



# Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease District 3, 2014



## Sportsmen and Sportswomen

Epizootic Hemorrhagic disease (EHD) is the most common disease of white tailed deer. It is caused by two types of viruses, one produces Blue Tongue and the other Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease. The symptoms of the two viruses are very similar, so they are both called EHD. These viruses are transmitted to deer by biting midges (no-seeums or gnats). There is no direct transmission from animal to animal. The disease occurs every year to some extent throughout the state. Depending on local weather conditions (wet = increased midge populations) and acquired collective herd immunity some areas of the state may have more severe outbreaks of the disease than others.

An EHD outbreak occurred in District 3 this past year. The Commission began receiving calls the first week of August about deer being found dead, in ponds and near water from all over the district. Dead deer are often found near water sources as they try to find relief from fever and dehydration associated with the disease. Dead deer reports continued until the first week of October. Although there were rumors of hundreds of deer found in area rivers, the highest number the Commission confirmed found in any one area was forty deer. The table below represents the number of deer reported dead to the NCWRC.

Deer Reported Dead to WRC	
Warren Co.	64
Vance Co.	41
Franklin Co.	237
Wake Co.	42
Johnston	25
Wilson Co.	3
Nash Co.	21
Northampton Co.	11
Halifax Co.	12
Edgecombe Co.	23

Reports indicated that Franklin County was the county with the highest number of reported dead deer. **Reporting dead deer with no obvious signs of injury is vital to the Commission because it provides NCWRC biologists with the opportunity to test recently expired deer and confirm cause of death.** Deer sent for testing this year were positive for a type of EHD known as variant-6. This strain had never been documented in NC before which helps explain why more deer were affected this year. North Carolina sends an annual EHD disease report to SE Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study Group and this information is compiled into a nationwide report of EHD that helps us understand the disease. **Please report to the NCWRC all dead deer found under unusual circumstances so that we can better understand the health of our deer herd.**

We understand it was a tough year for deer and want to share with you the best harvest information (Fig. 1) available at this point. The harvest comparisons (Fig. 1 and Fig. 2) on the back of the page compare **electronic harvest reports only**. We do not have the cooperators (check books) data for 2014 as of this writing. At the time of this writing, harvest reports indicate that statewide harvest is down -15% for 2014 even in areas where no EHD was detected. In areas with confirmed cases of EHD, the harvest was more reduced. There are a variety of factors to consider when looking at harvest data. Effort may have decreased when hunters didn't see deer, they stopped hunting or decreased the number of deer harvested based on their observations. Another consideration is that North Carolina experienced a tremendous acorn crop statewide. When acorn mast is heavy, deer tend to focus their movements in areas where cover is optimal and acorns are abundant reducing deer sightings. That means they won't be seen as frequently on trail cameras, in open agricultural fields or over bait. In fact we generally see a decrease in the total deer harvest in years where acorns are abundant.

In summary, EHD has occurred throughout the SE for a long time. Experience with the disease indicates deer populations rebound to pre-disease levels in 2-3 years. Wilkes Co. had a similar outbreak in 2012 and the harvest levels rebounded quickly (Fig. 2). We have no way of knowing exact losses due to this disease. Based on previous experiences with EHD we have **no plans to alter harvest limits or seasons** at this point. Limiting the harvest of does can help the population rebound more quickly if you want to see/harvest more deer in your area. Management under Quality Deer management should continue on with doe harvest as usual. We appreciate your interest and help in managing North Carolina's white-tailed deer.

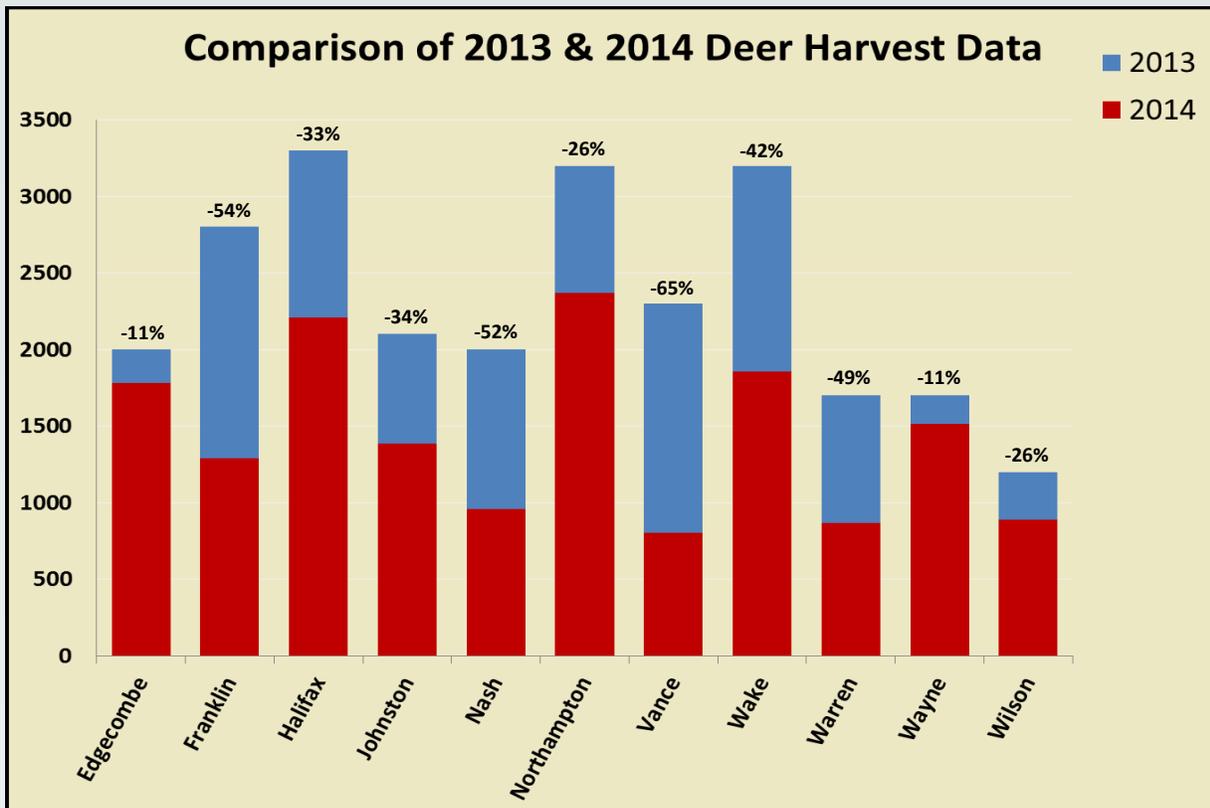


Figure 1. Comparisons of electronic harvest data in D3 for 2013 and 2014 seasons

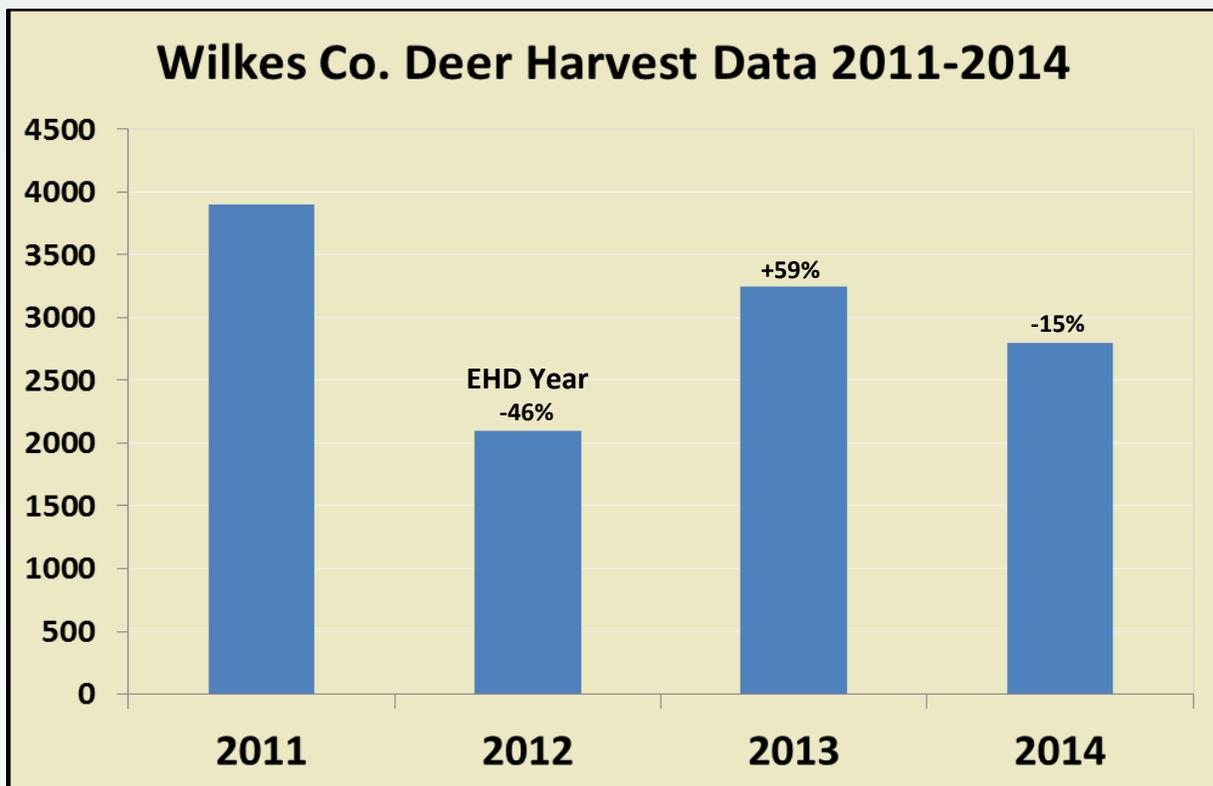


Figure 2. Wilkes Co. electronic harvest data pre and post EHD 2011-2014