



2026 Archery Deer Harvest Reporting & Hunting Regulations Information Sheet

Your deer permit entitles you to participate in the privilege of deer hunting. Please review this information to ensure that you comply with all of the deer hunting regulations. While hunting, please respect the rules of good sportsmanship and the property of others.

Have a safe and successful deer hunt.

MANDATORY DEER HARVEST REPORTING

Successful deer hunters must register (report) their harvest by 10 p.m. on the same calendar day the deer was taken by calling the toll-free telephone check-in system at 1-866-452-4325 (1-866-IL-CHECK) or by accessing the online check-in system: <https://www.exploremoreil.com/wildlife/harvest>.

Note to cell phone users: The most common reason hunters are unable to complete their harvest report is because of a poor cell phone connection. Once you have properly tagged your deer, wait until you are out of the woods and receive a clear, strong cell phone connection before placing your call.

TAGGING: The temporary harvest tag shall be attached and properly sealed immediately upon kill and before the deer is moved, transported or field dressed. No person shall leave any deer that has been killed without properly attaching the temporary harvest tag to the deer in the manner prescribed on the permit.

HARVEST REPORTING: Hunters must register (report) their harvest by 10 p.m. on the same calendar day the deer was taken. If a hunter is not able to locate a harvested deer in sufficient time to enable reporting the harvest by 10 p.m., the hunter must immediately report the harvest upon retrieving it. When reporting, hunters will be asked a series of questions to help biologists manage Illinois' deer population (additional information below). Before checking in your deer, please look over the questions listed on the back of your permit and be prepared to answer them. Please have a pen or pencil on hand when making the call (an extra-fine-tipped permanent marker works best). Upon completion, the hunter will be provided with a confirmation number to verify that he or she checked in the harvest. The confirmation number must be written by the hunter onto 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 (leg tag). The temporary 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, the deer has been checked in, and final processing is completed. 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.

If the head/antlers are left with a taxidermist, the confirmation number must be recorded on the "head tag" portion of the permit, and both must remain with the deer. If the carcass is taken to a meat processor, the temporary 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 must supply the tanner with either their deer permit number, their confirmation number, or written certification by the person from whom the deer was received that the specimen was legally taken or obtained.

Harvest reporting questions will include your permit number, the county or special hunt area of harvest, and the season in which you are hunting. You will also be asked the following questions. It will be helpful if you fill in the answers on this sheet before making the call. Use the ruler on the back of your permit to make any necessary measurements.

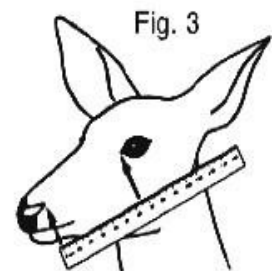
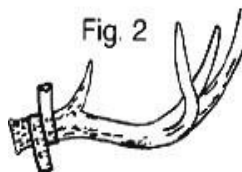
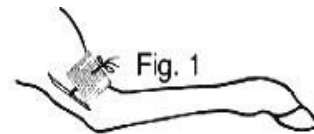
- Select the type of deer that you harvested: (1) a buck with antlers; (2) a buck without antlers; or (3) a doe.
- Was your deer a fawn last summer or is it an adult?
- How many bobcats did you see while hunting this location during this season?
- How many turkeys did you see while hunting this location during this season?
- How many wild pigs did you see while hunting in this county during this season?
- Measure the distance in MILLIMETERS from the rear edge of the nostril opening to the front corner of the eye (Fig. 3).

Additional Questions For Bucks With Antlers Only:

- How many antler points at least 25 mm long are present?
Count the total number of points on both beams, including the tip of the main beam.
- Measure the circumference in MILLIMETERS around the thickest antler beam one inch above the base.
- If the brow tine interferes with this measurement, take the measurement just below the brow tine. (Fig. 2)

ANTLERED DEER - A deer having at least one antler of a length of 3 or more inches

ANTLERLESS DEER - A deer without antlers or a deer having antlers less than 3 inches long.



PERMITS ARE NOT TRANSFERABLE. "Transfer" means the modification or changing, by the Department, or any other person, individual or group, of the name or the location on an issued permit to another person or location.

2026-2027 Archery Deer Hunting Rules and Regulations

Season Dates

- **In counties with a firearm season and west of State Route 47 in Kane County:**
 - October 1 - November 19, 2026
 - November 23 - December 2, 2026
 - December 7, 2026 - January 17, 2027
- **In Cook, DuPage, Lake and Kane County (east of State Route 47):** October 1, 2026 - January 17, 2027

Illinois Restricted Archery Zone

The Illinois Restricted Archery Zone shall consist of Champaign, Douglas, Macon and Piatt Counties (except Allerton Park located in Piatt County). During the period October 1-October 31, only antlered deer may be harvested in the Restricted Archery Zone, regardless of permits in possession. An antlered deer is defined as a deer having at least one antler of a length of 3 or more inches.

Hunting Hours

One-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset. No bow and arrow device shall be carried with the arrow in the nocked position during hours when deer hunting is unlawful.

Permit, License, & Habitat Stamp Requirements

Permit: Recipients of any type of Archery Deer Hunting Permit shall record their signature on the permit prior to hunting and must carry it on their person while hunting.

License: In addition to your deer permit, you must have a valid Illinois hunting, sportsman, youth, or apprentice license unless you are:

1. A person who is disabled and able to show proof of disability in the form of one of the following:
 - A State Disabled Person ID card (available from the Secretary of State through the Drivers License Exam Station) showing a P2, P2A, H2 or H2A disability.
 - Veteran's disability card (at least 10% service related) available from local Illinois Department of Veterans' Affairs offices.

OR unless you are:

2. An Illinois resident on active duty and on leave from the U.S. Armed Forces.
3. 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. Landowners/Tenants are required to obtain a Habitat Stamp, unless exempt.

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 a State Habitat Stamp. Any person who obtained a Lifetime License before January 1, 1993, shall not be required to obtain a State Habitat Stamp.

Licenses/stamps are available at exploremoreil.com.

It Is Unlawful:

- to use or possess any other firearm or ammunition in the field while hunting white-tailed deer except as provided in the Firearm Concealed Carry Act;
- for any person having taken the legal limit of deer by bow and arrow to further participate with bow and arrow in any deer hunting party;
- to drive deer, or participate in a deer drive, on all Department-owned or managed properties. A deer drive is defined as a deliberate action by one or more persons (whether armed or unarmed) whose intent is to cause deer to move within archery range of one or more participating hunters.

For more details regarding deer hunting laws, please refer to the Hunting and Trapping Digest, or contact IDNR Office of Law Enforcement at 217-782-6431.

Hunting Devices

The only legal hunting devices to take or attempt to take deer are:

1. **Crossbows:** Crossbows used in hunting shall meet all the following specifications:
 - shall use a bowstring to propel the bolt or arrow and have a minimum peak draw weight of 125 pounds;
 - have a minimum length (from butt of stock to front of limbs) of 24 inches;
 - have a working safety;
 - be used with fletched bolts or arrows of not less than 14 inches in length (not including point).
2. **Longbows, recurve bows, or compound bows** with minimum pull of 30 pounds at some point within a 28-inch draw. Minimum arrow length is 20 inches.

Broadheads must be used for archery deer hunting. Broadheads may have fixed or expandable cutting surfaces, but they must be a minimum 7/8 inch in diameter when fully opened. Broadheads with fixed cutting surfaces must be metal or flint-, chert-, or obsidian-knapped; broadheads with expandable cutting surfaces must be metal.

All other hunting devices, including electronic arrow tracking devices utilizing radio telemetry, are illegal.

Clothing

Special clothing is required during any **gun deer seasons that are open concurrently with the Archery Season:**

- Youth firearm Oct. 10-12, 2026
- On those IDNR sites that allow archery deer hunting during the firearm deer seasons Nov. 20-22 & Dec. 3-6, 2026
- Muzzleloader-only Dec. 11-13, 2026
- Late winter Dec. 31, 2026 - Jan. 3, 2027 & Jan. 15-17, 2027
- Special CWD Dec. 31, 2026 - Jan. 3, 2027 & Jan. 15-17, 2027

Any person taking or attempting to take deer by use of a bow and arrow shall wear, when in the field, a cap and upper outer garment of solid blaze orange or solid blaze pink color, displaying a minimum of 400 square inches of blaze orange or blaze pink material in all Illinois counties open to those seasons.

Bag Limit

The bag limit is one deer per legally authorized either-sex, antlered-only or antlerless-only permit. All either-sex permits and antlered-only permits are subject to the following restriction: No hunter, regardless of the quantity or type of permits in his/her possession, may harvest more than 2 antlered deer during a year, including the youth, archery, muzzleloader and firearm seasons. For purposes of this subsection, deer seasons are considered to be in the same year if their opening dates fall within the same 12-month period that begins on July 1. A hunter in possession of an either-sex permit after having harvested 2 antlered deer during a year, as defined above, may only use the permit to harvest an antlerless deer. Subject to this restriction, an either-sex permit holder is allowed to take a deer with or without antlers; and an antlered-only permit holder is allowed to take only a deer having at least one antler of a length of 3 or more inches. An antlerless-only permit holder is allowed to take only a deer without antlers or a deer having antlers less than 3 inches long.

Hunting Area

All Illinois counties. Permission to hunt on private property must be obtained from the property owner or tenant. Landowner permits are valid on all properties owned by that permittee, regardless of in which county the property is located, so long as that county is open for the specific hunting season for which the permit is issued. This includes all permits issued to: 1) A landowner, tenant, bona fide current income beneficiary, or the immediate family of a landowner, tenant, or income beneficiary; or 2) A bona fide equity shareholder, bona fide equity member, or bona fide equity partner and on all lands owned by the corporation, limited liability company or partnership. All tenant permits issued under this Part are valid only on lands rented/leased for commercial agriculture in the counties open for the specified hunting season. A hunting rights lease, or other nonagricultural lease, is not valid as a basis for obtaining a landowner or tenant permit.