



Archery deer hunters not complaining

by Lee Keck

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Though firearm hunters harvested slightly more deer during the regular firearm and muzzleloader seasons, very few complaints have been made by those who prefer to hunt with archery equipment.

This year's regular firearm season resulted in hunters bagging some 80,021 whitetails, some 500 more than last year. Muzzleloader hunters bagged a preliminary total of 3,700 deer, compared to last year's 3,308.

This is probably due to the fact that archers are used to dealing with adversities. And, it doesn't really upset matters that archers are harvesting excellent numbers of whitetails when compared to their firearm counterparts.

And, it is helpful that weather has been much better during most of the three-and-a-half month archery season. Firearm hunters, on the other hand, dealt with considerably less than ideal weather, particularly during the first segment of the seven-day hunt.

The first-segment opener on Nov. 17 brought relatively mild temperatures and moderate breezes. However, Friday was considerably different than Saturday which found hunters dealing with powerful winds and exceptionally cold conditions. Nov. 19, the final day of the three-day, first-segment hunt, brought slightly moderating temperatures and somewhat diminished winds.

Weather conditions were much improved during the second segment of the hunt. This portion of the hunt began on Nov. 30 and continued through Dec. 3. Nearly ideal conditions could be found throughout this four-day second segment.

Since deer population totals were expected to be better this year, hunters were hoping for a big harvest.

Unfortunately, bad weather conditions made the much of the first segment unbearable. And by the time the second segment of the seven-day firearm hunt rolled around, firearm hunters were too far behind the previous year harvest totals to make any significant total.

Interestingly, the harvest total for the first three days of the 2017 firearm season (51,365) was down nearly 11 percent from the previous year. Though the firearm hunters tried, the 28,656 deer taken during the second segment did improve the total harvest, but not enough.

Still archers continued to plug away. As of Dec. 10, Illinois archers had bagged some 52,650 deer. This is an increase of more than 4,400 over last year during the same period.

The top five counties for archery harvest during at this point were Pike (1,852), Fulton (1,474), Jefferson (1,236), Adams (1,155), and Williamson (1,040). The harvest at that point consisted of 56 percent does and 44 percent males.

Results for local counties followed by the previous year's total for the same period show Calhoun County archers bagging 597/546 deer. Greene County hunters harvested 715/575. Archers in Macoupin County had recorded 969/790, while Morgan County hunters tagged 534/471 deer. The archery harvest in Jersey County for the period was 443/426. The Madison County archery harvest stood at 733/667.

The Illinois archery deer season continues through Jan. 14.

A special late-season antlerless-only deer hunt is scheduled for Dec. 28-31 and Jan. 12-14. Typically, the late-winter season permits are available at license vendors statewide beginning mid-December.

In addition, hunters with unfilled county permits from the regular firearm, youth and muzzleloader season may also hunt during this special season provided their permits are valid in the particular county open to this hunt. It is important to note that the unfilled permits are valid only for the county they were originally issued.

Hunters wishing to utilize unfilled firearm or muzzleloader permits should check with the Department of Natural Resources to ensure their county is open for the late-season hunt.