

Bobcats Cull Sick Deer
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Within the last year, SCWDS has diagnosed 3 instances of bobcat predation upon white-tailed deer submitted from a radio-telemetry deer mortality study being conducted by the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department, Clemson University, and Westvaco Corporation. These recent cases prompted a review of SCWDS diagnostic records from 1975 to the present. Cases involving bobcats were categorized as follows: 1) confirmed - sighting of bobcat with deer carcass; 2) probable - a cached carcass with injuries consistent with bobcat attack; and 3) possible - a cached, partial carcass with insufficient remains for complete pathologic evaluation. Eight cases involving bobcats (1 confirmed, 5 probable, 2 possible) were found among 716 deer clinical cases. Five deer were from telemetry studies (the 3 from South Carolina and 2 from Arkansas) and the remaining 3 were found by wildlife biologists in Florida, Georgia, and South Carolina. Six of the 8 deer were less than 1 year of age; 2 were adults.

Health status could not be determined from the limited remains of 2 fawns, but 5 of the 6 other deer had pre-existing health problems. Included were 1 underweight 11 month old deer and 1 emaciated 11 month old deer with chronic rumen and hoof lesions due to hemorrhagic disease and numerous large stomach worms (*Haemonchus contortus*); a severely tick-infested, emaciated (45 pounds), 4-year-old doe with oral food impactions and a pathologic fracture of a mandible which were compatible with arterial worm infection (elaeophorosis); an emaciated (65 pounds), 2.5-year-old buck with an infected gunshot wound to a foreleg and disseminated secondary bacterial abscesses; and a 3-month-old fawn in fair condition that had been subject to stress and malnutrition during the 1982 flooding of the Everglades.

Although only a limited number of bobcat-killed deer were examined, nearly all of the cases which could be adequately evaluated had either pre-existing health problems or were from populations under extreme environmental stress. These observations support the concept that bobcat predation is serving as a "culling" force on weak and sick deer as opposed to reducing the number of healthy deer.