

2024-25 Kansas Elk Harvest Report

PERFORMANCE REPORT STATEWIDE WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND SURVEYS

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Background – Elk were released onto Fort Riley Military Reservation in 1986, and a limited hunting season was initiated in 1990. The herd continued to increase until the elk began leaving the Fort and causing significant crop damage on neighboring landowners. The Department responded by allocating almost 200 permits in 1999 and 2000 resulting in the harvest of over 100 elk on and around the Fort and a significant reduction in the population.

As the herd rebounded, the Department's management philosophy changed to try and avoid situations of conflict with landowners followed by rapid herd reduction. As a result, longer seasons and less restrictive permitting options were progressively authorized as new issues emerged except on Fort Riley and the Cimarron National Grasslands. This framework allows elk that may be causing crop damage or other conflicts on private land to be harvested in a timely manner, giving landowners the ability to control their own elk numbers. However, elk hunting opportunity serves as a big incentive for landowners to maintain some elk. And many have, as evidenced by the herds of elk that have become established on private lands around the state. Elk continue to increase under this management approach and now occur at least occasionally though often unpredictably throughout most of the state.

Elk hunting in Kansas is limited to Kansas residents. Any-elk permits valid on Fort Riley are once-in-a-lifetime, and antlerless-only elk permits valid on Fort Riley may only be obtained once every five years. Demand for these permits has skyrocketed over the past six years. This season's total of 2564 applications or preference point purchases was by far the highest total on record, representing a 31% increase over last year's total of 1954, which was the previous record high (Figure 1). This includes an average over the past five years of 105 active-duty military personnel stationed at Fort Riley. These individuals are given a preferential draw opportunity for Fort Riley permits. Unit 3 permits are available over-the-counter (OTC) to general residents and landowner/tenants. Hunt-own-land permits are also available OTC in Units 2 and 3, with their advantage over landowner/tenant permits being their availability in the buffer area outside of Fort Riley within Unit 2 where landowner/tenant permits are not available.

Hunters purchased 229 elk permits for the 2024 season (Figure 2). This is the most elk permits ever sold in Kansas, up from 216 permits sold last season. The steady increase in the sale of over-the-counter permits for about the past dozen years is indicative of an elk herd growing in number and distribution in the state, but probably also reflects an apparent recent increase in elk moving off Fort Riley. It's also worth noting that regulatory changes in the early 2000s made elk progressively more accessible to more hunters, whereas regulations affecting permit availability have been stable now for over 10 years.

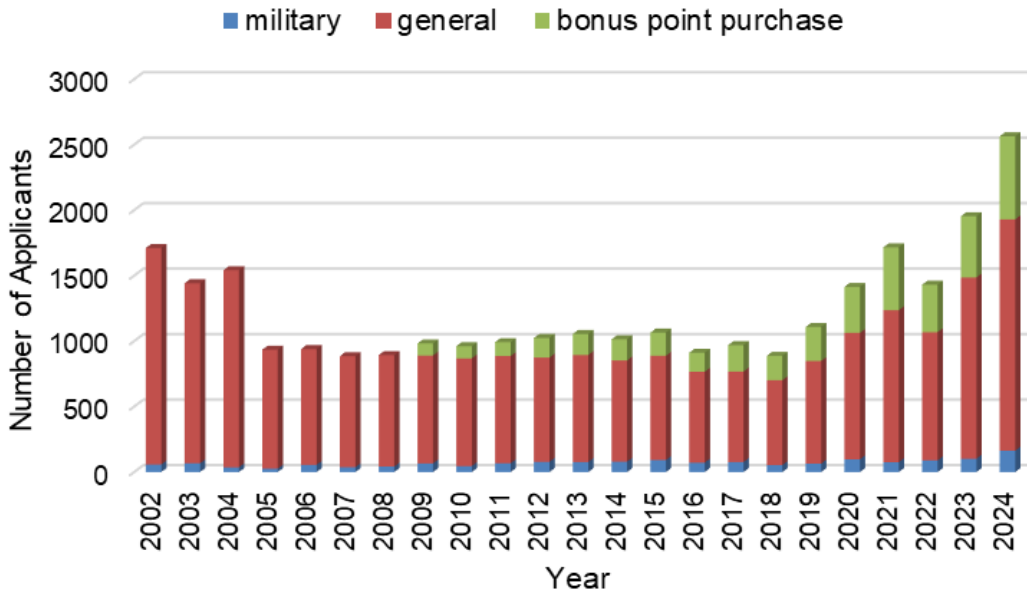


Figure 1. Fort Riley elk permit applications and bonus point purchases in Kansas since 2002. A \$5 bonus point fee was initiated in 2005 and increased to \$10 in 2016.

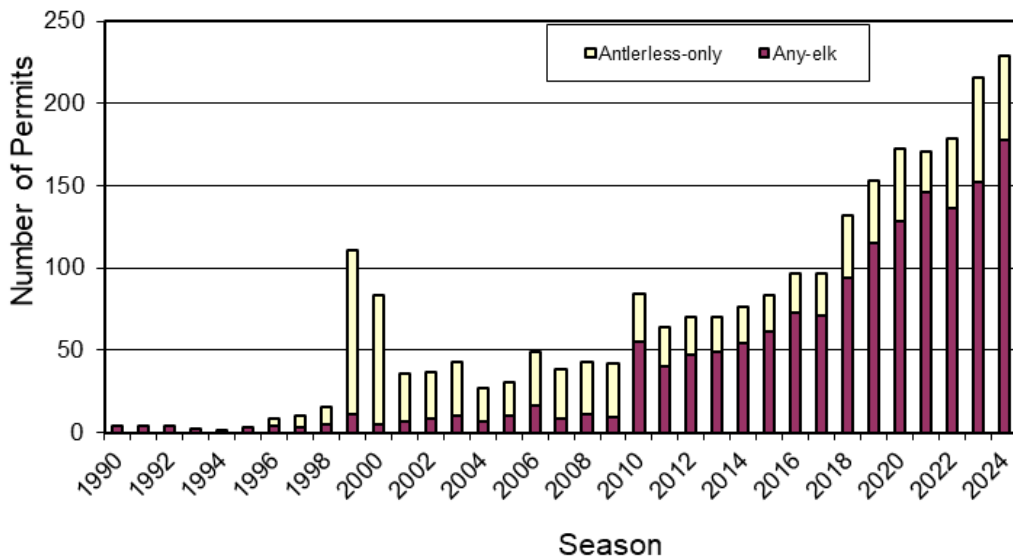


Figure 2. Antlerless-only and any-elk permit sales in Kansas since hunting seasons were initiated on Fort Riley in 1990.

Harvest – Elk harvest and hunter activities are monitored annually through harvest surveys sent to all elk hunters (see Appendix 1). Paper report cards and postage paid tooth envelopes are sent out at the beginning of the season, then paper and e-mail follow-ups are conducted at the end of the season. Fort Riley also has mandatory harvest registration that is incorporated into this report for applicable nonrespondents (i.e. those who reported their harvest to Fort Riley but not KDWP). The harvest survey response rate was 62% this season, 11% below the 5-year average.

The reported harvest was 47 elk (Figure 3), including 34 elk taken on 782 any-elk permits (19%) and 13 taken on 51 antlerless-only elk permits (25%). This was down from last year's 24-year high of 61 elk. Twenty-six of the 34 elk taken on any-elk permits were antlered. The number of antler points of 22 of these animals can be found in Table 1.

Total permit success was 21%. Ten of 12 hunters (83%) with Fort Riley any-elk permits and eight of 18 hunters (44%) with Fort Riley antlerless-only elk permits harvested elk. Over the past five years, Fort Riley any-elk permit holders have averaged 77% success and Fort Riley antlerless-only permit holders have averaged 50% success. Only 1/3 of the antlerless-only permits are valid during each one-month segment of the any-weapon season on Fort Riley. Five-year average harvest success for the October, November and December segments for antlerless-only permits were 53%, 40% and 57%, respectively. Harvest success rates for these permits since 2013 can be found in Figure 4.

Harvest success rates for permits available over-the-counter (not valid on Fort Riley) are provided in Figure 5. General resident any-elk and antlerless-only elk permit success rates averaged 21 and 14%, respectively, over the past five years. Success rates for landowner permits including landowner/tenant and hunt-own-land permits averaged 16% and 27%, respectively, for any-elk and antlerless only elk permits over the past five years.

Reported harvest and success rates do not include a correction for nonrespondents because Fort Riley has traditionally accounted for most of the harvest, and they have mandatory harvest reporting. In addition, from 2006-2015, harvest reporting was mandatory statewide to facilitate testing for chronic wasting disease (CWD). Consequently, until recently, the number of harvested elk not reported to the Department was presumably very low. More recently, with high permit sales and success outside Fort Riley, nonrespondents are probably contributing to harvest more than ever before. Expanding respondent success rates to nonrespondents yields an additional harvest of 23 elk, including 12 antlered bulls.

Elk harvest is spread out fairly evenly throughout the season (Figure 6), but there are a couple of notable points. Just one elk was killed during the August firearms season which was established in 2019 as an alternative to issuing depredation tags for damage to corn on private land. Archery and muzzleloader seasons on Fort Riley open September 1. Just one elk was killed on Fort Riley and four on private lands during that month. There were also seven elk killed outside of Fort Riley during the Dec. 4-15 regular firearms season (concurrent with firearms deer). Another 13 elk were killed on private lands during the late firearms season off Fort Riley, including three in January, eight in February and two in March.

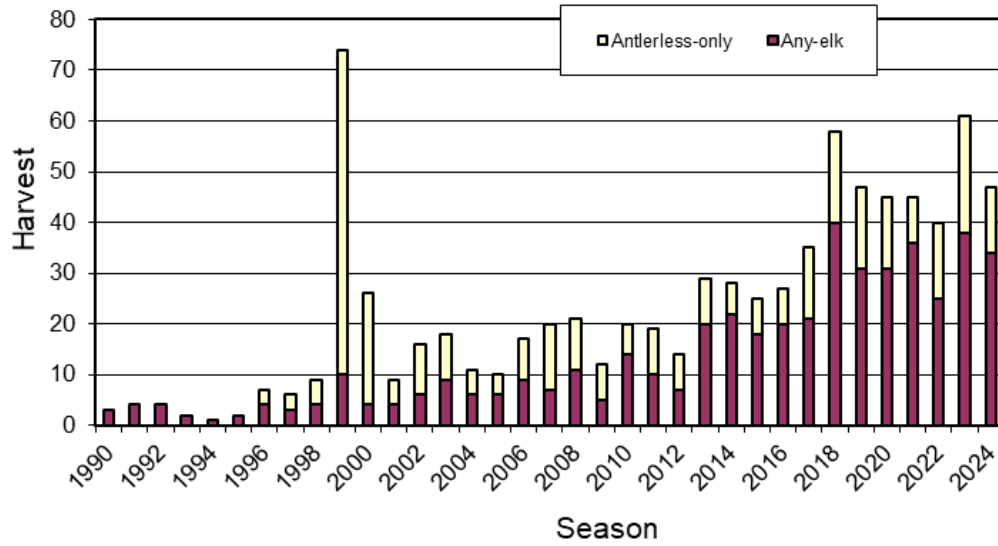


Figure 3. Elk harvest in Kansas by any-elk and antlerless-only elk permit holders since hunting seasons were initiated on Fort Riley in 1990.

Table 1. Antler points of bull elk harvested in Kansas during the 2024-25 season (n=22).

Antler Points	Number of Hunters
1x1	2
4x3	1
4x4	1
4x5	1
5x5	6
5x6	2
6x6	5
6x7	1
7x7	3



Figure 4. Harvest success rates for draw permit types valid on Fort Riley for elk in Kansas since 2013. (AE = any-elk, AO = antlerless-only)

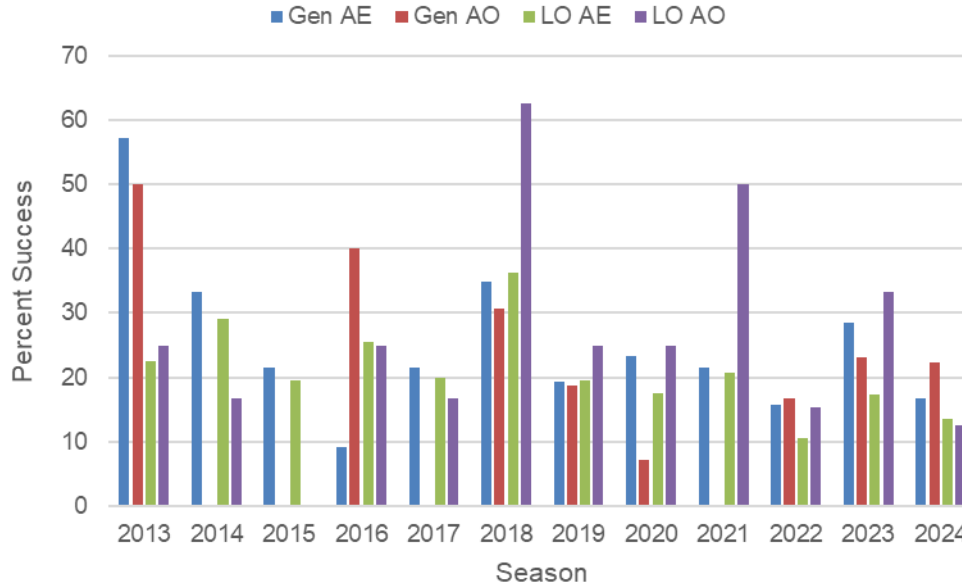


Figure 5. Harvest success rates for general resident (Gen) and landowner/tenant (LO) elk permits available in Kansas over-the-counter since 2013. (AE = any-elk, AO = antlerless-only)

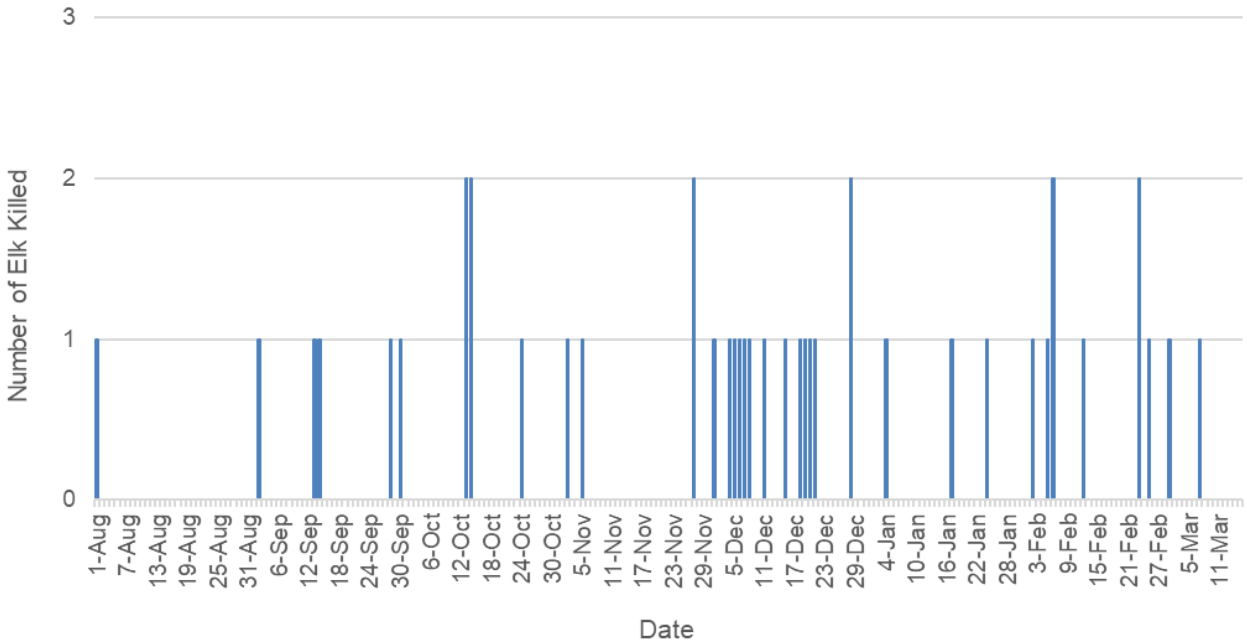


Figure 6. Reported date of harvest of elk taken during the 2024 season (n=42).

Equipment Use - Elk permits are valid during any season with equipment legal for that season. The percent of elk hunters using each equipment type in recent years is provided in Figure 7. Annual totals in this figure exceed 100% as quite a few hunters use more than one equipment type (21% in 2024). The percent of elk harvested with each equipment type is provided in Figure 8. Five-year harvest averages by equipment type are: firearms-70%, muzzleloader-11%, compound bow-15%, crossbow-5%, shotgun-0%, longbow-0%, and recurve bow-0%.

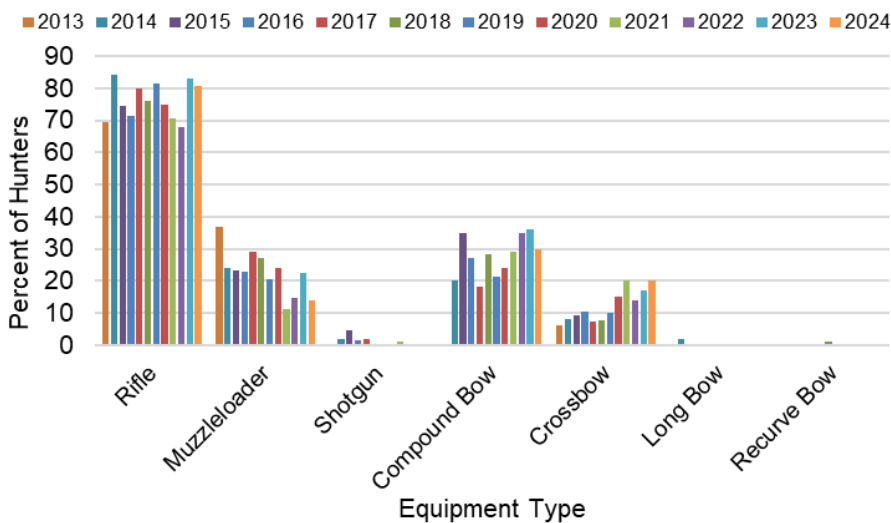


Figure 7. Percent of hunters using each equipment type to hunt elk in Kansas since 2013.

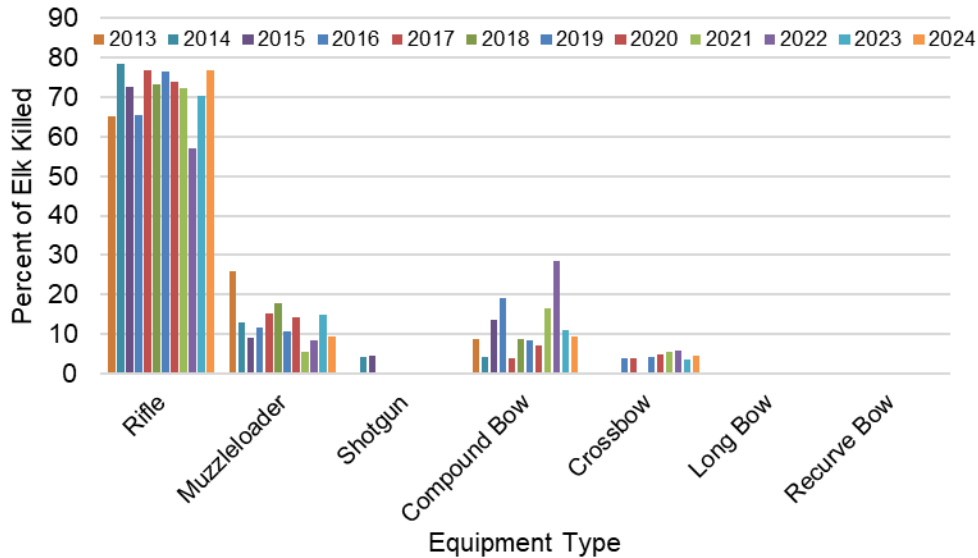


Figure 8. Percent of elk harvested in Kansas with each equipment type since 2013.

Harvest by Location – There are currently three elk management units in Kansas (see page 2 of Appendix 1) of which Units 2 and 3 are open to hunting. These units have been in place since 2011 except the boundary of Unit 2 was adjusted in 2018. Elk harvest in Kansas by management unit since 2013 can be found in Figure 9. Elk harvest by property type since 2013 can be found in Figure 10. Hunters provided county of harvest for 44 of 47 elk harvested. Harvest by county was as follows: Riley-17, Geary-10, Barber-3, Marshall-3, Pottawatomie-2, Clark-1, Clay-1, Hamilton-1, Kearny-1, Kingman-1, Kiowa-1, Sherman-1, and Stevens-1. In the last five years, elk have been harvested in 34% of the counties in Kansas (34 of 105).

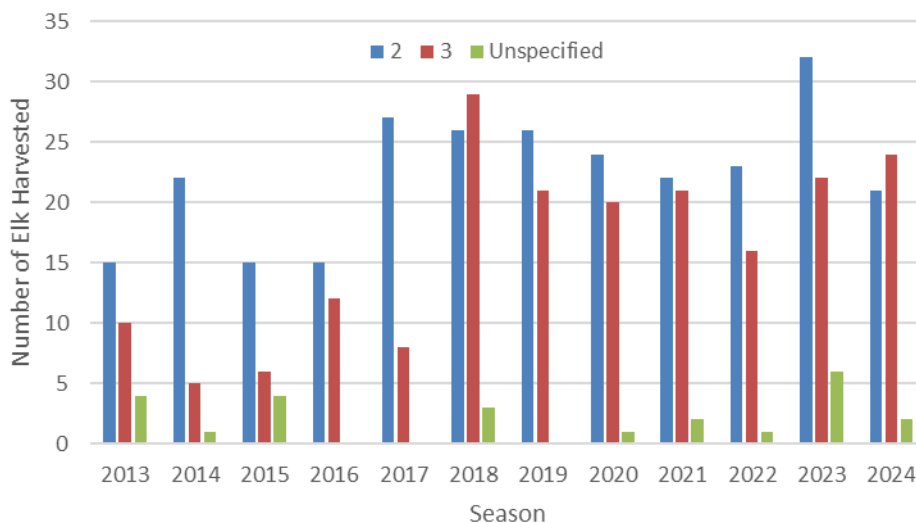


Figure 9. Elk harvest in Kansas by management unit since 2013.

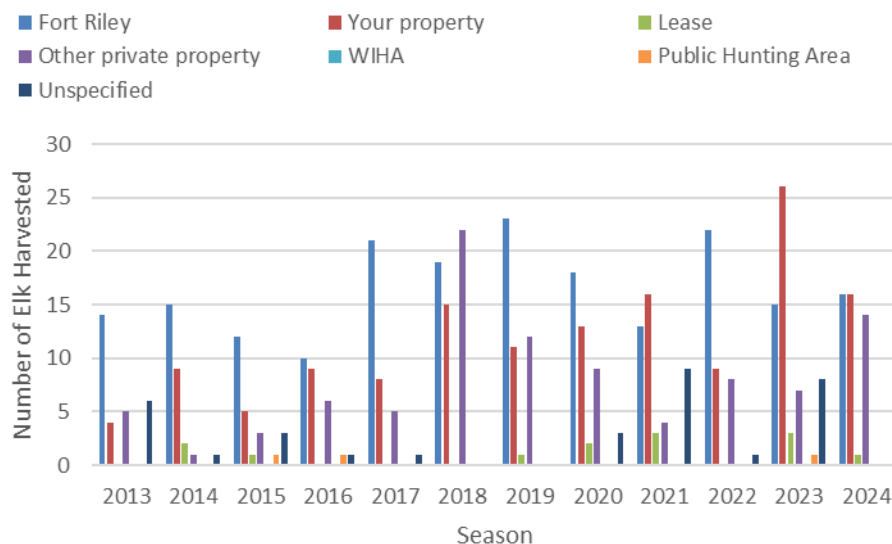


Figure 10. Elk harvest in Kansas by property type since 2013.

Satisfaction - Elk hunters are asked to indicate their hunt satisfaction on a 7–point scale ranging from extremely dissatisfied to extremely satisfied. This serves as a general indicator of hunt quality likely reflecting harvest success, elk numbers, bull quality, access, crowding and various other factors of the hunt. Mean satisfaction by permit type since 2016 is found in Figure 11. Also an indication of satisfaction, elk hunter comments from the harvest survey are provided in Appendix 2.

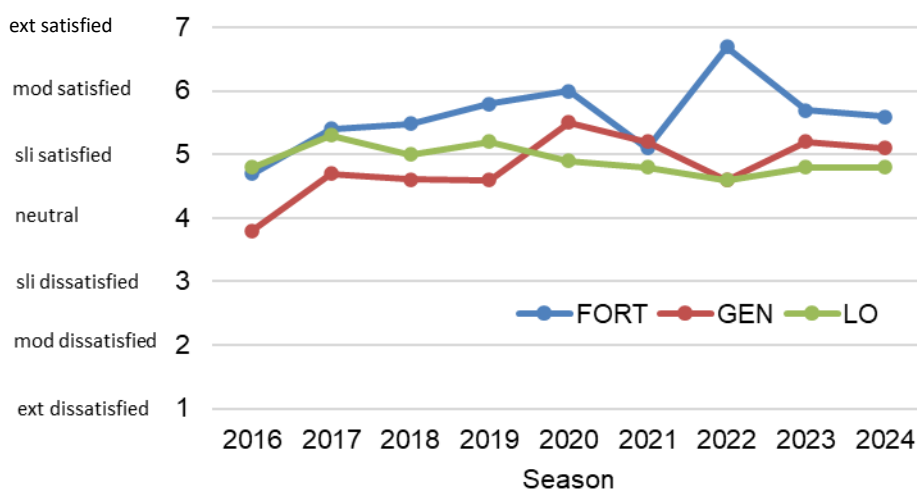


Figure 11. Mean elk hunter satisfaction by permit type in Kansas since 2016. (FORT=Fort Riley, GEN=general resident and LO=landowner/tenant)

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT

This program receives Federal financial assistance from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the U.S. Department of the Interior and its bureaus prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability or sex (in educational programs). If you believe that you have been discriminated against in any program, activity or facility, or if you desire further information, please write to:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Diversity and Civil Rights Programs- External Programs, 4040 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 130, Arlington, VA 22203 |

Appendix 1.

2024-25 Elk Hunter Report Card

2024-25 ELK HUNTER REPORT CARD



Please complete this report as soon as you are finished elk hunting for the season. It should be returned in the enclosed tooth envelope. All "b" sections pertain only to those who harvested an elk.

1a. Check the one item that best describes your elk season.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I harvested an adult bull | <input type="checkbox"/> I hunted but did not harvest an elk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I harvested an adult cow | <input type="checkbox"/> I did not hunt (If you did not hunt, please |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I harvested a male calf | check here, sign and return this form.) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I harvested a female calf | |

b. If you harvested a bull, how many points did it have, for example 5x6?

2a. Describe your elk hunting during each month?

	Days Hunted	Largest Number of Elk Seen in a Day
August	_____	_____
September	_____	_____
October	_____	_____
November	_____	_____
December	_____	_____
January	_____	_____
February	_____	_____
March	_____	_____

b. If you killed an elk, what was the date? _____ (see calendar on back or page)

3a. Check each land ownership type that you used while hunting for elk.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fort Riley | <input type="checkbox"/> Your Property (you own or lease for ag) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Public Hunting Areas (i.e. Milford Wildlife Area) | <input type="checkbox"/> Private Hunting Lease |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) Lands | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Private Property |

b. Circle the land ownership above that shows where you killed your elk. Please also provide the county and unit below (see map on back of page).

County: _____ Elk Unit (2 or 3): _____

4a. Check each type of hunting equipment you used while hunting elk.

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Centerfire Rifle | <input type="checkbox"/> Compound Bow | <input type="checkbox"/> Recurve Bow |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muzzleloader | <input type="checkbox"/> Crossbow | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (list below): |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shotgun | <input type="checkbox"/> Long Bow | _____ |

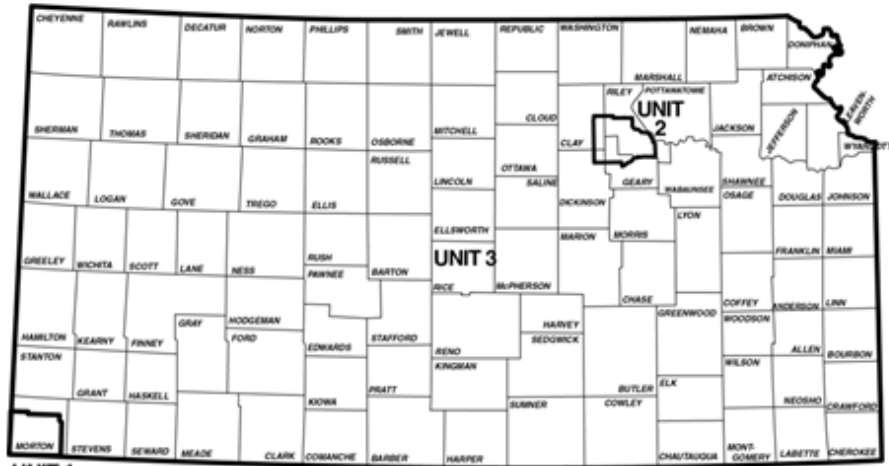
b. Circle the equipment type above that you used to kill your elk.

5. Check the selection that best describes your satisfaction with your elk hunt.

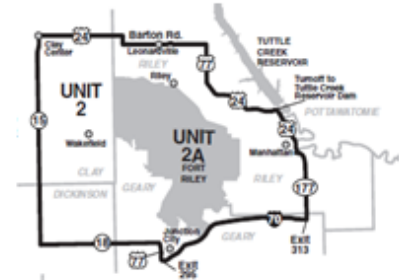
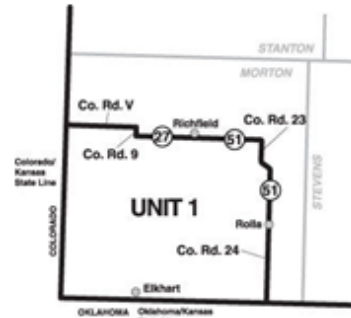
- | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
|  | | |  | | |  |
| Extremely Dissatisfied | Moderately Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Neutral | Slightly Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied | Extremely Satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

6. Name: _____

Elk Units



Unit 1 is closed to elk hunting



SEASONS ON FORT RILEY

Muzzleloader & Archery Season: Sept. 1-30, 2024
Either-Sex Firearm Season: Oct. 1-Dec. 31, 2024
Antlerless-Only Firearm Seasons: 1st Segment, Oct. 1-31, 2024;
 2nd Segment, Nov. 1-30, 2024, 3rd Segment, Dec. 1-31, 2024

SEASONS OUTSIDE FORT RILEY (STATEWIDE EXCEPT MORTON COUNTY)

Muzzleloader Season: Sept. 1-30, 2024
Archery Season: Sept. 16 – Dec. 31, 2024
Firearm Seasons: Aug. 1-31, 2024, Dec. 4-15, 2024 and
 Jan. 1 – Mar. 15, 2025

AUGUST 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

SEPTEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

OCTOBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

NOVEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

DECEMBER 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

JANUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

FEBRUARY 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

MARCH 2025						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Appendix 2.

Elk Hunter Comments from the
2024-25 Elk Hunter Harvest Survey

COMMENTS

A bit more information here. I only put neutral on the elk hunting satisfaction because of the hunting area closures on Fort Riley. There is nothing anybody can do about this, as we all agree military training has priority over hunting. The elk learned right away to not enter the few open areas all the hunters congregated. The chase and hunt for my elk was a great experience! Regarding the question about the most elk I saw in a day. I answered that for how many elk I saw in an open area where I could hunt. That answer was one single cow elk. I saw several of the herds of 15-30 elk inside the impact area, or in closed training areas on Fort Riley. The numbers were high in areas with no access. Overall the experience was great. The tag application was easy and the information I was given was complete and understandable. Thank you guys for giving me this outstanding opportunity, and thank you for answering my questions before season! This was greatly appreciated.

Didn't receive DNA and tooth envelope until after the harvest

Elk was processed before I received this letter.

Health cows and bulls.

Hunt was great. I am in the Army and understand training requirements, but it was tough with most of the post closed the better part of the season.

I apologize for not completing the survey sooner. Right after I harvested the bull I had a lot of field problems come up, then NTC and now I have PCS'ed I have the teeth and skin sample and will get them turned into the mail asap.

I could've killed a spike but was only going to kill a mature bull or mature cow minus calf.

I drew a fort Riley cow tag, but every training area that held elk was closed until well after my season had ended. Pretty disappointing considering I purchased a tag just to watch the training areas be closed all season.

I had already sent head off before receiving this letter. There is a tissue sample, but NO teeth.

I saw fewer elk on camera this year than last year.

It was fun to dream, I knew they were in the area and was grateful to have the opportunity. I know it would be hard to get farmers on board, but another five or six herds spread throughout Kansas with management like there is at Fort Riley would be awesome! Barber county, Quivira surrounding areas, Chase County and Wilson lake area. Maybe bring the draw odds from 2% up to 10%? PS. I do appreciate the work that is being done at the KDWP. Keep it up.

Just not many in Marshall county

My elk skull is being mounted. I already gave it to the taxidermist.

My farm had more elk on it this year than it has the past three years. I love seeing them.

Please reduce the boundaries around Fort Riley for Elk Hunting.

Saw a 6x6 SW of Cottonwood Falls in Sept. Saw a 5x5 south of Cedar Point in Oct.

Saw the elk on a trail camera

Spotty to no cell service to check in at some of the wildlife area spots

There is a substantial herd. I have identified at least 8 different bulls just on my property from mid Aug to end of Sept. They come and go.

We had a few cow elk on trail camera but never saw them in person

We have a great herd.