
Population Reduction Options

Capture and relocate

Definition. The capture, transport and release of free-ranging, wild animals, primarily for conservation or ecological reasons, in (to) a location different from which they came, but where the species may presently occur or historically have occurred naturally.

Discussion. Ungulates are trapped, netted and/or remotely immobilized with tranquilizers and then relocated. Ungulates may be captured by a variety of techniques including stationary drop nets, rocket nets, net guns, remote immobilization using drugs, corral or Clover traps. Some capture techniques involve pre-baiting to attract and condition the animal to the capture site, and then baiting the trap or net site to facilitate capture. After capture, the animal is generally restrained and blindfolded, and sometimes chemically immobilized. Subsequently, the animal may be subject to a variety of procedures: marking, tagging, collaring, collection of biological data or samples, preparation for transport or even euthanasia. Time from reaching the trap until the deer is restrained ranges from 5 seconds to 30 minutes, and after that, tagging, collaring or other procedures can be completed quickly (often less than 5 minutes).

Alternately, animals can be injected by tranquilizer darts, via remote delivery. It takes about 4 to 6 minutes for the tranquilizer to become effective during which time the animal may continue to feed and move. Wildlife professionals have no control over where an animal might move, and may require permission of land owners to come onto private land and retrieve a darted animal. When the animal succumbs to the tranquilizer, it is tracked and captured.

For transport, the animal may or may not be crated and then trucked, trailered or barged to the release site. During transport, deer should not be overcrowded (<5 individuals transported together) and should be kept in the dark. Antlers should be removed from bucks or they should be transported separately.

Efficacy. Effective at lowering populations, and may be useful in localized situations

Cost

- Expensive due to staff time (generally >60% of project costs) required for capture and transport
- Costs vary from \$352 USD /deer in 2000 to \$800 USD/deer in 2002
- Winnipeg MB project reported costs of \$300 CDN/deer in 1985 - volunteer time not included. Details of this project are included in Appendix B.

Human health and safety concerns. The risk of accidental encounters with capture equipment and treatment drugs is minimal. There is a small risk of human injury during capture activities. Animals

treated with immobilizing drugs cannot be consumed by humans so animals must be ear tagged prior to release in areas where there may be hunting.

Humaneness

- High mortality after release negates the perceived “humaneness” of this action.
- Animals can suffer extreme stress during capture and relocation, capture related injuries and mortality, capture myopathy causing debilitation and death, and incur high incidental mortality rates following release.

Advantages

- Perceived by the public as a humane option, therefore has some public relations value
- May instill wariness in remaining animals, possibly reducing aggressive incidents
- May be of value for small social groups in localized situations under special circumstances
- May be of value when the population is below carrying capacity at the release site

Disadvantages

- Not as humane as the public might think; not necessarily a non-lethal management option
- High ungulate mortality rates, both during capture and following release, may occur
- Ungulates may be injured during the capture or transport process
- Ungulates subject to capture and relocations are susceptible to capture myopathy; a significant mortality factor
- Expensive
- Requires substantial financial and logistical commitments of trained personnel and equipment to ensure human and animal safety
- Disrupts resident populations and may increase disease spread, initiate or exacerbate other land use conflicts, or disturb existing predator-prey balance
- Ungulates habituated to urban environments may seek out comparable residential locations from which they came
- Few skilled contractors available, requires significant investment of Ministry staff time

Population Reduction Options

Capture and euthanize

Definition. The capture and subsequent euthanization of ungulates, using a penetrating bolt gun or firearm.

Discussion. Ungulates are trapped, netted or tranquilized and then killed. For capture and euthanize projects, ungulates may be captured by a variety of techniques including stationary drop net, rocket nets, net guns, Clover traps or remote immobilization drugs.