

Maine Deer Harvest Highlights 2009

2009 marked the 24th season of the any-deer permit system. A total of 45,385 any-deer permits were allocated to 11 WMDs, including 2,241 Superpack (bonus) any-deer permits issued in WMDs 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25 and 29 to achieve district specific doe harvest quotas. Of the permits available, 6,995 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 31st-November 28th) and muzzleloader (November 30th-December 12th) seasons. Superpack licenses were allocated to 2.5 % of the any-deer permits in wildlife districts with 3,500 or more permits as "Bonus Deer" permits. This allowed Superpack license holders to take two deer, one of which must be antlerless.

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 license 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) and ran for 79 hunting days (Sept. 12th to Dec. 12th); the statewide (Special) archery season from October 1st to October 30th.

Overall 18,092 deer were registered during 2009. During the expanded and special archery seasons 1,813 were taken. This equates to a minor decrease (2%) in archery hunting from 2008; the Youth Day harvest of 330 decreased from 2008 by 35% primarily due to the prohibition on taking antlerless deer in bucks only WMDs. This rule change for Youth hunters occurred in WMDs that were most recently affected by 2 difficult winters. The regular firearms season's overall harvest of 14,838 was a 16% decrease from the previous year. For the third year a special license allowed crossbow hunting during the regular firearms season with a harvest of 8 deer. Finally muzzleloaders experienced good success with an increased harvest of 6%, taking 1,111 deer with muzzleloader.

A harvest quota of 5,037 adult does was set in 2009 to meet deer management objectives in Maine's 29 WMDs. These quotas included anticipated harvests resulting from the either-sex archery and youth-day seasons. Doe quotas ranged from 0 in 18 WMDs (districts 1-14, 18, 19, 27, and 28), to 798 does in WMD 22; Any-Deer and Superpack permittees tagged 1,894 fawns, while archers and youth day hunters tagged 466 young of the year. Overall, 6,924 antlerless deer were registered by hunters and the statewide adult doe harvest totaled 4,576 or 9% below pre-season set quotas.

The statewide harvest of antlered bucks (11,168) in 2009 was within 5% of our projected buck harvest. The top 5 buck-producing WMDs (per sq. mi.) during 2009 were (in descending order) districts 29, 24, 21, 22 and 20, all in central and southern Maine. Among the 11,168 antlered bucks taken in 2009, roughly 4,914 (44%) were 1 ½ year-olds (yearlings), while more than 3,462 (31%) were mature bucks (4 ½ to 15 ½ years old). Male fawns are reported with antlerless deer.