

The Arizona Game and Fish Department will be conducting aerial surveys of big-game animals in Southeastern Arizona during the first three weeks of January. # The survey findings are used by wildlife managers to accurately set annual hunt permit numbers for various game species. # Surveys, from Jan. 3 to Jan. 18, will take place over the Santa Rita Mountains south of Tucson, the Sonoita-Patagonia area, the Florence-Oracle area and other locations. # " The species we're surveying are whitetail deer, mule deer and javelina, " said Mark Hart, spokesman for the Game and Fish Department. " If we see something other than those species, we will note it and annotate the report. But mainly those are the species we're counting. " # The surveys will involve helicopter flights lasting up to five hours, and fixed-wing aircraft may also be used, Hart noted. # The department provided this list of scheduled survey flights: # Jan. 3-4 over the Santa Rita Mountains area; # Jan. 5-6, Sonoita-Patagonia area; # Jan. 7-8, Tombstone-McNeal area; # Jan. 9-10, south of Willcox area; # Jan. 11-12, Safford-Duncan area; # Jan. 13-14, Galiuro Mountains area; # Jan. 15-16, Florence-Oracle area; # Jan. 17-18, Amado-Tubac area. # Hunters in the field might notice survey activity in some areas. # " Although we attempt to conduct these flights so that there is minimal conflict with ongoing hunts, surveys may overlap with an open hunt, " said Raul Vega, regional supervisor of Game and Fish in Tucson. # Hunters may encounter low-flying Game and Fish Department aircraft conducting big-game surveys during weekdays and on weekends, specifically