

Elk Economics

By Larry Hyslop



Alan Jenne's successful hunt for a bull elk

Elk are a valuable resource for Elko County. This is the message from Ken Gray, Regional Game Supervisor for the Nevada Department of Wildlife's Elko office.

This fall's elk hunts are just beginning, but we do know 3,958 cow (antlerless) tags and 1,475 bull tags have been given out. By looking at past success rates, Ken estimates 933 bulls and 1,225 cow elk will be taken this fall.

He also further projects that based on the amount of meat typically gotten from an elk kill, these hunts will provide 382,600 pounds of elk meat to hunters. Elk meat is highly nutritious, low in fat and cholesterol and high in protein. As an example of its value, an elk farm sells elk tenderloin filet for \$27/pound and stew meat for \$9.75 per pound.

Elko County provides the most elk hunting opportunities in the state. Looking at the rifle bull tags, 1,390 were given out in Nevada. Of those, 63%, or 879 tags, were given out in Elko County. For cow tags, of the 4,086 state tags, 68% or 2,790 tags, were given out here. Hunters spent \$120 for each tag. In 2012, ten hunters were unsuccessful in drawing for each tag given out.

Out of state hunters bring money into Nevada and Elko County. Of this year's cow tags, 72 went for out of state, each costing \$500. For bulls, 145 hunters spent \$1,200 for tags.

No local studies have been done to look at the amount of money spent by elk hunters but a national survey of state wildlife departments was conducted by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. It showed in 2011, the typical elk hunter spent \$1,457 on their yearly hunts, most of which was spent in the area of their hunts.

The value of elk goes beyond hunting. When people are questioned about their favorite animal to see, elk are usually near the top of their list. The presence of elk enhances Elko County residents' outdoor activities.

"The value of elk to Elko County people is overlooked," Ken said. One example of this is that while mule deer rifle hunts brings out a lot of hunters, it is only during a one-month season. Elk rifle hunts

extend over five months. Ken would like to see more promotion, more advertising, done for Elko County's elk resource.

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