

2025-2026 Late-Winter Deer Season Hunting Information

SEASON DATES: January 1-4 and 16-18, 2026

HUNTING HOURS: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

BAG LIMIT: One ANTLERLESS deer per legally authorized permit. Only ANTLERLESS deer may be harvested during Late-Winter Deer Season. An antlerless deer is defined as a deer without antlers or a deer having antlers less than 3 inches long.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS: Illinois resident hunters must purchase a valid Late-Winter Deer Season permit OR have a valid unfilled deer permit. Nonresident hunters must have a valid unfilled deer permit.

Hunting on Private Land

COUNTIES OPEN TO LATE-WINTER DEER SEASON

Brown	Henderson	Perry
Clay	Jasper	Pike
Coles	Jefferson	Randolph
Crawford	Knox	Rock Island
Effingham	Macoupin	Saline
Fayette	Madison	Schuyler
Franklin	Marion	Shelby
Fulton	McDonough	Williamson
Hamilton	Mercer	Warren
Hancock	Monroe	Washington

OBTAIN A PERMIT

1. Purchase an OTC county-specific Late-Winter Deer Season permit:
 - a. Sold over the counter by IDNR License Vendors - Illinois residents only
 - b. No purchase limit
 - c. Fee \$17.50 + associated fees
 - d. Available December 9, 2025, through January 18, 2026

OR

2. During Late-Winter Deer Season, persons hunting on private land may use an unfilled deer permit valid for the previous firearm, muzzleloader* or youth deer season and valid for one of the open counties listed above. Unfilled firearm and muzzleloader deer permits are valid only for the county for which they were originally issued. Unfilled landowner firearm deer permits are valid only for the farmlands that the person to whom it was issued owns, leases or rents, in the open counties. Unfilled youth deer permits issued as part of the statewide youth-only deer hunting season are valid for all the open counties listed above. *Hunters using an unfilled muzzleloader deer permit may only use a muzzleloading rifle.

Hunting on Public Land: Sites Requiring a County-Specific Permit

- **Brown County** - Spunky Bottoms Unit of Weinberg-King SP; Buckhorn Unit of Siloam Springs
- **Coles County** – Fox Ridge SP; Paul C. Burrus SHA
- **Crawford County** - Crawford County SWA
- **Effingham County** - Wildcat Hollow SHA

- **Fayette County** - Carlyle Lake SFWA (except sub-impoundment areas and west of Kaskaskia River)
- **Hamilton County** - Hamilton County SFWA; Ten Mile Creek SFWA (Dahlgren and Goshen Trail Units only)
- **Henderson County** - Big River SF; Mississippi River Pool 18
- **Jasper County** - Meeker SHA; Newton Lake SFWA; Prairie Ridge SNA
- **Jefferson County** – Rend Lake SFWA and Corps of Engineers' managed areas of Rend Lake; Ten Mile Creek SFWA (Eades Mine and Belle Rive Units)
- **Knox County** - Spoon River SF
- **McDonough County** - Argyle Lake SP
- **Mercer County** - Mississippi River Pool 17
- **Perry County** - Pyramid SP (Captain, Denmark and Galum units only)
- **Pike County** - Ray Norbut SFWA; Ray Norbut Dutch Creek Unit; Mississippi River (Pool 22) Saverton Pool Federal Land; Mississippi River (Pool 24) Clarksville Pool Federal Land
- **Putnam County** - George S. Park SNA; Miller Anderson Woods (Putnam portion only)
- **Randolph County** - Fort de Chartres SHS (muzzleloading rifles only; no in-line muzzleloading rifles or muzzleloaders with scopes allowed); Kaskaskia River SFWA, excluding Doza Creek Water Management Area and Baldwin Lake Rest Area; Turkey Bluffs SFWA
- **Rock Island County** - Mississippi River Pool 16
- **Saline County** - Sahara Woods SRA; Saline County SFWA
- **Schuyler County** – Weinberg-King SP; Weinberg King SP – Scripps Unit
- **Shelby County** – Hidden Springs State Forest
- **Williamson County** – Crab Orchard NWR (Open Hunt Area Only)

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- OR**
2. As in years past, unfilled firearm or muzzleloader permits for the county in which the site is located will be valid for Late-Winter Deer season at the sites listed above. Unfilled youth deer permits issued as part of the statewide youth-only deer hunting season are valid at the sites listed above. Unfilled site-specific firearm or muzzleloader deer permits are also valid for the sites listed above. Unless otherwise listed, where site boundaries extend over more than one county, only the portion of the site that lies within an open county is open to hunting.

Additional Requirements

In addition to your Late-Winter Deer Season permit, you must have the following:

Hunting License: A valid Illinois Hunting, Sportsman's, Youth, or Apprentice License unless you are:

1. A disabled person with a State ID card available from the Secretary of State through the driver license examining station showing a P2, P2A, H2 or H2A disability.
2. A disabled veteran with a Veterans disability card (at least 10% service related); available from local Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs offices.
3. An Illinois resident on active duty and on leave from the U.S. Armed Forces.
4. A landowner or tenant residing on farmlands, or the children, parents, brothers and sisters permanently residing on such lands, and hunting only the lands resided on.

Habitat Stamp: Before any person 18 years of age or older takes, attempts to take or pursues a deer, he or she shall first obtain a State Habitat Stamp. Disabled veterans and former prisoners of war shall not be required to obtain State Habitat Stamps. Any person who obtained a Lifetime License before January 1, 1993, shall not be required to obtain a State Habitat Stamp.

FOID Card (issued by Illinois State Police): Regardless of who owns the gun, anyone who has a firearm, including muzzleloaders, or firearm ammunition in their possession must have in their possession a valid Firearms Owner's I.D. (FOID) Card unless he or she is:

A licensed out-of-state-sportsman hunting in Illinois, or under the age of 21 and under the immediate control of a parent, guardian, or responsible adult who has in their possession a valid FOID Card. For FOID Card information, call 217-782-7980.

Reporting Deer Harvest

Successful hunters must register their harvest by 10:00 p.m. on the same calendar day the deer was taken by calling the toll-free telephone check-in system at 1-866-ILCHECK or by accessing the online check-in system at <https://www.exploremoreil.com/wildlife/harvest>. They will be provided with a confirmation number to verify that they checked in their harvest. This number must be written by the hunter on the temporary harvest tag (leg tag). If the condition of the tag precludes writing on the tag in the appropriate space (i.e., bloody, etc.), the confirmation number shall be written elsewhere on the tag, or onto a piece of paper and attached to the deer along with the temporary harvest tag. The deer must remain whole (or field dressed) until it has been checked in. In instances where deer are checked in while the hunter is still afield, the deer may not be dismembered while afield beyond quartering the animal. If quartered, all parts of the carcass (except the entrails removed during field dressing) must be transported together and evidence of sex must remain naturally attached to one quarter. Evidence of sex is:

- a. For a buck: head with antlers attached to carcass or attached testicle scrotum, or penis.
- b. For a doe: head attached to carcass or attached udder (mammary) or vulva.

The harvest tag (leg tag) and confirmation number must remain attached to the deer until it is at the legal residence of the person who legally took or possessed the deer and final processing is completed. If the head/antlers are delivered to a taxidermist for processing, the confirmation number must be recorded on the "head tag" portion of the permit and both must remain with the deer while at the taxidermist. If the carcass is taken to a meat processor, the harvest tag (leg tag) with confirmation number must remain with the deer while it is processed and until it is at the legal residence of the person who legally took or possessed the deer. Persons delivering deer/parts of deer to a tanner for processing must supply the tanner with either their deer permit number, their confirmation number, or a written certification by the person from whom the deer was received that the specimen was legally taken or obtained.

Please call **217-782-7305** or email us at DNR.Permits1@illinois.gov if you have any questions.

For IDNR site-specific information: Hunter Fact Sheets - <https://huntillinois.org/directory>

Effective January 1, 2023, a new Illinois law will allow hunters to use centerfire, single-shot rifles in certain calibers for deer hunting. For more information please visit:
<https://www2.illinois.gov/dnr/hunting/Pages/Law-change-that-affects-hunting-season.aspx>