



EarthWatch

Dhode Island



Topic: What Hunters and Management Area Users Need to Know to Stay Safe during Hunting Season

Date: Friday, December 4, 2009

Location: Arcadia Deer Check Station – Rt 165 in Exeter

Background:

With the shotgun deer hunting season opening on Saturday, December 5, the Department of Environmental Management is focusing its efforts on informing hunters about what steps they need to follow to ensure a safe and enjoyable hunt. Deer hunting hours remain one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Hunters should check DEM regulations for specific regulations as to where hunting is allowed, and should also check with local authorities for additional hunting restrictions. For instance, in DEM's Newport County management areas, only archery hunting is permitted in Simmons Mill, and no Sunday hunting or firearm deer hunting is permitted in Sapowet Management Area; however, the Eight Rod Farm Management Area in Tiverton is open for shotgun hunting.

All deer hunters are required to obtain written permission annually for all deer hunting on private lands. DEM has developed a courtesy card, available on the DEM website, for hunters and landowners to sign which gives the dates for permissions, and contains *A Hunter's Pledge* regarding principles of conduct.

Shotgun Deer Hunting Seasons:

The shotgun season for deer on the mainland begins on Saturday, December 5 and continues through December 13. Hunters can utilize both state land management areas and private lands during that period. From December 14 through December 20, shotgun season continues on private lands only for taking either-sex deer. Antlerless deer only may be taken on private lands during the late season, which runs from December 26 to January 2.

The season for shotgun deer hunting on Block Island will be open on select weekdays through February 26th, as published in the state's *2009-2010 Hunting and Trapping Abstract*. Hunters should call the New Shoreham Police Department at 466-3220 for check station information.

The shotgun season for taking either sex deer on private land, as well as antlerless deer on Jamestown and Aquidneck Island will be open from December 5 through December 20, and continues for antlerless deer on private land from December 26 to January 2.

Fluorescent Orange Safety Requirements:

Solid daylight fluorescent orange safety clothing is required during the hunting season statewide. Hunters are required to wear 500 square inches of fluorescent orange during the shotgun season.

Throughout all shotgun deer seasons, all other users of state management areas also must wear at least 500 square inches of solid, daylight fluorescent orange material. For all hunters and management area users, the orange clothing should include a hat and vest worn above the waist and visible in all directions. Thereafter, the requirement drops to 200 square inches through the end of February, and during the spring turkey hunting season.

A new regulatory change enacted this year exempts archers from wearing hunter orange in areas of the state that are limited to hunting by archery only.

Hunting Licenses Required:

Hunting licenses, pheasant permits, and abstracts that summarize the hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits by species, are available at various license vendors throughout the state (most city and town clerks and most sporting goods stores) and at DEM's Licensing Office in Providence. The fee for a resident hunting license is \$18. All money collected through licensing fees goes into a special restricted account used specifically to fund the state's wildlife restoration program. These funds benefit both game and non-game species.

Junior hunting licenses are issued to individuals 12-14 years old who have successfully completed the safety course. These individuals may hunt under the immediate supervision of a qualified licensed adult 21 years of age or older. An individual may hunt independently at 15 years of age.

Residents 65 years and older may obtain a free permanent hunting license from any city or town clerk or from DEM's Licensing Office.

Firearm Safety Requirements:

Persons applying for a hunting license or an archery permit for the first time must complete a course in safe hunting practices and handling and use of firearms or archery practices, and must obtain a Certificate of Competency in order to obtain a RI hunting license. If an individual was granted a RI hunting license in a prior year, or if an individual can produce a hunter education card issued by RI or under an equivalent program of hunter education adopted by another state, they are excused from the course. Also, individuals who are presently serving or have been honorably discharged from the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard are not required to take the course.

A list of hunter safety instructors, dates, and locations of classes is available from DEM's Hunter Safety Office (789-3094) and online on DEM's website, www.dem.ri.gov. The courses, and all materials, are provided free of charge.

Individuals should educate themselves regarding the top health and safety concerns of hunters. These include: hypothermia, rabies, Lyme disease, chronic wasting disease (CWD) and avian influenza. Important precautionary information and procedures on these topics may be found in the 2009-2010 Rhode Island Hunting and Trapping Abstract.

Surplus Game May be Donated to Food Pantries:

Hunters can donate their surplus game, properly processed, packaged, and refrigerated, to a number of local food kitchens through the [Hunters and Fishermen for the Hungry](#) program,

coordinated by DEM's Division of Fish and Wildlife in cooperation with the Rhode Island Food Bank. The Division maintains a list of locations, updated regularly, where fish and game may be donated, and has also prepared a booklet with guidelines on handling game and fish for donations, as well as a collection of [game and fish recipes](#) for the food kitchens. All of this information is available on [DEM's website, www.dem.ri.gov](#). An information packet is also available by calling the Division at 789-0281.

Interview:

DEM Environmental Police Officer and Hunting Safety Instructor Michael DiPietro talked about fluorescent orange requirements, handling firearms, provide a review of practices that are prohibited during hunting; and demonstrate safe firearm handling techniques: 2-hand carry (most stable position); offered safety tips including be aware of where muzzle is pointed at all times (down/straight up); keep finger out of trigger until you shoot; demonstrated loading and unloading of firearm; showed how to use a safety harness. The officer also demonstrated fluorescent orange requirements – a hat for 200 square inches; and a hat and vest combo for 500 square inches.

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF FIREARMS SAFETY

1. Treat every firearm with the same respect due a loaded firearm
2. Control the direction of your firearm's muzzle. Carry your firearm safely, keeping the safety on until ready to shoot. Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.
3. Identify your target and what's beyond it. Know the identifying features of the game you hunt.
4. Be sure the barrel and action are clear of obstructions and that you have only ammunition of the proper size for the firearm you are carrying.
5. Unload firearms when not in use. Leave the actions open. Firearms should be carried unloaded when traveling to and from shooting areas.
6. Never point a firearm at anything you do not want to shoot. Avoid all horseplay with a firearm.
7. Never climb a fence or tree, or jump a ditch or log, with a loaded firearm. Never pull a firearm toward you by the muzzle.
8. Never shoot a bullet at a flat, hard surface or water. During target practice, be sure your backstop is adequate.
9. Store firearms and ammunition separately beyond the reach of children and careless adults.
10. Avoid alcoholic beverages or other mood-altering drugs before or while shooting.