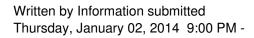
Late-season deer hunting opportunities available



Information submitted

COLUMBUS — As the calendar turns to 2014, Ohio hunters have another opportunity to pursue white-tailed deer when muzzleloader season opens Saturday, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Deer-muzzleloader season runs through Tuesday.

"Muzzleloader season offers a great late-season opportunity for hunters to bag a white-tailed deer and enjoy Ohio's outdoors with friends and family," said Scott Zody, chief of the ODNR Division of Wildlife.

Ohio is one of the top white-tailed deer destinations in the United States. Ohio ranks No. 7 nationally for the number of trophy deer as compiled by the Boone and Crockett Club through 2011.

Hunters can pursue deer in Ohio with a muzzleloader or bow during this four-day season. Deer-archery season remains open through Feb. 2. Hunters checked 21,555 deer during the 2013 four-day muzzleloader season.

Muzzleloaders are traditional hunting implements that emphasize accuracy and the value of the first shot. The popularity of muzzleloading rifles for hunting and target shooting continues to grow. Types of muzzleloaders include flintlock, percussion cap, in-line percussion and muzzleloading shotgun.

Hunting time is extended 30 minutes for all deer-gun seasons. Hunters were already allowed to hunt deer 30 minutes before sunrise and this year; an additional 30 minutes has been added after sunset for gun seasons. Ohio's small game, furbearer and waterfowl seasons are also open during the muzzleloader season. All hunters (except waterfowl hunters) must wear a visible solid hunter orange or camouflage hunter orange coat, jacket, vest or coveralls during

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the muzzleloader season.

Hunting is the best and most effective management tool for maintaining Ohio's healthy deer population. Hunters have harvested more than 167,000 deer so far in the 2013 hunting seasons.

The ODNR Division of Wildlife remains committed to properly managing Ohio's deer populations through a combination of regulatory and programmatic changes. The goal of Ohio's Deer Management Program is to provide a deer population that maximizes recreational opportunities, while minimizing conflicts with landowners and motorists. This ensures that Ohio's deer herd is maintained at a level that is both acceptable to most and biologically sound.

Until recently, the populations in nearly all of Ohio's counties were well above their target numbers. In the last few years, through increased harvests, dramatic strides have been made in many counties to bring those populations closer toward their goal. Once a county's deer population is near goal, harvest regulations are adjusted to maintain the population near that goal.

Ohio deer bag limits are determined by county. The statewide bag limit is nine deer but a hunter cannot exceed an individual county bag limit. Hunters may harvest only one antlered deer, regardless of hunting method or season. More deer hunting information can be found in the 2013-14 Ohio Hunting and Trapping Regulations and at wildohio.com. Hunters can share photos by clicking on the "Photo Gallery" tab online.

Hunters who received a 2013-14 Ohio deer hunter effort and harvest survey are encouraged to complete it when the season ends. This survey is an important tool in Ohio's deer-management program and information provided in the survey is vital for establishing hunting regulations. The survey is conducted with a random sampling of hunters to help eliminate bias.

Ohio ranks fifth nationally in resident hunters and 11th in the number of jobs associated with hunting-related industries. Hunting has a more than \$853 million economic impact in Ohio through the sale of equipment, fuel, food, lodging and more, according to the National Shooting Sports Foundation's Hunting in America: An Economic Force for Conservation publication.

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ODNR ensures a balance between wise use and protection of our natural resources for the benefit of all. Visit the ODNR website at ohiodnr.gov.