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Rick Schwab
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This trophy white tail deer was taken in Kansas more than 30 years ago, when deer were less plentiful than they are now. — Photo by Cynthia Haynes/The Oberlin Herald

Northwest Kansas continues to be

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
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Mule and whitetail deer populations in northwest Kansas have been pretty steady over the past five to six years, state wildlife officials say, with good hunting opportunities throughout the region.

Lloyd Fox, big game program coordinator with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks in Emporia said, some excellent deer hunting is available across the state, even though deer numbers in northwest Kansas are fairly low based on national standards.

He said the western half of the state has populations of both mule deer and whitetail. At this time of year, the deer are getting ready for winter, he said, are putting on fat and getting ready for the breeding season, which begins about mid-November.

He said deer density is about two to four per square mile in the western part of the state.

"The herds are not uniformly distributed over the region during the year," he said, "and there will be concentrations that may depend on the weather and food conditions. During the blizzards, we had records of up to 100 deer concentrating on one feeding area."

He said deer have "home range fidelity," meaning they will stay within a specific area.

"Once they establish their home range, they do not shift out of that home range when food or water conditions become severe," he said. "They live or die in their home ranges."

He said the home range can be a couple of

square miles for a buck or about half a mile to a mile for a doe, especially a whitetail doe.

He said mule deer have a strong group sense of responsibility, especially with the female and young in the herd, and they have overlapping home ranges.

"The northwestern part of the state has the best mule deer hunting in the state," Fox said. "With the increase in whitetail, there is good hunting for both species. Out here it is about a 50-50 ratio."

He said the mule deer are more visible and more predictable in their movements around the home range. The whitetail tend to stay more in dense cover, and at this time of year, Fox said, that includes tall corn fields.

He said in the last part of the year, the number of car-deer accidents tend to increase. He said that is because of the rut or mating season.

"The deer tend to have other things on their mind," he said, "and some herds are moving from a summer range to a winter range. Not all deer do this, but those that do move can move a distance of 40 to 50 miles from the summer range. When they move across the countryside, it puts them in unfamiliar territory, and that adds to the danger for drivers."

Fox said the deer licenses have changed this year. He said the special draws are finished for the year, but individuals can buy a variety of hunting permits over the internet.

A deer permit for residents can be purchased over the counter for either sex of whitetail deer — antler or antlerless. It is good statewide, and residents can buy up until the last day of the

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