

South Dakota Deer History

Source: South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks. 2017. South Dakota White-tailed Deer and Mule Deer Management Plan, 2017-2023. Completion Report 2017-02. South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks, Pierre, South Dakota, USA. [South Dakota 2017 Deer Plan](#), page 1

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) were indigenous to almost all of South Dakota prior to the American expansion west ... The Missouri River was the simplest mode of transportation for the earliest explorers to the Dakota Territory, and many of their observations indicate that both white-tailed and mule deer were abundant along the Missouri River and most of its significant tributaries prior to 1840 ...

By the turn of the 20th century, most deer were extirpated due to unregulated harvest and market hunting. Legislation created in the early 1900s essentially closed all deer hunting across South Dakota except in the Black Hills, and by the 1950s deer populations had recovered in most areas of the state

[from page 1]: Historical records suggest that both white-tailed and mule deer were nearly extirpated from the region east of the Missouri River in South Dakota between 1875 and 1880 (Jackson 1972). By 1900, records further suggest both deer species were nearly extirpated in the state west of the Missouri River (Bever 1957a).

Despite unregulated harvest and market hunting, deer herds persisted in the Black Hills region but numbers were greatly reduced. In the mid-1870s Custer and Ludlow wrote that deer were abundant in the Black Hills region, but by 1880 prospectors, market hunters, and homesteaders devastated the deer herds (Bever 1957a).