

Dept. of Natural Resources: Great stories from the field highlight opening weekend of Wisconsin's 167th nine-day gun deer hunt

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CONTACT: Kevin Wallenfang, DNR big game ecologist, 608-206-1107; Todd Schaller, DNR Chief Conservation Warden, 608-381-8927; Sawyer Briel, DNR communications, 608-282-5334

MADISON - As of Saturday morning of the opening weekend of Wisconsin's 167th gun deer season, over 545,000 hunters had purchased their license to enjoy this annual nine-day tradition with friends and family.

Pictures and stories from all over Wisconsin continue to flood in as hunters share their experiences. Be sure to follow DNR on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) for more updates, photos and stories throughout gun deer season.

Preliminary License Sales Data

Preliminary figures indicate that the number of deer hunters in Wisconsin declined in 2018, continuing a trend that DNR has been anticipating for several years. For [more information regarding license sales](#), visit dnr.wi.gov and search keywords "[weekly totals](#)."

Final license sales figures will be available in January, at which time DNR staff will perform a thorough analysis and interpretation. As a national leader in designing programs to attract new hunters and train current hunters to become mentors, DNR and partner staff and volunteers are working hard to counteract this decline.

“There are good examples of programs and campaigns that are successful at recruiting and retaining hunters, but it will take time to build them to scale,” said Keith Warnke, DNR R3 coordinator. “With the full support of our partners, DNR will be able to maintain the hunting and angling tradition.”

Preliminary Registration Totals and Future Outlook

In total, 118,670 deer were harvested by gun and registered statewide during the opening weekend of the gun deer hunt in 2018, compared to 105,216 in 2017. A total of 65,388 bucks were registered on opening weekend, compared to 60,380 in 2017. A [more detailed summary of preliminary registration totals](#) can be found at keywords “[weekly totals](#).”

Preliminary harvest numbers seem to correlate with weather reports that have been shared on DNR’s Facebook page as well as with reports hunters provided during the registration process. Reports from the entire state indicate excellent hunting conditions, including snow cover in most areas. Preliminary registration figures in the Northern Forest are down slightly compared to the opening weekend in 2017. Hunters throughout the state reported seeing rutting activity, which was expected with the early gun season opening date.

The southern part of the state also experienced excellent hunting conditions, with fresh snow in some areas and comfortable temperatures. Overall, registration numbers in the Farmland zones were slightly higher than last year. With the weather reports for the remainder of the gun deer hunt looking positive throughout most of Wisconsin, hunters can expect continued opportunities and are encouraged to head out to enjoy the remainder of the nine-day season hunting with family and friends.

Regional and statewide contacts regarding deer hunting in Wisconsin are as follows:

- statewide – Kevin Wallenfang, Department of Natural Resources big game ecologist, 608-206-1107;
- northern Wisconsin – Chuck McCullough, DNR wildlife management supervisor, 715-966-1146;
- northeastern Wisconsin – Jeff Pritzl, DNR wildlife management supervisor, 920-366-3450;
- west central Wisconsin – Kris Johansen, DNR wildlife management supervisor, 608-396-1062; and

- southern Wisconsin – Bret Owsley, DNR wildlife management supervisor, 920-210-2451.

Registration of Deer Required with GameReg

As a reminder, hunters are required to register their deer by 5 p.m. the day after harvest. For more information, search keywords “[GameReg](#).”

“The registration process is critical to the management of Wisconsin’s deer herd, so hunters who forgot to register their deer are encouraged to complete this process, even if they do so beyond the 5 p.m. deadline,” said Kevin Wallenfang, DNR big game ecologist. “Knowing life is busy, the best practice is to register your harvest immediately so you don’t forget – some hunters are completing the registration while still in the field, which works great.”

Opening Weekend Hunting Accidents

The DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement reports two hunting incidents, both of which occurred on Nov. 18 and resulted in injuries.

The first was in Columbia County in Marcellon Township – a 24-year-old shooter was participating in a nearby deer drive when he shot at a running deer, striking instead the victim, a 23-year-old male, in the foot. The victim was a member of the same hunting party.

The second incident occurred around 5:05 p.m. in Dunn County in the Village of Colfax. A 21-year-old male who was not wearing blaze orange was working on his downed deer when he was hit in the arm by a bullet from a 17-year-old shooter who thought the victim was a deer. The victim was transported to the hospital and released.

Wisconsin’s 10-year average is approximately three hunting incidents for opening weekend of the nine-day gun deer hunt. The decline in incidents is the direct result of hunter safety education given by Wisconsin’s volunteer instructors and conservation wardens. As part of this push for safe hunting, wardens remind all hunters to use the four firearm safety rules as a cornerstone for safe and successful outings.

- T – Treat every Firearm as if it is loaded;
- A – Always Point the muzzle in a safe direction;

- B – Be certain of your target and what’s beyond it; and
- K – Keep your finger outside your trigger guard until you are ready to shoot.

To learn more about safe hunting in Wisconsin, search keywords “[safety tips.](#)”

For more information regarding deer hunting in Wisconsin, search keyword “[deer.](#)”