



WHITE-TAILED DEER

ANIMAL ID

SEASON INFORMATION

HUNTING TIPS

White-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) were reported to be quite abundant when settlers arrived in Iowa in the early 1800s. Although the clearing and cultivating of land for agriculture may have initially improved the suitability of the landscape for deer, uncontrolled exploitation for food and hides rapidly reduced deer numbers. By 1880, deer were rarely sighted in much of the state and in 1898 the deer season was legally closed. By this time deer had been virtually eliminated from all parts of the state. Modern hunting in Iowa began in Dec of 1953 with 4,000 deer being harvested. Today about 100,000 deer are taken annually. Iowa has a reputation of having one of the nation's highest quality deer herds.

IDENTIFICATION

The most characteristic feature of the white-tailed deer is the white underside of its tail or "flag" that is flashed when disturbed. Deer are graceful, sleek and have long legs, which makes them look taller than their actual height of 35 to 38



inches. Deer grow a lightweight, reddish-brown coat in the summer and a heavy grayish-brown coat in the winter. This winter coat of hollow hair is so well insulated that snow will not melt when it lands on a deer. Whitetails can run at speeds up to 35 mph but prefer to slip away from danger or remain motionless while danger passes.

Male deer grow a new set of antlers each year. These antlers are used for sparring with other males for breeding rights. Antlers are shed from January to March and can be quickly utilized by rodents for the minerals. Adult females can have two fawns per year.

IOWA DEER SEASON INFORMATION

Deer hunting regulations appear in the *Iowa Hunting & Trapping* regulations online and from license retailers.



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| SHOOTING HOURS: | 1/2 hour before sunrise to 1/2 hour after sunset |
| BAG LIMITS: | One per valid license & transportation tag |
| LOCATIONS: | Entire state is open to hunting |
| LICENSE AND FEES: | Small game license, habitat fee & deer license |

HARVEST REPORTING

Transportation tag must be attached before deer is removed from the field or within 15 minutes of locating the animal. Deer must be reported by midnight of the day after the harvest or before it is taken to a taxidermist or locker. Confirmation number must be written on the tag.

HUNTING TIPS

SEASON OPTIONS:

Iowa offers a large variety of hunting seasons to fit just about every hunter's taste. Weapon choice and weather are often the deciding factor of what season a hunter will choose.

SCOUTING

Look for deer signs such as scrapes, rubs or pellets. Hunting during the "rut" breeding time in November can provide a hunter with a lot of viewing opportunities as deer are more active and often less weary.

Always be aware of wind direction. Deer have excellent eyesight and tremendous noses. They are animals of patterns. The more time you can spend learning a deer's behavior pattern the greater your chances of success.

Deer do not see color but are highly sensitive to movement.



WHERE TO HUNT DEER IN IOWA:

Deer are habitat generalists, changing with the season. They are often associated with timber and prefer oak forests and shrub areas. Deer are browsers and eat tree buds in the spring and quickly consume acorns in the fall.

Don't overlook large tall grass areas as deer can hide anywhere. Field edges make good areas for locating/seeing deer. Scrapes are often associated with edges or trails.

Males tend to be isolated from does except for breeding.

PLACES TO HUNT:

- **HUNTING ATLAS** shows all areas in the state open to public hunting, wildlife likely found in the area, open seasons and any restrictions. www.iowadnr.gov/hunting
- Iowa Habitat Access Program (**IHAP**) allows hunter access to private land in exchange for habitat improvement on the site. A list of current IHAP sites is available at: www.iowadnr.gov/ihap

SAFETY AND ETIQUETTE:

- Blaze orange is required during any firearm season.
- If hunting from a tree stand wear appropriate safety equipment and check all straps.
- Be aware of what is beyond your target. Slugs can travel great distances and can skip across frozen ground.
- Be in shape. Dragging deer is strenuous labor and may require additional help.
- Make sure the animal is dead before approaching. A deer kick can cause severe injury.
- Don't succumb to peer pressure. Take the best shot or no shot.
- Be proficient with your firearm.

FOR MORE INFORMATION
on where to hunt in your local area,
contact your regional DNR wildlife biologist.