

COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA BRIEFING

Meeting Date: March 20, 2026

Agenda Number: 14

Presenter: Stewart Liley

Corroborator: N/A

Agenda Title: Initial discussion of pronghorn rule (19.31.15 NMAC) for the 2027 – 2030 hunting seasons.

1. Summary of Agenda Item

The Department will present biological data and proposed adjustments to the Pronghorn Rule (19.31.15 NMAC). We held 2 hybrid in person/virtual public meetings and have also received public comments on the rule.

Initial proposed changes include:

- Require purchase of a license a day prior to the start of a hunt
- Evaluate a potential ranch registration process for purchase of private land OTC pronghorn licenses, similar to the current registration process used for private land elk hunting in Secondary management zones.
- Consider a cap on private land OTC licenses.
- Shift GMU 4 rifle hunt to muzzleloader hunt
- Adjust season dates where necessary. For example, shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting calendar day starts for consistency.
- Work with the military on hunts that occur on Department of Defense lands.
- Adjust license numbers to meet management strategies and reflect changes in pronghorn herd dynamics.
- Shift season dates in SW later to address a later breeding and fawning period.

2. Background Information

The pronghorn rule (19.31.15 NMAC) is re-evaluated every 4 years and changed based on population data, management goals, and public feedback.

Except for in a few very specific instances to address nuisance issues, the Department allows male harvest only. Population trajectories are driven by adult female and fawn survival; both adult female and fawn survival rates need to be adequate for stable populations. Weather, disease, predation and human induced mortality can all impact adult female and fawn survival; however, availability of forage and concealment cover can lessen or intensify the effect of these individual factors. Pronghorn have a polygamous breeding strategy where a single male will breed many females within a season. Because of this breeding strategy, almost all (>95%) breeding age females become pregnant each year even though there are generally fewer males than females in a population. Studies have shown that when the number of bucks stays above 10 bucks per 100 does, pregnancy rates are consistent and high. As such, buck mortality, including mortality from harvest, does not negatively impact population growth because females carry pregnancies and almost all of them are pregnant each year.

3. Strategic Plan References and Possible Impacts of Agenda Item

The process as presented to the Commission meets the Conservation Services Program Objectives 1, 2 and 5 of the Department's Strategic Plan: FY 2019 – FY 2023

4. Considerations Regarding Duplications and/or Conflicts with Existing Rules or Statutes

None

5. Description and Summary of Public Involvement Process and Results

The Department held 2 public meetings the week of March 9th. Proposed changes to the pronghorn rule have been posted on the Department's website.

Suggested Motion

This is a discussion item and no motion is necessary, unless Commission discretion dictates otherwise.