

# Habitat-focused Approaches to QDM



**Kip Adams – NDA Chief Conservation Officer**

# Deer Hunting

- America's pastime
- Deer are among the most widespread wildlife species
- Deer are the most sought after game animal
- Nearly 8 of every 10 hunters identifies as a deer hunter





# Deer Hunting

- 79% of American hunters pursue deer
  - 11 million deer hunters
  - 3.1 million turkey hunters
  - 1.4 million duck hunters
  - <1 million elk hunters



# Deer Hunting

- Deer drive the hunting industry
  - Deer hunters spend >\$23 billion annually with a >\$50 billion total multiplier effect





# Deer Hunter Opportunity

- National average = 134 days of total deer season
- North Carolina = 149 days of total deer season



# Deer Hunter Days Afield

- National average = 12 days hunting deer
- North Carolina average = 15 days hunting deer





# Deer Hunter Density

- National average = 5 deer hunters/square mile
- North Carolina = 5 deer hunters/square mile



# Successful Hunters

- 41% of hunters shot a deer in 2019/20 season
- North Carolina = 49% of hunters shot a deer
- 22% of NC hunters shot >1 deer in 2019/20 season (18% avg.)



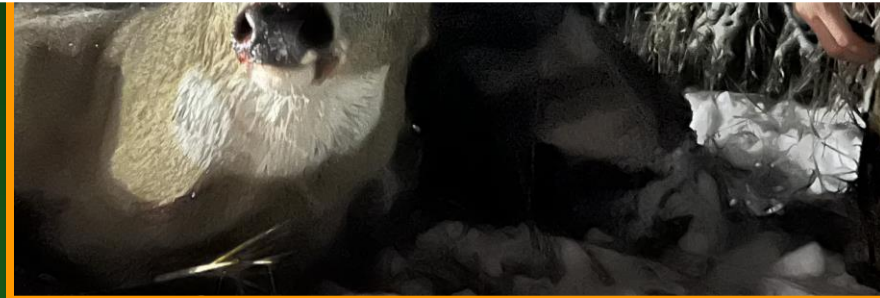


# Antlered Buck Harvest (PSM)



State	2020 Harvest
Delaware, Michigan, Pennsylvania	3.9
South Carolina	3.2
Maryland	3.0

North Carolina = 1.8



# Top Antlerless Harvest (PSM)



State	2020 Harvest
Pennsylvania	5.8
Delaware, Maryland	5.1
New Jersey	4.5
Michigan, Wisconsin	3.4



North Carolina = 1.7



# Buck Age Structure

~20% 1.5yrs

~38% 2.5yrs

~43% 3.5+yrs



# North Carolina Summary

- Longer deer season than many other states
- Hunt more days than average from other states
- Deer hunter density = national average
- Hunters are more successful than average hunters
- Above average number shoot >1 deer per year
- Buck and antlerless harvests = national averages
- Very balanced buck age structure

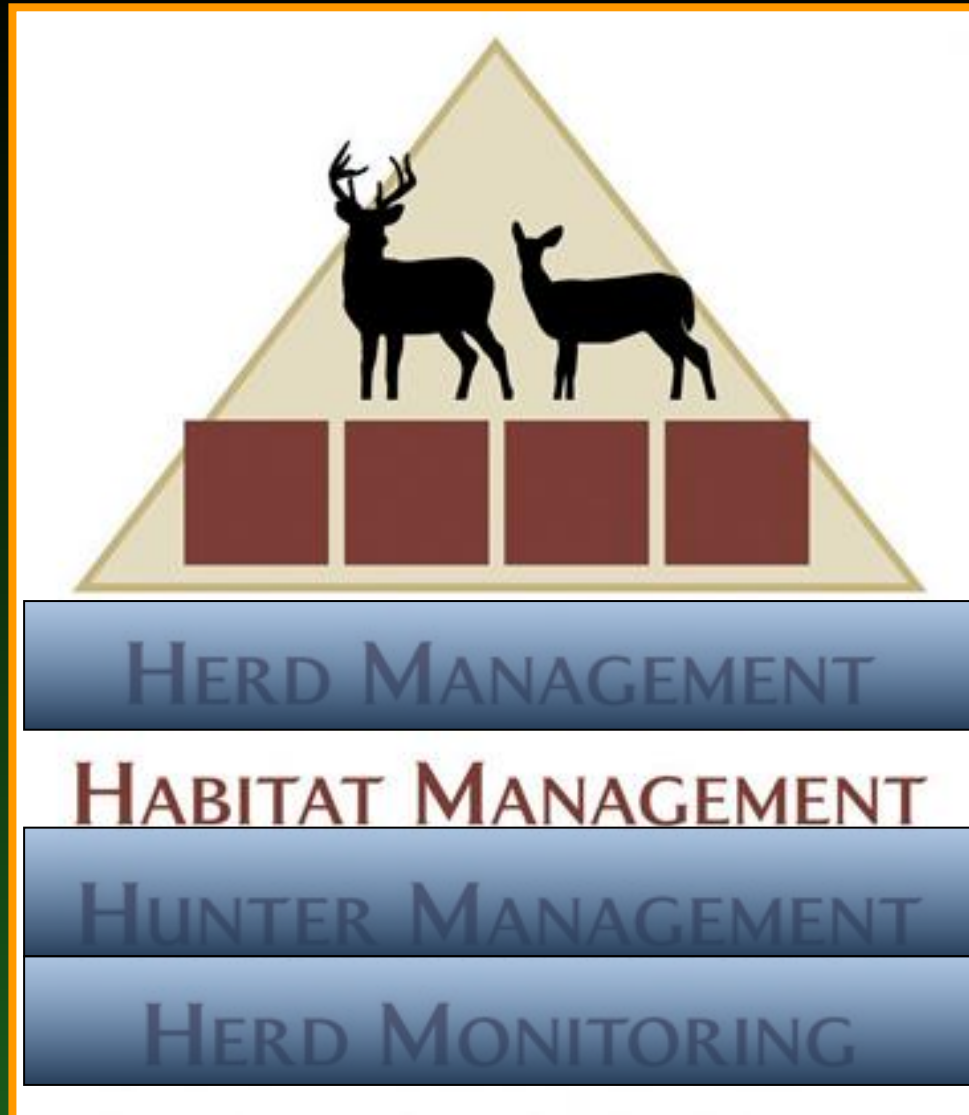




# Quality Deer Management is...

**The approach under which young bucks are protected from harvest, combined with an adequate harvest of female deer to produce healthy deer herds in balance with existing habitat conditions.**

# Four Building Blocks of QDM





# Good Habitat...





# Important for does and fawns...





**As well as bucks...**



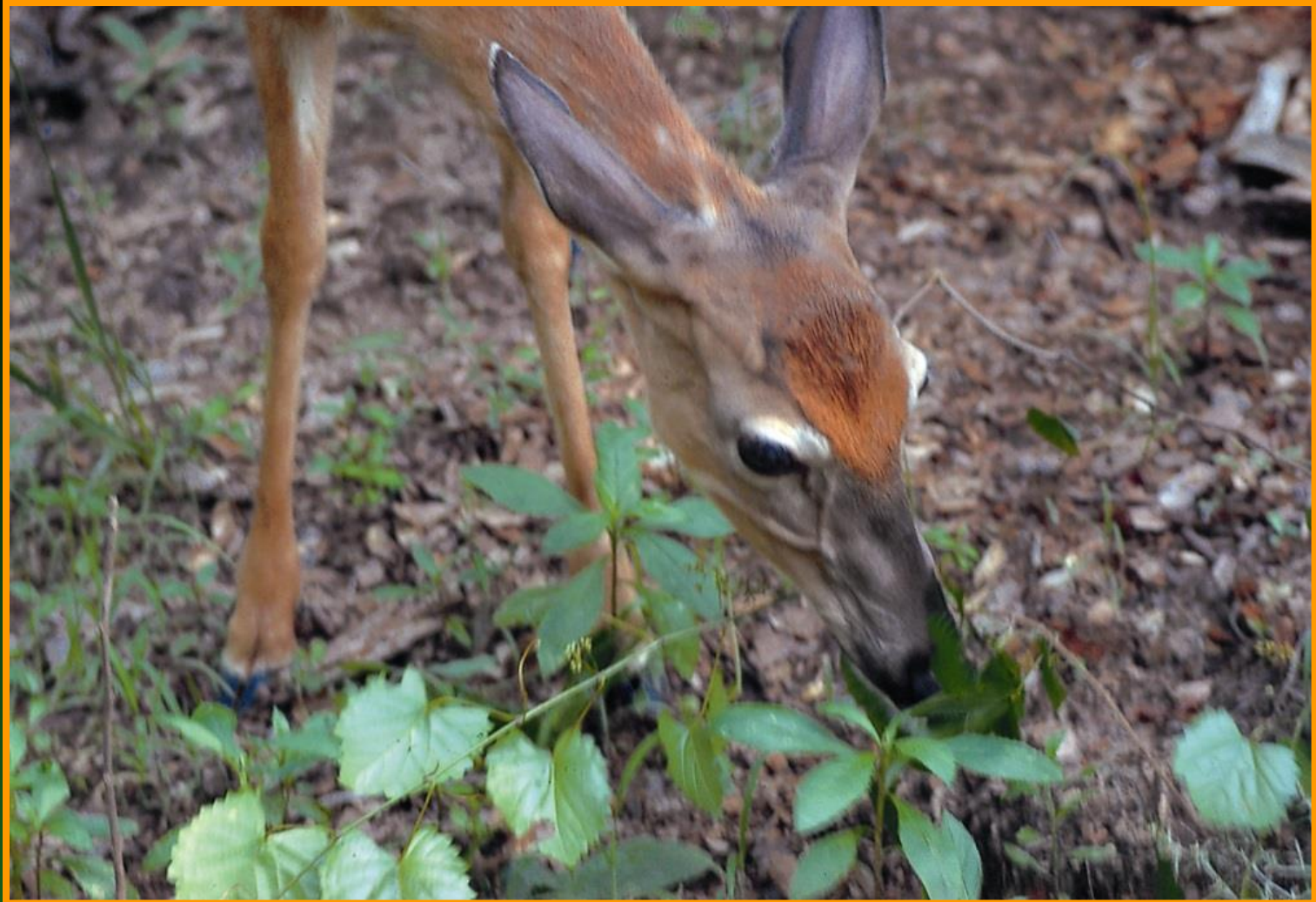


**And for deer in all age classes...**





**Each deer eats about one ton of  
forage annually!**





**~16,000 pounds of forage is  
necessary for this group of deer...**





# Habitat Management



**Forests, Old Fields and Food Plots**



# Prescribed Fire can be used in all 3





**Goal is to provide year-round  
nutrition...**



# Provide Year-Round Nutrition

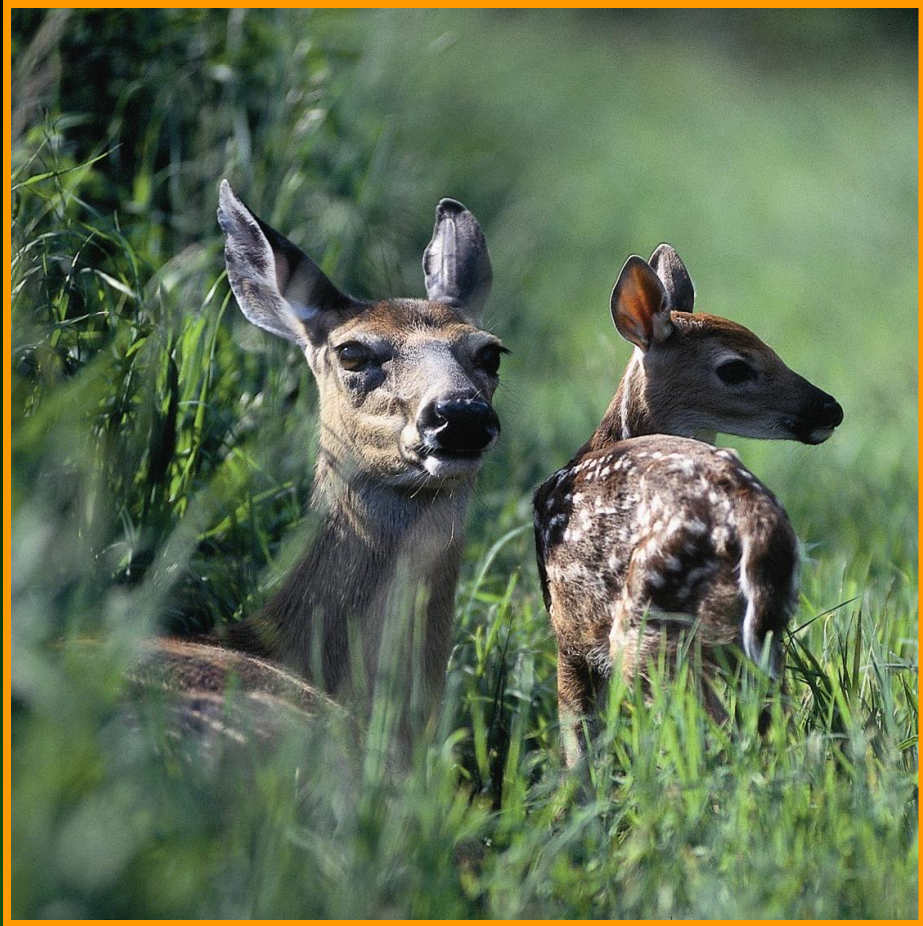
## – Spring –





# Provide Year-Round Nutrition

## – Summer –



# Provide Year-Round Nutrition

## – Fall –





# Provide Year-Round Nutrition

## – Winter –





# Forest Management



**Typically 75+% of area**



# Provides food and cover...



**Want diversity of stand types and age classes  
interspersed across the habitat**



**You don't want this...**



**This stand contains 50-100 lbs browse/acre**



**This is much better...**



**This stand contains up to 1,000 lbs browse/acre**



# Timber Mgt. & Prescribed Fire...



**This stand contains up to 1,400 lbs browse/acre**



# Structure is important...





# **“Old Fields”**

## **Early Successional Vegetation**



**Typically 1-5% of area**



# Provide food and cover...



**This field contains 2,000-4,000 lbs forage/acre**



# Forbs are extremely important...





# Ideal fawning cover...





# NWSG provide cover...



...but no food



# Fire is extremely beneficial...





# Spot spraying...





# Old field are maintained by...

- Prescribed fire
- Disking
- Mowing
- Crushing with roller chopper/dozer
- Herbiciding
- Combination of methods





# Food Plots



**Typically 1-5% of area**



# Food Plots



**Can provide 2,000-8,000 lbs forage/acre**



# Provide food and some cover...



Are used to supplement native vegetation



# Fire for food plot preparation...





# What to Plant





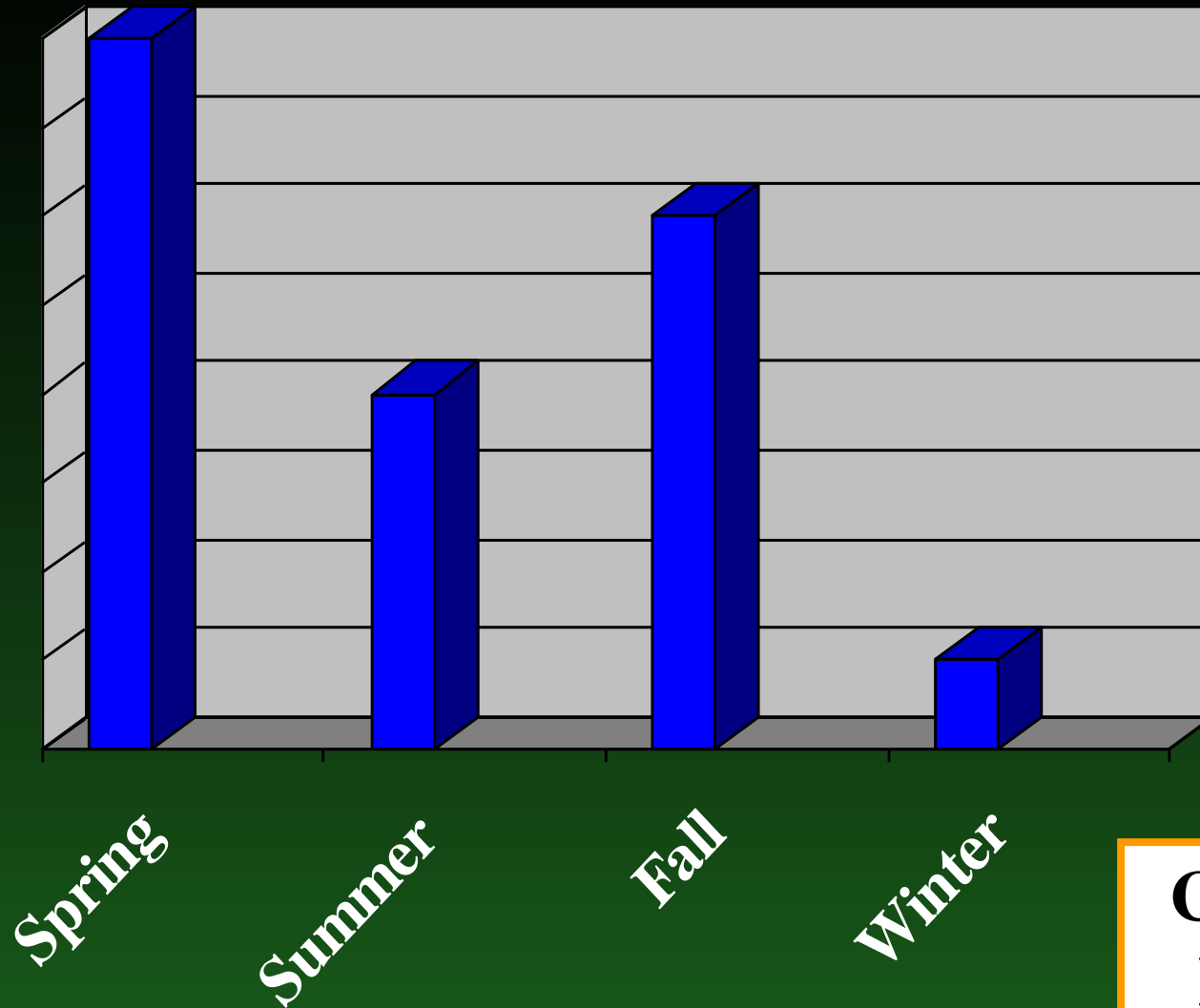
# Cool-Season Perennials

- Alfalfa
- White Clover
- Red Clover
- Chicory





# Provide Year-Round Nutrition



**Cool-Season  
Perennials**



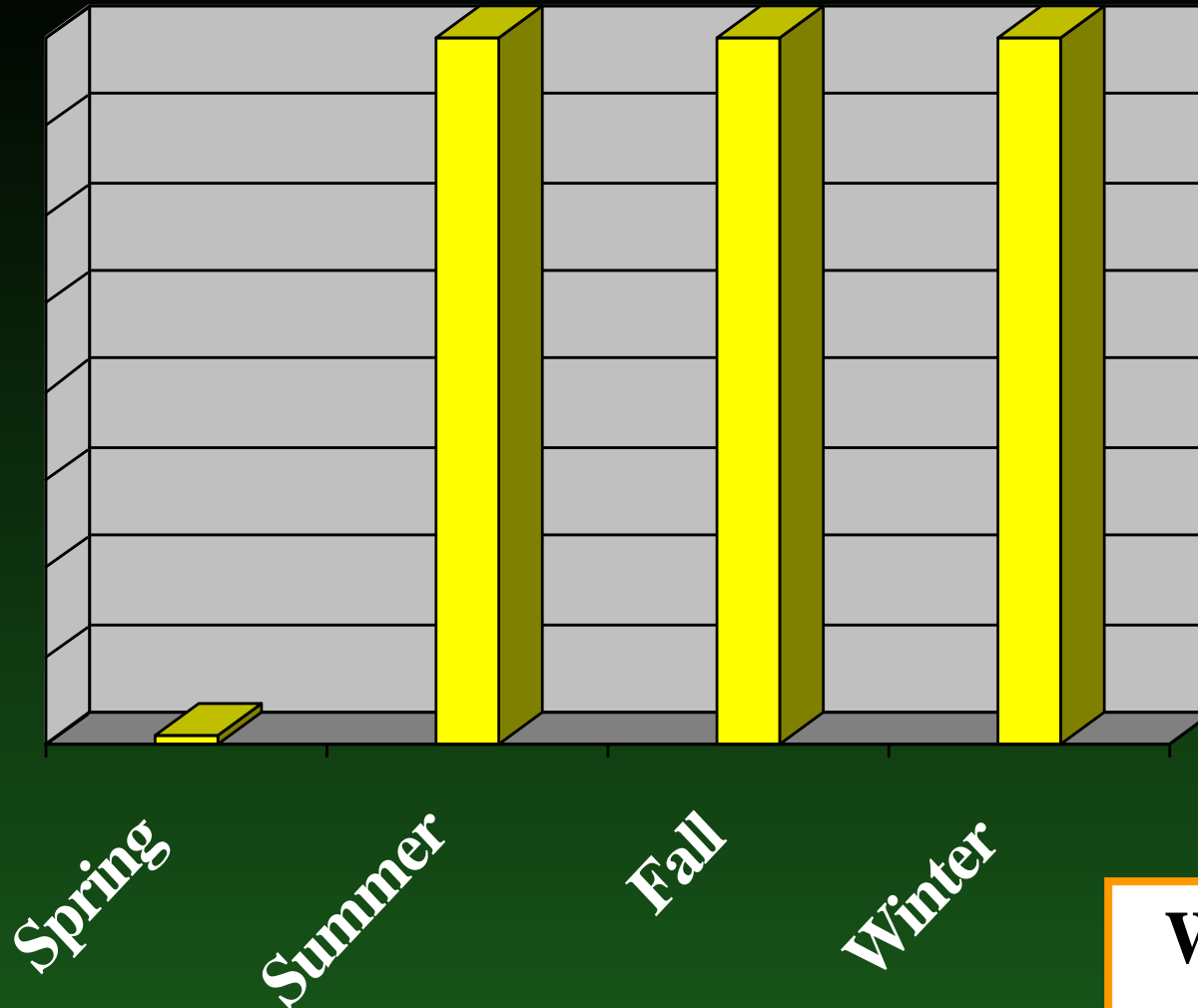
# Warm-Season Annuals

- Corn
- Soybeans
- Cowpeas
- Lablab
- Sorghum





# Provide Year-Round Nutrition



**Warm-Season  
Annuals**

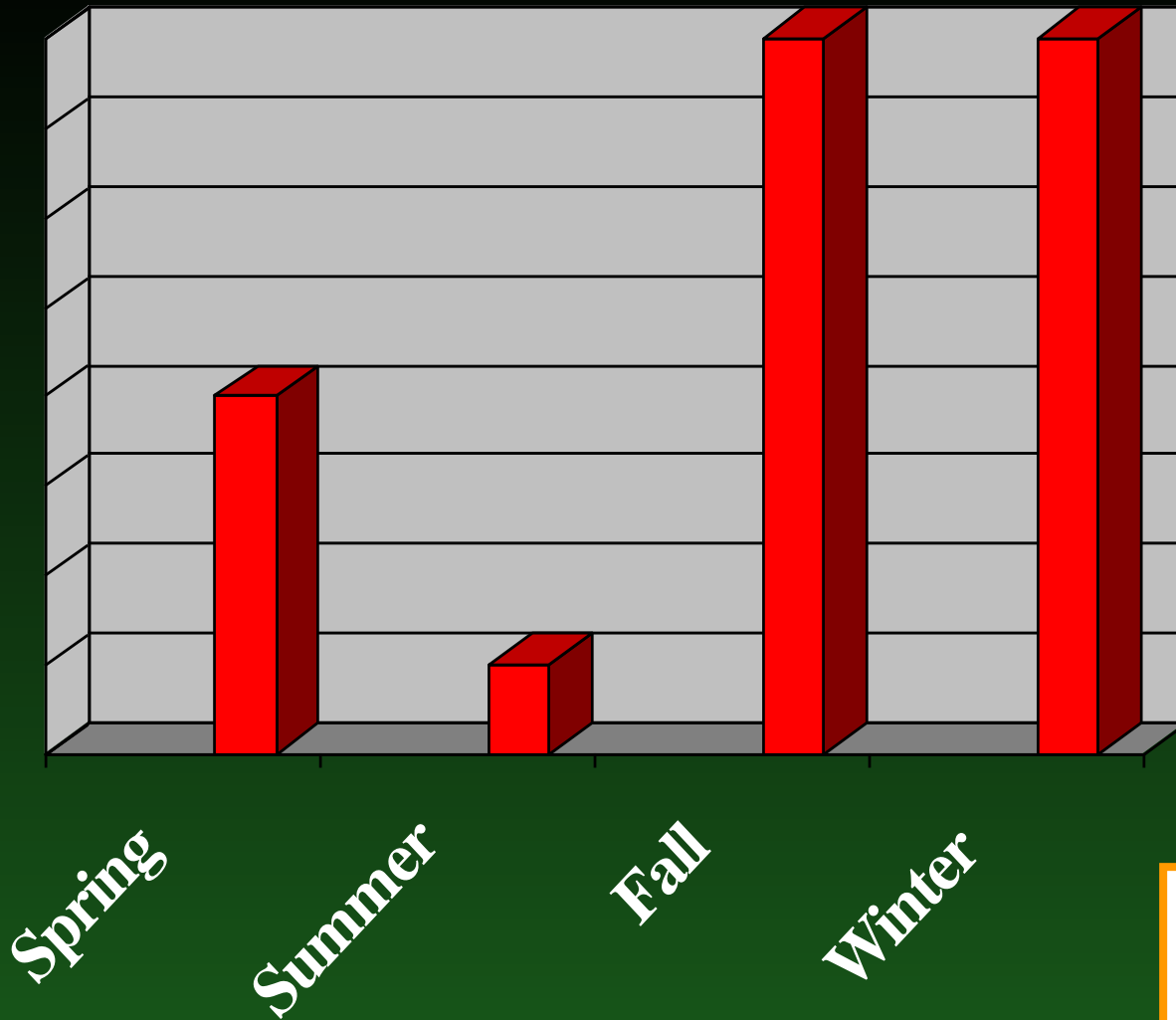


# Cool-Season Annuals

- Brassicas
  - turnips
  - rape
  - kale
- Oats
- Spring/Winter Wheat
- Spring/Winter Rye
- Austrian Winter Pea



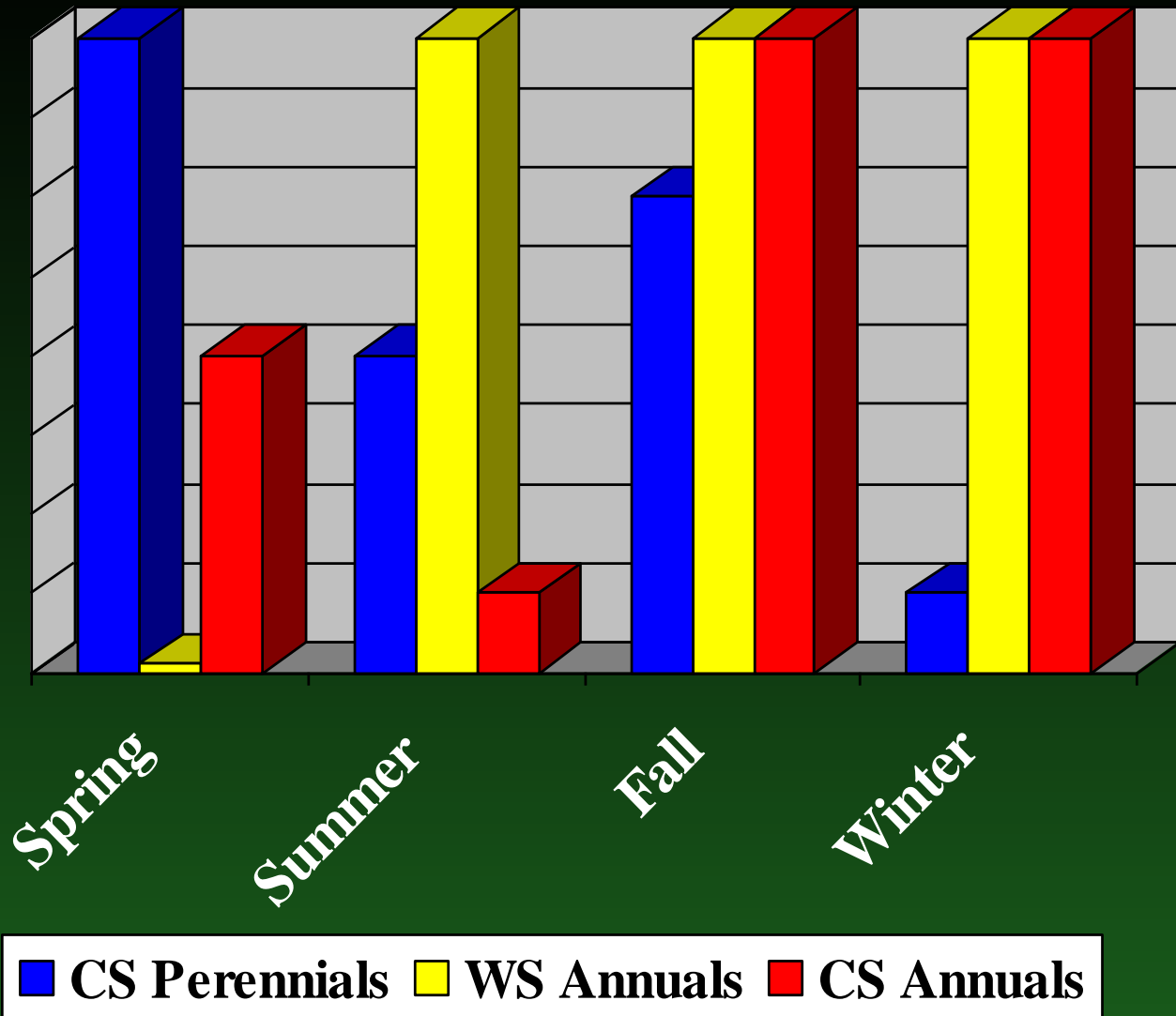
# Provide Year-Round Nutrition



**Cool-Season  
Annuals**

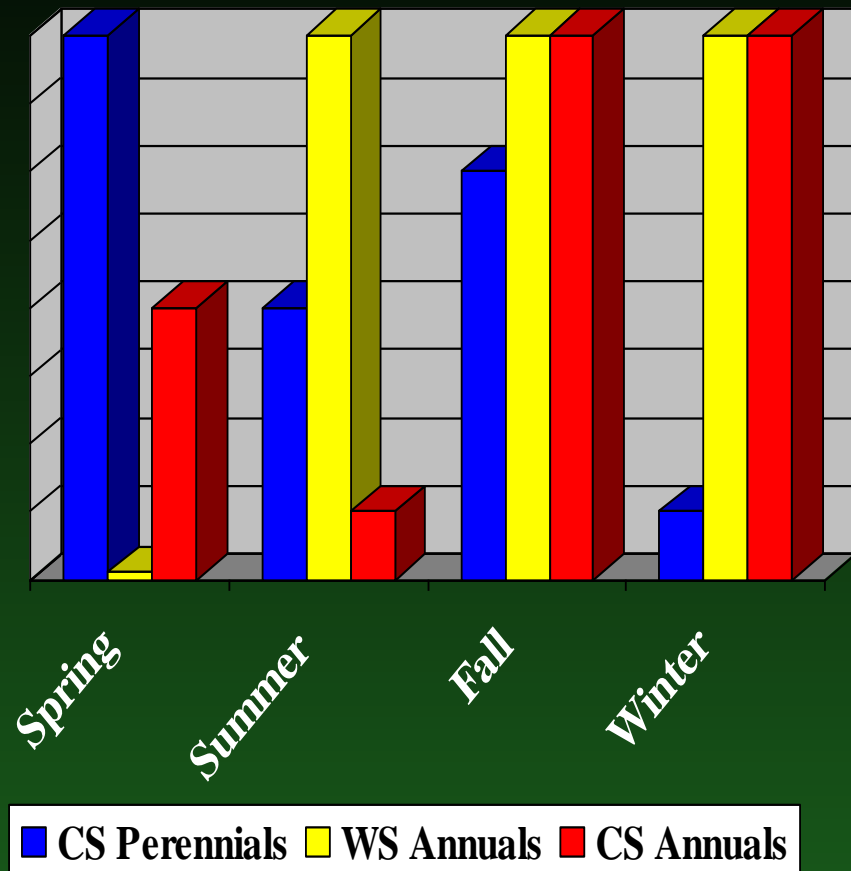


# Provide Year-Round Nutrition



# Recommendations for Nutritional Plots (1-5 acres)

- ~33% in cool-season perennials (clovers)
- ~33% in cool-season annuals (brassicas)
- ~33% in warm-season annuals (corn, soybeans)





**Plant and...**

**Pray for Rain!**

# Proper habitat management provides...





# Year around cover...



## Softwood species



# Year around cover...



## Hardwood species



# Year around cover...



Old fields/NWSG



# Proper habitat management also provides...





**Year around food...**



**Agricultural**

# Year around food...



**Hard mast**



# Year around food...



Soft mast

# Year around food...



Forbs

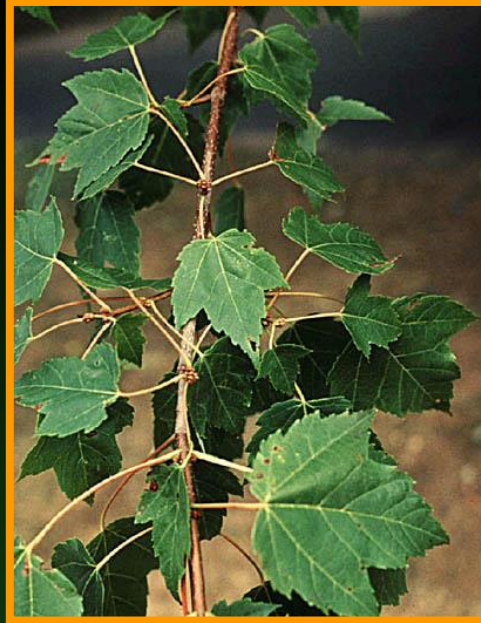


# Year around food...



Vines and shrubs

# Year around food...



**Hardwood browse**



# Year around food...



**Softwood browse**

# Fantastic hunting...





**‘Carrot’ is better deer hunting...**



# Good deer habitat benefits many other species...







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