



2006 Deer Harvest by Town in Maine
Total = 29,918

Maine Deer Harvest Highlights 2006

2006 marks the 21st season of the any-deer permit system and a reconfiguration of the Wildlife Management Districts (WMD). The new 29 WMD changes mostly affect the downeast region by realigning districts to better reflect deer habitat similarities and improve deer management.

A total of 67,725 any-deer permits were allocated to 24 WMDs, including 1,218 bonus any-deer permits issued in WMDs 23 and 24 to achieve district specific doe harvest quotas. Of the permits available, 9,922 (15%) were issued to qualifying landowners in an early, separate lottery. Any-deer permits are WMD and hunter specific; they may be used during the regular firearms (October 30th-November 25th) and muzzleloader (November 28th-December 10th) seasons. Bonus permits allow hunters to take an additional antlerless deer and can be used during any open season. New in 2006 was the Superpack license that allocated up to 2.5 % of the any-deer permits in wildlife districts with 5,000 or more permits to Superpack license holders as "Bonus Deer" permits. This allowed Superpack license holders to take two deer, one of which must be antlerless. In all 514 permits were distributed in WMDs 16, 17, 21, 22 and 23.

Although antlered bucks (3" minimum antler length) were legal quarry for all hunters during all deer seasons, only hunters who possessed a valid any-deer or bonus permit license could legally take a doe or a fawn during these firearms seasons. Sundays were closed to all hunting and the opening Saturday of the regular firearms season was reserved for Maine residents only.

Our expanded archery season targets locations in which deer populations are under-harvested primarily due to firearms discharge bans and residential sprawl. The expanded archery season had no limit on antlerless deer (either-sex) and ran for 79 hunting days (Sept. 9th to Dec. 9th). As before, deer of either sex could be hunted statewide during the Sept. 28th to October 27th regular archery season.

Overall 29,918 deer were registered during 2006. During the expanded and special archery seasons 1,713 and 781 deer were taken respectively. This equates to a 35% increase in the expanded zones and over a 100% increase during the regular archery season over 2005. We suspect the higher archery kill was due to better weather than in 2005. The Youth Day harvest of 1,216 also showed an increase over 2005 by 81% and was the highest Youth Day harvest since its inception and 47% higher than the previous record year (2003). The regular firearms season's overall harvest of 24,862 mirrored the 2005 season with a slight increase in the buck and doe harvest. For the first time a special license allowed crossbow hunting during the regular firearms season with 15 hunters bagging a deer. Muzzleloaders fared better in 06' with an overall harvest of 1,307 for an increase of 31% over 2005. It is interesting to note that despite a dismal opening day of firearms season with the kill down by 96%, the overall season still turned out better than expected with the first week's total harvest picking up by 43%.

A harvest quota of 8,473 adult does was set in 2006 to meet deer management objectives in Maine's 29 WMDs. These quotas included anticipated harvests resulting from the either-sex archery and youth-day seasons. Doe quotas ranged from 0 in 5 WMDs (districts 1, 3, 19, 27, and 28), to 1,715 does in WMD 17. Any-Deer and Bonus permittees tagged 4,021 fawns, while archers and youth day hunters tagged 985 young of the year. Overall, 13,769 antlerless deer were registered by hunters and the statewide doe harvest totaled 8,799 or 3.8% above pre-set quotas.

The statewide harvest of antlered bucks (16,149) in 2006 was within 1% of our projected buck harvest with a little more than half of our WMDs reporting a higher harvest than projected. The top 5 buck-producing WMDs (per sq. mi.) during 2006 were (in descending order) districts 24, 21, 29, 22 and 23, all in central and southern Maine. Among the 16,149 antlered bucks taken in 2006, roughly 8,326 (51%) were 1 ½ year-olds (yearlings), while more than 1,776 (11%) were mature bucks (4 ½ to 15 ½ years old). Male fawns are reported with antlerless deer.

It was estimated that over 172,000 hunters took to the woods to hunt deer in 2006. Overall 71% of the deer registered were by residents. Estimates of success vary, with resident (including landowner) any-deer permit holders having a 26.8% success rate overall versus 22% for non-resident hunters. In general, buck hunters without an any-deer permit harvested bucks at an estimated 10-12% success rate.

Maine's statewide post-hunt population was estimated at 218,700 deer or 7.6 deer / mi² during 2006. For 2007 deer population management will continue to focus on increasing herd productivity in the northern and downeast regions. And with a relatively moderate 06'-07' winter doe harvests will likely continue at similar levels in order to stabilize deer populations and maintain our short-term population objectives within most central and southern WMDs.