

Popular firearm deer season opens Saturday

Written by Wauneta Breeze
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By Jan Schultz

The Imperial Republican

According to Game & Parks Commission forecasts, the 2011 firearm deer season should set a record for antlerless whitetail harvest.

The popular season, especially in this area's Frenchman Unit, opens Saturday and continues until Nov. 20.

A check with the North Platte Game & Parks Commission office indicates there are still plenty of hunting permits available for whitetail deer (either sex).

In addition in the 8 West Area that includes Chase County, there were still about 150 permits available Tuesday for antlerless deer, either mule deer or whitetail. The prediction of a record whitetail harvest comes as the Game & Parks has authorized more than 250,000 permits and bonus tags for harvest of the antlerless whitetail.

Game & Parks Officer Dirk Greene said the population looks good in the western part of the Frenchman Unit including Chase, Dundy, Hayes and Hitchcock Counties.

"They are moving around a lot," he said.

The near completion of corn harvest should aid local hunters, he said.

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Ron Schoenberger, owner of Laker's, the only check-in station in Chase County, said it's hard to get a feel on the success of the archery hunters so far since Game & Parks no longer requires checking in deer shot with a bow. Now, those hunters check in animals via a tele-check system.

That will be the case, too, for those hunting with a muzzleloader during the December deer season.

However, all hunters who bag a deer with a firearm during the Nov. 12-20 season must check in their animals at Game & Parks approved stations like Laker's.

All deer must be checked in not later than 12 noon on Monday, Nov. 21.

Archery, turkey seasons stay open

during firearm this year

Something new this firearm season—those hunting deer with a bow/arrow as well as turkey hunters can continue to hunt during the Nov. 12-20 firearm deer season.

Officer Greene said that poses some special safety concerns this season.

During those nine days of the firearm season, archery deer and turkey hunters must wear the hunter orange, along with the firearm hunters.

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Greene said there are likely to be a lot of pheasant hunters out, as well, this weekend. He highly recommends they wear the hunter orange, too, and wear it all season even though it's not required.

Greene also reminds hunters to get permission to hunt on private land and to follow the guidelines on their deer hunting permits following the bagging of their prey.

Highlights of 2010 season

Nebraska deer hunters produced a big year in 2010, setting records for overall and antlerless whitetail harvest.

Game and Parks has a goal of reducing the whitetail population in eastern Nebraska by harvesting more antlerless deer. Here's how:

The total deer harvest during the 2010 season was 88,034 (77,028 whitetails and 10,709 mule deer). While a record 37,967 whitetail bucks were killed, a record 39,198 antlerless whitetails also were killed—marking the first time the antlerless whitetail harvest surpassed whitetail buck harvest.

The antlerless whitetail harvest increased by nearly 9,000 from 2009. Bonus tags, antlerless-first mandates in some units, additional hunting opportunities and \$6 youth permits all contributed to the antlerless whitetail harvest.

Here are other highlights to the 2010 big game hunting seasons:

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- A record 141,573 deer permits were sold. The number of firearm permits sold increased while the number of archery and muzzleloader permits sold decreased from 2009.
- Deer hunter success rates were 68 percent for firearm, 40 for archery and 37 for muzzleloader.
- Electronic checking helped wildlife managers obtain harvest information faster. There were 25,000 deer checked via telephone or online.
- The first year of the \$6 youth deer permit was popular, with 11,255 permits sold.
- Age structure of whitetails and mule deer bucks continues to improve. A record 75 percent of whitetail bucks and 83 percent of mule deer bucks taken were age two or older.
- Last year, record numbers of youth (11,255) and nonresident (15,300) permits were sold.