

## KDFWR Deer Program

### Summary Data: 2025 December Harvest

9<sup>th</sup> January 2026

## Season Summary

The month of December was a successful one across the Commonwealth with deer hunters adding 11,592 deer to this season's total of 142,484 deer harvested since the beginning of the season in early September. The 142,484 deer taken during the 2025-26 season so far is the second highest total in the last five years and over 3,000 deer higher than the 10-year average this far into the deer season (Figure 1).

More than half of December's harvest occurred during Kentucky's 9-day Late Muzzleloader season which began on December 13, where 6,960 deer were harvested. Sixty-three percent (4,371) of the deer taken were females, while 30% (2,110) were antlered deer. Of males harvested with a muzzleloader, 60% were 2.5 years old or older, 21% were yearling males, and the remaining 19% were antlerless males.

Kentucky's Free Youth Firearm Weekend, which occurred December 27-28 this year, resulted in the harvest of 893 deer. Youth hunters in Kentucky do not have to purchase a hunting license during this two-day season and provides another firearm opportunity during a time that students are home for winter break. Of the 893 deer harvested, 544 were females, 259 were antlered males, and 90 were antlerless males. This season has varied greatly in total harvest over the years due to its length and placement in the season, but this year's harvest nearly met the 5-year average of 920 deer taken.

Of the 142,484 deer harvested through the end of December, 52% (73,728) have been antlered bucks while 43% (61,227) were female and 5% (7,526) antlerless males (Figure 2). This proportion is similar to previous years at this point in the season, with female harvest comprising between 42% and 45% of the harvest in the last five years (Figure 3). Of the males taken thus far, 70% (56,680) were 2.5 years old or older, while 21% (17,030) were yearlings and 9% (7,526) were fawns (Figure 4). This is the second-highest total of adult bucks taken at this point in the season in the last ten years, bested only by last season's 60,462 bucks.

Seventy-four percent (105,413) of the deer taken so far this season have been harvested with a firearm, while 11% (15,349) were with archery equipment, 9% (12,699) were crossbow harvests, and 6% (9,021) were taken with muzzleloaders (Figure 5). These proportions are similar to past seasons, though the muzzleloader percentage is the lowest in the last decade. This is likely due to less-than-ideal hunting conditions during both the Early and Late seasons (Figure 6).

Nearly all Kentucky public hunting areas are open to archery and crossbow hunting season-long, with several providing firearm and muzzleloader opportunities in some capacity. Public land harvest has accounted for 5% of the season total so far, with 7,329 deer harvested across 129 areas. This total is the second highest on record, only bested by the 2024-25 season total of 7,623 deer harvested at this point in the season. The state-maintained Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) with the highest harvest so far this season include Peabody (570), Taylorsville Lake (237), Green River Lake (226), Clay (207), and Barren River Lake (191) WMAs (Table 1).

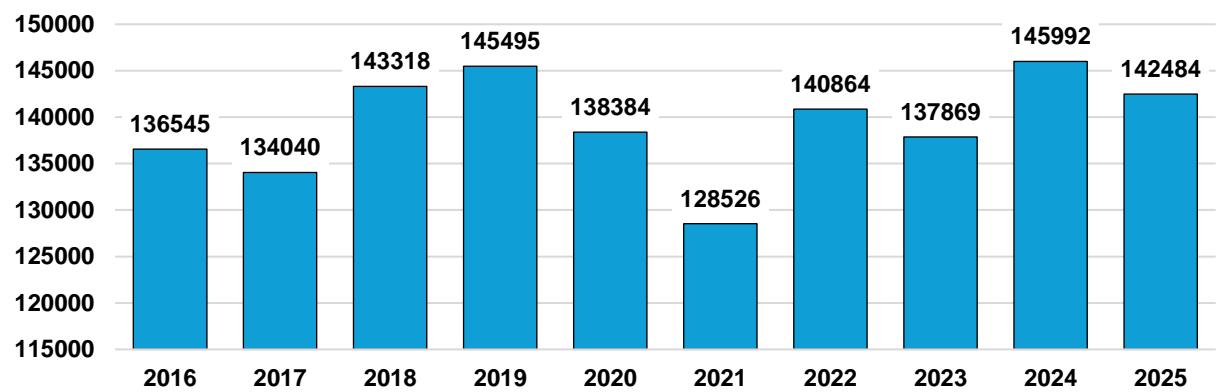
Regionally, the Bluegrass region has seen the most action thus far with 39,742 (28%) deer harvested, followed closely by the Green River (38,462; 27%), Southeast (26,191; 18%), Purchase (19,586; 14%) and Northeast (17,673; 12%) regions. Hardin County has had the highest harvest of any county in the Commonwealth so far this season with 3,436 deer taken, followed by Breckinridge (3,006), Christian (2,918), Hart (2,685), Graves (2,646) and Shelby (2,628) counties (Figure 7, Table 2).

## **Antlerless Harvest Goals**

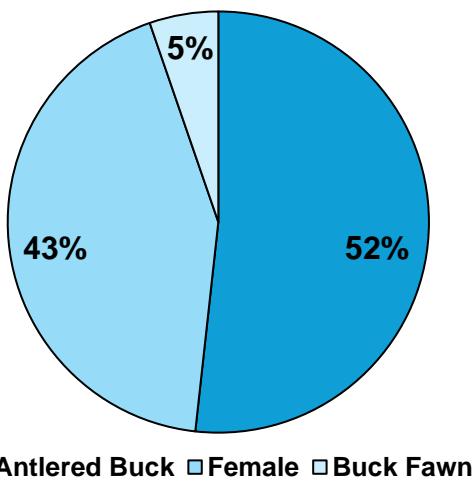
Deer managers are often quick to call for harvesting additional antlerless deer, particularly in areas that have reached, or are on the cusp of reaching, biologic and social carrying capacity. However, deer managers seldom tell hunters how many antlerless deer to harvest or why it is important to do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

Seven counties have so far reached at least 80% of their harvest goal this season: Simpson (97%), Breckinridge (84%), Monroe (83%), Green (83%), Taylor (82%), Adair (81%), and Meade (80%; Figure 8, Table 3). With only 19 days remaining in the 2025-26 season, many counties have an uphill climb to reach desired antlerless harvest goals. Without adequate female harvest in Zone 1 and Zone 2 counties, deer populations will continue to increase to undesirable levels.

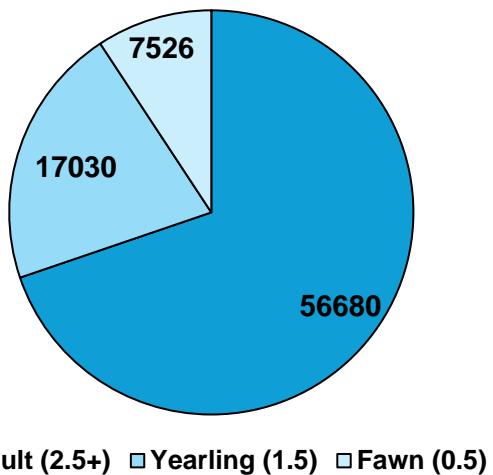
**Fig 1. Total Harvest through 31 December**



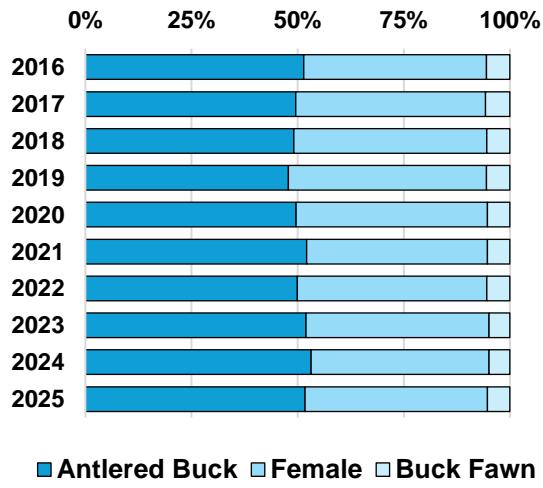
**Fig 2. Harvest by Sex**



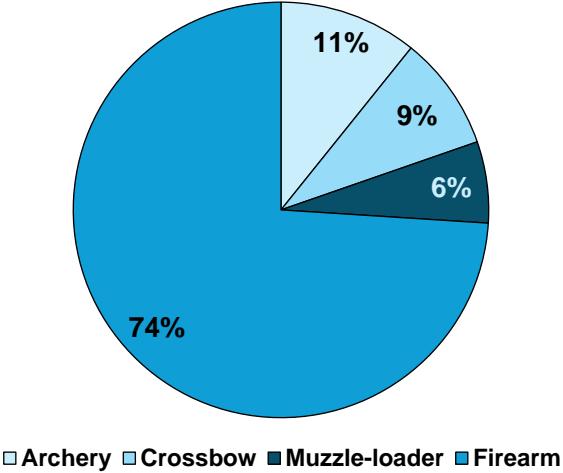
**Fig 4. Buck Harvest by Age**



**Fig 3. Historic Harvest by Sex**



**Fig 5. Harvest by Weapon**



**Fig 6. Historic Harvest by Weapon 2016-2025**



Daniel Boone National Forest	1254	Yellowbank WMA	92	Rolling Fork WMA	46	Beaver Creek WMA	25
Fort Knox Military Reservation	808	Kentucky Lake WMA	89	John A. Kleber WMA	44	Czar Hunting Access Area	25
Peabody WMA	570	Wendell H. Ford RTC	86	Fishtrap Lake WMA	41	Hensley-Pine Mountain WMA	24
Land Between The Lakes NRA	450	Higginson-Henry WMA	79	Kentucky Ridge Forest WMA	39	Lloyd WMA	24
Taylorsville Lake WMA	237	Ballard WMA	73	Fleming WMA	38	Kentucky Ridge State Forest	23
Green River Lake WMA	226	Boone Forestlands WMA	71	Pocahontas WMA	38	Grayson Lake WMA	22
Clay WMA	207	Lake Barkley WMA	70	Green River State Forest	37	Jones-Keeney WMA	22
Barren River Lake WMA	191	Wells Hunting Access Area	66	Paintsville Lake WMA	34	Simon Kenton WMA	22
Sloughs WMA	156	Kentucky River WMA	64	Redbird WMA	34	Cane Creek WMA	21
Lake Cumberland WMA	153	Yatesville Lake WMA	60	Obion Creek WMA	33	Carr Creek Lake WMA	21
Big Rivers WMA & State Forest	150	Elk Horn Coal HAA	58	Veterans Memorial WMA	33	Tygart State Forest	21
Clarks River NWR	119	Cumberland Forest WMA	55	Asher Hunting Access Area	32	Cranks Creek WMA	20
Blue Grass Army Depot	115	West Kentucky WMA	53	Continental HAA	32	Doug Travis WMA	20
Pennyroy State Forest	96	Livingston County WMA and SNA	50	Boatwright WMA	31	Otter Creek ORA	20
Nolin River Lake WMA	92	Rough River Lake WMA	49	Dewey Lake WMA	30	RH Group HAA	20

\*totals included Quota Hunt harvests

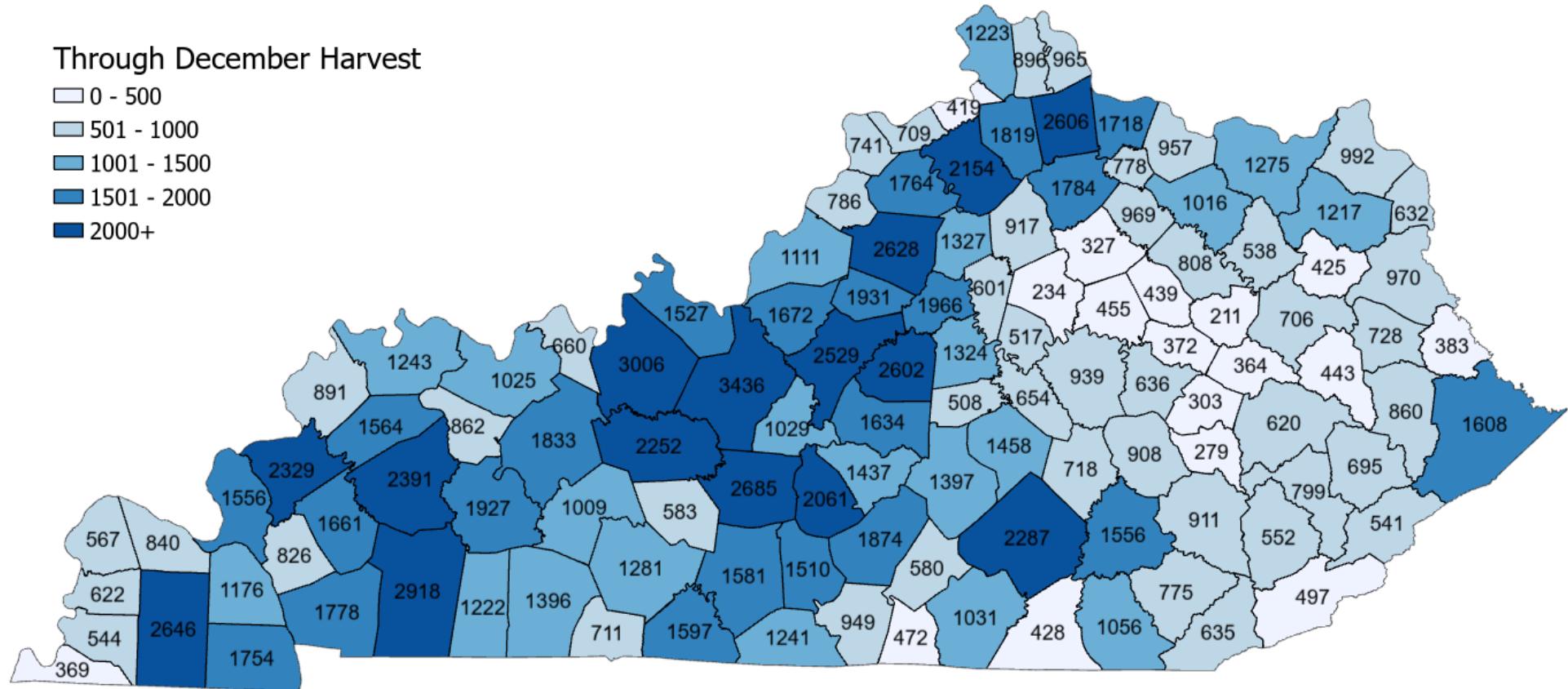
\*\*all other areas <20 total harvests

*Table 1. Public land harvest through 31 December 2025*

Hardin	3436	Grant	1819	Logan	1396	Nicholas	969	Johnson	728	Rowan	538
Breckinridge	3006	Harrison	1784	Franklin	1327	Campbell	965	Rockcastle	718	Jessamine	517
Christian	2918	Trigg	1778	Mercer	1324	Mason	957	Simpson	711	Boyle	508
Hart	2685	Henry	1764	Warren	1281	Cumberland	949	Carroll	709	Harlan	497
Graves	2646	Calloway	1754	Lewis	1275	Madison	939	Morgan	706	Clinton	472
Shelby	2628	Bracken	1718	Henderson	1243	Scott	917	Knott	695	Clark	455
Pendleton	2606	Bullitt	1672	Monroe	1241	Clay	911	Hancock	660	Magoffin	443
Washington	2602	Caldwell	1661	Boone	1223	Jackson	908	Garrard	654	Montgomery	439
Nelson	2529	Marion	1634	Todd	1222	Kenton	896	Estill	636	McCreary	428
Hopkins	2391	Pike	1608	Carter	1217	Union	891	Bell	635	Elliott	425
Crittenden	2329	Allen	1597	Marshall	1176	McLean	862	Boyd	632	Gallatin	419
Pulaski	2287	Barren	1581	Jefferson	1111	Floyd	860	Carlisle	622	Martin	383
Grayson	2252	Webster	1564	Whitley	1056	McCracken	840	Breathitt	620	Powell	372
Owen	2154	Livingston	1556	Wayne	1031	Lyon	826	Woodford	601	Fulton	369
Green	2061	Laurel	1556	Larue	1029	Bath	808	Edmonson	583	Wolfe	364
Anderson	1966	Meade	1527	Daviess	1025	Perry	799	Russell	580	Bourbon	327
Spencer	1931	Metcalfe	1510	Fleming	1016	Oldham	786	Ballard	567	Lee	303
Muhlenberg	1927	Lincoln	1458	Butler	1009	Robertson	778	Leslie	552	Owsley	279
Adair	1874	Taylor	1437	Greenup	992	Knox	775	Hickman	544	Fayette	234
Ohio	1833	Casey	1397	Lawrence	970	Trimble	741	Letcher	541	Menifee	211

*Table 2. Harvest by county through 31 December 2025*

**Figure 7. Harvest by county through 31 December 2025**

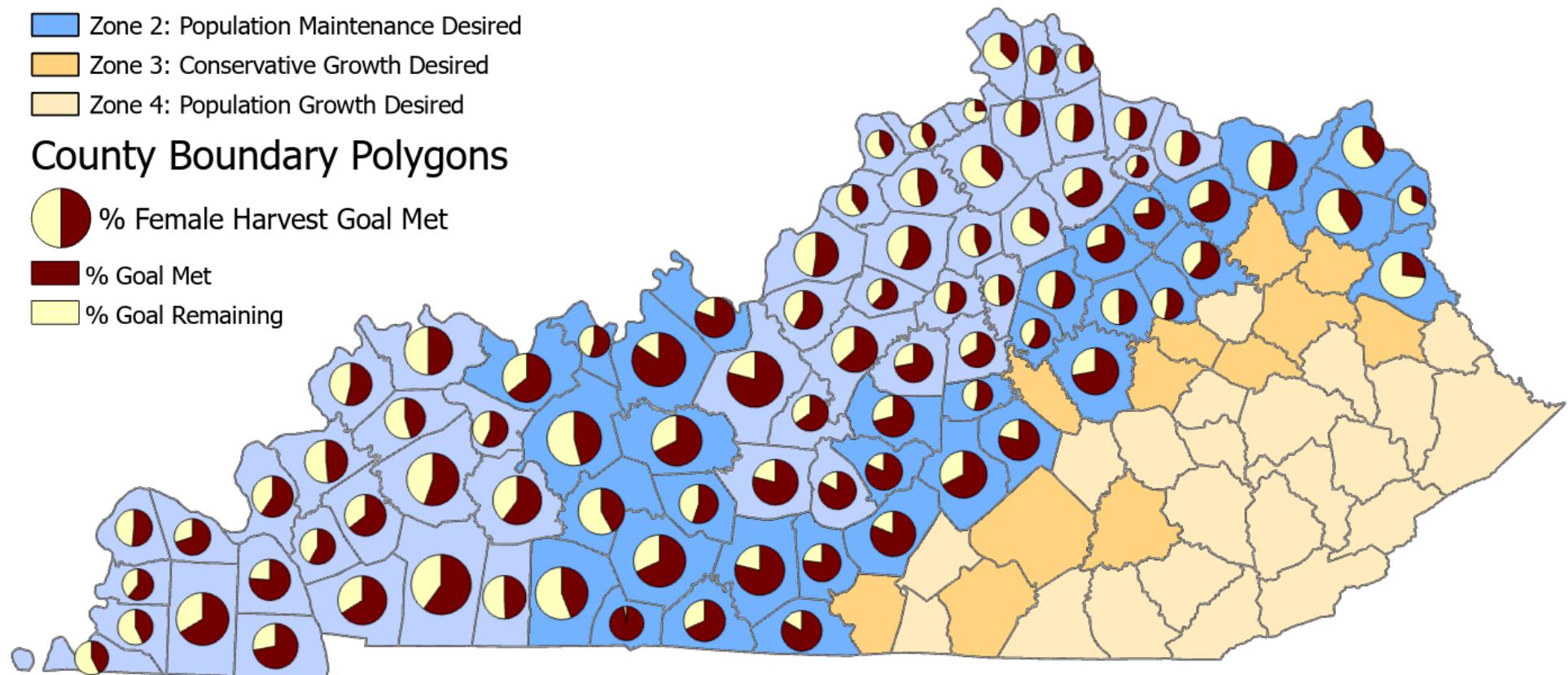


**Figure 8. Female Harvest Goal Progress through 31 December 2025**

- Zone 1: Population Reduction Desired
- Zone 2: Population Maintenance Desired
- Zone 3: Conservative Growth Desired
- Zone 4: Population Growth Desired

### County Boundary Polygons

- % Female Harvest Goal Met
- % Goal Met
- % Goal Remaining



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	875	53%	1	Livingston	1321	784	59%	2	Boyd	806	258	32%
1	Ballard	496	255	51%	2	Logan	1328	585	44%	2	Boyle	385	206	54%
1	Boone	1602	602	38%	1	Lyon	642	372	58%	2	Breckinridge	1711	1443	84%
1	Bracken	1574	813	52%	1	Marshall	758	577	76%	2	Butler	1060	445	42%
1	Bullitt	1363	793	58%	1	Mason	803	420	52%	2	Carter	1257	518	41%
1	Caldwell	1264	814	64%	1	McCracken	574	402	70%	2	Casey	758	513	68%
1	Calloway	1202	866	72%	1	McLean	788	449	57%	2	Clark	313	155	50%
1	Campbell	1032	494	48%	1	Mercer	882	592	67%	2	Daviess	696	447	64%
1	Carlisle	497	302	61%	1	Muhlenberg	1517	913	60%	2	Edmonson	350	193	55%
1	Carroll	740	313	42%	1	Nelson	2002	1265	63%	2	Fayette	170	90	53%
1	Christian	2224	1334	60%	1	Oldham	961	390	41%	2	Fleming	606	417	69%
1	Crittenden	2410	1167	48%	1	Owen	2894	1087	38%	2	Grayson	1575	1066	68%
1	Franklin	1344	609	45%	1	Pendleton	2500	1282	51%	2	Greenup	949	378	40%
1	Fulton	381	163	43%	1	Robertson	647	384	59%	2	Jessamine	321	186	58%
1	Gallatin	750	184	25%	1	Scott	1196	418	35%	2	Lawrence	1343	358	27%
1	Grant	1709	872	51%	1	Shelby	2399	1354	56%	2	Lewis	902	472	52%
1	Graves	2019	1340	66%	1	Spencer	1517	944	62%	2	Lincoln	803	629	78%
1	Green	1210	1005	83%	1	Todd	1148	566	49%	2	Madison	513	370	72%
1	Hancock	531	289	54%	1	Trigg	1325	875	66%	2	Marion	1083	768	71%
1	Hardin	2090	1651	79%	1	Trimble	733	309	42%	2	Meade	842	677	80%
1	Harrison	1353	898	66%	1	Union	801	431	54%	2	Metcalfe	907	698	77%
1	Hart	1617	1277	79%	1	Washington	1836	1320	72%	2	Monroe	677	564	83%
1	Henderson	1165	582	50%	1	Webster	1725	779	45%	2	Montgomery	289	153	53%
1	Henry	1734	816	47%	1	Woodford	598	291	49%	2	Nicholas	550	407	74%
1	Hickman	568	244	43%	2	Adair	965	783	81%	2	Ohio	1815	832	46%
1	Hopkins	1863	1030	55%	2	Allen	964	656	68%	2	Simpson	324	315	97%
1	Jefferson	1015	533	53%	2	Barren	860	677	79%	2	Taylor	796	651	82%
1	Kenton	825	433	52%	2	Bath	505	307	61%	2	Warren	853	580	68%
1	Larue	723	473	65%	2	Bourbon	183	130	71%	*only Zone 1 and Zone 2 counties included with female harvest goals				

Table 3. Female harvest goal progress through 31 December 2025