

2015 Wisconsin Nine-day Gun Deer Hunt – Postseason Report

In 2015, 612,377 gun deer hunters from every state in the US and 21 foreign countries purchased a license to participate in Wisconsin's nine-day gun deer season, compared to 608,711 in 2014. In total, 849,778 gun, archery and crossbow licenses (not including upgrades) licenses have been sold through the end of the nine-day gun deer season, compared to 835,583 (not including upgrades) in 2014.

This year, the department saw hunting traditions passed along to over 20,000 new resident hunters who bought a gun deer license for the first time, or the first time in 10 years. New female hunters represented 36 percent of resident gun first time buyers and 27 percent of resident first-time archery and crossbow buyers. In all, female hunters made up 10.4 percent of all deer license sales.

Preliminary registration totals through the nine-day season indicate 201,812 deer have been registered (94,166 bucks and 107,646 does), an increase of roughly one percent from 2014's preliminary total (199,583).

The department's Hunt/Fish Pocket Ranger applications set a new record for number of downloads in a month in November 2015 with 19,387. Since its launch, the app has been downloaded 169,382 times.

A Nov. 16 "ask us anything" online chat exemplified Wisconsin hunters' desire to make sure they were ready for another hunt before heading into the woods – department staff answered 91 questions for over three hundred live participants, with three thousand people viewing the chat at a later time. Overall, readers (both live and those reading it later) spent 250,629 minutes (or more than 4,177 hours) reading or participating in one of 6 deer-related chats.

After completing a pilot program in 2014, all hunters were required to electronically register deer through the GameReg system in 2015 - 68 percent of registrations were completed online using a smartphone or computer, while 32 percent were completed using the telephone option. Feedback received from hunters in the field was positive, and many hunters enjoyed the convenience and ease of use associated with electronic registration.

In the seven days leading up to the nine-day season opener, the DNR call center received 20,708 customer contacts and provided excellent customer service to a number of hunters. On Friday, Nov. 20, the call center fielded 5,303 customer contacts (compared to 4,734 in 2014), and From Nov. 1 through opening day, 41,996 total customer contacts were received.

At some point during the deer season all credentialed law enforcement staff assisted with enforcement, education and community involvement. During the nine-day deer gun season, Conservation Wardens made 16,772 patrol contacts (number of people contacted during your patrols), handled 2,319 service contacts (number of contacts or calls for service you receive that

are not violation/complaint related) and the DNR Hotline handled 683 calls to the Hotline system.

During the nine-day hunt, DNR investigated eight hunting incidents during the nine-day gun deer season: five non-fatal (Rock, Marathon, Jackson, Polk and Manitowoc) and three fatal (Columbia, Waushara and Marathon). With over 600,000 gun-deer hunting licenses this season, eight hunting incidents resulted in 1.31 incidents per 100,000 hunters. Wisconsin's 10-year average is 1.36 incidents per 100,000 hunters.

2015 Nine-day Gun Deer Season Structure and Overview

County Deer Advisory Councils and citizen involvement through programs like the Deer Management Assistance Program have played a key role in decision making and resource/habitat management as we enter a new era of deer hunting in Wisconsin.

In 2015, hunters experienced a season structure similar to 2014, with differences including the removal of the "holiday hunt" and expansion of the four-day December antlerless hunt statewide. New in 2015, hunters were asked to declare the land type (public/private) for free farmland zone antlerless tags issued with their hunting license. Based on public feedback and a relatively mild 2014/2015 winter, the number of buck-only units decreased from 19 in 2014 to 12 (in part or whole) in 2015.

During the nine-day gun deer hunt, weather conditions consisted of moderately cold but comfortable temperatures statewide with trace amounts of snow in the north and excellent snow cover across the southern one-third of the state for the first days of the season. Snow increased visibility in the woods and provided excellent conditions for scouting and tracking. Preliminary registration figures and discussions with many hunters suggest that deer numbers continue to struggle in northern Wisconsin. However, improvements in deer sightings were observed from 2014.

Electronic Registration

This year ushered in the beginning of electronic deer registration with the launch of GameReg. GameReg offers the flexibility of a responsive website that provides one location and one design for all internet users regardless of device or browser. Since the launch of GameReg this past fall, DNR has collected over 305,000 registrations. Adaptations to the phone-in registrations took place over the course of the season to provide additional instruction and to ease and shorten the time required. Opportunities for continued improvement will be evaluated for implementation for 2016.

While the electronic registration system is running smoothly with no technical issues, due to the large amount of data being received from the field, the "live" registration reporting summary on our website experienced significant data gaps and delays during the nine-day hunt.

Reporting deer registration numbers for counties/zones was also delayed due to the rate at which the department received online data during the nine-day gun deer season.

While the vast majority of deer registration records were entered correctly, duplicate records were identified as a result of hunters inadvertently submitting their registration more than once. System updates are now in place to prevent any further issues.

Deer Season 2015 Communications Summary

Deer season communications placed a large focus on the first year of electronic registration for all deer hunters, and feedback received from the field was encouraging. Hunters enjoyed the convenience of using the GameReg to register their harvest in a matter of minutes – and over 200 in-person registration stations statewide helped keep important traditions intact.

News Releases

- January through December 2015 → ~50 deer and deer hunting focused news releases distributed regionally or statewide.
- DNR Weekly News currently has 26,279 subscribers.
- All news releases tweeted to ~15,000 followers

2015 Media Packet

- Packet was sent to media contacts statewide and legislative staff and posted online in 2 installments (Sept. 18 and Oct. 26)
- Contents include:
 - [Safety message from DNR Secretary Cathy Stepp](#)
 - [Find a place to hunt fact sheet](#)
 - [Deer hunt 2015 fact sheet](#)
 - [Deer season 2015 FAQ](#)
 - [Deer registration flyer](#)
 - [E-registration information](#)
 - [Deer donation information](#)
 - [Economic impacts of deer hunting](#)
 - [2015 deer fall forecast](#)
 - [Public Access Lands Atlas information](#)
 - [First Deer Certificate promo](#)
 - [First-time deer hunting license buyer promo](#)
 - [Deer Hunt Wisconsin 2015 promo](#)
 - [Deer Management Assistance Program brochure](#)

Gov Delivery

- Gov Delivery is an email service that allows interested individuals to sign up to receive updates pertaining to a specific topic – Gov Delivery has been a very useful tool in deer season communications.

- Each deer message sent to over 200,000 email addresses.

Web Metrics (pageviews)

September 2015

- Deer: 55,368
- Electronic Registration: 20, 683
- Weekly Totals: 2,536

October 2015

- Deer: 69,874
- Electronic Registration: 33, 236
- Weekly Totals: 8,333

November 2015

- Deer: 201,923
- Electronic Registration: 149,860
- Weekly Totals: 78,137

- Between these three pages (linked to keywords) on dnr.wi.gov, ~620,000 pageviews between Sept. 1 and Nov. 30. Top days were Nov. 21-23 and 29.

Video

- Dan Small's Deer Show 2015 (posted online and featured on TV in Fall)
- Open/Close with Sec. Stepp and Gov. Walker (posted online)
- Deer Tales at Sauk City in-person registration station (being edited now)

Alternative Outreach

- Proactive outreach to Hmong and Hispanic Community Groups throughout Wisconsin.
- LE presence at cultural events to answer questions.
- Hmong and Spanish translated regulations brochures available online.

Media Contact Volume

- Coordination between Office of Communications and Wildlife Management and Law Enforcement staff in central office and in the field – efficient management and delegation for an extremely large volume of deer season-related calls from media statewide.
- 225 Deer season-related media contacts from Nov. 9 to Dec. 2 (busiest from Nov. 18-24)
- Busiest day in November:
 - Nov. 23 → 51 total media contacts, 41 of these (80%) were deer-related

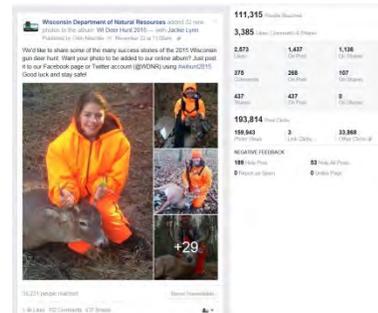
DNR Phone Applications

- **Hunt/Fish Pocket Ranger sets new record for number of downloads in a month in November 2015 with 19,387.**
- Downloads between 8/31/15 and 11/30/15 → **41,130**

- Total number of downloads since launch → **169,382**

Facebook

- 69,011 likes as of 12/1/15 (49,108 as of 11/30/14, **increase of 19,903**)
- 9/1/15 to 12/1/15 → increase of 7,513 followers
- Most popular deer-related Facebook post in November (2,573 likes, 437 shares, ~111,000 people reached).



Twitter

- 14,900 followers as of 12/7/15 (11,400 after deer season last year, increase of 3,500)

Specialized Social Media Outreach

- “Your Tradition, Your Words”
 - In four words or less, show us your favorite fall traditions! Videos should contain no spoken words and be less than 15 seconds long and pictures will need your words included → 10 videos : DNR staff and outdoor enthusiasts from throughout
 - We are still compiling this footage, and will share the final product in a December Facebook post and news release.
- 2015 #Wardengirl “Tweet-a-long” - Office of Communications staff member Joanne Haas teamed up with wildlife management and law enforcement staff to do a live “tweet-a-long” during the nine-day gun deer hunt

Live Chats

- Six informational chats open to the public with DNR wildlife, law enforcement, regulations and communications specialists:

Aug. 5: Tag Availability/Antlerless Permits

- Live participants: 123
- People reading it later: 337
- # of questions answered: 55

Aug. 18: Season Forecast/Where to Hunt (with DMAP plug)

- Live participants: 340
- People reading it later: 411
- # of questions answered: 150

Aug. 27: Mentored Hunt, Learn to Hunt, Hunt to Eat

- Live participants: 70
- People reading it later: 140
- # of questions answered: 28

Sept. 3: New Regulations/E-Registration

- Live participants: 180
- People reading it later: 300
- # of questions answered: 98

Sept. 22: DMAP chat

- Live participants: 62
- People reading it later: 101
- # of questions answered: 14

Nov. 16: Safety/Regs Refresher (“ask us anything”)

- Live participants: 307
- People reading it later: 3071
- # of questions answered: 91

*Overall, readers (both live and those reading it later) spent 250,629 minutes (or more than 4,177 hours) reading or participating in our chats.

CWD Surveillance

The statewide CWD sampling budget (earmark funds from the sale of antlerless tags in CWD affected counties, plus a special Pittman-Robertson allocation to meet hunter service testing requests) allows for a projected 4,000 deer samples statewide.

Targeted surveillance areas include the southwestern and southeastern core infection areas within the Southern Farmland Zone, including both the southwestern and southeastern core infection areas, the ten-mile radius surrounding the 2011 Washburn County positive, the four ten-mile radius areas each surrounding the Juneau, Adams, northern Portage, and southern Portage counties, the ten-mile radius area surrounding a CWD positive captive facility in Marathon County, and the ten-mile radius in Eau Claire County around a CWD positive captive facility (new in 2015).

Surveillance and sampling helps the department track changes in both CWD prevalence and distribution in each of these areas.

In mid-November, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection notified the department of a three-year old buck shot on an Oneida County hunting preserve on

Nov. 11, 2015 testing positive for CWD. A DNR Law Enforcement fence inspection Nov. 27, 2015 found the perimeter fence to be in good condition, and no escapes have been reported. The distance to the nearest CWD wild positive deer is 81 miles southwest in northwest Portage County (2012 detection). Targeted surveillance of the wild deer population will be implemented beginning with the 2016 deer season as is done with the surrounding areas around other cervid farms where CWD has been reported. Under state statute 29.336, Wis. Stats, the department was required to enact a ban on the feeding and baiting of deer in any county that is within 10 miles of any captive or free-roaming deer that tests positive for either CWD or Tb that would take effect in January 2016.

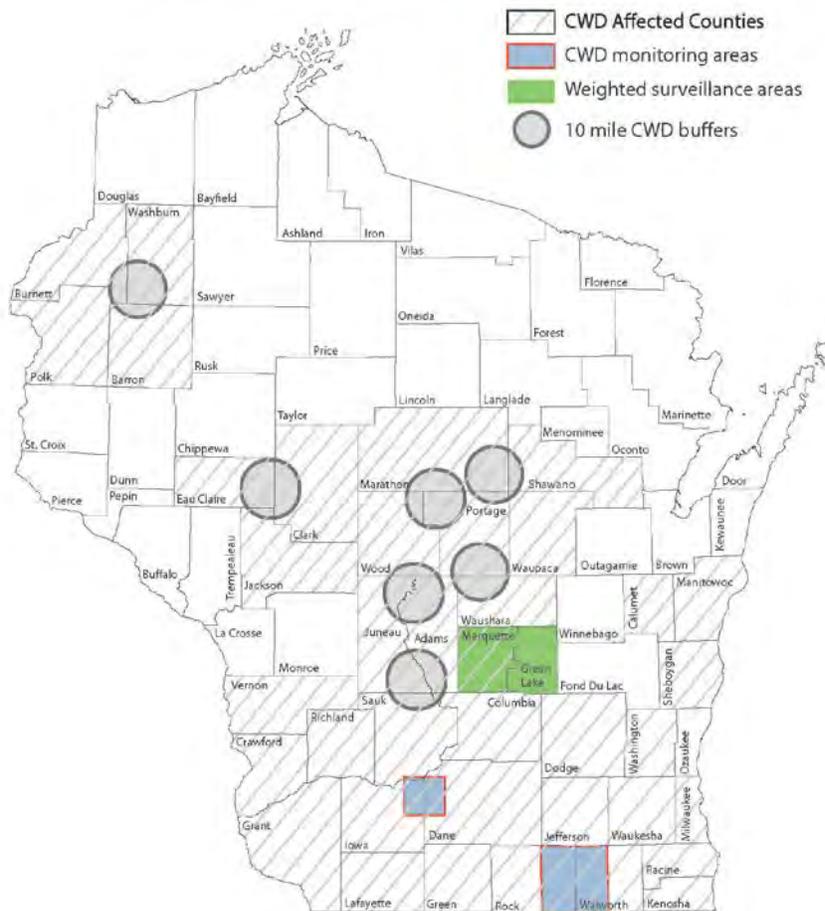
The weighted surveillance program, which continued this fall, uses weighted sampling to help increase the efficacy and efficiency of disease detection surveillance efforts. The goal of the program is to focus collection and sampling efforts on select age and sex classes of deer. Since CWD is found at higher prevalence rates in adult males than in other demographic groups, they represent the most valuable group of animals to test for CWD detection in areas where the disease has not previously been found. As a result, our efforts will be focused on sampling adult male deer in Marquette and Green Lake counties at select taxidermists and on opening weekend, with a focus placed upon older age deer (which represent the highest hunter-harvested weighted value).

Samples will be collected through remaining 2015 seasons. As is always the case, hunter cooperation has been outstanding. Our sample total to date has been down which was not unexpected with the first year of electronic registration implementation.

- Statewide projection of 4,000 samples
- 2,561 total samples statewide (as of Dec. 7)
- 76 positives in the Southern Farmland Zone (as of Dec. 7)

The following map illustrates the current statewide surveillance plan.

CWD Sampling Areas for 2015



Deer Donation Program

During the 16th season of the WDACP-sponsored deer donation program there were 54 counties and 104 processors participating in the statewide program. To date, hunters have donated 1,228 deer. Donations are down about 24% compared to last year. Last year, 57 counties and 115 processors participated in the program with a final tally of 1,622 deer being donated. This year marks the lowest number of donated deer since the program's inception in 2000. However, there is still time for hunters to contribute; participating processors will accept legally harvested and registered deer through the end of the deer hunting season.