

SUBJECT: Report and preliminary findings from the 2010 gun deer season

FOR: DECEMBER, 2010 BOARD MEETING

TO BE PRESENTED BY: Tom Hauge, Randy Stark, Diane Brookbank, Keith Warnke

SUMMARY:

Representatives from the Bureaus of Wildlife Management, Law Enforcement and Customer Service and Licensing will present the preliminary findings from the 2010 firearm deer hunting season and an update on CWD surveillance efforts.

Discussion will include information on:

1. Deer hunting license sales
2. Hunting accidents and enforcement issues
3. Preliminary deer harvest numbers
4. CWD statewide sampling efforts and harvest numbers from the CWD control zones

RECOMMENDATION: For information only.

LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS:

- | | | | |
|--|---|------------------------------|----------|
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Fiscal Estimate Required | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Environmental Assessment or Impact Statement Required | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |
| No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Background Memo | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | Attached |

APPROVED:

Tom Hauge
 Bureau Director, T. Hauge / R. Stark / D. Brookbank

11/2/10
 Date

Laurie Osterndorf
 Administrator, Laurie Osterndorf

11/4/10
 Date

Matt Frank
 Secretary, Matt Frank

11-12-10
 Date

cc: Laurie J. Ross - AD/8
 Tom Hauge - WM/6

Randy Stark - LE/8
 Scott Loomans - WM/6

Diane Brookbank - CSL/1
 Keith Warnke - WM/6

DATE: December 7, 2010

TO: Natural Resources Board

FROM: Matt Frank, Secretary

SUBJECT: 2010 Deer Season Report

Deer hunting is one of the most anticipated events of the year for over 600,000 Wisconsin citizens. While each hunter's season and experience is unique, Wisconsin's 159th gun deer season brought many successes.

Deer hunting in Wisconsin is all about traditions. In 2010, hunters in many of the state's deer management units experienced a return to the traditional season structure with a number of buck-only and buck-plus-quota units. For the second season running there were no earn-a-buck units outside of the CWD management zone and many fewer herd control units than in past seasons.

A preliminary tally of the nine-day gun deer season showed hunters registered 218,144 deer, an 11% increase over 2009. Buck harvest was up significantly at 102,006 – a 17% increase over 2009 – and antlerless harvest came in at 116,138 – a nearly 7% increase over 2009. Hunter reports from opening day reflected hunters seeing more deer compared to 2009.

Another significant milestone was achieved in 2010 - the first season since 1974 with no fatal hunting incidents. This is directly attributable to our corps of 5,630 dedicated and volunteer hunter education instructors, our safety conscious hunting community and our staff dedicated to continually enhancing hunter safety. Over 1 million hunters have graduated from Wisconsin hunter safety education classes since 1967 and at 1.93 Wisconsin is well below the national average of 3.27 firearm hunting incidents per 100,000 hunters.

This is a remarkable and welcome achievement and I thank everyone for helping to make the 2010 deer season a safe one.

Thanks are also due to the volunteers representing hunting organizations, university staff, local governments, farmers, county forests and forest landowners met several times to examine existing population goals and recommend changes where appropriate. The 2010 season structure was in part determined by increases in over-winter population goals in 43 deer management units. Wisconsin is also fortunate to have such dedicated and involved hunters and interested citizens who attended public hearings to give us their feedback and make deer management processes truly inclusive for all stakeholders

Early in 2011, after all harvest data have been entered and verified, we will have new over winter population estimates to compare to our population targets. We will look carefully at the data to determine where we now stand with respect to the size of the deer population in various regions across the state. Preliminary harvest figures this year indicate population growth in many areas where antlerless hunting opportunity has been limited recently. For example, in the north and northeast, there are significant areas where the deer population was below goal. Antlerless deer hunting has been strictly limited in these areas

in the past few years (including 2010) and buck harvest statistics are showing that it appears likely deer populations grew where it was needed. On the other hand, in the CWD zone in the southern part of the state, the high density of deer has likely been a contributing factor to the increased prevalence of CWD in the deer herd, increasing the risk of spread. Once we complete the full analysis of the 2010 harvest data, we will have a better understanding of the size of the deer population to make decisions for the 2011 hunt and future seasons.

The ALIS licensing system performed flawlessly processing a one-day record 89,593 license purchases on Friday, the day before the season opener. At 5:30p.m. Friday, it was processing transactions at a rate of 333 per minute. Sales as of opening day totaled 607,926. This rose to 621,094 by the close the season at sunset on Sunday November 28. While computers handled much of the work, our customer service representatives still provided a human touch when, while noting sales coming in they realized that hunters purchasing licenses online would not receive their backtags by mail in time for the opener. These hunters were contacted individually by phone and were advised to go to a local license seller where their tags could be printed on the spot. The hunters were given locations of the closest license sellers and a refund to their credit card which they could then use for the over-the-counter purchase.

The department remains committed to supporting Wisconsin's hunting traditions and managing for a healthy, sustainable and ecologically balanced deer population. Deer registrations and hunter field observations are important parts of this effort. Launched this year, Operation Deer Watch, and the Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey involve citizens and hunters in reporting to DNR researchers observations of adult deer and fawns and nine other wildlife species. As a result, we were able to report to hunters in the week prior to the opener the number and rate of deer seen per hour in the woods by other hunters from all 131 deer management units.

We look forward to the findings, over the next several years, of the field data we are gathering to more accurately estimate our deer populations. We are carrying out the remaining recommendations of the independent experts who reviewed Wisconsin's deer management methods. Thanks go to the Union-Sportsmens' Alliance and the many Wisconsin union locals who built traps that will be used to capture and radio-collar hundreds of deer this winter.

The department will be putting out a steady stream of information and updates for hunters and observers of deer and has a new Internet-based delivery system that allows citizens to receive the latest information at home in their email in the form of an alert that something of interest has been posted. Called [GovDelivery](#), users can subscribe and unsubscribe as they wish at anytime and select from a list of subjects that they wish to monitor.

I am pleased to transmit the full report on Wisconsin's 2010 gun deer season as follows prepared by staff in Wildlife, Law Enforcement and Customer Service & Licensing.

Department of Natural Resources 2010 Deer Season Report

HUNTING LICENSE SALES

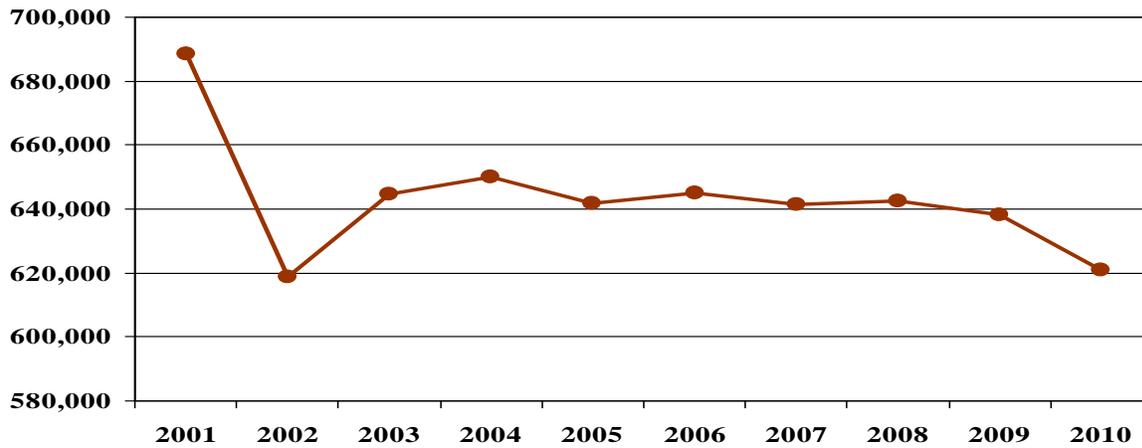
When and where a hunter buys their gun deer license is almost as much of a tradition as the hunt itself. When comparing sales statistics for the Friday before the 2009 season to the Friday before the 2010 season, both the hourly sales and the sales at our top 20 locations are almost a mirror image. By the end of the day on Friday this year, we issued a total of 89,593 licenses. This is the highest number of licenses issued through the licensing system in one day, peaking at 333 licenses per minute between 5:00 and 6:00 p.m.

Gun Deer License Sales

At the close of the 2010 gun deer season, 621,094 gun deer licenses had been issued; down 3% from 2009. Of these, 13,168 licenses were issued during the open season. The 10-year history of Gun Deer license sales shown below includes Conservation Patron license holders.

10-Year History of Gun Deer License Sales

(includes Conservation Patron licenses)



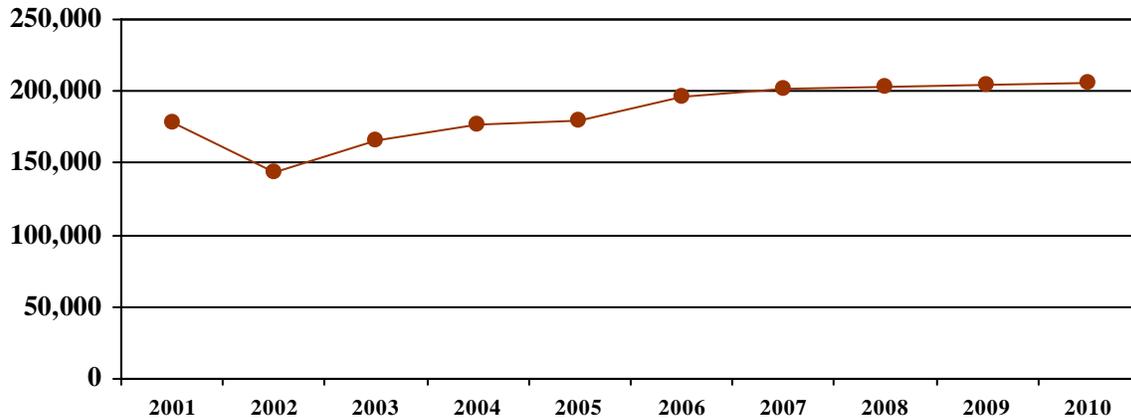
2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
688,540	618,945	644,818	649,955	641,771	644,906	641,432	642,419	638,040	621,094

Archery License Sales

Archery hunting continues to gain in popularity. There were 205,410 Archery licenses sold in 2010, up slightly from 2009. The 10-year history of Archery license sales numbers does not include Conservation Patron licenses. Archery license sales continue through the late bow season.

10-Year History of Archery License Sales

(does not include Conservation Patron licenses)



2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
178,269	144,162	165,122	177,159	179,853	196,726	201,224	203,675	204,833	205,410

Antlerless Deer Tags

One antlerless tag valid in any Herd Control Unit was included with every deer hunting license that was sold. In addition, hunters purchased over 167,038 antlerless deer tags. Of these, 41,202 were issued for Herd Control units. The remaining 125,836 antlerless tags were issued for regular deer management units. Antlerless permit sales will continue through the remaining deer hunting seasons.

DEER HUNTERS

Hunters from every state in the country and several foreign countries, ranging in age from 10 to over 90 bought a license to gun deer hunt in Wisconsin.

10 & 11 Year Old Hunters

More than 1,400 10 & 11 year old youths participated in this year's Mentored Hunting Program:

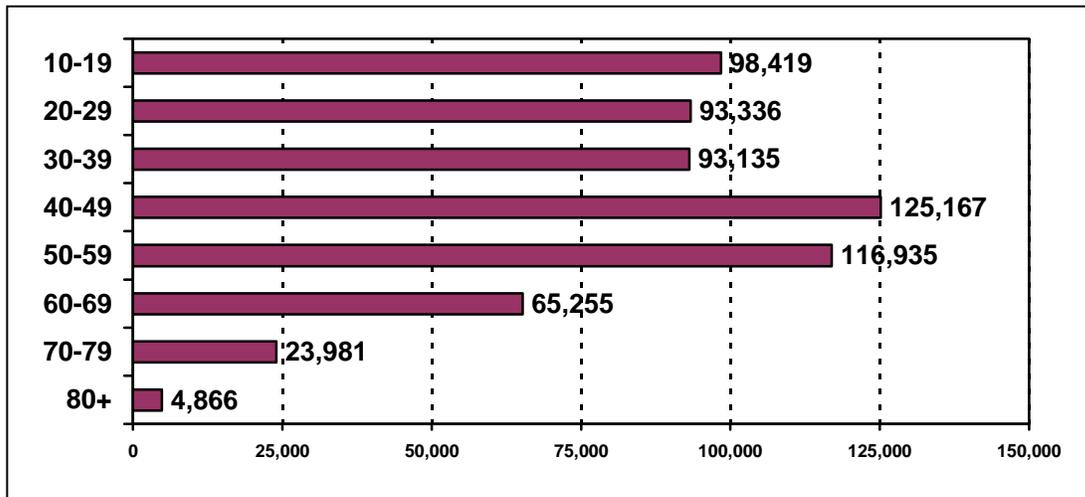
- 11,331 licenses purchased in 2010 (compared to 9,907 in 2009)
- 96 percent (10,917) were residents; 414 nonresidents
- 20.4 percent were female

All Hunters

Of the 621,094 hunters this gun deer season:

- 95% were Wisconsin residents
- 79,180 or 13% were youth (under the age of 18)
- 9% or 54,448 of all hunters were female
- 54,753 or 9% were Senior Citizens (65 years of age and older)

Age of Deer Gun Hunters



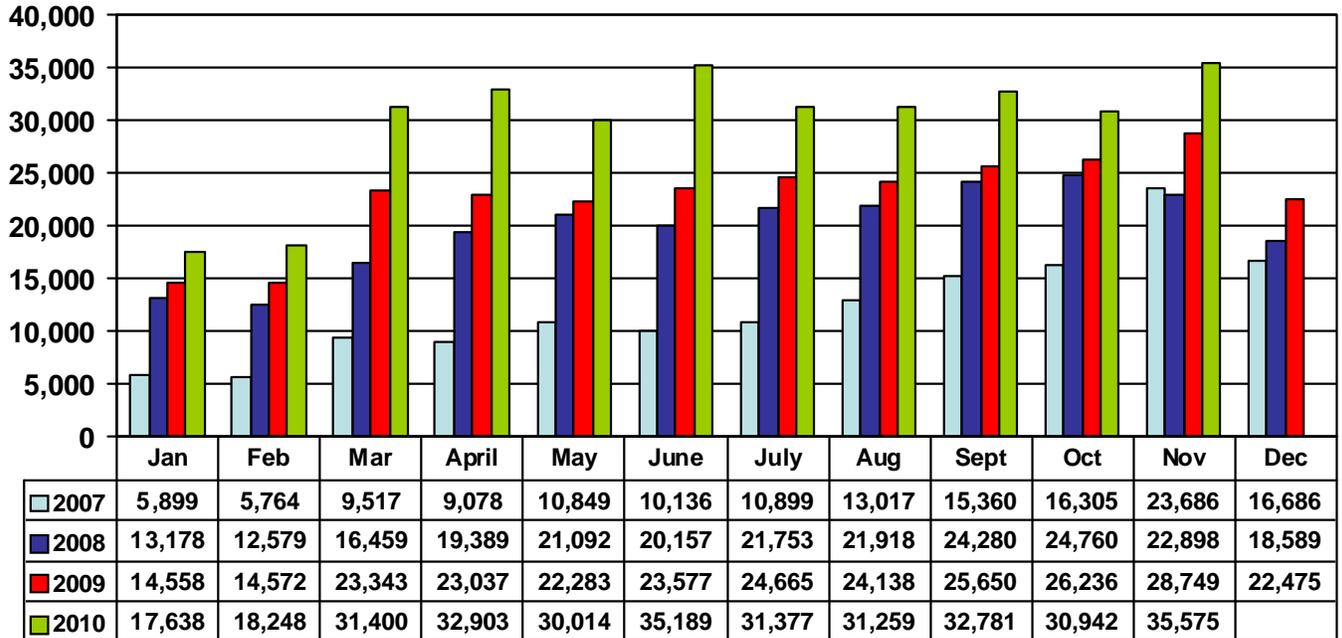
CALL CENTER SERVICES

Popularity of DNR's Call Center which is available 7 days per week, 15 hours per day continues to grow. Customer Service staff across the state are actively involved in handling calls and internet chats. The Call Center is on track to reach 357,000 calls (up 31% from 2009) and 17,800 internet chats (up 28%) this year.

Call Center

The call center experienced two record setting days in November, handling 2,717 calls on Thursday and 3,231 on Friday before the start of the season. Customer Service staff handled 12,719 calls and 631 chats the week before the season opener. Over 7,500 calls and 600 chats were handled during the open season.

**Call Center Volume
2007-2010**



HUNTING TRENDS AND ISSUES

Weather

Near perfect weather conditions prevailed for deer hunting throughout the state and during most of the week. Fog in the southern part of the state hampered visibility on the first Sunday of the season, but generally temperatures were cool and dry, allowing those who were dressed warmly to remain in the field without having to rush a deer into the processor. The snow cover, which was present in the some northern counties, would have been welcome statewide. Corn crop harvest was almost 100% which made deer – and the hunters – more visible.

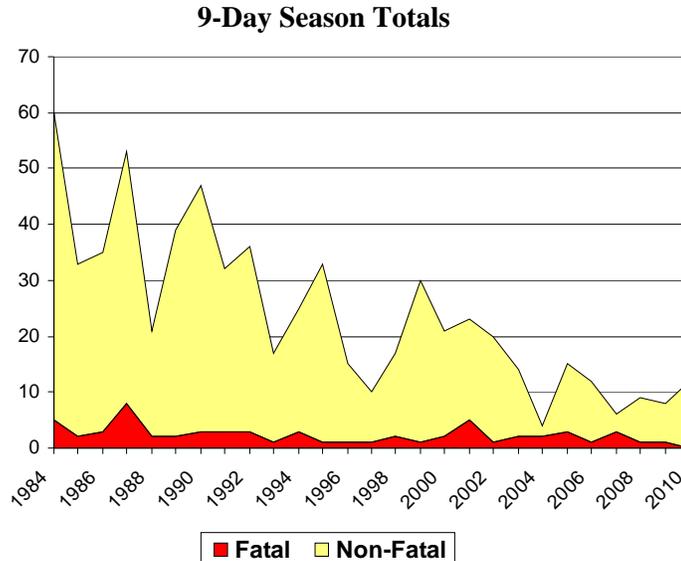
General Observations

Wardens reported that hunters met in “buck only” units expressed satisfaction with no harvesting of antlerless deer.

Wardens continue to see increasing hunting pressure on public lands likely as a result of fragmentation of large blocks of previously undeveloped land, underscoring the importance of having public land available for hunting, as well as private land access through the Managed Forest Lands Program. Wisconsin is fortunate to have accessible public and private lands made possible through the Stewardship Program and the MFL Program.

Hunting-related Shooting Incidents

History was made for the 2010 Nine-Day Gun Deer Season! **For only the second time in recorded history of gun deer hunting the season ended with no fatal injuries; 1974 was the only other year.** Our goal is to eliminate all injury and loss of life while hunting. We conduct thorough investigations to learn what happened in these incidents so we can work to prevent such incidents in the future. By knowing who did what, when, where and how we are able to positively affect hunter behavior via hunter education curriculum, media outreach efforts and training of our volunteers and Department staff.



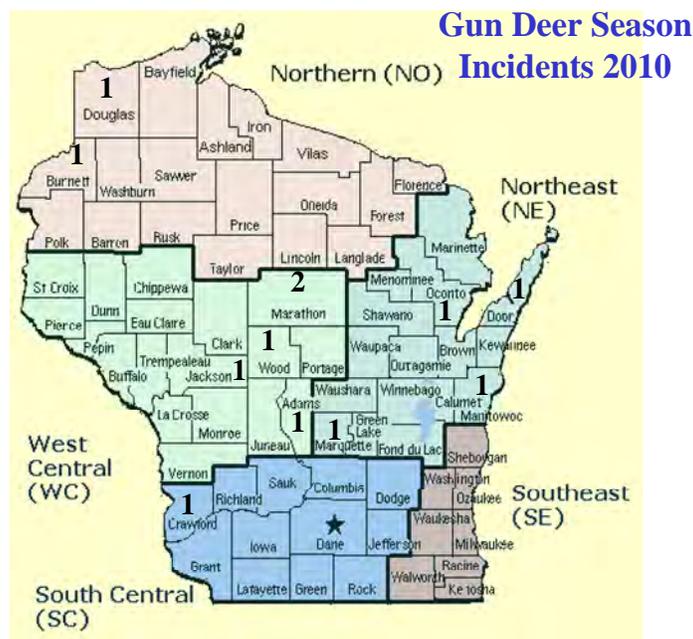
2010 Gun Deer Season Incident Statistics Total: (12 incidents total)

Of the 12 injuries:

3 - Self inflicted injuries	25%
9 - 2 party incidents	75%
7 of the nine 2 party incidents involved members of same group	77%
Incident Rate per 100,000 (621,094 Licenses sold)	1.93 per 100,000 participants
2 - Incidents involved Juvenile Shooters (under age 18) <i>A drop in the average of 30% over previous years</i>	16.6%
Average Age of the Shooters (Identification of 2 shooters is undetermined)	35.8 years old

8 - Occurred during deer drives <i>An increase in percentage over previous years, which was 50%</i>	66.6%
8 - While shooting at a running deer <i>An increase in percentage over previous years of 50%</i>	66.6%
Firearms Type Involved:	
10 - rifle	83.3%
2- handgun	16.6%

See addendum for synopsis of hunting incidents.



Passing on the Tradition through the Mentored Hunting Program

Wisconsin has a hunting heritage like no other, and it’s important to pass on the tradition of hunting to the next generation. Deer season presents an opportunity for seasoned hunters to pass on the rich history and tradition to the next generation of hunters.

The Mentored Hunting Law that allows a person as young as 10 years old to hunt prior to completion of a hunter education course, continues to bring future hunters into the woods. Wardens reported contacting an increased number of mentored hunters and their experienced partners afield this deer season.

Once again this year, there were no hunting incidents involving mentored hunters.

The number of mentored hunting license sold to 10 and 11 year olds was up 12.5 % as compared to 2009.

Number of 10-11 year old Mentored Hunting deer gun licenses sold in 2009 and 2010

2009	9907
2010	11331

See the addendum for some wonderful mentored hunting stories.

Convicted Felons and Intoxicated Individuals

One of the goals of the warden service is to create a safe and enjoyable outdoor recreational environment for everyone. To this end, wardens have placed emphasis on removing known criminal offenders, intoxicated individuals and subjects using illegal drugs from the outdoor recreational environment in the interest of public safety. .

Persons with felony convictions are not prohibited from purchasing a hunting license in Wisconsin. However, it is illegal for felons to possess firearms and therefore participation in group deer hunting is illegal. During the 2010 deer gun season, the hotline received 12 complaints of felons in possession of firearms leading to wardens arresting thirty seven (37) felons in possession of firearms in the field. This was the 8th most frequently encountered violation by wardens during the 2010 season.

Felons in possession of firearms during the gun hunt are frequently found to be in violation of other laws. As a group, they represent a larger proportion of serious violations compared to other violators and their behaviors represent a disproportionate risk to public safety, hunter safety and officer safety. This group has greater potential to erode the image of law abiding hunters in the eyes of the non-hunting public. During the 2010 deer gun season, in addition to being arrested for illegally possessing a firearm the following violations were detected: untagged deer, using full metal jacket ammunition, hunting without a license, reckless use of firearm, outstanding warrants, illegal baiting, fraudulent licenses, group hunting violations, illegal drug possession, carrying a concealed weapon, operating while intoxicated, obstructing a warden, loaded gun in a vehicle, uncased gun in a vehicle, road hunting and hunting during the closed season.

Felons in Possession of a Firearm Cases: 2003-2010

Year	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003
Number	37	29	9	16	9	3	10	14

See addendum for details.

Hunter/User Conflicts:

Some conflict is inevitable when over 600,000 hunters and many other outdoor users hit the woods at the same time. Analyzing the sources of conflict can be instructive in terms of developing strategies to reduce conflicts and create a safe and enjoyable outdoor recreational environment for everyone.

While still present, the conflict experienced this year was less intense than in recent years. The common themes with conflicts this season included conflicts related to stand placement on public lands, property boundaries disputes, disagreements over who actually shot a deer both hunters claim, ATV use, and safety concerns related to hunting near homes or subdivisions. There were some hunter conflicts that occurred from the multiple uses and hunting methods on state land. Examples include deer drives on public lands disturbing those in tree stands and pheasant and waterfowl hunters in conflict with deer hunters.

Hunter Harassment Complaints

2008	2009	2010
4	15	9

The number of hunter harassment complaints fell from 15 in 2009 to 9 in 2010. The complaints received generally involved hunter/hunter or adjacent landowner/hunter harassment situations.

Search And Rescue Efforts

Being ready to respond to emergencies to enhance public safety is a major goal of the warden service. The local warden’s knowledge of the area coupled with equipment furnished by the Department enhances efficiency and effectiveness during search and rescue efforts. The use of Global Positioning Units (GPS), computer mapping software, radios, cellular phones, Mobile Data Computers and ATV’s were all deployed this deer season in search, rescue, recovery and emergency response efforts. Wardens responded to nine (9) requests for search and rescue from local municipalities and law enforcement agencies. These included assisting tornado victims in Walworth and Racine Counties, locating tree stand fall victims, lost hunters, locating a remote personal injury related vehicle accident, two non-hunting incident related death investigations involving hunters, and even removing a deer from a swimming pool.

See addendum for details.

Ground Blinds

Commercial camouflage ground blinds/tents continue to become more popular throughout the state, both on the ground and on elevated platforms. Wardens observed a number of hunters using camouflage ground blinds on DNR land and found good compliance with the blaze orange marking rule. There is some confusion on the requirement not applying to all public areas (county, federally owned).

Although not required, wardens observed some hunters on private property also displayed blaze orange on their ground blinds

Warden are often questioned by hunters on the reasoning for only requiring blaze orange on ground blinds located on state lands, and not all lands when having a hunter completely camouflaged defeats the

purpose of blaze orange clothing. Law enforcement recognizes the concerns, but the DNR does not currently have the authority to regulate the color of blinds used on private lands, however the agency does have authority to do so on lands that the DNR owns, manages or controls.

Buildings Shot

Increasing rural residential development means more buildings on the landscape. Wardens reported a total of thirteen (13) homes and barns struck by bullets or slugs during the 2010 deer gun season. No injuries resulted. These types of incidents are reported to the local law enforcement agencies who often request assistance from the local Conservation Warden. Wardens assisted with 20 investigations in which the responsible party was determined in 11 cases. Of the 20 incidents, the firearms included 8 shotguns, 5 rifles and 7 undetermined. See addendum for details.

Reported Incidents of Buildings Shot 2006-2010

Year	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
Number	13	10	25	19	15

Arrests, Seizures and Calls for Service

Summary of Total Violations and Seizures by Year

Summary by Year	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Total Number of Violations	1284	1404	1400	1518	1394	1280
Juvenile	43	13	33	4	35	45
Adult	1241	1391	1367	1514	1359	1235
Total Number of Seizures						
Illegal Deer	165	114	176	183	149	200
Illegal Bear	1	4	7	5	4	6
Other seizures	106	105	106	144	89	99
Car Killed Deer	11	10	12	9	13	21

Top Ten Violations Encountered by Wardens

2010 Rank	Violation	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006	% Change
1	Illegal use of bait - Firearms	216	334	308	331	254	-35%
2	Trans. loaded gun in vehicle	109	88	129	120	106	24%
3	Trans. uncased gun in vehicle	79	80	97	80	88	-1%
4	Group deer hunt violation	73	35	10	30	14	109%
5	Hunt w/in 50' of paved road center	53	35	53	62	44	51%
6	Fail to validate tag	50	37	72	65	48	35%
7	Hunt from an illegal elevated device	43	51	48	30	22	-16%
8	Felon in possession of firearm	37	29	14	3		27%
9	Feeding wild animals violations	32	42	54	82	45	-24%
10	Hunt without a license	30	35	17	27	32	-14%

- There was an 8.5% decline in the total number of arrests from 2009 to 2010 (down from 1,404 arrests to 1,284 arrests.)
- Although the top violation in 2010 is illegal baiting – the number of arrests for illegal baiting (216) represents a 35% decline from 2009.
- Group deer hunting violations more than doubled from 2009 to 2010 and ranked the 4th highest type of violation encountered by wardens.
- Violations associated with road hunting increased. Hunting within 50 feet from roads increased by 51%, and loaded firearms in vehicles increased by 24%.
- Feeding wild animals while possessing a firearm jumped 122% over arrest numbers for 2009 (it was the 15th most common violation encountered (20 cases in 2010 versus 9 in 2009).
- The total number of illegal deer seized increased by 44% over 2009 numbers.
- Felons in possession of firearms was the 8th most common violation encountered; 37 cases is the highest in 5 years.

See addendum for details

History of Calls to DNR Hotline during the 2008- 2010 Nine Day Seasons

Type of call	2008	2009	2010
Found dead deer or other carcass	42	84	90
Baiting and feeding	27	48	24
Heard shots; believes poaching	17	23	13
Hunt within 50 feet of roadway center	37	20	30
Shoot from a vehicle	12	21	16
Hunt before or after hours	38	31	31
Possession of untagged deer	16	5	2
Possession of illegal deer	11	15	19
Miscellaneous	187	229	245
Total Hotlines	387	476	470
Calls to the Hotline not DNR violations or other calls for service/information	148	157	168
Total calls	535	633	638

Public use of the DNR Violation Hotline continues to be strong. The total number of calls handled by Hotline dispatchers during the November 2010 9-day gun deer season was 638, slightly more than the 633 calls received in 2009. This was the first deer season when tips could be texted into the hotline. We received 20 texts (3% of hotline contacts) via the TIP 411 feature, 12 of which pertained to violations and were forwarded to Conservation Wardens for investigation. Based on user technology trends, we expect this hotline feature to become more popular in the future

Notable changes from 2009 include significant decreases in baiting and feeding complaints from 48 to 24; hunter harassment from 15 to 8; "heard shots-believes poaching" from 23 to 13. Interestingly, complaints of hunters shooting from a vehicle dropped from 21 to 16 while "hunting within prohibited distance of the center of a roadway" complaints increased from 20 to 30. The Hotline also received 12 calls regarding felons in possession of firearms compared to 11 in 2009.

Illegal Baiting and Feeding Of Deer

Across the state, baiting and feeding complaints and arrests were down significantly. Hotline complaints regarding illegal baiting and feeding were down 50%, and arrests for illegal baiting were down 35%, and arrests for illegal feeding were down 24%.

The volume of material in bait piles has also dropped noticeably. Nearly all wardens reported that extremely large bait piles are very few and far between now. While some wardens continue to report considerable illegal baiting in some local areas, on a statewide basis, most wardens reported finding noticeably fewer illegal bait piles on the landscape. Hunters continue to be very supportive of apprehending those who are illegally baiting.

Wardens report that based conversations on with hunters across the state, it appears an increasing number of hunters are frustrated with baiting and feeding and recognize the impacts it has on deer movement and distribution on the landscape.

In addition to increased compliance due to several previous years of strong enforcement, Warden contact with hunters report the following potential factors in the decrease in illegal baiting:

- Some hunters have simply decided illegal baiting was not worth the effort or cost.
- Some hunters opted to grow food plots as compared to a pile of bait that needed to be continually restocked.
- While many hunters contacted indicated they bait simply because “their neighbors do,” an increasing number of hunters that wardens come in contact are frustrated with baiting and some have voluntarily decided to stop placing food for deer in an effort to re-establish natural deer movement patterns.

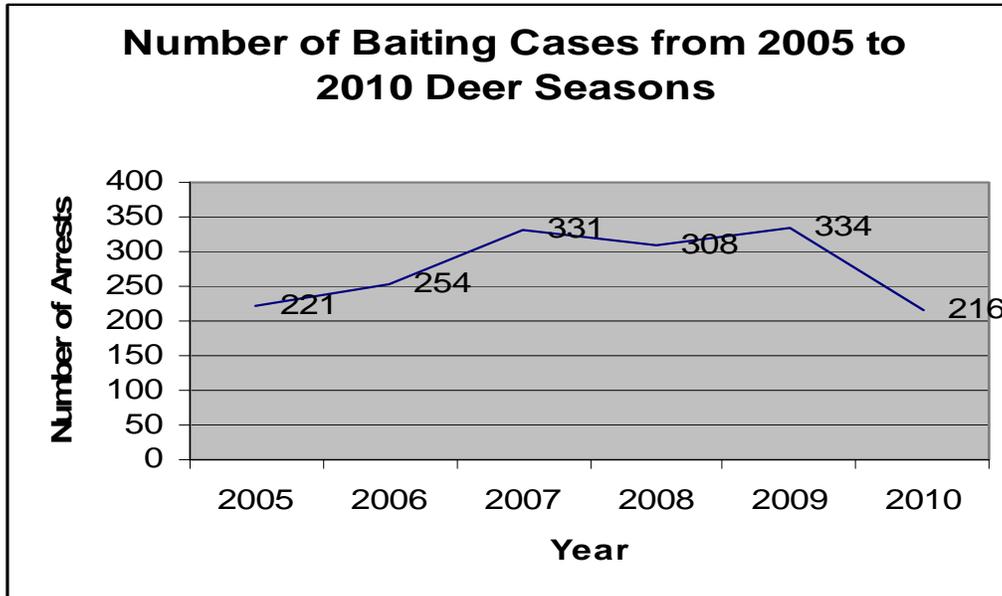
Wardens report the following observations and trends in baiting:

- A greater proportion of those determined to illegally bait are broadcasting bait over larger areas in an effort to make it less detectable and measurable.
- Some hunters are baiting heavily the week prior to the season to attract deer to a general area and then reducing the bait to legal volume once the season opens.

Arrests for illegal baiting and feeding deer

2010 Deer Gun Season Baiting and Feeding Cases by Region

Region	Baiting Cases	Feeding Cases
Northern	79	15
West Central	72	9
Northeast	38	3
South Central	22	4
Southeast	5	1
Total	216	32



Wolf Shootings

During a wolf flight just prior to the deer season, one radio-collared wolf was found apparently shot in Jackson County.

As of the drafting of this report, three (3) illegally killed wolves were detected in Jackson and Rusk Counties during the 2010 Firearm Deer Season. Two of the three wolves were not radio collared.

Out of 63 radio collared wolves detected via telemetry equipment during the 2010 deer season, one was found dead, also in Jackson County. No wolves were found dead in northern Wisconsin, which included 54 radio collared wolves on the air. However, on flights that occurred 11/29/10, two wolves were missing. Both of these were animals displaying dispersal behavior, and they may have just moved out of range or were lost.

Customer Service and Tagging System

DNR Service Centers are very busy the week prior to deer season despite the availability of licenses at outside vendors and the Call Center accessible 7 days a week. Wardens reported the much abbreviated counter service hours at the Service Centers (some offices open only one day per week, none on weekends) was mentioned by hunters in every region who like to get detailed information that they feel only comes with a personal contact.

In particular, the tag for recent hunter education graduates is only available at DNR Service Centers. We need to come up with an easier way to put a tag in the graduate’s hands. Some proposed a system of providing them to students through a phone process, or giving them to students at graduation. An informational handout that goes to every student on how to obtain their tag would help with questions.

Some wardens in the Northern Region said they received many calls about tagging options in the Herd Control units.

CWD Seasons

The difference in registration deadlines in the CWD Zone is confusing for some hunters who are unaware that the shorter deadline for registration exists, i.e., deer in CWD zone must be registered the day after kill and gun hunters outside CWD zone have until the day after the season to register their deer.

There were no hunting related shooting incidents in any of the prior shotgun only areas in the CWD management zone where rifles are now allowed or in any of the prior shotgun only areas that now allow rifles in Dunn, Shawano and Kewaunee counties.

Some hunters in CWD Zones continue to be frustrated by Earn a Buck. The frustration generally is expressed in a story where they or someone they knew had to pass on a nice buck because they had not yet earned a buck, or concern about lack of deer and continued emphasis on antlerless harvest.

Transporting deer out of the CWD zone to adjoining counties makes enforcement difficult if it involves a deer that needs special authorization. A suggestion to change the rules so that registration takes place before the deer is transported out of the zone.

Wardens in Bayfield County were asked about the false positive CWD on a deer farm. There were sightings of ear tagged deer in the area near the deer farm. Hunters and landowners were appreciative of efforts of DATCP and DNR to keep the public informed until the final results were known.

DEER HARVEST REPORT

Statewide preliminary registration figures indicate total harvest during the 2010 9-day season (November 20-28) was up 11% over 2009 to 218,144 (Table 1). This includes 102,066 antlered bucks - an 17 % increase, and 116,138 antlerless deer (+7%) (Table 1). The antlerless to antlered buck harvest ratio was 1.1 during the 9-day gun hunt, the lowest it's been since 1993 when it was 0.87 antlerless deer for every buck harvested. Harvest of antlered bucks increased by more than 30% in eleven counties compared to 2009 and decreased by more than 10% in two (Richland and Rock). Antlerless deer harvest dropped by more than 30% in three northern counties and by 20 to 30% in four northern counties due to limitation of antlerless deer permits.

Hunting conditions during the 9-day gun hunt were seasonably cool and generally rated as "good" across the state on opening day. Snow covered the ground in parts of northwest Wisconsin, which provided good visibility and tracking conditions, while in the southeast temperatures were in the mid 40's under clear skies on the opener. The remaining eight days had two poor weather days during the week with rain, snow and ice that was followed by a clear, cool four-day weekend with very good hunting conditions.

Deer populations in many northern and central units are near healthy goals but lower than recent years. Because of this, there has been less antlerless deer hunting opportunity and fewer deer seen in these units. However, buck harvest across the northern and central forest counties moved strongly upward indicating population growth.

Populations in northeastern Wisconsin were below goal. Antlerless harvest was very limited in these units and it appears from the buck harvest that populations are growing there.

In the eastern farmland regions of the state, buck harvest moved strongly upward; indicative of a growing population due to reduced antlerless deer harvest since 2008. Buck harvest in the western farmland appeared stable to slightly up.

Unit specific harvest information and population estimates will be complete by early March 2011.

Youth Gun Deer Hunt and Mentored Hunting Program

Over 11,300 mentored deer licenses were sold to 10 and 11 year-olds last fall. From the October 9 and 10 youth hunt weekend, preliminary data entry figures show at least 3,371 deer were harvested by 10-15 year old youth hunters.

There were no hunting incidents within the 10 and 11 year old hunter category for the second straight year.

This was the ninth year a youth gun deer hunt has been offered –the fifth year in which it was held on a separate weekend. The youth hunt was established in 2002 through the recommendations of the Deer 2000 and Beyond Project. The hunt was held in all deer management units statewide, with the exception of some state park and non-quota areas. The youth hunt weekend this year was greeted with unseasonably warm weather (highs in the 80's in southern Wisconsin).

Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities

The 2010 Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities was held October 2 - 10, 2010. Over 100 sponsors enrolled more than 62,000 acres of land to disabled hunters with Class A, long-term Class B, or Class C disabled hunting permits. The DNR's Gun Deer Hunt for Hunters with Disabilities Program first began in 1990 to give disabled hunters an opportunity to hunt deer while mild temperatures persist and mobility is relatively unhampered. These hunts are sponsored by private individuals or organizations and almost entirely take place on privately-owned lands. Since the programs inception, the DNR has encouraged private landowners and organizations to become involved and sponsor a hunt.

Unfortunately, no harvest information is available from these hunts. Reports from hunting camp representatives and individual disabled hunters, however, indicate the disabled hunting program continues to be a huge success. For many disabled hunters, the hunting experience itself is what's most cherished, rather than harvesting a deer.

Steady increases in participation have been observed each year and the popularity of the program continues to soar. We are committed to making opportunities available to everyone regardless of their physical abilities or limitations. We are proud of the continued success of this program and we look forward to acquiring more sponsors and participants in years to come.

Early Archery Season

The early archery season ran from September 18th – November 18th this year. As of Dec. 6, 2010, there were almost 45,000 archery records in the stub database, and this number is increasing daily as data entry catches up. Buck harvest during the first two weeks of the 2010 archery season was up by 11% over 2009.

October 4-day antlerless hunt

The October 4-day antlerless deer hunt ran October 16-19 in herd control, EAB and CWD units. There are approximately 9,000 antlerless deer stubs from gun harvest during the October gun hunt as of November 17.

New ways for hunters to participate in deer management

We continue to increase the involvement of hunters in the deer management process. Hunter submitted data will help form a picture of the hunting conditions and can be used to provide an index tracking population changes in the future. Every successful hunter was asked to complete a short survey on the registration stub asking them how long they hunted, how many deer they saw, and to rank the weather conditions for hunting.

The Deer Hunter Wildlife Survey has continued for the second year, where hunters can report their observations of deer and the hunting conditions to the DNR. Over 2,500 hunting trips have been reported online from the 9-day season alone. Hunters rated weather conditions on opening day 25% better than 2009. Deer seen per hour during opening weekend increased 44% compared to 2009. One trend consistent with last year is that deer sighting rates tend to be substantially higher earlier in the fall and decline through the month of November. This survey will be open until the end of deer hunting, so hunters are encouraged to continue populating this database.

Operation Deer Watch premiered this summer and over 4,100 deer observations were reported from citizens around the state. Participation was strong with observations reported from all unit groups in the state. The strength of this program will be in continuous strong participation. Our objective is to promote and expand citizen participation in submitting deer observations.

This winter, field work begins on a major deer research initiative, carrying out the final recommendation of the independent audit of our deer management methods. Hundreds of hunters have already taken part in these studies by building traps, contacting landowners and promoting this work. There is a continuing need for the involvement and ownership by hunters in these projects as the protocols call for capture, handling, and radio collaring of hundreds of deer this winter.

Summer Deer Observations

Summer deer observations in Wisconsin show the rate of fawn production increased 5.5% in 2010, rising above the 10-year average for the first time since 2007. While fawn production is up moderately from last year on a statewide basis, there are significant regional variations. Both staff and volunteer observers reported the highest fawn-to-doe ratio in a group of deer management units (15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 22A, 23, 60M and 60B) in the west central and northwest Wisconsin counties of Washburn, Polk, Burnett, Barron,

St. Croix and Dunn. Observers reported the lowest fawn-to-doe ratio in north central Wisconsin, the “snow belt” units in the Ashland, Iron and Sawyer counties region – (DMUs 6, 7, 13, 14, 28, 29A and 29B) – where fawn production remains below the long-term average.

CWD Update – 2010

This fall we are conducting disease surveillance in the CWD Management Zone (CWD-MZ), around game farms where CWD has been found in captive deer in Portage, Waushara, and Crawford Counties, and around a Bayfield County deer farm that had a significant breach in the fence. Within the CWD-MZ, testing of all adult deer harvested in the western-core monitoring area, eastern monitoring area, and the area around Devil's Lake State Park remains mandatory. Additionally, extra efforts are underway to increase the number of samples taken surrounding the western-core monitoring area and north of the eastern-core monitoring area. Throughout the rest of the CWD-MZ we offer testing for hunters if they are able to bring their deer to one of our sampling stations.

A final count of the number of deer tested for CWD through the end of November is not yet available, but over 5,600 deer have been sampled since April 1st, 2010. Twenty-nine of these deer have tested positive for CWD. Department staff increased efforts to collect lymph nodes in the field this fall in lieu of collecting entire heads. Those efforts were well received by hunters and they reduce some of the costs associated with transportation, storage, and staffing needs at the Black Earth processing center.

We again had a great group of DNR staff, volunteers, students, and partner-agency staff assisting at our registration and sampling stations and at the Black Earth processing center. Those long hours and assistance are greatly appreciated!

Many thanks are also due to the partners involved in the Target Hunger program which offers hunters an option for donating deer in the CWD zone. The DNR is covering the costs of testing the deer that are going to pantries as well as providing funding for the pantry program through cooperative agreements with the various community action coalitions involved.

Our future CWD management direction will be influenced significantly by the CWD Response Plan, which was approved by the Natural Resources Board earlier this year. The goal of the plan is to minimize the area of Wisconsin where CWD occurs and the number of infected deer in the state. This will require a sustained commitment of effort and resources to support the management, surveillance, research, outreach, education, and other tools necessary to reach this goal. Our ability to reach this goal depends on fostering and continuing to strive to develop a strong partnership with everyone who values Wisconsin's deer herd.

Deer donation

Virtually all processors reported deer donation numbers were down from last year. Some counties reported numbers similar to last year, which was the lowest year of donations. Buffalo County, traditionally in the top 3 counties for deer donation, dropped from 258 deer last year to 239 so far this year. Dane County also dropped from 483 last year to 360 so far this year. Sawyer County, buck only, dropped from 48 deer last year to just 4 deer to date.

Deer donation this year will likely be the lowest number in the 11 year history of the program. With most reports in, it appears that our grand total may not exceed 2900 deer. This is about 25% lower than last year

Acknowledgement and thanks

The department would like to recognize and extend our thanks to all hunters who participated in the numerous hunting seasons and surveys this fall. The information they provided will be invaluable in interpreting harvest figures and population analyses. We also extend our thanks and recognition to the hundreds of wildlife managers, technicians, volunteers, wardens, and cooperating staff from other programs who spent thousands of hours registering and aging deer, and collecting samples for disease analysis. The cooperation of over 600 registration stations throughout the state facilitates the detailed deer population analysis and management that serves Wisconsin so well. The department extends our thanks and gratitude to the many people who make this happen every year. Finally, and still working hard, staff from Customer Service and Licensing are entering all of the 300,000+ deer registration stubs. Thank you.

Table 1. 9-Day Preliminary Deer Registration Call-Ins, November 20-28, 2010

Northeast Region				<u>% Difference 2009 vs. 2010</u>		
County deer was registered in	Bucks	Antlerless	Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total
BROWN	299	337	636	14%	-4%	4%
CALUMET	393	505	898	24%	32%	28%
DOOR	1,016	915	1,931	13%	23%	18%
FOND DU LAC	971	1,290	2,261	30%	33%	32%
GREEN LAKE	1,245	1,263	2,508	26%	22%	24%
KEWAUNEE	665	595	1,260	16%	-6%	5%
MANITOWOC	741	789	1,530	18%	5%	11%
MARINETTE	2,954	1,427	4,381	16%	-15%	4%
MARQUETTE	1,848	2,361	4,209	28%	27%	28%
OCONTO	2,498	1,722	4,220	36%	4%	21%
OUTAGAMIE	1,271	1,363	2,634	27%	39%	33%
SHAWANO	2,554	2,206	4,760	23%	10%	17%
WAUPACA	3,669	3,936	7,605	24%	32%	28%
WAUSHARA	1,515	1,663	3,178	22%	3%	11%
WINNEBAGO	533	678	1,211	19%	47%	33%
Regional Total	22,172	21,050	43,222	24%	16%	20%

Northern Region						
COUNTY	Bucks	Antlerless	Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total
ASHLAND	1,067	179	1,246	12%	-73%	-23%
BARRON	2,939	4,166	7,105	24%	29%	27%
BAYFIELD	2,235	1,628	3,863	14%	-4%	5%
BURNETT	1,896	3,442	5,338	22%	43%	35%
DOUGLAS	2,354	2,954	5,308	9%	41%	25%
FLORENCE	1,022	282	1,304	23%	755%	51%
FOREST	943	97	1,040	26%	21%	25%
IRON	453	17	470	15%	-92%	-21%
LANGLADE	1,463	208	1,671	38%	-22%	26%

LINCOLN	1,681	616	2,297	42%	33%	39%
ONEIDA	1,560	296	1,856	35%	-19%	22%
POLK	3,171	5,389	8,560	20%	41%	33%
PRICE	1,573	693	2,266	28%	-32%	1%
RUSK	1,876	1,561	3,437	22%	-14%	3%
SAWYER	1,855	1,238	3,093	25%	-28%	-4%
TAYLOR	1,746	1,421	3,167	16%	-29%	-10%
VILAS	928	40	968	39%	-66%	23%
WASHBURN	2,311	3,400	5,711	46%	53%	50%
Regional Total	31,073	27,627	58,700	24.23	14.01	19.20

South Central Region

COUNTY	Bucks	Antlerless	Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total
COLUMBIA	1,514	2,630	4,144	-5%	6%	1%
DANE	723	1,597	2,320	26%	28%	28%
DODGE	1,094	1,946	3,040	24%	47%	38%
GRANT	2,031	3,160	5,191	0%	1%	0%
GREEN	518	1,128	1,646	8%	11%	10%
IOWA	990	1,804	2,794	6%	-13%	-7%
JEFFERSON	663	1,433	2,096	16%	7%	10%
LAFAYETTE	903	2,126	3,029	46%	45%	45%
RICHLAND	1,067	2,051	3,118	-15%	-6%	-9%
ROCK	336	805	1,141	-10%	13%	5%
SAUK	2,117	3,886	6,003	5%	-2%	0%
Regional Total	11,956	22,566	34,522	6%	8%	7%

Southeast Region

COUNTY	Bucks	Antlerless	Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total
KENOSHA	77	155	232	7%	-1%	2%
MILWAUKEE	3	2	5			
OZAUKEE	156	200	356	15%	12%	13%
RACINE	106	259	365	-9%	6%	1%
SHEBOYGAN	523	601	1,124	25%	-8%	5%
WALWORTH	165	453	618	36%	10%	16%
WASHINGTON	539	850	1,389	12%	12%	12%
WAUKESHA	323	633	956	14%	11%	12%
Regional Total	1,892	3,153	5,045	16%	6%	10%

West Central Region

COUNTY	Bucks	Antlerless	Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total
ADAMS	1,219	1,400	2,619	20%	-19%	-4%
BUFFALO	1,731	2,343	4,074	7%	-8%	-2%
CHIPPEWA	2,441	3,022	5,463	17%	-14%	-2%
CLARK	3,013	3,663	6,676	14%	-6%	2%
CRAWFORD	1,159	1,823	2,982	2%	-2%	0%

DUNN	2,199	2,655	4,854	27%	-10%	4%
EAU CLAIRE	992	1,428	2,420	-1%	-6%	-4%
JACKSON	2,368	2,476	4,844	9%	-14%	-4%
JUNEAU	1,567	1,696	3,263	30%	-2%	11%
LA CROSSE	1,049	1,452	2,501	-6%	5%	0%
MARATHON	3,740	2,900	6,640	35%	26%	31%
MONROE	1,942	2,097	4,039	-1%	-16%	-10%
PEPIN	747	1,070	1,817	-1%	6%	3%
PIERCE	1,392	2,218	3,610	-2%	-1%	-1%
PORTAGE	2,008	1,508	3,516	27%	-13%	6%
ST. CROIX	941	1,546	2,487	23%	25%	24%
TREMPEALEAU	2,448	3,552	6,000	6%	2%	4%
VERNON	1,989	2,956	4,945	-2%	-1%	-1%
WOOD	2,167	1,975	4,142	26%	-3%	10%
Regional Total	35,112	41,780	76,892	13%	-4%	3%

Statewide Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total	Bucks	Antlerless	Total
	102,205	116,176	218,381	18%	6%	11%