

PROPOSAL 258

5 AAC 85.045(18). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose.

Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunting seasons in Unit 20D as follows:

(18) hunting seasons and bag limits for moose in Unit 20 are as follows:

...

Unit 20(D), that portion lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River, except the Delta Junction Management Area and the Bison Range Controlled Use Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose, per lifetime of a hunter, by youth hunt drawing permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued may be issued in combination with those portion in the Delta Junction Management Area and the Bison Range Controlled Use Area; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf;

Sept. 16 – Sept. 25
(General hunt only)

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf

Oct. 10 - Nov. 25
(General hunt only)

...

Unit 20(D), that portion within the Bison Range Controlled Use Area

...

1 antlerless moose, per lifetime of a hunter, by youth hunt drawing permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued in Unit 20(D) lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River and the Delta Junction Management Area; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf;

Unit 20(D), that portion within the Delta Junction Management Area

RESIDENT HUNTERS:

...

1 antlerless moose, per lifetime of a hunter, by youth hunt drawing permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued Unit 20(D) lying west of the west bank of the Johnson River and south of the north bank of the Tanana River and the Bison Range Controlled Use Area; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf;

1 moose every four regulatory years by drawing permit a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

...

1 antlerless moose by registration permit only; a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf

Sept. 16 – Sept. 25
(General hunt only)

No open season.

Sept. 16 – Sept. 25
(General hunt only)

Sept. 1 - Sept. 15
(General hunt only)

Oct. 10 - Nov. 25
(General hunt only)

NONRESIDENT HUNTERS:

1 moose every four regulatory years by drawing permit only, a person may not take a calf or a cow accompanied by a calf; or

Sept. 1 - Sept. 15

...

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Antlerless moose hunts must be reauthorized annually. The objectives of the Unit 20D antlerless moose hunts are to 1) stabilize population growth of this high-density moose population; 2) address concerns about range degradation, reduced nutritional condition of moose, and reduced reproductive success of moose; 3) make progress toward meeting the Unit 20D intensive management (IM) harvest objective of 500–700 moose; and 4) provide youth and disabled veteran hunting opportunity.

The Unit 20D moose population is currently below the IM population objective and nutritional indices suggest the population is at low to moderate nutritional levels. In November 2023, the Southern Unit 20D population estimate was 3,250 moose (90% confidence interval 2,715–3,786 moose; 2.1 moose per square mile). This estimate represents a slight increase in moose abundance compared to the 2022 survey, which estimated 2,530 moose (1.62 moose/mi²). The 2022 population estimate was 40% lower than the 2020 estimate, likely due to increased mortality because of severe winter conditions during 2021–2022, which included deep snow and winter rain events. The 2024 observed twinning rate of 27.5% (up from 8% in 2023) was a near record high for GMU 20D. The two-year (2023 and 2024) average twinning rate is 17.8%. An increased twinning rate following the population reduction after the winter of 2021–2022 suggests improved nutritional condition of this moose population. A reduction in browse offtake from 41% in 2022 to 21% in 2023 in Unit 20D also supports less browsing pressure on available forage. Furthermore, short-yearling weights collected in 2025 averaged 396 lbs, which is greater than the 385 lb threshold suggestive of low nutrition but less than the 410 lb threshold suggestive of high nutrition. Thus, similar to the multi-year twinning rate estimate, the short-yearling weights suggest the moose population nutrition is now at moderate levels. The goal is to manage the 20D moose population for stability, and antlerless harvest is an important component of this management strategy. No antlerless moose were harvested in regulatory year (RY)22 or RY23 as the moose population experienced a 40% decline as a result of the severe winter of 2021 – 2022. During RY24 a limited number of antlerless permits were offered, and 12 cows were harvested.

Continued antlerless harvest is needed to maintain this population at an optimal density relative to habitat constraints and will contribute additional harvest towards meeting the IM harvest objective without reducing bull-to-cow ratios. The current population trend suggests that low, consistent antlerless harvest provided by drawing permit hunts in Unit 20D, in conjunction with other mortality factors (including ceremonial harvest, vehicle collision, accidents, and predation), is appropriate to maintain population stability. If antlerless moose hunts are not reauthorized, the moose population could increase to levels beyond the capacity of the habitat. Opportunity to hunt a harvestable surplus of cow moose would be lost, and the ability to meet IM harvest objectives could be further compromised.

The Department of Fish and Game (department) will continue to evaluate antlerless moose hunts and their effect on moose density and population growth. The department will implement future antlerless moose hunts as needed based on the evaluation of three indices of density-dependent moose nutritional conditions in relation to changes in moose density: biomass removal of current annual growth on winter browse, proportion of females with twin calves, and late-winter calf weights.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish & Game

HQ-F25-040
