

## **NEWS RELEASE**

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources**

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**SUBJECT: Wisconsin's annual nine-day gun deer hunt sees increase in statewide buck harvest; opportunities for antlerless deer hunting continue through January**

**MADISON** – Close to 600,000 deer hunters embraced the excitement of another nine-day gun deer season in Wisconsin, and preliminary numbers show an increase in the buck harvest, especially in the far northern counties.

### ***Message of thanks from Gov. Scott Walker and DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp***

"The gun deer hunt is one of our more anticipated outdoor traditions, and it's very important to Wisconsin's economy and conservation while providing millions of hours of enjoyment in the field," said DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp. "White-tailed deer are one of our greatest natural resources, and it's exciting to see the passion so many people have for hunting and conservation in our state."

### ***Preliminary Registration Totals***

Preliminary registration figures indicate a total of 97,892 hunters were successful in their pursuit of a buck, an increase of 5,282 (5.7 percent) compared to 2015. Overall, preliminary registration figures show that 196,785 deer were harvested during the nine-day gun deer hunt, compared to 198,057 in 2016.

The largest change in buck harvest occurred in the Northern Forest Zone (30 percent increase from 2015) after two consecutive mild winters and limited antlerless tags.

"While many factors influence hunter success, the buck harvest is one of our best indicators of how the population is responding to harvest strategies in the Forest Zones," said DNR big game ecologist Kevin Wallenfang.

"The harvest is never uniform just as deer densities aren't uniform, but overall it is encouraging to see the increase in the northern counties, and statewide harvest levels similar to last year," said Wallenfang.

The nine-day hunt also provided successful hunters with 98,893 antlerless deer, a 6.2 percent decrease from 2015, mostly in the Farmland Zones. However, those numbers are expected to climb as hunters enjoy the ongoing statewide muzzleloader hunt, statewide four-day antlerless only hunt and nine-day antlerless only Holiday Hunt in select farmland counties. Hunters may use any unfilled antlerless tag during the latter two hunts.

For the nine-day gun deer hunt, the 2016 regional harvest breakdown by region (with percent change from 2015) included:

- Northern Forest Zone: 23,445(30 percent increase) antlered and 8,955(21 percent increase) antlerless;
- Central Forest Zone: 5,067(2 percent decrease) antlered and 2,943(2 percent decrease) antlerless;
- Central Farmland Zone: 48,872 (1.4 percent increase) antlered and 62,612(8.2 percent decrease) antlerless;
- Southern Farmland Zone: 20,508 (3.4 percent decrease) antlered and 24,383(-10%) antlerless; and
- Total: 97,892 (5.7 percent increase) antlered and 98,893 (6.2 percent decrease) antlerless.

Hunters were required to register harvested deer before 5 p.m. the day after harvest. Any hunter who failed to follow mandatory registration rules should do so now, despite having missed the deadline. For more information regarding preliminary registration and license sales numbers, search keywords "[weekly totals](#)."

### ***License Sales***

In 2016, 598,867 gun deer licenses were sold through the end of the nine-day gun deer season, compared to 612,377 in 2015. In total, 834,092 gun, archery and crossbow licenses (not including upgrades) licenses have been sold through the end of the nine-day gun deer season, compared to 849,778 (not including upgrades) in 2015.

Deer license and tag sales will continue throughout the remaining hunting seasons. For a more detailed breakdown of this year's license sales, search keyword "[weekly totals](#)."

### ***Hunting Accidents***

DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement's conservation wardens are investigating the 5 non-fatal hunting incidents in four counties during the gun-deer season. One incident occurred in Waukesha, Oconto and Ozaukee, and two in Taylor. As always, one incident is one too many, and our hearts go out to anyone impacted by a hunting incident.

Hunting in Wisconsin is safe which is demonstrated by our continued downward trend in hunting incidents. Five out of the last 10 deer seasons were fatality-free and nine out of the last 10 deer season involved single digit incidents.

Chief Conservation Warden Todd Schaller said this downward trend in hunting incidents is because hunters know and use firearm safety principles and the thousands of volunteer hunter education instructors who host hunter safety courses statewide.

“We saw hunters following the firearm safety message of TABK-and take time to educate those who don’t,” said Schaller “It was great to see hunters, and families of hunters, out in the woods enjoying a Wisconsin tradition.”

### ***Additional deer hunting opportunities continue through December***

Hunters are reminded of additional opportunities to hunt deer in Wisconsin after the close of the nine-day season. This year’s muzzleloader season is currently open through Dec. 7, and the archery season is open through Jan. 8, 2017. A four-day antlerless-only hunt will take place Dec. 8-11, while the holiday hunt will be offered in a number of counties statewide Dec. 24 to Jan. 1, 2017. Any legal firearm, crossbow or archery equipment may be used during these hunts.

The gun deer season will remain open through Dec. 7 in metro sub-units, while archery hunting in these areas is open through Jan. 31.

For more information regarding which hunts may be offered in each county, check out the interactive deer map at keyword “DMU.”

### ***GameReg***

The GameReg internet registration system and call-in phone option worked well overall, and hunters continued to visit walk-in stations that offered these services in 2016. Positive feedback was received throughout the season as hunters enjoyed the convenience and flexibility of the system.

With GameReg, the accuracy of deer harvest numbers is directly related to the level of hunter compliance. If a hunter forgot to register their deer, they still have time to use GameReg and help make sure each deer harvest is counted. For more information, search keywords “gamereg.”

### ***Hunters asked to participate in online Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey***

The [Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey](#) will remain active until all deer seasons have ended, and wildlife managers ask that hunters submit a report of what they saw during their time in the field. This information will provide valuable data used to improve population estimates for Wisconsin's deer herd and other species.

For additional information, search keywords “[deer hunter wildlife](#).”

### ***County Deer Advisory Councils***

As a reminder, those interested in providing important feedback regarding deer management are encouraged to participate in County Deer Advisory Councils. These councils use a number of resources, including deer population data, harvest data, public input and other information to provide recommendations regarding deer management in their county.

Additional information regarding CDAC recommendations, agendas and membership can be found at keyword “CDAC” – any additional questions can also be sent to [DNRCDACWebMail@Wisconsin.gov](mailto:DNRCDACWebMail@Wisconsin.gov).

***While counting down to next year's hunt...***

While the nine day hunt has ended, hunters are reminded to connect with DNR staff on social media through the department's Facebook and Twitter pages. DNR staff look forward to photos from the field each year.

Hunters who harvested their first deer this season are also reminded to fill out a [first deer certificate](#) and commemorate a successful hunt. A printable certificate will be sent to the email address provided.

For more information regarding deer hunting in Wisconsin, search keyword "deer."