

Delaware's 2013-'14 deer harvest ranks third all-time

DOVER (Feb. 14, 2014) – Delaware hunters harvested 14,263 deer during the 2013-'14 season, a 7.2 percent increase from the previous season's 13,302, DNREC's Division of Fish and Wildlife announced today. The 2013-'14 deer harvest ranks as the third all-time highest deer harvest for Delaware.

"We anticipated that hunters would have a successful season this year due to favorable habitat conditions experienced this past spring and summer resulting from the cool and wet spring and summer, coupled with the exceptional hard mast (acorns and other tree nuts) crop last year, which meant Delaware's deer herd was likely going to be in excellent condition heading into this past hunting season," said Deer and Furbearer Biologist Joe Rogerson, Division of Fish and Wildlife. "Delaware's highest deer harvest occurred during the 2004-'05 season, with 14,669 deer. This season, we were only a few hundred deer from setting an all-time record."

During the 2013-'14 season, hunters harvested more does than bucks, with 53 percent females (7,558) and 47 percent males (6,705). Antlerless deer – females, juvenile bucks without antlers known as button bucks, and bucks with antlers measuring less than three inches – represented 70.9 percent of the total harvest.

Since the first year of Delaware's five-month-long crossbow season in 2010-'11, when hunters harvested 398 deer, harvest numbers have nearly tripled. This season, 1,058 deer were taken during the crossbow season. Combined with the harvest from vertical bows – compound, recurve and longbows – the total archery season harvest for 2013-'14 was 2,446 deer, ranking as the all-time highest archery season harvest for Delaware which had recently been set last year (1,941 deer).

Rogerson noted that the deer population seemed to quickly recover from the 2012 outbreak of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), a viral infection that can be lethal to deer, which had an impact on the 2012-'13 deer harvest, particularly in Sussex County. For the 2013-'14 season, Sussex County hunters harvested 7,133 deer, up 10.6 percent from last year's total of 6,448 and was nearly identical to the average harvest for the five years prior to the EHD outbreak.

"We expected the harvest rates to rebound in the areas impacted by EHD last year and the harvest numbers certainly reflect that," said Rogerson. "This is a testament to how productive and resilient Delaware's deer population is."

While the statewide harvest ranked third all-time, there were numerous harvest records set by hunters this past season:

- Crossbow season harvest: 1,058 deer
- Combined archery season harvest (vertical and crossbows): 2,446 deer
- January muzzleloader season total harvest: 734 deer

Records also included the highest numbers of the following:

- Adult does harvested in a single season: 6,584
- Spike bucks with both antlers less than three inches: 378
- Antlered bucks harvested in a single season: 4,144
- Shed bucks harvested in a single season: 139
- Male deer harvested in a single season: 6,705
- Deer harvested in New Castle County: 2,947
- Deer harvested in Kent County: 4,183
- Deer harvested in four New Castle County wildlife management zones, one zone in southwestern Kent County, and two zones of the three zones along Sussex County's southern border
- Deer harvested on privately owned lands: 12,415
- Deer harvested with crossbows throughout all hunting seasons: 1,298
- Deer harvested with all archery equipment throughout all hunting seasons: 2,986

"Many hunters enjoyed success this year as indicated by the total harvest as well as the numerous records broken this past year, and we fully expect Delaware hunters to continue to enjoy Delaware's deer hunting opportunities for years to come," said Rob Hossler, program manager for Species Conservation and Research, Division of Fish and Wildlife.

For more information about the Delaware deer harvest or any other deer-related issue, please contact Joe Rogerson at 302-735-3600, or visit the Division's white-tailed deer information page at <http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/fw/Hunting/Pages/DeerInfo.aspx>.