



Mule Deer Strategies and Management

SEASON THREE

By Dean Trumbley



Agenda

- Introductions
- Photos/Videos
- Hunting Strategies
 - Homework
 - Ruts On
- Management Considerations
- Season Three
- Question/Answer





Dean Trumbley RP Bio., P. Biol, QEP

- Registered Professional Biologist designation in BC
- Professional Biologist designation in Alberta
- Consultant for industry and government for over 15 years
 - Participated on well over 75 studies in fisheries/wildlife
- Member of COSEWIC 2006-2013
 - Co-Chair for 2 years
 - Lead on the Terrestrial Mammals SSC
 - Sub-lead on the Freshwater Fisheries SSC
- Member on the Canadian delegation for the Convention on Biological Diversity for the United Nations
- Former big game guide
- Born August 22 and first hunting trip was September 10th





Mule Deer

- Mule Deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*)
- 3-3½ feet tall, 125-400 pounds
- Fawning June-July, usually 2 (1-3)
- Central and western North America
- Home range is roughly 36-240 hectares
- Normal life-span 16 years in the wild
- Rutting season October to December
- Coniferous forests, desert shrubs, chaparral, grasslands with shrubs, however browse plants have to be available in all habitat types





Balance

My “*Bringing Science to the Hunt*” segment series in Trigger Effect always balances the teaching of both hunting strategies with an understanding of biology, conservation and/or management.

I live by this principle.





Let's start with some photos and video!

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Thompson Region

4x4 Mule Deer Buck

Heavy interior Douglas fir stand (rut)

Harvested by Dean Trumbley



Season Two



Co-Host Gary Ducommun's daughter's first buck.



Cariboo Region

4x4 Mule Deer Buck

Heavy interior Douglas fir stand (second estrus)

Harvested by Dean Trumbley



Season One



My son's first 4x4 buck.



Thompson Region

4x4 Mule Deer Buck

Ponderosa pine and interior Douglas fir benches (rut)

Harvested by Gary Ducommun



Hunting Strategies

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Strategies

- Not all mule deer are the same
 - Understand the geography and behaviour

1. Homework

- a) Behaviour Considerations
- b) Scouting

2. Ruts On

- a) Geographic Patterning
- b) Weather
- c) Predators





Understanding Behaviour

- Early season
 - Bachelor groups, feeding and cooling
- Pre-Rut
 - On the move (migration)
 - Photoperiod
 - Snow depth trigger (mountainous)
- Rut
 - Early rut: key “does”
 - Second estrus: highly mobile
- Post-Rut
 - Food and resting cover





Scouting

- Spring/Summer
 - Fawn survival and bucks in velvet
 - Alpine and sub-alpine pockets
 - Elevation pockets
 - Identify migration funnels or corridors
- Pre-Rut to Rut
 - Use of trail cameras/mineral
 - Migration trigger (snow depths) and/or
 - Rut (photoperiod)
- Wintering *(not for hunting purposes but understanding the herd status)*
 - Snow Interception, Thermal and Security Cover





Ruts On!

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Geographic Patterning

- Although you cannot pattern a mule deer buck like a whitetail, they do have geographic habits that you can pattern





Weather

- Mule deer rely heavily upon their senses (*sight, hearing and smell*)
 - A good rule of thumb is they need to have at least two of these peaked at all times; therefore,
 - High wind, extreme cold or higher than normal temperatures will drive deer activity into thermal cover
 - Heavy rain or snow tends to push mule deer around and they will favour small openings near security cover
 - Warm up after heavy snowfall drives deer into openings as well, favouring large.

Favorite tactic: if you find a big buck track in fresh snow that is less than an hour old...walk them out!





Predators

- If you are identifying predator activity in an area that will change the behaviour and patterns of mule deer; this includes,
 - Wolf, cougar, coyotes
 - Human pressure
 - Vehicle traffic (noise pollution)
- Use aerial photos, scouting and deer sign to identify the location of security cover being used
 - Security cover is mature stands of timber with excellent escape routes and maximized ability for deer senses, especially sight and smell
- Other reality may identify that you need to concentrate efforts elsewhere

Favorite tactic: if large predators are in the area hunt heavily in the security cover you have identified during scouting...my favorite is mature IDF stands (second growth) bordering steep Ponderosa Pine benches or rim rock.





Management Considerations

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History



History

- Mule deer was the dominant ungulate throughout British Columbia
- Pre-1960 forest fires were frequent and large (1000 hectares +), however they burnt less intense and more rapid
- White-tailed deer were only present (sparsely) in north-eastern BC and in the valley bottoms in the southern interior as short as 25-years ago





History

- In the 70s-80s forest practises did not really address mule deer management directly
- Hunting had substantial general buck seasons (September to January) with antlerless seasons as well (pre-rut)
- Forest fire suppression became much more effective





History

- In the late 80s and early 90s mule deer populations starting experiencing problems in north-eastern B.C. and in the Cariboo
- Various research was conducted and 4-point seasons were implemented in these areas, however the Thompson/Okanagan remained status quo, minus the antlerless seasons





History

- Fire suppression in the 90s and into the year 2000 became high effective limiting fire sizes to 10 hectares and less
- Research results from the Cariboo were used as a blanket template for mule deer management when pertaining to the forest industry
- Some range regulations were enforced during critical mule deer time periods (i.e. spring fawning)
- By the early 2000s pine beetle started to rear its ugly head





History

- Presently, mule deer seasons are limited with the majority pressure being put onto 4-point or better bucks(tend to be mature), concentrated recruitment buck seasons and does are LEH
- White-tailed deer populations are rapidly expanding
- Range cattle dominate mule deer habitats
- High predator numbers





Management Considerations

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Key Messages

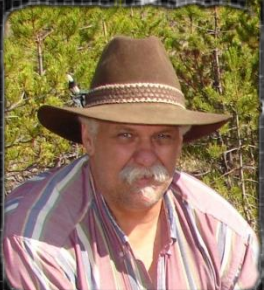


Never one thing

- Frequently as a biologist I am asked:
What do you think the reason is mule deer numbers are low?

ANSWER:

It is the accumulations of many effects that cause the issue...in order to fix, we must use a holistic solution.





Fires are Good *(just not for us)*



April 2005



May 2007



Finally...

*We need to start managing based on
herd quality and not hunter
opportunity!*

If our herds are healthy and the
carrying capacity of the land is
attained...the hunter opportunity is
taken care of.





Teaser

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Season Three



Teaser...



KENT



GARY



DEAN

Questions?

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Thank-you for your time!