

# WILDLIFE TRENDS

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## Vanished...

### “What Happened to Our Deer Herd?”

By *Dave Edwards*

While there were many great bucks harvested this season—even a new world record non-typical buck that scored over 300 inches on the Boone & Crockett scale—hunting this year was tough. Few landowners or hunting clubs met their antlerless harvest goals. Wide-spread panic and concern among hunters and landowners seemed to set in around Christmas. No one was seeing many deer and food plots were growing tall from the lack of browsing pressure. In some areas, deer didn't even have interest in corn fields. Many of our clients throughout the Southeast thought they had experienced a deer die-off or had harvested too many deer during the previous hunting season. While it is true that some deer herds in the Southeast experienced a higher-than-normal outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), which can be fatal, few populations were significantly impacted.

So why didn't we see as many deer this past season? Well, in some cases, it was a result of reducing the deer herd to a healthy, desirable density. However, on most properties it was the result of adequate spring/summer rain and excellent growing conditions that produced an abundant food supply of mast crops (acorns, persimmons, berries) and browse (honeysuckle, greenbriar) through the fall and winter. The deer were there. They just didn't have to move far to find a quality food source and were less dependent on food plots to meet their nutritional needs. Home range sizes were smaller resulting in fewer deer seen while hunting.



Did you see as many deer in your fields this year?

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