



By Diane Stamm

The Wauneta Breeze

Hunters are gearing up for the start of firearm and statewide buck season which begins Saturday, Nov. 16, and runs until Sunday, Nov. 24.

Game warden Dirk Greene says the outlook is “pretty good” for this year’s season, with mule deer outnumbering whitetail.

Hunters should have more success with harvest nearing completion.

Greene said there are quite a few options available for deer hunters.

In the Frenchman Unit, the 1,500 Mule Deer Conservation Area (MDCA) permits sold out quickly. MDCA permit holders may harvest one of any deer, except antlerless mule deer, and one antlerless whitetail.

Sixteen hundred whitetail permits were available. As of Tuesday, 138 permits were left. Permit holders may harvest one white tail and one antlerless whitetail deer.

For Season Choice Antlerless (SCA) permit holders, each permit allows for the harvest of two antlerless whitetails. Nine hundred and ninety-seven permits remain. Enders, Medicine Creek, Red Willow and Swanson SRA/WMA are closed to the use of SCA permits.

Hunters can visit outdoornebraska.ne.gov/hunting/guides/biggame/deer/BGdeer_permitinfo.asp for permit availability, info and quotas.

Muzzleloader season runs Dec. 1-31, but Greene reminds hunters that they can’t hunt mule deer in the Frenchman Unit with muzzleloaders. Archery season runs until Dec. 31. Both still have permits remaining.

After bagging their deer, hunters may use these local check-in stations:

—Enders: Laker’s (308) 882-4011

—Benkelman: Brad Wiese 822 C St. (308) 423-2911

—Hayes Center: Tom Dow 2 W 2 N Hayes Center (308) 286-3453

—McCook: Red Willow County Sheriff 502 Norris Ave. (308) 345-1850

—Trenton: Hitchcock County Sheriff Courthouse (308) 334-5444

2012

In the Frenchman Unit, 1,666 mule deer and 1,575 whitetail deer were harvested in 2012. Two hundred fifty-one antlerless mule deer and 1,703 antlerless whitetail were also killed.

Across the state, last year’s whitetail buck harvest showed the effects of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD), going down 30 percent.

Over the past three years, mule buck harvest has dropped 20 percent. The Game and Parks Commission believes this is due to brain worm mortality.

The Commission also states the 2012 harvest was the eighth highest on record for mule and whitetail deer combined and the number of older bucks is high.

The Frenchman Unit was one of the least impacted by EHD, according to Greene, but the Game and Parks Commission says EHD killed about a third of the whitetail population across the state in 2012. The Frenchman Unit, stating its losses to be four percent, was the only unit reporting less than a 17 percent loss.

New in 2013

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission has made changes to policies in 2013.

While there were 3,900 fewer November firearm permits and 6,700 less SCA permits, 400 antlerless-only permits with antlerless-only whitetail bonus tags were added to the Frenchman Unit.

The closings of Enders, Medicine Creek, Red Willow and Swanson SRA/WMAs to the use of Season Choice Antlerless permits is also new this year.

Boundaries have been expanded for Season Choice Area Frenchman West.

Rules, Regulations

- —All big game hunters in Nebraska are required to have a species-specific permit for deer, antelope, elk or mountain (bighorn) sheep.

—Except for residents younger than age 16 and residents who hold veteran or 69 or older senior permits, all big game hunters also are required to have a Nebraska Habitat Stamp.

- —A Nebraska hunt permit is not required for big game. A big game permit is valid only for the species-specific season, weapon and unit or area for which it is issued and may not be exchanged for another permit. Permits are not transferable or refundable.

—The minimum age to hunt with a deer permit is 10 years. Youth age 10-15 may hunt with a youth deer permit. Youth may apply for a draw unit permit at age 9 provided they are age 10 by the start of the season. Youth age 16 may hunt on youth deer permits provided they are age 15 when they apply and provided they are age 15 on Sept. 15 (start of the season) of the calendar year.

— No one may have more than two permits that allow the harvest of a buck.