



2005 Deer Harvest by Town

Final Version
May 2006

Maine Deer Harvest Highlights 2005

In 2005, the any-deer permit system entered its 20th season and represents the 8th year of permit allocations among the 30 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs). A total of 68,685 any-deer permits were allocated to 24 WMDs, and 2,040 bonus any-deer permits were issued to 3 of these districts to achieve district specific doe harvest quotas. Of the 70,725 permits available, 10,383 (15%) were issued to qualifying landowners in an early, separate lottery. Any-deer permits are WMD and hunter specific; they may be used during the regular firearms (October 31-November 26) and muzzleloader (November 28-December 10) seasons. Bonus permits allow hunters to take an additional antlerless deer and can be used during any open season. Although antlered bucks (3" minimum antler length) were legal quarry for all hunters during all deer seasons, only hunters who possessed a valid any-deer or bonus permit could legally take a doe or a fawn during these firearms seasons. Sundays were closed to all hunting, and the opening Saturday of the regular firearms season was reserved for Maine residents only.

Our expanded archery season targets locations in which deer populations are under-harvested, primarily due to firearms discharge bans and residential sprawl. The expanded archery season had no limit on antlerless deer (either-sex) over 79 hunting days (Sept. 10 to Dec. 10). As before, deer of either sex could be hunted statewide during the Sept. 29 to October 28 regular archery season.

Overall, 28,148 deer were registered during 2005, of which 1,268, 384, 672, 24,682, and 994 were taken during the expanded archery, regular archery, youth day (October 22nd this year), regular firearms, and muzzleloader seasons, respectively (148 deer were registered without an associated season). The 2005 harvest was 2,778 deer less than in 2004 -- a 9% decrease (30,926 vs. 28,148 deer). The 2005 harvest is just under the average (28,704) number of deer harvested in the 20-year history of the any-deer permit regulations. Reasons for the decreased deer harvest are difficult to determine, but a good acorn crop in south and central districts, higher gas prices, warm and rainy weather, and hunter effort all may have been a factor.

A harvest quota of 9,189 adult does was set in 2005 to meet deer management objectives in Maine's 30 WMDs. These quotas included anticipated harvests resulting from the either-sex archery and youth-day seasons. Doe quotas ranged from 0 in 6 WMDs (districts 1-3, 19, 28 and 29), to 1,838 does in WMD 17. Any-Deer and Bonus permittees also tagged 3,905 fawns, while archers and youth day hunters tagged 585 young of the year in 2005. Overall, 12,835 antlerless deer were registered by hunters during 2005, and the statewide doe harvest totaled 8,345 or 9% below pre-set quotas. Although in some districts doe quotas were not achieved, the total harvest of bucks and does brought the district closer to the population density objective. Therefore there is some leeway or range of harvest level that is acceptable and that brings us closer to district goals. In half of the districts, doe quotas were slightly exceeded. While these harvests did not adversely affect management efforts for most of these WMDs, doe harvests that occurred in "buck-only" districts may be counter productive to management goals. Alternate harvest strategies must be looked at to reduce all causes of doe mortality in "buck-only" districts where the objective is to increase the herd.

The statewide harvest of antlered bucks (15,261) in 2005 was the third lowest buck harvest since the beginning of the any-deer permit system 20 years ago. The top 5 buck-producing WMDs during 2005 were (in descending order) districts 24, 17, 21, 22, and 23, all in central and southern Maine. Among the 15,251 antlered bucks taken in 2005, roughly 6,405 (42%) were 1 ½ year-olds (yearlings) sporting their first set of antlers, while more than 3,052 (20%) were mature bucks (4 ½ to 15 ½ years old). Male fawns are reported with antlerless deer.

Maine's statewide post-hunt population was estimated at 219,000 deer or 7.4 deer / mi² during 2005. Deer population management during 2006 will focus upon continued population recovery in northern and eastern WMDs. Although the 05'-06 winter was mild, doe harvest will be slightly reduced from past years in order to stabilize deer populations and maintain our short-term population objectives within most central and southern WMDs.