Explanation of the Proposed Deer Changes for 2013-2014
For Website

Each year, proposals for deer season are developed based on data compiled by the division's deer program administrator. The proposals are approved by the chief and presented to the wildlife council and to the public at the spring open houses for comment. The Wildlife Council is responsible for passing the proposals into regulations for the deer season.

Ohio's current deer regulations are a compilation of past rules which have been modified and adjusted to meet deer management needs. As these needs change, so must the tools. A number of changes this year reflect this. Many of these proposals are to "clean up" the regulations for consistency.

Proposal: Eliminate the term "zone." Instead refer to a county's bag limit.
Justification: The word "zone" conflicts with Ohio's deer management approach.

- The proposed change is reflective of Ohio's county-based deer management approach. Ohio does not manage deer based on zones. The zones were simply collections of counties with generally similar needs. As those needs change, so too must the collections.
- The proposed regulations give more flexibility in applying bag limits. Counties will not have to be blocked together for continuity or simplicity. In the past this has compromised the ability to manage in some cases.
- The county bag limit is based on county needs, not just geographic ease.
- The bag limit is simpler for hunters to understand.

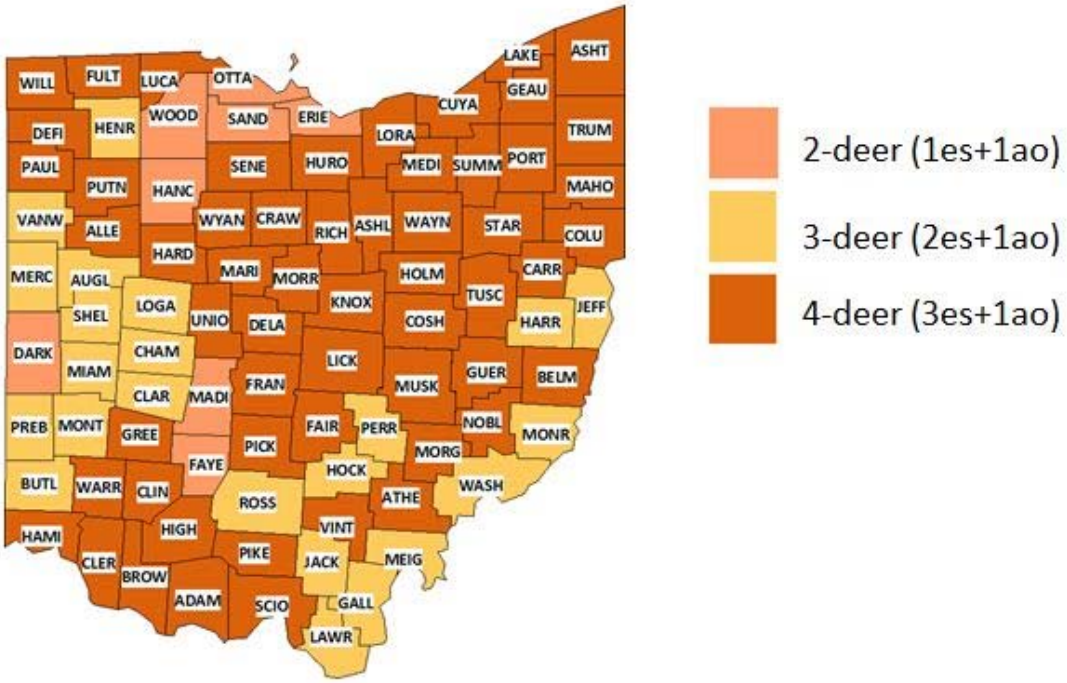
Proposal: Bag limits for 2013-2014: 2 deer counties (8 counties); 3 deer counties (23 counties); 4 deer counties (57 counties). These counties may not be contiguous. (See map below.)
Justification for reduction in bag limits: Less than 1% of successful hunters kill more than 4 deer.

2 Deer Counties: 1 either sex deer permit + 1 antlerless only deer permit
3 Deer Counties: 2 either sex deer permits + 1 antlerless only deer permit
4 Deer Counties: 3 either sex deer permits +1 antlerless only deer permit

- Hunters can use: 2 permits (1 either sex and 1 antlerless) in the counties designated as 2 deer counties; 3 permits (2 either sex and 1 antlerless) in the counties designated as 3 deer counties; and 4 permits (3 either sex and 1 antlerless) in the counties designated as 4 deer counties for a total of 9 deer statewide. In addition, 6 additional deer may be harvested in authorized controlled hunts.

- The antlerless permits are a deer management tool. They serve both as an incentive to harvest antlerless deer early, as well as a fine tuning device. The number which can be used in 3 and 4 deer counties has been reduced this year to address county needs, as well as to keeping things simple and uniform in the transition to a new set of harvest management rules.

Proposed Deer Bag Limits 2013-14



Proposal: Create an Antlerless Deer Muzzleloader Season. Eliminate the Early Muzzleloader Season on 3 designated areas. Eliminate the Extra Gun Weekend.
Justification: This season will encourage early, rather than late, antlerless harvest and is consistent with the structure of the antlerless permit program where "earlier is better."
Justification: The extra gun weekend was started in 2006 after an OSU study indicated hunters wanted additional weekend days to hunt, but recent trends in harvest and hunter contacts suggest that the hunt has lost some appeal.

- The Antlerless Deer Muzzleloader season would replace the extra gun weekend and early muzzleloader season on 3 designated areas.
- This season would be antlerless only. Archery hunting would be permitted that weekend and would be antlerless only.

- The Antlerless Deer Muzzleloader Season is proposed for the second weekend of October (Oct. 12-13, 2013.)
- Hunters will be able to use both antlerless permits and either sex permits.
- The proposed new deer season means the fall wild turkey season would start on the Monday following the second weekend in October.
- Only 13 percent of the deer hunters archery hunt exclusively; 23 percent only hunt deer with a firearm; while 63 percent of Ohio's deer hunters use multiple types of implements.
- Support for an early antlerless only muzzleloader season was shown by 63% of all deer hunters, and 43% of archery-only hunters.
- As for moving a gun season into a traditional archery-only time, archery hunters should realize that Ohio's archery season is the longest in the nation.
    - On average, only 2,000 deer are harvested the second weekend in Oct., less than 1 percent of the season total.
    - Of those 2,000, approximately 75 percent are does, not bucks.
    - Taking more does earlier helps move the sex ratio closer to 1:1. This makes for a more intense rut by encouraging buck movement.
    - Removing deer early in the season means that resources that would have been consumed will be available for the surviving herd later in the winter.
    - A Pennsylvania study showed its early muzzleloader season had no impact on buck movement; deer movements were identical before, after, and during the mid-October season. (See graph below.)

Buck Movement Relative to mid-October Firearm Season in PA

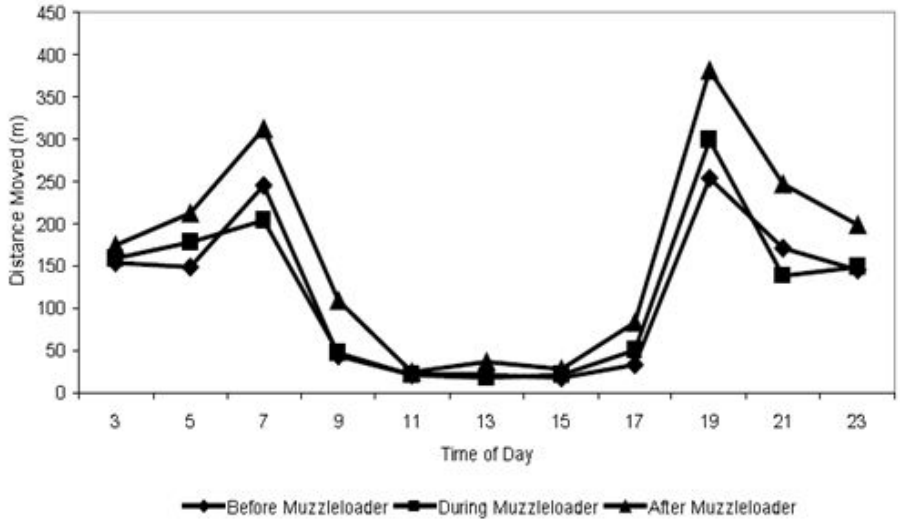


Figure 5. Median distances moved by antlered deer wearing GPS radio collars during 2-hour time intervals the week before, during, and after the October muzzleloader and firearms season. Sunrise occurred Around 0730hrs and sunset occurred around 1830hrs. Pennsylvania, 2002-2004.

- Eliminating the extra gun weekend would give deer a break before the January muzzleloader season.
- Eliminating the extra gun weekend will now give archery hunters the entire month of December to hunt without interruption from a firearms season.
- Research shows most hunters only hunt three days with a gun, no matter how many days or when the seasons are offered. Leaving the December bonus gun season would result in a further dilution of hunter effort.
- The weather in early October will be ideal for young and old hunters alike.

Proposal: Eliminate the urban deer zones

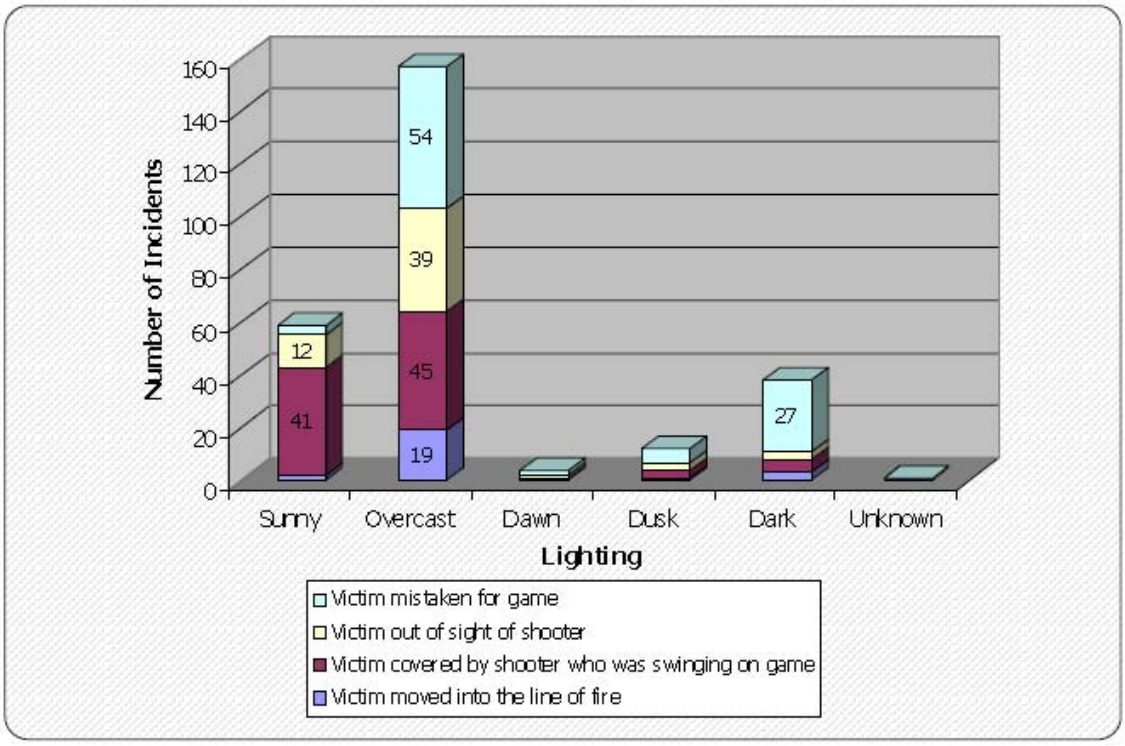
Justification: The urban permit program was initiated in 1994 when antlerless opportunities were very limited and the Division of Wildlife wanted to encourage additional harvest in urban sections of the state where access was a limiting factor. At that time the highest county bag limit was 2, and only in a select few counties. The urban units are no longer relevant because the generous bag limits throughout the State have reduced their appeal.

- Only 9% of all the deer taken in an urban county are tagged with an antlerless permit during or after gun season.
- Less than 1% of all hunters harvest more than 5 deer.
- There are other ways to deal with urban deer besides season long antlerless permits. Metro Parks and municipalities will have other methods available to them to handle deer problems.

Proposal: Change the valid dates of $15 antlerless permits to: the opening of archery season through the Sunday before the start of deer gun season, except controlled hunts authorized by the chief of the Division of Wildlife.
Justification: This would allow the valid dates to be printed on the new permit, rather than the effective date. This would reduce confusion and make it easier for hunters to understand when they can use these permits.

- The antlerless permits would be valid for Division of Wildlife authorized controlled hunts after the start of the gun season.
- Beginning this year, the $15 antlerless permit, as well as the rest of the deer permits and the fall turkey permit, will not be available for sale until June 1st to prevent people from buying permits that they may not be able to use. (Season dates are approved in April, after the typical first sale date of the new licenses and permits. Therefore the date had to be pushed back.)

Proposal: It is proposed to extend the legal shooting hours to ½-hour after sunset for all deer firearms seasons. (Gun, antlerless muzzleloader, deer muzzleloader, and youth)
Justification: This would make the hours consistent for all deer seasons.
- This is one of the most productive times to hunt deer.
- According to a 1999 Texas study from 1966-1997 (See chart below.)
    - Less than 10% of all incidents involve a hunter being mistaken for game, only 4% of those occurred at dusk.
    - A hunter is 10 times more likely to be mistaken for game in overcast conditions, rather than at dusk.



- At least 33 states have white-tailed deer hunting ½-hour before sunrise to ½-hour after sunset.
- In 2007 Pennsylvania extended legal shooting hours to ½ hour after sunset,
    - Over a 4 year period, incidents dropped from 20 to 12 per year.
    - Education is more important to preventing accidents than light conditions.
        - Hunters need to remember to be sure of target and beyond.
- It is the hunter's decision to pull the trigger.
    - Waterfowl hunters already need to make this decision since they have to ID the species of ducks.
- Fewer hunters are hunting during the firearms seasons. In 1977, 91% of deer killed were with a firearm. In 2011 that number dipped to 62%, despite the fact that hunters now have nine additional days of firearms hunting.
- With the popularity of trail cameras, many hunters now use ambush tactics, similar to archery hunters, instead of a deer drives.