

## KDFWR Deer Program

Summary Data: 2025 September Harvest

1<sup>st</sup> October 2025



### Summary

Kentucky's 2025-26 deer season began with some of the coolest opening weather in recent memory. With lows in the 50s and highs in the mid-70s across most of the Commonwealth, deer were on the move to start the season, and hunters were eager to head afield. This unseasonably cool weather, coupled with the Special Antlerless Firearm Season in CWD counties, led to a record 8,141 deer reported harvested across the state during the month of September. This total bested the 10-year average (6,481) by over 1,500 animals (Figure 1). Over 7,200 hunters were successful in harvesting at least one deer during this month.

Fifty one percent of the harvest was comprised of females (4,114), 47% (3,854) were antlered males, and 2% (173) were buck fawns (Figure 2). Of the antlered males taken during the month of September, 90% of them were 2.5 years old or older (3,456; Figure 3). Despite Kentucky receiving a lot of early season attention by nonresident hunters, 76% of the harvest was taken by Kentucky residents. Twenty percent (1,623) was taken by nonresident hunters while 4% was from hunters with unknown residence (youth, landowner, etc.). This proportion of nonresidents has remained stable in the last five years, though higher than the season-long percentage, with Kentucky residents harvesting between 76% and 77% of the deer taken in September (Figure 4).

Nearly all Kentucky public hunting areas are open to archery and crossbow hunting across the state. Through the month of September, 541 (7% of harvest) deer have been reported harvested on public land throughout the Commonwealth. The state-maintained Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) with the highest deer harvest during the month of September were Green River Lake (43), Big Rivers (42), Higginson-Henry (27), Yellowbank (27), and Ballard (20) WMAs, though 75 areas have seen at least one deer reported harvested so far this season (Table 1). It is interesting to note that Green River Lake WMA had the highest WMA harvest with only archery opportunity available. The other 4 public areas on this Top 5 list were open for the special antlerless firearms season.

Regionally, the Bluegrass Region has seen the most deer harvested so far this season with 2,405 (30%). The Bluegrass is followed closely by the Green River (27%; 2,158), Southeast (20%; 1,617), Purchase (13%; 1,044), and Northeast (11%; 917) regions. Hardin County currently holds the highest harvest in the state with 241 deer, followed by Breckinridge (185), Christian (180), Pulaski (169), and Washington Counties (161; Table 2, Figure 5).

## **Opening Weekend**

The opening weekend of archery deer season in Kentucky was September 6-7. 2,395 deer were reported harvested across the Commonwealth on that near-record-breaking weekend. Sixty percent (1,439) of harvested deer were antlered bucks, 1,312 of which were 2.5 years old or older (91%), while 39% (931) were females, and 1% (25) were buck fawns. Kentucky residents comprised 73% of the harvest (1,750), while 23% (547) came from non-resident hunters. The 2025 archery opening weekend was the second highest total harvest on record, bested only by last season's 2,520 deer taken.

## **Special CWD Season**

The 14 counties that comprise Kentucky's Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Surveillance Zones (Ballard, Breckinridge, Calloway, Carlisle, Fulton, Hardin, Henderson, Hickman, Graves, Marshall, McCracken, Meade, Union, and Webster) had the opportunity to harvest antlerless deer with a firearm during the last weekend in September for the first time ever. This special season was developed in an effort to increase antlerless harvest and obtain additional CWD samples for surveillance. Those two days accounted for 576 deer harvested, 92% of which were female (530) with the other 8% being buck fawns.

Nearly one half of the harvest came from the 8 counties west of Kentucky Lake (261), while 198 deer were harvested in Breckinridge, Hardin, and Meade counties and another 117 were taken in the newly established Henderson, Union, and Webster county zone. Eighty-six percent of the harvest (494) was taken by Kentucky residents, a larger proportion than is seen in typical Kentucky deer seasons, while 10% was from nonresident hunters (60). Fifty-one of the 576 deer (9%) were harvested on WMAs that were open to the season, with Yellowbank WMA (11), Higginson-Henry WMA (8), and Sloughs WMA (7) topping the charts for public land area harvest.

Around 60% of Kentucky's successful hunters only harvest one buck and no antlerless deer across the statewide 140-day deer season. During the Special CWD Season, even without the ability to harvest a buck, 466 successful hunters harvested an average of 1.24 deer per hunter in two days.

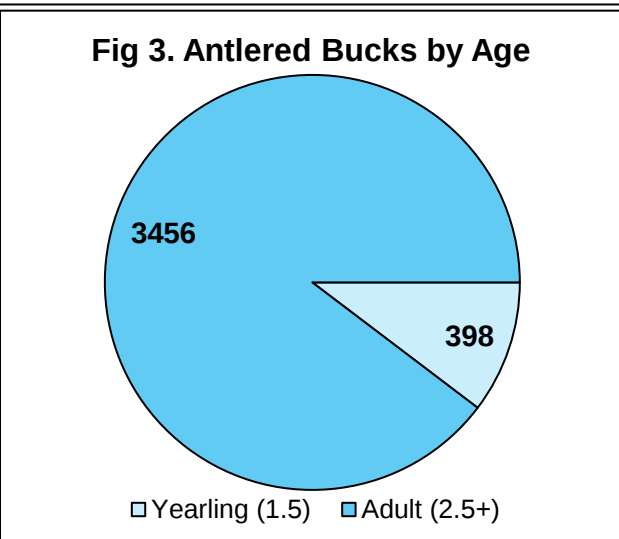
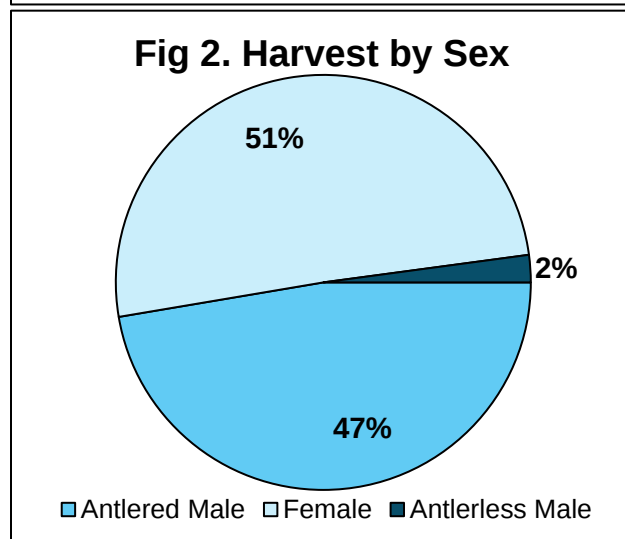
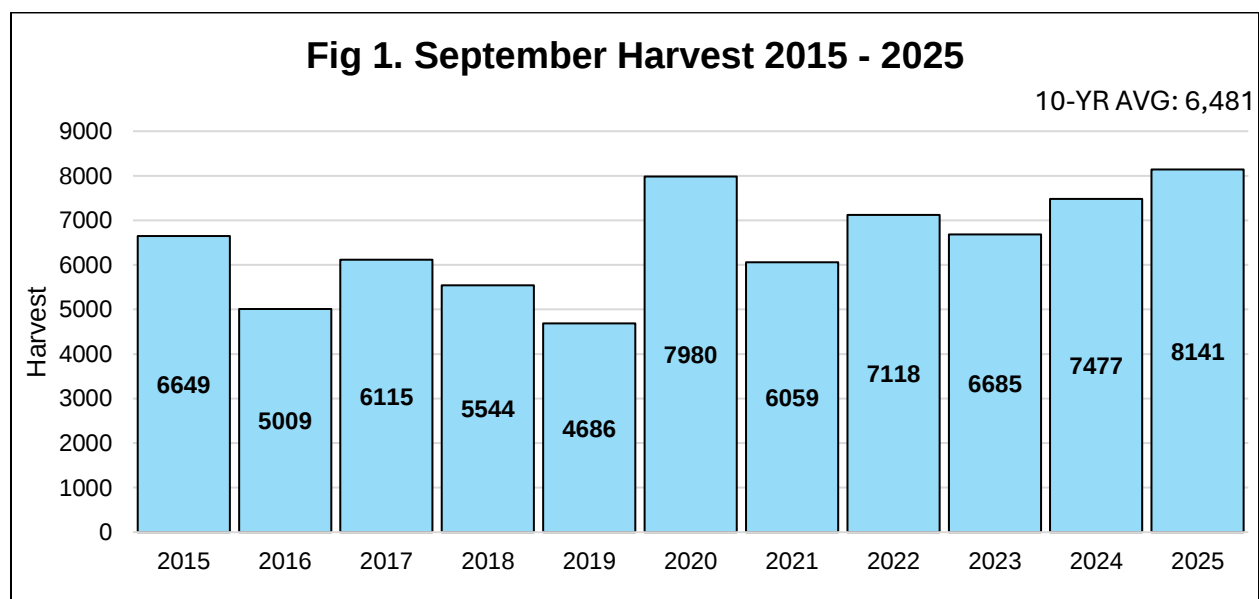
## **Antlerless Harvest Goals**

Deer managers are often quick to call for harvesting additional antlerless deer, particularly in places that have reached, or are on the cusp of reaching, biologic and social carrying capacity. However, deer managers seldom tell hunters how many antlerless deer to harvest or why it is important to do so. Beginning in the 2025-26 deer season, the KDFWR has established harvest goals for antlerless deer across all of Kentucky's Zone 1 and 2 counties where deer populations are at or approaching

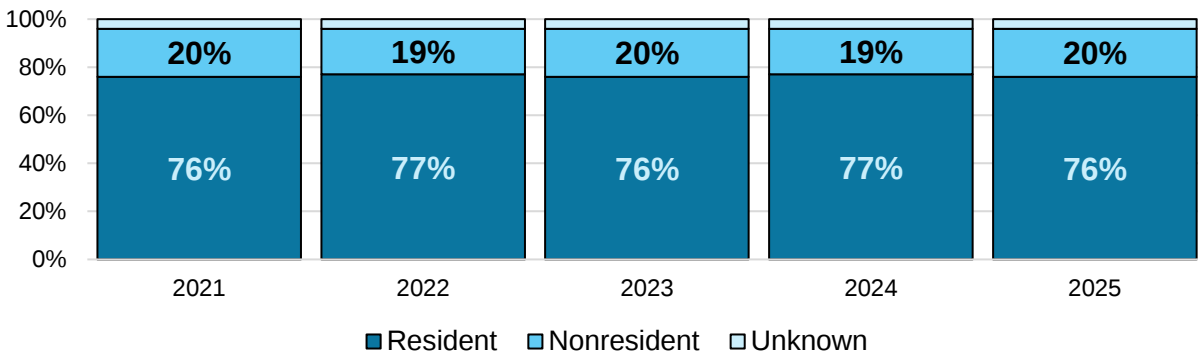
overabundance. The primary goal of this is to reduce populations where applicable (e.g., Zone 1 counties) and maintain others where deer are at more appropriate levels (e.g., Zone 2).

To maintain a deer population at the current level, hunters need to harvest approximately 20% of the standing crop of females. To reduce a population, hunters need to harvest >30% of the standing crop of females. In Kentucky, we generally harvest about 15% of the standing crop in a Zone 1 or 2 county which is insufficient in curtailing population growth across the board. To establish our harvest goals, we estimated the standing crop of females in the population, then take 30% of that to use for a goal to “shoot for.”

Although early in the 140-day deer season, several counties have taken significant strides towards meeting their archery harvest goals (Figure 6, Table 3).



**Fig 4. Resident vs. Nonresident September Harvest 2021-2025**



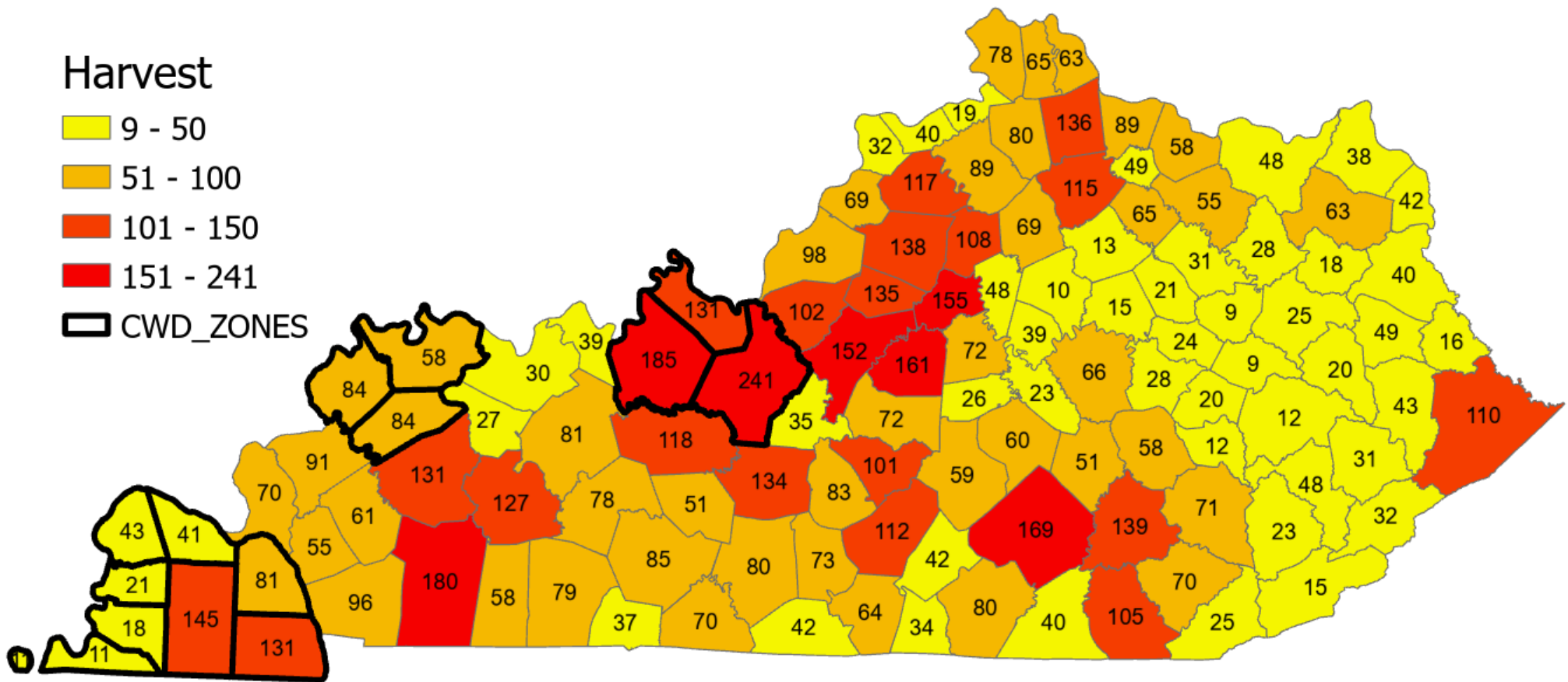
| Public Area                                  | Harvest | Public Area               | Harvest |
|----------------------------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|
| Land Between the Lakes NRA                   | 53      | Wendell H. Ford RTC       | 11      |
| Fort Knox Military Reservation               | 48      | Clarks River NWR          | 10      |
| Green River Lake WMA                         | 43      | Grayson Lake WMA          | 8       |
| Big Rivers WMA & State Forest                | 42      | Blue Grass Army Depot     | 7       |
| Daniel Boone National Forest                 | 40      | Central Kentucky WMA      | 7       |
| Higginson-Henry WMA                          | 27      | John C. Williams WMA      | 7       |
| Yellowbank WMA                               | 27      | Kentucky River WMA        | 7       |
| Ballard WMA                                  | 20      | Lake Cumberland WMA       | 7       |
| Sloughs WMA                                  | 18      | Kentucky Lake WMA         | 5       |
| Taylorville Lake WMA                         | 18      | Griffith Woods WMA        | 4       |
| Barren River Lake WMA                        | 14      | Rough River Lake WMA      | 4       |
| Peabody WMA                                  | 14      | Wells Hunting Access Area | 4       |
| Clay WMA                                     | 11      | West Kentucky WMA         | 4       |
| <i>*all other areas &lt;4 deer harvested</i> |         |                           |         |

Table 1. September Public Area Harvest 2025.

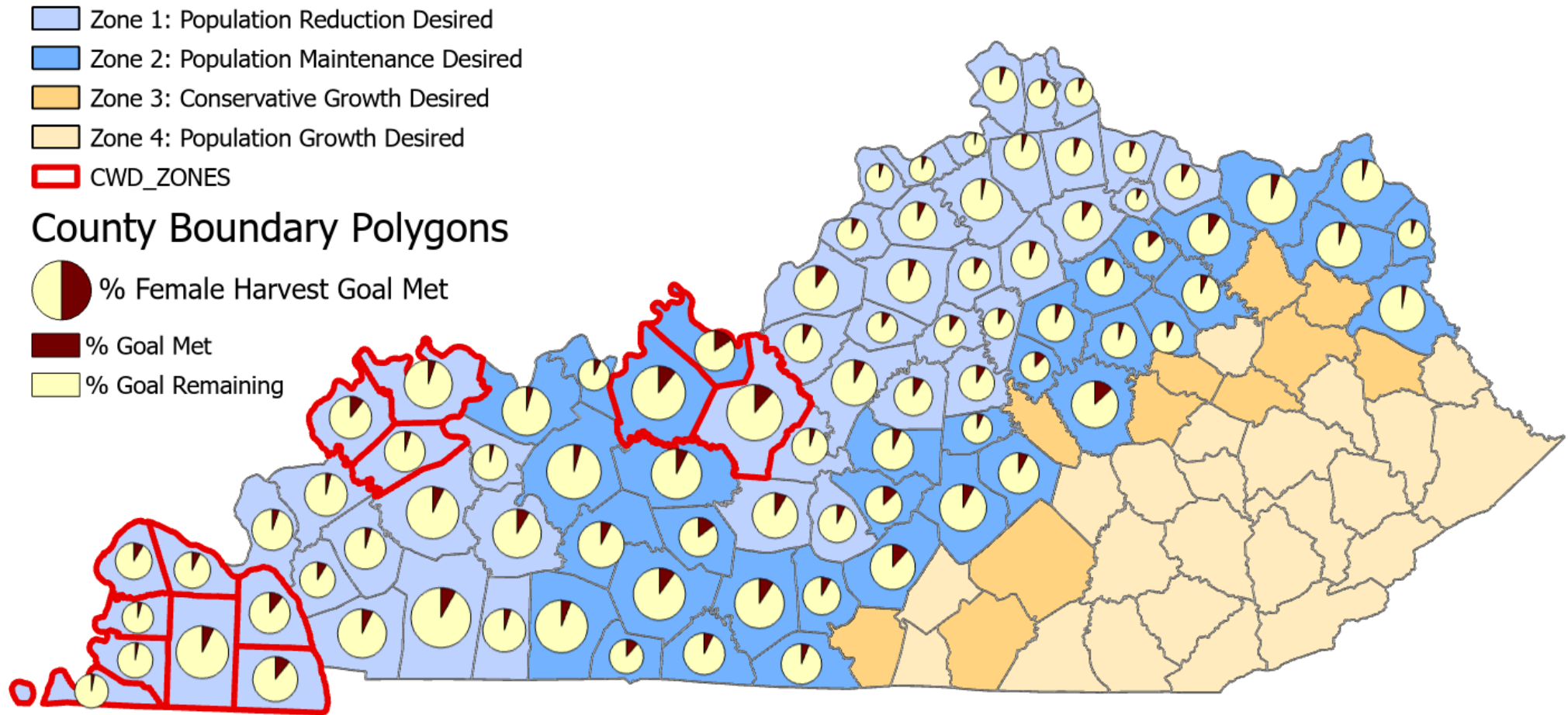
|              |     |            |     |            |    |            |    |           |    |            |    |
|--------------|-----|------------|-----|------------|----|------------|----|-----------|----|------------|----|
| Hardin       | 241 | Adair      | 112 | Logan      | 79 | Casey      | 59 | Carroll   | 40 | Powell     | 24 |
| Breckinridge | 185 | Pike       | 110 | Boone      | 78 | Henderson  | 58 | Lawrence  | 40 | Garrard    | 23 |
| Christian    | 180 | Franklin   | 108 | Butler     | 78 | Todd       | 58 | McCreary  | 40 | Leslie     | 23 |
| Pulaski      | 169 | Whitley    | 105 | Metcalfe   | 73 | Mason      | 58 | Jessamine | 39 | Montgomery | 21 |
| Washington   | 161 | Bullitt    | 102 | Marion     | 72 | Jackson    | 58 | Hancock   | 39 | Carlisle   | 21 |
| Anderson     | 155 | Taylor     | 101 | Mercer     | 72 | Fleming    | 55 | Greenup   | 38 | Magoffin   | 20 |
| Nelson       | 152 | Jefferson  | 98  | Clay       | 71 | Lyon       | 55 | Simpson   | 37 | Lee        | 20 |
| Graves       | 145 | Trigg      | 96  | Allen      | 70 | Edmonson   | 51 | Larue     | 35 | Gallatin   | 19 |
| Laurel       | 139 | Crittenden | 91  | Livingston | 70 | Rockcastle | 51 | Clinton   | 34 | Elliott    | 18 |
| Shelby       | 138 | Owen       | 89  | Knox       | 70 | Johnson    | 49 | Trimble   | 32 | Hickman    | 18 |
| Pendleton    | 136 | Bracken    | 89  | Oldham     | 69 | Robertson  | 49 | Letcher   | 32 | Martin     | 16 |
| Spencer      | 135 | Warren     | 85  | Scott      | 69 | Woodford   | 48 | Bath      | 31 | Clark      | 15 |
| Hart         | 134 | Union      | 84  | Madison    | 66 | Lewis      | 48 | Knott     | 31 | Harlan     | 15 |
| Hopkins      | 131 | Webster    | 84  | Kenton     | 65 | Perry      | 48 | Daviess   | 30 | Bourbon    | 13 |
| Meade        | 131 | Green      | 83  | Nicholas   | 65 | Floyd      | 43 | Rowan     | 28 | Breathitt  | 12 |
| Calloway     | 131 | Ohio       | 81  | Cumberland | 64 | Ballard    | 43 | Estill    | 28 | Owsley     | 12 |
| Muhlenberg   | 127 | Marshall   | 81  | Campbell   | 63 | Monroe     | 42 | McLean    | 27 | Fulton     | 11 |
| Grayson      | 118 | Grant      | 80  | Carter     | 63 | Boyd       | 42 | Boyle     | 26 | Fayette    | 10 |
| Henry        | 117 | Barren     | 80  | Caldwell   | 61 | Russell    | 42 | Morgan    | 25 | Menifee    | 9  |
| Harrison     | 115 | Wayne      | 80  | Lincoln    | 60 | McCracken  | 41 | Bell      | 25 | Wolfe      | 9  |

Table 2. September harvest by county.

Figure 5. September Harvest by County



**Figure 6. Female Harvest Goal Progress through September**



| Zone | County     | Total Female Harvest Goal | Female Harvest | % Goal Met | Zone | County     | Total Female Harvest Goal | Female Harvest | % Goal Met | Zone                                                          | County       | Total Female Harvest Goal | Female Harvest | % Goal Met |
|------|------------|---------------------------|----------------|------------|------|------------|---------------------------|----------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|---------------------------|----------------|------------|
| 1    | Anderson   | 1647                      | 155            | 9%         | 1    | Livingston | 1321                      | 70             | 5%         | 2                                                             | Boyd         | 806                       | 42             | 5%         |
| 1    | Ballard    | 496                       | 43             | 9%         | 1    | Logan      | 1328                      | 79             | 6%         | 2                                                             | Boyle        | 385                       | 26             | 7%         |
| 1    | Boone      | 1602                      | 78             | 5%         | 1    | Lyon       | 642                       | 55             | 9%         | 2                                                             | Breckinridge | 1711                      | 185            | 11%        |
| 1    | Bracken    | 1574                      | 89             | 6%         | 1    | Marshall   | 758                       | 81             | 11%        | 2                                                             | Butler       | 1060                      | 78             | 7%         |
| 1    | Bullitt    | 1363                      | 102            | 7%         | 1    | Mason      | 803                       | 58             | 7%         | 2                                                             | Carter       | 1257                      | 63             | 5%         |
| 1    | Caldwell   | 1264                      | 61             | 5%         | 1    | McCracken  | 574                       | 41             | 7%         | 2                                                             | Casey        | 758                       | 59             | 8%         |
| 1    | Calloway   | 1202                      | 131            | 11%        | 1    | McLean     | 788                       | 27             | 3%         | 2                                                             | Clark        | 313                       | 15             | 5%         |
| 1    | Campbell   | 1032                      | 63             | 6%         | 1    | Mercer     | 882                       | 72             | 8%         | 2                                                             | Daviess      | 696                       | 30             | 4%         |
| 1    | Carlisle   | 497                       | 21             | 4%         | 1    | Muhlenberg | 1517                      | 127            | 8%         | 2                                                             | Edmonson     | 350                       | 51             | 15%        |
| 1    | Carroll    | 740                       | 40             | 5%         | 1    | Nelson     | 2002                      | 152            | 8%         | 2                                                             | Fayette      | 170                       | 10             | 6%         |
| 1    | Christian  | 2224                      | 180            | 8%         | 1    | Oldham     | 961                       | 69             | 7%         | 2                                                             | Fleming      | 606                       | 55             | 9%         |
| 1    | Crittenden | 2410                      | 91             | 4%         | 1    | Owen       | 2894                      | 89             | 3%         | 2                                                             | Grayson      | 1575                      | 118            | 7%         |
| 1    | Franklin   | 1344                      | 108            | 8%         | 1    | Pendleton  | 2500                      | 136            | 5%         | 2                                                             | Greenup      | 949                       | 38             | 4%         |
| 1    | Fulton     | 381                       | 11             | 3%         | 1    | Robertson  | 647                       | 49             | 8%         | 2                                                             | Jessamine    | 321                       | 39             | 12%        |
| 1    | Gallatin   | 750                       | 19             | 3%         | 1    | Scott      | 1196                      | 69             | 6%         | 2                                                             | Lawrence     | 1343                      | 40             | 3%         |
| 1    | Grant      | 1709                      | 80             | 5%         | 1    | Shelby     | 2399                      | 138            | 6%         | 2                                                             | Lewis        | 902                       | 48             | 5%         |
| 1    | Graves     | 2019                      | 145            | 7%         | 1    | Spencer    | 1517                      | 135            | 9%         | 2                                                             | Lincoln      | 803                       | 60             | 7%         |
| 1    | Green      | 1210                      | 83             | 7%         | 1    | Todd       | 1148                      | 58             | 5%         | 2                                                             | Madison      | 513                       | 66             | 13%        |
| 1    | Hancock    | 531                       | 39             | 7%         | 1    | Trigg      | 1325                      | 96             | 7%         | 2                                                             | Marion       | 1083                      | 72             | 7%         |
| 1    | Hardin     | 2090                      | 241            | 12%        | 1    | Trimble    | 733                       | 32             | 4%         | 2                                                             | Meade        | 842                       | 131            | 16%        |
| 1    | Harrison   | 1353                      | 115            | 8%         | 1    | Union      | 801                       | 84             | 10%        | 2                                                             | Metcalfe     | 907                       | 73             | 8%         |
| 1    | Hart       | 1617                      | 134            | 8%         | 1    | Washington | 1836                      | 161            | 9%         | 2                                                             | Monroe       | 677                       | 42             | 6%         |
| 1    | Henderson  | 1165                      | 58             | 5%         | 1    | Webster    | 1725                      | 84             | 5%         | 2                                                             | Montgomery   | 289                       | 21             | 7%         |
| 1    | Henry      | 1734                      | 117            | 7%         | 1    | Woodford   | 598                       | 48             | 8%         | 2                                                             | Nicholas     | 550                       | 65             | 12%        |
| 1    | Hickman    | 568                       | 18             | 3%         | 2    | Adair      | 965                       | 112            | 12%        | 2                                                             | Ohio         | 1815                      | 81             | 4%         |
| 1    | Hopkins    | 1863                      | 131            | 7%         | 2    | Allen      | 964                       | 70             | 7%         | 2                                                             | Simpson      | 324                       | 37             | 11%        |
| 1    | Jefferson  | 1015                      | 98             | 10%        | 2    | Barren     | 860                       | 80             | 9%         | 2                                                             | Taylor       | 796                       | 101            | 13%        |
| 1    | Kenton     | 825                       | 65             | 8%         | 2    | Bath       | 505                       | 31             | 6%         | 2                                                             | Warren       | 853                       | 85             | 10%        |
| 1    | LaRue      | 723                       | 35             | 5%         | 2    | Bourbon    | 183                       | 13             | 7%         | *only Zone 1 and 2 counties included for female harvest goals |              |                           |                |            |

Table 3. Female harvest goals and progress by county.