



## Why are some species hunted on Antelope Island?

The Utah Division of Wildlife Resources and Utah State Parks work hand in hand to manage the wildlife in Antelope Island State Park. Hunting plays a crucial role in keeping the park's wildlife populations healthy and at manageable numbers for the available habitat.

### Support for deer hunting

Currently, deer hunting on Antelope Island is limited to two male deer (called bucks) per year. That number will increase in the coming years to help address the following issues:

#### Reducing the risk of disease

Chronic wasting disease — also called CWD — is an always-fatal disease for deer, and it has been detected close to Antelope Island. Buck deer are more likely to carry and spread the disease to other deer. Regulating the number of bucks, through hunting, helps reduce the risk of spreading CWD.



#### Sustaining and increasing the deer population

In recent years, Antelope Island has experienced a decrease in its deer herd, which is likely due to a combination of factors:

- Approximately 200 deer were translocated off the island in 2014.
- This population has a relatively high number of bucks compared to does.
- Bucks are larger and require more resources than females to survive.
- New fawns are not surviving, mainly due to coyote predation.
- A high fence was installed on the south end of the island, which limits migration and may ultimately limit the amount of food available to deer.

As contrary as it may sound, buck hunting can actually help increase a deer population over time. New research in Utah shows that in populations like the one on the island — where a high number of males may be outcompeting or displacing females and fawns for limited resources — there will be little to no population growth. When there are fewer bucks (but still enough to mate with all the does), a population will see more fawns survive to adulthood. This scenario, repeated over time, is how a population grows. Hunting is a proven way to ensure bucks are strategically removed from the population and gradual herd growth can occur.

### Funding habitat projects

Revenue generated from hunting permits is used to improve habitat for deer and many other wildlife species. Some projects include noxious weed control, planting nutritious vegetation, and installing or improving available water sources. Better habitat results in more deer and healthier deer.

#### DIVISIONS



#### OFFICES



## Support for bighorn sheep hunting

Antelope Island's bighorn sheep herd is growing, and there are plans to implement limited hunting beginning in the fall of 2025. Why is hunting necessary? Many of the reasons are similar to those mentioned earlier:

### Reducing disease risks and maintaining a healthy population

Bighorn sheep are highly susceptible to pneumonia. It's caused by bacteria that can be transferred to bighorns when they encounter infected domestic sheep or goats or other infected bighorn sheep. Many bighorn populations exposed to pneumonia die out over several years because lambs cannot survive the disease.

To prevent the disease from getting onto the island, managers must ensure two key things:

- No bighorn sheep can leave the island.
- No domestic goats or sheep can access the island.

Male bighorn sheep, known as rams, will begin to search for breeding opportunities at around 4 years old. They are willing to travel very long distances to breed. To reduce the chance of rams attempting to leave the island — and bringing back disease — maintaining fewer rams on the island is necessary. Transplanting rams off the island isn't always an option because of disease concerns in recipient populations, so hunting is used as the primary tool to help manage a healthy number of rams.



### Funding habitat projects

Just like with deer permits, bighorn sheep hunting permits generate money that is used for habitat projects. Improved habitat results in the island being able to support more bighorn sheep, which visitors can then view and enjoy.

## Support for bison hunting

There is currently limited bison hunting in the state park. Although the bison are wild animals, the Antelope Island herd is rounded up every year, and each animal is vaccinated, screened for disease and tagged with a unique identifier.

When the herd has more animals than the park's habitat can support, the excess bison are either sold at auction or hunted. Together, both methods help keep the bison numbers at manageable levels. Hunting is often the tool used to remove older male animals from the herd.

