

# 2016-2017 Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Elk Report



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**Introduction**

The Elk Program is administered under the Wildlife Division of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR). The KDFWR is an agency of the Kentucky Tourism, Arts & Heritage Cabinet. It is overseen by a nine-member commission who are nominated by Kentucky’s sportsmen and sportswomen. The nominees chosen by the sportsmen and sportswomen are sent to the Governor, who appoints the Commission members for each district. The department employs about 450 full-time staff, which includes conservation officers, wildlife and fisheries biologists, conservation educators, information and technology staff, public relations and administrative professionals.

KDFWR receives no money from the state’s General Fund. Agency funding is provided through the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, boating registration fees, and federal grants based on the number of licenses sold in the state.

The Elk Program is tasked with managing the elk herd in the state to provide ample hunting opportunity while balancing the needs of consumptive and non-consumptive user groups. The Elk Program is made up of one program coordinator, Gabe Jenkins, and three biologists: Dan Crank, Will Bowling, and Joe McDermott. Program staff are based out of headquarters in Frankfort as well as the elk zone in eastern Kentucky.

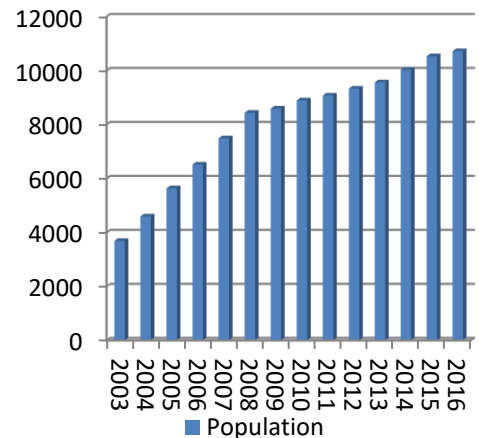
**Elk In Kentucky**

Elk are native to KY and were present until the mid-1880’s, when the population was eliminated due to habitat degradation and overhunting. This is why the Kentucky elk program is considered a restoration, not an introduction. Kentucky’s present elk herd is a free-ranging, wild herd established from 1,550 wild elk captured out-of-state and released into southeast KY between December 1997 and March 2002. Contributing states included Utah, Kansas, Oregon, North Dakota, Arizona, New Mexico, with the majority of elk captured in Utah. Release sites were located in Harlan, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Martin, Perry, and Pike counties. The elk restoration zone covers 16 counties in the southeast region of the state (approximately 4.1 million acres).

The current estimated population is approximately 11,000 animals. Kentucky has the highest elk population of any state east of the Mississippi River.

The first elk hunt was conducted in 2001. Six bulls and six cows were harvested, with all hunters filling their permit. The same number of permits was issued in 2002 and 2003. In 2004, the number of permits was increased to 40. Beginning that year, legal deer hunters were also allowed to harvest elk outside the elk zone in order to control populations, keeping elk numbers low in agricultural areas or poor elk habitat. The number of elk permits has increased nearly every year since 2004, with a total of 910 permits available in 2016.

**Elk Population Estimate**



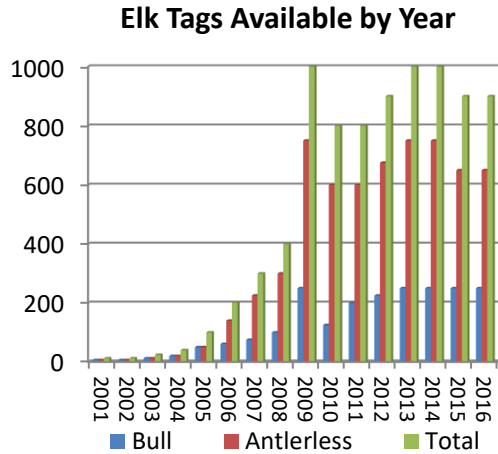
## Elk Hunting Permits

### General Quota Hunt Permits

The majority of KY elk permits are issued by way of a computer-randomized drawing.

Applicants must apply online between Jan 1 and April 30 each year. They may apply for four permits from the four permit types (bull archery/crossbow, bull firearm, antlerless archery/crossbow, and antlerless firearm), but no more than once for each type. Both resident and non-resident hunters may apply for the elk permit drawing. A maximum of 10% of the available permits may go to

non-resident applicants. During the month of May, applicants' names are drawn at random by a separate Kentucky government agency (the Commonwealth Office of Technology [COT]) and then randomly assigned a permit type based on their application choices. Hunters that are drawn for either an antlered or an antlerless permit are not eligible to draw another permit for three years.



### Youth Permits

Hunters that are 15 years of age or younger may apply for the youth-only drawing. There are currently 10 youth-only either-sex permits. Youth may also apply for the general drawing four times like any other applicant, giving them 5 chances overall. However, they are only eligible to draw one permit.

### Commission Permits

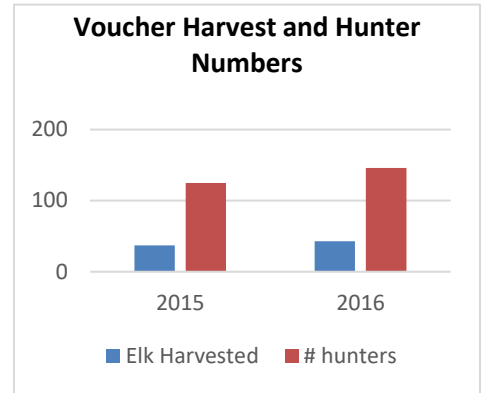
There are 10 either sex Commission permits that are available each year. These permits are assigned each year by the KDFWR Commission members to conservation groups. Those groups then auction or raffle the permits in order to raise money for conservation projects.

### Landowner Access Permits

KDFWR has a program that allows large land holders in the elk zone to enter their land into management agreements in order to provide hunters additional public access to huntable land. Landowners are issued an either-sex elk permit for every 5,000 acres enrolled in the public access program. The landowner may transfer or sell the permit to whomever they choose.

Voucher Cooperator Permits

Beginning in 2015, landowners with 100 acres or more could enter their property into a program with KDFWR called the Voucher Cooperator Elk Permit Program. It links people who own or lease elk hunting land with hunters who have drawn an elk tag. Hunter access is accomplished by offering landowners/lessees an either sex, transferable elk permit when they accumulate 20 points (harvested bull = 2 points, harvested cow = 1 point). Hunters sign up to hunt voucher properties on a first come, first served basis through an automated online system after the area draw is complete. A total of 97,243 acres have been entered since 2015, resulting in 43 elk being harvested by a total of 146 hunters on those properties. This resulted in 3 tags being transferred to those landowners for the 2017 – 2018 season.



Elk Restoration Permits

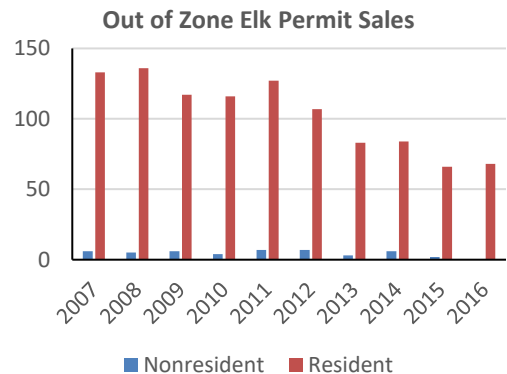
Beginning in 2017, landowners who allow trapping of elk for restoration purposes are eligible to gain points toward obtaining a transferrable either sex elk permit for use on their property or property they lease. They must accumulate 20 points to receive a permit (2 points for a bull, 1 point for a cow). All trapping will be performed during the winter months.

Late Season Hunt Permits

The late season hunt is designed to remove elk in areas that have had elk damage concerns over a number of years. The dates of the hunt correspond with the time of year when most damage occurs. This allows hunters to target elk that are likely causing damage, and to alleviate that burden to local landowners. Hunters are limited to the Knott County and Stony Fork EMU (Elk Management Unit). Only applicants that live inside the 6 counties within the two Elk Management Units are eligible to be drawn in the late season hunt. In 2016, 4 hunters were drawn for the late season hunt.

Out of Zone Elk Permits

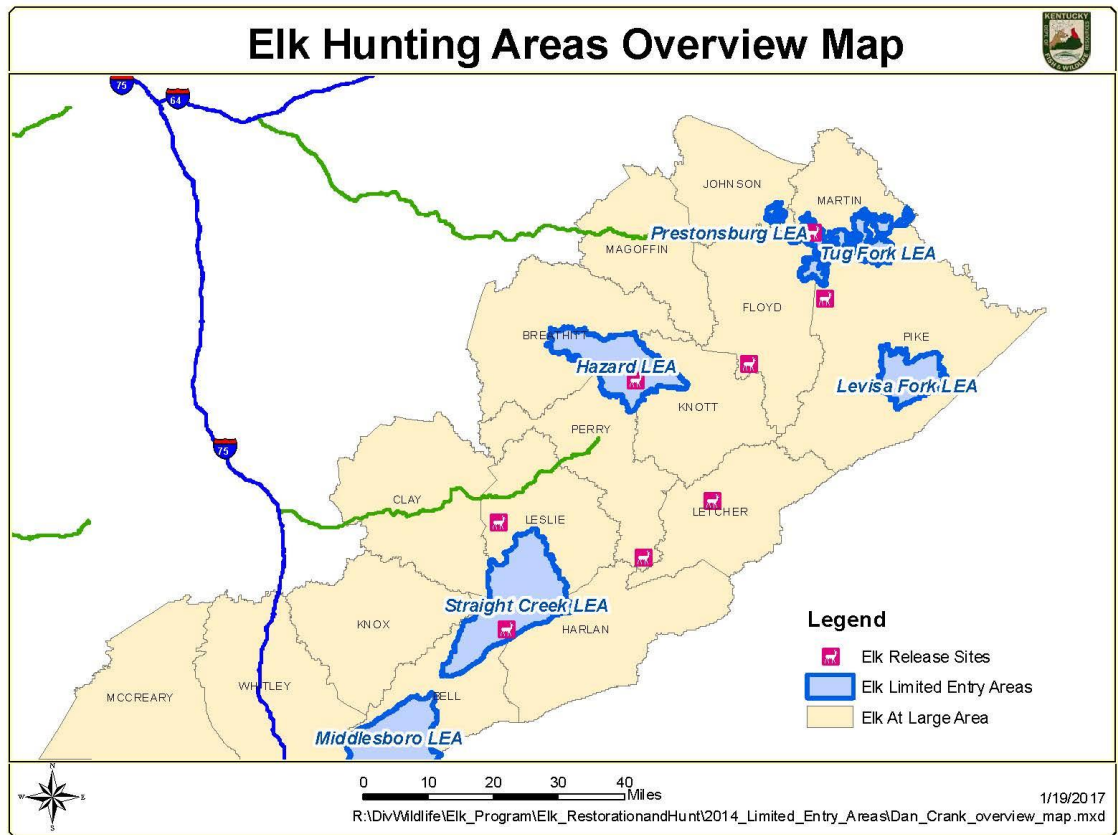
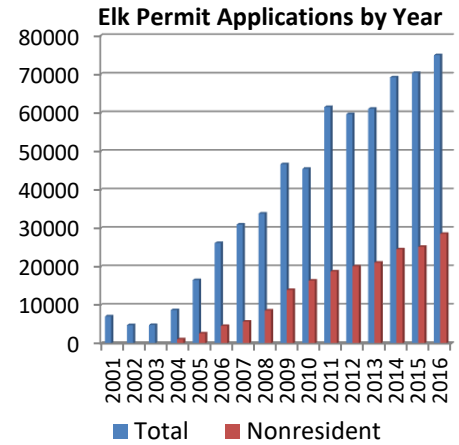
Elk may be taken from any county outside the 16-county Elk Restoration Zone by hunters who possess an annual Kentucky hunting license and an out-of-zone elk permit. These hunters must follow deer season and equipment regulations, but are not required to possess a deer permit. No elk were harvested outside the elk zone this year.



## Quota Drawing Process and Statistics

### How Permits Are Drawn

Elk applications go on sale January 1 of each year and can only be purchased online at fw.ky.gov. Hunters can apply for four different permit types. The application period ends at midnight on April 30. After the application period, a computer drawing conducted by the Commonwealth Office of Technology randomly selects the hunters from the pool of applicants. All hunters are drawn for the At-Large area. If hunters want, they can then apply for one of the Limited Entry Areas (LEA) (Hazard LEA, Levisa Fork LEA, Middlesboro LEA, Prestonsburg LEA, or Straight Creek LEA). A second computer drawing is then held in July to fill the LEA openings. If a small group (up to 3) of drawn applicants would like to hunt the same area, they are able to apply as a group.



Odds

The odds of drawing a permit for the 2016-2017 seasons are shown in the table below. These numbers are based on how many applicants were in each permit type and how many permits were issued.

Type	Resident Odds	Non-resident Odds
Bull Firearm	1/138	1/764
Cow Firearm	1/36	1/143
Bull Archery	1/98	1/767
Cow Archery	1/23	1/137
Either-sex – Youth	1/97	1/331

License and Permit Fees

Residents

Elk Quota Hunt Application: \$10/application

Elk Permit: \$100 Bull, \$60 Antlerless

General Resident Hunting License: \$20

Non-residents

Elk Quota Hunt Application: \$10/application

Elk Permit: \$550 Bull, \$400 Antlerless

General Non-resident Hunting License: \$140

**General Information about the 2016-2017 Season**

Season Dates

Archery Season Dates

Bull Only: September 17–September 30, 2016

Either-sex archery and crossbow: Oct 15–Dec 9, Dec 17–23.

Either-sex archery only: Oct 15–Dec 9, Dec 17–Jan 6, 2017, and Jan 14-16, 2017.

Firearms Bull week 1: October 1-7

Firearms Bull week 2: October 8-14

Firearms Cow week 1: December 10-16

Firearms Cow week 2: January 7-13, 2017

Bag Limits

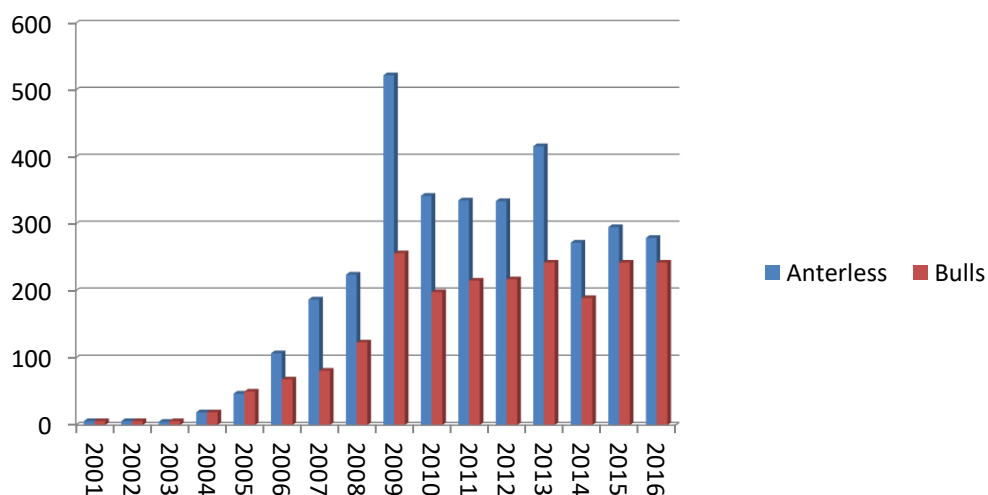
Elk hunters may only take one elk per year.

Area Permit Allotment

	Hazard LEA	Straight Creek LEA	At Large	Prestonsburg LEA	Middlesboro LEA	Tug Fork	Total
Bull Archery	15	15	64	1	1	4	100
Cow Archery	60	58	133	1	2	6	260
Bull Firearm Week 1	8	15	48	1	1	2	75
Bull Firearm Week 2	8	15	48	1	1	2	75
Cow Firearm Week 1	30	37	118	3	4	3	195
Cow Firearm Week 2	30	37	118	3	4	3	195
Youth	3	2	3	0	0	2	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>154</b>	<b>179</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>910</b>

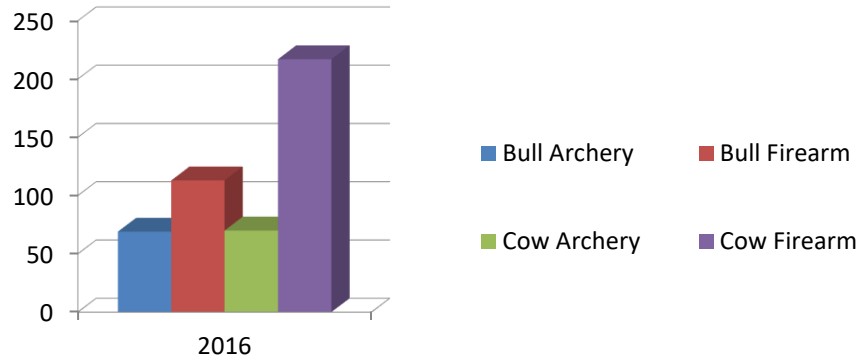
2016-2017 Harvest Results

Total Harvest by Year





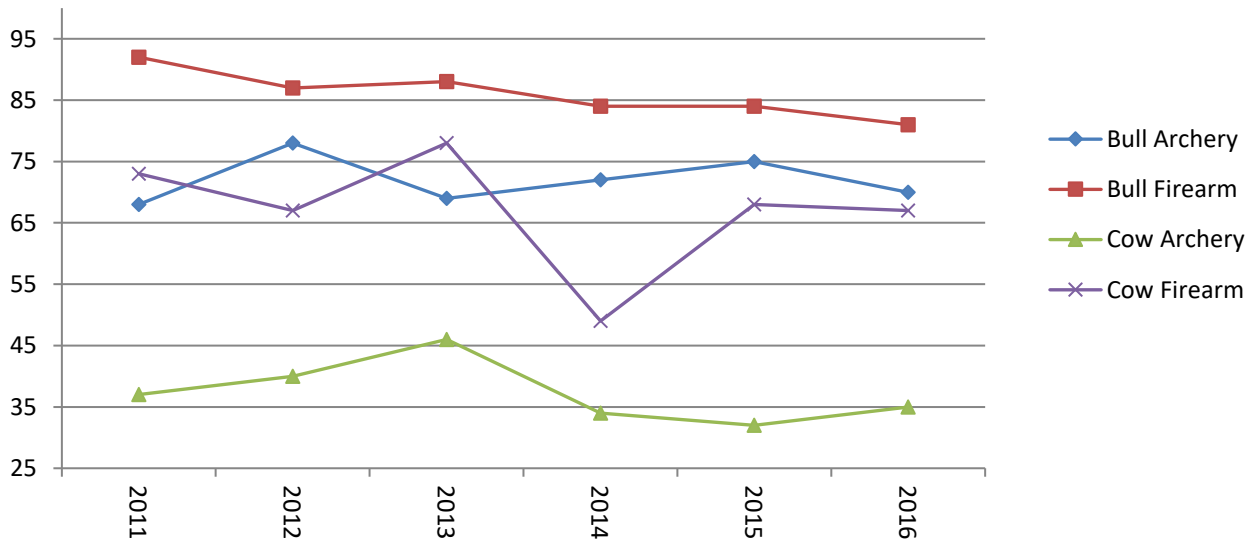
Weapon Type Harvest Summary



Success Rates by Area

	Hazard LEA	Middlesboro LEA	Prestonsburg LEA	Straight Creek LEA	Tug Fork	At Large
<b>Bull Archery</b>	87%	100%	100%	40%	100%	69%
<b>Bull Week 1</b>	75%	100%	100%	67%	100%	72%
<b>Bull Week 2</b>	100%	100%	100%	82%	50%	72%
<b>Cow Archery</b>	39%	50%	100%	17%	50%	23%
<b>Cow Week 1</b>	63%	75%	100%	45%	33%	56%
<b>Cow Week 2</b>	67%	50%	100%	56%	67%	52%
<b>Youth</b>	100%	n/a	n/a	n/a	100%	67%

Overall Success Rates by Weapon Type



## Kentucky Top 10 Trophy Bulls

SCORE	Hunter	County	Method	Year
*392 0/8	Sam Billiter	Pike	Modern Gun	2016
*377 5/8	David Giles	Knott	Modern Gun	2015
*373 4/8	Anthony Brown	Letcher	Archery	2015
*372 6/8	Terrell Royalty	Knott	Modern Gun	2009
371 0/8	Greg Neff	Bell	Modern Gun	2007
*369 5/8	Bryan Barton	Bell	Modern Gun	2016
*368 4/8	Bill Krider	Knott	Modern Gun	2015
*367 7/8	Kelvin Jackson	Harlan	Modern Gun	2008
367 0/8	Bill Auxier	Knott	Modern Gun	2007
*365 5/8	Brent Jones	Knott	Modern Gun	2013

**\* Indicates Non-typical**

This list includes the 10 largest bull elk scored and reported to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. The department is compiling a list of the top 100 elk taken in Kentucky. Please send copies of official (signed) score sheets to: Kentucky Trophy Elk List, KDFWR, 1 Sportsman’s Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601. Emailed submissions to [info.center@ky.gov](mailto:info.center@ky.gov) also will be accepted.

## Changes to the 2017-2018 Elk Season

The number of permits available will decrease to 710.

All drawn hunters are blocked from drawing another permit for 3 years.

Group application number changed from maximum of 5 people per group to maximum of 3.

Any legal weapon for elk hunting may be used during the 7 day firearm seasons.

## Disease Surveillance

### Brainworm (*Parelaphostrongylus tenuis*)

Brainworm, or meningeal worm, is the common name for a parasite that affects elk and other deer species. White-tailed deer are carriers of the parasite, but have evolved resistance to the disease. The parasites are limited only to deer species; therefore there is no disease risk to most livestock. Brainworms are small parasitic worms that travel through the body and end up in the spinal cord or brain, where they cause damage to nervous tissue. Elk infected with the parasite may become emaciated, disoriented, and show abnormal behavior such as a loss of fear for humans. Most affected individuals

ultimately die from complications caused by the disease. Approximately 4-6% of elk in Kentucky contract the parasite. Brainworm symptoms are similar to those caused by Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), but the two are in no way related. KDFWR biologists actively seek out animals showing brainworm symptoms and collect biological samples for testing. If you see an elk that fits the description, please contact your local biologist.

#### Chronic Wasting Disease

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is a disease of high concern to deer and elk across North America. It is caused by a certain type of protein (prion) and causes damage to brain tissue. KDFWR has tested thousands of deer and elk statewide and have not detected the disease.

### Current Research

No research projects are ongoing at this time.

### Education

#### KY Elk University Training Module

An on-line elk hunt training is available through our website that covers topics ranging from pre-hunt preparation to the actual hunt and what to do after an elk is harvested (<http://app.fw.ky.gov/elk101/default.aspx>).

#### 2015-2030 Elk Management Plan

The transition from an elk restoration to sustainable elk management has resulted in creating a comprehensive Kentucky Elk Management Plan. KDFWR had two goals in writing this Plan: we wished to provide an overview of past and current management of the Kentucky elk herd, and to provide a vision for future management of the herd. The result is the 2015-2030 Kentucky Elk Management Plan, which is available on our website (<http://fw.ky.gov/Hunt/Documents/20152030ElkManagementPlan.pdf>)

#### Elk Info Page

Other information regarding KY elk restoration and management can be found on our Elk Info Page at <http://fw.ky.gov/Hunt/Pages/Elk-Info.aspx>

**Contacts**

If you have questions about the elk herd or elk hunting opportunities, please visit the elk webpage at [fw.ky.gov/Hunt/Pages/Elk-Hunting.aspx](http://fw.ky.gov/Hunt/Pages/Elk-Hunting.aspx) or call the KDFWR Info Center at 1-800-858-1549.

Approximately 95% of Kentucky is privately owned. To successfully manage our wildlife resources, the KDFWR works cooperatively with Kentucky’s private landowners. One of the essential ingredients in conserving Kentucky’s wildlife resources is habitat improvement. Wildlife biologists are available to work with interested individuals or groups on properties that they own or have management rights on. To contact your local wildlife biologist for assistance with wildlife management on your property see the map.

