

**RESOLUTION 5-23  
LANDOWNER SPECIAL LICENSE**

**WHEREAS** wildlife ungulate populations, specifically elk, continue to cause significant damage to agricultural commodities; and

**WHEREAS** current tag allocations and hunting quotas have not alleviated or mitigated economic losses for producers; and

**WHEREAS** landowners must currently apply and be unsuccessful in the draw for regular season before applying for a Landowner Special License; and

**WHEREAS** the Landowner Special License is only valid for a single season; and

**WHEREAS** the ungulate issue is an ongoing agricultural problem as evidenced by previous resolutions regarding the management of elk at both the ASB Conference as well as RMA.

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED  
THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST**

That Alberta Environment and Protected Areas restructure the criteria for Landowner Special Licenses to allow for landowners to receive tags without having to previously be unsuccessful in a regular draw.

**FURTHER THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED  
THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST**

That Alberta Environment and Protected Areas allow Landowner Special Licenses to be valid for the entirety of the season in all Wildlife Management Units (WMU's) in which the applicant has deeded land.

**SPONSORED BY:** Saddle Hills County

**MOVED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SECONDED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CARRIED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DEFEATED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STATUS:** Provincial

**DEPARTMENT:** Alberta Environment and Protected Areas

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ungulate populations continue to negatively impact agricultural producers. According to the Minister of Environment and Parks, ungulate population management requires multiple areas of interest, and providing increasingly more hunting licenses may not be the best option. The number of hunters on the landscape is already at a threshold where to add anymore would risk increasing conflicts.

In 2021, according to the Hunter Harvest Report by AEP, the estimated hunter success was 25% in WMU 358 and 36% in WMU 359. The estimated total elk harvested in WMUs 358 and 359 in 2021 was 383 and 613, respectively.

Past resolutions on the issue of ungulate management date back to 1999, from both the ASB Conference and RMA.

## Resolution 4-15S

# Landowner Special Licence for Elk

---

Date:

February 23, 2015

Expiry Date:

April 1, 2018

Active Status:

Expired

Sponsors:

Mountain View County

District:

2 - Central

Year:

2015

Convention:

Spring

Category:

Environment

Status:

Archived

Vote Results:

Carried

Preamble:

WHEREAS Alberta ungulate populations, primarily elk, are increasing rapidly due to current wildlife management policies; and

WHEREAS the increased elk population is responsible for damage to hay land, pasture, forages and other crops primarily located in agricultural areas; and

WHEREAS the introduction of an Antlerless Elk Season in many of the Wildlife Management Units (WMU), was to control elk populations; and

WHEREAS landowners are currently required to apply in the regular draw process if they wish to obtain an Antlerless Elk Licence; and

WHEREAS if the landowner is unsuccessful in the draw, they may apply for a Landowner Special Licence which requires ownership of a minimum of 160 acres and is only valid for the single season applied for; and

WHEREAS first parcel out subdivisions restrict the landowner's ability to obtain a Landowner Special Licence;

Operative Clause:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties request that Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development (ESRD) amend the Landowner Special Licence criteria to remove the requirement to enter in the draw process and that landowners of agricultural property with less than 160 acres qualify for the special licence; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that ESRD permit Landowner Special Licences to be used in any declared season within that Wildlife Management Unit.

Member Background:

Non-migrating herds of elk are becoming established in Alberta's agricultural areas. These local populations are destroying both standing and stockpiled forages intended for use as cattle feed. The damage is compounded by the fact that the elk trample and defecate on unconsumed forage rendering it unpalatable.

Limited effective control measures are available for producers dealing with the dilemma of these non-native herds. Amending hunting regulations in Agricultural zones will reduce the number of non-native elk, while having no effect on elk populations in their traditional habitat.

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is responsible for preventing and mitigating ungulate damage by providing producers with deterrent, intercept feed, temporary fencing, and in chronic cases, permanent fencing materials. While these techniques are effective for small areas such as stored feed areas, this approach does not work over large areas.

It is assumed that the introduction of an Antlerless Elk Season in many of the Wildlife Management Units (WMU), was to control increasing elk populations. Presently, landowners are required to apply in the draw process if they wish to obtain an Antlerless Elk Licence. If they are unsuccessful in the draw, they may apply as a person named on title on a parcel of 160 acres or more. They may then be eligible for a Landowner Special Licence. This licence is only useable on the titled land and during the season applied for. With multiple hunting seasons available in many WMU's, the Landowner Special Licence should be valid during any identified season.

With increasing growth and development pressures in Alberta it is common for 160 acre quarter sections to be subdivided with a first parcel out. First parcel out subdivisions typically only remove 5-10 acres from the Agricultural quarter. The remaining parcel (150 acres plus) is typically utilized for agricultural purposes in the production of crop or forage. These landowners would no longer qualify to apply for a Landowners Special Licence on the 150 acre parcel which could be directly affected by depredation by elk.

As the licences are only valid on one parcel of titled land, landowners would not be inclined to apply if elk were not an issue on their land. However, as elk herd movement is unpredictable landowners who did not apply for the regular draw often experience elk depredation. It is suggested that the requirement for landowners to apply for the draw be removed, and allow landowners more flexibility to apply for the special licence when it is needed. In the main elk WMU's the Antlerless Elk Special Licence is only valid in one of the specified seasons, however there are 2-5 seasons depending on the WMU. If the object of the draw is to reduce the elk population it would make sense that measures should be in place to provide every opportunity for success. From reviewing the 2013 harvest estimates (see reference link) it is clear that success rates can be quite low, and current regulations may not be achieving the desired level of elk population management in Agricultural areas.

References:

[www.albertaregulations.ca/pdfs/hunt-draws/Landowner-Special-Licence.pdf](http://www.albertaregulations.ca/pdfs/hunt-draws/Landowner-Special-Licence.pdf)

[www.mywildalberta.com/Hunting/documents/ElkHunterHarvest-2013.pdf](http://www.mywildalberta.com/Hunting/documents/ElkHunterHarvest-2013.pdf)

[RMA Background:](#)

The AAMDC has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

[Government Response:](#)

**Environment and Parks:** Environment and Parks will be developing a new game allocation policy through a collaborative process with the Alberta Game Management Advisory

Group, of which the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties is a member. Objectives for landowner licenses will be discussed through this process. Environment and Parks values the perspective of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties in informing this program as it goes forward.

Currently, Environment and Parks is changing some requirements related to the landowner special licenses. For 2015/16, individuals who apply for either antlered or antlerless elk special licenses and are unsuccessful can now apply for antlerless elk landowner licenses where they are eligible.

#### Development:

Although the response indicates a willingness to address the issue of landowner special licenses through a new game allocation policy, at this point there has been no policy change to address the resolution request. As such, this resolution has been deemed Intent Not Met, and will be revisited as the collaborative process for developing a new game allocation policy takes place.

## Resolution 9-15: Elk Quota Hunt

**WHEREAS:** Many Eastern Slopes and Peace Region Municipalities are having difficulties with problem elk populations;

**WHEREAS:** Many Peace Region Municipalities have submitted many resolutions in this regard for these same problems;

**WHEREAS:** Minimal and modest increases have been made to Eastern Slopes and Peace Region Wild Life Management Units (WMU's) harvest limits;

**WHEREAS:** These increases in tag allocations have not resulted in alleviating or mitigating economic losses sustained by producers;

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT ALBERTA'S AGRICULTURAL SERVICE BOARDS REQUEST** that the Minister of Environment and Sustainable Resources implement an Elk Quota Hunt, based upon the principles of the former Chronic Wasting Disease Quota Hunt and/or other ways the ministry can develop to alleviate this problem.

**Status:** Provincial

#### Response

### Alberta Environment and Sustainable Resource Development

Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is implementing new elk hunting seasons in wildlife management units 162 and 163 in southeastern Alberta. These

additional seasons will occur in areas where there are currently low elk numbers in order to maintain low populations and reduce range expansion.

Our department is increasing the number of antlerless elk hunting seasons for Canadian Forces Base Suffield and creating new hunting seasons for antlered elk. These seasons are in support of lowering elk populations in and around the base in response to landowner concerns. We are also implementing late-season antlerless elk hunting seasons in wildlife management units 302, 303, 304, 305, 306, 308 and 310 in southwestern Alberta. These seasons will extend into January and are being implemented in response to landowner concerns over agricultural depredation.

Department staff conducted elk population surveys in many wildlife management units throughout the province, including the Peace River area. Updated population estimates will be used to make changes to the number of issued hunting permits for the upcoming 2015 hunting season.

In addition, Environment and Sustainable Resource Development is amending the procedure for landowners to provide greater flexibility in obtaining antlerless elk landowner licences. Landowners who are unsuccessful in either the antlerless or antlered elk special licence draws will be allowed to apply for an antlerless elk landowner licence.

Resolution 12-20F

## **Expansion of Elk Hunting for Management in Agriculture Production Areas**

---

Date:

November 1, 2020

Expiry Date:

December 1, 2023

Active Status:

Active

Sponsors:

Leduc County

District:

3 - Pembina River

Year:

2020

Convention:

Fall

Category:

Environment

Status:

Intent Not Met

Vote Results:

Carried

Preamble:

WHEREAS Alberta's elk populations are increasing rapidly due to current wildlife management policies; and

WHEREAS increased elk populations within primarily agricultural areas has impacted agricultural producers through damage to hay land, pasture, silage crops and other crops; and

WHEREAS the introduction of an antlerless elk season in many of Alberta's wildlife management units was intended to assist in elk population control;

Operative Clause:

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) request that the Government of Alberta increase the number of antlerless elk draw seasons to a minimum of two per wildlife management unit (WMU) located within agricultural areas; and

FURTHER BE IT RESOLVED that RMA request that the Government of Alberta increase the number of antlerless elk tags allocated within WMUs that are located within agricultural areas to compensate for poor hunter harvest success.

Member Background:

Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 334 is comprised of portions of Leduc County, Brazeau County, and Yellowhead County. The eastern portion of this WMU is primarily agricultural land with a high proportion of livestock operations, who rely on hay land and silage crops (such as corn) to provide winter feed for their cattle herds. Over the past three years, several herds of non-migrating elk have become established within WMU 334. Sightings of at least two separate herds of eighty elk and two herds of forty are common within the area. These elk have been damaging both standing and stockpiled forages that are intended for cattle feed.

Elk in the area have become especially damaging to corn crops that are intended as winter grazing for the cattle. While there are techniques for preventing and mitigating ungulate damage, such as deterrent, intercept feed and permanent fencing, these techniques are typically not effective/economical when dealing with large areas, such as entire fields.

The introduction of an antlerless elk season is believed to assist in the control of elk populations by removing female elk from the population. Tags are allocated within each WMU based on population numbers. This allocation assumes that with a 100% success rate of harvest, population numbers will be manageable. However, based on Alberta Environment and Parks' (AEP) Hunter Harvest Report, hunter success rates for elk only exceeded 50% in one WMU, and was only 11% in specifically for WMU 334.

AEP has confirmed that there has not been a specific survey for elk conducted within WMU 334, and the last aerial survey that was flown for other ungulate species was in January 2016. However, AEP had allocated 20 antlerless tags for WMU 334 in 2019 and 20 in 2020. According to the 2019 Hunter Harvest Report in 2019, five female elk and two young elk were harvested within the WMU, a success rate of 35%. Although this is a higher success rate than is recorded on the estimated resident harvest for elk, it is not a high enough success rate to ensure populations are managed.

By increasing the number of antlerless hunting seasons within WMUs where agriculture is a significant operation, the season in which elk can be hunted within these WMU's can be extended, and it is believed that the hunter harvest success rate can be increased. By increasing the number of antlerless tags available in these unit areas, elk populations will be more accurately managed even with a less than ideal hunter harvest rate.

Past resolutions have been endorsed by members of the Rural Municipalities of Alberta specifically related to elk population control, although there are no active resolutions currently.

References:

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/hunter-harvest-report-elk-estimated-resident-harvest-for-elk>

<https://rmalberta.com/resolutions/2-15s-elk-quota-hunt/>

<https://rmalberta.com/resolutions/4-15s-landowner-special-licence-for-elk/>

RMA Background:

RMA has no active resolutions directly related to this issue.

Government Response:

#### Alberta Environment and Parks

I appreciated hearing from RMA members regarding elk depredation specific to Wildlife Management Unit 334. To mitigate elk depredation in Alberta's agricultural areas, Environment and Parks employs several management strategies, including adding extra seasons, extending antlerless seasons and changing landowner licence eligibility. While

these strategies reduce depredation, they can also contribute to concerns related to hunter density, which can impact hunting access and limit harvest success.

I encourage the RMA to have concerned members track depredation events and provide details to their local fish and wildlife office (contact information is available at [www.alberta.ca](http://www.alberta.ca) by searching for “fish and wildlife contacts”), as this information can be used to assist the department in managing elk.

I have asked Environment and Parks staff to review the current landowner special licence process to ensure it is efficient and relevant to minimizing depredation issues. The department will also be evaluating the antlerless elk special licence as part of its annual process for recommending changes to hunting rules, and will adjust the number to better address concerns over agricultural conflict. Department staff indicate that an increase in antlerless elk tags and split seasons will not necessarily account for limited hunter success. Hunters’ ability to access lands containing the elk herds remains a key factor in determining the effectiveness of hunting as an elk-management tool. To assist on this front, I encourage RMA’s members to facilitate elk hunter access to private and leased public lands. This would have a substantial impact on harvest success.

#### Alberta Municipal Affairs

Alberta’s disaster recovery programs (DRPs) are intended to be financial assistance programs of last resort in response to widespread disasters or emergencies. The intent is that applicants first use insurance and other sources of assistance prior to accessing DRP assistance. Documentation is required from applicants to ensure that assistance is paid only for eligible uninsurable costs.

To enable DRP applicants to recover more quickly, the 2020 Disaster Assistance Guidelines (DAGs) include shortened program timelines to expedite the closure of DRPs, from five years in previous guidelines to three years. Applicants may request an extension if they experience project delays or are unable to submit the required documentation within the three-year timeline.

The Alberta Emergency Management Agency (AEMA) may provide a local authority applicant with an advance payment of up to 50 per cent of the eligible amount of requested assistance, if requested in writing by the community upon establishment of a DRP. Any subsequent requests for rolling advances must be supported by paid invoices from the applicant. For communities to receive an expedited final DRP payment, it is essential that they have completed their recovery projects and submitted all required records as indicated in the DAGs. Delays or discrepancies in project completion or the submission of requested documents result in final payment delays to the applicant.

The Disaster Assistance Guidelines ensure fair and transparent administration of DRPs and outline documentation requirements for applicants. The guidelines closely align with the federal Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAAs) to maximize federal reimbursement and minimize the financial burden on Alberta taxpayers. Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada may provide cost-recovery funding for DRPs based on a progressive formula under the DFAAs.

In order to receive federal reimbursement, the province must pass a strict federal audit for each program and meet all documentation requirements. AEMA is looking for opportunities to reduce red tape for individuals and communities under the DRP. As part of these efforts, AEMA is advocating for changes to the DFAA guidelines that would reduce administrative burdens under the program.

**Development:**

RMA appreciates the Alberta Environment and Parks (AEP) response outlining the several management strategies currently employed to mitigate elk depredation in agricultural areas. AEP's response has indicated that the department will be evaluating the antlerless elk special licence as part of its annual process for recommending changes to hunting rules and will adjust the number to better address concerns over agricultural conflict.

RMA assigns this resolution a status of Intent Not Met and will update the status of the resolution if there are any changes to elk hunting management from the annual evaluation. **Provincial Ministries:**

Environment and Parks