to show our neighbors our video of a Buck that has over 170" of antler or trail cam pictures of Bucks with over 150" of antler. Of course not because you know darn well the neighbors will be lined up on your property line if not over the property line. What's funny is we keep our trail cameras out during hunting season and we notice that some of the Bucks we regularly got pictures of before hunting season were actually spending hunting season on the neighbor's property. I could tell this because I would only get an occasional picture of the Buck near our property line. Also, we were notified of a Buck that we had shared pictures of was actually harvested by one of our neighbors and we hadn't seen him during the season before he was harvested. What's also funny is that you don't really want to show anyone a picture of a big Buck that you have but even without seeing the picture they are probably going to shoot him if they see him. Because we are so determined to try to grow big antlered Bucks we figured we would go **all in** and show our neighbors everything we were doing. (Keep in mind that even though the deer herd in our area has the genetic potential to grow a B&C maybe the deer herd in your area only has the genetic potential to grow a 120" Buck so that may become your goal.) We have some good neighbors and they all show an interest in deer management. Do we all agree on everything? Absolutely not, but we do agree on many things. Most importantly we are all trying to grow bigger antlered Bucks and older age Bucks. I don't know for sure but this meeting with the neighbors may have been the reason we have had more young good antlered Bucks survive each season. In hindsight I wonder if showing them the pictures of the 3 ½ year old and older Bucks that we hoped to shoot helped influence them to wait for one of these older Bucks. Even if you can only get 4 out of 6 neighbors to buy into a common management plan that is better than just 1 out of 6. Someone needs to take the initiative in getting the neighbors together so why don't you take the lead. Ask them to go to this website where we will be posting lots of video, pictures and articles about deer monitoring and management and then see if everyone is willing to get together to come up with a common management goal.

Everybody should agree that **monitoring** your deer population can be valuable so you can tell if you are seeing more or less deer than previous years and most importantly how many deer you have harvested season by season. This isn't even asking anyone to shoot or not shoot a deer, it's just keeping track of your harvests and camera counts or sightings. It's when you get into selective harvest that people may have a hard time agreeing. I'm not going to get into deer management strategies in this article because it will be covered in a few different articles. A deer management program is a long term investment so you need to think long term and not short term. You also need to do some record keeping so you can monitor the success or failure of your management program. This monitoring is accomplished by doing phase I that I described above and is provided in the Basic Version of our software. Please read my next article which is titled "Deer Management Phase I (Monitoring your Deer Harvests and Sightings/Camera Counts)" where I will show you exactly what we are doing and the Reports that we get.