



Deer Research in Southeastern PA

A study of deer survival and mortality causes

During the winters of 2012 and 2013, the Pennsylvania Game Commission will be studying white-tailed deer in southeastern Pennsylvania. The study's objectives are to estimate survival rates and identify causes of mortality. To accomplish these objectives, Game Commission biologists will capture and mark white-tailed deer. Marked deer will then be monitored to determine survival and mortality causes.

Where will this study take place?

The study will occur in Wildlife Management Unit 5C and may include parts of Berks, Bucks, Chester, Lehigh, and Montgomery counties.

How can the public help?

Private landowners can provide access to land for capturing deer. In the last decade, the Game Commission and private landowners have worked together to capture nearly 5,000 white-tailed deer across Pennsylvania.

Captured deer will be released where captured. No deer will be captured and moved to other locations.

If you are interested in allowing deer capture activities on your land, please contact the Game Commission's deer research crew leader at 717-433-7406.

How will deer be captured?

Deer will be captured during winter after the hunting season or in areas not open to hunting using drop nets, rocket nets, and Clover traps. The Game Commission has used these capture methods for the last decade, and these methods have been approved by Pennsylvania State University's Animal Care and Use Committee.

PGC personnel will set up nets and traps on cooperating properties. Non-PGC personnel should not tamper with nets or traps. Nets and traps are safe to animals and people when handled and operated by trained personnel.

Drop and rocket nets are used only when PGC personnel are present.



A drop net used to capture deer in a field. Drop nets are 70ft x 70ft nets supported by 4 corner posts. A drop net is dropped on deer standing under the net.



A rocket net used to capture deer. When fired, rockets carry the net into the air to capture deer standing under the net.

Clover traps can capture deer at any time when set. If the trip wire is hit, a net door will fall down enclosing the animal in the trap. Although PGC personnel will check Clover traps daily, a captured deer may be in the Clover trap for a few hours. Free-roaming pets have been captured and released unharmed in the past.

Will deer be drugged when captured?

Deer captured with drop and rocket nets will be given a sedative to calm them down. This makes the capture process safer for the deer and PGC personnel. The drugs used will naturally clear from the deer – including meat – after a month. So the deer will be perfectly safe to be consumed by hunting season.

If a tagged deer is killed by a vehicle and a citizen wishes to consume the deer, they should report the ear tag number when they call the Game Commission for a road kill permit.



A Clover trap baited with corn. Deer enter to eat the corn, hit a trip wire, and a net door falls down to capture them in the trap.



Captured deer with radio collar.

How will deer be marked?

All deer will be marked with ear tags. Some deer will be marked with radio collars. Researchers use radio collars to track deer movements and survival.

Can marked deer be harvested?

Marked deer can be harvested like any other deer by properly licensed hunters.

If I harvest or find a tagged deer, how do I report it?

All ear tags and radio collars are marked with a toll-free number, 1-877-778-3637 (1-877-PSU-DOES). If you find or harvest a tagged or radio-collared deer please call the toll-free number and report where, when and under what circumstances you came across the tag.

For more information on deer and deer management in Pennsylvania, visit the Game Commission's website, www.pgc.state.pa.us

