2025

Serving nature and you

Missouri Deer Season Summary & Population Status Report



Missouri Department of Conservation
Prepared by:
Deer, Elk, and Wildlife Health Program Staff - Science Branch

Table of Contents

Deer Program Mission and Vision 1
Statewide Deer Management Overview 2
2025 Deer Season Summary 2
    Firearms Deer Season Summary 2
    Archery Deer Season Summary 3
    Deer Hunter and Harvest Trends 4
Regional Deer Population Status and Summaries 8
County Deer Population Status 17
Planting Food Plots for Deer 22
Deer Management Assistance Program 23
Chronic Wasting Disease Overview 24
    CWD Surveillance 25
    CWD Regulations Update 25
    Localized CWD Management 26



Deer, Elk, and Wildlife Health Program Staff – (573) 815-7901

Jason Isabelle: *Deer and Elk Program Supervisor* .....ext. 2902
Brigid Niemeyer: *Wildlife Health Program Supervisor* .....ext. 2934
Ashleigh Day: *Private Lands Deer Biologist* .....ext. 2899
Aaron Hildreth: *Deer and Elk Biologist* .....ext. 2892
Ethan Baker: *Wildlife Health Specialist* .....ext. 2898
Samantha Maywald: *Wildlife Health Specialist* .....ext. 3902

Deer Program Mission and Vision

The mission of the Department's Deer Program is to use science-based wildlife management to maintain healthy, biologically and socially balanced deer populations throughout the state that provide recreational opportunities and minimize human-deer conflicts and the potential for negative impacts on ecosystem health.

Goal 1: Deer Population Management – Proactively manage deer populations so they exist within biological and social carrying capacity within defined management units using science-based management practices.

Goal 2: Hunting and Recreation – Provide opportunities for all citizens to enjoy deer-related recreational activities and promote deer hunting as a socially and culturally important tradition that is the primary tool to achieving deer population goals.

Goal 3: Deer Health and Disease – Ensure the maintenance of a healthy deer population and minimize the threat and impacts of CWD and other diseases on the deer population.

Goal 4: Education, Communication, and Public Engagement – Provide information to stakeholders about deer, deer hunting, and deer management and create opportunities for public engagement in deer management decisions and in the collection of biological information that influences deer management.

Goal 5: Research – Support and conduct applied research to help inform the management of Missouri's deer population.

The Deer Program, managed by the Science Branch within MDC, develops annual regulation recommendations based on harvest data, hunter and landowner surveys, MDC staff surveys, public comments, population models, and the Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Surveillance and Management Plan. The conservation of all of Missouri's valuable wildlife is made possible thanks to private landowners and all others supporting the one-eighth of one percent Conservation Sales Tax, permit sales, and income generated by fish and wildlife tourism.

Thank you!






Equal Opportunity to Participate

Equal opportunity to participate in, and benefit from, programs of the Missouri Department of Conservation is available to all individuals without regard to their race, color, nationality, sex, age, or disability. Questions should be directed to the Department of Conservation, PO Box 180, Jefferson City, MO 65102, 573-751-4115 (voice) or 800-735-2966 (TTY), or to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Division of Federal Assistance, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Mail Stop: MBSP-4020, Arlington, VA 22203.

Statewide Deer Management Overview

Over the last decade, deer numbers in most Missouri counties have increased steadily and have become closer to population goals. Therefore, statewide deer management goals have largely focused on stabilizing deer numbers through increased antlerless harvest to prevent deer populations from exceeding biologically and socially-acceptable levels. Programs such as the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) have been created to assist landowners in meeting local deer management objectives (see Pg. 23 for more information). Despite these efforts, statewide doe harvest tends to be less than antlered buck harvest (**Figure 2**). Statewide deer management also continues to be focused on minimizing the impacts of chronic wasting disease (CWD). Surveillance for CWD is ongoing across the state to detect new areas of infection as early as possible. Where CWD is known to occur, large-scale and localized management have been conducted to keep infection rates low and protect Missouri's deer population.

2025 Deer Season Summary

Season	Dates	What Was New for 2025
Archery Deer Season	Sept. 15 - Nov. 14, 2025 Nov. 26, 2025 - Jan. 15, 2026	• The rule that prohibited transporting high-risk deer parts (such as the brain and spinal cord) out of the county of harvest was rescinded. Hunters were required to dispose of unused deer parts in trash that was dumped in a sanitary landfill or on the property where the deer was harvested. • Callaway, Cape Girardeau, Daviess, Harrison, Henry, Marion, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Ralls, St. Louis, and Texas counties were added to the CWD Management Zone. • Callaway, Cape Girardeau, Daviess, Harrison, Henry, Marion, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, Ralls, St. Louis, and Texas counties were open for hunting during the CWD Portion of firearms deer season. • The antler-point restriction was removed from Callaway, Daviess, Harrison, Henry, Marion, Miller, Moniteau, Morgan, and Ralls counties. • Prices for nonresident deer and turkey hunting permits were increased to keep pace with the Conservation Department's rising costs for goods and services. • You could fill four firearms antlerless permits in Buchanan, Clinton, Dade, DeKalb, Lawrence, and Texas counties. • Youth hunters could harvest more than one deer during the Early Youth Portion of firearms deer season. • Hunters were required to report their deer to Telecheck before transporting it out of the county where it was harvested or by 10 p.m. on the day of harvest, whichever came first.
Firearms Deer Early Antlerless Portion	Oct. 10 - 12, 2025	
Firearms Deer Early Youth Portion	Nov. 1 - 2, 2025	
Firearms Deer November Portion	Nov. 15 - 25, 2025	
Firearms Deer CWD Portion	Nov. 26 - 30, 2025	
Firearms Deer Late Youth Portion	Nov. 28 - 30, 2025	
Firearms Deer Late Antlerless Portion	Dec. 6 - 14, 2025	
Firearms Deer Alternative Methods Portion	Dec. 27, 2025 - Jan. 6, 2026	

Firearms Deer Season Summary

Firearms deer harvest (236,551) was 9% higher than the 2024 harvest. Compared to the 2024 season, the greatest increase (48%) occurred during the Early Antlerless Portion (**Table 1**). Additionally, youth hunters harvested 35% more deer during the 2025 Early Youth Portion than during 2024 (**Table 1**). Given their short duration, deer harvest during the youth portions of the firearms deer season can vary considerably from one year to the next. Youth hunters harvested less deer during the Late Youth Portion with a 9% decrease in harvest. Overall, harvest was down slightly (<1%) during the November Portion compared to the 2024 season (**Table 1**). The November Portion harvest was 12% below the five-year average, and was impacted by the unseasonably warm weather on opening weekend.

Table 1. Deer harvest by portion and deer type in Missouri, 2024-2025.

Season or Portion	Antlered Bucks			Button Bucks			Does			Total		
	2024	2025	Change	2024	2025	Change	2024	2025	Change	2024	2025	Change
Archery	28,266	31,482	+11%	4,098	4,255	+4%	24,152	26,544	+10%	56,516	62,281	+10%
Early Antlerless[1]	34	54	+59%	839	1,103	+32%	4,864	7,337	+51%	5,737	8,494	+48%
Early Youth	9,847	12,420	+26%	957	1,376	+44%	3,064	4,914	+60%	13,868	18,710	+35%
November	82,314	90,126	+10%	13,164	12,214	-7%	63,099	55,831	-12%	158,577	158,171	0%
CWD	3,930	5,667	+44%	1,054	1,479	+40%	6,470	8,782	+36%	11,454	15,928	+39%
Late Youth	1,059	956	-10%	269	223	-17%	1,217	1,145	-6%	2,545	2,324	-9%
Late Antlerless[1]	111	156	+41%	2,061	2,766	+34%	12,470	16,956	+36%	14,642	19,878	+36%
Alternative Methods	2,773	3,275	+18%	1,072	1,363	+27%	6,238	8,408	+35%	10,083	13,046	+29%
Managed Hunts	601	636	+6%	265	284	+7%	1,368	1,373	0%	2,234	2,293	+3%
Total	**128,935**	**144,772**	**+12%**	**23,779**	**25,063**	**+5%**	**122,942**	**131,290**	**+7%**	**275,656**	**301,125**	**+9%**

[1]Antlered bucks taken during this portion had antlers <3" in length or were harvested using a CWD Management Permit.

Archery Deer Season Summary

Archery deer harvest during the 2025 season was 10% higher than the 2024 season, and the second highest on record (**Table 1**). Compared to 2024, the 2025 season antlered buck harvest had the greatest increase at 11%, does at 10%, and button buck harvest with a 4% increase (**Table 1**). Archery season harvest accounted for 21% of the overall harvest for the 2025 deer season. Just under 25% of archers harvested a deer, which was slightly higher than in 2024 (**Figure 4**).

The 2025 archery deer season marked the tenth year of crossbows being a legal method for all archery hunters in Missouri. During the 2025 archery season, 51% of the deer harvested were taken with crossbows. The percentage of deer harvested with a crossbow has stabilized at 51% as the five-year average. Allowing crossbows during the archery season has not significantly affected the overall composition of the archery harvest.

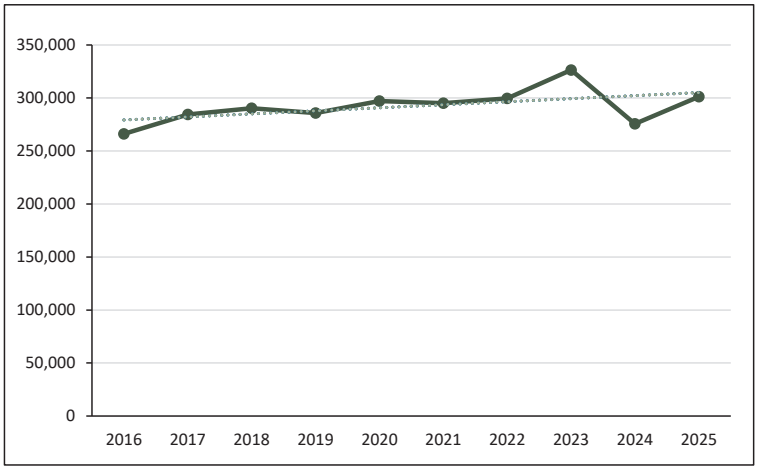


Figure 1. Number of deer harvested in Missouri, 2016-2025.

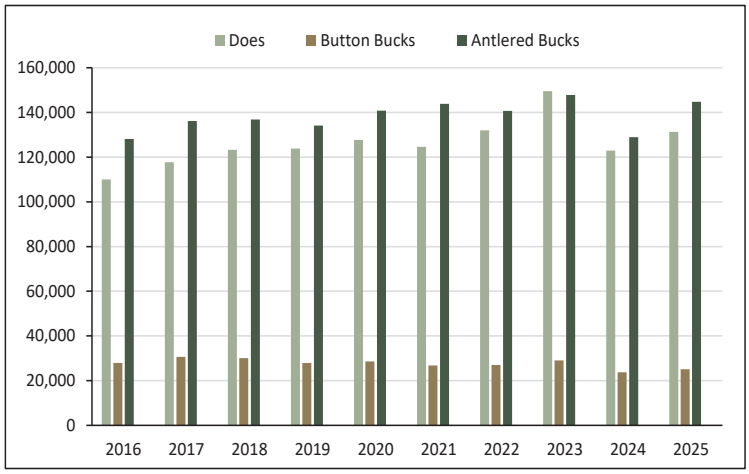


Figure 2. Harvest composition of deer in Missouri, 2016-2025.

Deer Hunter and Harvest Trends

In 2025, there were approximately 202,400 archery deer hunters and approximately 444,200 firearms deer hunters in Missouri. Most archery hunters also hunt during firearms season, so there was a total of about 474,200 deer hunters in 2025. This total is roughly 43,500 fewer hunters than the 2012 peak in deer hunter numbers (**Figure 3**). Archery hunter numbers have been fairly stable for the last several years. The number of firearms deer hunters had shown a downward trend; however, the slow decline has leveled off with the five-year average indicating relative stability at approximately 446,000 firearms deer hunters. The total number of hunters in 2025 was less than 1% different from the 2024 total and five-year average (**Figure 3**). Efforts to recruit, reactivate, and retain hunters remain a priority in Missouri.

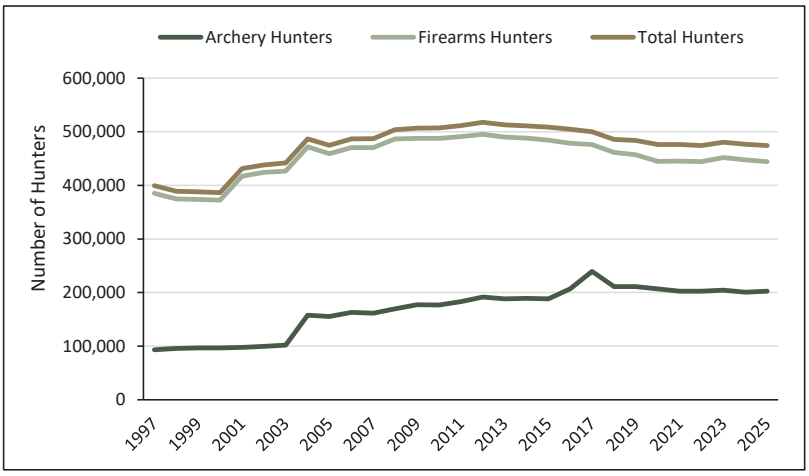


Figure 3. Archery, firearms, and total deer hunter numbers in Missouri, 1997-2025.

Total deer harvest was 9% higher in 2025 than the 2024 deer season, and a 1% increase from the previous five-year average (**Figure 1**). The percentage of hunters who harvested at least one deer during the firearms and archery deer seasons during 2025 was 40% and 24%, respectively (**Figure 4**). In 2025, nonresidents accounted for approximately 9% of Missouri hunters (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Deer harvest summary by hunter residency, deer type, and hunting method in Missouri, 2011-2025.

Year	Residency[1]		Deer Type			Method[2]		Total
	Resident	Nonresident	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Archery	Firearms	
2011	274,695	15,103	114,607	39,697	135,830	49,594	238,700	290,134
2012	293,825	15,713	120,491	42,155	147,214	51,122	256,927	309,860
2013	238,084	13,800	104,853	31,002	116,149	50,140	200,114	252,004
2014	242,020	14,930	114,409	29,943	112,720	48,566	206,885	257,072
2015	264,230	15,430	125,248	32,362	122,294	50,242	228,194	279,904
2016	249,339	16,542	128,311	28,016	110,267	47,734	217,508	266,594
2017	265,682	18,504	136,127	30,602	117,747	51,991	231,124	284,476
2018	269,948	20,119	136,849	30,115	123,260	52,915	235,732	290,224
2019	265,637	20,088	134,092	27,970	123,811	61,407	222,820	285,873
2020	274,746	22,333	140,855	28,652	127,707	67,487	227,833	297,214
2021	270,765	24,240	143,815	26,750	124,578	59,498	233,325	295,143
2022	273,140	24,815	140,735	27,029	131,955	56,683	240,827	299,719
2023	297,580	26,090	147,850	29,094	149,504	55,731	268,444	326,448
2024	247,478	24,704	128,935	23,779	122,942	56,516	216,906	275,656
2025	272,751	26,317	144,772	25,063	131,290	62,281	236,551	301,125

[1]Does not include harvests where residency specifications were not available.
[2]Does not include deer harvested during managed hunts.

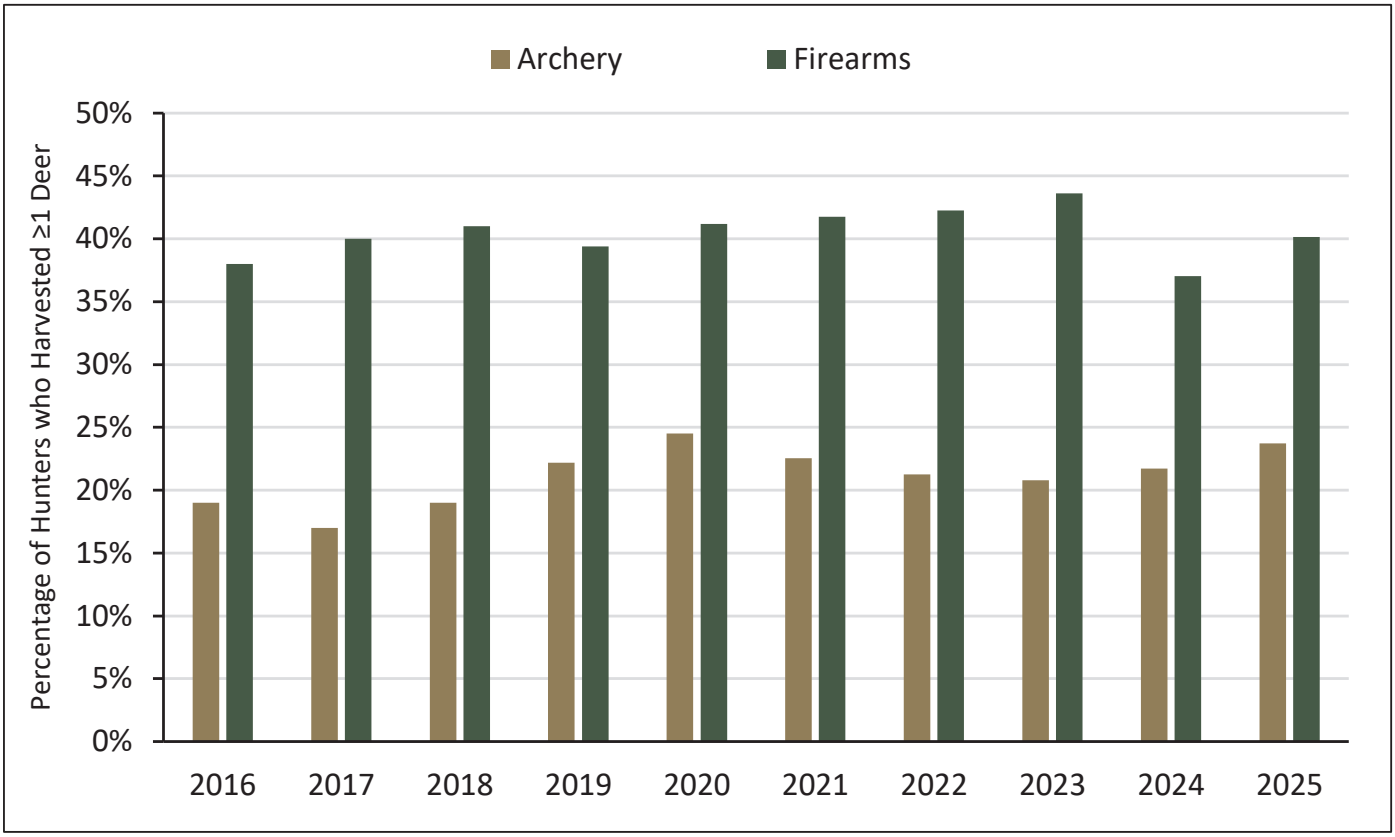


Figure 4. Success rates of archery and firearms deer hunters in Missouri, 2016-2025.

Table 3. Deer observations during the 2025 deer season by hunters participating in MDC's wildlife observation survey compared to the previous five-year and ten-year averages.

	2025		5-Yr. Avg.		10-Yr. Avg.	
Region	**Deer Seen per Hour**	**Does per Buck**	**Deer Seen per Hour**	**Does per Buck**	**Deer Seen per Hour**	**Does per Buck**
Central	1.19	1.50	1.06	1.71	1.00	1.76
Kansas City	0.88	1.40	1.12	1.60	1.03	1.65
Northeast	1.33	1.32	1.18	1.47	1.15	1.55
Northwest	1.35	1.57	1.19	1.59	1.15	1.68
Ozark	0.48	1.61	0.76	2.53	0.75	2.39
Southeast	0.97	3.25	0.81	2.60	0.75	2.52
Southwest	1.20	1.66	1.10	2.09	1.04	2.09
St. Louis	0.75	1.73	0.85	1.86	0.81	1.94
Statewide	**0.95**	**1.59**	**1.03**	**1.77**	**0.97**	**1.81**

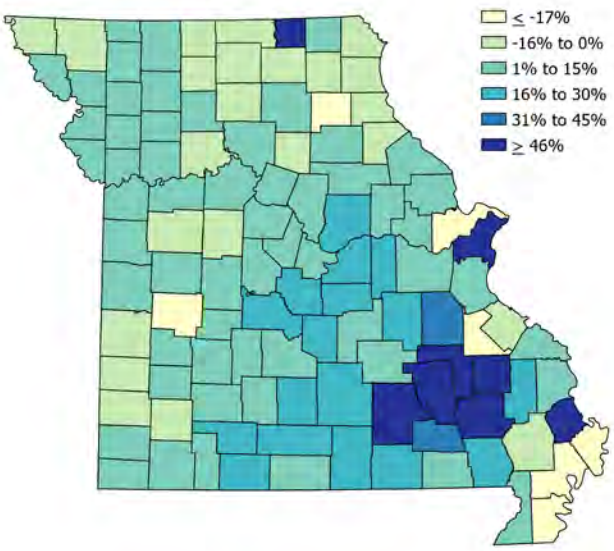


Figure 5. Percent change in total deer harvest in Missouri in 2025 compared to the 2024 deer season.

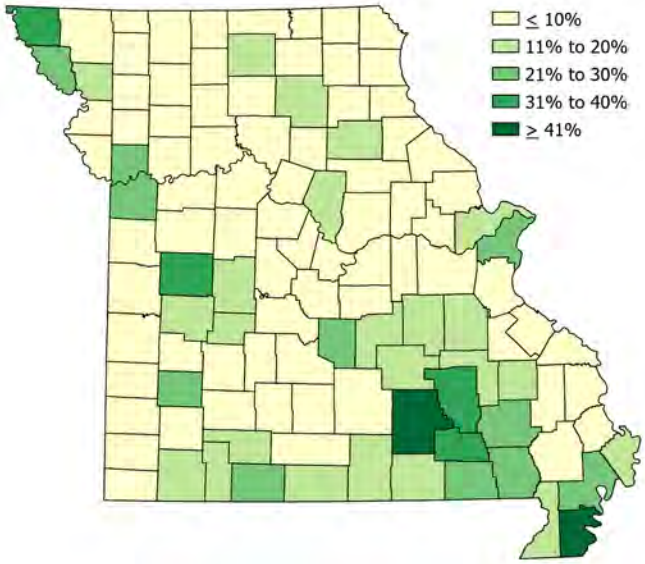


Figure 6. Percentage of total deer harvest on public land in Missouri during the 2025 hunting season.

Table 4. Permits issued and deer harvested by permit type in Missouri, 2024-2025.

Permit Type[1]	Number of Permits Issued			Number of Deer Harvested		
	2024	2025	Change	2024	2025	Change
Archery Any-Deer	138,579	139,736	+1%	31,237	34,841	+12%
Landowner Archery Any-Deer	54,040	53,419	-1%	3,859	4,529	+17%
Youth Archery Any-Deer	10,440	10,591	+1%	1,786	2,074	+16%
Archery Antlerless	68,361	70,872	+4%	14,888	15,914	+7%
Landowner Archery Antlerless	104,694	103,818	-1%	3,472	3,861	+11%
Youth Archery Antlerless	4,667	4,820	+3%	684	793	+16%
Firearms Any-Deer	316,336	313,239	-1%	78,714	87,086	+11%
Landowner Firearms Any-Deer	82,187	81,173	-1%	16,537	18,728	+13%
Youth Firearms Any-Deer	58,266	59,133	+1%	20,484	23,545	+15%
Firearms Antlerless	266,647	265,194	-1%	76,498	80,024	+5%
Landowner Firearms Antlerless	96,538	98,083	+2%	12,487	13,494	+8%
Youth Firearms Antlerless	37,153	39,568	+7%	9,312	11,215	+20%
Resident Firearms	811,746	811,772	0%	196,714	216,204	+10%
Nonresident Firearms	45,381	44,618	-2%	17,318	17,888	+3%
Resident Archery	358,955	360,662	0%	48,571	53,670	+10%
Nonresident Archery	21,826	22,594	+4%	7,355	8,342	+13%

[1]Not an inclusive list of permit types.

Table 5. Deer hunter and harvest statistics in Missouri, 2025.

	Archery	Firearms	Archery & Firearms Combined
Age Distribution of Hunters	**Number of Hunters**		**Number of Hunters[1]**
10 or younger	3,633	23,379	23,801
11-15	10,408	40,971	41,895
16-40	81,987	166,272	182,093
41 or older	106,602	213,862	227,052
Total hunters	202,630	444,484	474,841
Any-Deer Permits Issued	**Number of Permits**		**Number of Hunters[1]**
Resident	132,358	344,192	362,891
Nonresident	17,969	28,180	41,225
Landowner	53,419	81,173	81,796
Antlerless Permit Sales[2]	**Number of Hunters**		**Number of Hunters[3]**
1	38,940	156,543	146,050
2	10,605	41,683	51,741
3	2,357	9,230	15,597
4 or more	1,761	8,451	17,116
Deer Harvested	**Number of Hunters**		**Number of Hunters[4]**
0	154,544	265,993	270,262
1	38,041	136,205	143,678
2	7,555	31,072	40,849
3	1,674	7,638	12,290
4 or more	816	3,576	7,762
Antlered Bucks Harvested[5]	**Number of Hunters**		**Number of Hunters[4]**
0	172,017	332,483	340,792
1	29,847	111,249	124,361
2	766	752	9,688
Deer Harvested	**Percent of Hunters**		**Percent of Hunters[4]**
0	76.27%	59.84%	56.92%
1	18.77%	30.64%	30.26%
2	3.73%	6.99%	8.60%
3 or more	1.23%	2.52%	4.22%
Antlered Bucks Harvested[5]	**Percent of Hunters**		**Percent of Hunters[4]**
0	84.89%	74.80%	71.77%
1	14.73%	25.03%	26.19%
2	0.38%	0.17%	2.04%

[1]Number of individuals that held an archery and/or firearms any-deer permit.
[2]Excludes no-cost landowner permits.
[3]Number of hunters that purchased the specified number of permits when combining their archery and firearms permits.
[4]Number/percent of hunters that harvested the specified number when combining their archery and firearms harvest.
[5]Includes hunters that harvested antlered bucks during managed hunts.

Regional Deer Population Status and Summaries

Statewide deer population trends are important; however, regional trends are more informative to most landowners and hunters. It is also important to recognize that deer populations can vary considerably within a region and even within a county. Regional and local diversity in deer numbers can be a result of differences in land cover and use, harvest regulations, hunter goals and density, and disease events. Therefore, regional information should be considered as a starting point when evaluating deer populations within a localized area.



Table 6. Regional summary of deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

Region	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Central	45,426	5.5	10.4	4.3
Kansas City	31,404	4.5	7.8	4.4
Northeast	42,745	5.7	9.3	4.2
Northwest	32,768	3.5	6.9	3.5
Ozark	40,974	4.6	6.5	2.4
Southeast	34,604	4.0	6.9	2.7
Southwest	42,835	4.6	7.8	3.7
St. Louis	30,369	6.9	14.0	8.2
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**301,125 (t)**	**4.9 (a)**	**8.7 (a)**	**4.2 (a)**

Central Region Summary

Deer harvest in Central Region during 2025 (45,426) was 14% higher than 2024 (**Figure 7**). Central Region recorded the highest total harvest among regions in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile ranked third among regions. Firearms hunters per square mile ranked second, and archery hunters per square mile ranked third (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Callaway, Gasconade, and Morgan (**Table 7**). Gasconade County had the greatest harvest per square mile and number of firearms hunters per square mile in the region (**Table 7**). Boone County had the most archery hunters per square mile (**Table 7**).

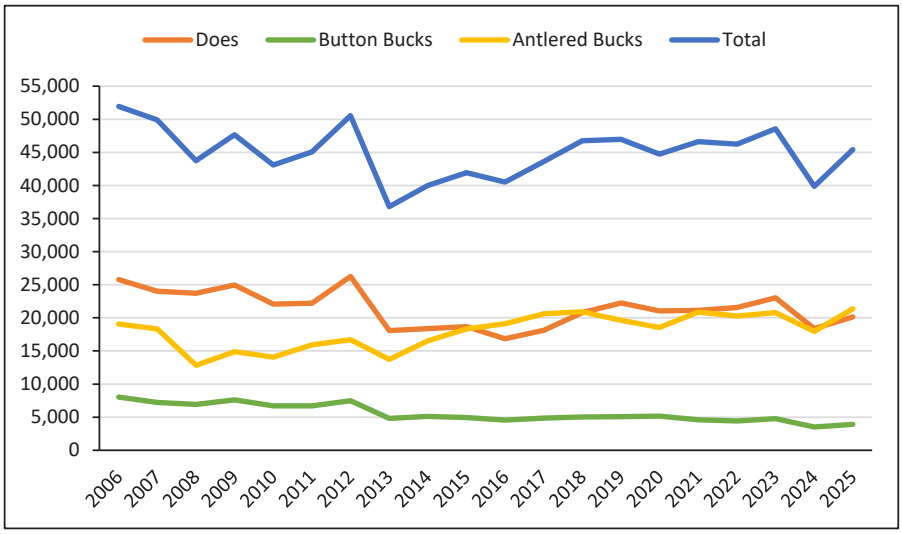


Figure 7. Central Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 7. Central Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Audrain	2,305	3.5	6.7	2.8
Boone	3,439	5.6	14.4	6.6
Callaway	5,197	6.6	14.0	6.1
Camden	3,714	6.1	9.2	4.2
Cole	2,029	5.8	9.9	3.5
Cooper	2,320	4.4	8.1	2.2
Gasconade	4,073	8.2	17.1	5.5
Howard	2,304	5.3	10.1	6.3
Maries	2,204	4.3	8.4	3.2
Miller	2,850	5.1	8.5	2.9
Moniteau	1,822	4.6	8.6	3.2
Montgomery	3,419	6.8	16.5	6.1
Morgan	3,962	6.9	9.1	4.5
Osage	3,740	6.4	10.5	5.9
Saline	2,048	2.9	5.6	1.7
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**45,426 (t)**	**5.5 (a)**	**10.4 (a)**	**4.3 (a)**

Kansas City Region Summary

Deer harvest in Kansas City Region during 2025 (31,404) was 3% higher than 2024 (**Figure 8**). Kansas City Region ranked seventh among regions in total harvest in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile ranked sixth among regions. Firearms hunters per square mile tied at fourth, and archery hunters per square mile ranked second (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Benton, St. Clair, and Henry (**Table 8**). Jackson County had the greatest harvest per square mile, and Benton County had the greatest number of firearms hunters per square mile in the region (**Table 8**). Additionally, Jackson County had the most archery hunters per square mile (**Table 8**).

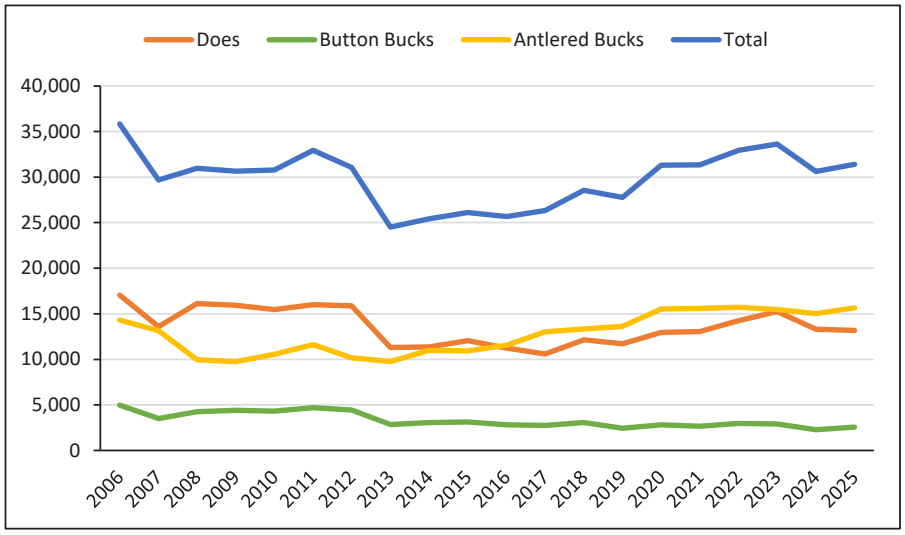


Figure 8. Kansas City Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 8. Kansas City Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Bates	2,316	3.0	5.2	2.0
Benton	4,228	6.3	10.6	6.4
Cass	2,731	4.4	9.1	4.3
Clay	1,139	3.8	8.5	7.0
Henry	3,300	5.5	10.2	4.0
Jackson	2,415	6.4	6.1	8.6
Johnson	3,057	4.0	7.0	3.8
Lafayette	1,684	2.9	7.0	2.7
Pettis	2,867	4.4	7.8	2.4
Platte	1,153	3.3	7.2	5.3
St. Clair	3,383	5.3	10.3	4.2
Vernon	3,131	4.4	4.7	1.7
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**31,404 (t)**	**4.5 (a)**	**7.8 (a)**	**4.4 (a)**

Northeast Region Summary

Deer harvest in Northeast Region during 2025 (42,745) was 2% lower than 2024 (**Figure 9**). Northeast Region ranked third among regions in total harvest in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile ranked second among regions. Firearms hunters per square mile ranked third, and archery hunters per square mile ranked fourth (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Pike, Macon, and Monroe (**Table 9**). Pike County had the greatest harvest, the greatest number of firearms hunters, and the greatest number of archery hunters per square mile (**Table 9**).

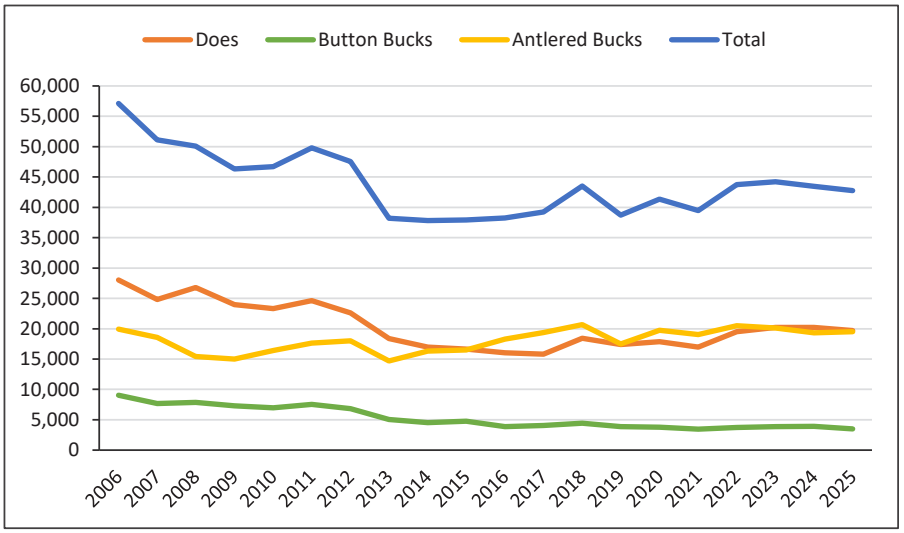


Figure 9. Northeast Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 9. Northeast Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Adair	2,639	5.0	9.8	3.9
Clark	2,750	5.8	9.7	5.3
Knox	2,646	5.6	9.2	3.5
Lewis	2,407	5.1	7.7	4.2
Macon	4,525	6.0	11.3	3.7
Marion	2,339	5.8	9.5	4.6
Monroe	3,749	6.2	11.1	5.9
Pike	4,848	7.8	11.8	6.0
Putnam	2,336	4.8	7.3	3.6
Ralls	2,742	6.1	10.2	4.4
Randolph	2,476	5.6	10.6	4.4
Schuyler	1,512	5.2	7.3	2.8
Scotland	2,640	6.4	9.1	4.3
Shelby	2,559	5.5	7.1	2.3
Sullivan	2,577	4.2	8.0	3.5
Total(t)/Avg. (a)	**42,745 (t)**	**5.7 (a)**	**9.3 (a)**	**4.2 (a)**

Northwest Region Summary

Deer harvest in Northwest Region during 2025 (32,768) was 3% higher than 2024 (**Figure 10**). Northwest Region ranked sixth among regions in total harvest in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile ranked last among regions. Firearms hunters per square mile tied at sixth, and archery hunters per square mile ranked sixth (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Harrison, Daviess, and Linn (**Table 10**). Daviess County had the greatest harvest per square mile, and Caldwell County had the greatest number of firearms hunters per square mile in the region (**Table 10**). Additionally, Caldwell County had the most archery hunters per square mile (**Table 10**).

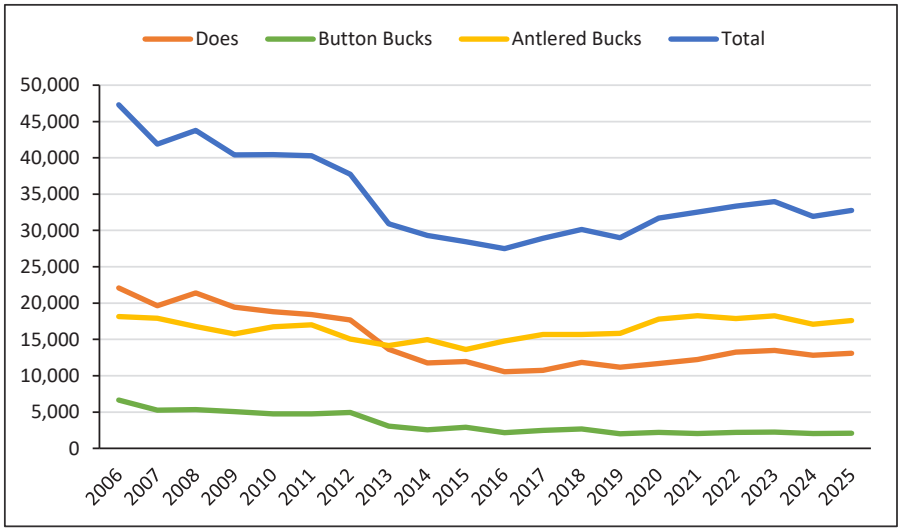


Figure 10. Northwest Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 10. Northwest Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Andrew	1,065	2.6	8.1	3.2
Atchison	540	1.0	3.3	1.4
Buchanan	867	2.5	6.1	3.9
Caldwell	2,129	5.3	9.9	6.4
Carroll	2,358	3.7	7.1	2.5
Chariton	2,331	3.6	7.0	2.7
Clinton	1,016	2.7	7.0	6.2
Daviess	2,873	5.4	8.0	3.9
DeKalb	1,097	2.8	7.7	2.8
Gentry	1,536	3.3	7.5	3.0
Grundy	1,812	4.5	5.8	3.3
Harrison	3,220	4.7	7.3	5.0
Holt	849	2.0	3.8	1.8
Linn	2,590	4.6	6.7	3.5
Livingston	2,120	4.4	8.4	3.7
Mercer	2,036	4.8	6.2	4.7
Nodaway	1,433	1.7	4.1	1.0
Ray	1,800	3.4	9.0	3.3
Worth	1,096	4.3	7.6	3.3
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**32,768 (t)**	**3.5 (a)**	**6.9 (a)**	**3.5 (a)**

Ozark Region Summary

Deer harvest in Ozark Region during 2025 (40,974) was 20% higher than 2024 (**Figure 11**). Ozark Region ranked fourth among regions in total harvest in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile tied with Southwest at fourth among the regions. Firearms hunters per square mile and archery hunters per square mile ranked last (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Howell, Texas, and Oregon (**Table 11**). Howell County had the greatest harvest per square mile in the region (**Table 11**). Phelps and Carter counties tied for the greatest number of firearms hunters per square mile in the region (**Table 11**). Pulaski County had the most archery hunters per square mile (**Table 11**).

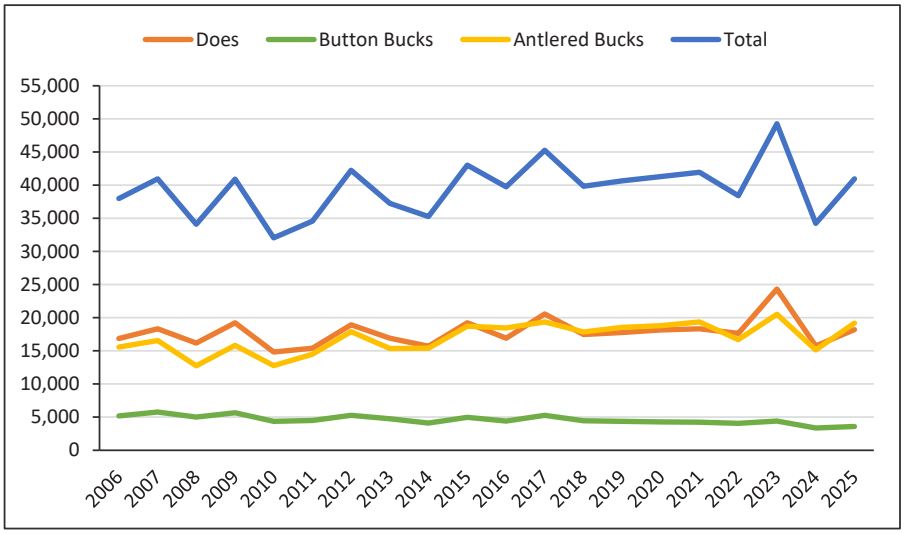


Figure 11. Ozark Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 11. Ozark Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Carter	2,210	4.5	8.4	2.8
Dent	2,659	3.6	6.9	2.3
Douglas	3,695	4.6	5.7	3.1
Howell	5,474	6.1	6.2	1.9
Oregon	4,176	5.4	5.3	1.9
Ozark	2,819	3.9	6.4	2.9
Phelps	2,723	4.2	8.4	3.2
Pulaski	2,501	4.9	8.2	4.1
Ripley	3,088	5.1	6.2	2.2
Shannon	3,030	3.1	4.7	1.4
Texas	4,974	4.3	6.4	1.8
Wright	3,625	5.5	5.4	1.9
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**40,974 (t)**	**4.6 (a)**	**6.5 (a)**	**2.4 (a)**

Southeast Region Summary

Deer harvest in Southeast Region during 2025 (34,604) was 24% higher than 2024 (**Figure 12**). Southeast Region ranked fifth among regions in total harvest in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile ranked seventh among regions. Firearms hunters per square mile tied at sixth, and archery hunters per square mile ranked seventh (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Wayne, Bollinger, and St. Francois (**Table 12**). St. Francois County had the greatest harvest per square mile and the greatest number of firearms hunters per square mile in the region (**Table 12**). Perry County had the most archery hunters per square mile (**Table 12**).

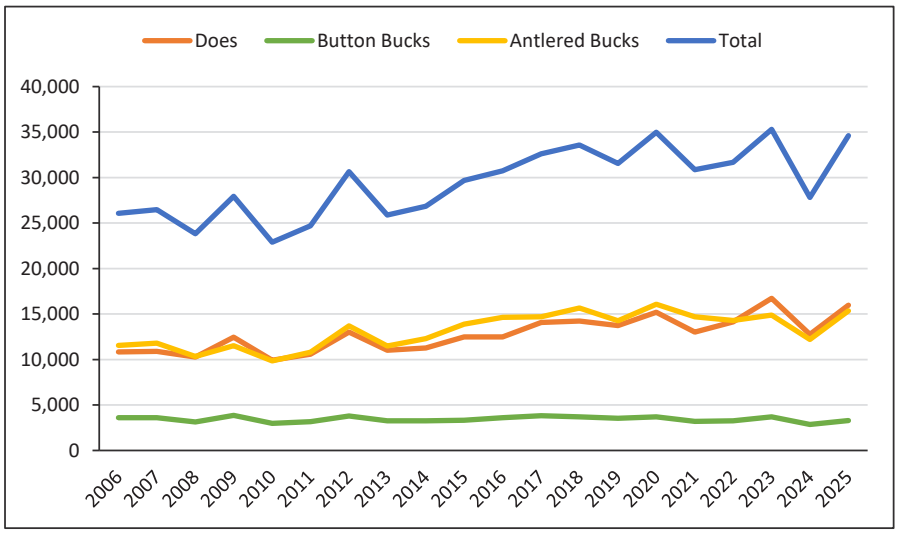


Figure 12. Southeast Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 12. Southeast Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Bollinger	3,992	6.7	11.4	4.3
Butler	1,852	2.9	6.1	2.4
Cape Girardeau	3,186	5.9	9.4	3.2
Dunklin	496	1.0	1.2	1.0
Iron	1,903	3.6	6.2	3.5
Madison	2,892	6.0	11.1	3.5
Mississippi	282	0.7	1.7	0.8
New Madrid	323	0.5	1.4	0.8
Pemiscot	169	0.4	0.8	0.0
Perry	3,160	7.0	13.3	5.1
Reynolds	2,746	3.5	5.8	2.1
Scott	900	2.3	2.5	1.5
St. Francois	3,381	8.4	14.0	5.0
Ste. Genevieve	3,306	6.9	13.8	4.9
Stoddard	1,935	2.5	3.0	2.1
Wayne	4,081	5.7	9.4	2.9
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**34,604 (t)**	**4.0 (a)**	**6.9 (a)**	**2.7 (a)**

Southwest Region Summary

Deer harvest in Southwest Region during 2025 (42,835) was 6% higher than 2024 (**Figure 13**). Southwest Region ranked second among regions in total harvest in 2025 (**Table 6**). Deer harvest per square mile tied with Ozark at fourth among the regions. Firearms hunters per square mile tied with Kansas City at fourth, and archery hunters per square mile ranked fifth (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Laclede, Polk, and Greene (**Table 13**). Hickory County had the greatest harvest, number of firearms hunters, and number of archery hunters per square mile (**Table 13**).

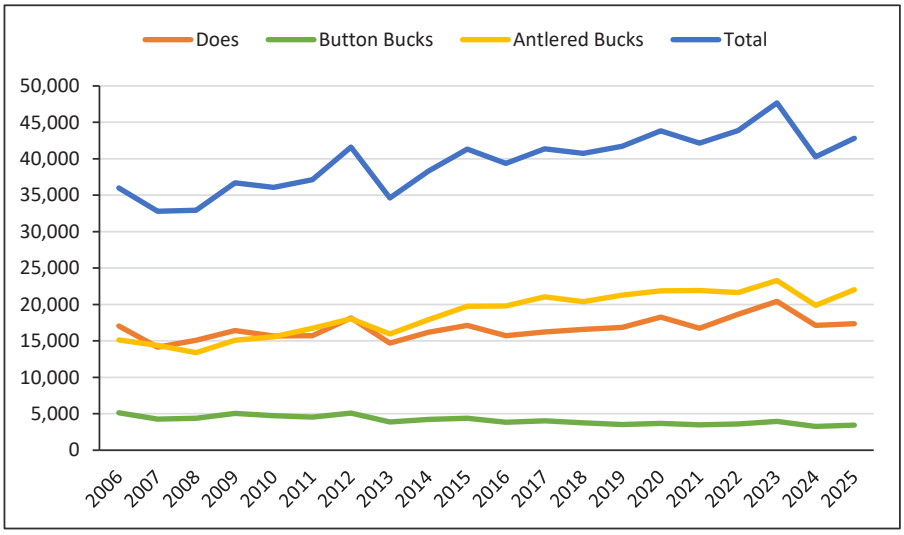


Figure 13. Southwest Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 13. Southwest Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Barry	2,538	3.4	6.9	2.1
Barton	1,844	3.3	4.8	2.4
Cedar	2,334	5.1	7.0	3.5
Christian	2,458	4.6	8.9	4.3
Dade	1,702	3.6	6.8	2.7
Dallas	2,951	5.6	7.6	3.9
Greene	2,955	5.2	9.8	5.9
Hickory	2,578	6.6	12.0	6.0
Jasper	2,607	4.7	7.0	3.8
Laclede	3,328	4.5	6.6	3.3
Lawrence	2,088	3.6	6.1	2.9
McDonald	1,907	3.7	6.2	2.1
Newton	2,890	4.9	8.6	4.2
Polk	3,152	5.1	7.8	3.3
Stone	2,137	4.9	8.0	4.5
Taney	2,452	4.3	9.4	5.7
Webster	2,914	5.1	8.2	2.8
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**42,835 (t)**	**4.6 (a)**	**7.8 (a)**	**3.7 (a)**

St. Louis Region Summary

Deer harvest in St. Louis Region during 2025 (30,369) was 11% higher than 2024 (**Figure 14**). Although St. Louis Region ranked last among regions in total harvest in 2025, deer harvest per square mile ranked first among regions (**Table 6**). Firearms hunters per square mile and archery hunters per square mile also ranked first (**Table 6**). Top harvest counties within the region were Franklin, Jefferson, and Lincoln (**Table 14**). Jefferson County had the greatest harvest and greatest number of firearms hunters per square mile in the region (**Table 14**). St. Louis County had the most archery hunters per square mile (**Table 14**).

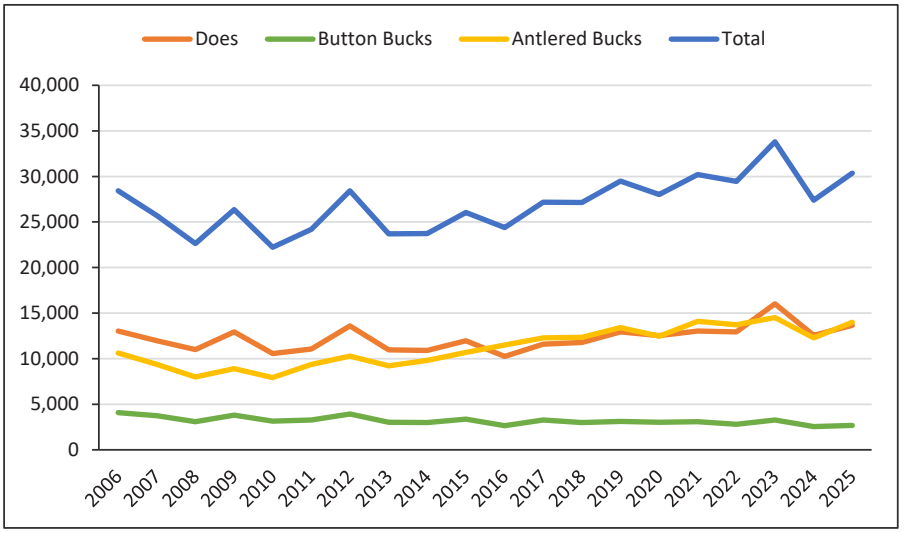


Figure 14. St. Louis Region deer harvest trend, 2006-2025.

Table 14. St. Louis Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2025.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Crawford	3,667	5.2	13.2	4.4
Franklin	6,751	8.0	18.9	7.9
Jefferson	5,173	9.1	20.4	9.9
Lincoln	4,503	7.8	14.6	7.8
St. Charles	2,141	5.0	10.4	10.9
St. Louis	1,922	8.7	8.9	14.4
Warren	2,787	6.9	17.0	6.9
Washington	3,425	4.7	8.8	3.7
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	**30,369 (t)**	**6.9 (a)**	**14.0 (a)**	**8.2 (a)**

County Deer Population Status

Deer populations can be highly variable within a region and even within a county due to variation in habitat availability, harvest regulations, local hunter goals and density, amount of public and private land, and the occurrence of disease outbreaks (e.g., hemorrhagic disease). Therefore, county-wide assessments of deer population trends are not applicable to every local situation but are a general representation of the status and population trend.

The Deer Program evaluates a variety of data to assess county-specific deer populations and for hunting regulation development including:

- **Harvest data —The total number and composition (antlered bucks, does, and button bucks) of harvested deer.**
- **Population data — Population simulations incorporating age-at-harvest data and estimated survival and reproduction rates. Indices (e.g., antlered buck harvest, wildlife observation survey data) are also used to help estimate deer population trends.**
- **Hunter, landowner, and staff surveys — Hunters and landowners are randomly selected to receive surveys.**
- **Public and staff input — Input is received via email, the MDC website, public meetings, and phone calls.**



Survey data are critical when assessing the deer population in relation to public acceptance levels. In cooperation with the USDA, we send out surveys statewide to a random sample of agricultural producers to assess perceptions and attitudes toward deer populations and regulations. Additionally, we send surveys to a random sample of deer hunters annually to estimate hunter effort, hunter density, and opinions concerning deer populations and regulations. We also consider public comments received throughout the year via the web, letters, calls, social media, public meetings,

The Deer Program reviews this information annually on a county-by-county basis to classify the deer population status and trend. Socially acceptable levels (social carrying capacity) are the first thing we look at when classifying the status of the deer population. Although biological carrying capacity, or the landscape's limitations on the number of deer that can be supported, is included within our assessment, social carrying capacity is typically much lower than biological carrying capacity. By monitoring population trends in each county, we gain an understanding of population status and adjust harvest regulations accordingly.

The goal of MDC's Deer Program is to maintain stable deer populations within each county that are at a socially acceptable level for most stakeholders. Missouri's deer population had been increasing throughout much of the state. Liberalizations to antlerless permit numbers and season length have helped to stabilize deer numbers in most areas. Currently, deer populations are at desired levels in most counties.

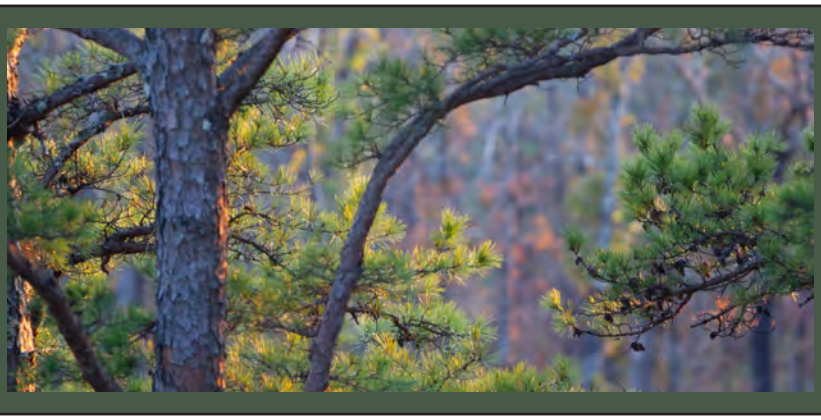


Table 15. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2025.

	Archery				Firearms				Totals[1]			
County	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Adair	359	27	211	597	985	180	877	2,042	1,344	207	1,088	2,639
Andrew	137	13	92	242	523	49	251	823	660	62	343	1,065
Atchison	103	6	59	168	305	11	56	372	408	17	115	540
Audrain	234	33	196	463	803	185	854	1,842	1,037	218	1,050	2,305
Barry	243	38	172	453	1,102	148	835	2,085	1,345	186	1,007	2,538
Barton	192	19	149	360	801	98	585	1,484	993	117	734	1,844
Bates	273	27	202	502	995	120	699	1,814	1,268	147	901	2,316
Benton	417	63	407	887	1,431	355	1,507	3,293	1,853	431	1,944	4,228
Bollinger	284	83	345	712	1,423	358	1,499	3,280	1,707	441	1,844	3,992
Boone	500	52	350	902	1,138	193	1,151	2,482	1,652	251	1,536	3,439
Buchanan	100	7	75	182	360	47	278	685	460	54	353	867
Butler	252	40	271	563	635	129	522	1,286	887	171	794	1,852
Caldwell	186	18	127	331	876	108	654	1,638	1,090	150	889	2,129
Callaway	529	56	407	992	1,825	376	1,970	4,171	2,360	437	2,400	5,197
Camden	428	55	412	895	1,344	234	1,216	2,794	1,777	295	1,642	3,714
Cape Girardeau	236	48	289	573	1,024	289	1,300	2,613	1,260	337	1,589	3,186
Carroll	244	23	159	426	1,106	112	714	1,932	1,350	135	873	2,358
Carter	248	48	266	562	756	150	648	1,554	1,036	218	956	2,210
Cass	391	57	286	734	1,053	153	791	1,997	1,444	210	1,077	2,731
Cedar	228	31	171	430	983	143	778	1,904	1,211	174	949	2,334
Chariton	206	28	173	407	968	143	799	1,910	1,187	171	973	2,331
Christian	318	33	234	585	984	167	722	1,873	1,302	200	956	2,458
Clark	357	28	223	608	886	205	1,051	2,142	1,243	233	1,274	2,750
Clay	228	22	163	413	340	59	211	610	596	101	442	1,139
Clinton	126	12	70	208	472	69	260	801	600	82	334	1,016
Cole	207	33	183	423	716	179	708	1,603	926	212	891	2,029
Cooper	239	37	195	471	827	163	859	1,849	1,066	200	1,054	2,320
Crawford	333	41	262	636	1,472	255	1,304	3,031	1,805	296	1,566	3,667
Dade	157	20	127	304	703	135	560	1,398	860	155	687	1,702
Dallas	298	50	234	582	1,175	230	946	2,351	1,475	280	1,196	2,951
Daviess	307	35	289	631	1,069	170	1,003	2,242	1,376	205	1,292	2,873
DeKalb	102	9	110	221	447	66	363	876	549	75	473	1,097
Dent	163	34	177	374	1,045	233	992	2,270	1,208	268	1,183	2,659

[1]Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Table 15. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2025 (continued).

	Archery				Firearms				Totals[1]			
County	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Douglas	286	34	286	606	1,534	229	1,326	3,089	1,820	263	1,612	3,695
Dunklin	46	6	81	133	206	26	131	363	252	32	212	496
Franklin	632	108	534	1,274	2,547	510	2,382	5,439	3,185	623	2,943	6,751
Gasconade	327	35	242	604	1,661	295	1,513	3,469	1,988	330	1,755	4,073
Gentry	159	11	96	266	638	96	536	1,270	797	107	632	1,536
Greene	480	53	372	905	1,021	150	852	2,023	1,508	208	1,239	2,955
Grundy	181	15	150	346	642	120	673	1,435	828	138	846	1,812
Harrison	432	20	311	763	1,287	162	1,008	2,457	1,719	182	1,319	3,220
Henry	348	57	293	698	1,271	247	1,084	2,602	1,619	304	1,377	3,300
Hickory	249	46	198	493	911	223	951	2,085	1,160	269	1,149	2,578
Holt	129	9	74	212	379	41	214	634	510	51	288	849
Howard	228	33	185	446	855	120	873	1,848	1,084	157	1,063	2,304
Howell	418	68	383	869	2,040	458	2,107	4,605	2,458	526	2,490	5,474
Iron	173	37	211	421	750	153	579	1,482	923	190	790	1,903
Jackson	452	55	383	890	487	68	398	953	1,069	186	1,160	2,415
Jasper	345	30	249	624	1,033	134	816	1,983	1,378	164	1,065	2,607
Jefferson	700	134	752	1,586	1,740	321	1,526	3,587	2,440	455	2,278	5,173
Johnson	352	33	251	636	1,283	225	913	2,421	1,635	258	1,164	3,057
Knox	299	46	214	559	887	193	1,007	2,087	1,186	239	1,221	2,646
Laclede	314	44	236	594	1,365	237	1,117	2,719	1,680	282	1,366	3,328
Lafayette	147	24	133	304	694	103	583	1,380	841	127	716	1,684
Lawrence	218	32	188	438	855	139	656	1,650	1,073	171	844	2,088
Lewis	258	25	208	491	808	173	935	1,916	1,066	198	1,143	2,407
Lincoln	448	68	420	936	1,399	331	1,693	3,423	1,890	414	2,199	4,503
Linn	285	21	225	531	1,047	126	886	2,059	1,332	147	1,111	2,590
Livingston	259	20	157	436	865	111	708	1,684	1,124	131	865	2,120
Macon	521	56	403	980	1,607	303	1,590	3,500	2,135	364	2,026	4,525
Madison	211	38	246	495	1,002	251	1,144	2,397	1,213	289	1,390	2,892
Maries	235	28	125	388	883	178	755	1,816	1,118	206	880	2,204
Marion	255	29	191	475	798	152	914	1,864	1,053	181	1,105	2,339
McDonald	252	26	136	414	814	91	588	1,493	1,066	117	724	1,907

[1]Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Table 15. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2025 (continued).

	Archery				Firearms				Totals[1]			
County	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Mercer	264	19	155	438	798	96	704	1,598	1,062	115	859	2,036
Miller	252	33	183	468	1,129	228	1,025	2,382	1,381	261	1,208	2,850
Mississippi	20	3	28	51	176	7	48	231	196	10	76	282
Moniteau	134	29	121	284	697	173	668	1,538	831	202	789	1,822
Monroe	377	42	278	697	1,304	293	1,399	2,996	1,696	341	1,712	3,749
Montgomery	263	40	263	566	1,240	262	1,351	2,853	1,503	302	1,614	3,419
Morgan	400	70	386	856	1,374	318	1,414	3,106	1,774	388	1,800	3,962
New Madrid	33	2	31	66	177	14	66	257	210	16	97	323
Newton	413	36	278	727	1,114	145	886	2,145	1,534	183	1,173	2,890
Nodaway	192	5	68	265	756	48	364	1,168	948	53	432	1,433
Oregon	355	49	326	730	1,385	325	1,736	3,446	1,740	374	2,062	4,176
Osage	340	45	251	636	1,462	279	1,363	3,104	1,802	324	1,614	3,740
Ozark	260	30	178	468	1,171	163	964	2,298	1,457	199	1,163	2,819
Pemiscot	13	5	15	33	100	6	30	136	113	11	45	169
Perry	143	35	188	366	1,171	235	1,388	2,794	1,314	270	1,576	3,160
Pettis	277	40	219	536	1,071	196	1,064	2,331	1,348	236	1,283	2,867
Phelps	280	31	191	502	1,123	189	909	2,221	1,403	220	1,100	2,723
Pike	404	81	464	949	1,407	406	2,072	3,885	1,818	488	2,542	4,848
Platte	236	28	176	440	418	34	261	713	654	62	437	1,153
Polk	291	51	256	598	1,266	241	1,047	2,554	1,557	292	1,303	3,152
Pulaski	290	36	228	554	951	183	813	1,947	1,241	219	1,041	2,501
Putnam	365	26	289	680	812	87	757	1,656	1,177	113	1,046	2,336
Ralls	275	38	259	572	956	188	1,026	2,170	1,231	226	1,285	2,742
Randolph	262	29	191	482	956	148	890	1,994	1,218	177	1,081	2,476
Ray	191	16	96	303	803	127	567	1,497	994	143	663	1,800
Reynolds	236	46	246	528	1,007	213	998	2,218	1,243	259	1,244	2,746
Ripley	232	31	231	494	989	255	1,350	2,594	1,221	286	1,581	3,088
St. Charles	313	36	261	610	580	95	626	1,301	976	156	1,009	2,141
St. Clair	322	69	341	732	1,308	228	1,114	2,650	1,631	297	1,455	3,383
St. Francois	277	64	312	653	1,151	256	1,290	2,697	1,431	322	1,628	3,381
St. Louis	434	77	562	1,073	249	32	218	499	808	145	969	1,922

[1]Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Table 15. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2025 (continued).

	Archery				Firearms				Totals[1]			
County	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Ste. Genevieve	197	37	224	458	1,311	210	1,327	2,848	1,508	247	1,551	3,306
Saline	207	10	182	399	869	112	668	1,649	1,076	122	850	2,048
Schuyler	192	13	121	326	527	128	531	1,186	719	141	652	1,512
Scotland	283	31	219	533	845	217	1,045	2,107	1,128	248	1,264	2,640
Scott	58	24	104	186	341	56	317	714	399	80	421	900
Shannon	266	31	202	499	1,119	248	1,152	2,519	1,388	279	1,363	3,030
Shelby	281	32	205	518	881	175	985	2,041	1,162	207	1,190	2,559
Stoddard	180	52	307	539	590	156	620	1,366	784	212	939	1,935
Stone	286	30	206	522	844	140	631	1,615	1,130	170	837	2,137
Sullivan	333	29	268	630	1,020	114	813	1,947	1,353	143	1,081	2,577
Taney	284	40	206	530	1,043	146	733	1,922	1,327	186	939	2,452
Texas	358	48	296	702	2,117	347	1,808	4,272	2,475	395	2,104	4,974
Vernon	369	49	296	714	1,340	163	914	2,417	1,709	212	1,210	3,131
Warren	311	39	253	603	1,026	186	972	2,184	1,337	225	1,225	2,787
Washington	298	74	279	651	1,271	306	1,197	2,774	1,569	380	1,476	3,425
Wayne	353	90	459	902	1,533	310	1,315	3,158	1,898	402	1,781	4,081
Webster	312	50	242	604	1,130	234	946	2,310	1,442	284	1,188	2,914
Worth	174	7	109	290	444	57	305	806	618	64	414	1,096
Wright	332	60	276	668	1,421	271	1,265	2,957	1,753	331	1,541	3,625
Regional												
Central	4,523	589	3,681	8,793	16,823	3,295	16,388	36,506	21,375	3,905	20,146	45,426
Kansas City	3,812	524	3,150	7,486	11,691	1,951	9,539	23,181	15,667	2,571	13,166	31,404
Northeast	4,821	532	3,744	9,097	14,679	2,962	15,892	33,533	19,529	3,506	19,710	42,745
Northwest	3,777	294	2,595	6,666	13,785	1,759	10,343	25,887	17,612	2,082	13,074	32,768
Ozark	3,488	500	3,040	7,028	15,651	3,051	15,070	33,772	19,200	3,578	18,196	40,974
Southeast	2,712	610	3,357	6,679	12,597	2,669	12,574	27,840	15,338	3,289	15,977	34,604
Southwest	4,880	629	3,654	9,163	17,144	2,801	13,649	33,594	22,041	3,438	17,356	42,835
St. Louis	3,469	577	3,323	7,369	10,284	2,036	9,918	22,238	14,010	2,694	13,665	30,369
Statewide												
Totals	**31,482**	**4,255**	**26,544**	**62,281**	**112,654**	**20,524**	**103,373**	**236,551**	**144,772**	**25,063**	**131,290**	**301,125**

[1]Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Planting Food Plots for Deer

Landowners and land managers may consider food plots as part of their deer management strategy. They are an excellent tool to increase hunting success and to provide nutrition during periods of stress when native vegetation is lower quality or lacking on the landscape. However, food plots should be used in combination with native habitat management, rather than as a replacement. Prior to establishment, it is important to set objectives, determine the cost, identify a suitable location, establish the size/shape (**Figure 15**), and select the appropriate forages. There is no one-size-fits-all food plot system, so it may take several seasons to determine what works best for a given area.

Food plots generally fall into two categories termed annual or perennial. These categories are further divided into cool-season and warm-season plantings. Nutritional needs vary throughout the year with deer seeking high protein forages in the spring and summer then shifting to carbohydrate-rich foods in fall and winter. For the best year-round supplemental nutrition, consider planting both warm and cool-season food plots.

Annual vs. Perennial

Annual food plots complete their life cycle in one growing season and must be replanted each year (although some types can reseed themselves). They establish quickly, can produce abundant, high-quality forage, allow flexibility to rotate different plantings, and are more adaptable to changing conditions. Annual forages commonly planted in Missouri include oats, wheat, rye, brassicas, annual clovers, forage beans (e.g., soybeans), corn, sunflowers, grain sorghum, and milo (**Table 16**).

Perennial food plots grow for multiple years with proper management. While they may take longer to fully establish, perennial plots provide dependable forage long term which reduces reseeding cost and time. Popular perennial forages include many clover varieties and alfalfa.

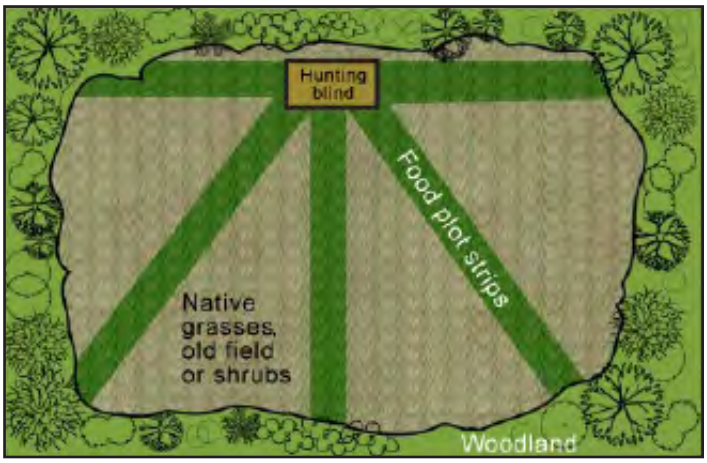


Figure 15. Example food plot design known as the "hub-and-spoke" that combines natural habitat with food plot strips published by the University of Missouri Extension.

Table 16. Example food plot mixes for deer in Missouri.

Mix	Species	Seeding Rate[2] (Broadcasting)
Annual Warm-Season	Alyceclover	10 lbs/acre
	American joinvetch	10 lbs/acre
Annual Cool-Season	Crimson clover	15 lbs/acre
	Small grain[1]	50 lbs/acre
Perennial Cool-Season	Red clover	7 lbs/acre
	Chicory	2 lbs/acre
	Ladino clover	4 lbs/acre
	Small grain[1]	50 lbs/acre

[1]Examples of small grains include winter wheat, oat, or cereal rye. Often serves as annual nurse crop.
[2]Pure live seed (PLS) may vary by seed treatment and coating. Coated clover seeds have fewer PLS per pound than raw seed, so adjust seeding rates.

Cool-season vs. Warm-season

Cool-season or "green browse" mixes thrive in spring and fall when temperatures are moderate. They also can provide nutrition during the winter months when most native vegetation is dormant and are useful for attracting deer during hunting season (**Table 16**).

Warm-season mixes grow best during late spring and summer when temperatures are consistently warm. These plots can provide high-protein forage during antler development and during fawning periods when does need additional nutrients to support lactation (**Table 16**). They can also provide food for deer during the winter months.

More information on food plots in Missouri can be found at Deer: Food and Water Needs | Missouri Department of Conservation or at the University of Missouri Extension Enhancing White-Tailed Deer Habitats on Your Property: Food Plots | MU Extension. The National Deer Association (NDA) offers a beginner's guide to deer food plots at A Beginner's Guide to Deer Food Plots.

Deer Management Assistance Program

In 2025, MDC completed the seventh year of offering the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). The program is designed to enable qualifying landowners to meet deer management goals on their property by offering additional antlerless permits for use during the hunting season. A total of 121 properties were enrolled during 2025, 61 (50%) of which were co-ops involving multiple landowners (**Table 17**). Ninety-seven (80%) properties were enrolled to address deer damage concerns and twenty-four (20%) were enrolled to achieve recreational deer management goals. The total enrolled acreage was approximately 120,135 acres (**Table 17**). Forty-six (40%) counties had at least one property enrolled in DMAP. Across all enrolled properties, 614 hunters were issued a total of 3,104 DMAP permits (**Table 17**).

Feedback from 57 DMAP participants indicated high program satisfaction, with 89% affirming that DMAP information was clear and accessible, and 88% finding the application process straightforward, which is consistent with previous years. Respondent feedback indicated 95% were satisfied with the program and 95% agreed DMAP was an effective program to help manage local deer populations. Recent liberalization in method of take and the reduced acreage requirement has been viewed favorably by participants. However, program participants have expressed a desire for a simpler DMAP permit allocation process. There is a promising solution in development to simplify the permit allocation process through a pool system rather than individual allocation. To learn more about DMAP, visit https://mdc.mo.gov/dmap.

Table 17. Summary of 2021-2025 Missouri Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) enrollment and harvest data.

	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Eligible Counties	89	114	114	114	114
Enrolled Properties	56	125	131	133	121
Enrolled Landowners	89	251	222	234	275
Enrolled Acreage	86,182	172,672	158,653	136,919	120,135
Authorized Permits/ Hunters	1,583 / 338	4,146 / 882	3,654 / 730	3,586 / 671	3,104 / 614
Filled Permits	613 (39%)	1,217 (29%)	794 (22%)	771 (22%)	621 (20%)



Chronic Wasting Disease Overview

Chronic wasting disease (CWD) is a contagious, fatal disease of deer, elk, and other members of the deer family. The disease is caused by a misfolded protein and can be spread by direct contact between deer, when deer encounter the carcass of an infected deer, or when deer encounter the misfolded proteins shed in the environment (urine, feces, saliva) by an infected deer. There is no known cure, treatment, or vaccine for CWD. Over time, CWD can spread widely and infect a large percentage of a deer population. If enough deer become infected, CWD can significantly affect deer populations resulting in lower deer numbers and fewer mature bucks and does, which is occurring in other states.

CWD spreads slowly within deer populations at first, but when about 5% of deer in an area have the disease, a tipping point is reached. After that point, the percentage of deer that have the disease increases significantly. MDC's goal is to keep infection rates below the tipping point. This can be achieved by increasing deer harvest in localized areas where CWD has been found. After the tipping point is reached, management actions to sustain a healthy herd become more difficult. As such, we have a window of opportunity to keep CWD infection rates low, but it will not stay open forever and may already be closing in some areas of the state.

CWD surveillance began in Missouri in 2002. Since that time, more than 320,000 deer have been tested for CWD and more than 300,000 deer were sampled prior to the disease being first detected in the state. The disease was first detected in captive deer in Linn County in 2010, in captive deer in Macon County in 2011, and in free-ranging deer in Macon County in 2012. As of June 2026, CWD has been detected in a total of 938 free-ranging deer in 55 counties. While the continued spread of CWD into new areas of Missouri is concerning, the percentage of CWD-positive deer where CWD has been found remains low. More information can be found at https://mdc.mo.gov/cwd.

There are no known cases of CWD affecting humans. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that hunters have their deer tested if hunting in an area where CWD has been found. The CDC also recommends not consuming meat from known CWD-positive animals. For more information, visit https://www.cdc.gov/chronic-wasting/about/index.html.



CWD Surveillance

More than 24,000 free-ranging deer were tested for CWD across Missouri during the 2025-26 CWD surveillance year (July 1, 2025 - June 30, 2026). Most samples were tested during mandatory sampling within portions of the CWD Management Zone on opening weekend of the November Portion of firearms deer season. Partnering taxidermists and meat processors collected most of the remaining samples.

Of the deer sampled for CWD during the 2025-26 CWD surveillance year, 122 deer tested positive in the following 35 counties: Barry (1), Barton (1), Boone (1), Cape Girardeau (1), Carroll (2), Chariton (6), Clark (2), Cole (3), Crawford (1), Daviess (3), Franklin (7), Greene (1), Grundy (6), Henry (2), Jefferson (13), Lewis (1), Linn (6), Livingston (6), Macon (2), Maries (2), Marion (1), Oregon (1), Osage (17), Ozark (1), Perry (2), Polk (1), Putnam (3), Randolph (1), Ste. Genevieve (17), St. Louis (1), Scotland (4), Shannon (1), Sullivan (4), and Webster (1). CWD detections in Boone, Cape Girardeau, Daviess, Greene, Henry, Ozark, Shannon, St. Louis, and Webster counties were the first detections in these counties.

CWD Regulations Update

Regulations intended to slow CWD spread are implemented within CWD Management Zone counties. The CWD Management Zone includes counties within 10-miles of a CWD detection. For 2025-26, the CWD Management Zone included 82 counties (**Figure 16**). Regulations within the CWD Management Zone included prohibiting placing feed and minerals for deer, mandatory sampling requirements (select counties), removal of the antler-point restriction, and providing additional days of deer hunting opportunity (CWD Portion). There are also carcass disposal regulations throughout the

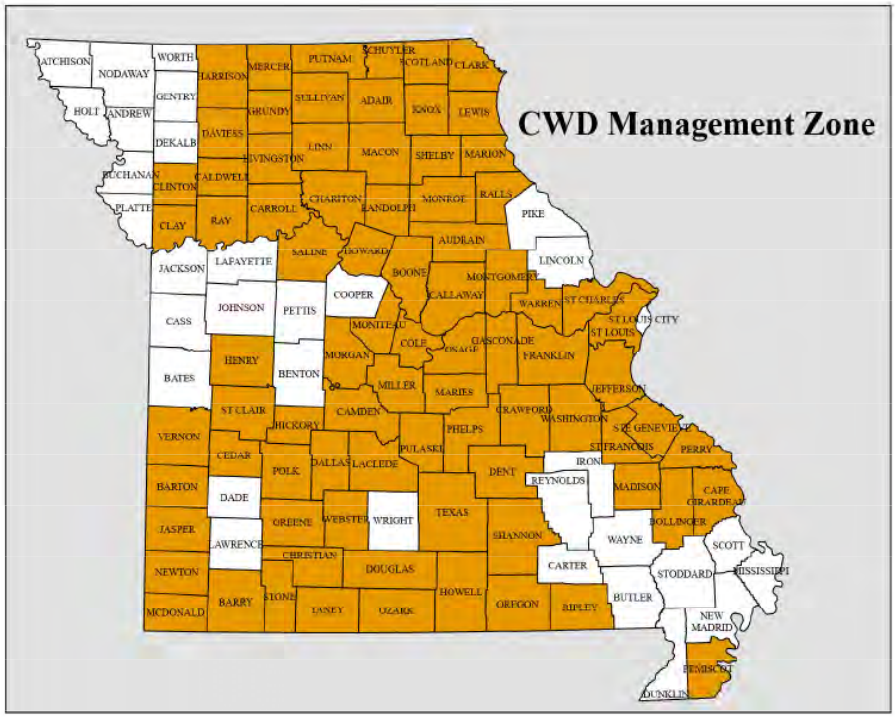


Figure 16. 2025 CWD Management Zone.



Localized CWD Management

Localized CWD management in Missouri occurs within CWD Core Areas which are areas within 1-2 miles of a CWD-positive detection. Within these areas, landowners are provided with no-cost either-sex hunting permits that can be used during deer season. The Department has also worked with landowners on a voluntary basis to conduct targeted removal after the deer season ends. Landowners determined whether targeted removal was conducted on their property and the number and type (bucks and does) of deer that were removed. The objectives of localized CWD management are to remove additional CWD-positive deer from the landscape and to reduce deer density in these localized areas to keep CWD infection rates low.

Targeted removal has been conducted on less than 5% of Missouri's landscape, and the number of deer removed is significantly less than the number of deer harvested by hunters during the deer hunting season. Since 2012, approximately 27,000 deer have been removed during targeted removal. During that same period, hunters harvested over 4 million deer in Missouri. The effectiveness of targeted removal to keep CWD infection rates low is well documented, and we have demonstrated the effectiveness of this CWD management tool in Missouri as well (**Figure 17**).

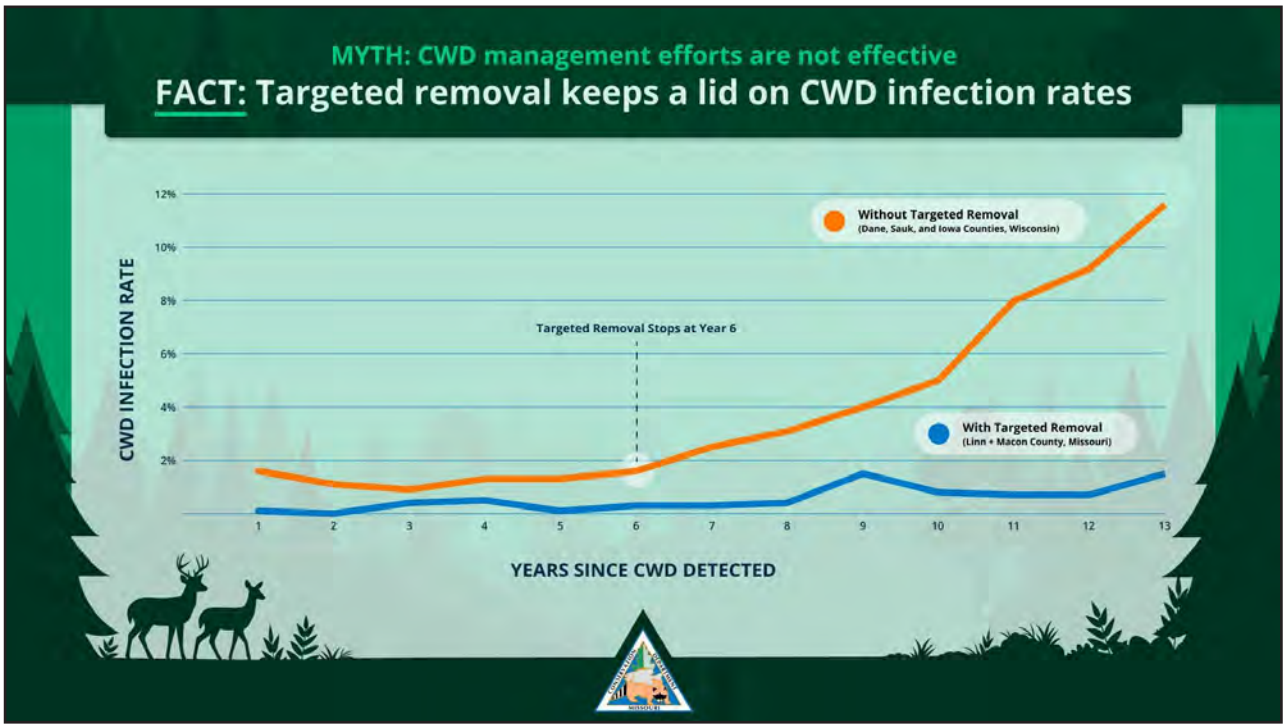


Figure 17. With targeted removal in Linn and Macon counties, CWD infection rates stayed low (<2%) for over 13 years. In Wisconsin's Dane, Sauk, and Iowa counties, where targeted removal efforts were stopped, rates climbed from <2% to nearly 12% in 13 years.



CWD management efforts have kept the percentage of the deer population that has CWD very low in Missouri. As the distribution of CWD changes on the landscape, we recognize that our management approach is going to have to adapt as well. As such, CWD management will continue to be an evolving process in Missouri, and we evaluate our program annually to adjust where needed. Although targeted removal has been an effective tool to keep CWD infection rates low in Missouri, these efforts have been paused and there are currently no plans to resume this approach. Despite the success of CWD management, landowner participation and support of targeted removal efforts have waned through time. The Department remains committed to keeping the deer herd healthy and working collaboratively with hunters and landowners, but we cannot be successful in this work, at the scale needed, without their support and participation. Moving forward, MDC will be working alongside hunters, landowners, and other partners to develop a localized approach in which hunter harvest is the primary tool to manage the deer herd and CWD during the regular deer season. For more information about CWD management in Missouri, visit: https://mdc.mo.gov/cwd.





Serving nature and you

Missouri Department of Conservation