

The Nebraska Game and Parks Board of Commissioners adopted regulations designed to increase the harvest of antlerless white-tailed deer in 2010.

A record deer harvest was expected in 2009, but a late crop harvest, a cold winter with record snowfall and low interest in the October antlerless season resulted in an antlerless white-tailed deer harvest that fell below objectives.

In 2009, 29,711 antlerless whitetails were harvested. The goal for this year is 42,000.

Commission deer management goals are to reduce white-tailed deer populations, especially in eastern Nebraska, and along the major river corridors, and to allow mule deer populations to increase in eastern and southwestern mule deer units.

Among the deer regulations the board adopted at its regular meeting in Lincoln are:

- *Expanding the October Antlerless season.* The season is lengthened from three days to 10, and the hunting area is expanded. The hunting area includes land in the following Season Choice Areas: 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9 River, 11, 12, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22.

An unlimited number of permits, which allow the harvest of two antlerless whitetails each, will cost \$10 for residents, \$54 for nonresidents.

Hunter orange no longer is required of archers during the October antlerless season, but the requirement remains in place for firearm hunters.

- *Earn-a-Buck* – This tool, designed to increase doe harvest, requires hunters with Elkhorn and Wahoo unit November firearm permits to check in a doe before or at the same time as they check in a buck. The November firearm season will be extended two days for hunters in these

units.

- *Mule Deer Conservation Area* – The area is comprised of the Buffalo, Frenchman, Republican, and Platte units. The only hunters who may harvest a mule deer buck are youth, landowners and those with the new Republican mule deer buck, Buffalo, Platte, or Frenchman permits.

These permits allow harvest in archery, muzzleloader and November firearms seasons. Restricted statewide buck, archery and muzzleloader permits will not be valid for mule deer bucks in the Mule Deer Conservation Area.

- *Establishing new Season Choice Areas* – The following season choice areas are established within existing areas: SCA 8 West, SCA 9 North, SCA 9 River, SCA 17 White River, SCA 24 River, and SCA 25 North. These are intended to allow for additional pressure on white-tailed deer in riparian areas and to allow for mule deer doe harvest where needed.

- *Expanding January late antlerless season* – The season is lengthened from 15 to 24 days and begins Dec. 26. Hunter orange is required for archers.

- *Using bow with firearm permits* – Archery equipment will be allowed as a legal weapon on firearm permits in November and January. Hunter orange is required.

- *Establishing new Statewide Whitetail Buck permit* – This permit will be unlimited in number and valid in archery, muzzleloader and November firearm seasons. The bag limit will be one whitetail buck and one antlerless whitetail. The permit price is \$72.50 for residents, \$521 for nonresidents.

- *More permits available* – An additional 45,000 antlerless permits and bonus tags will be available statewide.

Regulation changes to antelope hunting include increasing the landowner quotas from 20 percent of general tags to 50 percent, making electronic checking available for archery and muzzleloader seasons, establishing a new Cherry Late firearm unit and a corresponding late doe season for that unit.

Regulation changes to elk hunting include increasing permit quotas in most units and expanding elk zones in many units to increase landowner eligibility.

Following are the 2010 big game season dates:

Deer

Archery – Sept. 15-Nov. 12 and Nov. 22-Dec. 31

Mule Deer Conservation Area – Sept. 15-Dec. 31

October Antlerless (any weapon) – Oct. 2-11

November Firearm – Nov. 13-21

Earn-a-Buck November Firearm (Wahoo and Elkhorn units) – Nov. 13-23

Muzzleloader – Dec. 1-31

Season Choice (antlerless) – Sept. 15-Jan. 18, 2011 with bow; Dec. 1-31 with muzzleloader and Nov. 13-21 and Jan. 1-18, 2011 with firearm

Youth and Landowner – Sept. 15-Dec. 31 with bow; Dec. 1-31 with muzzleloader; Nov. 13-21 with firearm; and Dec. 26-Jan. 18, 2011 (antlerless only) with bow or firearm

DeSoto Muzzleloader – Oct. 16-17; Oct. 30-31; Dec. 11-12; and Jan. 8-9, 2011

Boyer Chute – Oct. 23-24; Nov. 20-21 and Dec. 18-19

Antelope

Archery – Aug. 20-Nov. 12 and Nov. 22-Dec. 31, but closed during firearm antelope season in all areas open to firearm antelope hunting

Muzzleloader – Sept. 18-Oct. 3

Firearm – Oct. 9-24

Late Firearm (Cherry Late unit) – Oct. 9-Nov. 12

Elk

Bull Permits – Sept. 25-Oct. 24

Antlerless Permits – Sept. 25-Oct. 24 and Dec. 1-21

Boyd Unit – Aug. 15-Nov. 12 and Nov. 22-Dec. 31

In other business, the board:

- Adopted changes to underwater spearfishing regulations. The regulations give underwater spearfishers the same daily bag and possession limit on walleyes as hook-and-line anglers: four walleye over 15 inches, of which only one can be 22 inches or longer. This replaces regulations allowing the take of two fish greater than 15 inches, one of which had to be 22 inches or longer.
- Approved regulations allowing the Commission to sell expired permits and stamps for no more than \$25.
- Adopted a resolution to expand the focus area of activities for the Focus on Pheasants plan in Nebraska. The plan is an effort of landowners and conservation partners to increase pheasant habitat and populations as well as hunter opportunities.
- Approved a gift of the O. John Emerson Tract in Holt County from the Nebraska Game and Parks Foundation. The land has been managed by the Commission as O. John Emerson Wildlife Management Area (WMA).
- Approved the acquisition of 40 acres of land in York County for wildlife diversity and hunting and designated it as an addition to Kirkpatrick Basin WMA.