

Firearm Deer Hunting Questionnaire 2015

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Abstract

Hunter participation in the 2015 firearm deer season was 0.1% higher than participation in the 2014 season (97.0% vs 96.9%). Total hunter days afield rose from 2.86 million days of hunter recreation in 2014 to 2.88 million in 2015. Firearm deer hunters averaged 4.4 days a field during the 2015 season. The majority of firearm deer hunting took place on private lands (77.0%). The Central Farmland and Northern Forest zones of the state experienced the most hunter days. Thirty-two percent of the respondents who actively hunted in 2015 killed a deer.

Methods

A survey was mailed to approximately 10,000 firearm deer hunters after the completion of the 2015 firearm deer season (Figure 1). The sample was drawn from the 2015 license sales, which had firearm deer authority, in proportion to license types purchased. The questionnaire included specific questions about the days and units in which firearm deer hunters hunted as well as the type of land hunted (private, public, or industrial). A second mailing of 5,000 questionnaires was sent to non-respondents. Data from all returned questionnaires were entered into the DNR production server and summarized using the Statistical Analysis System (SAS).

Results

Responses were received from 5,397 of 10,000 hunters surveyed. After duplicates were removed, the resulting response rate was 54%. In 2015, 97.0% of hunters who purchased a license hunted during the 9-day season (Table 1, Question 2). The number of license holders who hunted in the 2014 season (96.9%) was not different than the number of license holders who hunted in 2015. The success rate was similar as well, 39% in 2014 and 32% in 2015 of those who killed a deer.

Eighteen percent of hunters said they planned on hunting the muzzleloader season in 2015 (Table 1, Question 16). While nineteen percent of respondents planned on participating in the Central Forest Zone and Central Farmland Zone antlerless only deer season in December (10-13) (Table 1, Question 17). Approximately 10% of licensed hunters participated in the statewide youth deer season as either a hunter or a mentor (Table 1, Question 1).

Twenty-five percent of hunters were aware of the creation of citizen deer advisory councils (CDACs) in each county (Table 1, Question 18). CDACs were created to improve the citizen input on deer management in Wisconsin; however 37.4% of hunters have a 'neutral' view towards the CDACs (Table 1, Question 19). Forty-nine percent of respondents felt that the complexity of deer hunting regulations in 2015 was the same as in 2014 (Table 1, Question 19a).

Hunters were asked to report the type and number of deer killed on private and public/industrial/forest land. The mean number of antlered deer killed on private land is 0.16 while the mean number of antlered deer killed on public land is 0.04. Antlerless harvest is

similar; the mean number of antlerless deer killed on private land is 0.16 and the mean number of antlerless deer killed on public land is 0.02 (Table 1, Question 6).

When the results of this survey were expanded to the larger population of licensed firearm deer hunters, the number of active hunters in 2015 was estimated at 594,773. This is an increase from the estimated 590,876 hunters that hunted the 2014 season. The 2015 firearm deer season (21 Nov. – 29 Nov.) provided these hunters with approximately 2.88 million days of hunting recreation (Table 1, Question 4). This is an increase of 15,580 hunter days from 2014 levels. It would appear that a warm and wet November did not impact hunter participation during the firearm deer season.

Most hunter days were spent in the Central Farmland (48.0%), Northern Forest (30.5%), and Southern Farmland (16.9%) Zones of Wisconsin (Table 1, Question 4). The remaining hunter days (4.6%) were spent in the Central Forest Zone. Much of this distribution is in relation to the amount of deer habitat in each region. Seventy-seven percent of hunter days were spent on private lands (Table 1, Question 4). Public lands (about 20% of the State's deer range) provided approximately 548,750 hunter days of recreation (19% of hunter days). This is an increase from the 514,821 hunter days on public land in 2014 (Table 1, Question 4).

Hunters were asked how they obtained access to private land during the 9-day firearm deer season. Ninety-three percent of the respondents either owned the land themselves, hunted on land owned by a relative, or hunted on a friend's or neighbor's land (Table 1, Question 5). Thirty-five percent of hunters hunted in a county where baiting was legal, of these hunters, 43.9% baited (Table 1, Question 8).

The 2015 firearm deer harvest was 1.8% higher than in 2014, so it is surprising that 48.2% of hunters felt the deer population "went down" from last year (Table 1, Question 9). Hunter satisfaction remained the same in 2015 as in 2014 with 17% of hunters rating their hunt "Very high" or "Fairly high". Thirty-six percent rated their hunt "About average", while 47% rated it "Fairly low" to "Very low" (Table 1, Question 11). Successful hunters are significantly ($P = <0.0001$) more likely to rate their hunt "Very high" or "Fairly high" than unsuccessful hunters.

"Seeing deer" and "Spending time with friends and family" continue to be the "most" important factors influencing Wisconsin hunters' perceptions of "quality". "Weather" and "Not seeing other hunters" have the least effect. In Wisconsin, hunters continue to say that their happiness is not very strongly correlated to a dead deer, as only 17.9% of hunters ranked "Killing a deer" as the most important factor effecting their perception of "quality" (Table 1, Question 10).

Thirty-five percent of respondents were "Very dissatisfied" with the number of deer they saw during the entire 9-day firearm season (Table 1, Question 14) and 67.2% responded that the number of deer that they saw was "Less than expected" (Table 1, Question 13). "Increase in the number of predators" was the most stated factor affecting the decrease in the number of deer seen by firearm deer hunters; "Increased hunter harvest of antlerless deer last year" and "Winter stress on deer survival" were the next most stated factors (Table 1, Question 9b).

Fifty-eight percent of respondents describe themselves as an "Average deer hunter" with deer hunting an important part of their life, but a few other leisure activities are just as important (Table 1, Question 23). Only 11.6% of respondents described their 2015 9-day firearm season as "A lot of fun" (Table 1, Question 15) and even fewer (3.0%) were "Very satisfied" with the current state of deer hunting in Wisconsin (Table 1, Question 20).

Table 1. *Answers to the 2015 Firearm Deer Hunting Questionnaire.*

Question 1. Did you participate, as either a hunter or a mentor, in the youth deer season (10-11 October)?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	529	10.0%
No	4,753	90.0%

No Answer = 117

Question 2. Did you hunt the 9-day firearm deer season of 21-29 November?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	5,182	97.0%
No	161	3.0%

No Answer = 56

Question 3. Which of the following types of weapon did you use during the 9-day firearm season? (Check all that apply)

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Rifle	4,646	81.0%
Shotgun	702	12.2%
Muzzleloader	119	2.1%
Handgun	134	2.3%
Bow	64	1.1%
Crossbow	69	1.2%

Question 4. Fill in the table below. Write in the county, zone, and number of hours that you spent hunting for each day you hunted. (See map on back of cover letter.) If you hunted in more than one county on a given day, list only the county in which you spent the most time. Also, please check the type of land on which you hunted.

Zones Where Hunters Hunted (# of hunter days)					
Date 2015	Northern Forest	Central Farmland	Central Forest	Southern Farmland	Total
Nov. 21	165,534	254,493	28,972	93,276	542,275
Nov. 22	156,559	229,839	26,130	81,347	493,875
Nov. 23	110,659	124,860	13,748	41,695	290,962
Nov. 24	86,573	107,250	9,998	34,425	238,246
Nov. 25	75,098	119,975	9,202	36,924	241,199
Nov. 26	65,668	115,658	8,520	36,583	226,429
Nov. 27	82,142	146,561	14,087	50,671	293,461
Nov. 28	80,892	163,147	13,634	63,509	321,182
Nov. 29	56,010	122,248	9,203	49,536	236,997
Total	879,135	1,384,031	133,494	487,966	2,884,626

Zones Where Hunters Hunted (# of hunter days)

Deer Management Zone Group	Private	Public	Mixed	Total
Northern Forest	502,055	323,115	53,966	879,136
Central Farmland	1,217,815	130,427	35,788	1,384,030
Central Forest	81,347	44,991	7,158	133,496
Southern Farmland	427,979	50,217	9,771	487,967
Total	2,229,196	548,750	106,683	2,884,629

Question 5. If you hunted privately owned-land during the 9-day season, how did you obtain access to the land? (Check ALL that apply)

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
I own the land	1,763	34.7%
I lease the land	184	3.6%
I hunted land owned by a relative	1,555	30.6%
I hunted on a friend's or neighbor's land	1,412	27.8%
I obtained permission from a landowner that I didn't know personally	135	2.7%
I hunted unposted private land	35	0.7%
Other (please describe):	0	0.0%

Question 6. For the entire 2015 9-day firearm deer season, list where you hunted, and the type and number of deer killed on private land versus public land. (Note: public land includes industrial and managed forest lands that are publicly accessible). Please report harvest and hunting in different zone and county combinations on separate rows, and do not include deer that were registered by another hunter in your group.

Land Type	Mean Antlered Harvest	Mean Antlerless Harvest
Public	0.04	0.02
Private	0.16	0.16

Question 8. Did you hunt in a county where baiting was legal?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	1,741	34.8%
No	2,120	42.4%
Unsure	1,140	22.8%

No Answer = 181

If YES, did you bait for deer?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	709	43.9%
No	907	56.1%

No Answer = 125

Question 9. Thinking now about the county where you hunted most often during the 2015 9-day firearm season, how have deer numbers changed from the last year? (Check only ONE)

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Deer numbers went up (<i>Go to 9a</i>)	463	9.1%
Deer numbers went down (<i>Go to 9b</i>)	2,456	48.2%
About the same (<i>Go to 10</i>)	1,700	33.4%
I did not hunt the same area as last year (<i>Go to 10</i>)	207	4.1%
Unsure (<i>Go to 10</i>)	272	5.3%

No Answer = 84

Question 9a. Which of the following are likely causes for the increase? **Check all that apply.**

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Reduction in the number of predators	115	11.2%
Reduced hunter harvest of antlerless deer last year	376	36.5%
Improved quality of deer habitat	151	14.7%
Reduced winter stress on deer survival	389	37.7%
Other	0	0.0%

Question 9b. Which of the following are likely causes for the decrease? **Check all that apply.**

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Increase in the number of predators	1,789	45.7%
Increased hunter harvest of antlerless deer last year	1,103	28.2%
Declining quality of deer habitat	470	12.0%
Winter stress on deer survival	552	14.1%
Other	0	0.0%

Question 10. Please rate the factors that most influence your perception of a “quality” deer hunt. Enter a value of 1 to 7 next to each statement, with “1” having the most effect and “7” having the least effect on a “quality” hunting experience. (*Please use each number only once.*)

Factor influencing hunt	% That ranked it “1” (having the most influence)	Mean value of response
An opportunity to kill a deer	23.6%	3.22
Seeing deer	38.9%	2.54
Seeing bucks	24.2%	3.22
Weather	8.7%	4.91
Not seeing other hunters	11.2%	4.77
Spending time with friends and family	43.1%	2.97
Killing a deer	17.9%	4.03

*Many hunters rated multiple factors as having the most influence so the column total will not equal 100%.

Question 11. Overall, how would you rate the quality of your 2015 9-day firearm deer hunt?
(Check only ONE)

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Very High	262	5.1%
Fairly High	622	12.2%
About Average	1,821	35.6%
Fairly Low	1,341	26.2%
Very Low	1,071	20.9%

No Answer = 65

Question 12. While you were hunting during the 9-day firearm season how many deer did you see?

Mean = 8.89

Question 13. Considering the number of days that you hunted during the 9-day firearm season, how did the number of deer that you saw compare with your expectations?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
More than I expected	427	8.4%
About the same	1,251	24.5%
Less than I expected	3,434	67.2%

No Answer = 70

Question 14. Think about the number of deer you saw during the ENTIRE 9-day firearm season. How satisfied are you with the number of deer you saw? (Circle ONE number)

Mean response value = 2.80

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 (Very dissatisfied)	1,770	34.8%
2	834	16.4%
3	817	16.1%
4 (Neutral)	735	14.4%
5	422	8.3%
6	282	5.5%
7 (Very satisfied)	229	4.5%

No Answer = 93

Question 15. Considering all of your experiences leading up to and participating in the 2015 9- day deer season, please rate the amount of fun you had on the following scale.

(Circle ONE number) **Mean response value = 4.64**

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 (No fun at all)	244	4.8%
2	274	5.4%
3	454	8.9%
4 (Neutral)	1,285	25.3%
5	1,272	25.0%
6	969	19.0%
7 (A lot of fun)	591	11.6%

No Answer = 93

Question 16. Do you plan on hunting the 2015 muzzleloader season which immediately follows the 2015 9-day firearm season?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	909	17.7%
No	4,222	82.3%

No Answer = 51

Question 17. Do you plan on hunting the statewide antlerless only deer season (10-13 December)?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	982	19.3%
No	4,113	80.7%

No Answer = 87

Question 18. Each county now has its own citizen deer advisory council (CDAC) to make recommendations to the DNR on local deer management objectives and antlerless harvest quotas. Were you aware of this change?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Yes	1,286	25.0%
No	3,849	75.0%

No Answer = 47

Question 19. Overall, how do you view the creation of CDACs as a means to improve the quality of deer management in Wisconsin? **Mean response value = 3.58**

Response	Frequency	Percent
0 (Unsure)	899	17.7%
1 (Very negative)	228	4.5%
2	182	3.6%
3	281	5.5%
4 (Neutral)	1,902	37.4%
5	741	14.6%
6	513	10.1%
7 (Very positive)	343	6.7%

No Answer = 93

Question 19a. Compared to last year, how would you rate the complexity of deer hunting regulations in 2015?

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
More complex	1,139	22.4%
Same complexity as 2014	2,497	49.1%
Less complex	678	13.3%
Unsure	772	15.2%

No Answer = 95

Question 20. What is your overall satisfaction with the current state of deer hunting in Wisconsin.

Mean response value = 3.45

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 (Very dissatisfied)	824	16.1%
2	764	15.0%
3	972	19.0%
4 (Neutral)	1,122	22.0%
5	813	15.9%
6	456	8.9%
7 (Very satisfied)	155	3.0%

No Answer = 75

Question 21. Rate the importance of getting venison among your reasons for hunting deer.

Mean response value = 4.96

Response	Frequency	Percent
1 (Very unimportant)	253	5.0%
2	299	5.9%
3	345	6.8%
4 (Neutral)	931	18.2%
5	1,091	21.4%
6	1,026	20.1%
7 (Very important)	1,161	22.7%

No Answer = 76

Question 22. How many years have you deer hunted? **Mean = 31.79**

Question 23. Which of the following categories best describes you, as a deer hunter? (*Check one.*)

Answer	# of Responses	Percent (%)
Casual deer hunter – I enjoy deer hunting, but it is not as important to me as some other leisure activities	873	17.0%
Average deer hunter – Deer hunting is an important part of my life, but a few other leisure activities are just as important	2,989	58.3%
Avid deer hunter – Deer hunting is the most important leisure activity in my life	1,261	24.6%

No Answer = 59

Firearm Deer Hunting Questionnaire

s. 23.09(2)(k), Wis. Stats.
Form 2300-043 (R 11/15)



1. Did you participate, as either a hunter or a mentor, in the youth deer season (10-11 October)?

Yes No

2. Did you hunt the 9-day firearm deer season of 21-29 November?

Yes No (Skip to question #16)

If you answered NO to question #2, please skip to question #16. Thank you!

3. Which of the following types of weapon did you use during the 9-day firearm season? (Check all that apply)

Rifle Handgun
 Shotgun Bow
 Muzzleloader Crossbow

4. Fill in the table below. Write in the county, zone, and number of hours that you spent hunting for each day you hunted. (See map on back of cover letter.) If you hunted in more than one county on a given day, list only the county in which you spent the most time. Also, please check the type of land on which you hunted.

Date 2015	County	Zone	# of hours	Private	Public
Nov. 21 (Sat.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 22 (Sun.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 23 (Mon.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 24 (Tue.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 25 (Wed.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 26 (Thu.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 27 (Fri.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 28 (Sat.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nov. 29 (Sun.)	_____	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*****If you only hunted on public land, please skip to #6.*****

5. If you hunted privately owned-land during the 9-day season, how did you obtain access to the land? (Check ALL that apply)

I own the land. I hunted on a friend's or neighbor's land.
 I lease the land. I obtained permission from a landowner that I didn't know personally.
 I hunted land owned by a relative. I hunted unposted private land.
 Other (please describe): _____

*****If you did not harvest a deer during the 2015 9-day firearm season, please skip to question #8.*****

****6. For the entire 2015 9-day firearm deer season, list where you hunted, and the type and number of deer harvested on private land versus public land. (Note: public land includes industrial and managed forest lands that are publicly accessible).**

Please report harvest and hunting in different zone and county combinations on separate rows, and do not include deer that were registered by another hunter in your group.

See Map for Location		Antlered Buck Harvest		Antlerless Harvest	
County	Zone	Public Land	Private Land	Public Land	Private Land

Figure 1. 2015 Firearm Deer Hunting Questionnaire.

7. Below is a series of statements related to the experience of harvesting a deer. We are interested in knowing how many of these statements applied to your deer harvests during the 2015 gun deer season. You do not need to tell us which statements applied to you, only how many. We use responses to this question to statistically estimate incident rates for all deer hunters without associating actions with any individuals.

Thinking about the 2015 9-day firearm season, how many of the following statements were TRUE for each deer that you harvested?

- I harvested the deer from an elevated deer stand
- I harvested the first deer that I saw
- I used an ATV to get the deer out
- I processed the meat myself
- I registered the deer either on my own (i.e., online or by telephone) or at a volunteer registration station
- I donated the meat to charity

7a. For the FIRST DEER that I harvested, _____ (0 – 6) statements were TRUE.

7b. For the SECOND DEER that I harvested, _____ (0 – 6) statements were TRUE.

OR

7b. Did not harvest a second deer (Go to #8)

7c. For the THIRD DEER that I harvested, _____ (0 – 6) statements were TRUE.

OR

7c. Did not harvest a third deer (Go to #8)

**8. Did you hunt in a county where baiting was legal?

Yes No Unsure

If YES, did you bait for deer? Yes No

9. Thinking now about the county where you hunted most often during the 2015 9-day firearm season, how have deer numbers changed from the last year? (Check only ONE)

- Deer numbers went up (Go to #9a)
- Deer numbers went down (Go to #9b)
- About the same (Go to #10)
- I did not hunt the same areas as last year (Go to #10)
- Unsure (Go to #10)

9a. Which of the following are likely causes for the increase? (Check all that apply)

- Reduction in the number of predators
- Reduced hunter harvest of antlerless deer last year
- Improved quality of deer habitat
- Reduced winter stress on deer survival
- Other: _____

9b. Which of the following are likely causes for the decrease? (Check all that apply)

- Increase in the number of predators
- Increased hunter harvest of antlerless deer last year
- Declining quality of deer habitat
- Winter stress on deer survival
- Other: _____

Figure 1. Continued.

10. Please rank the factors that most influenced your perception of a quality deer hunt. Enter a value of 1 through 7 next to each statement, with "1" having the most effect and "7" having the least effect on a "quality" hunting experience.

(Please use each number only once.)

- _____ An opportunity to shoot a deer
- _____ Seeing deer
- _____ Seeing bucks
- _____ Weather
- _____ Not seeing other hunters
- _____ Spending time with friends and family
- _____ Harvesting a deer

11. Overall, how would you rate the quality of your 2015 9-day firearm deer hunt? (Check only ONE)

- Very high
- Fairly high
- About average
- Fairly low
- Very low

12. While you were hunting during the 9-day firearm season how many deer did you see? _____

13. Considering the number of days that you hunted during the 9-day firearm season, how did the number of deer that you saw compare with your expectations?

- More than I expected
- About the same
- Less than I expected

14. Think about the number of deer you saw during the ENTIRE 9-day firearm season. How satisfied are you with the number of deer you saw? (Circle ONE number)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied			Neutral			Very satisfied

15. Considering all of your experiences leading up to and participating in the 2015 9-day deer season, please rate the amount of fun you had on the following scale. (Circle ONE number)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
No fun at all			Neutral			A lot of fun

**16. Do you plan on hunting the 2015 muzzleloader season which immediately follows the 2015 9-day firearm season?

- Yes
- No

17. Do you plan on hunting the statewide antlerless only deer season (10-13 December)?

- Yes
- No

18. Each county now has its own citizen deer advisory council (CDAC) to make recommendations to the DNR on local deer management objectives and antlerless harvest quotas. Were you aware of this change?

- Yes
- No

19. Overall, how do you view the creation of CDACs as a means to improve the quality of deer management in Wisconsin?

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Unsure	Very negative			Neutral			Very positive

Figure 1. Continued.

19a. Compared to last year, how would you rate the complexity of deer hunting regulations in 2015?

- More complex
- Same complexity as 2014
- Less complex
- Unsure

20. What is your overall satisfaction with the current state of deer hunting in Wisconsin?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very dissatisfied		Neutral			Very satisfied	

****Finally, in order to get a better picture of the types of hunters that respond to our survey, we would like to know a little bit more about you, and your interest in deer hunting.****

21. Rate the importance of getting venison among your reasons for hunting deer?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Very unimportant		Neutral			Very important	

22. How many years have you deer hunted? _____ years

23. Which of the following categories best describes you, as a deer hunter? (Check one.)

- Casual deer hunter – I enjoy deer hunting, but it is not as important to me as some other leisure activities.
- Average deer hunter – Deer hunting is an important part of my life, but a few other leisure activities are just as important.
- Avid deer hunter – Deer hunting is the most important leisure activity in my life.

Figure 1. Continued.