



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 15, 2022

- [For Iowa's deer hunters, the wait is nearly over, shotgun deer seasons begin Dec. 3](#)
- [Chronic wasting disease](#)
- [Safety first, during the shotgun seasons](#)
- [All Iowans can help protect fish and wildlife through Turn in Poachers](#)
- [Donated deer hides benefit disabled veterans](#)
- [Rathbun Lake walleye length limit changes effective January 1, 2023](#)
- [Fall trout spawn in full swing](#)
- [State champions named in collegiate trap, skeet, sporting clays, and super sporting clays](#)

For Iowa's deer hunters, the wait is nearly over, shotgun deer seasons begin Dec. 3



Iowa's most popular deer hunting seasons are just around the corner, when roughly 100,000 blaze orange clad hunters take to the timber and wildlife experts are forecasting another good year.

"Our deer population is stable to slightly increasing statewide, so hunters should expect to see numbers similar to last year," said Tyler Harms, with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

The two shotgun seasons see the highest numbers of hunters participating, which also leads to significant deer harvest, all condensed into less than three weeks in December.

"About half of our annual deer harvest statewide each year occurs during these two seasons," Harms said. Shotgun one is Dec. 3-7; shotgun two is Dec. 10-18.

While seasonal weather is finally arriving, the mild, dry fall has benefited hunters in the earlier deer seasons.

"Hunters have reported harvesting more than 23,000 deer so far, which is about 8 percent higher than last year, so we're on track to harvest more than 100,000 deer statewide again this year," Harms said.

Last year, hunters reported harvesting nearly 103,000 deer, down from 109,600 in 2020. The Iowa DNR has a goal to manage the herd to provide an annual harvest of 100,000-120,000 deer. A key piece to the population management plan is harvesting antlerless deer.

“We encourage folks in counties where antlerless licenses are available to use them to help us to effectively manage the deer herd,” Harms said. The Iowa DNR has a listing of counties with antlerless licenses in real-time. To check the number of licenses in each county, visit www.iowadnr.gov, then click on the “available tags, quota information” tab on the hunting page and select “Resident Antlerless Deer by County” in the drop-down box.

New this year is the Excess Tag January Antlerless Season. Any county with unsold county specific antlerless licenses on Jan. 11, is eligible for this season.

“This is an opportunity to harvest late season deer, but this new season has a limited method of take – only centerfire rifles from .223 to .500 caliber may be used,” said Harms.

Counties that typically have unsold licenses at the end of the season in the past were those with higher quotas, in the southern and northeastern parts of the state.

“We also have the Population Management January Antlerless-only Season to manage the herd in localized areas. This season will be available in Allamakee, Appanoose, Decatur, Monroe, Wayne and Winneshiek if the county has more than 100 antlerless tags available on Dec. 19,” Harms said. “Although this season is only available in those six counties, it allows all legal methods of take, in addition to the .223 to .500 centerfire rifles.”

The Population Management January Antlerless-only Season is in select counties where chronic wasting disease has been confirmed. The season, if open, will be Jan. 11-22, 2023.

Deer donation program

The Iowa Deer Exchange is in its third year of connecting participants willing to provide deer meat with those willing to accept it. Heading in to the shotgun deer hunting seasons, the Iowa DNR is encouraging Iowans to sign up for the program.

Participants who signed up previously are encouraged to review their profile to make sure they are still considered active and the offer good until date hasn't passed.

“We're encouraging hunters who are making their plans now to consider picking up another doe tag and registering with the deer exchange to donate venison,” said Harms.

To sign up for the Iowa Deer Exchange, go to www.iowadnr.gov/deer then scroll down to Iowa's Deer Exchange Program link and fill out the required fields. The database creates a map and table with information deer donors and deer recipients can use to get connected. There is no cost to participate. It is illegal to sell wild fish and game in Iowa.

The deer exchange, along with the Help us Stop Hunger (HUSH) program, allows hunters an opportunity to provide high quality lean protein to their neighbors, while continuing to do what they enjoy – hunting deer.

Hunter who prefer to use the HUSH program are encouraged to contact a participating locker before they harvest a deer to see if the locker has any additional drop off instructions. The list of participating lockers is available at www.iowadnr.gov/deer the scroll down to the Help Us Stop Hunger link. The HUSH program is a partnership between the Iowa DNR, the Food Bank of Iowa and participating meat lockers.

Online hunting atlas

Hunters have an online tool that may improve their in-field experience, even before opening day.

The Iowa hunting atlas is an interactive map that shows all available public hunting land that is managed by the state, county or federal governments. The atlas is online at www.iowadnr.gov/hunting. A mobile version is also available.

A click on an area will show basic information like size, habitat type and likely species available.

Report your harvest

Hunters who harvest a deer are required to report their harvest by midnight on the day after it is tagged or before taking it to a locker or taxidermist. The hunter whose name is on the transportation tag is responsible for making the report. If no deer is harvested, no report is necessary.

Options to report your harvest include texting the registration number on your deer tag to 1-800-771-4692 and follow the prompts, online, by phone, through a license vendor during normal business hours, or using the Go Outdoors Iowa app. Reporting using the app is straight forward, fast and easy. Hunters have their confirmation right on their phone and also receive it as an email.

Deer harvest numbers are an important component of Iowa's deer management plan.

Changes to deer seasons

- Population Management January Antlerless Season will be available in Allamakee, Winneshiek, Decatur, Appanoose, Monroe and Wayne counties if the number of unsold antlerless licenses on the third Monday in December exceeds 100. Licenses will be available the same day the season is reinstated. Only antlerless deer may be taken during the Population Management January Antlerless-only season. Hunting is allowed on public land, and private land with permission. Shotguns, handguns, muzzleloaders, bows, crossbows and center-fire rifles .223 caliber to .500 caliber with a published or calculated muzzle energy of 500-foot pounds or higher may be used.
- Excess Tag January Antlerless Season will be available in all counties with unsold county antlerless tags on Jan. 10. Licenses will be available beginning Jan. 11, until quotas are filled. Due to the compressed timeline, these licenses will not be available online. Only antlerless deer may be taken during the Excess Tag January Antlerless-only season. Only centerfire rifles .223 caliber to .500 caliber with a published or calculated muzzle energy of 500-foot pounds or higher are allowed in the Excess Tag January antlerless season.
- Antlerless quotas have changed in 17 counties, see p. 8 in the Iowa Hunting, Trapping and Migratory Game Bird Regulations for current quotas.

Media Contact: Tyler Harms, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-777-5378.

Chronic wasting disease

The Iowa DNR will be working with hunters again this shotgun season to collect deer tissue samples to test for chronic wasting disease. So far this fall, one hunter harvested deer from Wayne County has been confirmed positive for the always fatal disease.

Hunters interested in participating in the surveillance effort are encouraged to contact their local wildlife biologist to arrange for sample to be collected. “If they’re interested but the sample quota has filled, we will assist them in submitting their sample through the hunter submission system, in partnership with Iowa State University – and that comes with a fee of \$25,” said Harms.

This is the first year that additional samples will be collected in Greene and Fremont counties after deer in those counties tested positive for the disease last year.

Chronic wasting disease has been found in 12 Iowa counties. In addition to Greene and Fremont, the disease has been confirmed in Woodbury, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Clayton, Fayette, Dubuque, Jackson, Decatur, Wayne and Appanoose counties.

If hunting in an area where chronic wasting disease has been found, hunters are encouraged to hold the deer meat separately until the test results are available. Hunters can check the results online at the Iowa CWD dashboard at www.iowadnr.gov/cwdresults.

“Hunters will need the registration number to find the test results – either write it down before tossing the tag or keep the tag,” Harms said. If a hunter’s deer tests positive, the DNR will contact them to offer to collect the meat and any other parts of the animal for proper disposal.

Hunters in areas where the disease has been found need a plan for carcass disposal.

“We recommend a trash service or landfill that accepts deer carcasses, if that’s not possible, then a burial pit, and lastly, leaving the boned-out deer on the area where it was harvested. That’s the best way to prevent bringing the disease to a new part of the state,” Harms said.

The idea is to minimize transporting carcasses as much as possible, he said. “Don’t bring it back home and pitch it out on the ‘back 40.’”

Virtual meeting

The Iowa DNR is hosting a virtual public meeting on chronic wasting disease on Nov. 29, from 7-8 p.m., when staff will provide an update on the science of the disease, its status in Iowa, and current management efforts. There will be an opportunity to ask questions and staff will answer as many as time allows.

There is no cost to attend, but registration is required in order to receive information prior to the meeting. Interested individuals can register to attend through the link <https://bit.ly/3Flgc4G>.

Media Contact: Tyler Harms, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-777-5378.

Safety first, during the shotgun seasons

The long wait is almost over. For an expected 100,000 deer hunters, the shotgun deer seasons are right around the corner and before they head to the timber, it’s important that everyone go through their gear to make sure everything still fits and still works and takes time to review their hunting safety plan.

“Hunting continues to be a safe activity enjoyed by hundreds of thousands of Iowans,” said Jamie Cook, hunter education administrator with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR). “And part of making hunting safe is creating a plan for each hunt.”

The hunting plan identifies the hunt location, who's on the hunt and outlines their role, describes how the hunt will unfold and when the hunters are expected to return home. Hunters are encouraged to leave a copy of the plan with someone in the event of an emergency, Cook said. "It's good to have someone who knows when to expect you home."

Hunters will also want to check their blaze orange gear to make sure it still fits and that that orange hasn't faded to the point of being ineffective. The minimum amount of blaze orange required by Iowa law to hunt in the firearm deer season is a 100 percent solid blaze orange vest, but Cook said they encourage hunters to wear blaze orange hats and gloves, too.

"Wear plenty of visible blaze orange," he said. "The more external blaze orange that's worn, the better the chance that hunters will be seen in the timber. We're not hiding from deer during the firearm seasons; we want to be seen by the other hunters."

He also reminded hunters to not only properly identify the target before shooting, but also what is behind the target and to avoid shooting at running deer. "It's easy to allow yourself to get caught up in the moment and fixate on the target, but hunters must remember to know what's in front of and beyond your target," Cook said. "It's also a good idea to talk to the landowner or tenant to confirm permission to hunt and to see if anyone else has permission to hunt the same property."

Before setting foot in the timber on opening morning, Cook advised hunters to spend some time sighting in their firearm to get reacquainted with its accuracy and the range that the bullets and slugs can travel, to treat every gun as if it were loaded and to always point the gun in a safe direction.

He said there has been an average of 10 hunting related incidents over the past three deer shotgun seasons with around half involving personal injuries. The most common causes for hunting injuries including fatalities during the shotgun deer season is careless handling of a firearm and shooting at running deer.

"Remember that we hunt with those who we're closest to, our family and our friends. If there's any question about taking a shot, don't pull the trigger, because once you pull the trigger, you can't call the shot back," he said. "No deer is worth taking an unsafe shot; another deer will come along. At the end of the day, we all want to get home safely with a little meat for the freezer."

Media Contact: Jamie Cook, Hunter Education Administrator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-350-8091.

All Iowans can help protect fish and wildlife through Turn in Poachers

Information is reported to the Turn in Poachers (TIP) system all year long, with a noticeable increase from September to January as part of the fall and winter hunting seasons. Regardless of the time of year or day of the week, the most important factor for the public in using the TIP system is timeliness.



“Our officers work odd hours and weekends so if you wait until Monday to report what happened over the weekend, the evidence can be gone or destroyed and the poacher is nowhere to be found,” said Matt Burner, district supervisor with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau for north central Iowa. “Call as soon as you know something. The quicker we’re on the scene, the better the chance that we can catch them in the act of committing the crime.”

He said callers should provide as much detail as possible, like the location, the person committing the act and their name, if known, the location of the animal that was killed, type of vehicle – make, model, color, and license plate, if possible, and an accurate, step by step account of the event as it happened.

“If you see something that doesn’t look right, take a picture or video and pass that along to the officer,” he said. “Even if it’s something questionable, report it and let the officer determine if they need to dig a little more to see if a follow up is necessary.”

Information can be reported online at www.iowadnr.gov/tip or by calling the hotline at 1-800-532-2020. You can remain anonymous. People who provide information that leads to a successful case are eligible for rewards ranging from \$200 up to \$1,500 and more. Rewards are paid for in part by the \$2 donation option provided by hunters and anglers when purchasing a license. Since 2009, more than 2,200 formal cases been submitted through the TIP program.

“You don’t have to be a hunter or angler to call in a tip,” Bruner said. “We appreciate all of the extra eyes in the field, working together to keep thieves from stealing the fish and game in this state that belongs to everyone.”

Trespassing

Trespassing is a year-round issue but, in the fall, it can often be associated with wildlife violations. When someone witnesses trespassing, ideally, the first call is to the sheriff and a second call is to the local conservation officer. That helps to ensure the officer nearest to the area can respond.

Donated deer hides benefit disabled veterans

Hunters donated 4,183 deer hides to Elks Lodges across Iowa last year, which was a slight increase from the 2021-22 season. The deer hides are used by the Veterans Leather Program to make professionally-crafted leather gloves for veterans in wheelchairs and also turned into leather used for therapy programs for recovering veterans.

The Veterans Leather Program relies on the charity of hunters to donate their deer hides. Hunters willing to donate their hides are encouraged to contact the local Elks Lodge for drop off locations or visit www.elks.org/lodges to find the nearest lodge. The therapeutic kits and gloves are distributed at no cost to the veterans.

Contact Lisa Widick at 208-360-6294 or ozzywidick@gmail.com for more information.

Rathbun Lake walleye length limit changes effective January 1, 2023

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is implementing a 15-inch minimum length limit on all walleye captured from Rathbun Lake, starting January 1, 2023.

All walleyes measuring less than 15 inches must be immediately released. Anglers can keep five walleyes per day. This regulation does not apply to the Chariton River below Rathbun Dam; the upper limit of the regulation will be the Wayne/Appanoose county line.

Currently, there is no length regulation on walleyes at Rathbun Lake.

“The walleye population in Rathbun Lake is one of the most studied in the state,” said Mark Flammang, fisheries biologist for the Iowa DNR.

Biologists monitor lakes to evaluate the effectiveness of different regulations and predict changes to the population to improve the angler experience and ensure that Iowa has a strong broodstock population.

When you catch a walleye in Iowa, there’s a good chance that fish got its start in one of Iowa’s walleye hatcheries. Since walleye often don’t reproduce naturally in the State’s inland rivers and lakes, their populations must be maintained through the DNR’s stocking program. The hundreds of millions of eggs needed each year to keep populations healthy are predominately collected from wild broodstock populations at Lake Rathbun.

“We have observed a change in the Lake Rathbun walleye population over the last decade. The population now experiences relatively inconsistent and low survival of stocked walleye on an annual basis,” explains Flammang. “Adding this minimum length limit can improve the average size of walleye anglers harvest, potentially increase the overall density of Rathbun Lake walleye, and likely reduce the time between bites for walleye anglers, while still protecting the adult female population.”

The DNR will continue to assess these regulations and recommend changes as needed.

Media Contact: Mark Flammang, Fisheries Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-647-2406.

Fall trout spawn in full swing

Hundreds of yellow ovals offset the brown and green coloration of each female brown trout ready to spawn at the Manchester Fish Hatchery. The splashes of color are signs that trout spawning season is in full swing.

Brown trout spawning was completed a couple of weeks ago. Brood trout from the French Creek genetic lineage were collected from Spring Branch Creek in Delaware County. The fish are checked for ripeness and spawned streamside before being returned to the stream.

All brown trout are stocked as 2-inch fingerlings. “Anglers like these ‘wild’ stream raised fish. They are harder to catch than our put-and-take stocked fish,” explains Mike Steuck, Iowa DNR fisheries supervisor for interior streams. “Many of the public streams have lots of brown trout in them.”

Fewer and fewer brown trout fingerlings are raised and stocked as the number of self-sustaining, naturally reproducing brown trout populations increase throughout Northeast Iowa.

Brook trout, Iowa's only native trout, give up their eggs in late October and early November. Eggs are taken streamside from wild South Pine Creek brook trout, fertilized and taken back to the Manchester Fish Hatchery to be raised and stocked as 2-inch fingerlings in June.

"As a part of DNR's Brook Trout Restoration Program, we're working to re-establish populations of Iowa 'wild' brook trout in streams with suitable habitat and excellent water quality," said Steuck.

Rainbow trout, the backbone of Iowa's trout program, take up much of December and January. Roughly 750,000 eggs will be collected this season.

Crews check for ripe female broodstock once a week. After a quick sedative bath to calm them, each big trout is held firmly over a plastic bowl, as one of the workers rolls a hand down her belly to force out a stream of orange-golden eggs—up to 4,000 to 6,000 per fish. Mixed in quickly is the milk-white sperm from two males. Water is added to activate the eggs and sperm allowing fertilization to occur. The ingredients are gently stirred with a turkey feather to avoid bruising the eggs.

The fertilized eggs are poured into an incubator tray and slid into their place below a stream of 50 to 52 degree water until they hatch. Tiny sac-fry hatch about 30 days after fertilization. Dark clouds of tiny fish grow in raceways at the hatchery. The fish are hand-fed for the first month, then "trained" to eat from automatic feeders.

As the trout develop and grow, they are monitored and transferred to larger tanks, then raceways. The fingerlings will be kept at Manchester or transferred to Iowa's two other stations, near Elkader and Decorah, to be raised for future stocking. In 13 to 15 months, they will be a half-pound and ready to be stocked. Nearly 50 put-and-take streams throughout nine northeast Iowa counties are stocked from April through October and almost 20 community trout fishing locations are stocked through the cold weather months.

"We stock about 380,000 catchable rainbow trout from the hatcheries," said Steuck. "We also stock about 60,000 brook, brown and rainbow trout fingerlings each year to grow in the streams."

There's natural spawning, mostly brown trout and some brook trout, in more than 75 northeast Iowa streams thanks to improved habitat and trout genetics, and an extended period of above average annual rainfall. Most trout caught, though, are spawned under the eyes of hatchery workers at Manchester. These coldwater fish are great fighters and beautiful in their spawning colors this time of year.

Find more information about Iowa trout streams and tips for trout fishing on the DNR website at www.iowadnr.gov/trout.

Media Contact: Mike Steuck, regional fisheries supervisor, northeast Iowa, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-927-3276.

State champions named in collegiate trap, skeet, sporting clays, and super sporting clays

The 2022 Iowa Scholastic Clay Target Program (SCTP) Collegiate Championships was held at Waukees's New Pioneer Gun Club, Nov. 12-13, that featured 182 athletes from 17 Iowa colleges competing in Trap, Skeet, Sporting Clays and Super Sporting Clays.

Iowa Western Community College, Hawkeye RedTails, and Wartburg Knights each won Team State Collegiate Championships over the weekend. Iowa Western took home first place team in Sporting Clays and Super Sporting Clays, while Wartburg won the Skeet event and the Hawkeye RedTails Sports Shooting Team won the Trap Championship. Iowa Western also won the Team High Overall Championship, which combines team scores from all four events.

Top individual honors in American Singles Trap went to Cole Sorenson of Southwestern Community College and Maddie Caston of the Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting. Top individual honors in skeet went to Colten Uitermarkt of the PC Eagles and Erin Nepl of Coe College. Sporting clays individual champions were Mathew Brindley of the Des Moines Clay Crushers, and Reegan Filip of Iowa Western Community College. The Super Sporting Clays Championship was won by Evan Guttormson from Wartburg and Reegan Filip of Iowa Western Community College. The final results for all events are below.

American Singles Trap

Men's Individual Singles Trap

1. Cole Sorensen, Southwestern Community College
2. Abram Lorence, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting
3. Dominick Ver Meer, PC Eagles
4. Matthew Rippel, Hawkeye RedTails Sports Shooting
5. Brock Bellneger, Ellsworth College Panthers

Women's Individual Singles Trap

1. Maddie Caston, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting
2. Jenna Smith, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting
3. Britlynn Klaas, Hawkeye RedTails Sports Shooting
4. Emma Chapin, Iowa Central Community College
5. Erin Nepl, Coe College Clay Target Team

Singles Trap Teams

1. Hawkeye RedTails Sports Shooting, 463 points
2. Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting, 457 points
3. Wartburg Knights, 455 points

Skeet Championship

Men's Individual Skeet

1. Colten Uitermarkt, PC Eagles
2. Dominick Ver Meer, PC Eagles
3. Evan Guttormson, Wartburg Knights
4. Mathew Brindley, Des Moines Clay Crushers

5. Tevin Statzer, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports

Women's Individual Skeet

1. Erin Nepl, Coe College
2. Libby Faust, Wartburg Knights
3. Elizabeth Eisenbarth, Hawkeye RedTails Sports Shooting
4. Nicole Breese, University of Iowa Shooting Sports
5. Jenna Smith, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting

Skeet Teams

1. Wartburg Knights, 485 points
2. Iowa Western Shotgun Sports, 479 points
3. Iowa Central Community College, 467 points

Sporting Clays Championship

Men's Individual Sporting Clays

1. Matthew Brindley, Des Moines Clay Crushers
2. Nathan Schulte, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports
3. Dominick Ver Meer, PC Eagles
4. Evan Guttormson, Wartburg Knights
5. Gage O'Connor, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports

Women's Individual Sporting Clays

1. Reegan Filip, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports
2. Erin Nepl, Coe College
3. Jenna Smith, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting
4. Libby Faust, Wartburg Knights
5. Allison Jensen, Iowa Central Community College

Sporting Clays Teams

1. Iowa Western Shotgun Sports, 219 points
2. Wartburg Knights, 206 points
3. Iowa Central Community College, 200 points

Super Sporting Clays Championship

Men's Individual Super Sporting Clays

1. Evan Guttormson, Wartburg Knights
2. Cole Sorenson, Southwestern Community College
3. Jacob Sleiter, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports
4. John DeFord, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports

5. Matthew Brindley, Des Moines Clay Crushers

Women's Individual Super Sporting Clays

1. Reegan Filip, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports
2. Erin Nepl, Coe College
3. Jenna Smith, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting
4. Elizabeth Eisenbarth, Hawkeye RedTails Sports Shooting
5. Yvonne Croninger, Wartburg Knights

Super Sporting Clays Teams

1. Iowa Western Shotgun Sports, 118 points
2. Wartburg Knights, 113 points
3. Iowa Central Community College, 109 points

High overall awards were given to teams and individuals who participated in all four disciplines; trap, skeet, sporting clays, and super sporting clays.

High Overall Men

1. Dominick Ver Meer, PC Eagles
2. Evan Guttormson, Wartburg Knights
3. Cole Sorenson, Southwestern Community College
4. Mathew Brindley, Des Moines Clay Crushers
5. Tevin Statzer, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports

High Overall Ladies

1. Erin Nepl, Coe College
2. Jenna Smith, Southeastern Blackhawks Sports Shooting
3. Reegan Filip, Iowa Western Shotgun Sports
4. Libby Faust, Wartburg Knights
5. Allison Jensen, Iowa Central Community College

High Overall Teams

1. Iowa Western Shotgun Sports, 1474 points
2. Wartburg Knights, 1452 points
3. Iowa Central Community College, 1406 points

The SCTP is a youth development program, first and foremost and we do this through the shooting sports and competitive shooting. The SCTP's mission is to help youth reach their highest potential in becoming the best athletes and young adults they can be. For more information on the Scholastic Clay Target Program in Iowa, contact Chris Van Gorp, DNR Shooting Sports Coordinator at 515-313-8048 or chris.vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov.

Media Contact: Chris Van Gorp, DNR Shooting Sports Coordinator, (515) 313-8048 or Chris.Vangorp@dnr.iowa.gov.

