

2015 Maine Deer Harvest

In 2015, Maine hunters harvested 20,325 deer, representing a decrease of 9.6% from the 2014 deer harvest. Given winter weather conditions in 2014-15, IFW biologists predicted a harvest of around 19,300 deer, which was slightly lower (~ 5%) than the actual harvest. Breaking down the 2015 harvest, 16,576 deer were tagged during the General Firearms season. This was a 10% decrease in deer harvest by firearm hunters in 2014. A total of 1,451 deer were harvested during the Expanded Archery season. This equates to an 8% decrease in the Expanded Archery harvest from 2014. In contrast, during the Regular Archery season 26% more deer were harvested than in 2014. Maine's youth harvested 826 deer, which was 2% above 2014 harvest on Youth Day. Last, but not least, Maine's Muzzleloader seasons hunters tagged 746 deer, a decline of 30%.

This year's buck harvest of 14,906 animals represents a decrease of 3% from last year, but is slightly higher than the projected harvest of 14,500 bucks. Southern Maine is well known for being a highly productive region for the state, in terms of its deer population. As such, it goes in hand that the top 5 buck producing Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs) are also located in the Southern tier of the state. The WMDs with the highest buck harvest were, in order from greatest buck harvest to least, per square mile of land, are 24, 21, 29, 22, and 23. Despite this, northern Maine's adult bucks are, on the average, slightly larger expressing an average weight of 180.3 lbs. In comparison, their more densely populated cousins in the southern half of the state average approximately 156 lbs.

One of the driving forces of Maine's deer population is winter weather. The 2014-15 winter proved to be severe in nature, which often results in a decline in the deer population. To offset potential over-winter losses, MDIFW reduced Any-deer permit (ADP) allocations by approximately 23% (28,770) from 2014's total allocation of 37,185 permits. The overall goal of the 2015 ADP allocation was to limit the doe harvest to 3,274 adult does. Overall, Maine hunters harvested 5,418 antlerless deer (i.e., adult does and fawns), of which 3,615 were adult does.

Maine offers five different structured hunting seasons providing the state's hunters over 80 days in which to pursue white-tailed deer. In 2015, Maine's regular seasons occurred as follows: 1) The Regular Archery season from Oct 1st to Oct 30th, 2) General Firearms season from Nov 1st to Nov 28th, 3) Muzzleloader Season 1 from Nov 30th to Dec 5th, and 4) Muzzleloader Season 2 from Dec 7th to Dec 12th. While increasing opportunity, the Expanded Archery season is primarily used to control deer populations in areas where deer are chronically overabundant and negatively impact themselves and people. The Expanded Archery season generally runs from early September to mid-December.

All hunters carrying a legal Maine hunting license, that allows deer hunting, could harvest a buck provided that it met the 3" minimum required antler length. Antlerless deer (i.e., does, fawns, and bucks with antlers less than 3" in length) could only be harvested by hunters who possessed an Any-deer permit, with the exception of youth hunters on Youth Day. Maine's youth are provided the opportunity, on Youth Day, to harvest antlerless deer in any WMD that receives an allocation of ADPs. Not changing from past years, Sunday remained closed to hunting, and the opening Saturday of the Regular Firearms season was reserved for Maine residents only.