

2024



Missouri Deer Season Summary & Population Status Report



Missouri Department of Conservation

Prepared by:

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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.

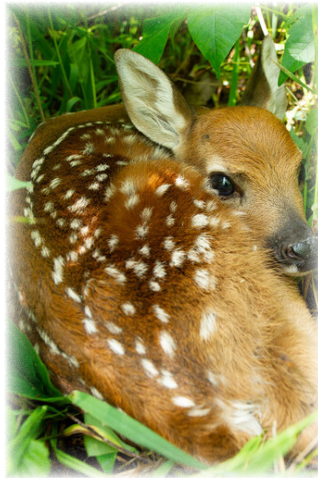
Goal 3: Health and Disease Management – Ensure the maintenance of a healthy deer population and minimize the threat and impacts of CWD and other diseases on the deer population.

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). 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.

2024 Deer Season Summary

Season	Dates	What Was New for 2024
Archery Deer and Turkey Season	Sept. 15 - Nov. 15, 2024 Nov. 27, 2024 - Jan. 15, 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You could no longer use an archery deer permit to take turkeys; you must have used a fall turkey hunting permit. Audrain, Boone, Cole, Dent, Douglas, Howard, Lewis, Maries, Monroe, Newton, Osage, Phelps, Randolph, Saline, Scotland, Shannon, Shelby, and Webster counties were added to the CWD Management Zone. During Nov. 16-17, 2024, hunters who harvested a deer in designated CWD Management Zone counties were required to take the deer (or its head) on the day of harvest to a mandatory CWD sampling station. The antler-point restriction was removed from Audrain, Boone, Cole, Howard, Lewis, Maries, Monroe, Osage, Phelps, Randolph, Saline, Scotland, and Shelby counties. You could fill four firearms antlerless permits in Dent, Douglas, Maries, Newton, and Phelps counties. You could use archery antlerless permits in Dunkin, Mississippi, New Madrid, and Pemiscot counties. The addition of these counties meant that archery antlerless permits could be used statewide. You could use drones (unmanned aerial vehicles) to track wounded deer. Prices for deer and turkey hunting permits were increased to keep pace with the Conservation Department’s rising costs for goods and services.
Firearms Deer Early Antlerless Portion	Oct. 11 - 13, 2024	
Firearms Deer Early Youth Portion	Nov. 2 - 3, 2024	
Firearms Deer November Portion	Nov. 16 - 26, 2024	
Firearms Deer CWD Portion	Nov. 27 - Dec. 1, 2024	
Firearms Deer Late Youth Portion	Nov. 29 - Dec. 1, 2024	
Firearms Deer Late Antlerless Portion	Dec. 7 - 15, 2024	
Firearms Deer Alternative Methods Portion	Dec. 28, 2024 - Jan. 7, 2025	

Total deer harvest during the 2024 deer season (275,656) was 15% lower than the record harvest in 2023 (**Table 1**), and an 8% decline from the previous five-year average. Several factors contributed to the lower harvest, including a later start to the November Firearms Portion and an abundant acorn crop, which likely affected deer movement and hunter success. Temperatures during the 2024 deer season were also some of the warmest on record.

Firearms Deer Season Summary

Firearms deer harvest (216,906) was 19% lower than the 2023 harvest, with declines in all portions except the Early Youth Portion. Harvest during the Early Antlerless Portion was down by over 10,000 deer (-65%) (**Table 1**). Unseasonably warm weather conditions during the Early Antlerless Portion likely influenced hunter participation in 2024. Harvest increased during the Early Youth Portion (23%) but declined during the Late Youth Portion (-30%) (**Table 1**). Youth portions occur for a relatively short duration of time, so it is common to see large fluctuations in harvest from year to year mostly due to the effects of weather on deer movement and hunter effort. The November Portion of firearms deer season opens two Saturdays prior to Thanksgiving which resulted in about a week later start in comparison to 2023. Unseasonably warm temperatures, high winds, the bumper acorn crop, and the season portion occurring a week later contributed to the decline (-18%) in harvest during this portion (**Table 1**). Harvest during the Alternative Methods Portion was 19% lower than the previous year (**Table 1**). The CWD Portion harvest remained relatively stable compared to 2023 with a slight (-2%) decline (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Deer harvest by portion and deer type in Missouri, 2023-2024.

Season or Portion	Antlered Bucks			Button Bucks			Does			Total		
	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change
Archery	24,813	28,266	14%	4,389	4,098	-7%	26,529	24,152	-9%	55,731	56,516	1%
Early Antlerless ¹	54	34	-37%	1,789	839	-53%	14,710	4,864	-67%	16,553	5,737	-65%
Early Youth	6,981	9,847	41%	855	957	12%	3,434	3,064	-11%	11,270	13,868	23%
November	105,708	82,314	-22%	16,101	13,164	-18%	72,076	63,099	-13%	193,885	158,577	-18%
CWD	4,713	3,930	-17%	1,073	1,054	-2%	5,921	6,470	9%	11,707	11,454	-2%
Late Youth	1,725	1,059	-39%	364	269	-26%	1,528	1,217	-20%	3,617	2,545	-30%
Late Antlerless ¹	128	111	-13%	2,760	2,061	-25%	16,028	12,470	-22%	18,916	14,642	-23%
Alternative Methods	3,139	2,773	-12%	1,452	1,072	-26%	7,905	6,238	-21%	12,496	10,083	-19%
Managed Hunts	589	601	2%	311	265	-15%	1,373	1,368	0%	2,273	2,234	-2%
Total	147,850	128,935	-13%	29,094	23,779	-18%	149,504	122,942	-18%	326,448	275,656	-16%

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

Archery Deer Season Summary

The archery deer season harvest increased considerably in 2019, largely due to a calendar shift that gave archers nearly an extra week of hunting during the peak of the rut before the November Portion of firearms deer season opened (Table 2). Another increase in archery harvest occurred in 2020 as a result of increased participation during the era of COVID-19 when many businesses were closed, and people were seeking outdoor forms of recreation. In 2020, Archery Any-Deer Permit sales were up 20% compared to 2019 and Archery Antlerless Permit sales were up 26%. Since then, archery harvests have declined, but have remained above the 10-year average. The archery harvest during 2024 (56,516) increased slightly (1%) compared to 2023 (Table 1).

The 2024 archery deer season marked the ninth year of crossbows being a legal method for all archery hunters in Missouri. MDC began allowing crossbows during the archery season in 2016 without an exemption to increase hunter participation. During the 2024 archery season, 50% of the deer harvested were taken with crossbows, which is similar to the previous three years. The percentage of the archery season harvest attributed to crossbows increased each year from 2016-2021 (Figure 1), albeit with smaller gains each year, and appears to be stabilizing. Allowing crossbows during the archery season has not affected the composition of the archery harvest greatly (Figure 2).

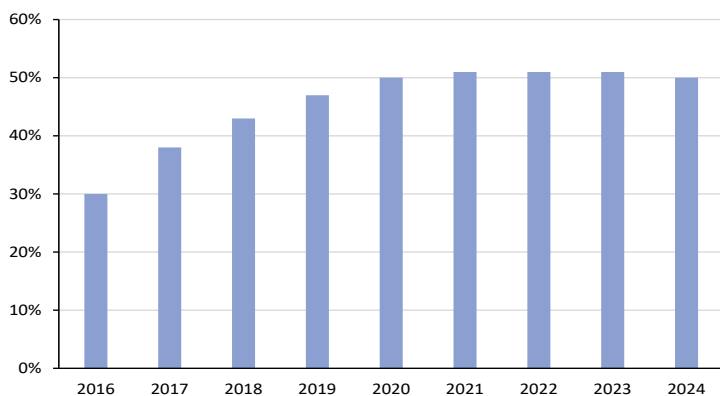


Figure 1. Percentage of the Missouri archery season harvest comprised of deer harvested using a crossbow, 2016-2024. Crossbows became a legal method for all archery hunters to use starting in 2016.

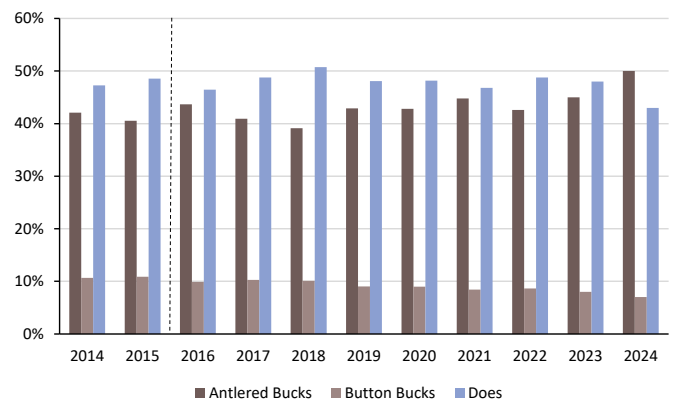


Figure 2. Percentage of antlered bucks, button bucks, and does in the archery deer season harvest in Missouri, 2014-2024. The vertical dashed line indicates when crossbows were first allowed to be used by all archery hunters.

Deer Hunter and Harvest Trends

In 2024, there were approximately 200,800 archery deer hunters and approximately 447,700 firearms deer hunters in Missouri. Most archery hunters also hunt during firearms season, so there were a total of about 476,900 deer hunters in 2024. This total is roughly 40,700 fewer than the 2012 peak in deer hunter numbers (**Figure 3**). Archery deer hunter numbers peaked later than firearms hunter numbers; however, archery hunter numbers have slowly declined from peak numbers as well. The trend of declining deer hunter numbers is not unique to Missouri. The decline is occurring nationwide as the baby boomer generation ages out of hunting and is replaced at a slower rate by younger generations of hunters. This has prompted many R3 (recruitment, retention, and reactivation) efforts in Missouri and elsewhere to try and slow or reverse the trend.

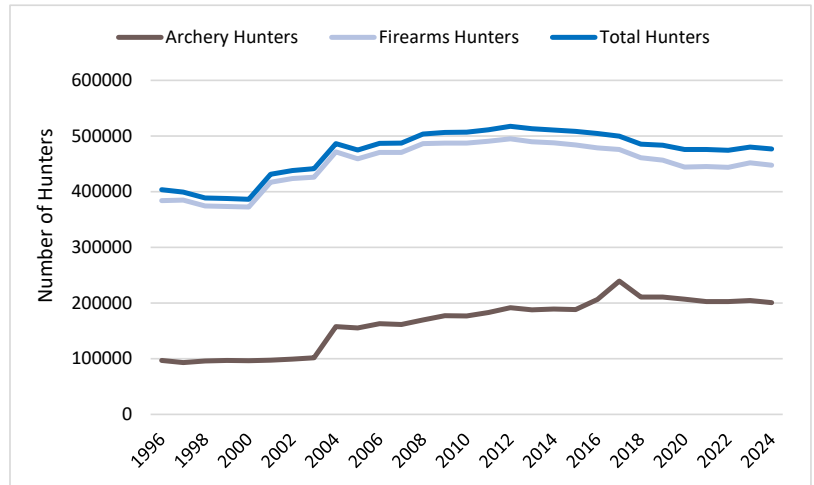


Figure 3. Trends in archery, firearms, and total deer hunter numbers in Missouri, 1996-2024.

Although archery and firearms deer hunter numbers in Missouri have been declining, the rate of decline has slowed in recent years. The total number of hunters in 2024 was less than 1% different from the 2023 total, indicating relative year-to-year stability (**Figure 3**). MDC has also increased its efforts to recruit and retain hunters and these efforts could be positively affecting the trajectory of deer hunter numbers in Missouri.

Hunter success (percentage of hunters who reported harvesting at least one deer) during the firearms and archery deer season during 2024 was 37% and 22%, respectively (**Figure 4**). The firearms deer season hunter success rate was the lowest it's been in the past decade owing largely to a combination of unfavorable weather conditions and a bumper crop of acorns. The archery hunter success rate had a slight (1%) increase in 2024.

Table 2. Annual deer harvest summary by hunter residency, deer type, and hunting method in Missouri, 2010-2024.

Year	Residency ¹		Deer Type			Method ²		Total
	Resident	Non-Resident	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Archery	Firearms	
2010	261,134	14,290	104,794	38,473	132,426	42,467	231,466	275,693
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

¹ Does not include harvests where residency specifications were not available.

² Does not include deer harvested during managed hunts.

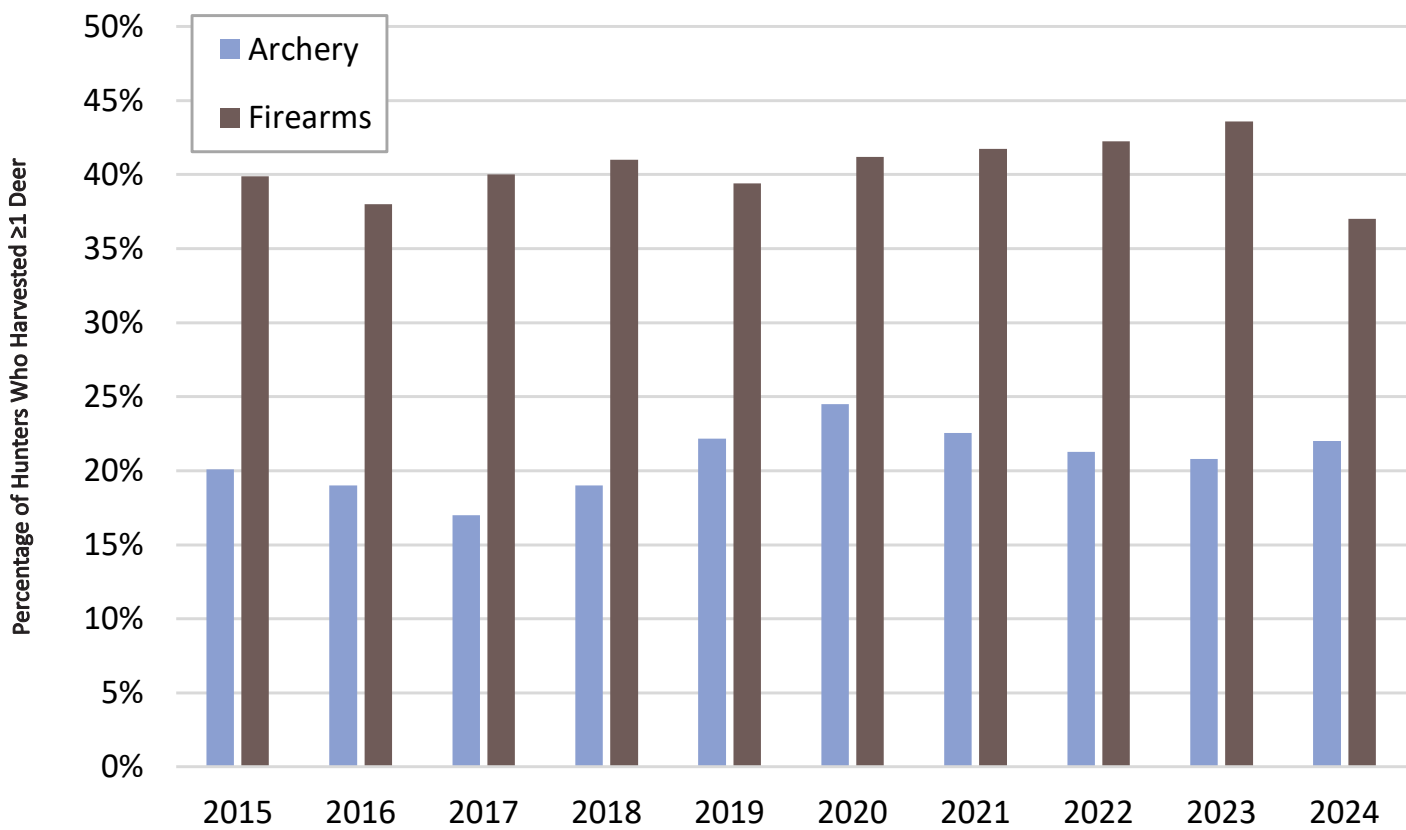


Figure 4. Success rates of firearms and archery deer hunters in Missouri, 2015-2024.

Table 3. Deer observations during the 2024 deer season by archery hunters participating in MDC’s bowhunter observation survey compared to the 5-year and 10-year averages.

Region	2024		5-Yr. Avg.		10-Yr. Avg.	
	Deer Seen per Hour	Does per Buck	Deer Seen per Hour (5-Yr. Avg.)	Does per Buck (5-Yr. Avg.)	Deer Seen per Hour (10-Yr. Avg.)	Does per Buck (10-Yr. Avg.)
Central	1.06	1.42	1.08	1.76	0.97	1.81
Kansas City	0.99	1.29	1.16	1.64	1.01	1.70
Northeast	1.25	1.49	1.17	1.47	1.12	1.56
Northwest	1.25	1.49	1.20	1.58	1.11	1.71
Ozark	0.57	1.96	0.82	2.62	0.76	2.35
Southeast	0.88	2.24	0.81	2.59	0.72	2.47
Southwest	1.12	1.90	1.11	2.13	1.01	2.11
St. Louis	0.89	1.48	0.86	1.92	0.78	1.98
Statewide	1.05	1.59	1.05	1.79	0.96	1.83

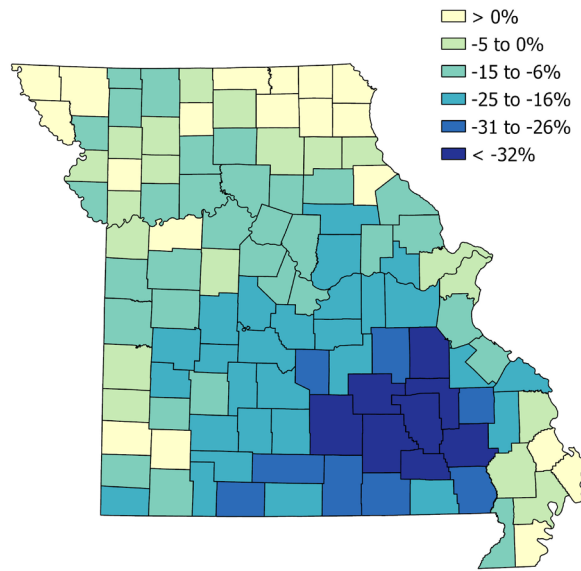


Figure 5. Percent change in total deer harvest in Missouri by county in 2024 compared to the 2023 deer season.

Table 4. Permits issued and deer harvested by permit type in Missouri, 2023-2024.

Permit Type ¹	Number of Permits Issued			Number of Deer Harvested		
	2023	2024	Change	2023	2024	Change
Archery Any-Deer	140,204	138,579	-1%	28,824	31,237	8%
Landowner Archery Any-Deer	54,982	54,040	-2%	3,588	3,859	8%
Youth Archery Any-Deer	10,764	10,440	-3%	1,810	1,786	-1%
Archery Antlerless	76,101	68,361	-10%	16,641	14,888	-11%
Landowner Archery Antlerless	107,443	104,694	-3%	3,695	3,472	-6%
Youth Archery Antlerless	5,473	4,667	-15%	823	684	-17%
Firearms Any-Deer	319,145	316,336	-1%	98,829	78,714	-20%
Landowner Firearms Any-Deer	82,924	82,187	-1%	21,205	16,537	-22%
Youth Firearms Any-Deer	56,772	58,266	3%	21,349	20,484	-4%
Firearms Antlerless	290,615	266,647	-8%	95,649	76,498	-20%
Landowner Firearms Antlerless	97,703	96,538	-1%	16,048	12,487	-22%
Youth Firearms Antlerless	38,810	37,153	-4%	12,170	9,312	-23%
Resident Firearms	841,129	811,746	-3%	246,238	196,714	-20%
Non-Resident Firearms	44,840	45,381	1%	19,012	17,318	-9%
Resident Archery	373,241	358,955	-4%	48,470	48,571	<1%
Non-Resident Archery	21,726	21,826	<1%	6,911	7,355	6%

¹ Not an inclusive list of permit types.

Table 5. Deer hunter and harvest statistics in Missouri, 2024.

	Archery	Firearms	Archery & Firearms Combined
Age Distribution of Hunters	Number of Hunters		Number of Hunters¹
10 or younger	3,498	22,636	23,051
11-15	10,419	41,057	41,967
16-40	81,054	167,244	182,649
41 or older	106,030	216,347	229,210
Total hunters	201,001	447,284	476,877
Any-Deer Permits Issued	Number of Permits		Number of Hunters¹
Resident	131,677	345,862	364,339
Nonresident	17,342	28,740	41,165
Landowner	54,040	82,187	82,745
Antlerless Permit Sales²	Number of Hunters		Number of Hunters³
1	38,209	159,510	148,165
2	10,291	42,021	51,891
3	2,156	8,531	15,296
4 or more	1,617	7,939	16,192
Deer Harvested	Number of Hunters		Number of Hunters⁴
0	157,372	281,552	286,950
1	34,701	128,027	135,564
2	6,642	28,106	36,953
3	1,513	6,672	10,808
4 or more	773	2,927	6,602
Antlered Bucks Harvested⁵	Number of Hunters		Number of Hunters⁴
0	173,593	347,901	357,260
1	26,703	98,616	111,393
2	705	767	8,224
Deer Harvested	Percent of Hunters		Percent of Hunters⁴
0	78.29%	62.95%	60.17%
1	17.26%	28.62%	28.43%
2	3.30%	6.28%	7.75%
3 or more	1.14%	2.15%	3.65%
Antlered Bucks Harvested⁵	Percent of Hunters		Percent of Hunters⁴
0	86.36%	77.78%	74.92%
1	13.29%	22.05%	23.36%
2	0.35%	0.17%	1.72%

¹Number of individuals that held an archery and/or firearms any-deer permit.

²Excludes no-cost landowner permits.

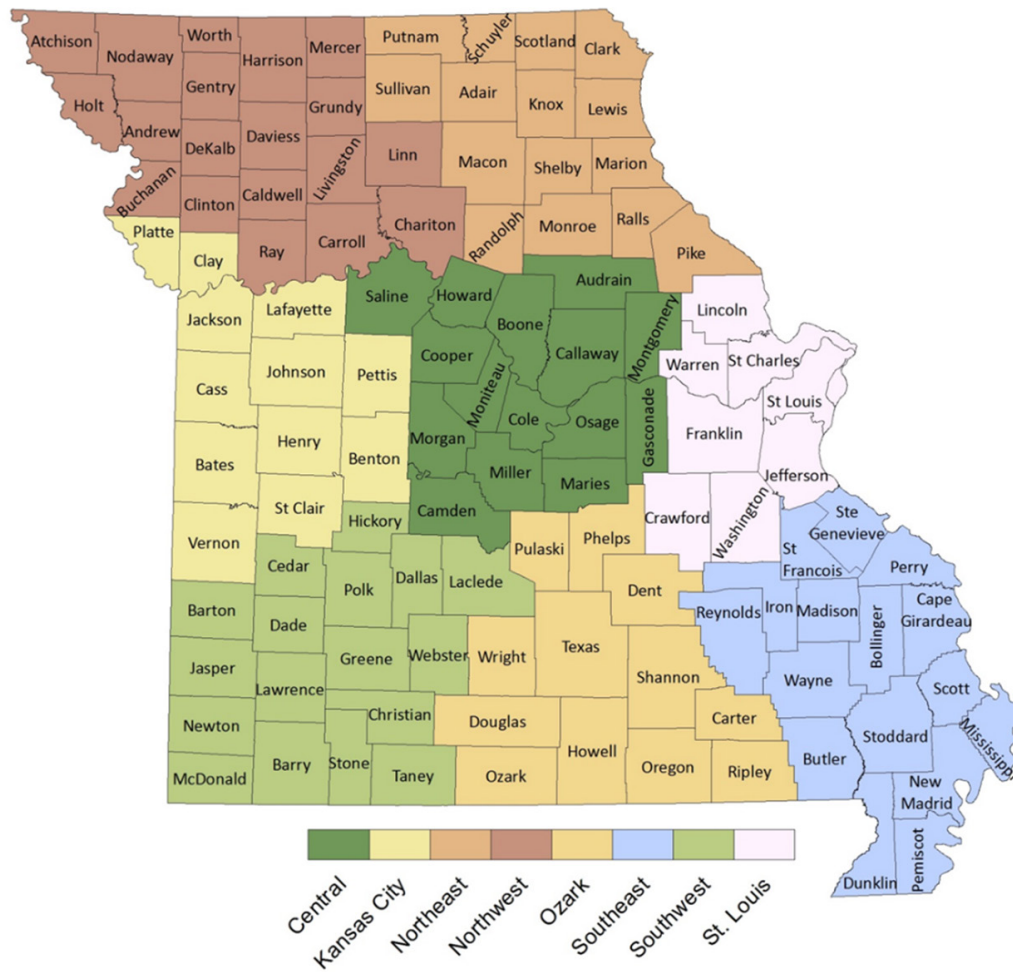
³Number of hunters that purchased the specified number of permits when combining their archery and firearms permits.

⁴Number/percent of hunters that harvested the specified number when combining their archery and firearms harvest.

⁵Includes 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.



Regional Offices

Central Region

3500 East Gans Road
Columbia, MO 65201
573-815-7900

Kansas City Region

12405 SE Ranson Road
Lee's Summit, MO 64082
816-622-0900

Northwest Region

701 James McCarthy Drive
St. Joseph, MO 64507
816-271-3100

Ozark Region

551 Joe Jones Blvd.
West Plains, MO 65775
417-256-7161

Southeast Region

2302 County Park Drive
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
573-290-5730

Northeast Region

3500 S. Baltimore
Kirksville, MO 63501
660-785-2420

Southwest Region

2630 N. Mayfair
Springfield, MO 65803
417-895-6880

St. Louis Region

2360 Highway D
St. Charles, MO 63304
636-441-4554

Central Region Deer Summary

Deer harvest in Central Region (39,860) decreased by 18% from 2023 (Table 6, Figure 6) and was the third highest among regions. Deer harvest per square mile (4.8) in the Central Region was also third among regions. Top harvest counties within the region were Callaway, Morgan, and Montgomery.

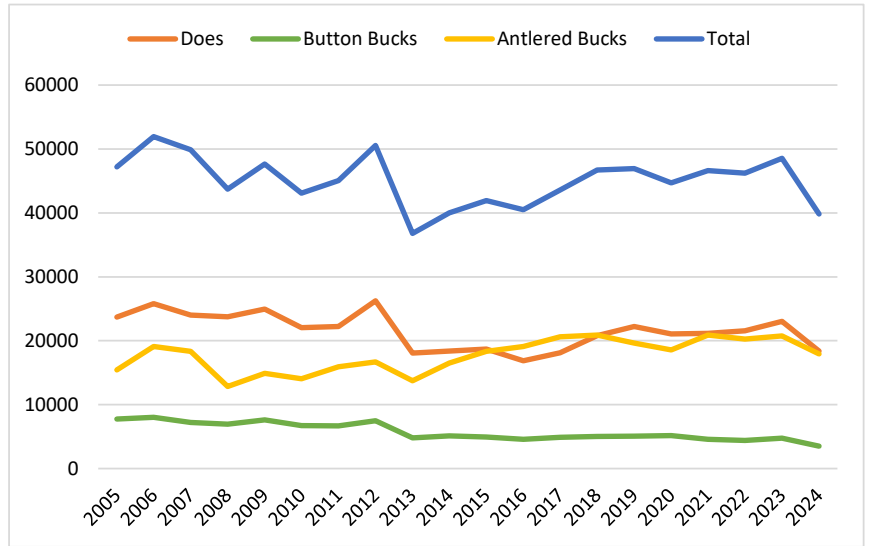


Figure 6. Central Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 6. Central Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Audrain	2,178	3.3	4.4	1.0
Boone	3,174	5.2	9.2	3.1
Callaway	4,440	5.7	9.9	3.5
Camden	2,963	4.9	8.1	2.1
Cole	1,866	5.3	10.7	2.8
Cooper	2,216	4.2	6.7	2.4
Gasconade	3,168	6.4	11.4	2.8
Howard	2,077	4.8	6.6	2.5
Maries	1,910	3.7	7.6	2.2
Miller	2,295	4.1	6.6	1.6
Moniteau	1,693	4.2	6.8	1.4
Montgomery	3,206	6.3	9.0	3.0
Morgan	3,591	6.3	7.7	2.2
Osage	3,129	5.4	9.6	2.0
Saline	1,954	2.8	3.8	1.0
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=39,860	a=4.8	a=7.9	a=2.2

Kansas City Region Deer Summary

During 2024, 30,616 deer were harvested in the Kansas City Region, which was a 9% decrease from 2023 (Table 7, Figure 7). Among regions, the Kansas City Region ranked sixth in the number of deer harvested and fourth in the number of deer harvested per square mile (4.3). Top harvest counties within the region were Benton, St. Clair, and Henry.

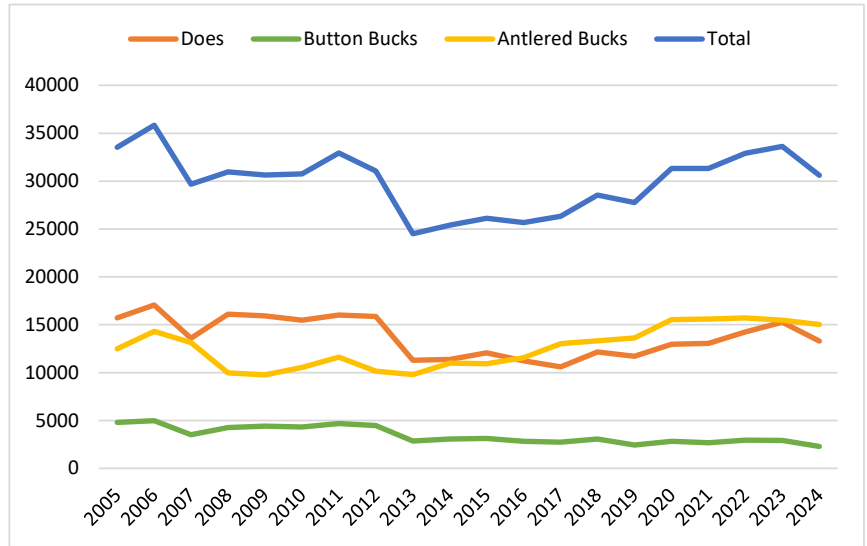


Figure 7. Kansas City Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 7. Kansas City Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Bates	2,212	2.9	4.2	1.3
Benton	3,915	5.9	8.7	2.3
Cass	2,496	4.0	6.0	2.0
Clay	1,059	3.5	7.8	2.8
Henry	3,293	5.4	8.7	2.1
Jackson	2,237	5.9	4.9	4.0
Johnson	3,151	4.1	5.5	1.5
Lafayette	1,652	2.8	3.9	1.3
Pettis	3,007	4.6	5.1	1.2
Platte	1,102	3.1	6.0	2.8
St. Clair	3,309	5.2	8.1	2.4
Vernon	3,183	4.4	4.9	1.6
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=30,616	a=4.3	a=6.2	a=2.1

Northeast Region Deer Summary

Deer harvest in the Northeast Region during 2024 (43,474) was slightly (-2%) lower than it was in 2023 (44,600) (Table 8, Figure 8). The Northeast Region ranked first among regions in deer harvest and ranked second among regions for the number of deer harvested per square mile (5.8). Top harvest counties were Macon, Pike, and Monroe. Following a considerable decline in deer numbers caused by the severe hemorrhagic disease (HD) outbreak of 2012, populations in the Northeast Region have been slowly rebounding.

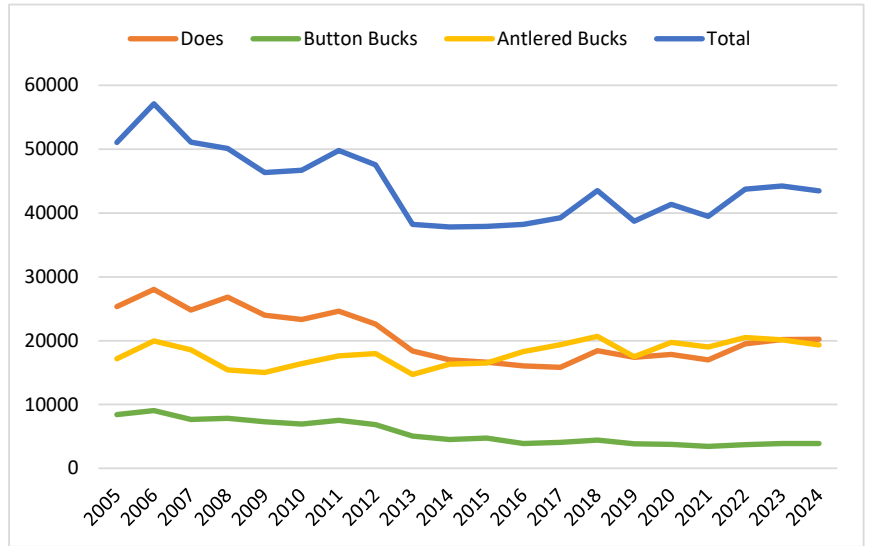


Figure 8. Northeast Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 8. Northeast Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Adair	2,827	5.3	7.1	1.8
Clark	2,750	5.8	4.9	2.0
Knox	2,700	5.7	6.5	2.3
Lewis	2,502	5.3	6.2	2.0
Macon	4,489	6.0	3.9	1.1
Marion	2,485	6.1	10.6	1.6
Monroe	3,527	5.8	8.0	2.5
Pike	4,425	7.1	9.4	2.5
Putnam	2,465	5.1	5.7	2.0
Ralls	2,845	6.4	8.4	2.5
Randolph	2,545	5.7	8.0	2.1
Schuyler	1,681	5.8	7.5	2.0
Scotland	2,961	7.2	6.2	1.3
Shelby	2,535	5.4	6.7	1.7
Sullivan	2,737	4.5	5.5	1.8
Total(t)/Avg. (a)	t=43,474	a=5.8	a=7.0	a=2.0

Northwest Region Deer Summary

In 2024, deer harvest in the Northwest Region was 31,955, which was 6% lower than the 2023 harvest total (Table 9, Figure 9). The Northwest Region ranked fifth in total deer harvest and seventh in deer harvest per square mile (3.4). Top harvest counties were Harrison, Daviess, and Linn. In the early 2000s, deer populations in the Northwest Region—much like those in the Northeast—exceeded management objectives. Increased antlerless harvest opportunities during the mid-to-late 2000s effectively brought numbers down. However, a severe outbreak of HD in 2012 caused a sharp decline, pushing populations well below target levels across the region. At the same time, habitat loss further reduced the land’s ability to support deer at previous densities. While conservative harvest regulations in recent years have allowed deer numbers to recover in most areas, populations in extreme northwestern Missouri continue to be below desired levels.

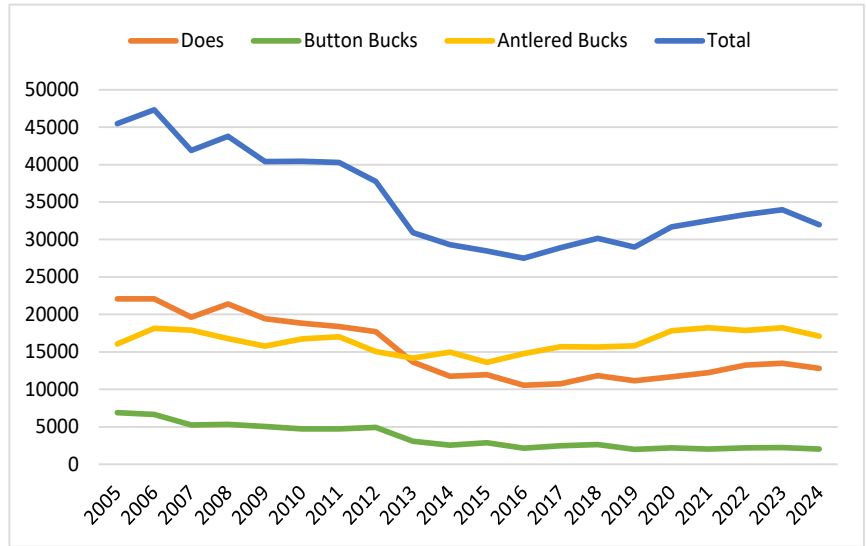


Figure 9. Northwest Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 9. Northwest Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Andrew	1,039	2.6	5.5	1.7
Atchison	575	1.1	1.7	0.6
Buchanan	844	2.4	3.8	1.7
Caldwell	1,854	4.7	7.3	2.2
Carroll	2,411	3.7	5.4	1.5
Chariton	2,096	3.2	4.6	1.2
Clinton	926	2.4	6.2	1.7
Daviess	2,836	5.3	6.3	1.7
DeKalb	1,047	2.6	4.8	1.2
Gentry	1,491	3.2	4.7	1.5
Grundy	1,885	4.7	5.8	1.2
Harrison	3,217	4.7	5.6	2.1
Holt	846	2.0	3.9	1.3
Linn	2,692	4.8	6.4	2.2
Livingston	1,990	4.1	5.2	2.0
Mercer	2,044	4.8	4.6	1.4
Nodaway	1,489	1.8	3.6	1.2
Ray	1,588	3.0	5.7	1.4
Worth	1,085	4.2	4.5	0.9
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=31,955	a=3.4	a=5.0	a=1.5

Ozark Region Deer Summary

Deer harvest in the Ozark Region during 2024 (34,242) was 31% lower than in 2023 and was the greatest decline in annual harvest of any region (Table 10, Figure 10). Deer harvest in the Ozark Region during 2024 was fourth among regions and ranked sixth in harvest per square mile (3.9). Top harvest counties were Howell, Texas, and Oregon. Deer harvest in the Ozark Region, like much of southern Missouri, fluctuates annually due to the influence of the acorn crop on deer movement and harvest vulnerability. In 2024, a strong acorn crop reduced deer movement, leading to a significant decline in harvest.

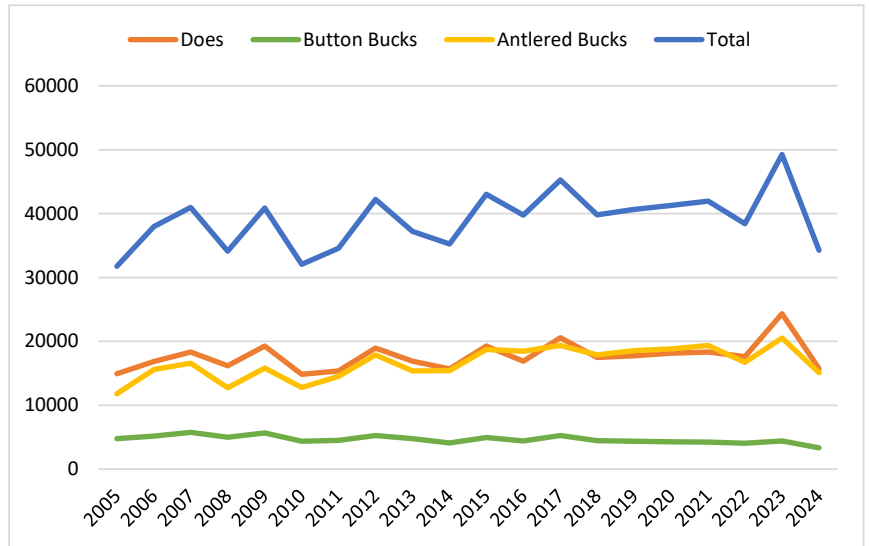


Figure 10. Ozark Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 10. Ozark Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Carter	1,539	3.1	6.9	1.6
Dent	2,584	3.5	6.8	1.0
Douglas	3,048	3.8	4.4	0.9
Howell	4,476	5.0	5.2	1.3
Oregon	3,376	4.3	4.0	0.9
Ozark	2,633	3.7	4.8	1.0
Phelps	2,384	3.7	7.1	1.4
Pulaski	2,085	4.0	8.6	3.0
Ripley	2,848	4.7	7.7	1.0
Shannon	2,069	2.1	3.8	1.1
Texas	4,121	3.6	4.7	1.1
Wright	3,079	4.6	6.0	1.3
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=34,242	a=3.9	a=5.8	a=1.3

Southeast Region Deer Summary

Deer harvest within the Southeast Region in 2024 was 27,824, which was 21% lower than in 2023 (Table 11, Figure 11). Among regions, Southeast Region ranked seventh in deer harvest and eighth in deer harvest per square mile (3.2). Top harvest counties were Bollinger, Cape Girardeau, and Perry. The Southeast Region features some of the most diverse landscapes in Missouri, leading to considerable variation in deer populations and harvest across the area. While deer numbers have steadily increased—similar to other regions in southern Missouri—this growth has also contributed to localized issues with crop depredation in parts of the region. Management efforts continue to focus on balancing population goals with social carrying capacity. Like the Ozark Region, a strong acorn crop reduced deer movement in 2024, leading to a significant decline in harvest.

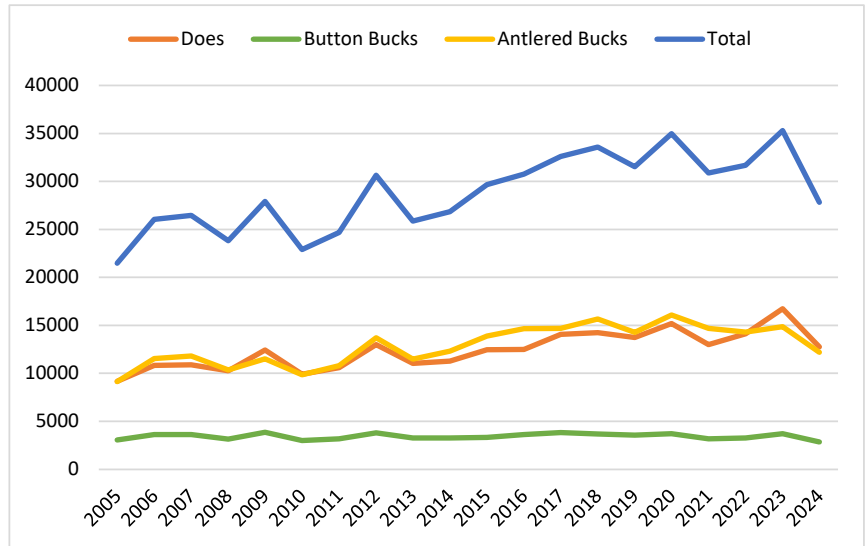


Figure 11. Southeast Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 11. Southeast Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Bollinger	3,291	5.5	9.3	2.4
Butler	1,490	2.3	5.4	1.2
Cape Girardeau	3,111	5.8	9.2	3.8
Dunklin	477	0.9	0.8	0.2
Iron	1,240	2.3	5.2	1.1
Madison	1,887	3.9	12.4	2.8
Mississippi	341	0.9	1.6	0.4
New Madrid	405	0.6	1.2	0.3
Pemiscot	227	0.5	1.1	0.3
Perry	2,791	6.2	8.9	1.9
Reynolds	1,766	2.2	4.4	1.1
Scott	930	2.4	9.5	2.7
St. Francois	2,509	5.3	13.8	2.3
Ste. Genevieve	2,562	6.2	3.0	1.3
Stoddard	2,117	2.7	3.3	1.0
Wayne	2,680	3.7	8.8	2.3
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=27,824	a=3.2	a=6.1	a=1.6

Southwest Region Deer Summary

During the 2024 deer season, 40,283 deer were harvested in the Southwest Region, which was 16% lower than in 2023 (Table 12, Figure 12). The Southwest Region ranked second in total deer harvest among regions and ranked fifth in harvest per square mile (4.3). Top harvest counties were Laclede, Polk, and Greene. Like the other regions in southern Missouri, deer numbers have been steadily increasing through time in the Southwest Region. The decline in harvest in 2024 was largely a reflection of a bumper acron crop.

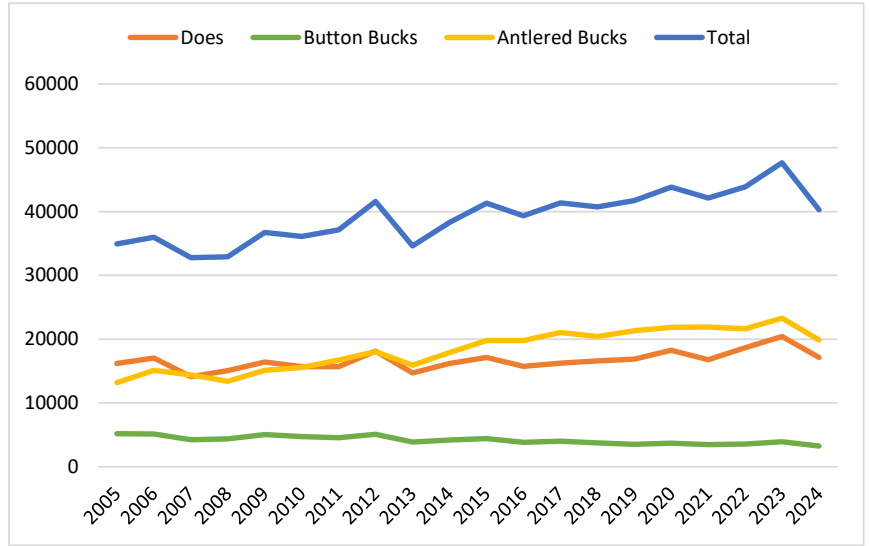


Figure 12. Southwest Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 12. Southwest Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Barry	2,446	3.3	4.1	1.8
Barton	1,850	3.3	4.3	1.5
Cedar	2,191	4.8	6.8	2.0
Christian	2,114	4.0	7.9	2.0
Dade	1,593	3.3	5.8	1.8
Dallas	2,707	5.1	8.6	2.3
Greene	2,813	4.9	9.1	5.1
Hickory	2,456	6.3	9.3	2.4
Jasper	2,653	4.8	5.6	2.5
Laclede	3,168	4.3	7.2	1.4
Lawrence	2,161	3.7	5.2	1.4
McDonald	1,802	3.5	4.0	2.3
Newton	2,789	4.8	5.4	2.4
Polk	2,959	4.8	7.0	2.4
Stone	1,878	4.3	6.4	1.8
Taney	2,057	3.6	7.1	1.2
Webster	2,646	4.7	7.0	2.1
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=40,283	a=4.3	a=6.5	a=2.1

St. Louis Region Deer Summary

During the 2024 deer season, 27,402 deer were harvested in the St. Louis Region, which was 19% lower than in 2023 (Table 13, Figure 13). The St. Louis Region ranked eighth in deer harvest but first in deer harvest per square mile (6.4). Top harvest counties were Franklin, Jefferson, and Lincoln. The St. Louis Region has experienced a gradual increase in deer numbers, particularly at the urban/rural interface.

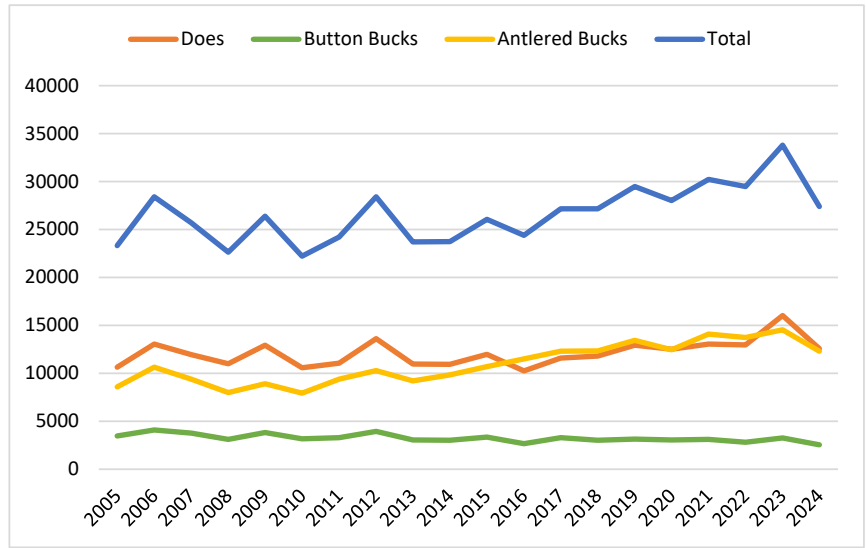


Figure 13. St. Louis Region deer harvest trend, 2005-2024.

Table 13. St. Louis Region deer harvest and hunter density, 2024.

County	Total Harvest	Harvest per Square Mile	Firearms Hunters per Square Mile	Archery Hunters per Square Mile
Crawford	3,082	4.3	9.0	1.8
Franklin	6,199	7.3	11.6	3.0
Jefferson	4,890	8.6	11.3	5.0
Lincoln	4,098	7.1	8.7	2.7
St. Charles	2,231	5.2	5.7	4.0
St. Louis	1,917	8.7	5.8	10.2
Warren	2,500	6.2	8.0	2.9
Washington	2,485	3.4	7.4	1.7
Total (t)/Avg. (a)	t=27,402	a=6.4	a=8.4	a=3.9

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 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, bowhunter 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 sample of agricultural producers to assess perceptions and attitudes toward deer populations and regulations. Additionally, we send surveys to a 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, and emails.

The Deer Program reviews this information annually on a county-by-county basis to classify the deer population status and trends. Socially acceptable levels (cultural 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. Currently, deer populations are at desired levels in most counties. Exceptions include portions of extreme northwestern and southeastern Missouri where deer habitat is more limited which reduces the carrying capacity of these areas for deer.



Table 14. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2024.

County	Archery				Firearms				Totals ¹			
	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Adair	269	26	234	529	989	218	1,075	2,282	1,258	247	1,322	2,827
Andrew	104	8	75	187	508	56	288	852	612	64	363	1,039
Atchison	111	3	57	171	332	11	60	403	443	14	118	575
Audrain	183	32	152	367	794	166	850	1,810	977	199	1,002	2,178
Barry	250	31	175	456	924	190	876	1,990	1,174	221	1,051	2,446
Barton	184	25	131	340	819	96	595	1,510	1,003	121	726	1,850
Bates	245	22	177	444	907	126	735	1,768	1,152	148	912	2,212
Benton	391	56	373	820	1,265	306	1,487	3,058	1,664	365	1,886	3,915
Bollinger	264	56	285	605	1,091	331	1,260	2,682	1,355	389	1,547	3,291
Boone	454	43	314	811	1,066	181	1,116	2,363	1,520	224	1,430	3,174
Buchanan	101	5	69	175	366	49	254	669	467	54	323	844
Butler	166	39	181	386	524	88	490	1,102	691	127	672	1,490
Caldwell	174	13	124	311	852	97	593	1,542	1,026	110	718	1,854
Callaway	416	52	403	871	1,354	333	1,737	3,424	1,785	410	2,245	4,440
Camden	366	77	295	738	953	263	983	2,199	1,320	346	1,297	2,963
Cape Girardeau	217	55	299	571	995	248	1,268	2,511	1,216	307	1,588	3,111
Carroll	231	23	136	390	1,047	139	835	2,021	1,278	162	971	2,411
Carter	174	51	162	387	562	114	440	1,116	757	165	617	1,539
Cass	326	34	229	589	1,027	120	753	1,900	1,355	154	987	2,496
Cedar	222	39	145	406	862	160	703	1,725	1,107	210	874	2,191
Chariton	187	16	128	331	923	119	713	1,755	1,120	135	841	2,096
Christian	244	51	206	501	795	132	686	1,613	1,039	183	892	2,114
Clark	326	36	259	621	909	196	1,024	2,129	1,235	232	1,283	2,750
Clay	194	21	153	368	346	41	223	610	567	71	421	1,059
Clinton	88	10	59	157	441	57	267	765	530	67	329	926
Cole	216	22	162	400	648	131	684	1,463	866	153	847	1,866
Cooper	200	15	183	398	794	140	884	1,818	994	155	1,067	2,216
Crawford	300	67	197	564	1,192	266	1,060	2,518	1,492	333	1,257	3,082
Dade	159	16	115	290	640	136	527	1,303	799	152	642	1,593
Dallas	282	45	217	544	1,010	187	954	2,151	1,294	233	1,180	2,707
Daviness	255	28	301	584	1,030	189	1,033	2,252	1,285	217	1,334	2,836
DeKalb	97	10	68	175	462	70	340	872	559	80	408	1,047
Dent	209	36	170	415	895	234	1,014	2,143	1,105	274	1,205	2,584

¹Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Table 14. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2024 (continued).

County	Archery					Firearms					Totals ¹				
	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total		Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total		Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	
Douglas	203	43	212	458		1,169	229	1,191	2,589		1,373	272	1,403	3,048	
Dunklin	45	5	50	100		208	31	138	377		253	36	188	477	
Franklin	602	98	521	1,221		2,263	477	2,216	4,956		2,869	579	2,751	6,199	
Gasconade	269	42	214	525		1,230	229	1,184	2,643		1,499	271	1,398	3,168	
Gentry	150	11	92	253		622	96	520	1,238		772	107	612	1,491	
Greene	432	52	354	838		926	170	845	1,941		1,363	227	1,223	2,813	
Grundy	173	23	136	332		695	112	691	1,498		879	139	867	1,885	
Harrison	416	24	269	709		1,271	188	1,048	2,507		1,688	212	1,317	3,217	
Henry	331	65	330	726		1,104	212	1,250	2,566		1,436	277	1,580	3,293	
Hickory	240	41	208	489		853	197	901	1,951		1,097	240	1,119	2,456	
Holt	109	8	75	192		410	26	217	653		520	34	292	846	
Howard	203	18	150	371		787	90	806	1,683		992	111	974	2,077	
Howell	326	81	293	700		1,448	428	1,900	3,776		1,774	509	2,193	4,476	
Iron	134	26	123	283		485	115	357	957		619	141	480	1,240	
Jackson	396	56	357	809		512	57	353	922		1,011	170	1,056	2,237	
Jasper	308	30	245	583		1,082	130	858	2,070		1,390	160	1,103	2,653	
Jefferson	731	139	712	1,582		1,488	320	1,499	3,307		2,219	459	2,212	4,890	
Johnson	306	28	271	605		1,275	170	1,042	2,487		1,587	208	1,356	3,151	
Knox	260	28	200	488		939	240	1,032	2,211		1,200	268	1,232	2,700	
Laclede	292	58	266	616		1,190	230	1,113	2,533		1,482	294	1,392	3,168	
Lafayette	146	16	106	268		691	109	584	1,384		837	125	690	1,652	
Lawrence	227	28	198	453		884	128	696	1,708		1,111	156	894	2,161	
Lewis	238	32	189	459		896	204	943	2,043		1,134	236	1,132	2,502	
Lincoln	402	77	397	876		1,184	292	1,669	3,145		1,605	380	2,113	4,098	
Linn	276	23	231	530		1,054	162	909	2,125		1,332	190	1,170	2,692	
Livingston	211	16	137	364		836	99	691	1,626		1,047	115	828	1,990	
Macon	422	52	366	840		1,712	291	1,619	3,622		2,136	348	2,005	4,489	
Madison	159	43	153	355		584	208	740	1,532		743	251	893	1,887	
Maries	195	24	135	354		729	160	667	1,556		924	184	802	1,910	
Marion	226	29	224	479		796	179	1,031	2,006		1,022	208	1,255	2,485	
McDonald	187	21	128	336		794	93	579	1,466		981	114	707	1,802	

¹Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Table 14. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2024 (continued).

County	Archery				Firearms				Totals ¹			
	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Mercer	265	18	173	456	806	91	691	1,588	1,071	109	864	2,044
Miller	203	36	155	394	791	209	894	1,894	994	246	1,055	2,295
Mississippi	27	1	42	70	206	10	55	271	233	11	97	341
Moniteau	116	14	108	238	604	126	725	1,455	720	140	833	1,693
Monroe	362	53	288	703	1,226	274	1,296	2,796	1,594	333	1,600	3,527
Montgomery	260	44	230	534	1,142	259	1,271	2,672	1,402	303	1,501	3,206
Morgan	328	85	354	767	1,072	337	1,415	2,824	1,400	422	1,769	3,591
New Madrid	17	10	53	80	202	17	106	325	219	27	159	405
Newton	398	25	299	722	1,058	116	867	2,041	1,470	144	1,175	2,789
Nodaway	189	11	111	311	768	68	342	1,178	957	79	453	1,489
Oregon	318	63	218	599	1,090	294	1,393	2,777	1,408	357	1,611	3,376
Osage	303	29	197	529	1,234	216	1,150	2,600	1,537	245	1,347	3,129
Ozark	202	23	170	395	994	200	980	2,174	1,227	231	1,175	2,633
Pemiscot	17	3	22	42	123	12	50	185	140	15	72	227
Perry	149	31	171	351	1,016	251	1,173	2,440	1,165	282	1,344	2,791
Pettis	253	54	276	583	1,105	182	1,137	2,424	1,358	236	1,413	3,007
Phelps	251	29	196	476	884	186	838	1,908	1,135	215	1,034	2,384
Pike	335	62	440	837	1,228	415	1,929	3,572	1,570	477	2,378	4,425
Platte	218	21	177	416	383	53	248	684	602	74	426	1,102
Polk	288	42	258	588	1,125	192	1,053	2,370	1,413	234	1,312	2,959
Pulaski	259	39	183	481	681	154	769	1,604	940	193	952	2,085
Putnam	341	29	256	626	897	142	800	1,839	1,238	171	1,056	2,465
Ralls	274	45	263	582	873	228	1,162	2,263	1,147	273	1,425	2,845
Randolph	267	28	211	506	992	133	914	2,039	1,259	161	1,125	2,545
Ray	169	13	105	287	760	70	470	1,300	930	83	575	1,588
Reynolds	170	48	157	375	541	178	672	1,391	711	226	829	1,766
Ripley	237	44	199	480	856	264	1,248	2,368	1,093	308	1,447	2,848
St. Charles	270	32	257	559	667	113	664	1,444	1,036	166	1,029	2,231
St. Clair	345	63	309	717	1,313	212	1,067	2,592	1,658	275	1,376	3,309
St. Francois	253	67	242	562	815	216	865	1,896	1,077	289	1,143	2,509
St. Louis	402	66	530	998	284	44	233	561	797	145	975	1,917

¹Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Table 14. County deer harvest totals by method of take and deer type, 2024 (continued).

County	Archery				Firearms				Totals ¹			
	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total	Antlered Bucks	Button Bucks	Does	Total
Ste. Genevieve	209	29	198	436	999	156	971	2,126	1,208	185	1,169	2,562
Saline	169	16	155	340	860	94	660	1,614	1,029	110	815	1,954
Schuyler	150	23	122	295	571	177	638	1,386	721	200	760	1,681
Scotland	273	43	224	540	925	285	1,210	2,420	1,199	328	1,434	2,961
Scott	70	18	113	201	351	65	313	729	421	83	426	930
Shannon	162	21	147	330	707	178	843	1,728	875	199	995	2,069
Shelby	278	36	205	519	937	193	886	2,016	1,215	229	1,091	2,535
Stoddard	202	68	300	570	666	140	705	1,511	890	210	1,017	2,117
Stone	227	33	177	437	666	118	656	1,440	894	151	833	1,878
Sullivan	331	26	262	619	1,074	179	865	2,118	1,405	205	1,127	2,737
Taney	226	29	165	420	788	145	704	1,637	1,014	174	869	2,057
Texas	332	53	228	613	1,665	300	1,543	3,508	1,997	353	1,771	4,121
Vernon	405	25	291	721	1,406	149	907	2,462	1,811	174	1,198	3,183
Warren	267	39	270	576	886	177	861	1,924	1,153	216	1,131	2,500
Washington	243	49	220	512	880	222	871	1,973	1,123	271	1,091	2,485
Wayne	325	72	280	677	926	207	849	1,982	1,262	281	1,137	2,680
Webster	264	45	219	528	975	206	937	2,118	1,239	251	1,156	2,646
Worth	143	12	132	287	446	48	304	798	589	60	436	1,085
Wright	284	33	218	535	1,165	253	1,126	2,544	1,449	286	1,344	3,079
Regional												
Central	3,881	549	3,207	7,637	14,058	2,934	15,026	32,018	17,959	3,519	18,382	39,860
Kansas City	3,556	461	3,049	7,066	11,334	1,737	9,786	22,857	15,038	2,277	13,301	30,616
Northeast	4,352	548	3,743	8,643	14,964	3,354	16,424	34,742	19,333	3,916	20,225	43,474
Northwest	3,449	275	2,478	6,202	13,629	1,747	10,266	25,642	17,105	2,031	12,819	31,955
Ozark	2,957	516	2,396	5,869	12,116	2,834	13,285	28,235	15,133	3,362	15,747	34,242
Southeast	2,424	571	2,669	5,664	9,732	2,273	10,012	22,017	12,203	2,860	12,761	27,824
Southwest	4,430	611	3,506	8,547	15,391	2,626	13,550	31,567	19,870	3,265	17,148	40,283
St. Louis	3,217	567	3,104	6,888	8,844	1,911	9,073	19,828	12,294	2,549	12,559	27,402
Statewide												
Totals	28,266	4,098	24,152	56,516	100,068	19,416	97,422	216,906	128,935	23,779	122,942	275,656

¹Includes deer harvested during managed hunts.

Public Land Deer Hunting in Missouri

The Missouri Department of Conservation offers over 1,000 access opportunities spread across all regions of the state (**Table 15**). Ozark Region offers the most acreage of public hunting opportunity with 269,059 acres open, followed by Southeast (181,114), Kansas City (135,469), Southwest (96,501), St. Louis (96,454), Northwest (94,518), Central (74,836), and Northeast (73,763).

Region	MDC Access Opportunities	Acres
Central	146	74,836
Kansas City	161	135,469
Northeast	91	73,763
Northwest	135	94,518
Ozark	112	269,059
Southeast	139	181,114
Southwest	145	96,501
St. Louis	130	96,454
Total	1,059	1,021,713

Table 15. MDC access opportunities and acreage by region.

Special regulations may apply to individual areas, and should be thoroughly reviewed before accessing any property. MDC areas open to hunting can be found at <https://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/where-hunt-and-shoot>. Additionally, the Missouri Outdoor Recreational Access Program (MRAP) offer hunters walk-in access on enrolled private lands. MRAP properties may be open to all types of hunting access or may be more restrictive in seasons and methods allowed. Be sure to be familiar with what access is allowed on specific MRAP properties. More information on the MRAP program can be found at <https://mdc.mo.gov/discover-nature/places/mrap-missouri-outdoor-recreational-access-program>.

During the 2024 deer hunting season, hunters harvested 38,453 deer on public lands in Missouri. This is roughly 12% of the total harvest. Shannon, Carter, and Ripley counties saw the highest number of deer harvested on public lands with 1,819, 1,267, and 1,230 deer harvested, respectively. By percentage of all deer taken, Shannon, Carter, and Pemiscot counties had the highest harvest on public lands in the state at 60%, 43%, and 43%, respectively. Twenty-three counties had harvest percentages on public land of 20% or higher, and 65 counties had harvest percentages on public land of 10% or less. Gasconade, Scott, and Schuyler counties had the lowest portion of public land harvest at 3%, 3%, and 2%, respectively (**Figure 14**).

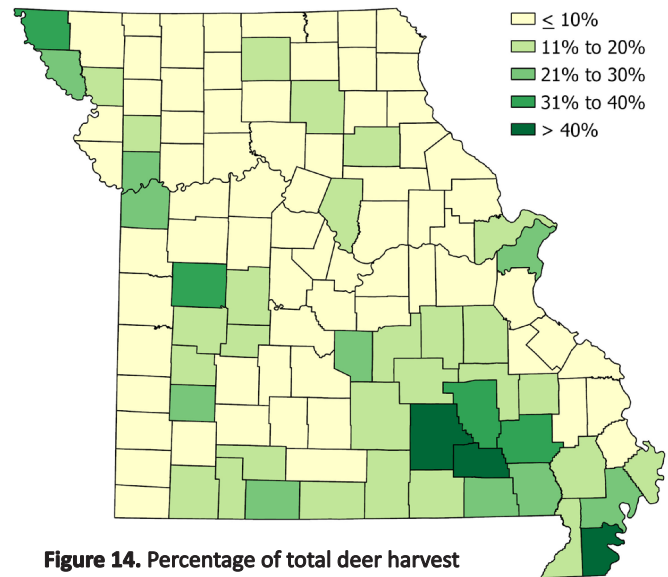


Figure 14. Percentage of total deer harvest taken on public land by county in 2024.



Deer Management Assistance Program

In 2024, MDC completed the sixth year of 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 harvest opportunity during the hunting season. A total of 133 properties were enrolled during 2024, 43 (32%) of which were co-ops involving multiple landowners (**Table 16**). One-hundred and two (77%) properties were enrolled to address deer damage concerns and thirty-one (23%) were enrolled to achieve recreational deer management goals. The total enrolled acreage was approximately 136,919 acres (**Table 16**). Fifty-six (49%) counties had at least one property enrolled in DMAP. Across all enrolled properties, 671 hunters were issued a total of 3,586 DMAP permits (**Table 16**).

Feedback from 69 DMAP participants indicated high program satisfaction, with 84% affirming that DMAP information was clear and accessible, and 88% finding the application process straightforward—an improvement over previous years. Respondents appreciated the recent reduction in minimum acreage requirements, which expanded eligibility and facilitated broader participation. The introduction of permit flexibility allowing both archery and firearm harvest methods further enhanced hunting opportunities. Additionally, 61% of participants expressed interest in forming or continuing cooperative management efforts, highlighting DMAP’s role in fostering collaborative deer management. Respondent feedback indicated 87% were satisfied with the program, and 93% agreed DMAP was an effective program to help manage local deer populations. To learn more about DMAP, visit <https://mdc.mo.gov/dmap>.

Table 16. Summary of 2020-2024 Missouri Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) enrollment and harvest data.

	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Eligible Counties	41	89	114	114	114
Enrolled Properties	28	56	125	131	133
Enrolled Landowners	45	89	251	222	234
Enrolled Acreage	36,788	86,182	172,672	158,653	136,919
Authorized Permits/ Hunters	587/147	1,583/338	4,146/882	3,654/730	3,586/668
Filled Permits	366 (62%)	613 (39%)	1,217 (29%)	794 (22%)	771 (22%)



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. The best way to manage CWD is to prevent its introduction into new areas and keep infection rates low where it exists.

Statewide CWD surveillance began in Missouri in 2002. Since that time, more than 310,000 deer have been tested for CWD. 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 2025, CWD has been detected in a total of 815 free-ranging deer in 46 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 on CWD in Missouri can be found at <https://mdc.mo.gov/hunting-trapping/species/deer/chronic-wasting-disease>.

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 before consuming it 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>.



2024-25 CWD Surveillance and Monitoring

More than 36,000 free-ranging deer were tested for CWD across Missouri during the 2024-25 CWD surveillance year (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025). Roughly 18,500 deer were tested during mandatory sampling within portions of the CWD Management Zone on opening weekend of the November Portion of firearms deer season. Another 4,766 were sampled through post-season targeted removal. Partnering taxidermists and meat processors collected the majority of the remaining samples.

Through the voluntary participation of landowners in CWD Core Areas across the state, a total of 4,766 deer were removed across 39 CWD Core Areas. These efforts resulted in the removal of 70 CWD-positive deer and lowered deer density in these localized areas to slow the spread of CWD. Landowners removed approximately a third of the removal total and MDC and USDA Wildlife Services staff removed the remainder. Since 2012, ~26,800 deer have been removed through targeted removal efforts statewide, accounting for around 35% of total CWD+ detections. During that same timespan, ~3.7 million deer were harvested statewide by hunters during the deer hunting season.

Of the deer sampled for CWD during the 2024-25 CWD surveillance year, 243 deer tested positive in the following 36 counties: Adair (4), Audrain (1), Barton (9), Callaway (1), Carroll (4), Cedar (1), Chariton (7), Clark (4), Cole (1), Crawford (3), Dallas (1), Franklin (27), Gasconade (1), Grundy (7), Howell (1), Jasper (2), Jefferson (23), Lewis (1), Linn (24), Macon (22), Marion (1), Mercer (1), Miller (1), Morgan (1), Oregon (7), Osage (17), Perry (10), Putnam (1), Randolph (3), Scotland (3), St. Clair (1), Ste. Genevieve (41), Stone (3), Sullivan (5), and Texas (1). CWD detections in Audrain, Callaway, Lewis, Marion, Miller, Morgan, and Texas counties were the first detections in these counties. The 243 CWD-positive deer included 173 from surveillance and 70 removed during post-season targeted removals.

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 2024-25, the CWD Management Zone included 70 counties (**Figure 15**). Regulations within the CWD Management Zone include a ban on feeding and minerals, mandatory sampling requirements (select counties), removal of the antler-point restriction, carcass movement restrictions, and additional days of deer hunting opportunity.

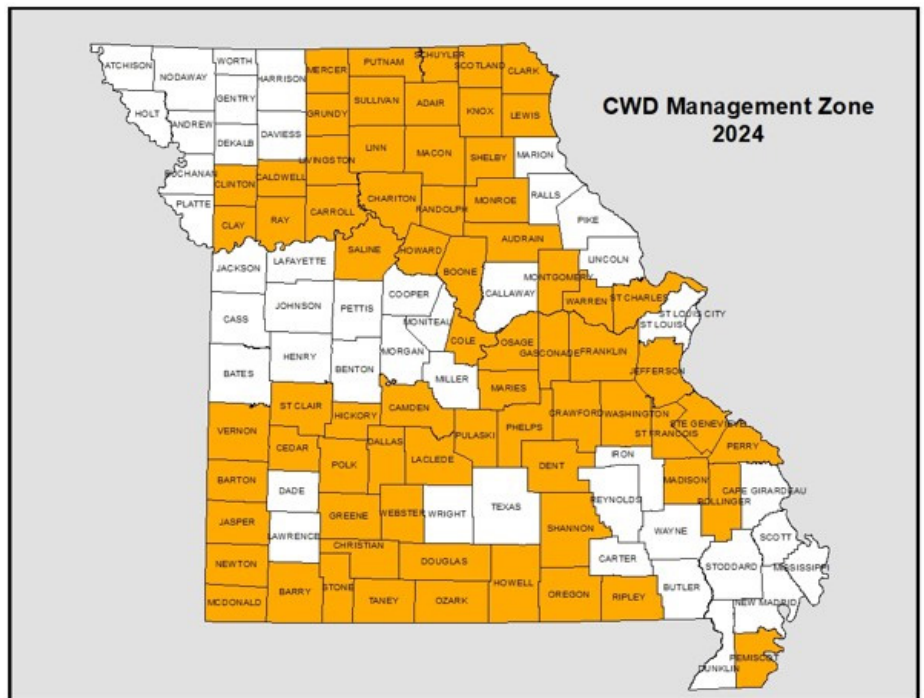


Figure 15. 2024 CWD Management Zone.

Localized CWD Management

MDC's goal is to have a healthy, sustainable deer population. CWD threatens Missouri's deer herd and hunting culture. There are examples from other states in which CWD prevalence (% of the deer population that has CWD) has increased from the low single digits to 50% or more in as little as 20 years in the absence of sustained, active, localized CWD management. There are also examples in other states where deer populations are declining and the age structure of populations is being impacted because of high CWD prevalence.

Wisconsin had its first confirmed case of CWD in 2001 and engaged in active management for seven years. Similarly, Alberta first confirmed CWD in 2005 and engaged in active management for three years. During those years, CWD apparent prevalence remained low in those areas (**Figure 16**). Without active management, CWD apparent prevalence rates have increased considerably (**Figure 16**). By comparison in Macon and Linn counties in Missouri, active management has been occurring since the disease was first detected, and CWD apparent prevalence rates remain less than 2% (**Figure 16**).

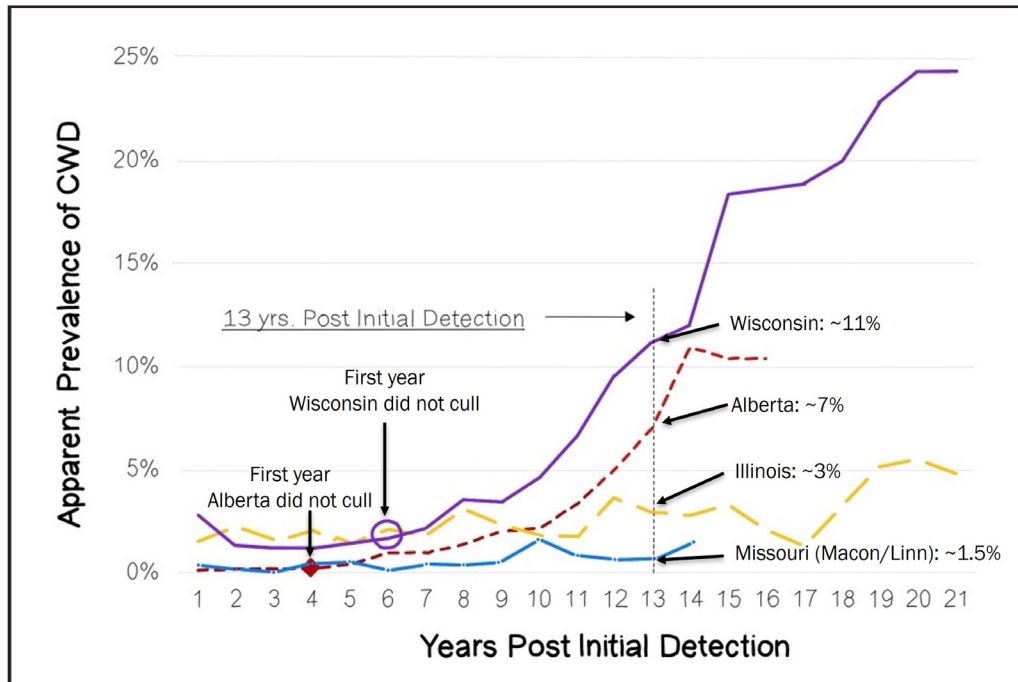


Figure 16. CWD prevalence in states/provinces with varying management practices. Adapted from Thompson et al. 2023. Wildlife Society Bulletin. Illinois and Missouri have conducted targeted removal annually since detection. Markers indicate when Alberta and Wisconsin stopped their targeted removal programs due to political pressure.

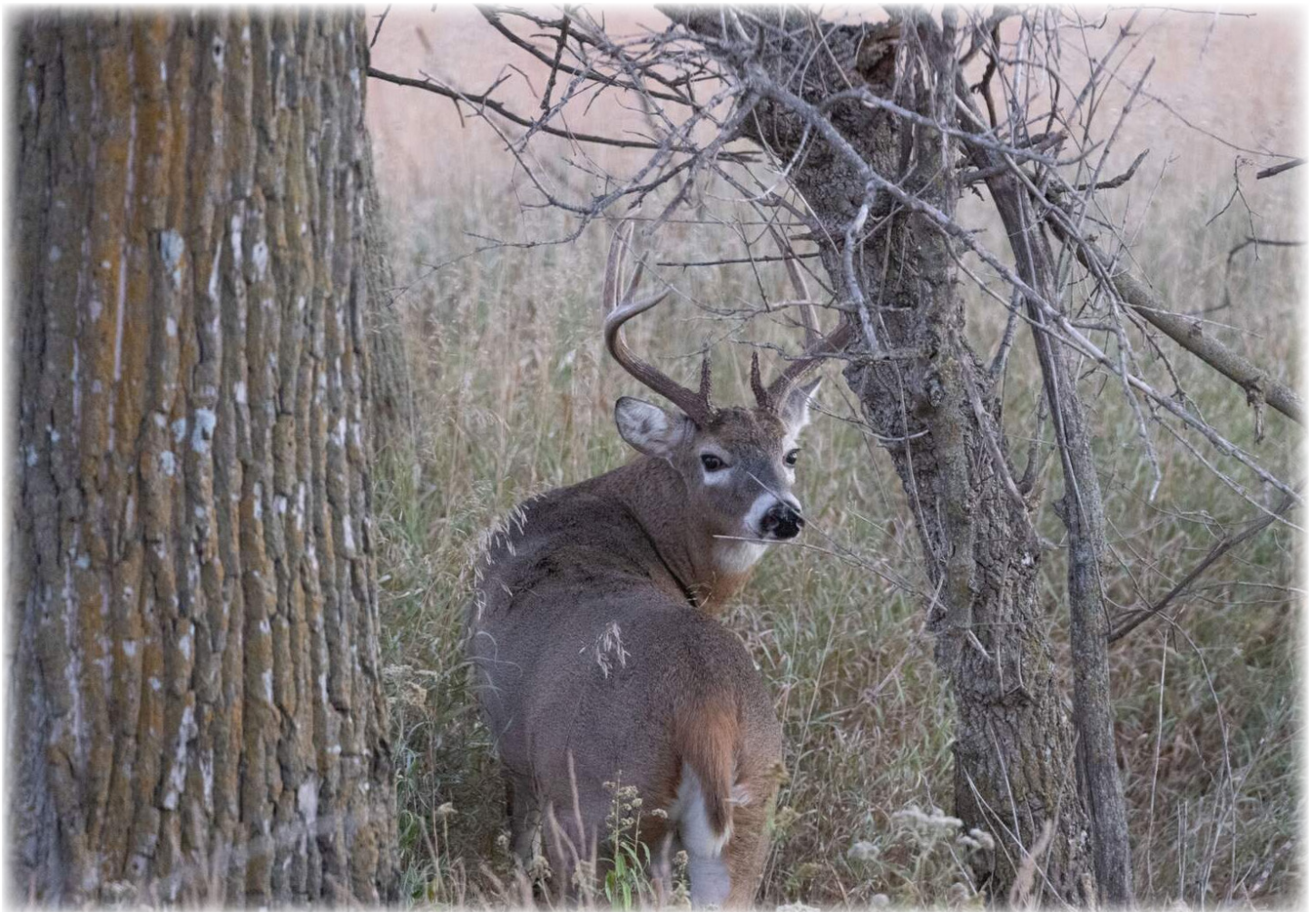
Wisconsin and Arkansas both recently studied the annual survival of deer in their endemic CWD areas. In Wisconsin, annual female deer survival rates were 83% for deer without CWD and 41% for deer with CWD. Male deer fared even worse in Wisconsin going from 69% without CWD to just 17% with CWD. In Arkansas, adults had 67% annual survival if they did not have CWD; annual survival for CWD positive deer was 45%. For more information on these studies, visit <https://www.agfc.com/hunting/deer/chronic-wasting-disease/cwd-research-and-resources/> and <https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/Research/articles/January2025>.



CWD Management in Missouri

Active, localized management in Missouri occurs in CWD Core Areas (hereafter, cores). Cores include each section/land grant where a CWD detection occurs and a 1-2 section buffer. Increasing deer harvest in cores can reduce CWD transmission rates and keep CWD infection rates low, resulting in a healthy deer population. Missouri has effectively used localized management to keep CWD infection rates low. We are also actively listening to the public and proactively testing out new methods to manage the disease including the Hunter Harvest Initiative (HHI). During the 2024 deer season, we piloted the HHI in 4 cores in Missouri. The goal of the HHI is to increase the harvest of deer within cores during the hunting season to reduce or eliminate the need for targeted removal in these areas. For targeted removal efforts, we have removal goals for each core. If the goal is met, we stop removals for the year in that area. Similarly, HHI cores have harvest goals. If the harvest goal is reached during the regular hunting season, targeted removals are not done in that core following the hunting season. Using what was learned from those efforts last year, we plan to expand the HHI to 19 cores this coming deer season.

Deer are an important natural resource to Missourians and CWD threatens that resource. Through an incredible conservation success story, we have gone from an estimated 400 deer statewide in 1925 to an estimated 1.7 million deer today. More than 475,000 people pursue this iconic species each fall in Missouri. CWD is a threat to a healthy, sustainable deer population in Missouri for current and future generations. We have shown that active, localized management of CWD through partnerships with landowners and hunters is a successful way to keep infection rates low. For more information on the HHI or post-season targeted removal efforts including existing core boundaries and removal totals by year and core, visit <https://mdc.mo.gov/cwd> and select the Hunter Harvest Initiative or Post-Season Targeted Removal pages. Additional information on CWD testing results, CWD Management Permits, and many other aspects of MDC's approach to managing CWD are also available from the CWD homepage.





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