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**DEC RELEASES STATISTICS FROM 2005-06 DEER HARVEST**  
**Hunters Have The Safest Season On Record**

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Denise M. Sheehan today announced the results of the 2005-06 deer hunting seasons, including deer harvest, information on Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD), and hunter safety statistics.

During the 2005 season, hunters harvested slightly more than 180,200 total deer, including 89,000 bucks and approximately 91,200 antlerless deer. The total deer harvest for 2005 represents a 14 % reduction from the 208,000 deer taken in 2004 and is the lowest total deer take since 1994. Declines in 2005 were expected following an intentional 35% reduction in Deer Management Permit (DMP) availability, an action intended to rebuild and stabilize the deer population in many areas of the State.

“While the 2005-06 big game season was one with many new changes and challenges, it continued to provide hunters throughout the State with quality hunting experiences,” Commissioner Sheehan said. “This year we enacted new regulations and legislation, like the first ever Saturday opener and expanding the use of rifles, and continued to address Chronic Wasting Disease. I would like to thank all the hunters both in the containment area and throughout the State for cooperating with our surveillance for CWD and for making 2005 the safest year on record for hunting in New York State.”

Deer takes in New York have declined in recent years as a result of specific management actions intended to reduce deer populations from the high levels of 2002 and 2003 and bring populations to manageable levels where deer were overabundant. These actions, combined with the impact of severe winter conditions in some areas resulted in deer population declines that were greater than expected. Through targeted management techniques in 2005, DEC biologists have been seeking to increase deer populations to achieve a better balance. However, deer populations comparable to 2002 levels cannot be maintained without long-term negative consequences such as damage to agriculture, forest regeneration, landscaping, or vehicle accidents. Results from the 2005 deer season indicate that current management efforts are working.

New York’s deer hunters took about 89,000 bucks in 2005, roughly the same as in 2004 and an indication that the overall deer population is stabilizing. Steuben County led the State with the highest deer take once again in 2005, with a total take of 8,577 deer, including 4,541 bucks. Allegany County was second with 7,335 deer (3,880 bucks), followed by Cattaraugus County with 7,321 deer (3,921 bucks). Erie County with 6,232 deer (2,563 bucks) and Ontario County with 6,053 deer (2,082 bucks) rounded out the top five counties in the State.

The statewide adult female take included almost 61,200 deer, down from about 80,200 adult females in 2004. This was an anticipated decline resulting from DEC's reduction in the total number of DMPs available during the 2005 season. Just over 387,600 DMPs were issued in 2005, about 220,000 less than in 2004. DMPs are valid only for the taking of antlerless deer and serve as the cornerstone for statewide deer management efforts.

Deer populations vary considerably throughout New York and approximately 20 % of the current Wildlife Management Units (WMU) have deer populations that are within 10 % of desired levels. About 15 % of the units have deer populations greater than desired while the remaining two thirds of the units have lower than desired deer populations. The goal of DEC's deer management program is to maintain deer numbers at levels that meet local interests and habitat conditions, while also providing quality hunting opportunities for New York's 540,000 deer hunters.

"Reducing the number of adult female deer harvested, such as was accomplished in 2005, should allow for the population to rebuild toward desired levels where necessary," said Commissioner Sheehan. The current winter has not yet had a significant impact on deer survival and small increases in deer populations can be expected for the 2006 season if mild conditions continue.

Although several significant regulatory changes regarding season structure and timing were implemented prior to the 2005 hunting season, their impact on deer harvest was not dramatic. The opening day of the Southern Zone Regular Deer Season was changed from a Monday to Saturday. This provided increased opportunity for young hunters who would normally have been in school for the opening day of the deer season and for those hunters who could not afford to take a day off work to hunt. The first two days of the season in 2005 accounted for 53% of the Regular Season buck take, only a slight increase over 2004 when about 49% of the Regular Season buck take occurred during the first two days of the season.

New portions of the Southern Zone were opened for deer hunting with centerfire rifles. While many hunters may have used rifles in these areas, there did not appear to be a widespread shift away from hunting with shotguns. No changes in deer take in these areas can be directly attributed to the opportunity to hunt with rifles.

The late archery and muzzleloading seasons were extended to nine days in length from the previous season lengths of 5 and 7 days respectively. Hunters appeared to take advantage of the increased season length, and the total deer take in the Southern Zone muzzleloading season increased from 6,618 deer in 2004 to 8,645 deer in 2005.

Also, 2005 marked the start of a pilot antler restriction program intended to expand the age structure of the buck population and better balance the sex ratio in WMUs 3C and 3J located primarily in Ulster County. The pilot antler restriction requires that bucks taken in these units have at least one antler with three points (or more) that are each at least one inch in length. Hunter compliance appears strong, and as expected, the buck take for these units dropped about 52%. As the program progresses, the total buck harvest should return to previous levels but with

a greater percentage of 2½ year old and older bucks in the population. This pilot will serve as a learning experience for both the DEC and New York deer hunters.

Since 1990, DEC has utilized local citizen task forces to establish deer population objectives for most WMUs. The task forces represent a broad range of public interests and consider concerns of farmers, foresters, conservationists, landowners and hunters. The desired deer population level of each WMU is expressed as a Buck Take Objective (BTO) and reflects the approximate buck take per square mile that would be taken when the deer population is close to the desired level.

The attached tables provide details on New York's 2005 deer harvest.

### **Chronic Wasting Disease**

In the spring of 2005, an intensive statewide Chronic Wasting Disease program was initiated to sample wild white-tailed deer after CWD was detected in the wild in Oneida County. Much of the sampling efforts involved the collection of deer heads from hunter harvest that were taken to meat processors this past fall. A sampling system was developed to determine the number of deer needed from each county in order to detect CWD if it was present in the state. No additional cases of CWD have been detected in New York during the intensified surveillance efforts. Since April, 2005, over 8,000 samples have been collected throughout the state including 2,080 samples from the Oneida-Madison County CWD Containment Area with no new cases detected. Additional samples will be collected throughout the winter statewide from deer exhibiting clinical symptoms. Intensive statewide sampling is planned for next fall as well.

CWD is a rare neurological disease that affects the brains of deer, elk, and moose causing the animals to become emaciated, lose body functions and eventually die. Following detection of CWD in two wild deer in Oneida County in April 2005, the Department established a mandatory deer check and testing procedure for all deer taken by hunters in the CWD Containment Area and significantly expanded statewide surveillance efforts.

Throughout the country, research studies are being conducted about CWD, but there continues to be no evidence that CWD is transmissible to humans. As a precaution, DEC, State health officials and the World Health Organization (WHO) will continue to recommend that hunters not eat venison from unhealthy deer, including CWD positive deer.

### **Safest Hunting Year in History in New York**

Reports of hunting related shooting incidents received by DEC indicate that 2005 was the safest year in hunting in New York since records have been kept. During 2005 hunting seasons in New York, there were 29 hunting related shooting incidents. The previous record low was 32 incidents in 2003. There were four fatalities, three of which occurred during the big game season and one during spring turkey season.

This year's record low total of 29 compares to an average of 45 incidents per year over the previous 5 years, and to 137 incidents per year during the 1960s.

Two new changes to the big game season were enacted last year, but did not adversely affect the safety of New York's hunters. The changes included moving the Southern Zone season opening day to a Saturday instead of the traditional Monday opener and expanding the use of rifles to new areas of the Southern Zone. No rifle injury was reporting in the new area, and only 15 of New York's 29 incidents occurred in big game hunting, making the big game season also the safest in history.

The decline in hunting related shooting incidents is not merely a reflection of the decline in hunter numbers. The hunting incident rate (incidents per 100,000 hunters) is declining much faster than the number of hunters. Hunter numbers have declined about 10% since the 1960s, while the rate of hunting related shooting incidents declined nearly 66% during the same period.

### **LONG-TERM HUNTING SAFETY RECORD, BY DECADE**

Average Annual Number of Hunting Related Shooting Incidents.

Decade	Incidents	Rate*
1960s	137	19.0
1979s	102	13.9
1980s	85	10.9
1990s	66	9.2
2000+	43	6.5

\* The Rate is the number of hunting related shooting incidents per 100,000 hunters.

Thanks largely to the efforts of over 3,000 dedicated volunteer Sportsman Education instructors for over 50 years, New York has an extremely safety-conscious generation of hunters. DEC is always looking for experienced hunters to pass on the tradition of hunting safety and responsibility to the next generation. If you are interested in joining DEC in this rewarding volunteer activity, call 888-HUNT-ED2 for information on becoming an instructor, or visit [www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/sportsed/index.html](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/sportsed/index.html) on the DEC website.

**NEW YORK STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION**

**Proposed Buck Take Objectives and Actual Buck Take for the NYS 2005 Deer Season  
(FIGURES IN BUCKS PER SQUARE MILE)**

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT	PROPOSED BUCK TAKE OBJECTIVE	ACTUAL BUCK TAKE		WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT	PROPOSED BUCK TAKE OBJECTIVE	ACTUAL BUCK TAKE
1C	not set	0.7		6H	not set	1.0
3A	3.0	1.0		6J	not set	0.5
** 3C	2.7	0.9		6K	1.8	1.5
3F Y	2.4	2.4		6N	not set	1.1
3G	4.1	2.6		6P Y	1.3	1.4
3H	4.2	2.3		6R	0.7	1.3
** 3J	3.4	1.8		6S	2.5	1.8
3K	3.5	2.2		7A	1.8	1.4
3M Y	3.3	3.4		7F Y	1.5	1.5
3N Y	2.7	2.6		7H Y	2.8	2.9
3P	2.5	2.2		7J Y	2.2	2.4
3R	not set	0.8		7M	3.5	2.4
3S	not set	1.4		7R	2.7	3.3
4A	1.9	1.3		7S Y	3.0	2.8
4B	1.2	1.6		8A	1.5	2.3
4C	4.5	3.0		8C	0.5	0.7
4F	3.4	2.4		8F	1.9	2.4
4G Y	2.3	2.1		8G	2.3	2.8
4H	3.4	2.2		8H	2.8	3.2
4J	not set	0.9		8J	2.1	2.4
4K	3.0	1.7		8M	3.9	2.9
4L	2.0	1.1		8N	not set	4.8
4M	1.9	1.1		8P	4.2	3.0
4N	3.5	2.2		8R Y	4.2	4.3
4O	3.3	1.7		8S	4.2	3.1
4P	2.7	1.6		8T	4.8	3.2
4R	5.1	1.5		8W	3.8	2.4
4S	3.3	1.8		8X	not set	3.8

WILDLIFE	PROPOSED BUCK	ACTUAL	WILDLIFE	PROPOSED	ACTUAL
4T	2.9	2.5	8Y	4.5	2.7
4U	4.1	1.5	9A	1.1	1.8
4W	4.0	1.6	9F	2.5	3.0
4X	not set	0.6	9G Y	2.0	2.2
4Y	3.9	2.9	9H	4.0	3.4
4Z	4.7	2.9	9J	3.5	2.7
5A	not set	0.6	9K	4.0	2.7
5C	not set	0.3	9M	5.1	3.9
5F	not set	0.4	9N	3.5	3.0
5G	not set	1.0	9P	6.0	3.6
5H	not set	0.7	9R	4.1	2.8
5J	not set	1.2	9S	3.1	2.2
5K	2.8	1.5	9T	4.4	2.6
5N	3.5	2.3	9W	4.4	3.4
5P	3.4	1.7	9X	5.8	3.2
5R Y	1.3	1.3	9Y	5.0	4.4
6A Y	1.7	1.5	<b>Totals:</b>		
6C Y	1.8	1.6	<b>92 WMU's Statewide</b>		
6F	not set	0.7	<b>75 WMU's with a Buck Take Objective</b>		
6G	1.7	2.5	<b>17 WMU's without a Buck Take Objective</b>		

- 2005 buck take is 10% or more above the objective.....12 WMUs (16%)
- Y 2005 buck take is within 10% of the objective.....14 WMUs (19%)
- 2005 buck take is 10% or more below the objective.....49 WMUs (65%)
- No mark Buck take objective is not established or unit not open...17 WMUs
- \*\* A pilot antler restriction program was implemented in WMUs 3C and 3J beginning in 2005. Buck take for these units was expected to drop during the first year of the program.

The Buck Take Objective for a Wildlife Management Unit represents the desired number of antlered bucks harvested annually per square mile. Buck take objectives are based upon recommendations made by Citizen Task Forces in each WMU. On average, hunters take a consistent percentage of the adult bucks available each year. DEC biologists use buck takes as an index of the success in reaching and maintaining deer populations at the recommended levels within each WMU.

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 CALCULATED DEER TAKE BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT (WMU)

WMU	N U M B E R 2004		O F D E E R 2005		BUCKS PER SQUARE MILE	
	BUCKS	TOTAL	BUCKS	TOTAL	2004	2005
1C	650	2,014	614	2,076	0.7	0.7
3A	486	661	617	767	0.8	1.0
3C **	834	2,286	299	730	2.6	0.9
3F	895	2,500	781	1,942	2.7	2.4
3G	1,368	3,448	1,167	2,370	3.0	2.6
3H	1,084	1,818	1,297	1,696	2.0	2.3
3J **	1,082	2,557	626	1,458	3.0	1.8
3K	922	1,624	833	992	2.4	2.2
3M	2,459	6,983	2,514	5,762	3.3	3.4
3N	626	1,504	578	1,327	2.8	2.6
3P	337	674	278	512	2.7	2.2
3R	110	184	165	308	0.5	0.8
3S	638	1,687	587	1,694	1.5	1.4
4A	483	878	568	897	1.1	1.3
4B	247	667	255	714	1.5	1.6
4C	512	1,003	490	947	3.1	3.0
4F	2,103	4,329	2,262	4,357	2.2	2.4
4G	725	1,532	789	1,534	2.0	2.1
4H	651	1,424	632	1,282	2.2	2.2
4J	191	547	134	481	1.3	0.9
4K	289	615	271	479	1.8	1.7
4L	255	423	197	349	1.4	1.1
4M	215	447	152	289	1.5	1.1
4N	411	1,096	462	725	2.0	2.2
4O	1,212	2,297	1,244	1,456	1.6	1.7
4P	591	1,175	569	661	1.6	1.6
4R	413	764	432	516	1.4	1.5
4S	478	805	398	716	2.2	1.8
4T	411	1,341	328	798	3.1	2.5
4U	306	660	194	443	2.4	1.5
4W	613	1,209	713	829	1.4	1.6
4X	22	24	46	51	0.3	0.6
4Y	662	1,970	520	1,349	3.8	2.9
4Z	860	2,069	718	1,576	3.4	2.9
5A	561	805	527	745	0.7	0.6
5C	318	400	314	378	0.3	0.3
5F	558	743	592	742	0.4	0.4
5G	1,149	1,615	1,091	1,508	1.0	1.0
5H	1,804	2,427	1,923	2,461	0.6	0.7
5J	1,080	1,592	984	1,495	1.4	1.2
5K	233	354	250	378	1.4	1.5
5N	1,053	1,661	1,042	1,730	2.4	2.3
5P	76	167	57	138	2.3	1.7
5R	424	851	487	858	1.1	1.3
6A	2,223	5,375	2,152	3,915	1.5	1.5
6C	1,463	2,891	1,382	2,784	1.7	1.6
6F	824	1,076	883	1,086	0.7	0.7
6G	2,500	6,274	2,509	5,696	2.5	2.5
6H	202	520	173	339	1.2	1.0
6J	702	1,149	906	1,311	0.4	0.5
6K	1,535	2,983	1,646	2,907	1.4	1.5
6N	408	534	522	653	0.8	1.1
6P	218	468	294	516	1.1	1.4
6R	582	1,108	707	1,623	1.1	1.3
6S	875	1,590	1,043	1,944	1.5	1.8

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 CALCULATED DEER TAKE BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT (WMU)

WMU	N U M B E R 2004		O F D E E R 2005		BUCKS PER SQUARE MILE	
	BUCKS	TOTAL	BUCKS	TOTAL	2004	2005
7A	658	1,186	780	1,022	1.2	1.4
7F	1,036	3,149	1,035	2,581	1.5	1.5
7H	983	2,560	1,033	3,272	2.8	2.9
7J	1,734	4,308	1,976	4,074	2.1	2.4
7M	3,142	4,597	3,939	5,000	1.9	2.4
7R	2,430	6,484	2,464	6,480	3.3	3.3
7S	2,177	5,438	2,039	4,379	2.9	2.8
8A	801	2,234	964	2,433	1.9	2.3
8C	101	304	93	360	0.7	0.7
8F	1,497	4,241	1,731	4,392	2.0	2.4
8G	1,889	5,545	1,928	5,637	2.8	2.8
8H	2,036	6,058	1,839	5,609	3.5	3.2
8J	1,467	3,753	1,702	4,177	2.1	2.4
8M	1,009	2,641	881	1,874	3.3	2.9
8N	1,806	5,866	1,515	5,210	5.7	4.8
8P	1,218	3,012	1,052	1,953	3.4	3.0
8R	1,179	4,489	1,174	3,271	4.4	4.3
8S	764	1,492	803	1,598	3.0	3.1
8T	1,175	3,082	1,249	2,338	3.1	3.2
8W	1,016	2,308	1,067	1,804	2.3	2.4
8X	1,354	3,551	1,506	2,790	3.4	3.8
8Y	1,005	2,074	944	1,635	2.8	2.7
9A	659	1,720	834	1,917	1.4	1.8
9F	751	2,022	832	2,353	2.7	3.0
9G	463	1,359	502	1,442	2.0	2.2
9H	3,378	8,224	3,260	7,158	3.5	3.4
9J	1,972	4,864	1,907	3,670	2.8	2.7
9K	1,289	3,234	1,221	2,514	2.9	2.7
9M	1,411	3,656	1,274	2,480	4.3	3.9
9N	595	1,616	631	1,160	2.9	3.0
9P	2,105	5,562	2,077	3,872	3.6	3.6
9R	588	1,662	599	1,017	2.7	2.8
9S	205	507	203	302	2.2	2.2
9T	700	1,707	646	1,040	2.8	2.6
9W	917	2,551	854	1,601	3.7	3.4
9X	677	1,614	697	1,070	3.1	3.2
9Y	617	1,938	550	1,439	4.9	4.4
TOT	88,733	208,733	208,406	89,015	180,214	

\*\*A pilot antler restriction program was implemented in WMUs 3C and 3J beginning in 2005. Buck take for these units was expected to drop during the first year of the program.

## CALCULATED DEER TAKE BY COUNTY 2004 - 2005

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COUNTY	N U M B E R 2004		O F D E E R 2005		B U C K S P E R S Q U A R E M I L E	
	BUCKS	TOTAL	BUCKS	TOTAL	2004	2005
ALBANY	934	2,288	851	2,118	1.7	1.6
ALLEGANY	3,929	10,587	3,880	7,335	3.8	3.7
BROOME	1,423	3,491	1,418	2,853	2.0	2.0
CATTARAUGUS	4,067	10,658	3,921	7,321	3.2	3.1
CAYUGA	1,706	4,220	1,793	4,579	2.4	2.5
CHAUTAUQUA	2,985	7,430	2,814	5,641	2.8	2.6
CHEMUNG	1,038	2,238	1,017	1,846	2.5	2.5
CHENANGO	1,771	2,674	2,365	2,982	1.9	2.6
CLINTON	506	690	504	655	0.5	0.5
COLUMBIA	2,153	5,824	1,696	4,024	3.3	2.6
CORTLAND	967	1,952	1,045	1,763	1.9	2.1
DELAWARE	2,283	4,437	2,355	2,828	1.5	1.6
DUTCHESS	2,333	6,145	2,010	4,472	2.9	2.5
ERIE	2,487	6,279	2,563	6,232	3.0	3.1
ESSEX	1,157	1,478	1,128	1,437	0.6	0.6
FRANKLIN	1,179	2,006	1,187	1,853	0.7	0.7
FULTON	570	855	494	856	1.1	0.9
GENESEE	1,431	4,108	1,406	4,147	2.9	2.9
GREENE	1,046	1,949	945	1,539	1.6	1.4
HAMILTON	732	908	826	987	0.4	0.5
HERKIMER	1,348	2,257	1,656	2,780	0.9	1.1
JEFFERSON	2,890	6,851	2,778	5,934	2.2	2.1
LEWIS	1,101	2,122	1,401	2,429	0.8	1.1
LIVINGSTON	2,063	6,093	1,900	4,864	3.2	2.9
MADISON	1,123	2,270	1,295	2,167	1.7	2.0
MONROE	1,624	4,451	1,593	4,336	2.5	2.4
MONTGOMERY	385	729	434	836	0.9	1.0
NIAGARA	723	1,882	918	2,101	1.4	1.8
ONEIDA	1,567	3,078	1,842	3,135	1.3	1.5
ONONDAGA	1,270	3,448	1,336	2,960	1.6	1.7
ONTARIO	2,488	6,875	2,082	6,053	3.8	3.2
ORANGE	2,718	7,215	2,655	5,822	3.2	3.2
ORLEANS	696	2,231	922	2,525	1.8	2.3
OSWEGO	1,220	2,382	1,425	2,371	1.2	1.5
OTSEGO	2,241	4,802	2,402	4,420	2.2	2.4
PUTNAM	593	1,396	553	1,238	2.6	2.4
RENSSELAER	1,362	2,678	1,170	2,200	2.0	1.7
ROCKLAND	103	176	157	287	0.6	0.9
SARATOGA	1,104	1,897	1,065	1,763	1.3	1.3
SCHENECTADY	179	312	232	395	0.9	1.1
SCHOHARIE	1,163	2,406	1,307	2,452	1.8	2.1
SCHUYLER	913	2,571	993	2,254	2.7	3.0
SENECA	706	1,683	820	1,952	2.1	2.4
ST LAWRENCE	3,562	7,476	3,385	5,951	1.3	1.2
STEUBEN	4,499	11,571	4,541	8,577	3.2	3.2
SUFFOLK	650	2,014	614	2,076	0.7	0.7

COUNTY	N U M B E R 2004		O F D E E R 2005		BUCKS PER SQUARE MILE	
	BUCKS	TOTAL	BUCKS	TOTAL	2004	2005
SULLIVAN	2,141	3,832	2,337	3,083	2.1	2.3
TIOGA	1,931	4,734	1,906	4,486	3.7	3.6
TOMPKINS	1,756	4,514	1,836	4,707	3.6	3.7
ULSTER **	2,281	5,380	1,483	2,978	2.0	1.3
WARREN	577	822	638	812	0.7	0.7
WASHINGTON	1,610	2,561	1,582	2,598	1.9	1.9
WAYNE	1,250	3,630	1,555	3,901	2.1	2.6
WESTCHESTER	638	1,687	587	1,694	1.5	1.4
WYOMING	2,079	5,240	1,908	4,431	3.5	3.2
YATES	1,482	4,923	1,489	4,178	4.3	4.4
TOTALS		88,733	208,406	89,015	180,214	

\*\*A pilot antler restriction program was implemented in 2005 in WMUs 3C and 3J, located primarily in Ulster County. Buck take for this area was expected to drop during the first year of the program.

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