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## MDC Reports 68,312 Deer Harvested During Firearms Opening Weekend, 20,000 Less than 2023 Season

NOVEMBER 18TH 2024 BY DEE LOFLIN

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### **MDC reports 68,312 deer harvested during firearms opening weekend**

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Preliminary data from the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) shows deer hunters in Missouri harvested 68,312 deer during opening weekend of the November portion of firearms deer season Nov. 16 and 17. Of the 68,312 deer harvested, 42,283 were antlered bucks, 5,105 were button bucks, and 20,924 were does.

Top harvest counties for opening weekend were Franklin with 1,627 deer harvested, Texas with 1,305, and Pike with 1,161.

Last year, hunters checked 90,253 deer during opening weekend of the November portion of firearms deer season.

According to MDC Cervid Program Supervisor Jason Isabelle, the drop in harvest this year was due to a combination of factors.

“The calendar shift this year put the November portion a week later than last year, which results in lower deer harvest,” said Isabelle. “The peak of the rut in Missouri occurs around Nov. 10. When the calendar shifts, it puts the opener about a week past peak rut when deer movement isn’t as high as it is earlier in the month.”

Another factor that Isabelle believes significantly affected this year's harvest total is an abundant acorn crop.

"Throughout much of Missouri, there are a lot of acorns in the woods this year," said Isabelle. "When that happens, deer don't need to move as much to find food and they frequent fields and other open areas less often, making them less visible to hunters."

Isabelle noted that the counties with the largest decline in harvest were in the more heavily forested portions of the state where acorn abundance has a more significant effect on deer movement.

Warm temperatures were another factor that contributed to this year's lower opening weekend harvest total according to Isabelle.

"Although the warm temperatures this weekend made it comfortable for hunters to be in the woods, it likely had an adverse effect on deer movement," said Isabelle.

Isabelle noted that the unseasonably mild temperatures probably also affected the desire of some hunters to harvest deer given the necessity for rapid processing.

"Fortunately, there are cooler temperatures in the forecast for the latter half of the November portion, which should result in better hunting conditions," said Isabelle.

Pictured above: Avery Hart killed a 6 pointer with her grandpa age 8 during the youth portion of the 2024 season.

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