

Dept. of Natural Resources: Preliminary nine-day deer hunt harvest totals and license sales now available

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MADISON, Wis. – Anyone who has ever experienced Wisconsin's famed gun deer season knows it's a tradition bigger than any buck. Wisconsin's 169th gun deer season kicked off Nov. 21 and runs through Nov. 29.

Preliminary License Sales Data

Preliminary figures indicate that the number of deer hunters in Wisconsin increased compared to the same period for both 2019 and 2018.

As of midnight Monday, Nov. 23, sales for gun, bow, crossbow, sports and patron licenses reached 810,233. Of that total, 559,591 were for gun privileges only, including gun, patron and sports licenses. The year-to-date sales for all deer licenses are up 3.2% from the same time last year.

Female hunters are the largest growing demographic in 2020, with the number of female hunters reaching nearly 90,000, up 9% from last year. The number of non-resident licenses decreased this year, likely due to COVID-19.

Of the total licenses sold, 58% were sold online, and 42% were sold by DNR license agents, which includes private businesses across the state.

Final license sales figures will be available in January, at which time DNR staff will

perform a thorough analysis and interpretation.

Hunters are reminded that the firearm seasons have only just begun. There continues to be great hunting throughout the rest of the season with Thursday and Friday generally showing an increase in harvest. In addition, the muzzleloader season runs from Nov. 30 – Dec. 9, and a statewide antlerless-only season occurring from Dec. 10 – 13.

Select units around the state also have the antlerless-only Holiday Hunt with runs from Dec. 24 – Jan. 1. However, hunters should check the regulations for a [list of specific units](#).

Wisconsin continues to be a destination location for hunting white-tailed deer. People of all ages, genders and races search out the great public and private land hunting opportunities across the state to pursue trophy bucks or to put a sustainable, organic protein source on their table.

Be sure to follow the DNR on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) to share your experiences and for more updates, photos and stories throughout gun deer season.

Preliminary Registration Totals and Future Outlook

In total, 95,257 deer were harvested by gun and registered statewide during the opening weekend of the 2020 nine-day gun deer hunt, compared to 93,155 in 2019. A total of 49,025 bucks were registered on opening weekend, compared to 48,252 in 2019. A detailed summary of preliminary registration totals is [available here](#).

Leading up to the nine-day season, harvest numbers for the archery and crossbow seasons show hunters are choosing to get out during that season and harvest deer as buck harvest was up 17% and antlerless harvest is up 17.5% statewide.

While hunter reports of deer activity varied around the state, most regions experienced excellent hunting conditions with cool temperatures, high visibility and low wind. Many reports indicated that the two things that would have made the conditions better would have been a coating of snow as well as cooler conditions freezing some of the wetter locations which would have increased access.

Preliminary registration figures in the northern and central forests showed a dip in

harvest totals compared to the opening weekend in 2019 while the farmland zones saw an increase. Light snow is expected much of Wisconsin mid-week, potentially improving conditions and opportunities for hunters to stay afield through the remaining season.

Registration of Deer Required with GameReg

As a reminder, hunters are required to register their deer by 5 p.m. the day after harvest through GameReg, the game registration system. All deer harvests must be reported [online](#) (fastest and easiest method) or by phone at 1-844-426-3734.

“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 Eric Lobner, DNR Wildlife Management Bureau Director. “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 Incidents

At the publication time of this news release, the DNR Bureau of Law Enforcement reports four firearm-involved hunting incidents during the 2020 nine-day gun deer season opening weekend Nov. 21-22.

- **Washburn County:** On Nov. 21, 2020 at approximately 11:30 a.m., a 62-year-old male victim was struck in the upper arm and face by a rifle round. The 19-year-old shooter and victim were participating in a deer drive together. The victim was taken by helicopter for medical treatment.
- **Saint Croix County:** On Nov. 21, 2020 at approximately 2:55 p.m., a 14-year-old male victim was struck in the left leg by a shotgun slug. The 27-year-old shooter and the victim were participating in a deer drive together. The victim was taken to a hospital, treated and released.
- **Adams County:** On Nov. 22, 2020 at approximately 1:00 p.m., the 40-year-old male shooter/victim was working the action of his pistol when it discharged into his left hand. The victim was treated at a local hospital.

- **Door County:** On Nov. 22, 2020 at approximately 5:00 p.m., the 65-year-old male victim/shooter was exiting his blind with his shotgun when he tripped and the firearm discharged into his chest. The victim was pronounced dead at the scene.

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, what's before it, and what's beyond it
- **K** - Keep your finger outside your trigger guard until you are safe to shoot.

To learn more about safe hunting in Wisconsin, visit the DNR website [here](#).

DNR VIOLATION HOTLINE: Anyone with information regarding natural resource violations may confidentially report by calling or texting: VIOLATION HOTLINE: 1-800-TIP-WDNR or 1-800-847-9367. The hotline is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Trained staff relay the information to conservation wardens. File an online report [here](#).