

More deer killed so far this year despite fewer hunters, DNR says

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The number of deer killed during opening weekend was up compared to 2021 even though there were fewer hunters this year, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

In a briefing yesterday, DNR officials said 102,347 deer were registered statewide during the opening weekend, a 15 percent increase over 2021. Deer Program Specialist Jeff Pritzl explained the snow cover across much of the state was helpful but windy and cold weather conditions posed a challenge for hunters.

“Keep in mind that in 2021, we had a relatively slow opener,” he said. “And so this isn’t so much a big jump from last year, as it is a return to more of a normal that we’ve seen over a five-year average. Bottom line, it was good to see that those registration numbers returned to normal over the weekend.”

The weekend harvest included 55,503 bucks, a 14 percent increase from the year before and 2 percent above the five-year average. Pritzl noted about 60 percent of the bucks killed during the gun deer season are harvested on opening weekend, with the other 40 percent spread over the rest of the week. The season runs through Sunday.

Meanwhile, sales for gun, bow, crossbow, sports and patron licenses to hunt deer reached 779,123, including 421,474 for gun privileges only. Deer licenses are down 2 percent from the same time last year.

Pritzl said that decline isn’t surprising and continues a trend that’s been going on for 20 years.

“And it’s not unique to Wisconsin, it’s national,” he said. “And actually in other states, their trend downward in license sales has been steeper than Wisconsin. So in one sense, we’re fortunate from that standpoint.”

State officials also reported six firearms-related injuries, including one death. An 11-

year-old boy was shot in the chest when a 41-year-old man attempted to unload his firearm while it was in the backseat of a vehicle. It discharged and struck the boy, who was flown to a hospital, where he died.

See more in a DNR release:

<https://www.wispolitics.com/2022/dept-of-natural-resources-2022-preliminary-gun-deer-harvest-totals-and-license-sales-now-available>

Watch a video of the briefing:

<https://wiseye.org/2022/11/22/news-conference-wi-dnr-gun-deer-season-media-briefing-2/>