

Sportsmen Against Hunger Nearly Reaches Game Donation Goal

Hunters donated 97,750 pounds of game meat to needy individuals and families across South Dakota during the 2009 hunting seasons through Sportsmen Against Hunger, nearly reaching the organization's goal of 100,000 pounds.

Sportsmen Against Hunger is a non-profit organization whose mission is to encourage and facilitate donation of wild game meat to needy families in South Dakota.

Hunters donate game by delivering animals to participating processors. Upon processing, the frozen packaged meat is then collected from the processors and taken to more than 60 food pantries or other charitable food distributors across the state who, in turn, ensure the donated meat is distributed to needy families and individuals. Commercially processed game meat is also donated to food banks through a clean-out-your-freezer food drive, or taken directly to food banks.

This past fall, through use of processing certificates completed by hunters at the time of game donation, Sportsmen Against Hunger reimbursed participating meat processors for processing 2,039 antlerless deer and 261 doe/fawn antelope. This was an increase from the 1,946 antlerless deer and 354 doe/fawn antelope donated in 2008. In addition, hunters donated 263 buck deer, 54 buck antelope, and 5,929 pheasants last year for which the hunters paid all processing costs.

Total donations in 2009 amounted to 390,000 healthy meals of meat for the needy. Even though this was another banner year, much more fresh meat is needed.

"The generosity of hunters never ceases to amaze me" said Jeff Olson, president of South Dakota Sportsmen Against Hunger. "I am surprised by the increase, as donations of deer and antelope to SAH programs across the country

were down in many states last fall. Additionally, total deer harvest in South Dakota was also down. To show any increase in donations at all really shows the sportsmen are becoming even more dedicated to this program in South Dakota."

In 2010, Sportsmen Against Hunger will again reimburse participating processors \$50 for each donated antlerless deer, and \$40 for each donated doe or fawn antelope. The processing certificate program is costly and the organization is always looking for additional ways to help fund the program. Last season, sportsmen donated almost \$30,000 to SAH through an optional check-off program when applying for big-game tags.

Information on making tax-deductible donations, as well as on history and operation of Sportsmen Against Hunger including a list of participating processors, can be found on the Sportsmen Against Hunger web site: www.feedtheneedsd.com

The Game, Fish and Parks Department, through the GFP Commission, has been a significant supporter of Sportsmen Against Hunger. Other support has come for many years through grants from Wal-Mart, Scheels of Sioux Falls, the Elmen Foundation, the Great Dacotah Chapter of Safari Club International, and the Black Hills Advertising Federation.

"Many people contribute to the continuing success of Sportsmen Against Hunger," Olson said. "They include the hunters who harvest and donate a few more deer than they would normally take, the 49 participating game processors who generally reduce their fees for processing donated game, the food pantries that



distribute the donated game meat, and the hunters, private donors and corporations who make generous funding contributions to the program in South Dakota."

For more information on Sportsmen Against Hunger, call 605-280-4977.

RMEF — Elk Hunt Forecast for 2010

MISSOULA, Mont.—Elk and elk hunting opportunities are abundant in much of North America, and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation is offering a sneak peek at upcoming seasons in its annual roundup of hunt forecasts for 28 states and provinces, now posted at www.rmef.org.

"Generally speaking, elk populations are in great shape and hunters have much to look forward to across the West, as well as in several Midwestern and Eastern states," said David Allen, president and CEO of the Elk Foundation. "A mild winter, much needed spring and summer moisture and our habitat conservation successes all factor into our optimism for the upcoming hunting season."

This summer, RMEF passed the 5.8 million acre mark for habitat conserved or enhanced for elk and other wildlife.

Allen added, however, that wolves continue to be a growing concern in regions where the predators share habitat with elk and other big game herds. In some areas, elk calf survival rates are now insufficient to sustain herds for the future. The urgent need to control wolf populations is a localized wildlife management crisis now compounded by a recent court decision to return wolves to full federal protections under the Endangered Species Act. RMEF has asked Congress to intervene and grant management authority to the states.

Nebraska

- Elk Population: 2,400
- Bull/Cow Ratio: Not available
- Residents only
- Hunter Success: 80 percent bulls, 58 percent cows

The state's elk herd is still growing consistently around 15-20 percent every year. As numbers grow, opportunities to hunt grow with them, but only if you're a resident. This year, the state will issue 272 tags, up 40 from last year, with 98 bull and 174 cow permits. To promote strong landowner relations, one-third of those permits are available to private landowners in a drawing and are non-transferable.

South Dakota

- Elk Population: 5,000
- Bull/Cow Ratio: 75/100
- Residents only
- Hunter Success: 50 percent

The state's largest herd in the Black Hills National Forest numbered as many as 5,000 animals back in 2003. Aggressive management knocked that number down to the current 3,000. But public attitudes have shifted and there is once again a cry for more elk and more hunting opportunity. To reach a goal of 4,000 in the Hills, managers have had to cut rifle tags again this year to 1,065—a drop of 300 from last year. Still, residents' odds of hunting a bull in the Black Hills are a solid 1:10. If you pull a tag, make the most of it, as you have to wait nine years to apply again.

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