

THE IMPORTANCE OF TEETH FOR AGING

Many hunters through their inquisitive nature frequently ask what the Department of Natural Resources does with the lower front teeth taken from the animals that they harvest. The value of these teeth lies in the fact that the age of the animal can be determined by grinding the root portion to a thin section and subsequently counting the annual growth rings in much the same manner as one counts the rings on a tree to determine its age.

A large number of jaws submitted by hunters makes it possible to estimate the age of the big game population in each Game Hunting Area. These data are essential in the study of population dynamics, that is, the study of the rate of increase or decrease of the population and the rates of mortality (death) and survival of our big game. Changes in age structure can provide a valuable clue along with other biological data as to the best level of harvest and thus serve as an aid in determining what type of season will be held and if quotas should be established.

The study of population age structure is one of the most powerful tools that the biologist has available and thus, the more teeth obtained the more reliable are the results. In many areas, we do not have a sufficiently large sample of teeth to make reliable estimates of the age structure whereas in a jaw, the sample is sufficient. Many hunters are not aware of the above nor aware that the Wildlife Branch annually gives an attractive crest to each hunter submitting a jaw. For those who have cooperated in the past a sincere thank you and we look forward to your support in the future - to those, who for one reason or another, have not collected teeth your cooperation is asked for. Remember, hunting is not a right, but rather a privilege - in order to manage the resources, hunter cooperation is needed if the privilege is to be protected. The objective of the Wildlife Branch is to protect the wildlife resources of the province in such a way that they can be utilized by present and future generations for assorted recreational pursuits. The Wildlife Branch in itself is not capable of performing this task without the sincere and devoted cooperation of all hunters and non-hunters alike in the province.

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