

Deer Season Summary 2017

[Graphic: Antlerless Deer looking directly at reader]

[Graphic: DNR Logo upper left corner]

[Graphic: Brick wall design on upper left and lower right corner of cover page]

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Disclaimer:

The numbers reported in this summary are derived from hunter harvest surveys from 2017 and previous years. Numbers do not include confidence intervals associated with estimates derived from the survey. For a complete summary of the 2017 deer hunting season, please visit mi.gov/deer.

[Graphic: two antlerless deer rubbing their noses together.]

The History of Deer in Michigan

Michigan has a rich and varied history of deer management. In the 1800s, deer habitats were altered dramatically through the removal of forests for crop fields. The shooting of deer for food was unregulated and deer were mostly gone from the southern Lower Peninsula by 1870. Logging of forests in the north produced the opposite effect. More openings, brush, and young forests provided cover and

browse, so the northern herd climbed to an estimated one million deer in the 1880s. As railroads developed and provided access into the wilderness, market hunters shot hundreds of thousands of deer. Early measures to control market hunting were unsuccessful because they only restricted the timeframe to take deer, not the number of deer taken. Inconsistent hunting regulations and available habitats led to decades of ups and downs in the deer population. The first regulation enacted to limit the taking of deer in Michigan occurred in 1859, when the State Legislature limited the taking of deer to the period of August 1 through December 31. In 1887, the use of dogs and artificial lights became illegal. The State Legislature shortened the season to 25 days with the first bag limit (five deer) and created the first deer license in 1895, selling 14,477 licenses for 50 cents each with 22 non-residents paying \$25 for a Michigan deer license. In 1909, the bag limit was reduced to three deer and market hunting and the selling of venison became illegal. Today, deer densities and harvest numbers in Michigan are generally lower in the north than in the south. Deer populations are lowest in the Upper Peninsula as complex predator loads and lake-effect snow associated with Lake Superior makes winter conditions challenging for deer. Deer in this area are forced to seek out lowland conifer swamps or migrate south in early winter to areas that typically receive less snow. Areas of the state that receive deep snow and cold winter temperatures often observe increased winter mortality and low fawn recruitment in comparison with areas of the state that receive milder winter conditions. In the southern one-third of the state, where winter conditions are less severe and agricultural crops are more common, deer are generally more abundant than in northern regions.

Overview

From the 2017 Deer Season

During the 2017 season, hunters could purchase a deer license, a deer combo license, an antlerless deer hunting license, or a junior antlerless hunting license. Hunters must choose at the time of their purchase whether they want the opportunity to harvest one or two antlered deer. The decision the hunter makes at the time of purchase has implications on the type of antler point restrictions that must abide by, depending on the part of the state they are hunting. The deer hunting season began on September 16-17 with the Liberty Hunt and Early Antlerless Firearm Season. The Liberty hunt is eligible for youths 16 years old and younger, and for individuals with qualifying disabilities. The early antlerless firearms season was available for any licensed hunter on private lands within select Deer Management Units (DMUs). Those seasons were followed by the Independence Hunt (October 19-22), which is a firearm hunt available to individuals with qualifying disabilities. The largest part of the hunting season is made up of Archery Season (October 1-November 14; December 1- January 1), Firearm Season (November 15-30), and the Muzzleloading Season (December 1-10) in Zone 1 and 2, December 1-17 in Zone 3). The deer hunting season concluded with a Late Antlerless Firearm season, which was available only on private lands in select DMUs (December 18- January 1). A special Disease Management Firearm Hunt was held from January 4th-7th and January 11th-14th in specified areas on private land in the Northeast Lower Peninsula to help manage deer numbers due to the presence of Bovine Tuberculosis and in select DMUs on public and private land in Southwest Michigan to increase disease sampling for Chronic Wasting Disease. License costs varied by type. Resident deer licenses were sold for \$20, while resident deer combo licenses were sold for \$40. A base license must be purchased with any deer license, which

costs \$11 for residents. Nonresident licensees cost \$20 for one deer license, or \$190 for a deer combo license. Nonresidents must purchase a \$151 base license prior to purchasing any deer license.

Licenses

There were 946,107 licenses sold in 2017, down 1.0% from 955,598 sold in 2016 (Table 1). These 946,107 licenses translated into 1,312,286 harvest tags available to hunters. The number of deer combo, antlerless, and mentored youth licenses showed an increase in sales from 2016.

	Licenses Sold	Harvest Tags
Deer Licenses	223,014 (-5.1)	223,014 (-5.1)
Combination Licenses	366,179 (0.2)	732,358 (0.2)
Antlerless Licenses	345,252 (0.4)	345,252 (0.4)
Mentored Youth Licenses	11,662 (2.3)	11,662 (2.5)
Total	946,107 (-1.)	1,312,286 (-0.7)

[Figure 1: Line graph depicting the total deer harvested 1931-2017. For more information call 517-284-9453]

Deer Harvest

A total of 376,365 deer were harvested in 2017, this represents a 10.3% increase from 2016 and ranks eight lowest totals over the past ten years. Over the past 87 deer hunting years in Michigan, the harvest for 2017 ranks 24th overall in the history of Michigan deer hunting (figure 1). The antlerless harvest of 150,709 was 3.9% more than 2016, while the antlered harvest of 225, 655 was 15% more than 2016. The antlered harvest ranks 20th overall in Michigan’s history, while the antlerless harvest ranks 24th overall. The Liberty Hunt accounted for a total of 7,193 deer taken with 4,911 of them being antlered deer. This season compromised about 2% of the total antlered deer harvest, as well as 2% of the total harvest (Table 3) . The early antlerless season, and the Independence Hunt have the smallest impact of all our deer hunting seasons. The early antlerless season accounted for 2,231 antlerless deer taken, which is about 1% of the total harvest. The Independence Hunt accounted for 485 deer statewide. The archery season accounted for 137,059 deer being taken, up 9.2% from 2016. It accounted for about 37% of the total harvest, and about 36% of the total antlerless deer harvested (Figure 2).

The firearms season continues to be the season where the most deer are harvested. This season accounted for 56% of antlered deer being harvested and 43% of the antlerless deer harvested (Figure 3). Just over half of the deer harvested in Michigan (51%) are taken during the firearms season (Figure 4). The muzzleloader season and the late antlerless season had a slight decrease in number of deer harvested from 2016. The muzzleloader season accounted for 24,058 deer taken, while the late antlerless season accounted for 14,340 deer taken, of 6% and 4% of the total harvest, respectively (Figure 4).

2017 Seasonal Deer Harvest

Number of deer harvested in each season of the 2017 Michigan deer hunting season. Values in parentheses represent % change from 2016-2017.

(Table 3) Number of deer harvested in each season of the 2017 Michigan deer hunting season. Values in parentheses represent % change from 2016-2017.

Season	Antlered	Antlerless	Total
Liberty	4,911 (19.4)	2,282 (2.5)	7,193 (13.5)
Early Antlerless	0	2,231 (-21.4)	2,231 (-21.4)
Independence	236 (-12.4)	248 (75.3)	485 (17.8)
Archery	83,655 (10.9)	53,404 (6.6)	137,059 (9.2)
Firearms	126,167 (17.6)	63,898 (11.1)	190,065 (15.3)
Muzzleloader	10,632 (17.0)	13,427 (-5.4)	24,059 (3.3)
Late Antlerless	0	14,340 (-20.5)	14,340 (-20.5)
Urban Archery	52 (N/A)	477 (N/A)	530 (N/A)
Disease Hunt	2 (N/A)	401 (N/A)	403 (N/A)
Total	225,656 (15.0)	150,709 (3.9)	376,365 (10.3)

(Table 2) Estimated antlered, antlerless, and total deer harvest from 2001 - 2017.

Year	Antlered	Antlerless	Total
2001	235,271	222,718	457,989
2002	241,304	230,573	471,877
2003	254,473	240,772	495,245
2004	229,654	222,151	451,805
2005	218,057	195,554	413,611
2006	265,711	184,962	450,674
2007	267,429	209,166	476,595
2008	248,533	232,105	480,638
2009	215,120	220,916	436,036
2010	212,341	199,958	412,299
2011	212,791	203,930	416,721
2012	222,640	191,364	414,004
2013	203,057	175,737	378,794
2014	178,228	144,139	322,367
2015	191,608	137,073	328,681
2016	196,233	145,054	341,287
2017	225,655	150,709	376,364

[Figure 2-4: Pie charts depicting the total amount of antlered, antlerless and the total deer harvest in each hunt as shown in the table above. For more information please call 517-284-9453.]

Deer Harvest by Region

The Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP) accounted for just over half of the deer harvested in the state. This past year 188,505 deer were harvested in the SLP, up from 184,214 harvested in 2016. Throughout the Upper Peninsula (UP) and Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP) the State of Michigan experienced a general

increase in deer harvest numbers. Increases were observed in both antlered and antlerless deer harvested.

Antlerless Deer Harvest

[Figure 5: Bar graph comparing the antlerless deer harvest from 2010-2017. For more information please call 517-284-9453.]

(Table 4) Total number of antlerless deer harvested by region between 2010 - 2017 seasons.

Region	Upper Peninsula	Northern Peninsula	Southern Peninsula	Total
2017	4,762	68,316	77,631	150,709
2016	2,577	57,757	84,720	145,054
2015	2,833	51,521	82,719	137,073
2014	6,496	54,161	83,482	144,139
2013	11,325	66,912	97,499	175,736
2012	12,482	67,291	110,591	191,364
2011	13,355	60,703	129,872	203,930
2010	11,627	54,606	133,725	199,958

Antlered Deer Harvest

(Table 5) Total number of antlered deer harvested by region between 2010 - 2017 seasons

Region	Upper Peninsula	Northern Peninsula	Southern Peninsula	Total
2017	30,519	84,260	110,876	225,655
2016	20,016	76,675	99,542	196,233
2015	17,057	70,675	103,977	191,709
2014	19,431	63,616	95,180	178,227
2013	28,907	70,734	103,416	203,057
2012	35,966	79,571	107,103	222,640
2011	30,033	71,383	111,374	212,790
2010	30,587	59,265	122,489	212,341

Check Station Data

A total of 38,262 deer were checked during the 2017 deer hunting season, the highest number of checked deer since 2001. Of these 38,262 deer that were checked 33,558 deer were aged during the 2017 deer hunting season. A total of 19,611 antlered deer were aged, while 9,018 antlerless deer were aged. Fawns (0.5 years old) made up 2,912 of the aged antlerless deer. Michigan continues to age more deer than any other state relative to overall harvest. A source of particular interest amongst hunters is the proportion of yearling bucks harvested related to older and more mature bucks. These numbers vary by region, but overall, the proportion of yearling bucks in the harvest has declined in recent years throughout the entire state of Michigan. The UP typically has the lowest percentage of yearling bucks harvested when compared to other locations in the state; however, the past two years were different. The UP saw their yearling buck harvest percentage increase from about 22.9% in 2015 to 41.5% in 2017.

This is likely due to the mild 2016 winter we experienced that supported overwinter fawn survival in 2017. The NLP had the lowest yearling buck harvest percentage (37.1), similar to the 2016 deer harvest report. These results are likely due to the antler point restriction in the NLP region. The SLP has seen consistent marks in the yearling buck harvest rising to 55.4% in 2017.

[Graphic: Antlerless deer grazing on grass close up]

2001-2017 Yearling Buck Harvest

[Figure 7: Yearling buck harvest percentage in the Upper Peninsula (UP), Northern Lower Peninsula (NLP), and Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP) from 2001 - 2017. For more information please call 517-284-9453.]

Deer Harvest by DMU

Comparing harvest between DMUs is challenging given the varying sizes, hunter numbers, and geography associated with each DMU. Still, DMU 332 which includes Huron, Tuscola, and Sanilac counties, leads the state in antlered deer harvested, antlerless deer harvested, and total deer harvested. It should be noted that 33, 677 deer hunters are estimated to hunt in this DMU, the highest of all DMUs (Table 6).

[Table 6: Hunter numbers, antlered deer harvest, antlerless deer harvest, and total deer harvest per DMU, Michigan 2017.]

DMU	Hunters	Antlered Deer	Antlerless Deer	Total Harvest
001	7,136	2,268	2,419	4,687
003	10,110	3,010	1,719	4,72
004	4,898	2,129	764	2,893
005	6,867	1,518	1,802	3,320
006	7,208	2,665	2,164	4,829
007	6,932	2,161	10	2,171
008	10,340	3,275	1,665	4,940
009	4,171	1,692	1,055	2,747
010	5,091	1,263	1,066	2,329
013	9,224	3,828	2,328	6,156
015	4,835	1,488	1,354	2,842
016	7,179	2,020	1,048	3,068
017	4,457	1,675	16	1,691
018	12,797	4,201	8,090	7,957
020	7,566	2,225	1,133	3,358
021	6,028	2,094	0	2,094
022	6,080	2,753	43	2,796
024	4,916	1,518	1,115	2,633
025	8,489	2,648	1,201	3,849
026	13,483	4,181	3,903	8,084

027	2,174	636	0	636
028	7,891	2,064	1,674	3,738
029	6,768	3,110	2,695	5,805
030	8,700	3,117	2,383	5,500
031	3,372	1,201	16	1,217
035	9,303	3,529	2,386	5,915
036	4,270	1,418	2	1,420
037	9,408	4,751	2,806	7,557
038	11,462	3,682	2,550	6,232
040	7,882	1,798	1,462	3,260
042	1,315	364	22	386
043	12,754	3,150	2,933	6,083
045	4,224	1,112	732	1,844
046	7,021	2,446	1,953	4,399
047	10,531	3,359	2,091	5,450
048	3,829	1,120	0	1,120
050	4,148	1,058	884	1,942
051	9,988	2,445	2,717	5,162
053	11,724	3,825	4,094	7,919
055	12,186	6,111	2,794	8,905
056	9,496	3,347	2,822	6,169
057	9,016	1,961	1,694	3,655
058	4,099	916	406	1,322
060	8,153	2,259	2,038	4,297
063	8,929	2,705	2,011	4,716
065	12,985	4,989	3,171	8,160
066	4,003	1,187	10	1,197
067	12,384	4,596	3,328	7,924
068	8,273	1,346	2,189	3,535
069	6,108	1,614	991	2,605
071	8,119	2,567	2,433	5,000
072	10,372	2,603	1,774	4,377
073	9,261	3,526	2,303	5,839
074	10,631	3,304	2,466	5,770
081	8,522	2,433	2,199	4,632
082	1,170	110	189	299
083	9,364	1,722	1,737	3,459
115	213	62	30	92
117	1,223	314	0	314
121	2,611	1,002	474	1,476
122	2,043	802	284	1,086
127	1,369	380	0	380
131	3,070	792	12	804
145	4	0	2	2
149	660	219	84	303
152	2,930	939	0	939

155	3,569	1,600	583	2,183
174	300	57	245	302
245	2	0	0	0
249	2,493	846	0	846
252	1,996	473	2	475
255	2,970	918	403	1,321
273	1,615	531	410	941
311	12,881	5,839	3,360	9,199
312	19,887	6,774	4,877	11,651
332	33,677	13,807	9,243	23,050
333	19,887	6,774	4,877	11,651
341	23,863	8,082	5,343	13,425
349	2,648	803	0	803
354	13,221	5,658	4,271	9,929
361	30,383	11,532	7,145	18,677
419	18,586	7,432	5,624	13,056
452	10,923	3,456	2,885	6,341

2017 Deer Season Summary

A total of 376,365 deer were harvested in Michigan in 2017, up 10.3% from 2016 total. Firearm season showed the largest gains, increasing total deer harvested by about 15.3% higher than 2016. The SLP remained the primary region for harvest, with 188,507 total deer harvested. The firearms season has continued to be the primary season when deer are harvested, with 51% of the total deer harvest occurring. The percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest, though increasing slightly in the UP and SLP in 2017, have remained at a historical low. The yearling buck harvest in the SLP has declined from over 70% in 2008 to 55% in 2017. The NLP saw the lowest percentage of yearling bucks harvested in 2014 at 32% with a higher 37% mark in 2017. The NLP has seen the most drastic change over the past six years, with the yearling buck harvest percentage at 58% in 2011.

[Graphic: Antlerless deer staring into the camera.]

[Graphic: Antlerless deer eating grass.]

[Graphic: Hunter walking off into a wooded area with rifle in hand.]

To learn more, visit mi.gov/deer

[Graphic: Recycling logo with “please recycle after use printed on 30% recycled paper” directly next to graphic.]