

**Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources
Natural Resources Board Agenda Item**

Item No. 6.B.

SUBJECT: Report and preliminary results of the 2021 deer seasons.**FOR:** January 2022 Board meeting**TO BE PRESENTED BY:** Casey Krueger, Chief Warden; Kimberly Currie, Customer and Outreach Services Bureau Director; Jeff Pritzl, Deer Program Specialist, Sarah Hoyer, Communications Director**SUMMARY:**

Representatives from the bureaus of Wildlife Management, Customer and Outreach Services, Law Enforcement and the Office of Communications will present preliminary findings from the 2021 deer hunting seasons. Discussion may include information related to preliminary harvest numbers, license sales, outreach efforts, hunting accidents and enforcement issues, CWD statistics and more. Bow and crossbow harvest may also be reviewed.

Additional information will be provided prior to the board meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: Information only.**LIST OF ATTACHED MATERIALS (check all that are applicable):**☒ Background memo☐ Type name of attachment if applicable☐ Type name of attachment if applicable☐ Type name of attachment if applicable

For

Approved by	Signature	Date
Eric Lobner, Bureau Director	DocuSigned by: <i>Eric Lobner</i> 49A5E090CF88465...	1/12/2022 8:17 AM CST
Keith Warnke, Division Administrator	DocuSigned by: <i>Keith Warnke</i> 9D60747CE78D4CA...	1/12/2022 1:46 PM CST
Preston D. Cole, Secretary	DocuSigned by: <i>Sarah Barry</i> A7D70DC3770642F...	1/14/2022 12:49 PM CST

cc: Board Liaison – AD/8

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WJR

by Sarah Barry

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CORRESPONDENCE/MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 7, 2022

TO: All Members of the Natural Resources Board

FROM: Preston D. Cole, Secretary

SUBJECT: Background memo relating to summary of the 2021 deer hunting seasons

CUSTOMER SERVICE

In 2021, customers participating in Wisconsin's deer hunting seasons purchased 810,919 licenses through Jan. 3, 2022, as compared to 823,454 licenses sold through Jan. 3, 2021, for the 2020 seasons. Preliminary counts for the 2021 seasons show 447,195 gun (not including sports or patron), 124,791 archery and 120,218 crossbow licenses (not including upgrades) were sold through Jan. 3, 2022. There is still potential for limited sales through Jan. 31, as metro unit deer seasons remain open through this period as does the extended archery and crossbow seasons in some farmland zone counties.

This year, the department saw hunting traditions passed along to 45,833 new hunters who bought a deer gun or archer license for the first time or for the first time in 10 or more years. This year, 18,476 mentored deer licenses were purchased. In all, female hunters made up 11% percent of all deer license sales and 24% percent of new buyer license sales.

The 2021 deer season was once again a very busy time for DNR Customer and Outreach Services Staff and DNR License Sales Agents. This year was the fifth season that the Go Wild licensing system and the integrated GameReg system were used to manage license sales, harvest authorization distribution and harvest reporting. The system performed as expected.

The day before the gun deer opener remained the peak sales day of the year with 99,439 licenses sold on that day alone. That day also remained our peak call volume day for the season as well with the call center staff answering 2,438 calls. The peak call volume hour was 10:00-11:00 a.m. on Friday, Nov. 19, with 257 calls answered. Of the 8,199 calls answered in the week before Nov. 20, 95% of calls were answered within two minutes; the average speed of answer was 21 seconds.

DEER SEASON HARVEST SUMMARY

This report provides harvest numbers comparing the 2021 harvest to both the 2020 harvest and the five-year average harvest from 2016-2020. Deer harvest was down in most seasons compared to 2020. However, most Northern Forest units saw slight increases in buck harvest (still 6% below the 5-year average), and most of the decline this year occurred with antlerless harvest in the Farmland Zones.

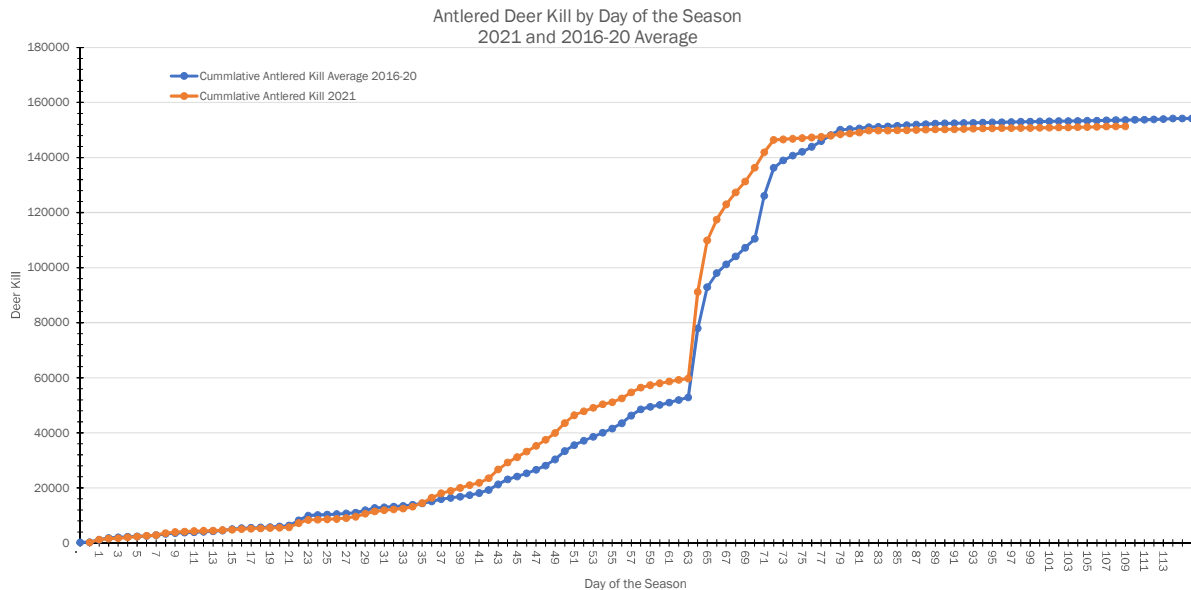
The deer season structure in 2021 was like that of 2020 with a few exceptions. Thirty-six counties offered the holiday hunt, up from 32 counties in 2020, and 27 counties offered an extended archery and crossbow season through Jan. 31, 2022, an increase from 26 counties in 2019. The archery and crossbow seasons opened almost a full week later than in 2020.

Preliminary Registration Totals

Preliminary registration totals for all deer seasons and weapon types through Jan. 4, 2022, indicate 303,749 deer were registered (151,254 antlered and 152,495 antlerless) compared to 338,839 deer registered during all 2020 deer seasons. There was a 4% decrease in statewide buck registration, with a

total registration decrease of 10.3% compared to 2020 (see table below). The total preliminary harvest for the 2021 season was 4.4% below the five-year average.

The graph below projects antlered deer harvest by day of all deer seasons for 2021 as compared to the average of the previous five years, 2016 – 2020. Overall, buck harvest during the 2021 season was just below the 5-year average.



This table below provides a breakdown of deer harvest by weapon type for all 2021 deer seasons and compares harvest numbers to the 2020 seasons as of Jan. 4, 2021. These numbers are subject to change as some DMUs have ongoing seasons until the end of January.

Preliminary 2021 Deer Harvested by Season			
Season	Total Kill 2020	Prelim. Total Kill 2021	% Change from 2020
Archery	47,836	38,147	-20.3%
Crossbow	65,731	57,071	-13.2%
Youth Hunt	7,484	5,075	-32.2%
9-day	196,191	182,783	-6.8%
Muzzleloader	7,223	6,581	-8.9%
December Antlerless	8,498	8,434	-0.1%
Holiday Hunt	5,876	6,109	4.0%
Total (All seasons)	338,839	303,749	-10.4%

Archery and Crossbow Season

The 2021 archery and crossbow seasons saw a decrease in harvest as compared to the 2020 season. This may be due in part to a later start to the season and the general decline in antlerless deer harvest this year in the Farmland Zones. October was unseasonably warm, and buck harvest was lagging. The warm, damp weather seemed to negatively affect the youth firearm hunt as well. Conditions improved nicely as fall progressed, and the buck harvest was running ahead of the 5-year average compared to the equivalent

length of season prior to the gun season. Antler development was observed to be above average this year, and some taxidermists shared they were exceptionally busy this year.

Nine-day Gun Deer Season

The 2021 nine-day gun deer season had good hunting conditions across the state. A very windy weather front with snow likely hampered harvest during the Sunday of opening weekend. Agricultural crop harvest was ahead of schedule across the farmland regions. Some snow cover could have improved visibility, but much of the state had bare ground for the entire season. The 2021 opener was still a relatively late start on the calendar, largely missing the breeding season, which provides more deer movement and sightings. The general theme for this year was “things were quiet,” with not a lot of deer or hunter movement. But as with any year, there is considerable variability across the state, with some areas reporting greater hunter presence, especially in the north, where some may not have traveled in 2020 due to pandemic precautions.

Citizen Involvement in Deer Management

County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) and citizen involvement through programs like the Deer Management Assistance Program continue to play a key role in deer management. The CDACs will reconvene in late March to develop local recommendations for the 2022 season. Hunters, landowners and others with an interest in deer management are strongly encouraged to attend their county meetings and participate in opportunities that help measure levels of support for CDAC recommendations. Extensive communication efforts will be made to inform and engage the public throughout the process.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

During the nine-day gun-deer season, conservation wardens made 12,135 patrol contacts with 53% occurring during the opening weekend. In addition, staff received 1,215 calls for services. As expected, the opening weekend is the busiest with 33% of the calls occurring on the opening Saturday and Sunday. Unlawful baiting/feeding violations constituted approximately 35% of the enforcement total.

During the combined 2021 deer seasons, conservation wardens investigated a total of six hunting accidents: five non-fatal and one fatal, in five counties (Door, Iron, Juneau, Marathon and Waukesha) with an incident rate of 1.14 per 100,000 licenses. All six incidents occurred during the nine-day gun deer season. None of the incidents involved mentored hunting.

Hunting in Wisconsin continues to be a safe activity, demonstrated by a continued downward trend in hunting incidents. During the nine-day gun deer season, the 10-year average is 1.12 incidents per 100,000 hunters. In six of the last 10 seasons there have been no fatalities.

DEER DONATION PROGRAM

This year, hunters donated 1,335 deer as of early January. This is comparable to 2020 donations. Wildlife Management expanded the Deer Donation Partners Program (DDPP) during the nine-day gun deer season. The program was initiated to explore ways to provide more deer donation drop-off locations in counties or areas that do not have a participating Deer Donation processor. Through the DDPP hunters may donate their deer at a convenient drop-off site. Deer are then transported by volunteers to a participating processor. In 2021, two DDPP deer drop off sites was established in Marquette and Green Lake counties, with 45 deer donated, up from 21 in 2020.

CWD SURVEILLANCE

Regional sampling occurred for the second year in the Northeast district, and disease detection and assessment surveillance continued in targeted areas statewide. This is the fourth year in a multi-year effort of concentrated regional sampling. Surveillance continued in 13 Northeast District counties to complete the regional sampling that occurred in that district last season.

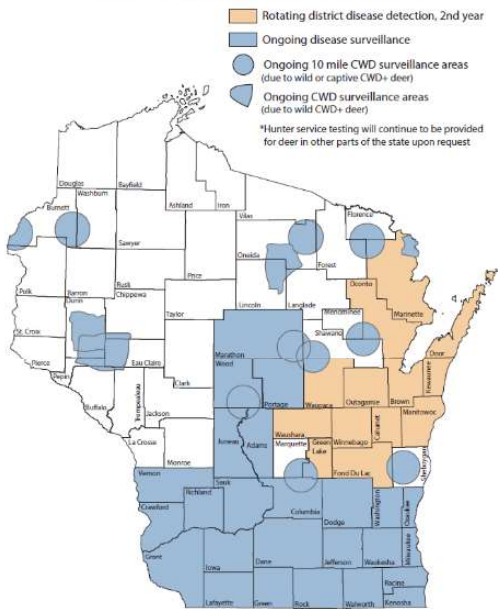
As of Jan. 5, 2022, 14,895 samples have been analyzed of the 15,864 samples received to-date. There has been a delay on CWD test results for deer harvested during the gun deer season and the rest of the 2021 deer season due to staffing shortages at the Wisconsin Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WVDL).

WVDL is one of only 18 certified CWD testing sites in the nation and has been testing samples for the Wisconsin DNR and Wisconsin deer hunters for more than 20 years. In partnership with WVDL, the DNR has striven to reduce hunter wait times, always looking for more efficiencies in our processes to deliver excellent customer service to Wisconsin deer hunters.

The 2021 CWD year runs from April 1, 2021, until March 31, 2022, so additional samples will be analyzed before the sampling year ends. A variety of factors, including changes in the annual surveillance plan, hunter interest, sick deer reports and additional permits like for agricultural damage and CWD surveillance, affect the number and distribution of CWD samples each year. We are on pace to have a slight reduction in total samples collected compared to 2020. Data entry and error correction of sample submission datasheets is still in progress.

Wildlife Management continued sampling deer within the southern farmland zone and other CWD-affected counties, including both the southwestern and southeastern core infection areas, to track changes in both CWD prevalence and distribution. We sampled deer in surveillance areas around CWD-positive wild deer in Adams, Eau Claire, Green Lake, Juneau, Lincoln, Oneida, Dunn, Marathon, Marquette, Portage, Shawano, Sheboygan and Wood counties, as well as in the wild deer herd surrounding CWD positive farm-raised deer facilities in Marathon, Burnett, Portage, Oneida, Shawano, Waupaca, Marinette/Florence/Forest, Taylor and Oconto counties.

CWD Sampling Areas for 2021



Deer Management Zone	Final 2020 CWD Samples	Preliminary 2021 CWD Samples
Central Farmland Zone	6658	6072
Central Forest Zone	500	547
Northern Forest Zone	2336	2069
Southern Farmland Zone	9386	7101
Unknown Zone	40	75*
Totals:	18,920	15,864
*Number will likely decrease as error corrections continue.		

All hunters had the opportunity to have their deer sampled through their county wildlife biologist or other available sampling locations. This year, Wildlife Management expanded efforts to encourage use of hunter self-sample CWD kits. Statewide, more than 100 hunters have submitted samples using the kits.

Online CWD Sampling Form

In 2021, the DNR improved the online CWD sample data form based on customer feedback and expanded promotion of its use by hunters. The online form is available to hunters through their registration email and their Go Wild harvest history. The form increases convenience to hunters whose name, contact information, customer number and harvest authorization number are automatically populated, saving time on data entry. The form also includes a clickable map so that entering harvest location information is more convenient and more accurate. In addition to its benefits to hunters, the form will improve data accuracy, saving considerable staff time on data correction. Paper forms are still available to hunters who prefer that method. In 2021, 13.4% of hunters who submitted deer for CWD testing used the online form, an increase from 12.7 % in 2020. Further improvements to the online form are planned for 2022 as we continue to enhance user experience and increase use among hunters who have their deer sampled for CWD.

Enter the barcode number from the barcode tag in your data kit.
Then answer the questions about your deer.

J. HUNTER - DNR 111-1111-1111
Tag/Harvest Authorization Number
Confirmation Number: W11-1111-1111

CWD Barcode Number
Confirm CWD Barcode Number
CWD Sampling Station ID Number

Type of Deer Harvested
☐ Male ☐ Female
If antlered:
Please choose...

Select your harvest location on the map. Your selection must be within Wisconsin.

Select your harvest location on the map. Your selection must be within Wisconsin.

CWD Sampling – Outreach and Marketing Efforts

Wildlife Management continued the Adopt-a-Kiosk (AAK) and Adopt-a-Dumpster (AAD) programs in 2021. These programs enhance hunter convenience, seek to increase CWD sampling numbers and provide appropriate deer carcass waste disposal locations. This year there were 17 AAK partners and 64 AAD partners. Funding from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) assisted in the AAD program expansion in 2021.

Funded in part through a second grant from USDA, the DNR ran a radio and digital marketing campaign in November to increase awareness of CWD sampling opportunities as well as baiting and feeding bans. DNR also released local and statewide news releases, GovDelivery email messaging and social media content throughout the 2021 deer seasons informing the public of CWD sampling opportunities as well as baiting and feeding regulations.

Drafters: Kimberly Currie, Crystal Caputo, Brian Dhuey, Jeff Pritzl, Casey Krueger, Matt O'Brien, Amanda Kamps, Erin Larson, Tim Marien

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