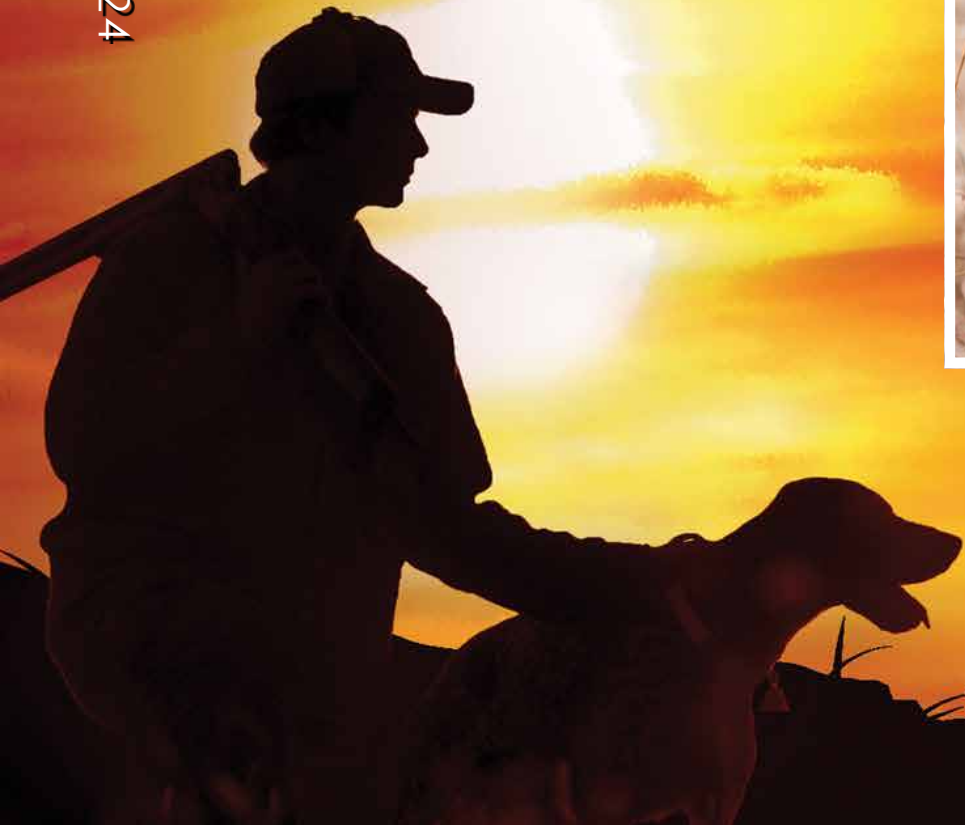


Fall OUTDOORS



FALL/WINTER 2024





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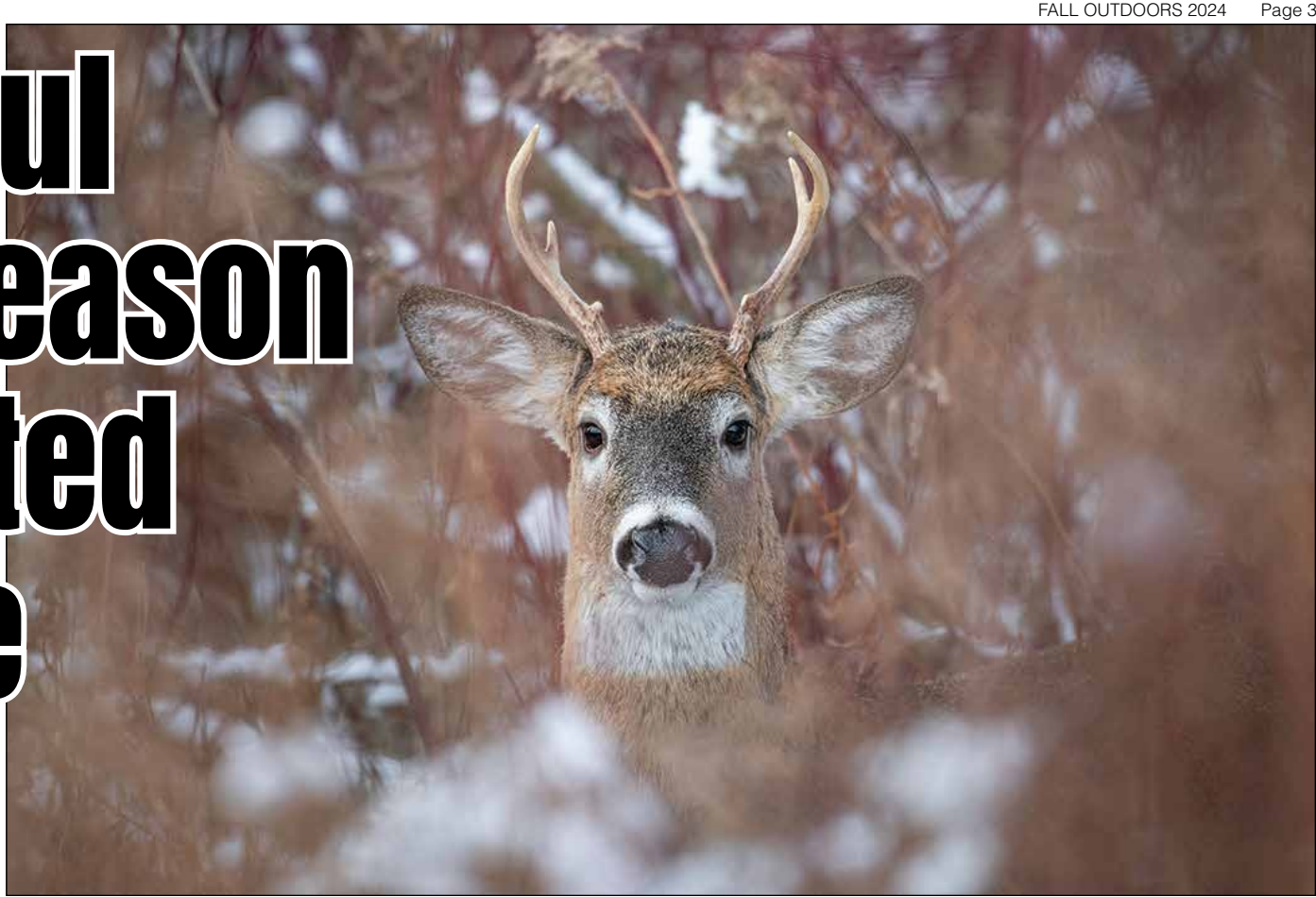
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Bountiful deer season predicted in state



Hunters should be happy this fall following last year's mild winter

By Jeff Pritzl/Eric Cananla
WISCONSIN DNR

The 2024 deer hunting season will bring new opportunity for hunters to secure venison for the freezer and create memories to cherish for years to come. More antlerless harvest authorizations are available than last year in most parts of the state, as well as more late-season opportunity in more counties, such as the Holiday Hunt and January archery seasons. In other words, 2024 is the year of opportunity.

Hunters should keep in mind that Wisconsin's varied landscapes support different deer population densities. The presence or absence of deer at a given time depends on a multitude of factors, including forage, cover and hunting pressure. As always, spending time in the field and scouting prior to the hunting season is important. The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers resources to help hunters get prepared, from public land mapping tools to recent harvest data trends to resources for chronic wasting disease testing.

New in 2024

The antlerless-only holiday hunt will run from Dec. 24 to Jan. 1, 2025 in 41 counties this year. Of these 41 counties, 35 are also extending the archery and crossbow deer seasons to close Jan. 31, 2025.

Farmland Zone counties have modified the number of antlerless harvest authorizations that will be issued with each license. Two permits issued with each license are most common, which is consistent with past years. Fifteen County Deer Advisory Councils chose three permits, and four CDACs chose four permits in 2024. The remaining Farmland Zone CDACs chose one permit to be issued with each license. Some metro sub-units also have modified permit availability.

Baiting and feeding regulations have changed in select counties. For more information, visit the DNR's Baiting and

Last year's deer harvest in the Southern District – which includes all counties in the Southern Lakes area – was on par with the past 5-year average. According to DNR staff, the unbelievably mild winter conditions should lead to ample opportunities and happy hunters this coming fall.

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Feeding webpage.

Deer Management Zones and Units

Wisconsin has four deer management zones: Northern Forest, Central Forest, Central Farmland and Southern Farmland. These zones are divided into 82 deer management units (DMUs). DMUs follow county boundaries in most cases, and 10 counties are split by zone boundaries into separate Forest and Farmland DMUs. Antlerless deer permits are set at the DMU level.

The state experienced a mild 2023-24 winter. Due to reduced harvest in 2023, Ashland and Iron County are not offering antlerless harvest authorizations this fall, but junior antlerless harvest authorizations will remain valid.

Farmland Zone DMUs increased permit availability and harvest opportunities in an effort to control herd densities, reduce agricultural damage, improve forest regeneration and minimize deer-related conflict.

Hunters who fill their freezer early on

and have additional harvest opportunities available are encouraged to continue hunting and share venison with others. The Deer Donation Program is a great way to help meet antlerless harvest quotas in these counties while making a difference in your community for those experiencing food insecurity.

For an overview of deer hunting rules, please check the 2024 Wisconsin Hunting Regulations available online or at hunting license vendors.

You can find additional information and resources, including FAQs, maps, how to find a place to hunt and more on the DNR's Deer Hunting webpage.

Local outlook

Across the Southern District, wildlife staff are eagerly anticipating the arrival of fall and the time-honored tradition of Wisconsin's deer season.

Last year's deer harvest in the Southern District was on par with the past 5-year average, and the unbelievably mild winter conditions should lead to ample opportunities and happy hunters this

coming fall.

An early spring with much needed rain has provided abundant cover and high-quality spring forage for does that are nursing fawns and bucks that are in the midst of

antler development. In addition, lower than recommended antlerless harvests and our highly productive farm ground continue to grow the deer population throughout much of the Southern Farmland Zone.

Even with such favorable conditions, it is important for hunters to keep in mind that there is great variation in the quality of the habitat across the landscape, and, as a result, the number of deer inhabiting individual properties can vary significantly.

The Southern District encompasses a wide range of deer habitat types, ranging from the high wooded ridges and coulees in the southwest to the flat, productive farmlands of the southcentral, all the way to the highly urbanized landscape in

• CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

2024 FALL
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the southeastern counties along Lake Michigan's border.

We also host the rolling southern kettles in the east and the extensive mix of wetland, woodland and ag-land areas of Dodge, Jefferson and Columbia counties. This high level of variation in habitat types, conditions and quality deer habitat contributes to great hunting and a robust deer population that has been stable to increasing year after year in many areas of southern Wisconsin.

Excellent opportunities to harvest deer and quality bucks can be found in all counties that make up the Southern District. This is a testament to the productivity and resiliency of our habitat and local deer herd. It's no wonder why Wisconsin is and has been a world-class destination for white-tail deer hunting.

Most deer within the Southern District are harvested on private property, which makes up more than 90% of the landscape here. Landowners interested in improving their properties should check out the Deer Management Assistance Program, which is a private land management program offered by the Wisconsin DNR that helps landowners manage their properties for better wildlife habitat.

With that said, excellent deer hunting can also be found on the tens of thousands of acres of county, state and federally owned lands open to deer hunting in southern Wisconsin.

Public lands often get a bad rap as being difficult to hunt, but savvy hunters who are dedicated, adaptable and not afraid to go the extra mile

(sometimes literally) will find adventure and plenty of deer to match wits with this fall.

If you're looking for a new area to hunt and have never explored our public lands, I highly recommend giving it a shot!

Another important aspect for Southern District deer hunters to keep in mind is that CWD continues to slowly increase in prevalence and geographic area within the district and state. Last year, Wisconsin detected just over 1,586 CWD positive deer through annual sampling efforts, the majority of which came from the Southern District.

County Deer Advisory Councils (CDACs) are offering similar quotas and antlerless deer harvest authorizations, in addition to extra hunting seasons, in response to public feedback and the stable to increasing deer population trend.

Check out the DNR's Deer Hunting webpage for more details and maps showing which counties are offering additional seasons. These additional seasons are a great way to enjoy family time afield during the holiday season and to put extra meat in the freezer.

The 2024 deer season will be here before we know it and will be welcomed by deer hunters all over the nation.

On behalf of the Wisconsin DNR, we'd like to wish everyone a safe and successful hunting season! We hope you take time this fall to get outdoors and enjoy the beauty and world class hunting opportunity.

Pritzl is a deer program specialist; Cananla is a deer biologist.

DNR REMINDS ATV RIDERS TO BE SAFE

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reminds trail riders and hunters alike to wear safety equipment when operating an off-highway vehicle.

Whether you're out for a day of trail riding or headed to the tree stand, a helmet and seatbelt can save your life.

By observing these best practices, hunters and recreational riders can ensure a safe and enjoyable time outdoors:

- Wear a seatbelt and helmet whenever the vehicle is in motion. Many of the fatalities that occur due to slow rollovers on hills could have been prevented had proper safety equipment been worn.
- Ride Sober – Hunt Sober. Hunting can mean traversing especially difficult terrain. Always drive at a safe speed and within your abilities.
- Visibility is important. Remember, headlights must always be on.

"Just as you'd wear a tree stand harness for safety while hunting, a seatbelt and helmet while on a UTV will keep you safe for seasons to come," said Lt. Jacob Holsclaw, DNR Off-highway Vehicle Administrator.

"It is especially important to remember your safety equipment on the ride to your stand, not just when you're in it," Holsclaw added.

Thus far in 2024, 26 people have been killed in ATV/UTV crashes. Most of them were not wearing seat belts or helmets. Several incidents also involved alcohol and speed as contributing factors.

Choosing to wear the appropriate safety gear and operating responsibly, whether on the trails, routes or private property, greatly reduces the chance of a serious injury or fatal crash.

One of the best things ATV and UTV operators can do to operate safely is take an online safety course. A list of approved safety education classes is available on the DNR Safety Education webpage. There are also a variety of other safety classes listed throughout the state, all related to the outdoors. To find classes, visit gowild.wi.gov and select "Safety Education" from the top of the homepage.

Wisconsin law requires every operator involved in a crash to report the incident without delay to law enforcement officials. Additionally, the operator must submit a written report to the DNR within 10 days of the incident.

For more information on ATV and UTV recreation, classes and safety in Wisconsin, visit dnr.wisconsin.gov and search ATV/UTV riding.

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There's an app for that

Access licenses, registrations and hunting zones through Go Wild

Wisconsin has made it easy to buy licenses and registrations. Hunters can purchase deer licenses and bonus authorizations through the Go Wild app or at license sale locations.

Bonus antlerless harvest authorizations became available in mid-August through the Go Wild app or at any license sale locations.

These bonus antlerless harvest authorizations may be filled with any weapon type during the appropriate season. They must be filled in the zone, unit and land type (public or private) designated on each harvest authorization. Bonus antlerless harvest authorizations are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Unsure which Deer Management Unit (DMU) to select? Head over to the Public Access Lands mapping application. Click "Show Layer List," then turn on "DNR Hunting Zones" and select "Deer Zones." Zoom in on your area to determine which DMU you fall within.

For more information, including county lists and maps of metro sub-units, see the 2024 Metro Sub-unit Guide PDF, accessible on the DNR website.

Hunters may use any of their Farmland (Zone 2) antlerless deer harvest authorizations included with their license or purchased bonus antlerless deer harvest authorizations to hunt in a metro sub-unit by selecting the deer management unit (DMU) where the sub-unit is located.

These harvest authorizations are valid within the entire DMU, including any metro sub-unit within that DMU.

Hunters may also request a metro sub-unit antlerless deer harvest authorization at no cost or purchase a bonus metro sub-unit antlerless deer harvest authorization. These options are available only in certain counties, and the harvest authorizations are limited to the boundaries of the metro sub-unit selected.

For more information, visit dnr.wisconsin.gov or gowild.wi.gov.



Simple safety protocols that can protect hunters

Hunting is a big business in North America. According to statista.com, in 2024, the number of hunting licenses, tags, permits, and stamps issued in the United States amounted to almost 40 million. The National Shooting Sports Foundation reports that sportsmen and women contribute millions of dollars to the economy every day.

Millions of hunters take to forests and fields every year. All hunters, whether old pros or newbies, can benefit from revisiting some safety procedures before their first outing this season.

Weather

Weather should be a consideration whenever people spend a significant amount of time outdoors. Hunters typically leave before dawn and arrive home after dusk.

Hypothermia is a very real risk for hunters who may be out in snow or wet conditions. It's possible to get hypothermia by overdressing as well. Sweating and then being exposed to dropping temperatures puts people at risk for hypothermia.

Hunters should dress in layers with moisture-wicking materials and a water-repellant outer layer. In addition, check the weather forecast before heading out as a last second precautionary measure.

Firearm safety

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources recommends hunters follow

these four basic principles of firearm safety – known as **TAB-K**:

Treat every firearm as if it is loaded; Always point the muzzle in a safe direction;

Be certain of your target and what is beyond it; and

Keep your finger outside the trigger guard until ready to shoot.

For tree stand users, here are some easy tips to follow:

- Always use a full-body harness;
- Always unload your firearm while climbing into or out of the stand; and
- Maintain three points of contact during the ascent or descent – two hands and one foot, or two feet and one hand.

Each deer drive should be planned in advance with safety as the top priority, King said. "Everyone involved in the drive should know and understand the plan."

If you plan to participate in a deer drive:

- Review the four firearm safety principles;
- Reconfirm you have positively identified your target;
- Reconfirm you have a safe backstop for your bullet; and

Review and stick to your hunting plan. Make sure all in the hunting party honor it.

For more information regarding hunter education and tips for safe hunting in Wisconsin, search the DNR website, dnr.wi.gov, for keywords "safety tips."

Additional safety tips

Hunters should always let others know where they will be when leaving in the morning. If something should happen, people back home can alert authorities if something goes awry.

Always check equipment and maintain it properly. Equipment should include gear colored in hunter's orange. That extends to dogs if they are accompanying hunters on a trip. This makes hunters more visible to other hunters.

Also, carry a first aid kit, a charged mobile phone or a satellite phone to maintain contact with others in case of emergencies.

Persons born on or after Jan. 1, 1973, must present their Wisconsin Hunter Education certificate or proof of a hunter safety course recognized by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources from another state, province or country), previous year's Wisconsin hunting license, or proof of successful completion of basic training in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves or National Guard to purchase any hunting license.

A certificate of successful completion of a Bow Hunter Education Course can be used to purchase an archery license.

These are just some of the safety protocols and requirements related to hunting. Non-hunters should exercise caution during hunting seasons, particularly when entering forests and areas that hunters frequent.

Seasoned hunters and novices alike can benefit from revisiting some general safety procedures before their first outing this season.

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Archery and crossbow

Sept. 14 to Jan. 5, 2025

Extended archery and crossbow

Jan. 8-31, 2025

Youth deer hunt

Oct. 5-6

Gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities*

Oct. 5-13

Traditional nine-day gun

Nov. 23-Dec. 1

Metro sub-unit gun**

Nov. 23-Dec. 11

Muzzleloader

Dec. 2-11

Four-day antlerless-only

Dec. 12-15

Antlerless-only holiday**

Dec. 24 to Jan. 1, 2025

* Gun deer hunt for hunters with disabilities is on sponsored properties only.

** These hunts only take place in select Deer Management Units. Verify areas on dnr.wi.gov.

Harvest registration

Successful deer hunters must register their deer either online (the fastest and easiest method) or by phone. They have the additional option of registering electronically at a participating walk-in registration station. For a list of participating businesses offering walk-in registration, the DNR website offers a database of participating businesses.

To register a deer electronically, hunters will visit gamereg.wi.gov or call 1-844-426-3734 (1-844-GAME-REG). To start, the electronic registration system will prompt hunters to enter the unique deer harvest authorization number for the harvest authorization filled, as well as their date of birth.

Then, harvest information



Deer season dates and harvest registration

The archery and crossbow white-tail deer season opened Sept. 14. The annual gun deer hunt will be held Nov. 23 to Dec. 1 this fall. For details on zones and Deer Management Units as well as other dates, visit dnr.wi.gov.

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such as the DMU in which the deer was harvested, age (adult or fawn), sex (buck or doe) of the deer and weapon type used to harvest the animal will be collected. Once hunters have provided this information,

they will receive a unique 10-character confirmation number. This number is no longer required to be written on a deer harvest authorization, but hunters are encouraged to record it.

All deer harvested during any deer season must be registered by 5 p.m. the day after harvest.

For more information, visit the DNR's Electronic Registration webpage.



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WHY BLAZE ORANGE?

Hunters and non-hunters alike are familiar with bright orange coats, hats, vests, and other gear that is worn during hunting season.

Even though it seems counterintuitive to wear “blaze orange” in the fields or woods for fear that animals may spot you, hunters need not worry so much.

Deer typically cannot recognize blaze orange attire designed to make hunters visible to other people. According to researchers, a combination of factors make deer less likely to be startled by blaze orange.

Deer have less binocular overlap than humans. Binocular overlap (the area that

both eyes view at the same time) allows focus on a single point and enables depth perception.

As a result, deer must shift their heads much more than humans to gain a good three-dimensional perspective of an object. Deer also have fewer cones in their retinas compared to humans. Cones are photoreceptors that enable color vision and distinguish fine details.

Furthermore, deer cannot readily perceive longer wavelengths of color, so oranges and reds appear more like brown or gray to them. However, deer can see blue colors more easily, so hunters may want to avoid blue jeans paired with their

orange gear.

Per the Wisconsin DNR, Remember, at least 50% of each hunter’s clothing above the waist must be blaze orange or pink

any time there is a firearm deer season in progress, and any head covering must be at least 50% blaze orange or pink.

(METRO CREATIVE)

DNR officials remind hunters to test for CWD

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources reminds hunters to test their deer for chronic wasting disease (CWD) before eating venison, as advised by human health organizations.

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the World Health Organization all recommend against eating meat from deer that test positive for CWD.

Infected deer typically appear healthy for many months after contracting the disease, so DHS encourages testing for the disease regardless of the physical condition of the harvested deer, especially in areas prevalent with CWD. To date, there have been no reported cases of CWD infection in humans.

CWD is a contagious, fatal neurological disease that affects the nervous system of deer, elk, moose

and caribou. It belongs to the family of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSEs) or prion diseases.

Prions are misshaped proteins that can spread the disease through direct animal-to-animal contact or in the environment through bodily substances or the carcass parts of an infected deer. Prions are extremely resilient and capable of remaining in the soil for years, potentially infecting several deer from a single source.

The disease can have an incubation period of over a year, which means infected deer can appear healthy for months before showing signs of illness. When signs are visible, the common signs are drastic weight loss, drooped head and ears, loss of coordination, excessive salivation and reduced fear of humans.

CWD Sampling

In 2024, CWD sampling will be available to all hunters through a combination of in-person, self-service and on-request sampling locations.

Hunters can use an online form in Go Wild to enter the data required for a CWD sample, but the sample still needs to be brought to a CWD sampling location. Test results can also be found in Go Wild for hunters that use either the online form in Go Wild or the paper copy form.

This year, the DNR will prioritize its sampling effort in select areas of the state around wild and farm-raised positive detections in central and northern Wisconsin. Sampling locations will also be available by hunter request in southern Wisconsin and the rest of the state.

There are currently 64 CWD-affected counties in Wisconsin from detections in both wild and farm-raised deer, with 46 of these counties having at least one CWD positive detection in the wild herd. Wisconsin has monitored CWD since it was first detected in 2002.

CWD testing, proper carcass disposal and following baiting and feed regulations are three important ways hunters can help slow the spread of CWD this season.

To learn more about CWD, visit the DNR’s website, dnr.wisconsin.gov and search “CWD.”



Remember, at least 50% of each hunter’s clothing above the waist must be blaze orange or pink any time there is a firearm deer season in progress, and any head covering must be at least 50% blaze orange or pink.

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Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources staff remind hunters that making carcass disposal and following baiting and feed regulations are three important ways to help slow the spread of CWD. To learn more, visit dnr.wisconsin.gov and search “CWD.”

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