

2026-2027 Special CWD Deer Season Hunting Information

Season Dates: Dec. 31, 2026 - Jan. 3, 2027 and Jan. 15-17, 2027

Hunting Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Bag Limit: One deer per legally authorized either-sex or antlerless-only permit. Deer taken during the Special CWD Deer Season are not subject to the antlered deer bag limit restrictions imposed during the firearm, muzzleloader, youth and archery deer hunting seasons.

Permit Requirements: Hunters must purchase a valid CWD Deer Season permit **or** have a valid unfilled deer permit from the previous firearm, muzzleloader or youth deer season. Persons using an unfilled deer permit may only take deer appropriate for that permit type (either-sex or antlerless-only).

Private Land Hunting

Counties Open to Special CWD Deer Season

Adams	Grundy	Livingston	Stark
Boone	Jo Daviess	Marshall	Stephenson
Bureau	Kane	McHenry	Will
Carroll	Kankakee	Ogle	Winnebago
DeKalb	Kendall	Peoria	
Effingham	LaSalle	Putnam	
Ford	Lee	Scott	

Obtain a Permit

1. Purchase an OTC county-specific Special CWD Deer Season permit:

- o Illinois residents **and** nonresidents
- o Sold over the counter by IDNR License Vendors
- o Available December 8, 2026, through January 17, 2027
- o Antlerless-only permit
- o Fee \$5.00 + associated fees
- o No purchase limit

OR

2. During Special CWD 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.

Public Land Hunting: Site-Specific Permit Required

- **Apple River Canyon** – Thompson/Salem Units SP in JoDaviess County
- **Castle Rock SP** in Ogle County
- **Franklin Creek SNA** in Lee County
- **French Bluff SNA** in Carroll County
- **Goose Lake Prairie SNA/Heidecke SFWA/Morris Wetland** in Grundy County
- **Hanover Bluff SNA** in JoDaviess County

- **Kishwaukee River SFWA** in DeKalb County
- **Lake Le-Aqua-Na SP** in Stephenson County
- **Lowden-Miller SF** in Ogle County
- **Rail Woods (Falling Down Prairie) SNA** in JoDaviess County
- **Starved Rock SP – includes Starved Rock SP, Matthiessen SP, Margery C Carlson SNA, Mitchell's Grove SNA and Sandy Ford SNA** in LaSalle County
- **Tapley Woods SNA** in JoDaviess County
- **Wards Grove NP** in JoDaviess County
- **Winston Tunnel SNA** in JoDaviess County
- **Witkowski SWA** in JoDaviess County

Obtain a Permit

Apply online at <https://www.exploremoreil.com>

- Online lottery application – Illinois residents only
 - Application available October 27, 2026, through November 23, 2026
 - Site-specific antlerless-only permit
 - Fee \$17.50 + associated fees
 - Application limit – 1
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Public Land Hunting: County-Specific Permit Required

- **Bureau County** - Miller Anderson Woods SNA
- **Carroll County** - Mississippi River Pool 13
- **Effingham County** - Wildcat Hollow SHA
- **JoDaviess County** - Mississippi River Pool 12
- **LaSalle County** - Marseilles SFWA (open only during first four-day segment of the Special CWD Deer season)
- **Marshall County** – Marshall SFWA (Zone 1, 2, 3)
- **Lee County** - Green River SWA
- **Peoria County** – Marshall SFWA (Zone 4)
- **Putnam County** - George S. Park SNA and Miller Anderson Woods SNA

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- No purchase limit

OR

2. As in years past, unfilled firearm or muzzleloader permits for the county in which the site is located will be valid for Special CWD 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.
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Additional Requirements

In addition to your Special CWD 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>