

Summary of Papers Relating to Texas Dog-Deer Hunting Studies that Resulted in the Ban of Dog-Deer Hunting in Texas

Italics indicate text transcribed directly from the publication. Links to the scanned PDFs of the original publications can be found on the home page of www.cfedh.com.

Blue italicized text is emphasized in case you want to read only the most important information.

Spencer, G.E. 1986. Hunting deer with dogs. Texas Parks and Wildl. Fed. Aid Rep. 56. 71pp. (only the first 19 pages are available on the website.)

The effects of hunting white-tailed deer (Odocoileus virginianus) with dogs were evaluated in 10 East Texas counties. Methods used were hunter and landowner questionnaires, mapping dog-hunted lands, investigations of deer population characteristics on 14 paired study areas, and deer movement investigations on a dog-hunted study area. (page 1, first paragraph). (study conducted in 1984-1985)

Description of hunting study areas: fourteen paired study areas in the 10 Texas counties where dog hunting was still permitted were used. *Areas where hunting with dogs was the primary deer hunting method were paired with areas where deer were hunted without the aid of dogs.*

Criteria for selection of dog-hunted study areas were as follows:

- 1. Hunting with dogs has been the primary deer hunting method used for at least the past 10 years.*
- 2. The area contains at least 10,000 acres in a contiguous tract.*
- 3. The area is accessible by vehicle. (top of page 5)*

Studies of deer populations on 14 paired study areas disclosed that dog-hunted areas have lower deer densities (17 deer per 1,000 acres) compared to non-dog-hunted areas (79 deer per 1,000 acres). (abstract, page1, paragraph 4.)

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The following is a summary of significant findings:

- 1. Hunters using dogs make up 6 percent of the hunting public in the 10 dog-hunted counties. Another 10 percent hunt both with and without dogs. These hunters are hunting 15% of the deer range with landowner permission. (survey methods are documented in paper)*
- 2. Both hunters (69 percent) and landowners (73 percent) in the 10 dog-hunted counties are opposed to hunting deer with dogs. (survey methods are documented in paper)*
- 3. Individual tracts of land open to dog-hunting are typically "island" situations. Eighty-nine percent of these tracts 1,000 acres or more in size contain less than 10,000 acres.*
- 4. Deer herds on dog-hunted lands are typically suppressed and contain less than one-fourth the deer numbers found on non-dog-hunted lands. Browse surveys show that range conditions are not limiting deer numbers on dog-hunted land. (In other words, lower deer density on dog-hunted land was not caused by less available food. Remember that this is 17 deer per 1,000 acres in dog-hunted areas compared to 79 deer per 1,000 acres in non-dog-hunted areas.)*
- 5. Lower doe:buck ratios on dog-hunted (2.27 does per buck) compared to non-dog-hunted areas (4.53 does per buck) suggest a relatively higher doe deer mortality on dog-hunted areas.*

6. *No significant difference in deer reproductive potential or fawn survival was found on dog-hunted compared to non-dog-hunted areas. (But because there are fewer does in dog-hunted areas, they produce fewer fawns.)*
7. *Deer blood serum analysis indicates that deer are being stressed by dog chases but irreversible stress levels in deer are not known.*
8. *Deer movement studies have not shown any permanent detrimental biological effects on deer from dog chases in a high density deer area. (note "high density deer area", which dog-hunted areas typically are not)*
9. *Experimental hunts have shown that hunting deer with dogs is a highly efficient harvest method with potential for high crippling loss. Hunter success on experimental dog-hunts was 65 percent and crippling incidence was 38 percent.*
10. *Dog dispersal patterns on experimental chases indicate that very large tracts of land are required to hunt deer with dogs. Seventy-four percent of identified dog-hunted lands are not large enough to insure that dog movement into surrounding ownerships will not occur 70 percent of the time. No tracts were identified that are large enough to contain dog movements 100 percent of the time.*

Campo, J.J., G.E. Spencer, and B. Ortego. 1987. White-tailed deer hunting with dogs in east Texas. Proc. Southeast. Assoc. Fish and Wildl. Agencies 41:404-409.

This six-page paper summarizes the 1984-1985 study.

Average dog dispersal from the point of release was 1.1 km (.68 miles); 70% of chases were within 1.6 km (1 mile) of the release point. Dog dispersal data indicated that 2,514 ha (6,212 acres) were required to hunt deer with dogs in a 405-ha (1,000 acres) core area to prevent dog trespass onto surrounding land in 70% of the chases. (abstract)

Dog dispersal data indicated that 70% of chases were within 1.6 km (1 mile) of the release point, and the greatest dog dispersal was 7.4 km (4.6 miles). These data provide a useful measure of the size area needed for deer hunting with dogs if dogs are to be contained within land controlled by dog hunters. Assuming a square-shaped tract and 1.6 km (1 mile) dog dispersal, 2,514 ha (6,212 acres) would be required to release dogs in a 405-ha (1,000-acre) core area to contain dog dispersal 70% of the time. Similarly 8.956 ha (22,131 ac) would be required to release dogs in a 4,047 ha (10,000 acre) core area. Dogs could not be released in the remaining "buffer" area without risk of dog trespass. This strategy is not practical for most dog-hunters and, therefore, dog dispersal into surrounding lands is inevitable in most cases. (page 408, first full paragraph)

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. 1990. Hunting deer with dogs. Texas Parks and Wildl. Dep. Fed. Aid Rep. 3 29pp.

A follow-up study to the 1984-1985 study was done in 1989. Hunter and landowner questionnaires, mapping dog-hunted lands, and investigating deer population characteristics on the four remaining paired study areas were done. The remaining 10 dog-hunted areas had changed to non-dog-hunted status.

From the abstract, page 1, the last two items stand out:

6. *Deer herds on dog-hunted study areas within the Sabine and Sam Houston National Forests remained suppressed and fragile in 1989 at 4 deer per 1,000 acres. Non-dog-hunted areas on the same National Forests support a moderate, vigorous herd of 28 deer per 1,000 acres. The same comparative 7:1 difference in deer numbers was observed on similar study areas in 1984-85 with 46 deer per 1,000 acres on non-dog-hunted areas. Browse surveys show that range conditions are not limiting deer herd growth on dog-hunted lands.*
7. *The results of this investigation have documented that a danger of depletion of the deer resource exists on lands where deer hunting with dogs is permitted and that this danger of depletion is directly related to some factor or combination of factors associated with the practice of hunting deer with dogs.*

Campo, Joseph J. and Gary E. Spencer. 1991. Regulatory Response to Deer Hunting with Dogs in Eastern Texas. Proc. Annu.Conf. Southeast. Assoc. Fish and Wildl. Agencies 45:235-240.

This six-page paper summarizes the study results that prompted Texas to ban deer hunting with dogs beginning with the 1990-1991 hunting season.

Opposition to hunting with dogs resulted from trespass by dogs and hunters, hunting from public roads, indiscriminate kills, disturbance, and personal preference. A typical example was a dispute when deer dogs and /or hunters crossed onto an ownership or hunting lease where they had no permission. Law enforcement records (citations) indicated that trespass and illegal hunting from public roads were the most frequent violations of deer-dog hunters. (page 239, second paragraph)