

NDG&F May 7th Newsletter

Deer Season Set, Online Apps Available May 9

North Dakota's 2012 deer season is set, with 65,300 licenses available to hunters this fall, 44,650 fewer than last year and the lowest since 1988.

Randy Kreil, wildlife chief for the State Game and Fish Department, said the decline in the deer population is a result of increased adult mortality and reduced fawn production following the severe winters of 2008-10. In addition, the extreme winter conditions followed nearly a decade of aggressive deer management featuring large numbers of antlerless licenses in many units.

"It is expected there will be very few, if any licenses remaining after the initial lottery," Kreil said.

"Therefore, there is not a concurrent season this year."

Hunters are able to draw one license for the deer gun season and one for the muzzleloader season, and purchase an archery license. Unlike the past several years, however, Kreil said a hunter will not be able to receive more than one license for the deer gun season.

Low deer numbers are evident in all portions of North Dakota, Kreil said, as all but two hunting units are below management goals. The statewide hunter success rate in 2011 was 52 percent, the lowest on record and well below the typical 70-75 percent success rate experienced by North Dakota deer hunters.

"The large decrease of licenses in 2012 is necessary to allow the deer population to grow toward management goals," Kreil said.

The mule deer population in the badlands was also stung by three consecutive harsh winters, with the three lowest years of fawn production observed from 2009-11. Survey numbers indicate mule deer in the badlands are down 23 percent from last year and 52 percent below 2007.

As a result, no antlerless mule deer licenses are available for the 2012 deer season in units 3B1, 3B2, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E and 4F, Kreil said. "This restriction applies to regular gun, resident and nonresident any-deer bow, gratis and youth licenses," he added.

The number of licenses available for 2012 is 1,200 antlered mule deer, a decrease of 3,350 mule deer licenses from last year; 1,282 for muzzleloader, down 826 from last year; and 120 restricted youth antlered mule deer, a decrease of 130 from last year.

North Dakota's 2012 deer gun season opens Nov. 9 at noon and continues through Nov. 25. [Online applications](#) for the regular deer gun, youth, muzzleloader, and resident gratis and nonresident landowner seasons will be available about May 9 through the Game and Fish Department's website at gf.nd.gov. Also, paper applications will be at vendors throughout the state the week of May 14. The deadline for applying is June 6.

Total deer licenses are determined by harvest rates, aerial surveys, deer-vehicle collision reports, depredation reports, hunter observations, input at advisory board meetings, and comments from the public, landowners and department field staff.

2012 Deer License Questions and Answers;

In past years, hunters have been able to receive more than one license that is valid during the deer gun season. Will that be the case this year?

No. The number of licenses remaining after the first drawing will be small, if any at all. Therefore, hunters can receive only one license for the deer gun season. If any licenses remain after the first and second lotteries, they will only be available to those who applied in the first lottery and still have not received a license, or for those who did not submit an application for the first lottery.

If I receive a deer gun license, will I still be able to receive a muzzleloader license or purchase an archery license?

Yes, hunters can draw one license for the deer gun season and one for the muzzleloader season, and purchase an archery license. However, there won't be any additional antlerless deer licenses available this year, that in the past could be used during the archery or muzzleloader season in the unit designated on the license.

Can I use my deer gun license during the muzzleloader or archery season?

No. The deer gun license is valid for only the regular deer gun season. That option in past years was only available for second, third, or additional antlerless licenses.

I want a deer license this year so I want to increase my odds and apply for a doe license as a first choice. If I receive the license, will I lose my preference points?

Yes, preference points are based on your first choice. If you receive your first choice, you lose your preference points.

Can I use my gratis license to take a mule deer doe?

Gratis hunters whose land is located in 3B1, 3B2, 4A, 4B, 4C, 4D, 4E and 4F may not take a mule deer doe with their gratis license. Gratis hunters in all other units may take any deer, including mule deer does.

As a landowner, if I apply in the regular lottery for a buck license as my first choice and a doe for my second choice, and receive a doe license, can I still submit a gratis application to get a license to hunt a buck?

No. If you submit a regular lottery application and receive a deer gun license, regardless if it is for a buck or doe, you are not able to receive a gratis license, as only one deer gun season license per hunter is allowed this year.

Since only one deer gun season license is available this year, does that mean landowners can receive either a gratis license or a lottery license, but not both?

That's correct. If a landowner applies for and receives a license in the regular lottery, he or she cannot also receive a gratis license. Landowners who apply in the regular lottery and are not drawn for a license can still receive a gratis license as long as there are unissued licenses.

I am a landowner, and often delay submitting a gratis license application until I know if I will have time to hunt deer. If I wait until later in summer to apply, will I still be able to get a gratis license?

Gratis licenses can be issued as long as licenses remain. However, with the dramatic reduction in licenses this year there is no guarantee that any licenses will be available after the initial lottery. Once all licenses are issued, Game and Fish is not able to provide further gratis licenses. Therefore, we suggest that landowners eligible for gratis licenses submit their application prior to the June 6 deadline to ensure receiving a license.

Missouri River Safety Day Set for May 17

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department, Cumulus Broadcasting and Sykes are sponsoring the Missouri River SPLASH – a recreation and boating safety event for everyone who enjoys the Missouri River.

The event is Thursday, May 17 in Mandan from 3-6 p.m. at Moritz Sport and Marine. Displays, hands-on activities, demonstrations, regulations, registrations and prizes are included.

The event is free, and people of all ages are invited to attend. Individuals who bring a completed boating safety exam to the event are eligible to win a prize.

State law requires youngsters ages 12-15 who want to operate a boat or personal watercraft with at least a 10 horsepower motor to first pass the state's Boat North Dakota safety course. In addition, some major insurance companies give adult boat owners who pass the course a premium discount on boat insurance.

The Boat North Dakota safety course is free and available at the Game and Fish Department, or in Bismarck and Mandan at any local boat or personal watercraft dealer, and at Cumulus Broadcasting.