



Case Study Report FRISK-GO

Wildlife Management and Silviculture, the Hatzfeldt-Projekt

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Adding value with a European Forest Risk Facility

Case study reports are a tool to investigate and document how a European Forest Risk Facility can add value to current actions using concrete examples based on real events/incidents

A) Brief description of the event/incident description

The hunting laws of the federal and state governments (Germany) currently regulating the hunting & closed seasons for ruminant ungulates, are not consistently based on wildlife biology. This sometimes causes irrational restrictions in hunting, which cause unnecessary disturbance and hunting pressure to the wildlife, which in return increases wildlife damage. Hunting seasons are extended into sensitive times, such as the breeding season and late winter.

The most prominent example of this fact is roe deer: Male roe deer older than one year can be hunted during the whole breeding and raising of young animals. However, they cannot be hunted after October 15, although all other roe deer continues at least until January 31.

This regulation is not based on wildlife biology (but trophy development) and as a consequence, after October 15, all roe deer, which cannot be clearly identified as female, is not harvested. Still, the hunting pressure and disturbance is ever present. Roe deer hunting, especially on driven hunts, can therefore be very ineffective and produce unnecessary stress.

Forest owners and managers, who rely on adapted wildlife densities as part of a close-to nature forest management, are herewith prevented from hunting efficient and with a low disturbance factor.

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B) Approach taken

An “alternative hunting season concept” is being tested in parts of the “Hatzfeld-Wildenburg'schen Forestry Administration”. The alternative concept represents a compromise between the requirements of Wildlife Biology and the requirements of the forest owner. The hunting seasons for all game species are synchronized and focused on two intervals in the year. These intervals are timed and synchronized with times of the year in which a) game is very active, and b) the viewing and spotting conditions are optimal (lack of green vegetation). Furthermore, there are no more distinction between the sexes and age classes within the hunting intervals, as well as no consideration of trophies.

Naturally, pregnant and leading mother animals are of course not culled.

The test was scientifically accompanied with intensive analysis of the hunting bag, the condition of hunted deer and forest and ground vegetation regeneration within the silvicultural concept.

C) Added value

The role of the Forest Risk Facility was an honest and neutral broker and easy access point for a With the hunting interval approach, the main hunting phase between September and January in particular can be used very effectively. Hunting requires less time, making the hunting season (and pressure) shorter. In the other phases, eg in summer during breeding, we can afford not to hunt at all. The second hunting interval in April and May was also very efficient. No problems or violations of standards of ethical hunting (wildlife biology, animal welfare and Ethics) were observed.

However, this is described interval system prevented in the provincial hunting laws due to the year-round hunting season for wild boar and foxes. Despite the shorter hunting by 2 months and 4 months of total hunting silence, the intended hunting quota by forest owners can be achieved, whereas the composition / structure / quality of the harvested animals has optimized and the forest owner and the hunter can influence wildlife population as well as wildlife damage better.

By now, the silvicultural objectives in the natural regeneration are all met without any ungulate protection measures.

The Wildlife damage assessment does not report any economically relevant damage either. The benefit of the natural tree regeneration is in a magnitude of € 150 per year and ha.

Demonstration sites are available within close proximity of each other showing both approaches, the Hatzfeld model and a traditional hunting system with focus on trophies and higher population numbers. Field visits, excursions and presentations can be arranged via the FRISK secretariat.