

2023-24 Kansas Elk Harvest Report

PERFORMANCE REPORT STATEWIDE WILDLIFE RESEARCH AND SURVEYS

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Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

Chris Kennedy
Secretary

Prepared by

Matt Peek
Research Biologist

Jake George
Wildlife Division Director

Rich Schultheis
Wildlife Research Supervisor



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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 sprung up 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 really increased over the past several years. This season’s total of 1954 applications or preference point purchases was the highest total on record (Figure 1). This includes an average over the past five years of 86 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 216 elk permits for the 2023 season (Figure 2). This is the most elk permits ever sold in Kansas, up from 179 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 some elk moving off Fort Riley potentially due to increased military activity on the Fort. 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.

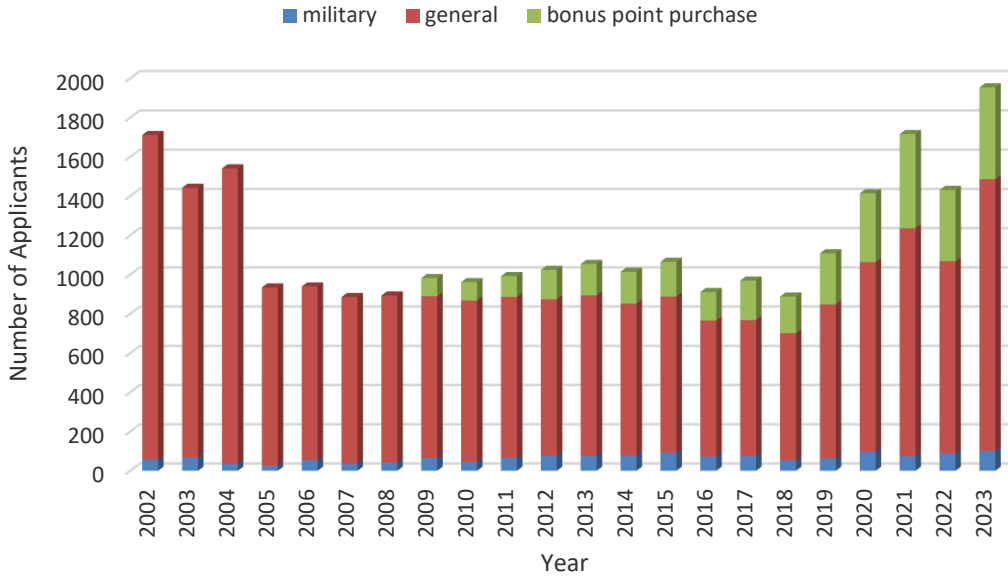


Figure 1. Fort Riley elk permit applications and bonus point purchases in Kansas since 2002. A \$5 bonus point fee was initiated in 2005 and increased to \$10 in 2016.

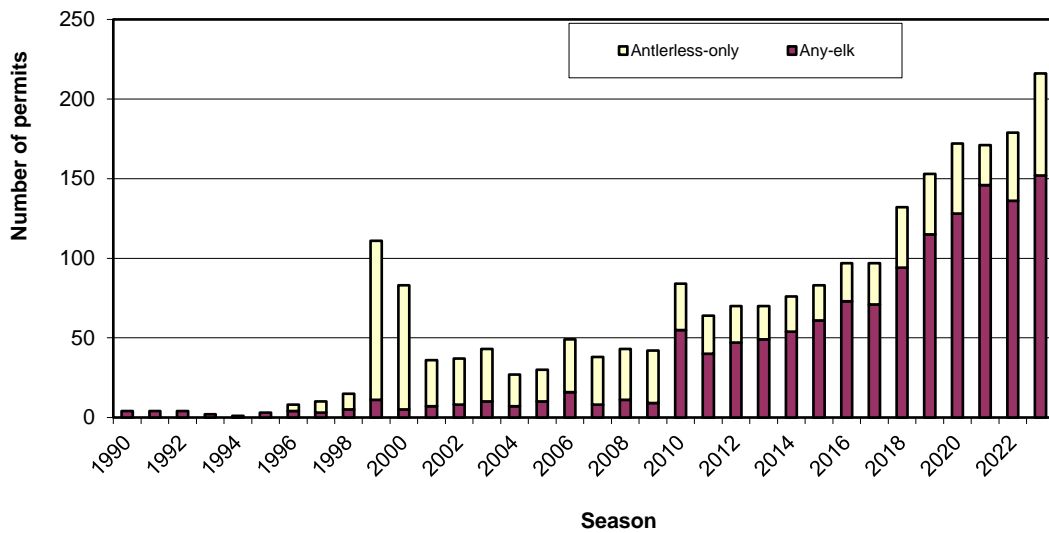


Figure 2. Antlerless-only and any-elk permit sales in Kansas since hunting seasons were initiated on Fort Riley in 1990.

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 75% this season, up from 73% last season which was the lowest response rate on record. The response rate 5-year average is 77%.

The reported harvest was 60 elk (Figure 3), including 37 elk taken on 152 any-elk permits (24%) and 23 taken on 64 antlerless-only elk permits (36%). This was up from a total of 40 elk harvested last season. Thirty-one of the 37 elk taken on any-elk permits were antlered. The number of antler points of 25 of these animals can be found in Table 1.

Total permit success was 28%. Eight of 12 hunters (67%) with Fort Riley any-elk permits and nine of 18 hunters (50%) 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 54% 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 60%, 43% and 60%, 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 22 and 13%, respectively, over the past five years. Success rates for landowner permits including landowner/tenant and hunt-own-land permits averaged 17% and 30%, 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 21 elk, of which 9 were antlered bulls.

Elk harvest is spread out fairly evenly throughout the season (Figure 6), but there are a couple of notable points. Four elk were 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. Four elk were killed on Fort Riley and eight on private land during that month. There were also six elk killed outside of Fort Riley during the Nov. 29-Dec. 10 regular firearms season (concurrent with firearms deer). Another 15 elk were killed on private lands during the late firearms season off Fort Riley, including eight in January, four in February and three in March.

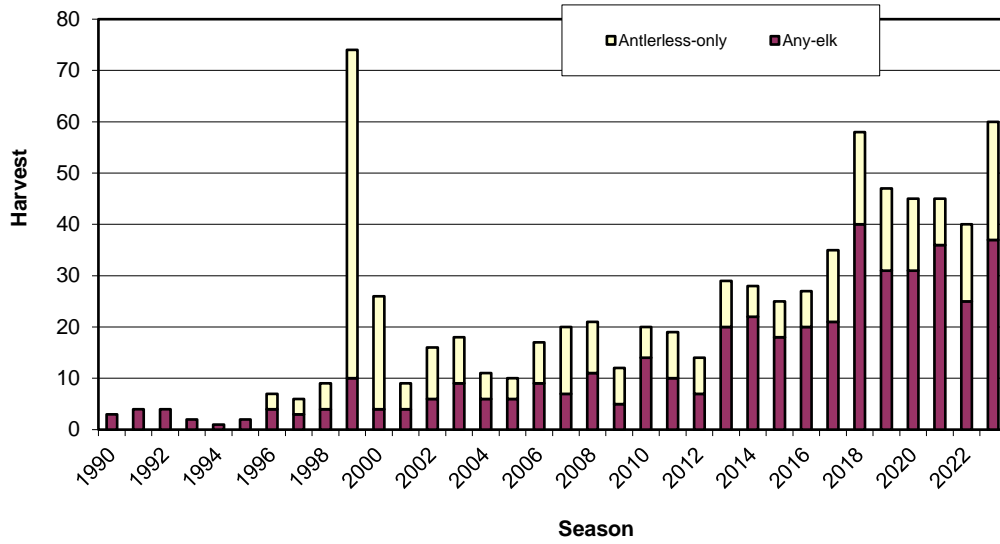


Figure 3. Elk harvest in Kansas by any-elk and antlerless-only elk permit holders since hunting seasons were initiated on Fort Riley in 1990.

Table 1. Antler points of bull elk harvested in Kansas during the 2023-24 season (n=25).

Antler Points	Number of Hunters
1x1	2
4x4	2
4x5	1
4x6	1
5x5	6
5x6	2
6x6	5
6x7	3
6x8	1
7x7	1
7x7	1

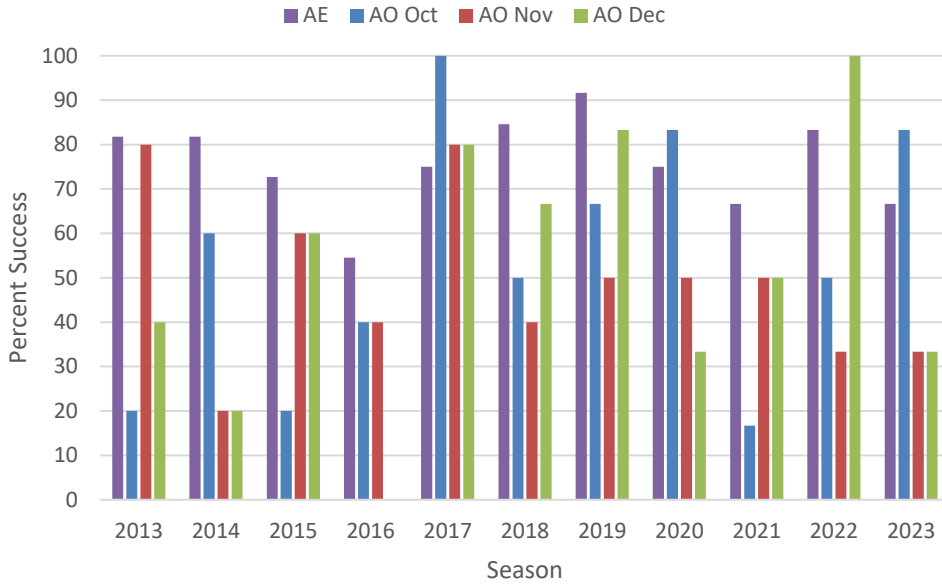


Figure 4. Harvest success rates for draw permit types valid on Fort Riley for elk in Kansas since 2013. (AE = any-elk, AO = antlerless-only)

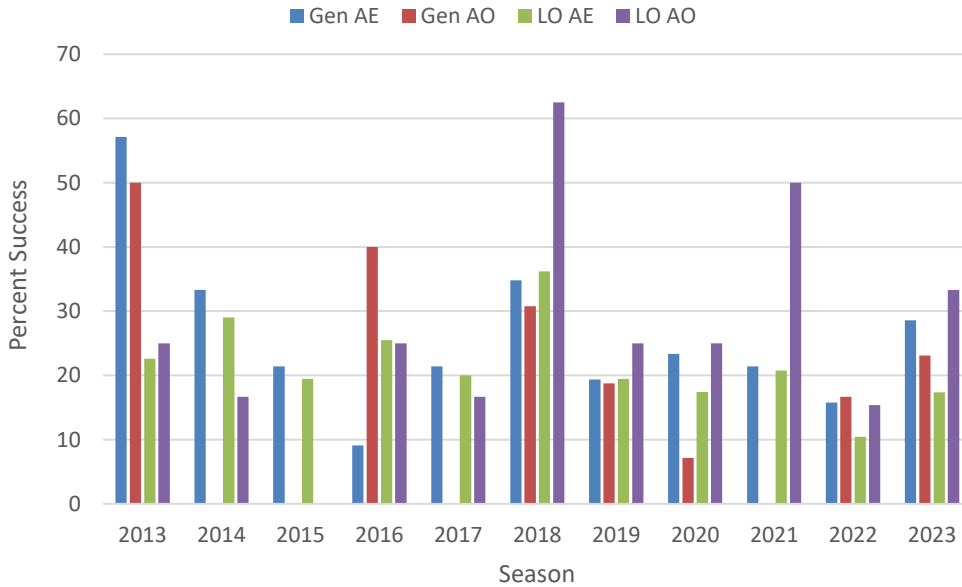


Figure 5. Harvest success rates for general resident (Gen) and landowner/tenant (LO) elk permits available in Kansas over-the-counter since 2013. (AE = any-elk, AO = antlerless-only)

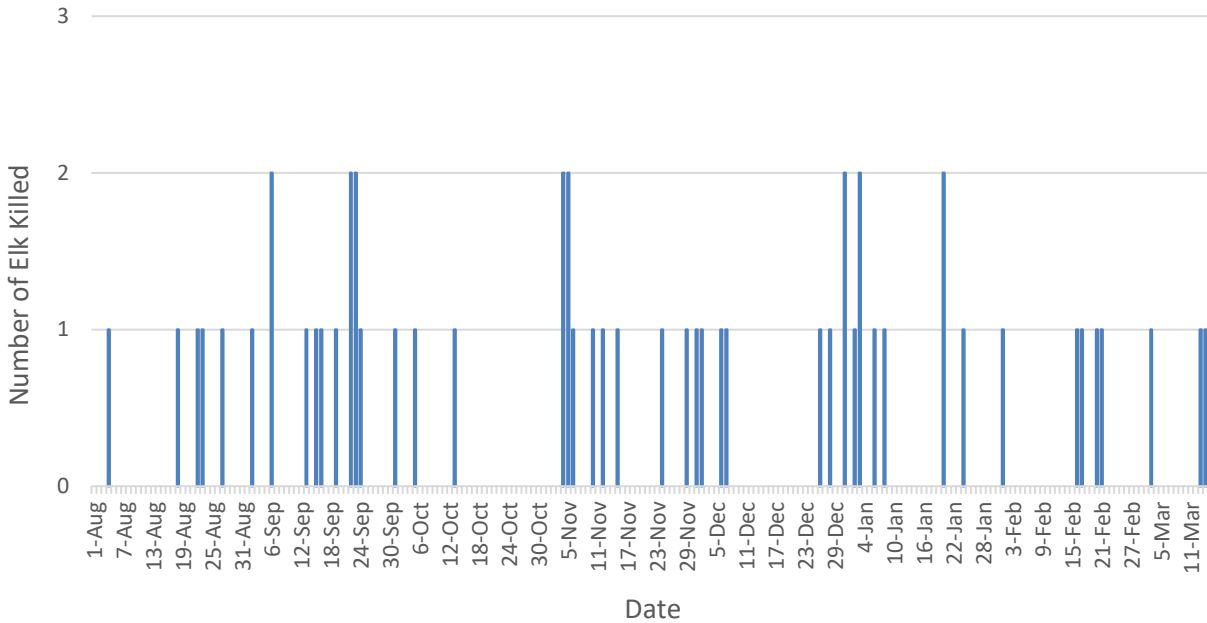


Figure 6. Reported date of harvest of elk taken during the 2023 season (n=54).

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 (25% in 2023). 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-14%, crossbow-5%, shotgun-0%, longbow-0%, and recurve bow-0%.

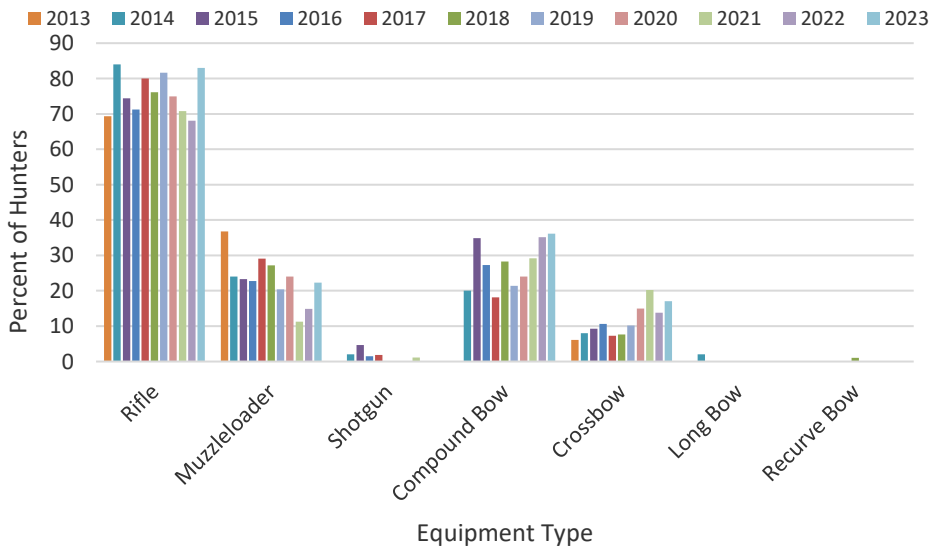


Figure 7. Percent of hunters using each equipment type to hunt elk in Kansas since 2013.

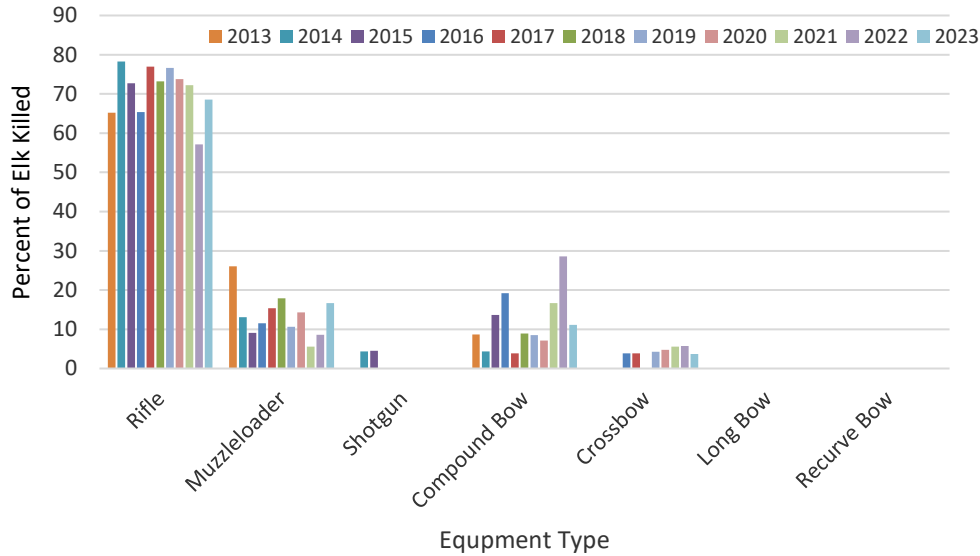


Figure 8. Percent of elk harvested in Kansas with each equipment type since 2013.

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 53 of 60 elk harvested. Harvest by county was as follows: Riley-20, Geary-10, Reno-4, Kearny-3, Gove-2, Phillips-2, Pottawatomie-2, Stafford-2, Gray-1, Greenwood-1, Hamilton-1, Marshall-1, Miami-1, Nemaha-1, Norton-1, and Pratt-1. In the last five years, elk have been harvested in 28% of the counties in Kansas (29 of 105).

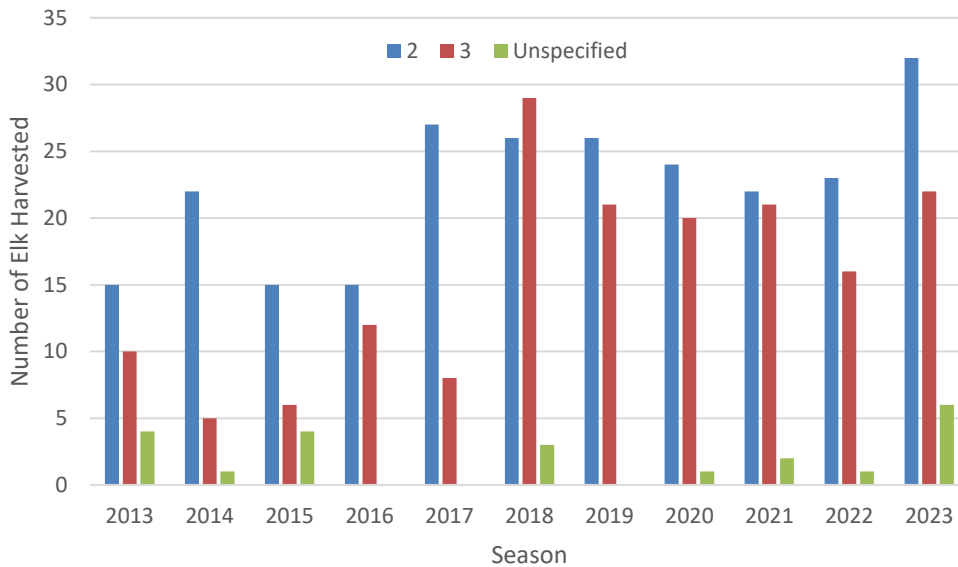


Figure 9. Elk harvest in Kansas by management unit since 2013.

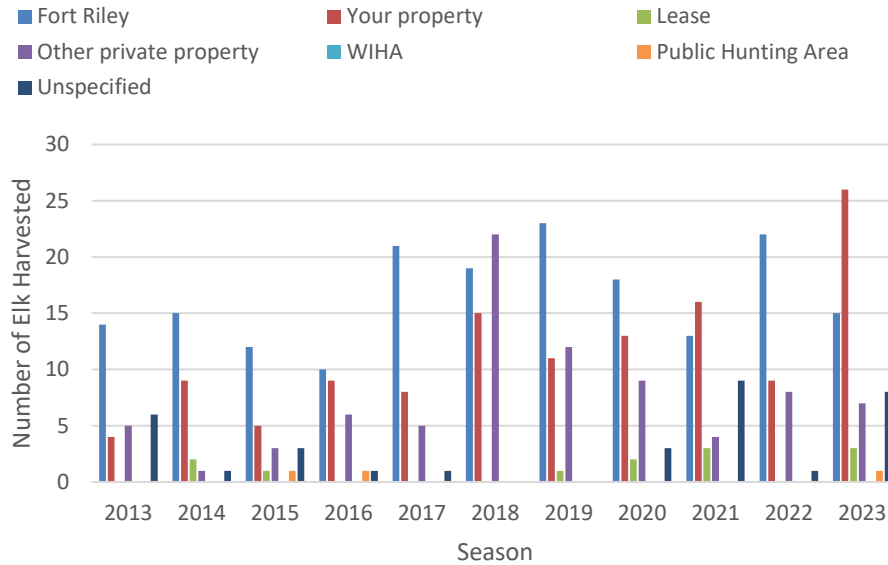


Figure 10. Elk harvest in Kansas by property type since 2013.

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.

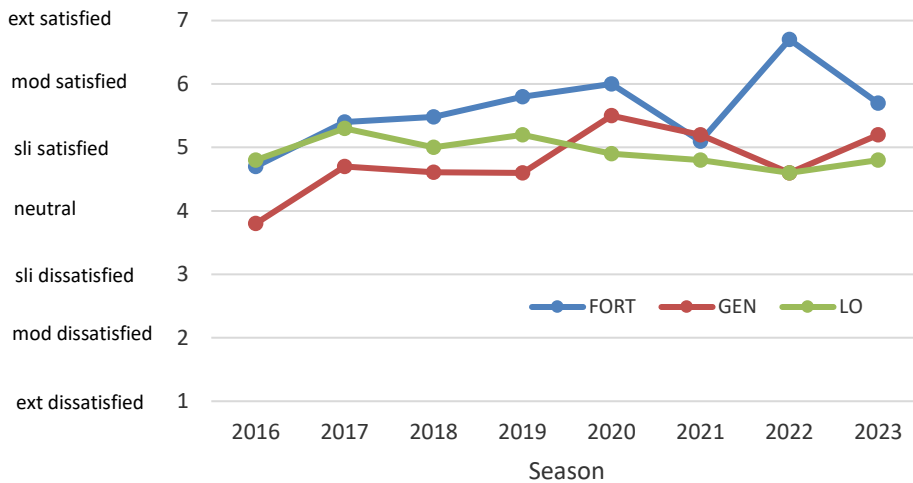


Figure 11. Mean elk hunter satisfaction by permit type in Kansas since 2016. (FORT=Fort Riley, GEN=general resident and LO=landowner/tenant)

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.

2023-24 Elk Hunter Report Card

2023-24 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.

- I harvested an adult bull
- I harvested an adult cow
- I harvested a male calf
- I harvested a female calf
- I hunted but did not harvest an elk
- I did not hunt (If you did not hunt, please check here, sign and return this form.)

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 page)

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

- Fort Riley
- Public Hunting Areas (i.e. Milford Wildlife Area)
- Walk-In Hunting Area (WIHA) Lands
- Your Property (you own or lease for ag)
- Private Hunting Lease
- 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.

- Centerfire Rifle
- Muzzleloader
- Shotgun
- Compound Bow
- Crossbow
- Long Bow
- Recurve Bow
- Other (list below):

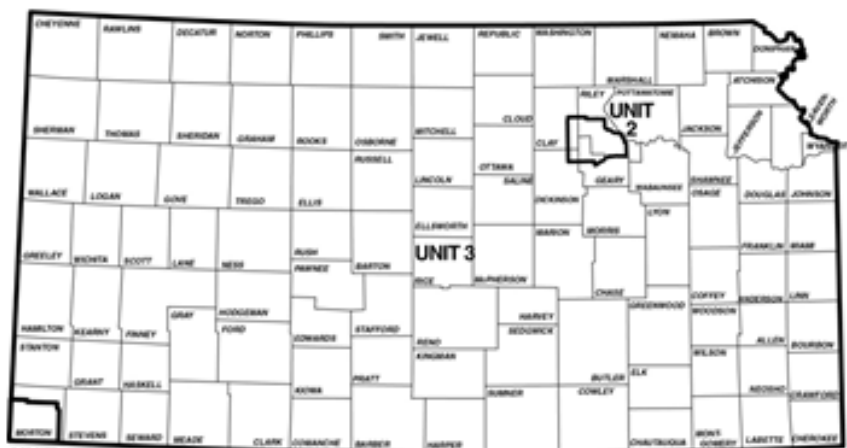
b. Circle the equipment type above that you used to kill your elk.

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

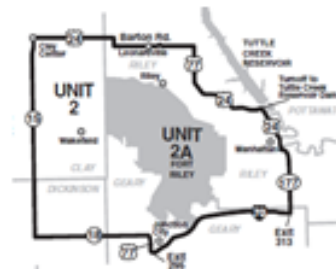
- | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Extremely Dissatisfied | Moderately Dissatisfied | Slightly Dissatisfied | Neutral | Slightly Satisfied | Moderately Satisfied | Extremely Satisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/>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

6. Name: _____

Elk Units



UNIT 1 Unit 1 is closed to elk [hunting](#)



Seasons Outside Fort Riley (Statewide except Unit 1)

- Muzzleloader season: Sept 1-30, 2023
- Archery season: Sept 11-Dec 31, 2023
- Firearm Season: Aug 1-31 & Nov 29-Dec 10, 2023, & Jan 1-Mar 15, 2024

Seasons On Fort Riley

- Muzzleloader season: Sept 1-30, 2023
- Any-Elk Permit Season: Oct 1-Dec 31, 2023
- Antlerless-Only Permit Segments:
 - First segment: Oct 1-31, 2023
 - Second segment: Nov 1-30, 2023
 - Third segment: Dec 1-31, 2023

August 2023

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 2023

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 2023

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 2023

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 2023

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 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			

February 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		

March 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						

Appendix 2.

Elk Hunter Comments from the
2023-24 Elk Hunter Harvest Survey

COMMENTS

A great resource to have available to Kansans. I enjoy seeing the growing numbers across the state. Would like to see some sort of management efforts to allow bulls to reach maturity. (Point restrictions)

Amazing Elk adventure. HuntTalk.com "Kansas Elk 2023" for my long recounting of the adventure. Pre-dawn herd leaving creek bottom at first place so no shot. legal elk in my scope once in muzzleloader 2 cows shoulder to shoulder - no safe shot legal elk three times in November. Young cow at .35 passed thinking that mature cow was following! Walking cow 185-never stopped.

Cameras indicate at least 15-16 bulls and 50 plus cows and calves visiting our property. I just hunted mostly on nice days when the elk were feeding at night. Could not catch a storm when I could get to the farm

Cow elk in the scope multiple times, chose to not shoot. In hindsight hurts some. I had an amazing elk adventure on Post. I did visit Corp lands one time.

Did not hunt due to shoulder injury!

DNA WAS GIVEN TO -- GAME WARDEN 9/3/23

For the love of Pete, please let us obtain nuisance tags so we can harvest and donate protein to those who need it. These herds are absolute hell on our crops. We now have herds on both sides of Fort Riley that run 60-90 head and that's before this coming Spring's next round of calving. 10-15 head running around is one thing, but we have surpassed that years ago. Please - what do we have to do?!?!

Great experience! Thank you for the opportunity!

Had seen elk on game camera in past. Nothing this season

Have no complaints. Would like to see more of them

I bought the permit because of reports of elk around the area. I definitely found sign of where they had been and bedded but had no sightings of my own. It was neat to hunt elk locally and I like the season structure

I didn't hunt but had elk on my farm most of the year.

I drew a tag for November for a cow. I figured that since the tag said November then that was the only month I could hunt for elk. I had been hearing mixed rumors saying that you're able to hunt the whole season, so I decided to call the fort Riley office and get clarification, mind you this is mid-October at this time. The individual I talked to said my tag is only good for November but I could have hunted in September with a bow or muzzleloader... that information was never put out. I would have loved to hunt during the elk rut and feel I would have had a better chance of harvesting a cow. While I am more than please to have been able to even hunt elk at all, the November season isn't the best due to everyone and their mom deer hunting on Fort Riley during the deer rut. Just my two cents. Again, I'm extremely happy for the opportunity to hunt elk, just feel that the flow of information to the hunter could be improved.

I had numerous bona-fide opportunities (approximately 5) to shoot an elk, but for various reasons chose not to do so. I learned much more about the animals as time went along. Early in November (11/03) I called a 5x5 bull to within 11 feet of me for about 90 seconds, for instance. Sadly, shortly after that, I contracted Covid, and had to stay away for a couple weeks -- and had an unruly cough after that for weeks. Had I realized that Covid was about to happen, I might have shot that animal. It's fine, though -- I had a blast !

I had several cows and calves that stayed on my property. I had a few bulls that passed through.

I KILLED MY ELK ON 11-5-23 AND RECEIVED THESE INSTRUCTIONS IN LATE NOVEMBER. OBVIOUSLY, THE HEAD IS GONE AND I HAVE SALTED THE HIDE. PORTION OF THE HIDE IS INCLUDED.

I only reason I purchase a elk lic. just in case I happen to see one. They only pass through this County. not living here

I received this one week after my harvest. I am sorry I have no teeth. I took the carcass to

Phils Farm to be processed

I saw a lot of elk on camera. Mostly nocturnal. I will try again next season.

i think it's awesome the state allows a lot tag.

It was a good year. Many elk in the area. Thankyou!

Landowners should not be able to buy over the counter tags. A lot of elk lock down on private property and they have control of herds at a time because they are able to buy tags every year

Literally i bought a license because there was an elk spotted across from our land in Washington county so i thought i might see it but never did :)

Lower jaw & skin gone prior to receiving envelope.

Saw a lot of them roaming around (300m+) and plenty tracks to follow. Never got a good shot/opportunity, not a lot of free days to hunt due to work. Would definitely try again if able.

SAW ELK ON CAMERA BUT THAT WAS IT. NO LUCK HUNTING

Teeth lost - I checked in pic I am sorry

The meat processor forgot to collect the teeth & DNA sample

The young Elk I harvested weighed 275 lbs. before being field dressed. I removed the 2 teeth but lost them before mailing.

They never made it to our land this year

Was hunting just a single cow elk that started showing up on the farm. Never saw her while hunting.

We primarily hunt deer, but we caught two cow elk on one of our game cameras last year. So, I've purchased a cow elk permit last year and this year. If they decide to show again while in legal season I want to be prepared.

Web site sucks-or the link sucks!! Teeth & skin is coming in the envelope you sent me-forgot to put this in. (received teeth sw)

While hunting on area F on Fort Riley the landowners across from the area on the other side of Wildcat creek rd parked on the road driving up and down keeping the elk on private land while they tried to cross onto Fort Riley. I felt this to be extremely unsportsmanlike and distasteful for all hunters chasing elk.