2018-2019 White-tailed Deer Report

Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources



Photo Credit: Joe Lacefield, Private Lands Biologist



Prepared by: Deer Program Staff

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Introduction

The Deer Program is administered under the Wildlife Division of Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR). The KDFWR is an agency of the Kentucky Tourism, Arts & Heritage Cabinet. It is overseen by a nine-member commission who are nominated by Kentucky's sportsmen and sportswomen. Commission members are appointed by the Governor. The department employs about 450 full-time staff, which includes conservation officers, wildlife and fisheries biologists, conservation educators, and information and technology, public relations, customer service and administrative professionals.

KDFWR funding is provided primarily by the sale of hunting and fishing licenses, boating registration fees and federal funds, including grants based on the number of licenses sold in the state.

The Deer Program is tasked with managing the white-tailed deer herd in the state to provide ample hunting opportunity while balancing the needs of consumptive and non-consumptive user groups. The Deer Program is comprised of one program coordinator, Gabe Jenkins, and two biologists, David Yancy and Kyle Sams. Deer Program staff are based out of the KDFWR Headquarters in Frankfort.

Deer in Kentucky

Deer are native to Kentucky and were present since Dr. Thomas Walker first reported in 1750 that the deer are "plentiful". However, due to unregulated harvest, the deer population began to decline rapidly in subsequent years. In 1946, the Division of Game and Fish initiated a three-pronged white-tailed deer project to facilitate the restoration of this important species. Components of this project consisted of refuge establishment, trapping and translocation of live deer, and habitat improvement work. Active restoration efforts concluded in March of 1999. After 52 years of trapping and translocation, 10,096 white-tailed deer had been stocked around the state. Kentucky now has a high quality deer population and ranks in the top five for all time Boone & Crockett buck production.

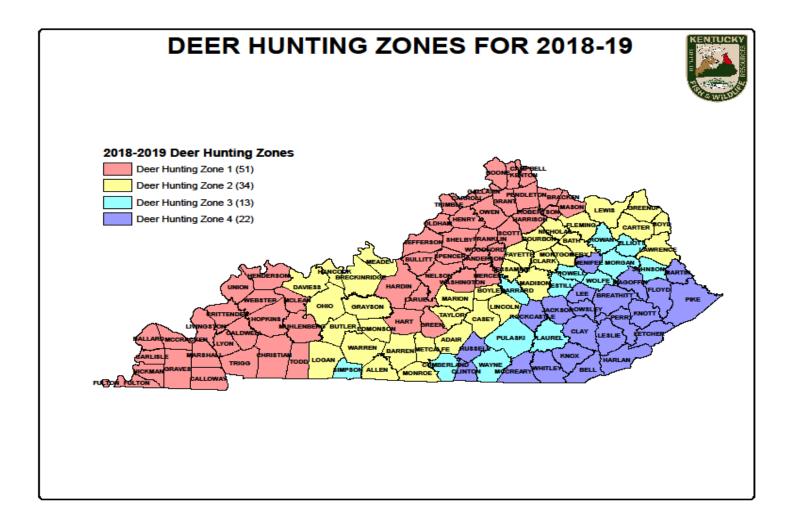
General Information about the 2018-19 Season

License and Permit Fees

License	Resident	Nonresident	
Annual Hunting License	\$27	\$140	
Senior/Disabled License	\$12	N/A	
Sportsman's License	\$95	N/A	
Youth Sportsman's License	\$30	N/A	
Statewide Deer Permit	\$35	\$120	
Bonus Antlerless Permit	\$15	\$15	
Youth Deer Permit	\$10	\$15	

Season Dates and Bag Limits

	Statewide	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3	Zone 4
Modern Firearm		Nov 10-25	Nov 10-25	Nov 10-25	Nov 10-25
Archery		Sept 1 - Jan 21	Sept 1 - Jan 21	Sept 1 - Jan 21	Sept 1 - Jan 21
Early Crossbow		Oct 1-21	Oct 1-21	Oct 1-21	Oct 1-21
Late Crossbow		Nov 10-Dec 31	Nov 10-Dec 31	Nov 10-Dec 31	Nov 10-Dec 31
Early Muzzleloader		Oct 20-21	Oct 20-21	Oct 20-21	Oct 20-21
Late Muzzleloader		Dec 8-16	Dec 8-16	Dec 8-16	Dec 8-16
Youth-Only Firearm	Oct 14-15				
Free Youth Weekend	Dec 29-30				
Antlered Bag Limit	1				
Antlerless Bag Limit	Based upon zone	Unlimited	Up to 4	Up to 4, only 1 deer with a firearm	Only 1 antlerless deer may be harvested during archery season, crossbow season, youth gun season, or the last three days of the late muzzleloader season.



Changes for the 2018-19 Season

- Statewide deer permit was modified from two deer to four deer (only 1 antlered).
 - o Zone 1 unlimited antlerless, one antlered
 - o Zone 2 4 deer total; either 4 antlerless or 3 antlerless and one antlered
 - All deer can be harvested via archery, crossbow, muzzleloader, or modern gun
 - Zone 3 4 deer total; either 4 antlerless or 3 antlerless and one antlered
 - Only one antierless and one antiered deer shall be harvested with a modern gun.
 - Zone 4 2 deer total; only one antlerless and one antlered deer shall be harvest
 - The one antierless deer can only be harvested during the youth gun hunts, archery, crossbow, or during the last 3 days of muzzleloader season.
- Youth Deer Permit was modified from 1 deer to four deer (only 1 antlered)
 - It would follow the changes listed above for deer permit.
- Modern Gun Season will be 16 days for all zones
 - Additional of six days for zones 3 and 4
- Special Deer Hunt Program will be a 1-2 day hunt with a modern gun on private lands sponsored by the KDFWR's Recruitment, Retention, and Reactivation (R3) branch.

- Prohibit the construction and or deployment of a device that is designed to entangle or trap the antlers
 of a deer.
- County Zone Changes
 - o To Zone 1
 - Union, Henderson, McLean, Muhlenberg, Todd, Mercer, Mason, Hart
 - o To Zone 2
 - Warren, Allen, Monroe, Barren, Metcalf, Adair, Edmonson, Butler, Breckenridge, Meade, Hancock, Daviess, Taylor, Casey, Lincoln, Boyle, Madison, Clark, Montgomery, Bath
 - o To Zone 3
 - Garrard, Pulaski, Wayne, Laurel
 - o Zone 4
 - No change

Population Status

Overall, the statewide deer population estimate shows a stable to slightly increasing trend. The 2018 statewide estimate is 908, 291 deer at the start of the 2018-19 hunting season, which is a 6% increase from 2017-18 (855,090). However, the 2018 population estimate was 1.4% below the 10-year average (921,451). This estimate is generated from harvest and age structure data, which is collected through telecheck reports and by KDFWR staff.

Deer management techniques have varied greatly across the state over the last decade. Of the 120 counties in Kentucky 51 are designated as zone 1, 34 as zone 2, 13 as zone 3, and 22 as zone 4. Zone 1 counties have the highest deer densities in the state, are considered reduction zones, and have an unlimited bag limit on antierless deer. At the other end of the spectrum are zone 4 counties where the deer densities are the lowest and antierless take is very limited. Zone 2 and 3 counties are at or near population goals.

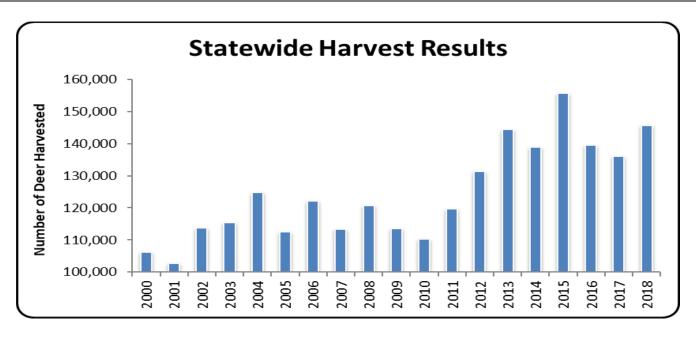
In the eastern portion of state, the deer population had increased to record high levels. During the late summer/early fall of 2017, the eastern portion of the state experienced an EHD outbreak. In response to the 2017 EHD outbreak, the antierless bag limit was reduced from four to one antierless deer in zone 4 counties.

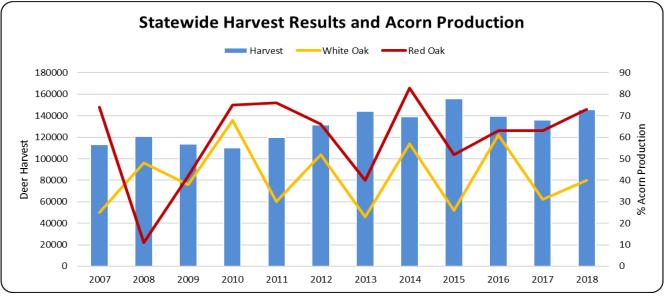
2018-2019 Total Harvest Summary

145,753 deer were harvested during the 2018-19 deer season, which is the second highest harvest on record. We observed a 7% increase from the 2017-18 season (136,018) and the 2018-19 season is 11% above the 10 year average (131,011).

In years with poor to average statewide acorn production (2018 white/red oak acorn production average was 57%), deer tend to travel more in search of food resulting in more deer sightings, which could be a contributing factor in the increase in harvest observed in the 2018-19 season. However, white oak acorn production seems to be more important in terms of deer movements because higher deer harvests tend to correlate with poor white oak acorn production years.

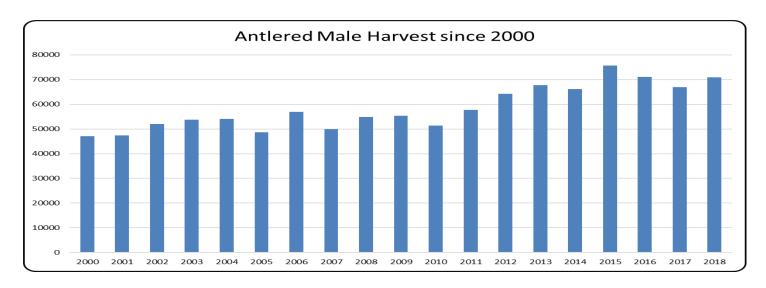
In addition, there were optimal hunting weather conditions during the major hunting timeframes, which also contributed to the near record setting harvest.





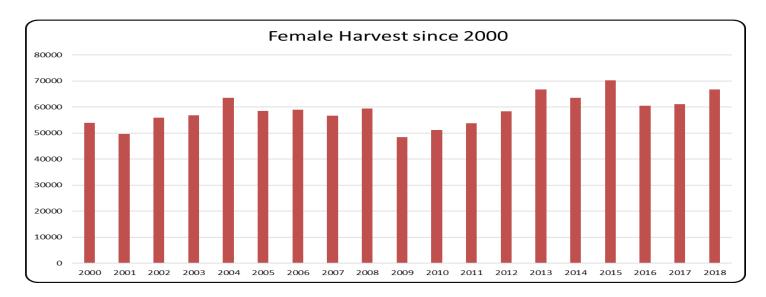
Antlered Buck Harvest

The total antlered buck harvest was 70,952 in the 2018-19 season, which is a 6% increase from the five-year average and is the third highest antlered buck harvest on record. Overall, when comparing antlered deer harvested per square mile of habitat, Pendleton County (4.6 antlered deer/sq. mi.) harvested the most antlered bucks with Bracken County (4.5 antlered deer/sq. mi.) coming in second, and Robertson County (4.2 antlered deer/sq. mi.) coming in third. Fayette County (0.5 antlered deer/sq. mi.) harvested the fewest antlered bucks per square mile during the 2018-19 season.



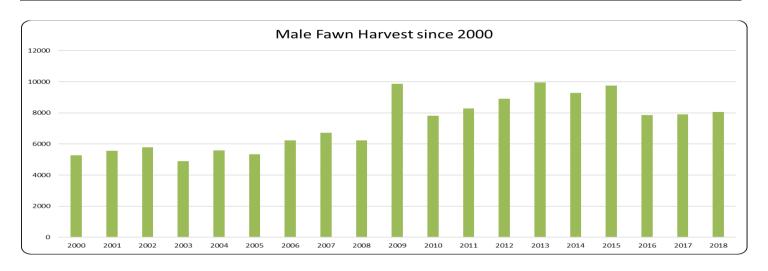
Female Harvest

The total female harvest was 66,727 in the 2018-19 season which is a 2% increase from the five-year average and a 9% increase from the 2017-18 season (61,111). Overall, when comparing female deer harvested per square mile of habitat, Pendleton County (5.7 female deer/sq. mi.) harvested the most female deer followed by Bracken County (5.3 female deer/sq. mi.) and Crittenden County (5.0 female deer/sq. mi). Martin County (0.1 female deer/sq. mi.) harvested the fewest female deer per square mile during the 2018-19 season.



Male Fawn Harvest

The total male fawn harvest was 8,066 in the 2018-19 season which is a 10% decrease from the five-year average and a 1.9% increase from the 2017-18 season (7,913). Overall, when comparing female deer harvested per square mile of habitat, Pendleton County (0.80 male fawns/sq. mi.) harvested the most male fawns with Spencer County (0.80 male fawns/sq. mi.) coming in second, and Bracken County (0.70 male fawns/sq. mi.) coming in third. Floyd County (0.01 male fawns/sq. mi.) harvested the fewest male fawns per square mile during the 2018-19 season.



Weapon Type Harvest Summary

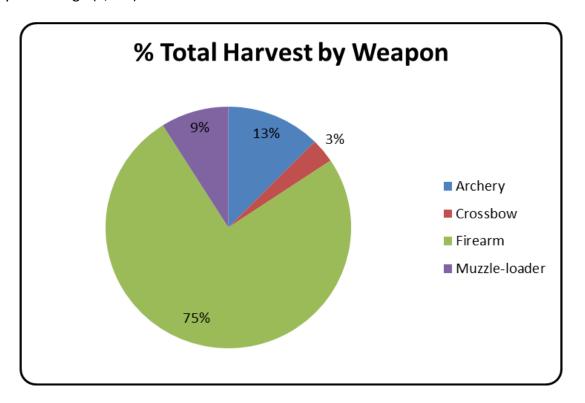
Weapon	Female	Male Fawn	Male	Total
Archery	10,683	875	6,561	18,119
Crossbow	2,850	319	1,536	4,705
Firearm	45,412	6,004	58,453	109,869
Muzzle-loader	7,782	876	4,401	13,059
Total	66,727	8,074	70,951	145,752

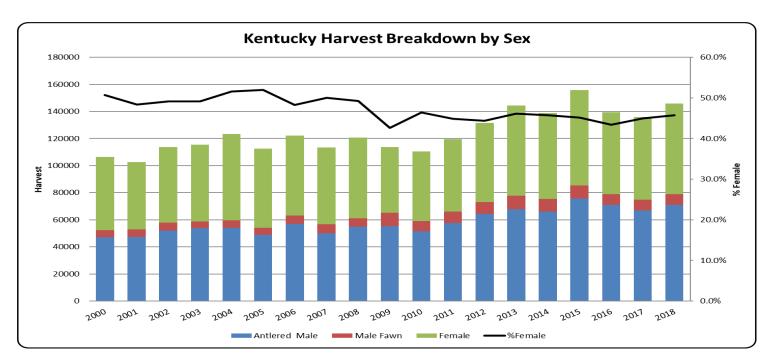
Despite a statewide bag limit that allows hunters to shoot more than one deer per year statewide, there appears to be a limit on the number of deer that hunters are willing to, or able to harvest, as 73.2% (76,066) of all hunters only harvest one deer. A smaller percentage of successful (26.8%, 76,861) hunters harvested two or more deer. Of the 103,927 total successful hunters in the 2018-19 season, the average hunter harvested 1.4 deer, which was a slight increase from last season and an all-time high. However, this rate usually does not fluctuate statewide between years and has remained stable over time.

Doe harvest numbers can flucuate greatly in a county or region due to harvest restrictions by zones. Even though the average hunter only harvests 1.4 deer, the successful hunters harvested approximately the same percentage of bucks and does. When compared to previous hunting seasons, the percentage of does in the harvest has fluctuated minimally over the last 15 years but appears to be increasing slightly.

There were no significant changes in the percentage of the 2018-19 harvest by weapon type compared to the 2017-18 season, with the exception of the rifle harvest (109,869) which had a 10% increase from the 2017-18 season (99,871) and was 4.4% above the five-year average (105,205). Seventy-five percent of the overall harvest occurred during the 2018-19 modern firearm season. The rifle harvest increase may be a result of the increase in modern gun season length in zones 3 and 4 from a ten-day season to 16-day season. We observed a 5.3% decrease from the archery harvest in 2017-18 (19,128) to 2018-19 season (18,119), which was 8% below the five-year average (19,701). The 2018-19 muzzleloader harvest (13,059) increased by 4.9% when compared to the 2017-18 season (12,449) and was 7.4% below the five-year average (14,101). The

crossbow harvest increased 3.5% from the 2017-18 season (4,574) to the 2018-19 season (4,705) and is 13.3% above the five-year average (4,154).



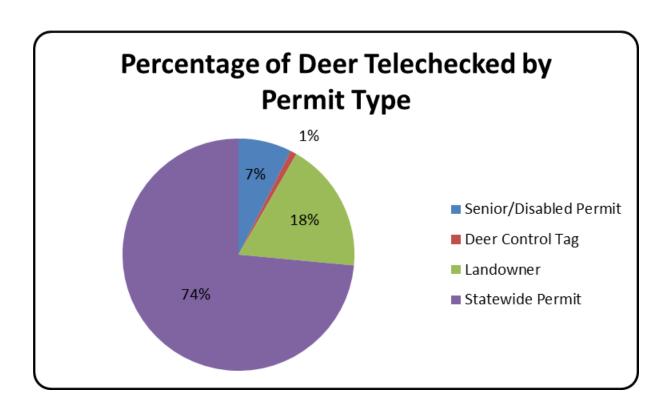


Monthly Harvest Rates

The 5,545 deer harvested in September is the fifth highest harvest on record for that month. October's harvest of 15,636 deer was the eighth highest October harvest on record since 1999. Hunters harvested 111,020 deer during November, most of which occurred during the statewide modern gun season. This ranks as the highest November harvest on record. December's harvest was the seventh highest record harvest with 11,119. Cooler conditions in September and October and optimal weather conditions for the modern gun season in November drove the harvest. January's harvest was 4% below the five-year average at 2,431, which was the sixth highest record, mostly due to better than normal weather conditions, which increased human activity afield.

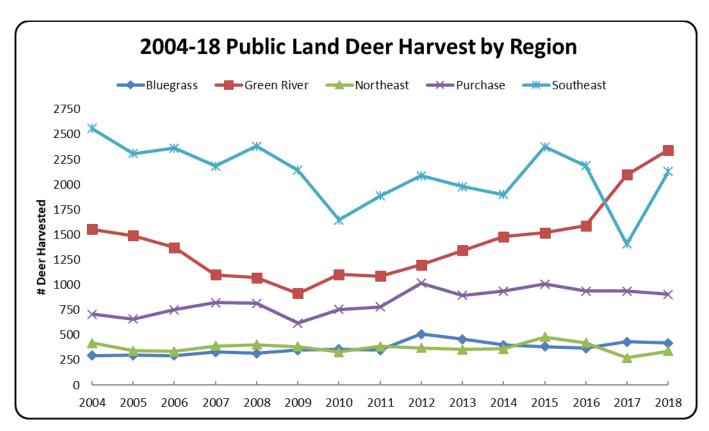
2018-19 Harvest Results by Permit Type

The percentage of deer telechecked by permit type has remained stable over the years. However, with the increasing number of senior/disabled licenses sold, we would expect to see the senior/disabled harvest increase and the statewide permit harvest to decrease over time. Landowners are not required to purchase a hunting license or deer permit if they are hunting deer on their own property but are still required to telecheck any harvested deer. Deer control tags are used in correlation with deer causing damage and have remained stable over the past four years.



Public Land Harvest

KDFWR owns, leases, or manages more than 124 Wildlife Management Area's (WMA), Hunting Access Areas (HAA), and Outdoor Recreation Areas (ORC) across the state for public use. Exceptions exist on some properties, but the majority of Kentucky's public areas are open to public hunting through quota hunts or under statewide regulations. The public areas are separated between five wildlife regions and are managed by regional staff in the Wildlife Division.



Quota Hunt Results

KDFWR offers 30 quota hunts on Kentucky WMA's. Any resident or nonresident hunter may apply for a deer quota hunt in Kentucky, but only the persons successfully drawn for quota hunts may hunt. The application period for KDFWR deer quota hunts is the month of September when applicants can apply online at fw.ky.gov. Applicants will be given the option to pick a first and second hunt choice, but may be drawn to participate in only one quota hunt. The non-refundable fee is \$3 per hunter to apply. Each hunter who applies correctly, but is not selected, will receive a preference point that increases the odds of being drawn the next year. Unselected hunters who do not apply the following year will lose all previously credited preference points. Applicants are selected based on individual preference points. Up to five people can apply together, but individuals within the group will have their preference points averaged. However, there is a 10% maximum allowance on non-residents to be drawn for each quota hunt. If any one of the group's Social Security numbers is drawn, the others in the group are automatically drawn. The exception applies to hunt parties that have one or more non-resident applicants and where the quota hunt may have already reached the 10% maximum limit of non-resident hunter. If this is the case, then no member of that party will be drawn.

6,715 people applied for 4,077 spots for the 30 KDFWR quota hunts held in the 2018-19 season. There are quota hunts for general hunters (i.e., residents or non-residents with statewide license), mobility impaired

hunters, archery/crossbow hunters, and youth hunters. Each of the five wildlife regions across the state have deer quota hunts.

For the 2018-19 report, quota hunts in the Green River Region will be highlighted.

Green River Region Highlights

Otter Creek ORA - Ryan Taylor, Wildlife Biologist

Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area (OCORA), is located in Meade County and consists of 2261 acres of mature upland and bottomland hardwood forest, and very small herbaceous fields. Otter Creek ORA offers a gun quota hunt held on the second Saturday of December with approximately 1,800 acres available for users to access during the hunt. 30 people were drawn for the 2018 quota hunts, but only 25 hunters (83%) actually hunted. Three deer were harvested during the 2018 quota hunt, which is the same amount harvested the previous year. Quota hunters observed/reported 39 deer during the quota hunt: 1 antlered deer, 31 antlerless deer, and 7 unknown. The following table includes data for the quota hunt.

Total Legal Harves	<u>t</u>			Total Deer:	3
Adult Bucks:	1	Adult Does:	1	Buck Ratio:	33%
Buck Fawns:	0_	Doe Fawns:	1_	Fawn Ratio:	33%
Total Bucks:	1	Total Does:	2	Antlerless Ratio:	33%
Known illegal kills	or lost crip	pples during hunt:	0	Total Hunting	
Total deer permits	issued:		30	Total Hunting Hrs:	124
Total hunters actua	ally hunting	j :	25	Total Deer Seen:	39
Total Hunter Show Total Hunter Succe	•		83% 12%	Deer Seen/Hour:	0.31

<u>Big Rivers WMA</u> – John Zimmer, Wildlife Game Management Foreman

Big Rivers WMA, is an 7,574 acre WMA nestled along the Ohio River in Crittenden and Union Counties. Big Rivers WMA offers a firearms quota hunt held on the first weekend of November. Typical terrain and habitats include mature bottomland hardwood forests, agricultural lands, and warm season grass fields. 100 people were drawn for the 2018 quota hunt, but only 77 hunters (77%) actually hunted. 33 deer were harvested during the 2018 quota hunt, which is up from the 30 deer harvested the previous year. Quota hunters observed/reported 668 deer during the November quota hunts: 226 antlered deer, and 404 antlerless deer. The following table includes data from the November quota hunt.

Total Legal Harv	<u>est</u>			Total Deer:	33
Adult Bucks:	19	Adult Does:	9	Buck Ratio:	57%
Buck Fawns:	2_	Doe Fawns:	3	Fawn Ratio:	23%
Total Bucks:	21	Total Does:	12	Antlerless Ratio:	43%
Known illegal kil Total deer perm Total hunters ac Total Hunter Sho Total Hunter Si	its issued: tually huntin ow Up Ratio:		0 100 77 77% 42%	Total Hunting hrs: Total Deer Seen: Deer Seen/Hour:	954 668 0.70





Damage Issues

An overpopulation of deer can have a negative impact on the environment and humans alike. Overabundant deer populations may result in agricultural and landscape damage, be detrimental to forest health and regeneration, pose safety risks due to deer-vehicle collisions, and serve as vectors for the transmission of tick-borne illnesses. State, local and private groups all have a stake in helping to manage the state's deer population. The primary tool for deer management in Kentucky is hunting, but hunting within the season framework alone may not be enough to curtail the issues that some stakeholders experience. Deer populations have the ability to outgrow what their habitat can reasonably sustain, or surpass what is known as the environmental carrying capacity. However, a much less understood issue in modern deer management is social carrying capacity, which is essentially the number or density of deer that is socially acceptable. KDFWR staff can offer their assistance once this threshold has been reached (see Contacts map on page 19). The local Biologist or Conservation Officer will schedule an on-site visit to document the damage and provide technical guidance on potential solutions. Technical guidance can be offered in many ways; however, the best damage mitigation strategy is a dedicated, long-term hunting regiment. In addition to hunting, assistance from KDFWR may come in the form of Deer Control Tags, Destruction Permits, and the use of KRS 150.170.

Deer Control	Tags Used in 201	8	
Region	DCT's Issued	DCT's Used	% Used
BG	861	328	38%
GR	920	438	48%
NE	225	76	34%
PR	812	171	21%
SE	763	273	36%
Total	3581	1286	36%

Destruction Permit Use from 2018				
Region	Destruction Permits Issued	Destruction Permits Used		
BG	395	70		
GR	37	17		
NE	19	0		
PR	80	36		
SE	5	0		
Total	536	123		

Disease Surveillance

Hemorrhagic Disease (HD)

Hemorrhagic disease (HD), which is a vector-borne disease of white-tailed deer, is caused by two related orbiviruses: epizootic hemorrhagic disease virus (EHDV) and bluetongue virus (BTV). HD viruses are considered the most important viral agents affecting deer populations in the United States. The virus is transmitted from animal to animal through the bite of an infected midge which is active in the late summer and early fall. Severe outbreaks are often associated with drought conditions because drought creates an increased amount of breeding habitat for the midges. The midges die off for the year after a hard freeze, eliminating new cases of HD.

HD is reported in localized areas from at least a few counties nearly every year in Kentucky, although outbreaks can be considerably large and widespread. In 2017, a large HD outbreak occurred in the eastern portion of Kentucky. Over 4,500 suspected cases were reported in eastern Kentucky using an online self-reporting system that was available to the public. In 2018, KDFWR biologists had 35 suspect HD deer reported. This is only slightly above a normal year. The majority of the deer were from northeastern Kentucky, in a region just north and west of where the main outbreak was in 2017.

When possible KDFWR will test animals that have died of apparent EHD. In 2018, four deer were tested for HD in which three of the four were clinically diagnosed as EHDV-2 positive (Lewis, Greenup, and Fleming Counties), while the other deer (Rowan County) was diagnosed as EHDV-6 positive.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

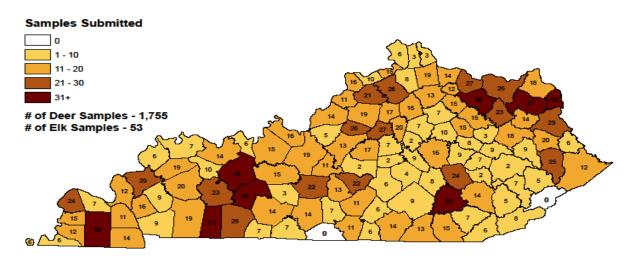
CWD is a fatal, neurological disease in white-tailed deer, mule deer, elk, moose, and caribou. It causes a characteristic spongy degeneration of the brains of infected animals resulting in emaciation, abnormal behavior, loss of bodily functions, and ultimately death. CWD is categorized as a transmissible spongiform

encephalopathy (TSE), a group that includes "mad cow" disease in cattle, Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease in humans, and scrapie in sheep and goats. CWD has been detected in 26 states, 4 Canadian provinces, Norway, and South Korea. Six states that border Kentucky have CWD present (West Virginia, Virginia, Missouri, Ohio, Illinois, and Tennessee). CWD has not been detected in Kentucky.

To detect CWD should it arrive in Kentucky, KDFWR adopted a CWD monitoring plan in 2002. That plan is a three-part monitoring program to test: 1) a random sampling of hunter-harvested deer, 2) target or suspect animals (i.e., animals that appear ill), and 3) a year round random sample of roadkill deer. In 2006, KDFWR adopted a contingency plan to deal with CWD if it was ever found in Kentucky. Since 2002, more than 30,000 deer samples have been tested. 1,755 deer were submitted for CWD testing in 2018-19, and all samples have tested negative for the disease.

2018-19 Statewide CWD Surveillance Number of Samples Submitted



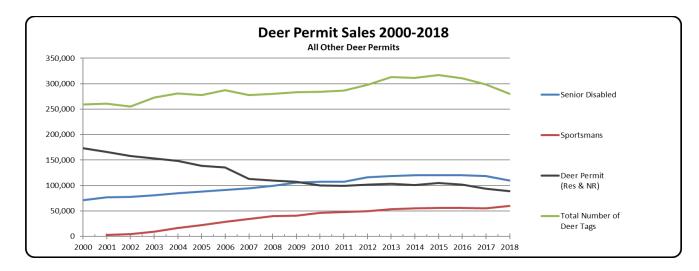


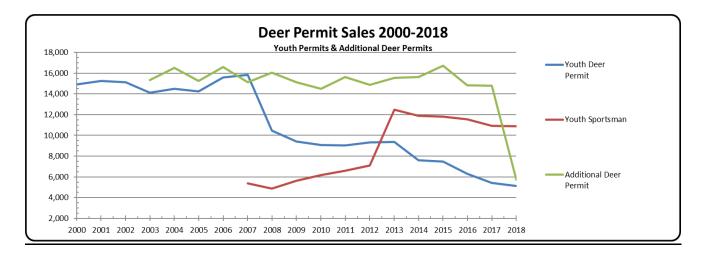
Carcass Importation Law

Intact deer carcasses from any state or other country may not be brought into Kentucky. Allowed parts from states and provinces include quarters or other portions of meat with no part of the spinal column or head attached, quarter or deboned meat, antlers, antlers attached to a clean skull plate, a clean skull, clean teeth, hides, and finished taxidermy products.

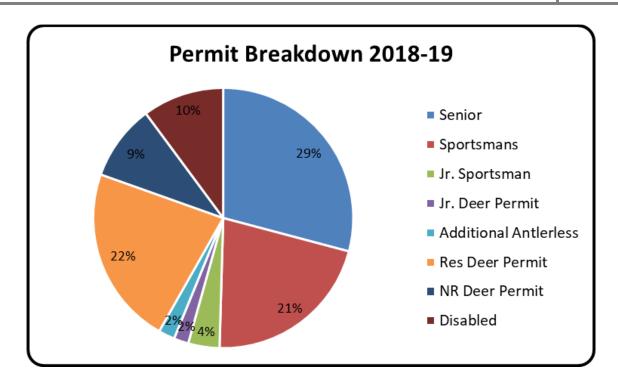
Deer Permit Sales

In recent years, the number of deer permits sold has remained stable. However, in the 2018-19 season (88,558) there was a decrease in deer permits sold compared to the 2017-18 season (93,287). When looking at the log-term outlook the 2018-19 season is 13% below the 10 year average (102,192). When including the license bundles (Sportsman's, Jr. Sportsman's, Jr. Deer Permit, Resident and Non-Resident Deer Permit, and Additional Deer Permit) in the total deer permit numbers, the 2018-19 season (279,917) is 6% below the 10 year average (298,178).





Upon further examination of license sales, the majority of deer permits are purchased by senior hunters (29%) followed closely by resident deer hunters (22%) and Sportsman License (21%) buyers. Over the last few years, there has been a steady increase in the number of senior licenses sold and a slow decrease in resident deer permit sales. The overall number of deer hunters is stable. However, the number of senior licenses is increasing, indicating that a majority of Kentucky deer hunters are reaching the age of 65 (i.e., the age at which you can purchase as Senior License). The Additional Deer Permit decreased significantly due to an increase from two deer to four deer on the statewide deer permit.



Changes for the 2019-2020 Deer Season

- A person shall not import a cervid carcass or carcass part that has any part of the spinal column or head from any other state or country.
 - A person importing a legally taken cervid carcass or carcass part may possess the following items;
 - Antlers
 - Antlers that are attached to a clean skull plate
 - A clean skull
 - Clean upper canine teeth
 - A finished taxidermy product
 - The hide
 - Quarter or deboned meat
- Crossbow season will begin on the third Saturday in September and run through the third Monday in January.
- A youth or a legal resident hunter sixty-five years or older may hunt with a crossbow from the first Saturday in September through the third Monday in January.
- Higginson-Henry WMA
 - Addition of a two-day quota gun hunt starting on the first Saturday in November.
 - Quota archery/crossbow hunt beginning the Monday following the third Saturday in October continuing through November 30.
- Big Rivers WMA
 - Quota archery/crossbow hunt beginning the Monday following the third Saturday in October continuing through November 30.
- Taylorsville WMA

- Quota hunt participants shall be given one preference point for each female deer checked in, up to a total of four

• Griffith Woods WMA

- Addition of a two-day quota gun hunt starting on the first Saturday in November.
- Quota archery/crossbow hunt beginning the Monday following the third Saturday in October continuing through November 30.
- Greenbo Lake State Resort Park
 - Deer hunting shall be allowed beginning on the first Tuesday of January for two consecutive days.
- Greenriver State Resort Park
 - Archery and crossbow deer hunting shall be allowed beginning on the second Thursday and December for four consecutive days.
- Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park
 - Archery and crossbow deer hunting shall be allowed beginning on the first Monday of November for five consecutive days.
- Kenlake Lake State Park
 - Archery and crossbow deer hunting shall be allowed beginning on the first Saturday in January for two consecutive days.
- Kincaid State Resort Park
 - Deer hunting shall be allowed beginning on the first Thursday of December for four consecutive days.
 - Deer hunting shall be allowed beginning on the second Thursday of December for four consecutive days.
- Yatesville Lake State Park
 - Muzzleloader, archery, and crossbow deer hunting shall be allowed pursuant to statewide requirements on the Monday following the second Saturday of December for three consecutive days.
- State Park Quota Hunts
 - Blue Licks Battlefield State Resort Park, Carter Caves State Resort Park, John James Audubon State Park, Lake Barkley State Resort Park, My Old Kentucky Home State Park, and Taylorsville Lake State Park.

Contacts

Approximately 95% of Kentucky is privately owned. To successfully manage our wildlife resources, the KDFWR works cooperatively with Kentucky's private landowners. One of the essential ingredients in conserving Kentucky's wildlife resources is habitat improvement. Wildlife biologists are available to work with interested individuals or groups on properties that they own or have management rights on.

Refer to the map below to contact your local wildlife biologist for assistance with wildlife management on your property.

