



Who are we?

Mission Statement—

The Quality Deer Management Association is a non-profit wildlife conservation organization dedicated to promoting sustainable, high-quality, white-tailed deer populations, wildlife habitats and ethical hunting experiences through education, research, and management in partnership with hunters, landowners, natural resource professionals and the public.

Why Join The QDMA? Here are 6 good reasons...

Reason # 1:

Learn how to achieve a balanced deer population and enhance hunting enjoyment, while improving your herd's overall health and productivity.

Reason # 2:

Have access to over 500 of the nation's most knowledgeable experts in the field of deer biol-

ogy, research, habitat and management available to personally answer all your questions.

Reason # 3:

Receive the most up-to-date educational information with the most advanced and accurate data available from the nations' top universities and wildlife professionals, to make informed deer and habitat management decisions.

Reason # 4:

Learn what plants have the most nutrition and are the most attractive to deer. Learn how you can improve your land to produce quality deer by planting the most productive, nutritious wildlife habitat your land can yield.

Reason # 5:

Learn how to design food plots specifically for bow or firearm hunting.

Reason # 6:

Learn how having a moderate number of deer, creating and maintaining good habitat, protecting young bucks and harvesting an adequate number of does, will actually increase fawn productivity and survival, create a more natural and balanced deer herd and allow you to harvest **more, bigger and healthier deer!**

QDM is not TDM

Quality deer management is not trophy deer management! While quality deer management will help produce bigger bucks, the main focus for QDM is to manage the deer population to create a healthy herd in balance with the existing habitat conditions. Involvement in the QDMA extends a hunter's role from mere consumer to deer manager. Quality deer management, in part, is the use of restraint in harvesting young bucks combined with an adequate harvest of female deer to maintain a more natural, healthy, socially balanced deer herd.

Join the fastest growing & most respected white-tailed deer management organization. Become an informed deer manager and join QDMA today!

QDMA New Membership Benefits:

- A 1-year subscription to *Quality Whitetails*, the quarterly journal of the QDMA.
- A free 1-year subscription to *Hunt Club Digest*
- A copy of *Quality Deer Management Deer Management for the New Millennium* booklet.
- A membership patch and vehicle decal.
- Receive your choice of:
 - QDMA's video, *Let Him Go So He Can Grow*
 - or a Jawbone Aging and Removal Poster
 - or a B & C and Pope & Young Distribution Map.
- Michigan members receive a quarterly newsletter.

Clubs and organizations can join as a QDMA Partnership. Please call 1-800-209-DEER for more information or an application form.

Mail this completed application to:

QDMA P.O. Box 227, Watkinsville, GA 30677

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please send me:

(New 1 yr. Members choose one, new 3 yr. Members choose two)

B&C, P&Y Map Aging Poster Video

Membership Categories:

\$25 per year Adult USA

\$65 for 3 years Adult USA

\$15 per year Junior (Under 16) USA

\$200 Sponsor Donation \$ _____

Remember—our 501(c)(3) status means your financial support is tax deductible. (Federal ID #57-0941892)

Check # _____ Money Order

MasterCard Visa American Express

Card # _____ - _____ - _____ - _____

Expiration Date _____

**Also apply by calling: 1-800-209-DEER
or visit our web site at: www.qdma.com**

October's Balance

by Dave Guynn - Clemson University

As an enthusiastic hunter, I know well what it can mean to see and harvest a quality white-tailed buck. Being intimate with Lady Luck is often the determining factor, but hard work and sheer persistence are needed to consistently take good bucks. As I mature, the importance of taking such bucks has lessened, while the assurance of their presence has become paramount. My experience as a wildlife biologist has made me aware of the importance of proper harvest management. And proper herd management cannot be achieved under today's norms of shooting the first legal animal encountered or by shooting only quality bucks.

Harvest guidelines are our most important deer management tool. As such, regulations should spell out not just the number of animals to be harvested in an area, but the social classes (age and sex) of those animals as well. In formulating these regulations, we should ask if a given deer population is living well or is it suffering social misery due to imbalances in herd structure? What classes of animals should be harvested if such an imbalance exists?

Why should we concern ourselves with maintaining a natural social balance in a managed deer herd? Because, to survive as long as they have, deer long ago developed social rules or mechanisms that would keep deer herds and their individual members fit and competitive. However, when harvest regulations allow hunters to deplete certain social classes (with deer, this is usually most or all bucks 1.5 years old or older) in an unscientific, haphazard manner, the herd's social mechanisms can become stressed. This is exactly the fix we are in today. We can only guess at how many whitetails inhabited North America before the white man arrived, but the late Ernest Thompson Seton, a pioneer naturalist and author, estimated a population of about 40 million animals. We would surmise that, despite predation and hunting by Native Americans, bucks 4.5 years old and older were not uncommon. The adult sex ratio of such herds was probably in the range of 50-75 bucks per 100 does. In local areas, the rut and fawning seasons probably lasted six to eight weeks. These were healthy deer living in social balance.

The situation is much different today. Post-hunt adult sex ratios of 20 or less bucks per 100 does are the rules, and most of these bucks are 1.5 years old. Mature bucks, 4.5 years old or older, are rare and many hunters cannot even comprehend how a mature buck from their area would look. Thus, at the beginning of the rut, 80% or more of the antlered bucks are 1.5 years old. These youngsters rise to the occasion and most receptive does are eventually bred, but at a price. How do the demands of breeding inhibit the growth potential of those few bucks that survive the hunting season? Because of the social imbalance, the rut and fawning periods may last 15 weeks or longer. This places additional stress on the few surviving bucks and causes fawns to be born after the period of optimum nutrition during spring or summer.

In most situations, this predicament is the result of haphazard hunting regulations and practices that have been defined more by tradition than biological concerns. In many areas, doe harvests are inadequate while bucks are harvested at such high rates that 80% or more of the bucks taken are 1.5 years old or younger. Also, most bucks are harvested within the first few days of the season.

The root of this problem is within us, the deer hunters. Why must we take the first legal animal we see? Hunting is a personal experience that is enjoyed in solitude or with people we know. It should not be a competitive sport with the objective of seeing who can shoot the biggest or the most deer. Why not go afield to observe, enjoy, learn deer behavior and harvest those individual animals that will create the proper social balance and ensure the continued welfare of the population? We must learn to respect the long-term welfare of our deer resource and place our personal desires behind the needs of the resource.

In recent years I have become a strong proponent of the quality deer management philosophy. My hope is that men and women who are fortunate enough to have known a deer herd in social balance will value these experiences to the point that socially imbalanced herds are unacceptable from both recreational and ethical viewpoints. Informed and selfless individuals must be willing to support biologically sound management principles that may in the short term be counter to his or her personal desires, but which in the long term will strengthen the resource.

The primary characteristic of any social system is the ranking of its members. Antler and body size are the primary factors that determine the relative rank of each buck. During the weeks preceding the rut, bucks establish social pecking order. This they accomplish primarily by posturing, sparring, and signpost behavior.

In a balanced population, mature bucks will do most of the breeding. The presence of older bucks and their signposts may suppress the competitiveness and libido of younger bucks. Lower testosterone levels should result in decreased weight loss during the rut and allow young bucks to grow to greater size before they assume breeding duties.

Under these conditions, the rut is intense and relatively brief. From the viewpoint of the hunter or deer observer, October will be a most exciting time. To experience the full drama of deer behavior, deer can be attracted by rattling antlers or mimicking the grunting of a rutting buck.

Beyond October, deer herds can exist in the social balance for which they evolved. But it will not be easy. To achieve this goal will require harvest management practices more scientific, flexible and progressive than those currently in use - practices that may never be accepted without the encouragement and support of selfless, farsighted hunters. These hunters must look not only beyond October, but beyond themselves. Their ultimate satisfaction must not come from how many deer or how large the antlers taken, but from knowing that the welfare of the deer resource is of their making.

Once established, such socially balanced herds will have high rates of reproduction and fawn survival. Long and generous hunting seasons will be required to harvest the various classes of deer that need to be removed to keep the herd size and social makeup in balance. But, first, the general ranks of hunters must be educated as to their role in deer management. Otherwise, changes in regulations regarding season length and bag limits would be to no avail.

Dr. Dave Guynn is a professor in the Department of Forestry, Clemson University. He also serves on the QDMA's Executive Board.