

Game Commission releases 2018-19 deer harvest report March 19, 2019 Pennsylvania

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Overall harvest largest since 2004-05 license year.

Pennsylvania hunters posted their highest overall deer harvest in 14 years when they took 374,690 deer during the state's 2018-19 hunting seasons, which closed in January, the Pennsylvania Game Commission reported today.

The 2018-19 deer harvest topped the previous year's harvest of 367,159 by about 10 percent. The last time the total deer harvest exceeded this season's total was in 2004-05.

After four years of successive annual increases in buck harvests, hunters posted a buck harvest of 147,750, which placed fourth overall since the start of antler restrictions in 2002. The 2018-19 buck harvest represents a 10 percent decline from the 2017-18 buck harvest of 163,750. The largest harvest in the antler-restrictions era – 165,416 – occurred in the first year.

Although the total deer harvest was not impacted by downpours on the opening day of the firearms deer season, the buck harvest seemed to take a hit. About half of the firearms season's overall buck harvest typically occurs on the season's opening day, when hunter participation is usually at its highest.

Steady rain in most of the state persisted through the morning if not longer of the firearms season opener, making hunting for deer, as well as staying dry and warm while afield, more difficult. And when hunter participation drops on the best harvest day of any season, the harvest typically does, too.

"This year's opening day antlered harvest was down significantly from last year's harvest," said Christopher Rosenberry, Game Commission Deer and Elk Section supervisor. "Although the rest of the firearms season's daily harvests were similar to or above last year's, they did not make up for the low opening day harvest."

Except on Deer Management Assistance Program properties and in Wildlife Management Areas 2B, 5B and 5D, antlerless deer hunting doesn't begin until the first Saturday of deer rifle season. That limits antlerless deer hunting to seven of the rifle season's 12 days.

Still, hunters took plenty of antlerless deer, which was anticipated with a 2018-19 allocation of antlerless deer licenses that exceeded the previous license year's.

The 2018-19 overall antlerless deer harvest was 226,940, which is about 10 percent larger than the 2017-18 harvest of 203,409.

Across the 23 WMUs used by the Game Commission to manage whitetails, the antlerless deer harvest decreased in only five units: WMUs 1A, 2B, 2H, 4B and 5D. The largest harvest increases – 48 percent – occurred in WMUs 2C and 3A.

On the antlered deer side of WMU-level harvests, the buck harvest dropped in all but six units: WMUs 2B, 2H, 3D, 4A, 5A and 5B. The largest declines were in WMU 2G, 23 percent; and WMU 4D, 22 percent.

The percentage of older bucks in the 2018-19 deer harvest remained amazingly high. About 64 percent of the bucks taken by hunters were at least 2½ years old. The remainder were 1½ years old.

"That almost two-thirds of the bucks taken last year in Pennsylvania were at least 2½ years old is a tribute to the science our deer managers use and the sacrifices a generation of hunters

made in the Commonwealth,” said Game Commission Executive Director Bryan Burhans. “The bucks being taken every day in Pennsylvania’s deer seasons are living proof that this Commonwealth has never managed whitetails better.”

About 66 percent of the antlerless deer harvest was adult females; button-bucks comprised 17 percent and doe fawns made up 17 percent.

Bowhunters accounted for about a third of Pennsylvania’s 2018-19 overall deer harvest, taking 110,719 deer (54,350 bucks and 56,369 antlerless deer) with either bows or crossbows. But the buck harvest also was down in the 2018-19 archery seasons, by 13 percent. The previous license year, bowhunters took 62,830 bucks. Unseasonably warm weather and rain impacted many fall bowhunting days in 2018.

The muzzleloader harvest – 23,909 – was similar to the previous year’s harvest of 23,490. The 2018-19 muzzleloader harvest included 1,290 antlered bucks compared to 1,310 bucks in the 2017-18 seasons.

Agency staff currently is working to develop its 2019 antlerless deer license recommendations, which will be considered at the April 9 meeting of the Board of Game Commissioners.

In addition to harvest data, staff will be looking at deer health measures, forest regeneration and deer-human conflicts for each WMU as it assembles antlerless allocations, according to Matthew Schnupp, agency Bureau of Wildlife Management director.

Total deer harvest estimates by WMU for 2018-19 (with 2017-18 figures in parentheses) are as follows:

WMU 1A: 5,800 (6,300) antlered, 12,400 (12,600) antlerless;
WMU 1B: 8,000 (8,300) antlered, 15,800 (13,000) antlerless;
WMU 2A: 6,000 (6,100) antlered, 10,900 (10,900) antlerless;
WMU 2B: 5,000 (4,500) antlered, 12,000 (14,000) antlerless;
WMU 2C: 9,600 (9,800) antlered, 11,787 (7,972) antlerless;
WMU 2D: 11,800 (14,700) antlered, 20,958 (17,391) antlerless;
WMU 2E: 6,300 (6,900) antlered, 9,701 (6,669) antlerless;
WMU 2F: 7,700 (9,500) antlered, 7,973 (7,202) antlerless;
WMU 2G: 6,300 (8,200) antlered, 7,402 (5,501) antlerless;
WMU 2H: 2,500 (1,700) antlered, 1,800 (1,900) antlerless;
WMU 3A: 4,800 (5,400) antlered, 7,400 (5,000) antlerless;
WMU 3B: 7,000 (8,900) antlered, 8,400 (7,000) antlerless;
WMU 3C: 7,700 (8,700) antlered, 12,200 (11,900) antlerless;
WMU 3D: 5,200 (4,700) antlered, 5,700 (4,200) antlerless;
WMU 4A: 5,100 (4,800) antlered, 8,230 (7,672) antlerless;
WMU 4B: 5,300 (5,600) antlered, 6,916 (7,108) antlerless;
WMU 4C: 5,800 (6,800) antlered, 7,200 (6,500) antlerless;
WMU 4D: 8,300 (10,600) antlered, 9,081 (8,417) antlerless;
WMU 4E: 7,000 (8,200) antlered, 9,300 (8,700) antlerless;
WMU 5A: 3,100 (2,900) antlered, 4,600 (3,801) antlerless;
WMU 5B: 9,200 (9,000) antlered, 14,608 (12,800) antlerless;
WMU 5C: 7,600 (8,800) antlered, 16,415 (15,600) antlerless;
WMU 5D: 2,600 (3,300) antlered, 6,000 (7,500) antlerless; and

Unknown WMU: 50 (50) antlered, 169 (76) antlerless.

Season-specific 2018-19 deer harvest estimates (with 2017-18 harvest estimates in parentheses) are as follows:

WMU 1A: archery, 2,530 (2,710) antlered, 3,150 (3,320) antlerless; and muzzleloader, 70 (90) antlered, 1,150 (1,480) antlerless.

WMU 1B: archery, 2,750 (3,370) antlered, 2,790 (2,730) antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 (30) antlered, 1,210 (970) antlerless.

WMU 2A: archery, 2,050 (2,040) antlered, 2,040 (2,030) antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 (60) antlered, 960 (1,170) antlerless.

WMU 2B: archery, 3,520 (3,060) antlered, 5,760 (6,490) antlerless; muzzleloader, 80 (40) antlered, 640 (1,010) antlerless.

WMU 2C: archery, 3,400 (3,400) antlered, 2,378 (1,500) antlerless; muzzleloader, 100 (100) antlered, 1,315 (1,000) antlerless.

WMU 2D: archery, 4,540 (5,720) antlered, 3,472 (2,800) antlerless; muzzleloader, 60 (80) antlered, 2,274 (2,100) antlerless.

WMU 2E: archery, 1,950 (2,040) antlered, 1,601 (1,120) antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 (60) antlered, 1,205 (880) antlerless.

WMU 2F: archery, 2,520 (3,110) antlered, 1,216 (1,340) antlerless; muzzleloader, 80 (90) antlered, 998 (1,060) antlerless.

WMU 2G: archery, 1,430 (2,050) antlered, 1,341 (1,110) antlerless; muzzleloader, 70 (50) antlered, 1,060 (990) antlerless.

WMU 2H: archery, 480 (390) antlered, 270 (320) antlerless; muzzleloader, 20 (10) antlered, 230 (280) antlerless.

WMU 3A: archery, 1,180 (1,670) antlered, 1,320 (1,010) antlerless; muzzleloader, 20 (30) antlered, 780 (690) antlerless.

WMU 3B: archery, 2,160 (3,030) antlered, 1,630 (1,560) antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 (70) antlered, 1,170 (1,040) antlerless.

WMU 3C: archery, 1,940 (2,530) antlered, 1,820 (2,200) antlerless; muzzleloader, 60 (70) antlered, 1,280 (1,400) antlerless.

WMU 3D: archery, 1,660 (1,550) antlered, 1,410 (1,230) antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 (50) antlered, 590 (570) antlerless.

WMU 4A: archery, 820 (960) antlered, 1,338 (1,250) antlerless; muzzleloader, 80 (40) antlered, 991 (950) antlerless.

WMU 4B: archery, 1,760 (2,060) antlered, 1,598 (1,760) antlerless; muzzleloader, 40 (40) antlered, 627 (740) antlerless.

WMU 4C: archery, 2,350 (2,770) antlered, 1,900 (1,800) antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 (30) antlered, 800 (700) antlerless.

WMU 4D: archery, 2,430 (3,020) antlered, 1,796 (1,920) antlerless; muzzleloader, 70 (80) antlered, 1,002 (1,080) antlerless.

WMU 4E: archery, 2,550 (3,040) antlered, 1,890 (1,870) antlerless; muzzleloader, 50 (60) antlered, 1,010 (1,030) antlerless.

WMU 5A: archery, 880 (870) antlered, 1,220 (1,060) antlerless; muzzleloader, 20 (30) antlered, 480 (440) antlerless.

WMU 5B: archery, 4,640 (4,830) antlered, 5,401 (4,920) antlerless; muzzleloader, 60 (70) antlered, 1,365 (1,180) antlerless.

WMU 5C: archery, 4,690 (5,800) antlered, 7,238 (6,890) antlerless; muzzleloader, 110 (100) antlered, 1,272 (1,210) antlerless.

WMU 5D: archery, 2,080 (2,770) antlered, 3,790 (4,890) antlerless; muzzleloader, 20 (30) antlered, 210 (210) antlerless.

Unknown WMU: archery, 40 (40) antlered, 0 (60) antlerless; muzzleloader, 0 (0) antlered, 0 (0) antlerless.

For additional information on Pennsylvania's 2018-19 deer harvest, please go to the agency's website – www.pgc.pa.gov – and go to the "White-Tailed Deer" page, then select **2018-19 Deer Harvest Estimates**.