

HUNTER MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES UTILIZED BY MONTANA RANCHERS^{TWS}

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A survey of private ranchers was conducted to identify practices used in Montana by ranchers to manage hunters. A questionnaire was sent to 989 ranchers from a population identified as typical working ranches larger than 400 ha. Respondents (42% return) indicated 80 percent had no restrictions or simple permission to hunt on most of their land. Twelve percent of the respondents indicated their ranch was closed to hunting and 12 percent had fee-hunting operations or leased to outfitters. Past damage by hunters (42%) and conflicts with hunters (33%) were reasons most cited for closing ranches to hunting. Combinations of strategies were utilized with vehicle restrictions, advanced reservations and check in/out being most common. Ranch size influenced management strategies with 63 percent of ranches under 400 ha requiring only simple permission to hunt compared to 28 percent of ranches over 400 ha. Sixteen percent of the smaller ranches had 50 percent or more of their land closed compared to 5 percent of the larger ranches. Implications of study results include a need for programs to address landowner concerns and programs to impress upon hunters the importance of their behavior in affecting public access to private land.