



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 20, 2022

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Stay safe on the ice this winter

With cold weather finally arriving in Iowa and freezing over lakes and ponds, ice fishing activity has begun at certain northern lakes. As a note of caution, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) reminds all anglers - especially those in central and southern Iowa - to stay patient and allow that ice thickness to grow before heading to their favorite ice fishing spot.

The DNR recommends a minimum of four inches of quality ice for fishing and at least five inches for snowmobiles and ATVs.

Ice forms at different rates on each body of water depending upon its size and depth. Once frozen, conditions change constantly and ice thickness can vary across the lake. Rocks, trees, docks or other things that poke through the ice will conduct heat and make the ice around it less stable. The DNR recommends that anglers test the ice thickness frequently and to trust your instincts – if the ice does not look right, don't go out.

A blanket of snow on top of an ice covered lake insulates the ice, slowing the growth of ice and hiding potential hazards or weak spots. River ice is 15 percent weaker than lake ice. Ice with a bluish color is safer than clear ice. Avoid slushy or honey-combed and stay away from dark spots on the ice. Don't walk into areas where the snow cover looks discolored.

Safety Tips on the Ice

- No ice is 100 percent safe.
- New ice is usually stronger than old ice.
- Don't go out alone - if the worst should happen, someone will be there to call for help or to help rescue.
- Let someone know where you are going and when you will return.
- Check ice thickness as you go out - there could be pockets of thin ice or places where ice recently formed.
- Avoid off-colored snow or ice. It is usually a sign of weakness.
- The insulating effect of snow slows down the freezing process.
- Bring along these basic items to help keep you safe: hand warmers, ice cleats to help prevent falls, ice picks (wear around your neck) to help you crawl out of the water if you fall in, a life jacket, a floating safety rope, a whistle to call for help, a basic first aid kit and extra dry clothes including a pair of gloves.

Iowa's late muzzleloader deer season is underway; hunters provide 4,600 deer samples for chronic wasting disease testing

With Iowa's shotgun deer seasons in the rearview mirror, hunting deer returns to a more solidary experience with late muzzleloader season and the reopening of the archery season.

Around 25,000 hunters participate in the late muzzleloader season which accounts for about 10 percent of the overall deer harvest. The late muzzleloader and archery deer seasons close on Jan. 10, 2023.

"We're right on track with the deer harvest as compared to last year," said Jace Elliott, state deer biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. "The deer harvest during the first shotgun season was the highest in five years at more than 25,000, and the second season harvest was similar to last year at around 20,000. Iowa's strong deer numbers in combination with relatively good weather made for productive shotgun seasons this year."

Hunters looking to extend their time in the timber can purchase a county specific antlerless deer tag for the late muzzleloader or archery season currently available in 22 counties.

Counties with unsold antlerless deer tags on Jan. 10, 2023, will be open for the excess tag January antlerless-only season. Only centerfire rifles .223 to .500 caliber with a published or calculated muzzle energy of 500-foot pounds or higher are allowed in this season. The excess tag January antlerless season was created by the Iowa legislature in the 2022 session. The season runs from Jan. 11-22, 2023. These tags go on sale Jan. 10 and due to the compressed timeline, they will not be available online.

Hunters may also participate in the population management antlerless season in Allamakee, Appanoose, Decatur, Monroe, Wayne and Winneshiek counties. These counties met the requirement of having 100 or more antlerless licenses on the third Monday in December. Shotguns, handguns, muzzleloaders, bows, crossbows, and centerfire rifles .223 and larger may be used in the population management antlerless season. The season runs from Jan. 11-22, 2023. Tags for the population management antlerless season went on sale Dec. 19.

Harvest reporting

Hunters who bag 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 or before processing it for consumption or transporting it out of state.

"Harvest reporting provides us critical data to responsibly manage this population. Annual harvest is a major component of how we model the deer population in Iowa, which informs important management decisions. By reporting their harvest, hunters are contributing to the success of our deer management program," Elliott said.

To date, hunters have reported more than 93,000 deer through the harvest reporting system.

Chronic wasting disease

Samples from more than 4,600 deer from across Iowa have been collected for chronic wasting disease testing. Of those, 1,100 samples have been processed, with 11 deer testing positive.

Surveillance results are available in real-time at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Deer-Hunting/Deer-Health/Chronic-Wasting-Disease/Surveillance-Results>.

Nine of the 11 samples were confirmed positive; two samples are considered suspect and are undergoing additional testing. The nine confirmed positive deer was from Allamakee, Appanoose, Clayton and Wayne counties. The two suspect positive deer were from Allamakee and Plymouth counties. Plymouth County in western Iowa would be the 13th county where the disease had been found. Chronic wasting disease is always fatal.

Samples collected from the shotgun seasons are still getting tested. Results are expected within a few weeks. Most of the counties have met the sample quota. Hunters interested in having their deer tested after the sample quotas are met or have a fawn or other lower priority deer, have the opportunity to get it tested on their own. Step by step instructions are available at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Deer-Hunting/Deer-Health/Chronic-Wasting-Disease/Hunter-Submission-Pathway>. Hunters will need to contact their local wildlife staff to begin the process. Wildlife staff contact information and unit boundary map is available on p. 52 of the hunting regulations.

Media Contact: Jace Elliott, State Deer Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-249-7056.

Iowa DNR accepting comments on proposed new armed forces fishing licenses

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is accepting comments on the proposed new armed forces fishing licenses, through Jan. 24.

2022 Iowa Acts Senate File 581, passed and signed into law on June 17, 2022, broadens the qualifications for who may obtain a lifetime trout fishing license to include Iowa residents who qualify for the disabled veteran homestead credit under section 425.15. The lifetime trout fishing fee is \$63.

2022 Iowa Acts Senate File 2383, passed and signed into law on June 16, 2022, establishes a new annual armed forces fishing license and a new annual armed forces hunting and fishing combined license to be issued to any resident of Iowa who has served in the armed forces of the United States on federal active duty. The fee for each new veteran license is \$5.

Comments on the proposed new armed forces fishing licenses may be submitted through Jan. 24 via email to fisheries@dnr.iowa.gov or by mail to Joe Larscheid, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, Wallace State Office Building, 502 East Ninth Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319-0034.

The DNR has scheduled a public hearing at 10 a.m. on Jan. 24 via conference call. Individuals who wish to attend the conference call must contact Joe Larscheid at Fisheries@dnr.iowa.gov. A conference call number will be provided prior to the public hearing. Persons who wish to make oral comments during the conference call must submit a request to Joe Larscheid prior to the public hearing. They will be asked to state their names for the record and to confine their remarks to the proposed fee for the new veteran licenses.

Any persons who intend to attend the conference call and have special requirements, such as those related to hearing or mobility impairments, should contact the the DNR or ADA

Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov, and advise of specific needs.

This formal comment period is an opportunity for stakeholders to help set the fee for the new lifetime trout fishing license. After considering public input, the DNR will finalize this rule and present it to the Natural Resource Commission for approval.

For more information, please contact Joe Larscheid by email at Fisheries@dnr.iowa.gov or by phone at 515-201-3376.