2020 DEER SEASONS

ARCHERY
October 1-November 13 & November 30-December 15, 2020 (closed during regular November season)
- One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state not to exceed the one buck annual limit.
- Antlerless deer may be taken anywhere in the state, not to exceed the annual limit.
- A crossbow may be used by anyone.

YOUTH DEER WEEKEND
October 24-25, 2020
- One deer of either sex, no antler restriction.

NOVICE WEEKEND
October 24-25, 2020
- 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.

MUZZLELOADER ANTLERLESS
October 29-November 1, 2020
- Muzzleloader license and antlerless permit required.
- Permit may be used during this season or during the regular muzzleloader deer season.

NOVEMBER RIFLE
November 14-29, 2020
- One legal buck may be taken anywhere in the state not to exceed the one buck annual limit.

MUZZLELOADER
December 5-13, 2020
- 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 antlerless permit.

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.

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.
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, the antler restriction will remain in effect in some WMUs but be removed 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, relatively few bucks currently survive beyond two years old and the antler restriction will remain in effect. 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 rifle season hunter effort survey.** This survey is mailed to 10,000 licensed hunters each year and is available to all hunters on the Fish and Wildlife website. 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 rifle 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 rifle season buck.** We are asking all successful rifle season hunters 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.

LICENSE INFORMATION

If you intend to hunt, fish, or trap in 2020, 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 on-line at our website. If you are unable to go on-line, you may go to any authorized license agent or Fish & Wildlife Office and request to have your license updated.
ARCHERY SEASON (October 1-November 13 and November 30-December 15, 2020)

Archery season has been extended; however, the season is closed during the regular rifle 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.

CROSSBOWS

A crossbow may be used as a means of take by any person during any hunting season that permits the use of bow and arrow.

Unless otherwise provided, any game which may be taken by shooting may be taken by use of bow and arrow or crossbow.

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.

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.

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.

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**

**YOUTH DEER WEEKEND (October 24-25, 2020)**

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courtesy Permission</th>
<th>More information on Youth Hunting</th>
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**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 Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department 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.

**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 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.

**NOVICE WEEKEND (October 24-25, 2020)**

Novice: A person who purchased their first hunting license less than 12 months prior to this season and is 16 years of age or older.

To participate in the novice season, a qualified person must have a valid Vermont hunting license 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:** The novice hunter may take one deer of either sex on novice deer weekend, and the antler restriction that applies in other deer seasons does not apply during novice deer weekend. The amount of fine will be doubled for a violation on Novice Deer Hunting Weekend, and the fine shall be assessed against the licensed adult who has the novice hunter in his or her charge.

**MUZZLELOADER ANTLERLESS DEER SEASON**

A muzzleloader antlerless deer season will occur for four consecutive days beginning on the Thursday 16 days prior the opening of the regular November rifle season (October 29-November 1, 2020). 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.
**NOVEMBER RIFLE SEASON (November 14-29, 2020)**

**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.

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**MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASON (December 5-13, 2020)**

**2020 Muzzleloader Antlerless Permit Allocation**

**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 taken an antlerless deer within the authorized WMU.

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**DEFINITION OF MUZZLELOADING 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 AMMUNITION FOR MUZZLELOADERS:** Black powder or other suitable non-smokeless propellant, and a single ball or bullet.

**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 who purchases a muzzleloader deer license shall not carry, while deer hunting during the muzzleloader deer season, any firearms other than one single-barreled muzzleloading firearm.

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**NATURAL DEER FLUID LURES BANNED**

Chronic wasting disease, or CWD, spreads quickly within deer herds, particularly among adult bucks, and causes infected individuals to lose body weight and eventually die. It is 100% fatal to white-tailed deer and is currently found in 25 states and two Canadian provinces.

**Why ban urine lures?** CWD is spread by deer urine and other bodily fluids. After infected fluid is deposited in soil, it can remain infectious for decades. Because of this, Vermont was one of the first states to ban the use of natural deer urine lures by hunters. Currently, 10 states and 2 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 up to a year before they demonstrate any symptoms, infecting other deer and creating a cycle of spread.

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*Natural Deer Fluid Lures Banned*
symptoms of the disease. Deer can only be tested for CWD after they die. 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. Destroy existing urine lures. It is not possible to track and recall bottles of lure that have been sold from an infected facility, so hunters would unknowingly continue to use urine that likely contains CWD prions and risk spreading the disease. 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. In most cases, states try to slow the spread of the disease through a dramatic depopulation of the local deer herd.

What can you do? The Fish & Wildlife Board and the Fish & Wildlife Department felt that implementing strong preventative measures was the only tool available to combat this disease. You can help Vermont’s deer herd and follow the law by using synthetic lure alternatives.

### ANNUAL LIMIT

A person shall not take more than four deer in a calendar year, only one of which may be a legal buck. Youth and novice hunters shall be allowed to take two legal bucks, provided that one is taken during the youth or novice season, not to exceed the annual limit of four deer.

### 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.

The existing paper tag that comes with a license may also be used. Optional Big Game Tags may only be used by a person who has purchased the appropriate license and tag for the species they are hunting.

### REPORTING DEER

A person taking deer shall within 48 hours report the taking and exhibit the carcass to the nearest game warden, official Fish & Wildlife Department Reporting Station, or to a person designated by the commissioner to receive the reports.

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.

### BIOLOGICAL INFORMATION

Deer hunters can contribute valuable information for the management of Vermont’s deer herd by 1) completing the annual rifle season hunter effort surveys should they receive one in the mail, 2) reporting their deer at select biological check stations during the youth and rifle weekend, and 3) collecting a tooth from their deer during rifle season. This will enable biologists to record key information.
such as age, antler characteristics, and health of the harvested deer.

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<th>Tooth Collection Project</th>
<th>Tooth Removal Video</th>
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**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 cosigner and consignee, name of the 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, paws, and internal organs of a legally taken black bear.

**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 planted 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 Fish & Wildlife 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.

**SWIMMING DEER**

It is illegal to take a deer that is swimming in any lake, pond, river, or other body of water.
SPIKE YEARLINGS PROTECTED
Deer with spike antlers may not be taken except during Youth Deer Hunting Weekend and only if allowed annually by the Fish & Wildlife Board.

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, or a gun suppressor.

It is illegal to carry, possess, or use a gun suppressor. “Gun suppressor” means any device for silencing, 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.

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: Snowmobiles may only be operated on designated trails in state wildlife management areas, state parks or state forests. ATV use is prohibited on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs).

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 Fish & Wildlife at 802-828-1000.

TRANSPORTING FIREARMS & 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 craft of any vehicle drawn by a 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.

**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 Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department to track and recover the animal during the season or within 24 hours after the season ends.

- **Application for a Permit to Track Wounded Wildlife with a Leashed-Tracking Dog**
- **List of Leashed Tracking Dog Handlers**

**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:

- **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.
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 wildlife management areas 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.
- Buy smart. Only use stands certified by the Treestand Manufacturer’s Association (TMA).
- Inspect your tree stand each time you use it.
- 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.
- Don’t go too high. The higher you go, the smaller the vital zone on a deer becomes, 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, crossbow cocked but unloaded, and be sure broadheads are transported in a hard case.
- Familiarize yourself with your gear before you go. The morning of opening day is 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.

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 hunter orange.

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

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

Wearing at least a florescent orange hat and vest will help other hunters see you. It’s also 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.

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 99 Wildlife Management Areas, or WMAs. All WMAs are open to hunting, trapping, fishing and other wildlife related outdoor activities.

Information about shooting ranges is available on our website.

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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 Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department encourages hunters to seek permission. The privilege of using private land is extended by generous 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.

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.

Vermont Habitat Stamp Online Donation Form

HUNT, POST, SHARE, LIKE

Vermont Fish & Wildlife 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 the Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s Facebook page 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 cause Lyme disease are still active in the fall in Vermont so hunters that spend time in tall grass, weeds, 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.

Learn More About Lyme Disease

Fact Sheet on Preventing Ticks Among Hunters

Lyme Disease in Vermont

Northeast Wildlife Disease Cooperative Fact Sheet

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