



SUMMARY OF 2002-2003 ILLINOIS DEER SEASONS



Forest Wildlife Information Series

September 2003



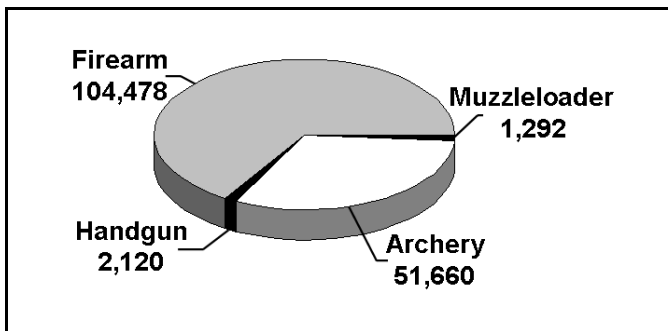
Introduction

Illinois deer hunters set a new harvest record during 2002 with 159,550 whitetails, compared to the previous record of 152,756, set in 2001. The firearm and handgun seasons showed a 3% and 1% increase in harvests, respectively, and there was a significant 8% increase in the archery season harvest. However, the muzzleloader season saw a 14% decrease in the whitetail deer harvest. A breakdown of harvest by season is provided in Figure 1.

Season Results

Firearm: The 7-day 2002 firearm deer season consisted of one 3-day segment (Friday - Sunday, Nov. 22 - 24) and a second 4-day segment (Thursday - Sunday, Dec. 5 - 8). Statewide corn harvest was more than 95% complete by the onset of firearm season. IDNR's Permit Office issued 277,888 county-specific firearm deer permits, resulting in 102,823 deer harvested in the 98 counties open to firearm hunting. An additional 3,850 permits (excluding standby permits issued at the sites) were issued for special hunt areas (public lands), with a harvest of 1,655 deer. In comparison, 99,906 deer were harvested using 275,435 county permits in 2001, and special hunt areas accounted for 1,398 deer with 3,775 permits. Hunters with muzzleloading-only permits took 624 deer during the second weekend of the 2002 regular firearm deer season. Table 1 presents the number of permits issued and resulting harvest on a statewide basis. Average permit success rates during 2002 increased by 1 percentage point (from 36% to 37%) compared to 2001, with the success rate for a full-season either-sex permit remaining at 40%. Daily harvest rates during the 2002 season were higher than during 2001 on the first four days of the hunting season, with decreases on the last three days (Figure 3). Individual county results are included in Table 7 at the end of this report.

Figure 1. 2002 Illinois deer harvest by season



Chronic Wasting Disease in Illinois

On November 1, 2002, DNR officials received confirmation that a wild Illinois deer had tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD). During the ensuing firearm deer season, over 4,000 samples were taken from hunter harvested deer in 36 counties. Six additional CWD-positive deer were identified from these samples. In conjunction with additional surveillance efforts, two clusters of infection were identified - one located along the Boone-Winnebago county line northeast of Rockford, and the other southeast of Woodstock in McHenry County (Figure 2).

Figure 2. CWD-infected Sections

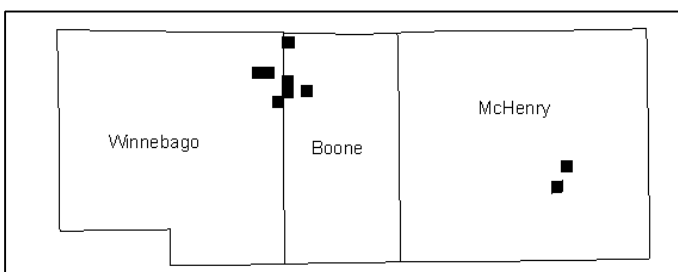
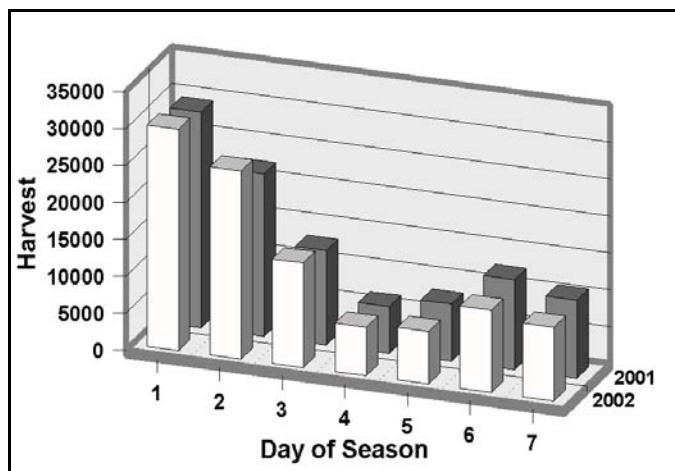


Table 1. Firearm deer harvest by permit type during 2002

Permit Type ⁽¹⁾	Permits Issued	Deer Harvested	Permit Success	% of Harvest
E-S/ Full	140,323	56,452	40%	54%
E-S/1st	327	73	22%	<1%
E-S/2nd	14,284	3,562	25%	3%
A-O/Full	42,270	20,480	48%	20%
A-O/1st	656	207	32%	<1%
A-O/2nd	3,020	902	30%	<1%
E-S/Free L-T	39,029	9,950	25%	9%
A-O/Free L-T	39,020	10,692	27%	10%
E-S/Paid L-T	18	6	33%	<1%
NRL/E-S	771	301	39%	<1%
NRL/A-O	508	203	40%	<1%
A-O/Youth	1,512	308	20%	<1%
E-S/Muzzle ⁽²⁾	6,239	542	N/A	<1%
A-O/Muzzle ⁽²⁾	593	82	N/A	<1%
Other ⁽³⁾	N/A	718	N/A	<1%
Total	288,570	104,478	37%⁽⁴⁾	100%

- (1) E-S represents either-sex permits and A-O represents antlerless-only permits. L-T represents landowner-tenant permits.
- (2) Represents permits issued for the muzzleloading-only season that could be used during the second regular firearm season.
- (3) Represents deer tagged with site-specific standby permits or unidentified/incorrectly used permit types.
- (4) Total does not include muzzleloading or "Other" data.

Figure 3. Daily harvest during the firearm deer seasons - 2002 and 2001



Weather conditions were generally favorable during the firearm season, with temperatures remaining cool, particularly during the fourth and fifth days, when temperatures dropped into the teens and single digits. During the first season, mean temperatures were in the mid to upper 30s, and a trace of snowfall was observed at several locations throughout the state on the first day. During the second season, mean temperatures were generally in the 20s. However, high temperatures reached the upper 40s on the sixth day.

The statewide 2002 firearm harvest is summarized by age and sex in Table 2. *Note:* age or sex data were lacking for 7,455 deer. Concern for traffic safety was the primary reason information was not collected for these deer (i.e., when hunter traffic backed up on major roadways at check stations, checkers only tagged deer and collected hunter permits but did not age deer). The sex composition of the 2002 firearm harvest was 42% females and 58% males.

Table 2. Sex and age composition of the 2002 firearm deer harvest *

Age	Males	% of Males	Females	% of Females	% of Total
Fawn	14,308	25%	10,054	25%	25%
1 ½	18,476	33%	12,668	31%	32%
2 ½	15,026	27%	12,000	30%	28%
3 ½	7,208	13%	4,293	11%	12%
4 ½+	1,523	3%	1,467	4%	3%
Total	56,541	100%	40,482	100%	100%

* There were an additional 7,455 deer checked through the check stations with no age or sex recorded.

IDNR biologists annually monitor the age structure of the antlered buck harvest. This serves as an index of the mortality rate, most of which is accounted for by hunter harvest. Limiting buck mortality at acceptable levels, while controlling population levels through adequate doe harvest, ensures that mature bucks are plentiful in the population, and doe:buck ratios are low. The proportion of yearling bucks (42%) in the antlered harvest during the 2002 firearm season was the lowest in recent years. Age composition of the antlered buck harvest is reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Age structure of antlered bucks taken during the 2002 firearm season for which age data are available

Age	Total	Percent of Total*
1 ½	16,871	42% (45%)
2 ½	14,851	37% (36%)
3 ½	7,149	18% (15%)
4 ½+	1,494	4% (3%)
	40,365	100%

* Figures in parentheses represent 2001 percentages.

Muzzleloading: The 2002 muzzleloader season was held December 13-15. Muzzleloader permit allocation decreased slightly overall, with 6,239 either-sex and 593 antlerless-only permits issued. In addition, the muzzleloader harvest of 1,292 deer represents a 14% decrease from the previous year (Table 4). Hunters with muzzleloading-only permits accounted for 56% of the harvest, with the remaining 44% taken primarily by landowners with unfilled property-only permits ("free" landowner permits).

Table 4. Harvest by permit type during the 2002 muzzleloading deer season

Permit Type ⁽¹⁾	Male ⁽²⁾	Female	Total Harvest	Percent of Harvest
E-S/Muzzle	325	322	649	50%
A-O/Muzzle	15	57	72	6%
E-S/Free L-T	169	102	272	21%
A-O/Free L-T	54	202	257	20%
Other ⁽³⁾	12	30	42	3%
Totals	575	713	1292	100%

(1) E-S represents either-sex permits and A-O represents antlerless-only permits, L-T represents landowner-tenant permits.

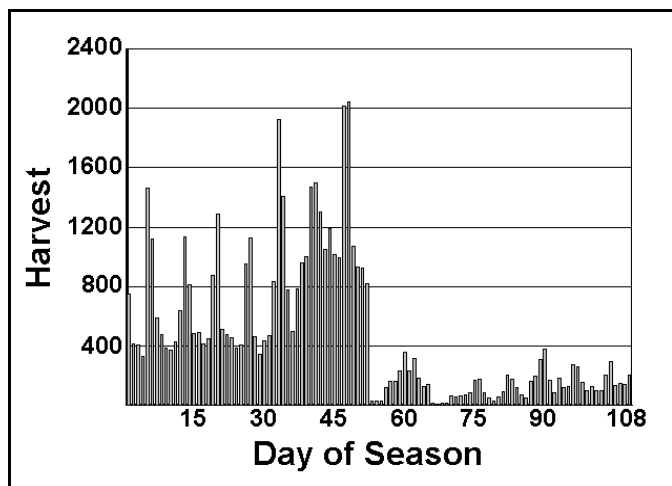
(2) Totals for male and female do not include 4 deer for which sex was not identified.

(3) Includes site-specific standby permits and improperly-used permit types.

Archery: In counties closed to firearm deer hunting, the 2002 - 2003 archery season consisted of 108 days from October 1, 2002 through January 16, 2003, while in counties open to firearm deer hunting the season consisted of 101 days. Resident hunters could purchase unlimited numbers of over-the-counter combination permits (each consisting of one either-sex and one antlerless-only tag), but harvest was limited to a maximum of two antlered deer during all seasons (including archery, firearm, and muzzleloader). Archery harvest increased significantly, from 47,858 in 2001 to 51,660 in 2002 (+8%). The ratio of bucks to does in the harvest was 55:45%. Archery harvest results by county are included in Table 7.

The rate of harvest during the statewide archery season peaked in early to mid-November during the rut, with the weekend of November 16-17 having the highest harvests. The harvest on the first complete weekend of the season was almost as high as during mid November. Daily archery harvest for the 2002-2003 season is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Daily archery harvest during 2002-2003



Restricted Archery Zone Results: Special regulations remained in place for the five central Illinois counties in the Restricted Archery Zone (Champaign, DeWitt, Macon, Moultrie and Piatt). In this zone, only antlered deer were legal during October 1-31, with a maximum harvest of 2 deer (either-sex) per hunter during the archery season. Either-sex hunting resumed November 1 until the close of the season.

Biologists' goal for the Restricted Zone was to reduce archery harvest by more than 20% from 1998 levels, with a heavy emphasis on reduction of the doe kill. A comparison of archery harvest in the Restricted Zone counties during the past 5 years is presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Results of regulations (enacted in 1999) in the 5-County Restricted Archery Zone, 2002

County	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Average % Reduction
Champaign	274	161	188	229	211	-28%
DeWitt	215	163	172	201	254	-8%
Macon	290	223	200	255	261	-19%
Moultrie	159	104	120	130	155	-20%
Piatt	177	122	104	97	123	-37%
Total	1,115	773	784	912	1004	-22%
Rest of State	35,213	40,573	42,116	46,947	50,656	+28%

Handgun: A special handgun hunting season (January 17-19, 2003) was held in 26 counties as authorized by 520 ILCS 5/2.25. A total of 11,713 antlerless-only permits was issued through a randomized lottery drawing. Hunter success averaged 18%, with a harvest of 2,120 deer (Table 6). Although interest in this season continues to grow, and support for expansion into new counties is strong, it is unlikely that IDNR will be able to increase the number of open counties in the absence of legislation to liberalize handgun deer hunting.

Table 6. Handgun harvest results by county - January 2003⁽¹⁾

County	Permits Issued	Total Harvest	Hunter Success	Antlerless Males ⁽²⁾	Female
Adams	514	81	16%	22	59
Brown	406	93	23%	28	65
Calhoun	327	86	26%	16	69
Clark	276	51	18%	7	44
Crawford	235	55	23%	9	41
Fayette	660	92	14%	28	64
Fulton	597	86	14%	26	60
Greene	317	68	21%	18	50
Jasper	410	85	21%	23	62
Jefferson	682	145	21%	33	111
JoDaviess	782	128	16%	33	95
Lawrence	133	31	23%	9	21
Macoupin	532	59	11%	3	53
McLean	290	44	15%	15	29
Morgan	243	47	19%	18	29
Ogle	416	44	11%	7	36
Perry	487	89	18%	21	68
Pike	954	273	29%	61	211
Randolph	540	91	17%	25	66
Richland	197	49	25%	13	36
Schuyler	416	70	17%	19	51
St. Clair	343	43	12%	11	31
Wayne	603	150	25%	42	108
White	221	63	28%	6	56
Whiteside	195	16	8%	4	12
Williamson	650	67	10%	18	49
Total	11,613	2,106	18%	515	1576

(1) Number of permits issued and deer harvested do not include special hunt areas. Grand totals including these areas are 11,713 permits and 2,120 deer harvested.

(2) Totals for male and female do not include 15 for which sex was not identified.

Recent Harvest Trends

Following the then-record harvest in 1995, deer harvests were relatively stable through 1999, with an increasing trend becoming evident over the last three years. Firearm harvest jumped significantly in 2000 but has since stabilized, while archery continues a long trend of steady annual gains.

Figure 5. Recent trends in Illinois deer harvest

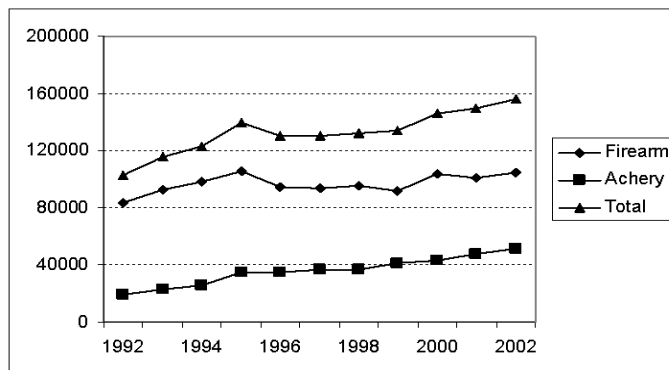


Table 7. Firearm and archery harvest by county, 2002-2003 season

<u>County</u>	<u>Firearm Permits</u>	<u>Firearm Harvest</u>	<u>Archery Harvest</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Firearm Permits</u>	<u>Firearm Harvest</u>	<u>Archery Harvest</u>
Adams	7627	2737	839	Macoupin	6205	2105	755
Alexander	1188	366	191	Madison	3403	1115	915
Bond	2816	1013	364	Marion	4503	1970	1067
Boone	1055	259	196	Marshall	1604	586	266
Brown	4169	1623	694	Mason	1455	567	485
Bureau	3306	1287	584	Massac	1767	594	378
Calhoun	3927	1524	911	McDonough	2364	929	390
Carroll	2975	977	380	McHenry	2844	570	603
Cass	2191	786	480	McLean	2215	716	462
Champaign	608	227	211	Menard	1481	539	332
Christian	1791	568	362	Mercer	2497	873	289
Clark	2948	1190	489	Monroe	2831	1195	280
Clay	3276	1424	560	Montgomery	3745	1337	513
Clinton	2373	917	481	Morgan	3116	1221	495
Coles	1678	639	466	Moultrie	440	172	155
Cook	0	0	128	Ogle	3776	1186	600
Crawford	2830	1236	564	Peoria	3906	1292	889
Cumberland	2021	741	252	Perry	4381	1819	709
DeKalb	1145	306	242	Piatt	403	180	123
DeWitt	830	314	254	Pike	9024	3691	2874
Douglas	585	214	137	Pope	6520	2130	713
DuPage	0	0	106	Pulaski	1815	738	325
Edgar	1639	679	302	Putnam	1111	440	175
Edwards	1459	596	168	Randolph	6070	2534	843
Effingham	2719	982	375	Richland	2286	932	441
Fayette	5612	2134	653	Rock Island	2357	726	418
Ford	376	116	61	Saline	2376	889	426
Franklin	3004	1171	840	Sangamon	2476	790	624
Fulton	6926	2298	1193	Schuyler	4686	1710	558
Gallatin	1736	678	254	Scott	1488	682	229
Greene	3860	1789	608	Shelby	3515	1129	631
Grundy	1166	378	346	St.Clair	3432	1270	683
Hamilton	3037	1402	468	Stark	617	232	162
Hancock	4630	1910	546	Stephenson	2902	1024	396
Hardin	2623	1025	356	Tazewell	2321	758	654
Henderson	1864	713	227	Union	5248	1880	570
Henry	2166	789	388	Vermilion	2273	772	915
Iroquois	1700	606	339	Wabash	845	397	251
Jackson	7159	2608	737	Warren	1532	612	225
Jasper	2941	1209	552	Washington	3725	1504	524
Jefferson	5201	2333	1389	Wayne	3841	1689	722
Jersey	2804	1006	536	White	2421	1117	552
JoDaviess	6679	2148	520	Whiteside	2313	767	368
Johnson	5148	1760	537	Will	1041	260	805
Kane	0	0	412	Williamson	5175	1696	797
Kankakee	953	218	233	Winnebago	2279	575	469
Kendall	467	130	166	Woodford	2269	838	539
Knox	3690	1277	592	Totals¹	277,888	102,823	51,660
Lake	0	0	535				
LaSalle	3294	1149	1068				
Lawrence	1746	812	492				
Lee	2103	725	535				
Livingston	1389	460	259				
Logan	947	367	226				
Macon	617	259	261				

¹ Firearm totals do not include permits issued for, or deer harvested on, special hunt areas. Grand totals including these areas are 281,738 permits and 104,478 deer harvested.