

# 2024 VERMONT WHITE-TAILED DEER SEASONS



## 2024 DEER SEASONS

| ARCHERY  |
|--|
| October 1-November 15 & December 2-15, 2024<br>(closed during regular November season)   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state not to exceed the one buck annual limit.</li> <li>❖ Antlerless deer may be taken anywhere in the state, not to exceed the annual limit.</li> <li>❖ A crossbow may be used.</li> </ul> |
| YOUTH DEER WEEKEND   |
| October 26-27, 2024  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ One deer of either sex, no antler restriction.</li> </ul>   |
| NOVICE WEEKEND   |
| October 26-27, 2024  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ A Novice is a person who purchased their first hunting license less than 12 months prior to this season and is 16 years of age or older.</li> </ul>   |
| MUZZLELOADER ANTLERLESS  |
| October 31-November 3, 2024  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Muzzleloader license and antlerless permit required.</li> <li>❖ Permit may be used during this season or during the regular muzzleloader deer season.</li> </ul>  |
| REGULAR  |
| November 16-December 1, 2024   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state not to exceed the one buck annual limit.</li> </ul>   |
| MUZZLELOADER   |
| December 7-15, 2024  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state not to exceed the one buck annual limit. Antlerless deer may be taken if you have an <a href="#">antlerless permit</a>. <b>DEADLINE TO APPLY IS JULY 31, 2024.</b></li> </ul>         |



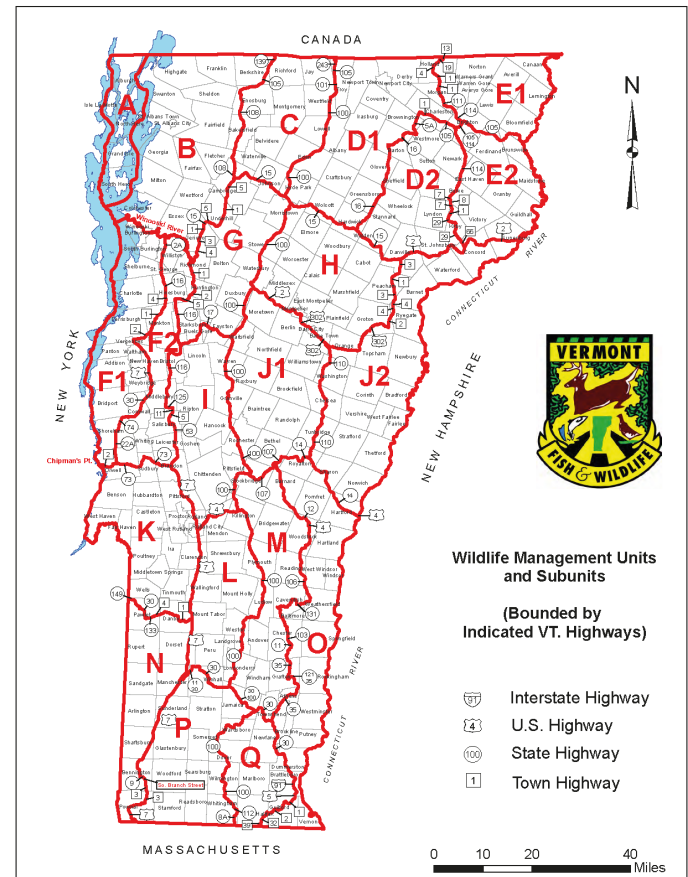
## DEFINITIONS OF TERMS FOR DEER SEASONS

**Legal Buck:** In WMUs C, D1, D2, E1, E2, G, I, L, M, P, and Q a legal buck is any deer with at least one antler three inches or more in length.

In WMUs A, B, F1, F2, H, J1, J2, K, N, and O a legal buck is any deer with at least one antler with two or more antler points one inch in length or longer.

**Point:** An antler projection of at least one inch measured from base to tip. A broken main beam shall count as a point, regardless of length.

**Antlerless Deer:** Those deer without antlers or with no antler longer than three (3) inches.



## LIMITS

No more than **four deer per year, only one may be a legal buck**. Youth and novice hunters can take two legal bucks, provided one is taken during the youth or novice season, not to exceed the annual limit of four deer. No antler restrictions apply for Youth Deer Weekend or Novice Weekend.

## REGULAR SEASON (November 16-December 1, 2024)

**Limit:** One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state. A person shall not take more than four white-tailed deer in a year in all deer hunting seasons, only one of which may be a legal buck.



- 🔗 [Deer Harvest Reports](#)
- 🔗 [Wild Game Processors](#)

## ARCHERY SEASON (October 1-November 15 and December 2-15, 2024)

Archery season is closed during the regular season.

**Licenses:** Any person wishing to hunt deer with a bow and arrow or crossbow during archery deer season must have an archery license/tag. A hunting or combination hunting and fishing license is required in addition to an archery license, except for nonresident archery-only deer license.

**Limit:** Antlerless deer or one legal buck may be taken during the archery season anywhere in the state, not to exceed the annual limit (4 deer/1 buck).

Deer must be taken by bow and arrow or crossbow. The arrowhead must be at least 7/8 of an inch in width with two or more cutting edges.

**It is illegal to carry a rifle, shotgun, or muzzleloader while archery hunting deer in the archery deer season.** A hunter may possess a pistol or revolver while archery deer hunting. The pistol or revolver MAY NOT be used to take game or dispatch the deer.

**A crossbow may be used by anyone to take game that may be taken by bow and arrow.**

Unless it is uncocked, it is illegal to possess or transport a crossbow in or on a motor vehicle, motor boat, airplane, snowmobile, or other motor-propelled craft or any vehicle drawn by a motor-propelled vehicle.

## YOUTH DEER WEEKEND (October 26-27, 2024)

Vermont's youth deer weekend is on the Saturday and Sunday **three weeks** prior to the opening of the November regular deer season.

A resident or nonresident youth, **15 years of age or younger on the weekend of the hunt**, who has successfully completed a hunter safety course may obtain a free youth deer hunting tag to hunt during this season. The youth must also purchase a Vermont hunting license at a license agent by either showing proof of satisfactorily completing the hunter safety course or proof of having held a valid hunting license previously. The youth hunter's parent or guardian must sign the hunting license application in the presence of the license agent.

When hunting, the youth hunter must be accompanied by an unarmed adult over 18 years of age who holds a valid Vermont hunting license. The adult may accompany no more than two youth hunters at any given time.



The adult must have **direct control and supervision**, including the ability to see and communicate with the youth hunter without the aid of artificial devices such as radios or binoculars, except for medically necessary devices such as hearing aids or eyeglasses.

**LANDOWNER PERMISSION IS REQUIRED BY LAW** in order to hunt on private land with a youth deer tag during youth deer weekend. All relevant game laws and regulations apply during the **Youth Deer Hunting Weekend**, including the prohibition on baiting and road hunting. Landowners are not exempt from the requirement to purchase tags to hunt on their own property on youth weekends.

A Vermont youth deer hunting tag is valid for one deer on youth deer hunting weekend in accordance with the rules of the Fish & Wildlife Board announced annually.

**Limit:** The youth hunter may take one deer of either sex on youth deer weekend, and the antler restriction that applies in other deer seasons does not apply during youth deer weekend.

The amount of fine will be doubled for a violation on Youth Deer Hunting Weekend, and the fine shall be assessed against the licensed adult who has the youth hunter in his or her charge.

- 🦌 [Courtesy Permission Card](#)
- 🦌 [More information on Youth Hunting](#)

## NOVICE WEEKEND (October 26-27, 2024)

*(concurrent with Youth Deer Weekend)*

**Novice: A person who purchased their first hunting license within the past 12 months and is 16 years of age or older.**

To participate in the novice season, a qualified person must have a valid Vermont hunting license, a free novice tag, and follow the requirements of the youth deer season.

The novice hunter must be accompanied by an unarmed adult who holds a valid Vermont hunting license and who is 18 years of age or older. An adult accompanying a novice shall accompany no more than two novice hunters at one time. “Accompany”, “accompanied”, or “accompanying” means **direct control and supervision**, including the ability to see and communicate with the novice hunter without the aid of artificial devices such as radios or binoculars, except for medically necessary devices such as hearing aids or eyeglasses.

**No Novice hunter shall hunt under this section on privately owned land without first obtaining the permission of the owner or occupant.**

**Limit:** One legal buck may be taken during this season, or any deer if the Board has authorized the taking of antlerless deer during youth hunting weekend.

- 🦌 [More information on Novice Hunting](#)

## MUZZLELOADER ANTLERLESS DEER SEASON (October 31-November 3, 2024)

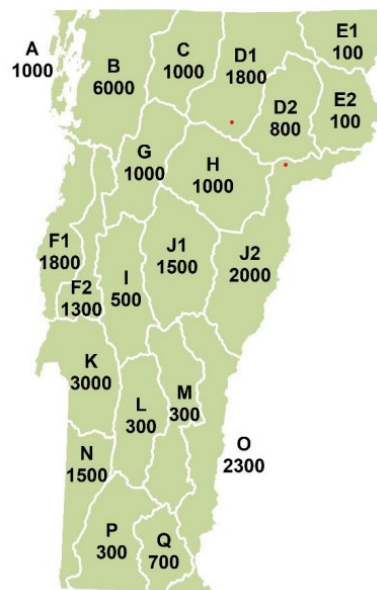
A muzzleloader antlerless deer season will occur for four consecutive days beginning on the Thursday 16 days prior to the opening of the regular November season. It will be October 31-

November 3, 2024. A muzzleloader license and an antlerless permit, in addition to a hunting or combination hunting and fishing license, are required for this season. The antlerless permit may be used during this season or during the December muzzleloader deer season.

**Definition of Muzzleloader Firearm:** A single-shot, single-barrel rifle or smoothbore firearm with a minimum barrel length of 20 inches, designed to be fired from the shoulder or a single-shot pistol with a minimum barrel length of 10 inches. Both rifle and pistol must be incapable of being loaded from the breach without the use of tools, and must have a minimum bore diameter of 0.43 inches and an ignition system of traditional or modern flintlock, caplock, matchlock, in-line or wheellock style.

**Definition of Loaded Muzzleloader:** The muzzleloading firearm shall be considered loaded when it has been charged with powder and projectile and is primed or capped.

**Special Provisions:** A person hunting deer in a muzzleloader deer season shall not possess any firearms other than one single-barreled muzzleloading firearm, and shall not possess or substitute any archery equipment or crossbow while hunting deer under a muzzleloader deer hunting license.



### [2024 Muzzleloader Antlerless Permit Allocation](#)

**DEADLINE TO APPLY IS JULY 31, 2024**

- 🦌 [Antlerless Deer Muzzleloader Lottery](#)

## MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASON (December 7-15, 2024)



**Licenses:** Muzzleloader license and hunting license required.

**Limit:** One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state. In addition, with an antlerless permit issued by the department, a person may take an antlerless deer within the authorized WMU.

### **NEW!** RETRIEVAL AND USE OF COVERED WILD ANIMALS

*A person shall not intentionally or knowingly kill a covered wild animal and intentionally or knowingly fail to make a reasonable effort to retrieve it.*

**Covered Wild Animals:** moose, deer, bear, wild turkeys, gray squirrels, snowshoe hare, cottontail rabbits, game birds, crows, and furbearers.

The covered wild animal must be processed as food, fur, hide, or feathers, or used for taxidermy. Coyotes that are taken by lawful means other than trapping and are retrieved and disposed of legally are excepted from these required uses. A coyote or its parts, or parts of the other covered wild animals, may not be left along a public right-of-way or highway, on posted property without landowner permission, or where otherwise prohibited by law.

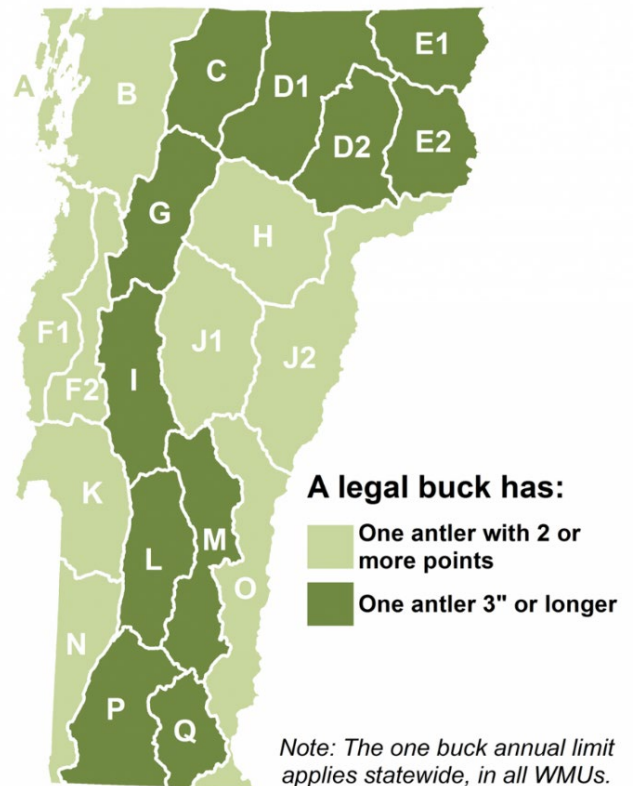
**Exceptions:** animals unfit for consumption, theft, loss to another wild animal, lack of access because of posting, defense of a person or property, and animals that are sick or diseased.

**“Take” and “Taking”** mean pursuing, shooting, hunting, killing, capturing, trapping, disturbing, harrying, worrying, wounding, snaring or netting fish, birds or other animals. It includes placing, setting, drawing or using any net or other device commonly used to take fish or wild animals, whether they result in taking or not. It includes every attempt to take and every act of assistance to another person in taking or attempting to take fish or wild animals.

## REGIONAL ANTLER POINT RESTRICTION MAP

Vermont is a small state, but substantial regional differences exist in deer habitat, deer density, hunting pressure, and winter severity. As a result, the effect of regulations such as an antler restriction differs from one region to another. What works in parts of Vermont is unnecessarily restrictive in some areas and ineffective in others. Therefore, there is an antler restriction in some WMUs but not in others.

In some areas, the reduced buck harvest rate caused by the one buck limit eliminates the need for an antler restriction. These are areas with large blocks of forest, low deer numbers, and relatively few hunters. Bucks grow older in these areas because they rarely cross paths with a hunter, not because they are protected by antler restrictions. In other areas, where hunting pressure is higher, the antler restriction is necessary to meet buck age structure goals. The combination of the antler restriction and a one buck limit will allow more bucks to survive to older age classes.



## SUPPORT SCIENCE-BASED DEER MANAGEMENT

Hunters play a critical role in the management of deer in Vermont. They provide the mechanism for controlling deer numbers, and they provide critical biological information from the animals they harvest. Successful deer management depends on cooperation from hunters.

Some ways hunters can contribute valuable information include:

- **Completing the annual deer hunter effort survey.** This survey is available to all hunters on the Fish and Wildlife website or through the hunting log in the Vermont Outdoors app. It provides critical information on hunting effort and sighting rates of deer and other wildlife that are used to estimate population size.
- **Reporting their deer at a biological reporting station during youth season or the opening weekend of the regular season.** Department biologists are present at select reporting stations during these weekends to collect important information on the health and physical condition of the deer herd. This information is more reliable if more deer can be examined.
- **Submitting a tooth from their regular November season buck.** We are asking all hunters successful in this season to provide a tooth from their buck when they report it. The deer's age can be determined from the tooth, and that age information helps estimate deer populations in each WMU.

- [VT Big Game Management Plan – Deer Management](#)
- [Tooth Collection Project](#)
- [Check the Age of Your Deer](#)
- [Tooth Removal Instructions](#)
- [Tooth Removal Video](#)

## LICENSE INFORMATION

If you intend to hunt, fish, or trap in 2024, you must update your lifetime, permanent disability, or permanent license regardless of whether or not you used your tags. This allows the department to collect accurate harvest and licensing information for these license holders.

This updated license will include current year tags. You may update your license at no cost online at our website. If you are unable to go online, you may go to any authorized license agent or Fish & Wildlife Office and request to have your license updated.

- [Purchase a License Online](#)
- [Update a Permanent License](#)
- [Find a License Agent](#)

## MENTORED HUNTING LICENSE

A mentored hunting license is available to a resident or nonresident who has not successfully completed a hunter safety course and has not held a hunting license in Vermont or any other state or province, so it may not be used on Youth Deer Weekend.

A person issued a mentored hunting license may hunt when:

- Accompanied by an adult 21 years of age or older who holds a valid Vermont hunting license. "Accompanied" means that the mentored hunter is in the direct control and supervision of the fully licensed adult hunter and is within 15 feet of the fully licensed adult hunter.
- A parent or legal guardian has also signed the license if the applicant is 15 years old or younger.

The fully licensed adult hunter may take only one person hunting.

A person holding a mentored hunting license is subject to the bag limit of the fully licensed adult accompanying the hunter. Game taken by a

mentored hunter goes towards the bag limit of the accompanying licensed hunter.

After tagging and reporting game, a person who holds a mentored hunting license may transport game he or she has taken without being accompanied by the licensed adult hunter.

There are limitations on a person who holds a mentored hunting license:

- A person who holds a mentored hunting license is not eligible to participate in youth turkey, deer, or waterfowl hunting weekends.
- A mentored hunting license is available for only two separate calendar years.

## HUNTING HOURS

Hunting hours are one half hour before sunrise to one half hour after sunset.

## TAGGING DEER

Deer must be tagged immediately when taken. The tag shall be placed on the carcass open to view and remain there until the carcass is cut up for consumption.

## OPTIONAL VERMONT BIG GAME TAG

Optional Vermont Big Game Tags are available free from license agents as durable alternatives to the paper tags on licenses.

Optional tags may be used to tag deer, bear, turkeys, or moose.

Record your CONSERVATION ID number (top left corner of your license) on the Optional Big Game Tag. A qualifying landowner may use the tag by writing "landowner" in the same space.



## REPORTING DEER

All successful hunters during Vermont's deer hunting seasons must, by law, report their deer within 48 hours to the VFWD.

A deer must be field dressed prior to reporting. A hunter must take a warden to the kill site of a deer if requested by a warden. No deer carcass shall be transported out of state without first being reported.

Hunters may use our online reporting system to report deer harvested during the **archery and muzzleloader seasons**.

**Deer harvested during the youth, novice, and 16-day regular November season must be reported in-person at a Big Game Reporting Station or to a State Game Warden.**

**Reporting Online:** Online reporting systems, which have been used successfully by many states, offers hunters a quick, easy, and convenient way to report their harvest while providing wildlife biologists with the data necessary for monitoring harvest trends and managing the white-tailed deer population. Hunters who prefer to report their deer in-person to a reporting station are welcome to continue doing so.

To [Submit Your Harvest Report](#), please have the following information readily available:

- Your Conservation ID # (*upper left-hand corner of your license or look it up [here](#)*)
- Your Tag Number (*if this is a landowner tag, enter "Landowner" into the form*)

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| ARCHERY TAG                  | John Smith<br>3006 Buck Hill Rd<br>Lowell, VT 05847 |
| VERMONT RESIDENT<br>06282285 | Date of kill: ___/___/20__<br>Time of kill: _____   |

- A photograph of the deer (*optional*) to include:
  - The head area of the deer to confirm the presence or absence of antlers and number of antler points. Photo should also include the filled-out tag attached to the deer.
  - **OR** Your face in the photo to connect the harvested deer to you if the tag is not readable.



Photo should include a headshot with the tag attached or the hunter's face if tag is not readable. Click image for more details.

- Location of kill – Town and Wildlife Management Unit | [WMU Map](#)
- Date and time of kill
- Sex the deer
- Deer's weight (*estimated weight is acceptable*)
- Number of legal antler points on each antler

Your harvest data are important to us and to the future of Vermont's white-tailed deer management.

- [Online Deer Harvest Reporting](#)
- [Big Game Reporting Stations](#)
- [Find a Vermont Game Warden](#)
- [Processing Your Deer Videos](#)
- [What to include in Your Deer Harvest Photo](#)

## TRANSPORTING DEER

A tagged deer may be transported only during the open season and for 20 days thereafter.

Deer may be legally transported only under these following conditions:

- By the person who shot the deer.

- When accompanied by the person who shot the deer (including moving the deer from kill-site to camp or motor vehicle).
- By a person who holds a mentored hunting license, unaccompanied by the fully licensed adult hunter.
- When transported by common carrier (for example, a shipping company) and tagged with the name of the co-signer and co-signee, name of station shipped from and its destination.

The appropriate deer tag must be securely attached to the deer in these circumstances.

When transporting parts of a deer, the parts or package must be marked with name and address of the person who killed the deer.

Deer do not need to be visible when transported.

## SALE OR PURCHASE OF GAME

**Big Game:** The only time it is legal to buy or sell big game or the meat of big game within the state is during the open season and for 20 days after the season ends. The meat of big game animals is not to be bought or sold to be transported out of the state. It is illegal to buy or sell anadromous Atlantic salmon taken in the Connecticut River Basin and/or to buy or sell wild turkey at any time.

Other than the meat mentioned above, a person may buy or sell at any time the head, hide, and hoofs of legally taken deer or moose and the head or hide of legally taken black bears. The sale of paws or internal organs of a black bear is prohibited.

## URINE LURES BANNED

Chronic wasting disease, or CWD, is 100% fatal to white-tailed deer and continues to spread in North America. It has now been found in most US states and 5 Canadian provinces.

**Why ban urine lures?** CWD is spread by deer urine and other bodily fluids. After infected fluid is deposited in soil, the prions that cause CWD can be

taken up by plants and continue to infect deer for many years. Because of this, Vermont was one of the first states to ban the use of natural deer urine lures by hunters. Currently, several states and Canadian provinces ban the use of these lures, and many additional states are considering similar bans.

Synthetic lures and food-scented lures pose no threat to the herd and are still permitted for use by hunters in Vermont.

Deer are able to contract CWD and spread the disease for more than a year before they demonstrate any symptoms of the disease. Therefore, facilities may be producing and selling deer urine lures from deer herds that show no symptoms of the disease but are actually infected with CWD. Even if most captive deer herds are actually “CWD-free”, urine lures from different sources are commonly mixed so all it would take is one infected herd to create a problem.

Once CWD is established in wild deer herds, no state has been able to control it despite considerable effort and expense. Slowing the spread of the disease requires a dramatic reduction of the local deer herd.

**What can you do?** The Fish & Wildlife Board and the VFWD feel that implementing strong prevention measures is the most effective way to combat this disease. You can help Vermont’s deer herd and follow the law by using synthetic lure alternatives.

- [Chronic Wasting Disease](#)
- [Q&A on Chronic Wasting Disease](#)

## BAITING DEER AND DEER LURES

It is illegal to hunt or take any wild animal by using bait during any deer hunting season, except that trappers may use bait in taking furbearers. Bait is defined as any animal, vegetable, fruit, or mineral matter placed with the intention of attracting wildlife. Artificial scents and lures are legal, provided they are not designed to be consumed by eating or licking. Deer lures containing any cervid urine, blood, gland oil, feces, or other bodily fluids, are illegal to use in Vermont.

It is illegal to take deer by using bait with the following exceptions:

- Incidental feeding of wildlife within active livestock operations;
- Standing crops planting and left standing as food plots for wildlife;
- Grain or other feed scattered or distributed solely as a result of normal agricultural, gardening, or soil stabilization, and logging practices; and
- Vegetation or food/seed naturally deposited.

## FEEDING DEER

It is illegal to feed wild deer at any time except:

- Under a license or permit issued by VFWD for scientific research, mitigation of wildlife damage or nuisance problems, or wildlife population reduction programs.
- By planting, cultivating or harvesting of crops directly associated with agricultural practices, including planted wildlife food plots.

It is also illegal to sell feed meant for deer per Vermont statute 6 V.S.A. §324(d). No person shall distribute a commercial feed product in the state that is labeled as bait or feed for white-tailed deer.

## SWIMMING DEER

It is illegal to take a deer that is swimming in any lake, pond, river, or other body of water.

## LIGHTS/LASER SIGHTS

It is illegal to intentionally throw or cast the rays of a spotlight, jack, or other artificial light on any highway, or any field, woodland, or forest, in order to spot, locate, take, or attempt to spot, locate, or take any wild animal.

**Laser sights** are illegal for hunting.



## MOTOR VEHICLES, ATVs, SNOWMOBILES, AND ROAD HUNTING

**State Lands:** Motor vehicles, including ATVs (all terrain vehicles), motorcycles or snowmobiles are not permitted on state lands, except on designated trails on which motor vehicles are explicitly authorized.

**Private Lands:** It is illegal to operate an ATV or snowmobile on any privately-owned land or body of private water unless the operator has written permission of the owner or is a member of a club which has landowner permission. It is illegal to obstruct private driveways, barways, or gateways with a motor vehicle. It is illegal to park or drive a motor vehicle of any kind on private land without permission.

**Hunting from Motor Vehicle:** It is illegal to take any wild animal by shooting with firearm or bow and arrow from any motor vehicle. Motor vehicles include cars, trucks, snowmobiles, ATVs, motorboats, airplanes, and any conveyance or trailer towed by these.

**Permanently Disabled Hunters:** A permanently disabled hunter with a proper permit may hunt from a stationary boat, or a motor vehicle that is at least 10 feet from the traveled portion of the road and when he or she has the landowner's permission to park. Shooting across the road is prohibited. Contact VTFWD at 802-828-1190.

**Transporting Firearms and Crossbows in Motor Vehicles:** A person shall not carry or possess while in or on a vehicle propelled by mechanical power or drawn by a vehicle propelled by mechanical power within the right-of-way of a public highway a rifle or shotgun containing a loaded cartridge or shell in the chamber, mechanism, or in a magazine or clip within a rifle or shotgun, or a muzzleloading rifle or muzzleloading shotgun that has been charged with powder and projectile and the ignition system of which has been enabled by having an affixed or attached percussion cap, primer, battery, or priming powder. Unless it is uncocked, a person shall not possess or transport a crossbow in or on a motor

vehicle, motorboat, airplane, snowmobile, ATV, or other motor-propelled vehicle.

**Road Hunting:** A person shall not take or attempt to take any wild animal by shooting a firearm, muzzleloader, bow and arrow, or crossbow while on or within 25 feet of the traveled portion of a public highway, except a public highway designated Class 4 on a town highway map. A person while on or within the traveled portion of a Class 4 public highway shall not take or attempt to take any wild animal by shooting a firearm, muzzleloader, bow and arrow, or crossbow. It is illegal to shoot a firearm, muzzleloader, bow and arrow, or crossbow over or across the traveled portion of a public highway. Violators are subject to a fine of up to \$1,000.

**Aerial Hunting Prohibitions:** It is unlawful for any person to take or attempt to take wild animals while a person is flying in an aircraft. Aircraft includes, but is not limited to, planes and helicopters.

It is unlawful for any person to take or attempt to take wild animals by use of an unmanned aerial vehicle or drone. Unmanned aerial vehicle includes but is not limited to drones. "Drone" means any device capable of flying in the air which is remotely, automatically or otherwise piloted without an occupant.

It is unlawful for any person to use an aerial vehicle, drone or unmanned aircraft to:

- Attempt to locate, surveil, or aid or assist in attempting to locate or surveil any wild animal for the purpose of taking or attempting to take a wild animal; or
- Communicate the location of any wild animal to any person on the ground for the purpose of taking or attempting to take a wild animal; or
- Drive, harass, or otherwise assist or aid in the taking or attempting to take a wild animal.
  - [Offroad Permit Application](#)
  - [Permanent Mobility Disability License Application](#)
  - [Rule Regarding Use of Drones](#)

## DOGS

**Deer and Moose:** Dogs may not be used in taking deer or moose. Dog owners are responsible for keeping their dogs restricted so they cannot take or harass deer or moose at any time of year. Dogs may be shot by wardens and certain other law officers when the dogs are caught harassing deer or moose, and the dog owner may be fined and have their licenses revoked.

**Leashed Tracking Dog to Recover Deer:** A hunter who believes he or she has legally killed or wounded a deer during hunting season may engage a person who has a “Leashed Tracking Dog Certificate” issued by the VFWD to track and recover the animal during the season or within 24 hours after the season ends. Except as otherwise permitted in bear hunting, no person may use a dog to track dead or wounded deer or bear.

- [Application for a Permit to Track Wounded Wildlife with a Leashed-Tracking Dog](#)
- [List of Leashed Tracking Dog Handlers](#)

## MACHINE GUNS AND AUTOLOADING RIFLES AND SUPPRESSORS

It is illegal while hunting in Vermont to use, carry, or have in your possession a machine gun of any kind or description or an autoloading rifle with a magazine capacity of over 6 cartridges, except a .22 caliber rifle using rimfire cartridges.

A person taking game with a gun may possess, carry, or use a gun suppressor in the act of taking game. Gun suppressor means any device for muffling or diminishing the report of a portable firearm, including any combination of parts, designed or redesigned, and intended for use in assembling or fabricating a gun suppressor, and any part intended only for use in such assembly or fabrication.

## HANDGUNS

Wherever a rifle may be used in hunting, a handgun is permitted.

## MUZZLELOADERS

Muzzleloading rifles, shotguns, and pistols may be used for hunting whenever modern firearms may be used. See muzzleloader deer season for more information.

## TREE STANDS AND GROUND BLINDS

**Private Land:** A person must have the landowner’s permission to build, erect, maintain, use or occupy a permanent or portable tree stand or ground blind for any purpose on any private land in Vermont. Anyone who builds, erects or maintains a tree stand or ground blind shall permanently mark the stand or blind with the owner’s name and address. Marking must be legible and placed so it can be read conveniently and easily. This does not apply to a landowner who builds, erects or maintains a tree stand or ground blind on his or her own land. It is illegal to use someone else’s tree stand or ground blind without landowner permission.

### State Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs):

Permanent tree stands and ground blinds are prohibited on state WMAs. Temporary tree stands and ground blinds are allowed without written permission from the department from the third Sunday in August through the third Saturday in December, May 1-31 (dates inclusive), or during any Youth Hunting Day or Youth Hunting Weekend. Blinds used during any other time (for wildlife viewing or photography) may be erected and used with prior written permission from the District Manager of the WMA.

Temporary blinds on state WMAs must be constructed according to the following requirements:

- No damage may be done to any living tree in erecting, maintaining, using or accessing the stand or blind except that:
  - Dead limbs, trees or shrubs may be removed as needed to erect and use the stand or blind.
  - No live limbs, trees or shrubs may be cut for any purpose except those one inch or less in

diameter at either ground level or from the main stem or branch of the tree where the stand or blind is located as appropriate (for guidance, a United States quarter is .9 inch in diameter).

- No nails, bolts, screws (including access steps), wire, chain or other material that penetrates through a living tree's bark into the wood below shall be used in erecting, attaching, maintaining or using any stand or blind.
- All tree stands or ground blinds used on WMAs must be clearly, permanently, and legibly marked with the owner's name and address. The marking must be placed in a manner that enables it to be read conveniently and easily.
- Tree stands and ground blinds that do not conform to this regulation are prohibited and may be confiscated and/or destroyed by the department. Building, erecting, maintaining, using or occupying a non-conforming tree stand or ground blind is prohibited. Construction of any tree stand or ground blind does not confer exclusive use of its location not the person who built it. Any person may use that location for purposes consistent with this rule.

**Tree Stand Safety Tips:** Hunters are using tree stands much more today than they did historically. Tree stands can be helpful in some hunting situations, but they also can be dangerous. Here are some tips to get the most out of your tree stand hunting experience:

- **Choose a live, straight tree,** and avoid ash that may be in decline due to emerald ash borer.
- **Buy smart.** Only use stands certified by the [Treestand Manufacturer's Association](#) (TMA).
- **Inspect them each time you use them.** Check your tree stand for wear and tear each time you go out into the woods.
- **Know the rules.** On state lands, it is illegal to place nails or other hardware into trees or build

permanent structures. On private lands, you must have landowner permission to erect a tree stand, cut or remove trees or other plants or to cut limbs. All stands, including ground blinds, must be marked with the owner's name and address.

- **Always wear a full-body safety harness, even for climbing.** Most falls occur going up and down the tree and getting in and out of the stand. Make sure your safety harness is in good condition – especially check the straps.
- **Don't go too high.** The higher you go, the vital zone on a deer decrease, while the likelihood of a serious injury increases.
- **Never carry firearms or bows up and down trees.** Always use a haul line to raise and lower all gear. Make sure your firearm is unloaded.
- **Familiarize yourself with your gear before you go.** The morning of opening day is a poor time to put your safety belt on for the first time.
- **Be careful with long-term placement.** Exposure can damage straps, ropes, and attachment cords. Also, the stand's stability can be compromised over time, as the tree grows.
- **Hunt smart. Hunt safe. Wear orange.**

📌 [Tree Stand Safety Tips](#)

## TREE STANDS AND CROSSBOWS

- Always cock the crossbow without a bolt on the ground before climbing into the stand.
- Once seated and secured, pull up your unloaded crossbow with a haul line.
- Do not place a bolt on the crossbow until you are safely secured in your stand.



## FLUORESCENT ORANGE

Hunter orange is not required by law in Vermont, but wearing it might save your life. Almost half of Vermont's hunting-related shootings might be prevented if hunters wear orange.

A New York study found that 94% of hunters involved in mistaken-for-game accidents were not wearing hunting orange. This is even more startling when you consider that 81% of New York hunters wear hunter orange.

Most states and Canadian provinces require it for hunting upland and big game animals.

Wearing at least a fluorescent orange hat and vest will help other hunters see you. It's your responsibility to follow the four basic rules of safe hunting:

1. Treat every gun as if it is loaded.
2. Point your gun in a safe direction.
3. Keep your finger off the trigger until you are ready to shoot.
4. Be sure of your target and beyond.

## CROSSBOW SAFETY

- Keep the string waxed and lubricate the rail periodically.
- Make sure your fingers are well away (below rail) from the path of the string and cables.
- Never dry-fire a crossbow.
- Make sure the limbs are free of obstructions before firing; be particularly careful if you are hunting from a ground blind.
- Never use a cocking device to uncock unless you have a model that is specifically designed to do so – most are not.
- To uncock, shoot a specially-designed unloading point or a field tip into soft ground; or shoot a field tip into a target.

- Practice often and avoid shots at game that are beyond your effective range – generally less than 40 yards.

## SAFELY FIELD DRESS YOUR HARVEST

Wildlife diseases are increasingly common in Vermont. These diseases can spread to humans – but much risk is preventable with some simple steps. To help control the spread of wildlife diseases, hunters and trappers should be especially careful to protect themselves when processing game. You can protect yourself from exposure to several diseases by following these steps:

- Do not shoot, handle, or consume any animal that is acting abnormally or appears sick.
- When field-dressing game, wear disposable gloves, start with a clean knife, and minimize the use of a bone saw to cut through the brain or spinal cord (backbone).
- If you do not have gloves, wash hands and arms thoroughly with soap and water after field dressing.
- Minimize contact with brain or spinal cord tissues, eyes, spleen, or lymph nodes while field dressing.
- Avoid consuming brain, spinal cord, eyes, spleen, tonsils, pancreas, and lymph nodes of harvested animals. Normal field dressing, coupled with boning out a carcass, will remove most, if not all, of these body parts. Cutting away all fatty tissue will remove remaining lymph nodes.
- Refrain from eating, drinking, and smoking while handling and field dressing game.
- Always wash hands and instruments thoroughly after field dressing and processing game meat.
- Disinfect knives, saws, and cutting table surfaces by soaking in a solution of 50% unscented household bleach and 50% water for an hour. Thoroughly rinse all utensils in water to remove the bleach. Afterward, allow them to air dry.
- Wear disposable gloves when processing and packaging the meat.

## ARCHERY WOUNDING RATES

Wounding is an unfortunate but unavoidable part of hunting. No matter how much a hunter practices or is selective about the shots they take, deflected arrows, jumped strings, buck fever, and other factors are eventually inevitable and largely out of their control.

### How can hunters minimize wounding?

- **Use newer gear.** Bowhunting equipment improvements have increased accuracy and precision.
- **Education helps hunters make better decisions.**
- **Hunting experience leads to better decision making in the woods.** Long-term research found hunters who harvested more deer had lower wounding rates.
- **Practice improves shooting proficiency and helps hunters understand their limits.** It is also important to practice with the bolts or arrows that you will hunt with, as different ones will fly differently.
- **Do not take long shots!** Research shows most shots beyond 30 yards will result in a miss or, worse yet, a wounded deer. Don't shoot, even if your bow or crossbow is accurate at longer distances and you've practiced those shots. The primary reason isn't accuracy – it's speed. The fastest crossbows on the market today fire a bolt at around 450 feet per second (fps). However, sound travels at 1,125 fps, and crossbows are loud. That means a deer will hear the shot before the bolt gets there. Thus, the likelihood of a deer "jumping the string" greatly increases beyond 30-40 yards.

## BOW AND ARROW OR CROSSBOW

Unless otherwise provided, any game which may be taken by shooting may be taken by the use of bow and arrow or crossbow. A crossbow may be used as a means of take by any person during any hunting season that permits the use of a bow and arrow – except migratory waterfowl.

All arrows, including crossbow arrows, must have an arrowhead of at least 7/8 of an inch wide and at least two cutting sides.

A crossbow may not be transported cocked in a motor vehicle.

Any person wishing to hunt **turkey, bear or deer** with a bow and arrow or crossbow must hold proof of having held an archery license or a certificate of satisfactory completion of a bowhunter education course from Vermont or another state or province in Canada.

🔊 [Hunter Education](#)

## RECOVERY OF ARCHERY DEER AFTER HOURS

Contact a licensed leashed dog tracker to pursue and recover a deer wounded with an arrow after the close of legal shooting time. In the alternative, a hunter must secure permission from the state game warden by calling the nearest state police office, giving the exact location and circumstances. Any recovered deer must be tagged, reported, and exhibited to the nearest game warden.

🔊 [Vermont Leashed Dog Trackers](#)  
🔊 [Contact a Game Warden](#)

## TIPS FOR MENTORS ON YOUTH DEER WEEKEND

A first deer hunt can mark the beginning of a lifelong passion for the outdoors and a commitment to wildlife conservation.

The VFWD offers these tips for the adult who is mentoring a young hunter:

- **Practice.** An adult's hunting rifle might not be appropriate for a young hunter. No matter what firearm is selected, make sure youth hunters practice handling and shooting.
- **Hunt Safe.** Hunting is one of the safest outdoor activities, and youth hunters are some of our safest hunters when accompanied by an alert mentor.

- **Hunt Smart.** Scouting is an essential and exciting ingredient to any successful hunt.
- **Wear Orange.** Make sure other hunters see you. Studies show that hunter orange is the safest color to wear while deer hunting, and deer do not see orange the same as we do.
- **Go Often.** Lifelong hunting participation is directly related to the amount of time spent hunting in youth, especially when these experiences occur in a family or mentor setting.
- **Respect the Intent.** The youth weekend hunt is for the youth, not adults. Legally, adults must leave their firearm at home, and landowner permission is required.
- **Have Fun!** Being with family and friends and generally having a good time is more important to youth hunters than bagging game. Don't push them, particularly if the weather is bad. Young hunters need positive reinforcement.

## HOW TO FIND A MENTOR

There are lots of ways to find a hunting mentor but remember: hunting mentors are people who know how to hunt. They are people – be respectful of their time and be open to their ideas.

**Attend a Learn to Hunt program** – The department hosts a seminar in the fall each year for deer season. The seminar is for new adult hunters and covers hunting tactics, game processing, and laws but also pairs new hunters with experienced hunting mentors. For more information about the LTH programs, email [Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov](mailto:Nicole.Meier@vermont.gov).

**Attend a Seminar** – When hunting seasons are coming up, consider attending a hunting seminar hosted by the department. Most seminars are conducted by volunteer hunter education instructors, and while they can teach you about hunting, you might also meet a mentor there.

**Join a Club** – Fish and game clubs have a rich history in Vermont, and they are a great place to practice shooting and meet other hunters.

- [Upcoming Seminars](#)
- [List of Fish and Game Clubs](#)

## HUNTER ACCESS VERMONT – Tips for Hunters – Being a Good Land User

Landowner permission is **not** required for hunting on private land in Vermont, except on land legally posted with signs prohibiting hunting, and also on all private land during the *Youth Hunting Weekends* for deer. A hunter shall show their license and must leave the land immediately on demand if requested by a landowner, whether the land is posted or not.

The VFWD encourages hunters to seek permission. The privilege of using private land is extended by general landowners, and most landowners allow hunting when asked.

Landowners who permit you to hunt on their land are doing you a favor and placing their trust in you. Here are some recommendations to prove their trust was not misplaced, help with your relationship with the landowner, and portray a positive image of hunting:

- Respect the landowner's property – use it only when and where the landowner approves.
- Understand clearly where you can and cannot drive or park your vehicle and abide by those restrictions.
- Leave your name, address, phone number and also make, model, and license number of your vehicle with the landowner or use the [Courtesy Permission Cards](#).
- If you have permission to return, find out if there are certain times or places that you should avoid. Always attempt to let the landowner know where you will be and when.
- Know the property boundaries and do not trespass on adjacent property.
- Try to keep the size of your hunting party small and always let the landowner know exactly who else will be hunting with you.

- Don't walk through unharvested crops or hunt near livestock or buildings.
- Leave gates as you find them. Cross fences in a manner that will not break or loosen wires or posts.
- Don't litter. Carry away litter left by others.
- Think before you shoot. Know your target and what is beyond it.
- Do not build or start fires at any time unless you have specific permission from the owner.
- It is illegal to place tree stands or build ground blinds without the landowner's permission. Do not cut, injure, or permanently mark trees with an axe, nails, or spikes.
- Observe all hunting and trapping rules and regulations.
- Respect fellow outdoorsmen, observing all safety precautions and the traditions of good sportsmanship.
- Hunt Safe! Accept full liability for your actions and persons while on the property.

**After the Hunt:** Remember that you are a guest on another person's property. Be sure to express your appreciation for the opportunity to hunt the land. The thoughtful hunter might also:

- Let landowners know when you have completed your hunt. Then they will know that you have left their property and will not worry about you being lost or stuck.
- Offer landowners a portion of your harvest off the land, such as a portion of venison once your game is cleaned or butchered.
- Follow up with a token of appreciation such as a gift certificate to a restaurant or perhaps a card with a hand-written note.

## WHERE CAN I HUNT IN VERMONT?

Vermont has more than 800,000 acres of federal and state public land open to hunting: **National Wildlife Refuges**, the **Green Mountain National Forest**, and all **state forests**. **State Parks** are open to hunting outside the operating season.

Perhaps the crown jewel of hunting in Vermont is the state's system of more than 100 **Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs)**. All WMAs are open to hunting, trapping, fishing, and other wildlife-related outdoor activities.

Information about shooting ranges is available on our [website](#).

- [Wildlife Management Areas](#)
- [Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks & Recreation](#)
- [Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge](#)
- [Silvio O. Conte National Fish & Wildlife Refuge](#)
- [Green Mountain National Forest](#)
- [Vermont Shooting Ranges](#)
- [Hammond Cove Shooting Range](#)
- [West Mountain Shooting Range](#)

## TIPS AND TECHNIQUES

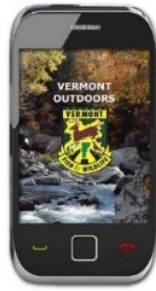
Finding a place to hunt is relatively easy, but hunters tend to congregate where deer are most numerous, typically on lowland farm country where posting is also common. However, the hunter who shows respect for the landowner and asks for permission to hunt can often find private land to hunt on.

**Looking for bigger bucks? Big buck can be found throughout Vermont.** Historically, the biggest bucks with the best racks were found in remote areas of the Green Mountains and Northeast Kingdom. However, the greatest numbers of deer are found in the lower elevations, and these areas now produce good numbers of mature bucks as well.

**Scout first.** Public or private, pre-season scouting is necessary. Because most of the state is heavily forested, deer are less likely to use any one trail as regularly as they do in more open country.

## VERMONT OUTDOORS – MOBILE APP

Vermont Outdoors, a mobile application, will connect you with department lands and fish and wildlife regulations. The app will help new and existing recreationalists find opportunities to hunt, fish, trap, or view wildlife on public lands and waters. Additionally, you will have easy access to fish and wildlife law digests, bait fish dealers, department news and current events, and reporting fish or wildlife violations.



The app can be downloaded at the Apple App Store for iPhones and Google Play for Android phones.

## TAKE THE LEAD AND GO NON-LEAD

VFWD encourages hunters to voluntarily use non-lead ammunition. The department knows finding any hunting ammunition can, at times, be challenging.

### Biting the Non-lead Bullet is Easy

- Non-fragmenting solid copper and copper alloy bullets are factory loaded by most manufacturers in most popular big game hunting calibers.
- Solid copper and copper alloy bullets offer consistent expansion and excellent weight retention and, as a result, deliver deep penetration.
- Less fragmentation means less meat loss.
- Non-lead bullets are longer. Experts recommend reducing bullet grain size by 15-20% for comparable performance to your current lead bullet.
- Highly frangible (brittle), non-lead small caliber bullets are available for both centerfire and rimfire cartridges.
- Required for waterfowl hunting for over 30 years, non-lead shotshells now cover everything from woodcock to wild turkey. This includes .410.

To learn more about switching to non-lead ammunition, and for tips to finding the right non-lead ammunition, visit: [www.nonleadpartnership.org](http://www.nonleadpartnership.org) and [www.huntingwithnonlead.org](http://www.huntingwithnonlead.org).

- [Choose Non-Lead Ammunition](#)

## VENISON FOR VERMONTERS

For years Vermont Game Wardens have coordinated the donation of venison to Vermonters in need. Today, the department's **Venison For Vermonters** program is making venison accessible to more Vermonters by coordinating the butchering and distribution of wild game meat for local food shelves and Vermonters in need.



You can help us feed our neighbors by donating today. 100% of your donation goes to covering the cost of butchering wild game meat.

An average-size Vermont deer will provide nutritious, delicious, local meat for 120 meals. So far, more than 3,000 pounds of wild meat has been donated to the program and distributed to food shelves across Vermont.

- [Venison For Vermonters](#)
- [Donate Today](#)
- [Interview with Wardens Serra and Whipple about the program](#)

## VERMONT HABITAT STAMP

Monies raised from sales of Vermont Habitat Stamps go to the Species and Habitat Conservation Fund, which is used to purchase and maintain Wildlife Management Areas.

### Projects supported by the Fund include:

- Purchase lands for Wildlife Management Areas.
- Improve public access to land for fish and wildlife-based activities such as birdwatching, hunting, fishing, enjoying wildlife or simply connecting with nature.
- Protect and improve wetlands.



- Protect and restore state-owned riparian stream banks.
- Protect and enhance deer wintering areas.
- Implement wildlife habitat enhancement for turkeys, bears, deer, songbirds, bats, moose, aquatic organisms, and all of Vermont’s native wildlife.
- Use our [online donation form](#).

**Hunting and Fishing License Purchase:** Donate when purchasing a hunting or fishing license by simply including your contribution when applying.

*When you purchase a Vermont Habitat Stamp, you help improve wildlife habitat and open land for outdoor recreation.*



**Please Note:** A stamp is not required to hunt fish or trap, nor do you have to buy a sporting license to donate for a stamp.

- [Online Donation Form](#)
- [2023 Vermont Habitat Stamp Annual Report](#)

## HUNT, POST, SHARE, LIKE



VFWD suggests the following tips to accurately reflect a positive hunting experience in social media.

- Display respect for the animal in its life and in its death. Ask yourself if your non-hunting friends would view the photo as respectful of this animal’s life.
- Make sure the animal looks its best. Place the tongue back in mouth and try to minimize blood in the photo to instead focus on the beauty of the animal. Try to take a photo of a successful hunt in the animal’s natural habitat. Blue sky, forest, and mountains place hunting in the context of its natural surroundings.

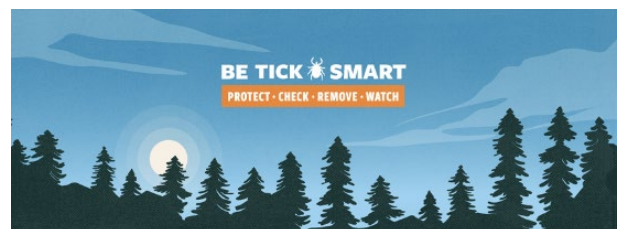
- Don’t just post “grab and grin” photos after a successful hunt. Show all the aspects of the hunt to give people a more complete picture of what hunting means to you. Post photos of a silent snowy forest or quality time spent outdoors with friends and family.
- Include posts from after the hunt too. A photo of you enjoying a plate of tasty venison with friends and family will help people make the connection that wild meat is a healthy, local, sustainable food source.
- If you see friends posting unethical behavior, don’t be afraid to speak up. Please forward any posts that include illegal activity to [ANR.FWInformation@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.FWInformation@vermont.gov) so our wardens can look into it.

If done properly, social media can be a great opportunity to show non-hunters why you are passionate about hunting and to inspire conservation and spark interest.

## HUNTERS, TICKS AND LYME DISEASE

Lyme disease has started to become more prevalent in Vermont during the last 10 years. Ticks that carry Lyme disease are still active in the fall in Vermont so hunters that spend time in tall grass, weed, and brush, along with successful hunters handling a deer, should follow a few simple tick-repelling precautions.

Treat your clothing and gear with permethrin before you hunt, making sure to follow the product instructions. Tuck your pants into your socks or boots to keep ticks from crawling up your legs. After returning from the hunt, check all over your body for ticks including your hair, and shower immediately.



Successful hunters handling a deer should remain vigilant for ticks even after they've returned from the field. Place a pan of soapy water under a hanging deer to kill any ticks that fall off the deer.

- 🦋 [Be Tick Smart](#)
- 🦋 [Prevent Tick Bites & Tick Bite Illnesses](#)



## REMINDER IF YOU HARVEST A BEAR

All licensed hunters are potential bear hunters during the late bear season as a Late Season bear tag is provided with every general hunting license sold. **If you harvest a bear, please be aware of the mandatory tooth collection and refer to the [2024 Black Bear Season Guide](#) for more information.**



- 🦋 [More on Black Bear Hunting](#)
- 🦋 [Avoid Shooting Sows with Cubs](#)

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|--|--|
|  | <b>VERMONT FISH &amp; WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT</b><br>1 National Life Drive, Davis 2<br>Montpelier, VT 05620-3702<br>802.828.1000<br><a href="http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com">www.vtfishandwildlife.com</a> |
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*Last Updated: 6/11/2024*

## VENISON RECIPES

### [Vermont Wild Kitchen](#)

- 🦋 [Venison Mac n Cheese Bubble and Squeak](#)
- 🦋 [Venison osso buco, warriors of the rainbow grits, fiddlehead gremolata](#)



Below are links to venison recipes from other state wildlife agencies:

- 🦋 [Alaska Department of Fish and Game](#)
- 🦋 [Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife](#)
- 🦋 [Indiana Department of Fish & Wildlife](#)
- 🦋 [Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources](#)
- 🦋 [Missouri Department of Conservation](#)
- 🦋 [New Jersey Division of Fish & Wildlife](#)
- 🦋 [North Dakota Game and Fish](#)
- 🦋 [Ohio Department of Natural Resources](#)
- 🦋 [Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation](#)
- 🦋 [Pennsylvania Game Commission](#)
- 🦋 [Rhode Island Fish and Wildlife](#)
- 🦋 [Texas Parks & Wildlife](#)
- 🦋 [Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources](#)
- 🦋 [West Virginia Department of Natural Resources](#)