

Elk / Agriculture Conflict Hunt 2015-16: Highlights

- The Yukon government has established an elk/agriculture conflict hunt to respond to conflicts involving elk, which are of concern to farmers in the Takhini River valley area.
- While this is an opportunity for individuals to harvest an elk, the government's goal is to train elk to avoid agricultural properties by using aversive conditioning, consistent with the proactive steps called for in the *Draft Management Plan for Elk in Yukon*.
- The government will contact the first 100 hunters on the list, in order of priority from the PHA draw, to notify hunters of their position in the draw and confirm their willingness to harvest an elk on short notice.
- The government is ensuring that First Nations hunters will also have the opportunity to participate, as they have in previous elk hunts, working directly with KDFN, TKC and CAFN to identify hunters to add to the priority list.

Guidelines for use

- **Preventative Measures:** Action has been taken earlier to reduce the risk of conflict, e.g., hazing, fencing.
- **Group size and composition:** Because aversive conditioning works best with larger groups of animals, a minimum number of elk must have been present for more than 24 hours, e.g., 5 bulls, or 10 cow/calves, or a mixed group of 10. Concerns over fewer elk or individual animals may be addressed by Conservation Officers on a case-by-case basis
- **Location:** Agricultural land parcels that are commercial operations, outside city limits, and within the buffer zone.
- **Permission:** Farmers will facilitate getting written consent from all residents living within 1 km of their property in advance of a conflict hunt. Doing so will assist the hunter in a timely response to address elk-agriculture conflicts.
- **Elk behaviour:** There is reasonable expectation that hunting will influence elk behaviour and the animals will begin to avoid the area.

Process

- Landowners are to contact Conservation Officer Services Branch (COSB) at 867-667-8005 (or 1-800-661-0525 after hours) with details about their elk complaint, e.g., elk locations, potential hazards, and other relevant information.

- COSB, the Fish and Wildlife Branch, and the Agriculture Branch will investigate the complaint to determine eligibility for a conflict hunt in consideration of the general guidelines listed above.
- COSB will use the Priority List to contact a willing hunter and issue a *Wildlife Act* permit and the conditions the hunter must abide by to hunt an elk.
- The hunter must complete the hunt in a time frame identified by the conservation officer and as specified on the permit.
- The hunter must remove the carcass (including offal) to ensure carnivores are not attracted to the area, and comply with mandatory reporting and submission requirements.

Hunters are required to hunt in a safe manner, and to make every effort to minimize property damage or injuries to elk that are not being harvested. The Yukon government will track harvest numbers and locations to evaluate the effectiveness of using the conflict hunt approach for addressing elk-agriculture conflicts.

The success of this approach will be determined through ongoing collaboration between all the government branches involved, as well as feedback from hunters and input from First Nations, renewable resources councils, the Yukon Fish and Game Association, the agriculture industry, and others.

Prepared by Fish and Wildlife Branch
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