



**By Jan Schultz**

***The Imperial Republican***

Hunter success in this area is running ahead of last year based on the first few days of Nebraska's firearm deer season.

Ron Schoenberger, who operates Chase County's deer check-in station at Laker's in Enders, said late Tuesday afternoon 277 deer had already been checked in there.

That compares to 257 at this point of the 2008 season.

First day comparisons also show a better year in 2009, with 115 hunters bagging their animal on the season's opener on Saturday. Last year, 90 hunters checked in their deer the first day.

Schoenberger said he's not sure why the success rate is higher, but has noticed one thing—about 95 percent of the deer checked in so far are mule deer.

That's a flip-flop from the norm in this area. Most often, whitetail deer are what area hunters are most successful in bagging, Schoenberger said.

There's still a lot of corn out in the field, due to a wet October that caused wet fields. Also, the crop hadn't dried down to acceptable levels as soon as farmers would have liked.

Since whitetails like to "hang out" more around the corn, and mule deer frequent the pastures and areas with sagebrush, that could be a big reason for the higher mule deer numbers, Schoenberger believes.

"I'm just not really sure," he said.

Whatever the reason, hunters are out and about now, and have until this Sunday, Nov. 22, to bag their deer during the firearm season.

Deer must be checked in by noon on Monday, Nov. 23.

Game & Parks Commission officers were on hand again on opening day at Laker's to take samples for Chronic Wasting Disease. Sixty-five samples were taken on Saturday, Schoenberger said.

The officer also checked for lice in mule deer, measured spreads and aged some of the deer checked in there.

During last year's nine-day season, a total of 374 deer were checked in at Enders, which marked an increase over the 2007 numbers, as well.

Once the firearm season closes, archery deer season will reopen in the state, and remains open until the end of the year.

So far, 17 archers have checked in their deer at Laker's.