

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Dec. 23, 2024

## With regular gun seasons over, deer hunting shifts to late season mode

With the two regular gun seasons now in the books, Iowa's deer hunting shifts to a more solitary endeavor with the opening of the late muzzleloader season and the reopening of the archery season.

Jace Elliott, state deer biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said roughly 15-20,000 hunters will participate in the late muzzleloader season and likely harvest about 10,000 deer.

"The season is popular with hunters looking to avoid the crowds. It's the season with the highest percentage of does harvested and is a good opportunity for herd management or to put meat in the freezer," Elliott said. "This time of year, hunters would be wise to target existing food sources as these resources can be limited."

While the archery season also re-opens, fewer deer are harvested during this time than during the early portion of the season.

The late muzzleloader and late split archery season are Dec. 23 to Jan. 10, 2025.

The final deer seasons are the two January antlerless deer only seasons – the Population Management January Antlerless Season and the Excess Tag January Antlerless Season. Both seasons run from Jan. 11-19, but there are differences between the two.

The Population Management January Antlerless Season is available only in Allamakee, Appanoose, Decatur, Lucas, Monroe, Wayne and Winneshiek counties if there are more than 100 antlerless tags available in that county on Dec. 23. Since all seven counties met that requirement, all seven will be open. Hunters participating in the population management January antlerless season may use bows, muzzleloaders, handguns, shotguns, crossbows, or rifles .223 caliber and larger, as a method of take.

The Excess Tag January Antlerless Season is available in all counties with unsold county antlerless tags on Jan. 11. Due to the compressed timeline, license sales will only be available over the counter, not online, until the quota is filled. Hunters participating in the excess tag January antlerless season may only use rifles from .223 caliber to .500 caliber as a method of take.

“We began running both seasons concurrently in 2023, and this past January we had just shy of 3,000 hunters participating who harvested about 1,500 deer statewide,” he said. “We will likely have similar counties participating as last year – primarily in northeast Iowa and southern Iowa - that will not fill their antlerless quota by Jan 10.”

Hunters can monitor the quotas in real time at [iowadnr.gov/Hunting](http://iowadnr.gov/Hunting) then click on the Antlerless Deer Tag Quotas link under the Helping You Prepare heading.

“If hunters are interested in using more than a centerfire rifle, they should consider purchasing the Population Management tags to have larger menu of options for the method of take,” he said.

### **Harvest Update**

“We’ve been tracking closely to last year when we harvested 104,000 deer across the state, and I think we will end up in that same ballpark when the season closes in January,” Elliott said. To date, hunters have reported 87,000 deer.

### **Hemorrhagic Disease Update**

Public reporting data suggests that 2024 was Iowa’s most severe hemorrhagic disease (commonly known as EHD) outbreak in recorded history. While more than 3,000 suspected EHD mortalities have been received this year in 94 counties, research suggests that multiplying that total by 10 would provide a more realistic, yet still conservative, estimate of total EHD-related mortality.

“This means that many hunters and landowners throughout the state are noticing fewer deer during the hunting season, specifically in central and northwestern Iowa,” Elliott said. “While there is still plenty of harvest opportunity during our late seasons, it’s important for our hunters to adapt their harvest goals to the current status of their local deer population. Talk with your neighbors to better understand population impacts in your area, and understand that deer tend to congregate in the late seasons, which can lead to false perceptions of abundance on certain properties.”

A new EHD reporting tool and dashboard can be found on the DNR Deer Hunting webpage at <https://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/Deer-Hunting>.

“While the majority of Iowa’s counties appear to be spared from severe population impacts from this recent outbreak, hunters should always consider the bigger picture and understand the role they play in managing balanced, healthy deer populations,” he said. “Successful local deer management relies on being informed and working together with neighbors, especially during severe EHD years.”

### **Chronic Wasting Disease Update**

The Iowa DNR has raised its deer sample quota this year due to the sampling increases around the new positive deer from 2023. This year, the DNR has collected more than 5,000 samples from across the state to date and the lab at Iowa State University is working through them.

So far, 26 deer have been either confirmed as having chronic wasting disease or are suspected and subject to a follow up test. The 26 positive deer includes three new counties - Davis, Shelby and Wapello – where the disease has been confirmed.

**Late Muzzleloader season**

- Method of Take: Bows, muzzleloaders, handgun, or crossbow
- Season is Dec. 23-Jan. 10. 2025

**Population Management January Antlerless Season**

- Method of Take: Bows, muzzleloaders, handguns, shotguns, crossbows, or rifles .223 caliber and larger
- Season is Jan. 11-19, 2025 – only in Allamakee, Appanoose, Decatur, Lucas, Monroe, Wayne and Winneshiek counties if there are more than 100 antlerless tags available in that county on Dec. 23.

**Excess Tag January Antlerless Season**

- Method of Take: Rifles .223 caliber to .500 caliber
- Season is Jan. 11-19, 2025 – available in all counties with unsold county antlerless tags on Jan. 11, and sales will only be available over the counter, not online, until the quota is filled.

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