

# Ecologist: Shoot fawns

MADISON, Wis. (UPI) — A University of Wisconsin wildlife ecologist is gunning for Bambi.

He says hunters who shoot fawns rather than bucks or does should be praised, not scorned.

"Hunters who . . . shoot a fawn should be rewarded in some way, not condemned," the ecologist, Orrin Rongstad, said. "They're helping the deer population more than hunters who kill larger, older animals instead."

Rongstad said an ideal deer season would concentrate harvesting efforts on fawns. Hunters should get a reward for shooting fawns, such as a guarantee of a party permit next season, he said, while hunters shooting adult does should be penalized and those killing older bucks should be limited by a lottery system.

Rongstad said predators and

weather have been the main population control factors for deer.

"Through laws and personal choice, man has concentrated hunting pressure on older deer, especially males, changing the natural sex and age structure of the deer herd," he said.

Rongstad said the result has been a large concentration of younger deer, while the range of ages — which should extend from fawns up to 8 year olds — has been shortened. He said bucks older than 3½ years are rare in Wisconsin.

Some deer are lost to starvation in northern Wisconsin almost every winter, he said, and fawns are the first to succumb. He said harvesting fawns would help reduce those losses.

Herd productivity is also affected by a dominance of fawns,

Rongstad said. He said fawns are either nonproductive or less productive than does and an overabundance of fawns makes it more difficult for herd numbers to increase the next year.

"I expected this to stir some controversy," Rongstad admitted after his views were made public in a routine news release from the university's extension department. But, he added, "We're creating worse problems rather than helping."

"If the hunter is happy with one-third less meat, he shouldn't be criticized," Rongstad said. "We shouldn't call him names because he shot poor little Bambi."

"If people only knew," he said. "The agony and slow death of starvation in the woods is so much worse."