



DEER 2018 SEASON SUMMARY



2018 DEER SEASON SUMMARY

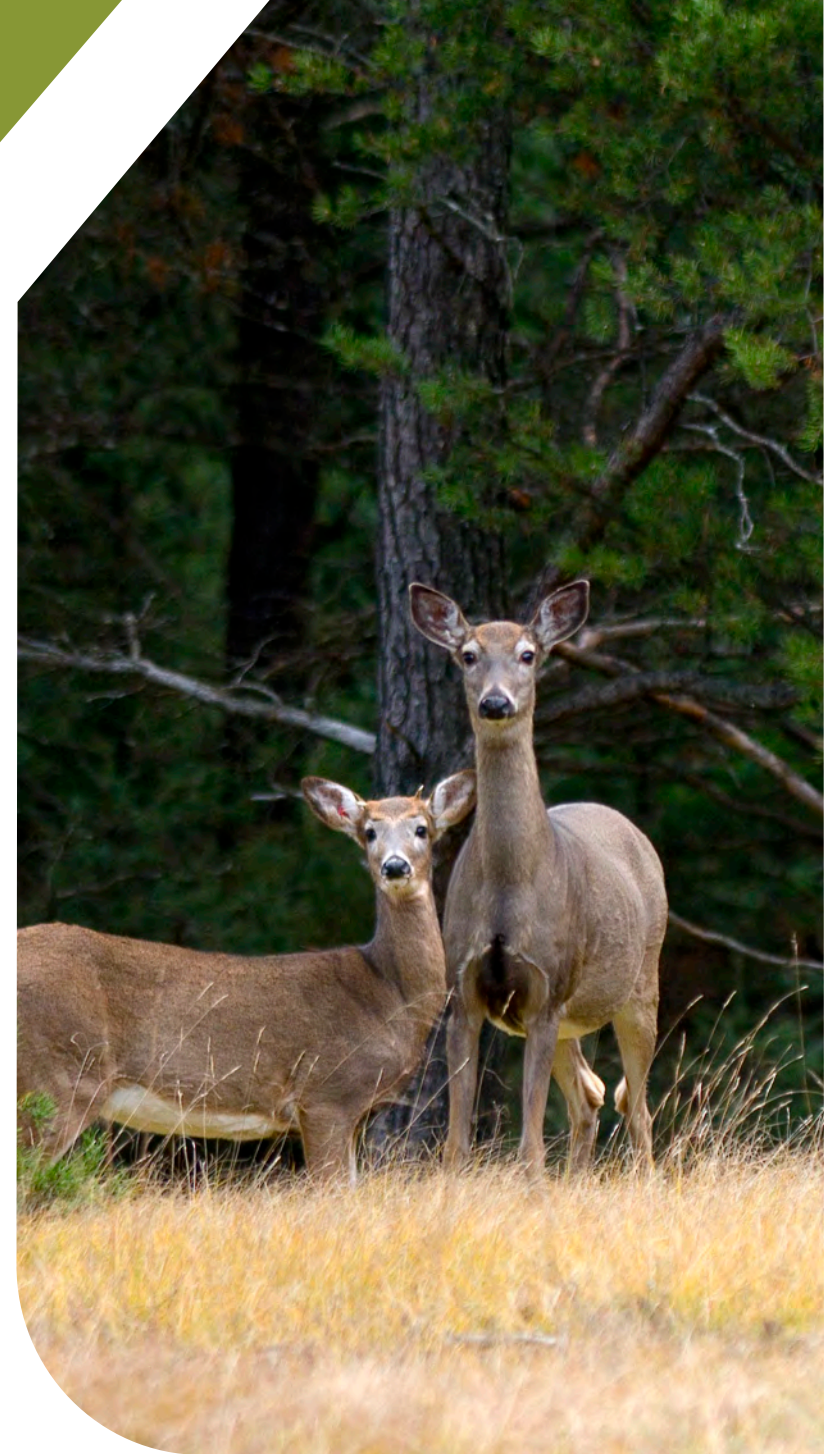
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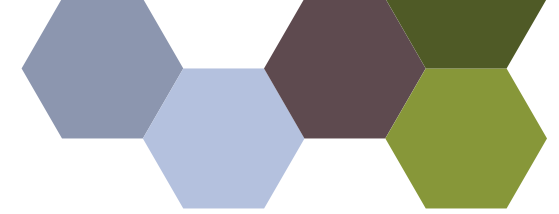
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Disclaimer

The numbers reported in this summary are derived from hunter harvest surveys from 2018 and previous years. Numbers do not include confidence intervals associated with estimates derived from the survey.

For a complete summary of the 2018 deer hunting season, please visit Michigan.gov/Deer.





The History of Deer in Michigan

Michigan has a rich and varied history of deer management. In the 1800s, deer habitats were altered dramatically through the removal of forests for crop fields. The shooting of deer for food was unregulated and deer were mostly gone from the southern Lower Peninsula by 1870. Logging of forests in the north produced the opposite effect. More openings, brush, and young forests provided cover and browse, so the northern herd climbed to an estimated one million deer in the 1880s. As railroads developed and provided access into the wilderness, market hunters shot hundreds of thousands of deer. Early measures to control market hunting were unsuccessful because they only restricted the timeframe to take deer, not the number of deer taken. Inconsistent hunting regulations and available habitats led to decades of ups and downs in the deer population.

The first regulation enacted to limit the taking of deer in Michigan occurred in 1859, when the State Legislature limited the taking of deer to the period of August 1 through December 31. In 1887, the use of dogs and artificial lights became illegal. The State Legislature shortened the season to 25 days with the first bag limit (five deer) and created the first deer license in 1895, selling 14,477 licenses for 50 cents each with 22 non-residents paying \$25 for a Michigan deer license. In 1909, the bag limit was reduced to three deer and market hunting and the selling of venison became illegal.

Today, deer densities and harvest numbers in Michigan are generally lower in the north than in the south. Deer populations are lowest in the Upper Peninsula as complex predator loads and lake-effect snow associated with Lake Superior makes winter conditions challenging for deer. Deer in this area are forced to seek out lowland conifer swamps or migrate south in early winter to areas that typically receive less snow. Areas of the state that receive deep snow and cold winter temperatures often observe increased winter mortality and low fawn recruitment in comparison with areas of the state that receive milder winter conditions. In the southern one-third of the state, where winter conditions are less severe and agricultural crops are more common, deer are generally more abundant than in northern regions.

Overview

From the 2018 Deer Season

During the 2018 season, hunters could purchase a deer license, a deer combo license, an antlerless deer hunting license, or a junior antlerless hunting license. Hunters must choose at the time of their purchase whether they want the opportunity to harvest one or two antlered deer. The decision the hunter makes at the time of purchase has implications on the type of antler point restrictions that they must abide by, depending on the part of the state they are hunting.

The deer hunting season began on September 22–23 with the Liberty Hunt and Early Antlerless Firearm Season. The Liberty hunt is eligible for youths 16 years old and younger, and for individuals with qualifying disabilities. The early antlerless firearms season was available for any licensed hunter on private lands within select Deer Management Units (DMUs). Those seasons were followed by the Independence Hunt (October 18–21), which is a firearm hunt available to individuals with qualifying disabilities. The largest part of the hunting season is made up of Archery Season (October 1–November 14; December 1–January 1), Firearm Season (November 15–30), and the Muzzleloading Season (December 7–16 in Zone 1 and 2, December 7–23 in Zone 3). The deer hunting season concluded with a Late Antlerless Firearm season, which was available only on private lands in select DMUs (December 17–January 1). A special Disease Management Firearm Hunt was held January 3–6 and January 10–13 in specified areas on private land in the Northeast Lower Peninsula to help manage deer numbers due to the presence of Bovine Tuberculosis and in select DMUs on public and private land in Southwest Michigan to increase disease sampling for Chronic Wasting Disease.

License costs varied by type. Resident deer licenses were sold for \$20, while resident deer combo licenses were sold for \$40. A base license must be purchased with any deer license, which costs \$11 for residents. Nonresident licenses cost \$20 for one deer license, or \$190 for a deer combo license. Nonresidents must purchase a \$151 base license prior to purchasing any deer license.

License Sales

There were 938,215 licenses sold in 2018, down 0.8% from 946,107 sold in 2017 (Table 1). These 938,215 licenses translated into 1,298,664 harvest tags available to hunters. The number of deer combo, antlerless, and mentored youth licenses showed a 1% decrease in sales from 2017.

2018 Licenses Sold & Harvest Tags Available

(Table 1)

Number of licenses sold and corresponding harvest tags available to hunters in 2018. Change from 2017 in parentheses.

	Licenses Sold	Harvest Tags
Deer Licenses	210,911 (-5.4)	210,911 (-5.4)
Combination Licenses	360,449 (-1.6)	720,898 (-1.6)
Antlerless Licenses	355,494 (+3.0)	355,494 (+3.0)
Mentored Youth	11,361 (-2.6)	11,361 (-2.6)
Total	938,215 (-0.8)	1,298,664 (-1.0)

1963 – 2018 Total Deer Harvested

(Figure 1)

Number of deer harvested in Michigan’s hunting seasons, 1963–2018. Harvest data from all seasons and for all deer sexes combined.





Deer Harvest

A total of 367,652 deer were harvested in 2018, this represents a 4.6% decrease from 2017 and ranks 7th lowest totals over the past ten years. Over the past 98 deer hunting years in Michigan, the harvest for 2018 ranks 25th overall in the history of Michigan deer hunting (*Figure 1*).

The antlerless harvest of 155,989 was 2.5% less than 2017, while the antlered harvest of 211,754 was 6% less than 2017 (*Table 3*).

The Liberty Hunt accounted for a total of 10,062 deer taken with 6,735 of them being antlered deer. This season compromised about 2% of the total antlered deer harvest, as well as 3% of the total harvest (*Table 2*).

The early antlerless season and the Independence season have the smallest impact of all our deer hunting seasons. The early antlerless season accounted for 4,523 antlerless deer taken, which is about 1% of the total harvest. The Independence Hunt accounted for 474 deer statewide (*Table 2, Figure 4*).

The archery season accounted for 111,617 deer being taken, down 18.6% from 2017. It accounted for about 31% of the total harvest, and about 29% of the total antlerless deer harvested (*Table 2, Figure 2*).

The firearms season continues to be the season where the most deer are harvested. This season accounted for 60% of antlered deer being harvested and 44% of the antlerless deer harvested. Just over half of the deer harvested in Michigan (53%) are taken during the firearms season (*Figure 3, Figure 4*).











The muzzleloader season and the late antlerless season had a slight increase in number of deer harvested from 2017. The muzzleloader season accounted for 25,254 deer taken, while the late antlerless season accounted for 16,167 deer taken, of 7% and 5% of the total harvest, respectively (*Table 2, Figure 4*).



2018 Seasonal Deer Harvest

(Table 2)

Number of deer harvested in each season of the 2018 Michigan deer hunting season. Values in parentheses represent % change from 2017–2018.

Color	Season	Antlered	Antlerless	Total
	Regular Firearm	126,396 (+0.2)	65,824 (+3.0)	192,221 (+1.1)
	Muzzleloader	9,915 (-6.7)	15,339 (+14.2)	25,254 (+5.0)
	Urban Archery	27 (-48.7)	295 (-38.2)	322 (-39.2)
	Early Antlerless	N/A	4,523 (102.7*)	4,523 (102.7*)
	Late Antlerless	N/A	16,167 (+12.7)	16,167 (+12.7)
	Liberty ^{a,b}	6,753 (+37.5*)	3,308 (+45.0*)	10,062 (+39.9*)
	Independence ^b	280 (+18.5)	194 (-21.9)	474 (-2.2)
	Archery	68,382 (-18.3*)	43,235 (-19.0*)	111,617 (-18.6*)
	Disease Hunt	0 (-100.0)	26 (-93.5*)	26 (-93.6*)
	Special Permits ^c	N/A	6,986 (-24.0)	6,986 (-24.0)
	Total	211,754 (-6.2*)	155,898 (-2.5)	367,652 (-4.6*)

^a Estimates for Liberty Hunt included results of both youth and hunters with disabilities.

^b Hunters with disabilities could hunt in both the Liberty and Independence seasons.

^c Includes deer harvested with DMA permits. These permits could be used during any deer hunting season.

*P <0.05

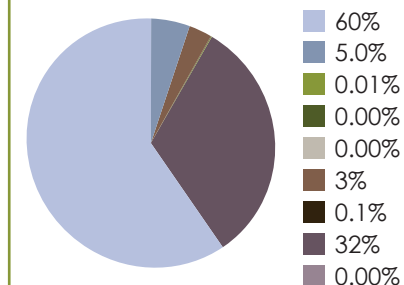
(Figure 2-4)

Antlered, antlerless and total deer harvested by season, Michigan 2018.

Labeled by color from (Table 2).

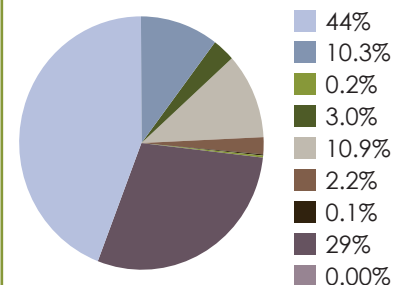
Antlered Deer Harvest

(Figure 2)



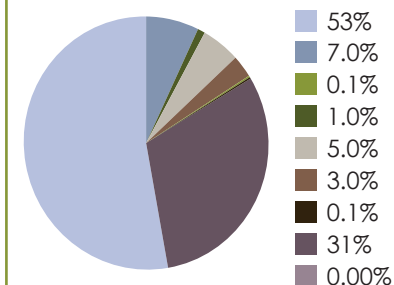
Antlerless Deer Harvest

(Figure 3)



Total Deer Harvest

(Figure 4)



2001 – 2018

Estimated Deer Harvest

(Table 3)

Estimated antlered, antlerless, and total deer harvest from 2001–2018

Year	Antlered	Antlerless	Total
2001	235,271	222,718	457,989
2002	241,304	230,573	471,877
2003	254,473	240,772	495,245
2004	229,654	222,151	451,805
2005	218,057	195,554	413,611
2006	265,711	184,962	450,674
2007	267,429	209,166	476,595
2008	248,533	232,105	480,638
2009	215,120	220,916	436,036
2010	212,341	199,958	412,299
2011	212,791	203,930	416,721
2012	222,640	191,364	414,004
2013	203,057	175,737	378,794
2014	178,228	144,139	322,367
2015	191,608	137,073	328,681
2016	196,233	151,988	348,222
2017	225,656	159,898	385,554
2018	211,754	155,898	367,652

Deer Harvest by Region

The Southern Lower Peninsula (SLP) accounted for over half of the deer harvested in the state. This past year 197,080 deer were harvested in the Southern Lower Peninsula, up from 188,505 harvested in 2017. Throughout the Upper Peninsula (UP) the harvest was very similar to last year. In the Northern Lower Peninsula, the harvest significantly decreased going from an estimated 152,570 in 2017 to an estimated 128,148 in 2018, with the largest decrease occurring during the archery season which is largely thought to be due to poor hunting conditions.

Antlered Deer Harvest

2010 – 2018

(Table 4)

Total number of antlered deer harvested by region between 2010–2018 seasons.

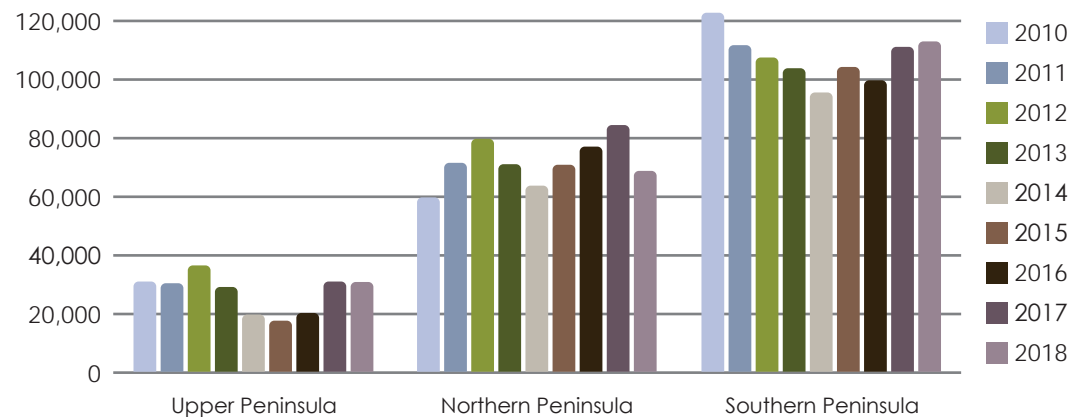
Year	Upper Peninsula	Northern Peninsula	Southern Peninsula	Total
2018	30,517	68,521	112,715	211,754
2017	30,519	84,260	110,876	225,655
2016	20,016	76,675	99,542	196,233
2015	17,057	70,675	103,977	191,709
2014	19,431	63,616	95,180	178,227
2013	28,907	70,734	103,416	203,057
2012	35,966	79,571	107,103	222,640
2011	30,033	71,383	111,374	203,930
2010	30,587	59,265	122,489	212,341

Antlered Deer Harvest

2010 – 2018

(Figure 5)

Total number of antlered deer harvested by region between 2010–2018 seasons.





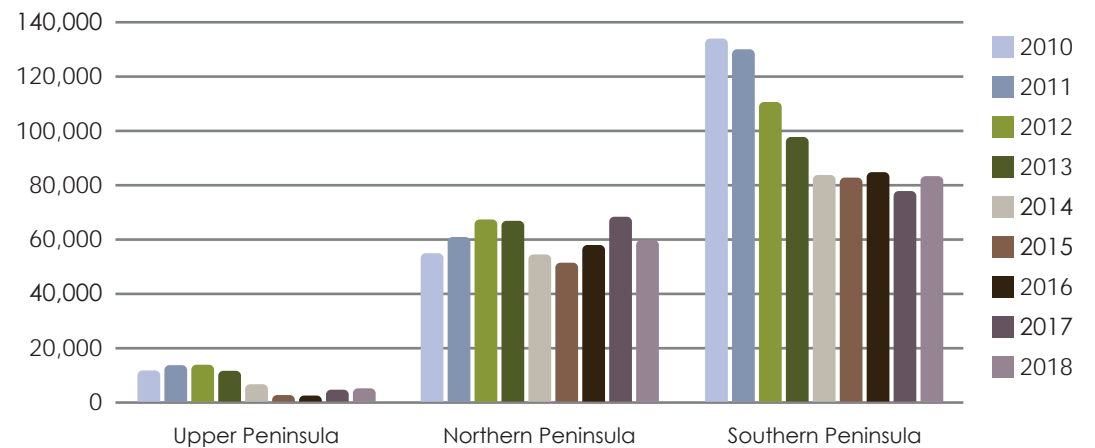
Antlerless Deer Harvest 2010 – 2018

(Table 5)
Total number of antlerless deer harvested by region between 2010–2018 seasons.

Year	Upper Peninsula	Northern Peninsula	Southern Peninsula	Total
2018	4,900	59,641	84,371	148,912
2017	4,762	68,316	77,631	150,709
2016	2,577	57,757	84,720	145,054
2015	2,833	51,521	82,719	137,073
2014	6,496	54,161	83,482	144,139
2013	11,325	66,912	97,499	175,736
2012	13,482	67,291	110,591	191,364
2011	13,355	60,703	129,872	203,930
2010	11,627	54,606	133,725	199,958

Antlerless Deer Harvest 2010 – 2018

(Figure 6)
Total number of antlerless deer harvested by region between 2010–2018 seasons.





Check Station Data

A total of 50,001 deer were checked during the 2018 deer hunting season, the highest number of checked deer since 2001. Of these 50,001 deer that were checked 34,896 deer were aged during the 2018 deer hunting season. A total of 21,829 antlered deer were aged, while 10,428 antlerless deer were aged. Fawns (0.5 years old) made up 2,639 of the aged antlerless deer. Michigan continues to age more deer than any other state relative to overall harvest.

A source of particular interest amongst hunters is the proportion of yearling bucks harvested related to older and more mature bucks. These numbers vary by region, but overall, the proportion of yearling bucks in the harvest has declined in recent years throughout the entire state of Michigan.

The UP typically has the lowest percentage of yearling bucks harvested when compared to other locations in the state and 2018 reflected that pattern with yearlings making up just 14.7% of antlered deer registered at check station. The NLP had the second lowest yearling buck harvest percentage (22.2%), which dropped further from 2017 (30.1%). These results are likely due to winter conditions in the UP and the antler point restriction in the NLP region. The SLP has the highest percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest, but in 2018 dropped below the 50% mark to 44.2%.





Deer Harvest by DMU

Comparing harvest between DMUs is challenging given the varying sizes, hunter numbers, and geography associated with each DMU. Still, DMU 332 which includes Huron, Tuscola, and Sanilac counties, lead the state in antlered deer harvested, antlerless deer harvested, and total deer harvested.

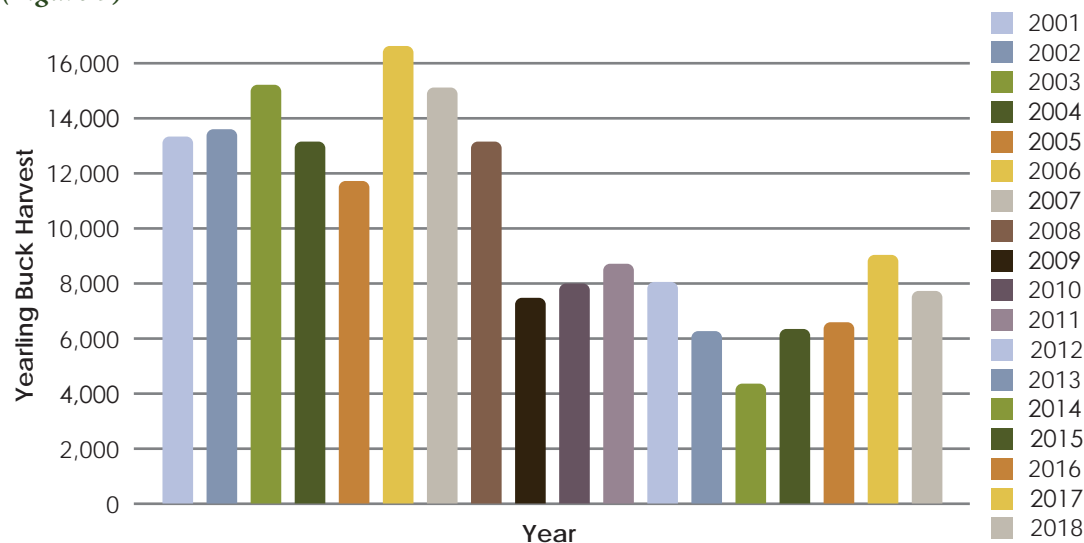
It should be noted that 33,677 deer hunters are estimated to hunt in this DMU, the highest of all DMUs (*Table 7*).

(Table 6)

	Total	Antlered	Antlerless
Total Deer Checked	50,001	27,079	22,922
Break Down:			
Deer checked as Deer	47,030	25,248	21,782
Deer checked as DCP	2,971	1,831	1,140
Drop Boxes			
Processor	4,391	2,752	1,639
Not drop box or processor	38,794	23,842	14,952

2001 – 2018 Yearling Buck Harvest

(Figure 7)



The numbers between 2017 and 2018 may be affected by a change in some deer checks – deer checked at processors and drop-boxes were generally entered as fawn or adult, not always in age classes.

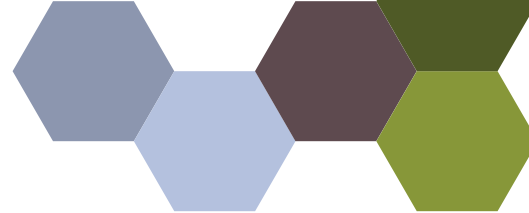


2018 Deer Harvest by DMU

(Table 7)
Hunter numbers, antlered deer harvest, antlerless deer harvest, and total deer harvest per DMU, Michigan 2018 .

DMU	Hunters	Antlered Deer Harvest	Antlerless Deer Harvest	Total Harvest
001	5,209	1,088	1,130	2,218
003	10,579	3,633	2,266	5,899
004	4,165	1,520	1,129	2,649
005	5,767	1,870	1,604	3,474
006	6,402	2,528	1,655	4,183
007	6,694	2,496	41	2,537
008	9,225	2,734	1,780	4,514
009	4,115	1,543	1,172	2,715
010	3,893	1,104	920	2,024
013	8,754	3,487	2,601	6,088
015	4,191	1,482	1,263	2,745
016	7,075	2,286	864	3,150
017	3,833	1,218	9	1,227
018	12,349	4,030	3,326	7,356
019	8,331	3,986	3,139	7,125
020	7,244	1,053	895	1,948
021	6,040	2,169	29	2,198
022	5,301	2,523	31	2,554
023	7,142	2,555	2,076	4,631
024	4,158	1,414	1,366	2,780
025	8,115	2,737	1,512	4,249
026	11,295	3,147	3,044	6,191
027	2,081	631	9	640

DMU	Hunters	Antlered Deer Harvest	Antlerless Deer Harvest	Total Harvest
028	5,994	1,388	1,457	2,845
029	7,084	3,480	1,874	5,354
030	7,523	2,864	2,331	5,195
031	3,646	1,284	11	1,295
033	6,644	2,367	1,898	4,265
034	8,289	3,969	2,413	6,382
035	7,224	1,937	1,289	3,226
036	4,115	1,490	11	1,501
037	9,203	4,127	3,045	7,172
038	11,614	3,599	3,027	6,626
040	6,489	937	910	1,847
041	11,685	3,928	2,766	6,694
042	2,301	613	2	615
043	14,051	1,523	2,289	3,812
044	12,759	5,094	3,866	8,960
045	3,593	1,012	907	1,919
046	7,143	2,419	1,663	4,082
047	9,740	3,212	2,406	5,618
048	3,753	1,162	9	1,171
050	3,896	943	864	1,807
051	8,818	2,120	1,823	3,943
053	10,840	2,755	3,108	5,863
054	12,239	4,143	3,297	7,440



(Table 7 Continued)

Hunter numbers, antlered deer harvest, antlerless deer harvest, and total deer harvest per DMU, Michigan 2018.

DMU	Hunters	Antlered Deer Harvest	Antlerless Deer Harvest	Total Harvest
055	11,313	4,985	2,497	7,482
056	9,438	3,351	2,593	5,944
057	8,949	2,008	1,793	3,801
058	4,188	950	476	1,426
059	12,676	4,711	4,398	9,109
060	8,596	1,604	1,587	3,191
061	5,717	1,506	994	2,500
062	17,834	5,413	5,026	10,439
063	9,185	2,174	1,842	4,016
064	9,476	2,371	2,952	5,323
065	11,816	3,227	2,718	5,945
066	3,712	1,485	9	1,494
067	11,727	3,952	4,014	7,966
068	7,753	1,456	1,407	2,863
069	5,964	1,668	643	2,311
070	7,333	1,994	1,343	3,337
071	8,812	2,929	1,962	4,819
072	8,528	1,442	893	2,335
073	8,797	3,794	2,294	6,088
074	10,935	3,703	2,559	6,262
078	7,391	3,016	2,552	5,568
081	8,139	2,956	2,389	5,345
082	1,120	223	79	302

DMU	Hunters	Antlered Deer Harvest	Antlerless Deer Harvest	Total Harvest
083	9,106	1,929	1,916	3,845
115	544	345	110	455
117	1,054	288	2	290
121	2,753	1,173	376	1,549
122	1,960	824	425	1,249
127	1,182	351	13	364
131	3,201	827	4	831
145	1	0	1	1
149	661	292	28	320
152	2,629	1,050	9	1,059
155	4,419	1,768	762	2,530
174	163	13	10	23
245	2	2	2	4
249	2,431	587	0	587
252	1,716	411	36	447
255	3,315	1,269	417	1,686
273	1,288	419	452	871
311	14,855	6,454	3,455	9,909
312	16,682	7,677	5,955	13,632
332	36,189	14,024	12,632	26,656
349	2,229	503	2	505
452	10,585	3,032	2,156	5,188

2018 DEER SEASON SUMMARY

A total of 367,652 deer were harvested in Michigan in 2018, down 4.6% from the 2017 total. Firearm season showed the largest gains, with a total of 192,221 deer harvested. The SLP remained the primary region for harvest, with 184,858 total deer harvested. The firearms season has continued to be the primary season when deer are harvested, with 53% of the total deer harvest occurring.

The percentage of yearling bucks in the harvest decreased further in 2018 and appear to be at historical lows. The yearling buck harvest in the SLP has declined from over 70% in 2008 to 44% in 2018. The UP saw the lowest percentage of yearling bucks harvested at just under 15% but this is likely more reflective of a greater abundance of older age class bucks being available on the landscape again with the milder winters of 2016 and 2017. The NLP has continued to steadily decrease in the number of yearling bucks harvested but this is likely reflective of the antler point restriction currently in place in 13 counties in the Northwest. Regardless of regulatory action taken, there does appear to be a shift in hunting mentality and a desire to harvest more 2.5 and 3.5 year old bucks.



To learn more, visit
Michigan.gov/Deer