

# Preliminary figures suggest rebound in deer hunt figures in southern region

Posted on Tuesday, Nov 1, 2022

With the gun deer hunting season less than three weeks away, officials are hopeful that deer harvest totals in parts of the state will see a rebound this year.

Jeff Pritzl, deer program specialist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, told WisconsinEye that preliminary figures from this year's bow and crossbow seasons suggest a return to normal in the state's southern region following a decline in the number of deer tagged in 2021.

"There maybe was something else going on last year that might have been more related to COVID and the behaviors associated with that," he said yesterday. "We actually had a pretty good bump in harvest in 2020, so that drop last year might have been a correction to what happened in 2020."

The annual gun deer hunt brings more than \$1 billion to the state's economy each year, according to state estimates. This year's eight-day gun deer season begins Nov. 19.

DNR figures show 309,392 deer were killed by hunters in 2021, which was down from 339,901 in 2020. WisconsinEye's Newsmakers host Lisa Pugh noted the southern farmland management zone saw a 17 percent decline in deer harvest numbers.

While the southern region of the state has the highest concentration of chronic wasting disease cases, Pritzl said it's difficult to determine if that decline was linked to CWD. The disease was first identified in the state about 20 years ago, and Wisconsin had a "measurable drop" in hunters participating in the following year's deer season, Pritzl explained.

"Even if that's only 5 percent, that's a lot of people when you're talking about over half a million deer hunters," he said. "About half of those people that stepped back that initial year came back in, but we've had this slow drop in total participation in

deer hunting.”

Chronic wasting disease has been identified in 60 of the state’s 72 counties, and the DNR is urging hunters to avoid bringing deer carcasses from areas with high levels of CWD into other parts of the state.

The state has other measures in place aimed at reducing the spread of the disease, such as bans on baiting and feeding deer across much of the state. But despite these efforts, Pritzl said the area in which CWD is commonly found has been spreading with new cases popping up at commercial deer farms as well as in wild populations.

Watch a video of Pritzl’s remarks here:

<https://wiseye.org/2022/10/31/newsmakers-previewing-wisconsins-2022-gun-deer-season-in-wisconsin/>

*-By Alex Moe*