

2008 Rhode Island White-Tailed Deer Status Report

Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Division of Fish & Wildlife
West Kingston, RI 02892

Report compiled by Susannah Wittwer, Seasonal Wildlife Biologist;
and Brian Tefft, Principal Wildlife Biologist.



Harvest Summary



The total Rhode Island 2008-09 harvest was 2945 deer. Mainland hunters (1,767) harvested a total of 2,617 deer with archery, muzzleloader and shotgun permits. Most hunters (1,247) took only one deer (70.6%), with 340 hunters taking two deer, 111 taking three deer, and the remaining 68 hunters taking from four to nine deer. Hunters on Block Island took 181 deer during archery and shotgun seasons. Prudence Island bowhunters took 82 deer. A total of 65 deer were harvested from Conanicut and Aquidneck Islands. Paraplegic hunters took 8 deer.

Overall, 16% of mainland hunters were successful. Mainland archery hunters had a success rate of 14%, mainland muzzleloader hunters had a success rate of 20%, and mainland shotgun hunters had a success rate of 12%. Block Island hunters had a 77% success rate, Conanicut and Aquidneck Island hunters had a 17% success rate, and Prudence Island hunters had a 32% success rate. Opportunities to hunt and harvest deer in Rhode Island continue to be excellent.

Rhode Island sportsmen submitted 217 chronic wasting disease (CWD) samples during the 2008-2009 hunting season. No evidence of CWD was identified. Plans are to continue scanning deer for CWD during the 2009-2010 season.

Year	ARCHERY		MUZZLELOADER		SHOTGUN	
	Permits	Harvested	Permits	Harvested	Permits	Harvested
1985	852	112	639	24	3193	120
1986	895	126	675	63	3354	239
1987	1093	179	725	56	2567	196
1988	1627	125	1709	105	4631	218
1989	1722	169	2242	189	4571	280
1990	2089	238	3888	390	5602	311
1991	2769	291	3796	474	5362	376
1992	4088	417	4598	663	7754	382
1993	3669	378	5144	625	6520	313
1994	3951	355	5487	658	6857	383
1995	4426	415	5680	743	7130	603
1996	4110	474	5973	1114	7901	575
1997	4058	299	7095	1044	7595	697
1998	3578	310	7863	771	6205	451
1999	3750	389	7290	1063	6999	591
2000	3868	472	7610	1107	6468	770
2001	4371	499	7769	1178	7338	572
2002	4772	525	7943	915	6249	591
2003	4612	737	7241	944	5362	563
2004	5311	783	6998	1173	5642	727
2005	5365	638	6894	1204	5688	833
2006	4935	519	7099	1211	6309	585
2007	4713	515	7279	1378	6015	693
2008	4644	724	7225	1413	5904	800

Mainland Harvest

We monitor both antler beams and body weight each year both to determine trends and to measure of herd health. The annual health of the herd can be assessed using average weights and antler beam diameters of the yearlings. High average weight and beam diameters indicate a healthy habitat with abundant food and nutrition. Beams and weights displaying a downward trend indicate increased numbers or reduced quality of habitat.

This hunting season, hunters took more does than bucks—with the exception of muzzleloader season—as shown by the 2008 season breakdown. Deer populations have the potential for rapid growth. Under normal circumstances, females two years or older produce twins annually, while yearling does typically produce single fawns. The Division of Fish & Wildlife has made improvements by instituting antlerless incentives to keep herd numbers in balance with available habitat. Controlling herd growth to keep population levels in balance with what the land can support and humans can tolerate is a primary goal of the management program. The primary method of maintaining population control is by removing antlerless

Mainland Harvest Summary

	Archery	Muzzleloader	Shotgun
Males	278	839	276
Females	296	547	367

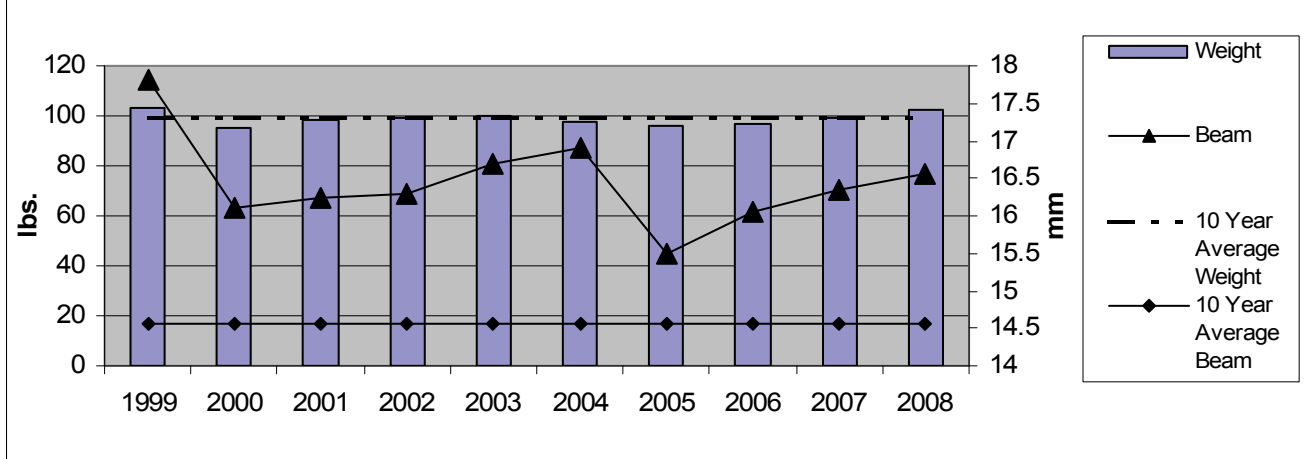
Largest Deer Taken (Dressed Weights)

	Female/Location	Male/Pts/Location
Archery	170/Exeter	253/11/Exeter
Muzzle	160/Charlestown	230/11/Scituate
Shotgun	170/Charlestown	204/8/Smithfield

Average Dressed Weights

	Male (lbs.)	Female (lbs.)
Fawn	63.7	59.6
Yearling	102.80	88.0
Adult	147.0	112.3

Fig. 1 Mainland Yearling Male Antler Weights & Beams



Rhode Island Big Bucks Club

Archery typical— Steve Muddiman
Score 157 7/8"
8 points, taken 10/21/08 in
Washington County



Archery typical— Pat Murray
Score 153 5/8"
11 points, taken on 11/18/08 in
Providence County



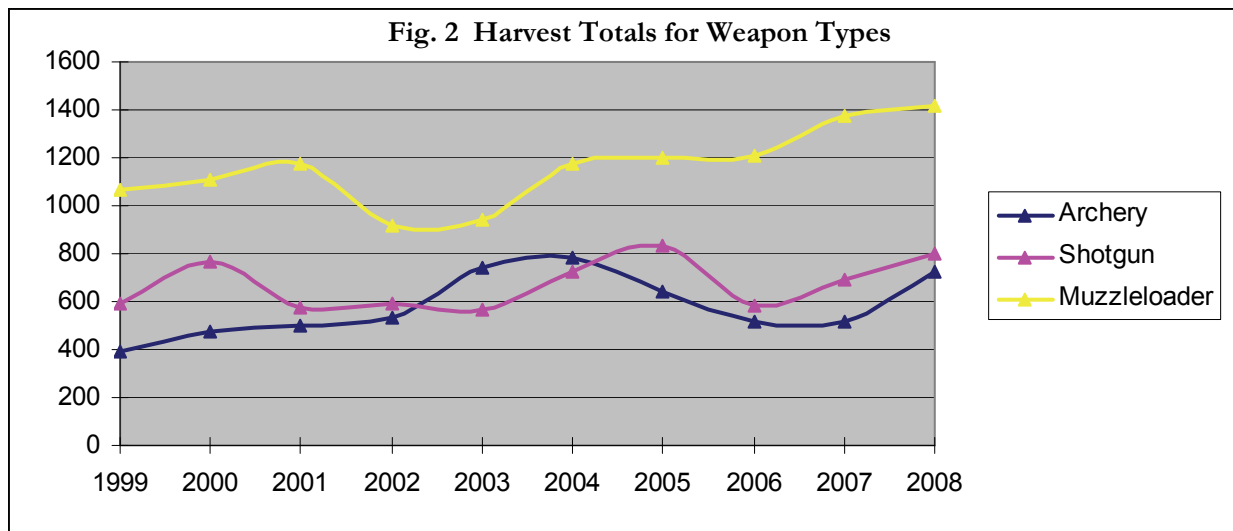
Management Areas & Towns

HARVEST BY MANAGEMENT AREA

Management Area	Archery	Muzzle	Shotgun
Arcadia	12	84	40
Beavertail	3	0	0
Big River	15	66	21
Black Farm	0	3	1
Black Hut	4	16	6
Buck Hill	3	24	5
Burlingame	3	25	3
Carolina	2	19	12
Cocumcussoc	6	3	0
Durfee Hill	2	10	5
Galilee Bird Sanct.	1	0	0
George Washington	8	23	3
Great Swamp	7	9	1
J.L. Curran	3	0	0
Killingly	2	3	0
Nicholas Farm	2	5	2
Prudence/Patience*	42	0	6
Rockville	0	2	0
Round Top	0	0	0
8 Rod Farm	4	2	0
Simmons Mill Pond	1	0	0
South Shore	1	1	0
Tillinghast	3	10	6
Wickaboxet	1	0	2
Woody Hill	2	20	2
Total Mgt. Area	127	325	115
Other (town owned)	0	0	0
NW Co-op**	0	4	4
Private	597	1082	679
Unknown	0	1	0
Fort Greene	0	0	2
Heritage	0	0	0
Grills Preserve	0	2	0
TOTAL	724	1413	800

HARVEST BY TOWN

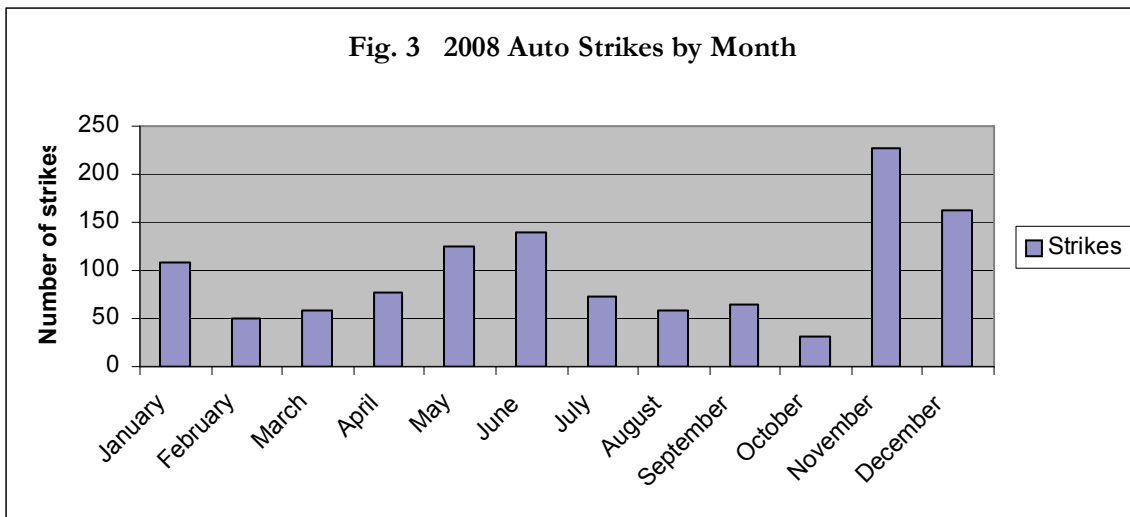
Town	Archery	Muzzle	Shotgun
Block Island	29	0	152
Burrillville	34	141	53
Charlestown	17	70	23
Coventry	59	78	67
Cranston	8	5	1
Cumberland	0	0	0
E. Greenwich	11	7	9
E. Providence	1	0	0
Exeter	60	170	75
Foster	35	120	62
Glocester	30	140	46
Hopkinton	18	81	56
Jamestown	32	24	3
Johnston	5	17	2
Lincoln	0	0	0
Little Compton	20	21	2
Middletown	2	0	1
Newport	0	0	0
N. Kingstown	52	40	23
N. Smithfield	15	33	8
Narragansett	8	0	0
Portsmouth	7	2	2
Prudence Island	82	0	0
Richmond	37	95	45
S. Kingstown	44	70	32
Scituate	25	56	24
Smithfield	13	25	16
Tiverton	42	42	8
Warren	0	0	0
Warwick	0	0	0
W. Greenwich	30	125	58
Westerly	8	49	28
Unknown	0	2	4
TOTAL	724	1413	800



Non-Seasonal Mortality

Non-seasonal mortality consists of deer deaths which occur outside of established hunting seasons. For example, deer may be killed by cars, dogs, starvation, poaching or illegal hunting, or natural accidents. Deer may also be taken out-of-season on agricultural damage permits. An overabundance of deer often leads to a high frequency of deer/vehicle collisions, as well as excessive damage to commercial forests, agricultural crops, nursery stock and landscape plantings. Information about non-seasonal mortality comes from DEM's Environmental Police Officer reports, Division of Agriculture, and Division of Fish & Wildlife.

Auto strikes were down slightly in 2008, though increased in the cities and towns with limited hunting. The slightly lower amount of mast (the fruits and seeds of all plants, both woody and herbaceous, used as food by animals) and warm weather contributed to the lower figures. Deer strikes tend to be higher during years of poor mast because deer are more likely to travel in search of food. The total non-seasonal deer mortality for 2008 was 1176; 13 less than last year or 1 percent. Auto strikes were responsible for 95% of the non-seasonal take for the year. Once again, North and South Kingstown had the most deer hit and killed by cars, with Coventry following.

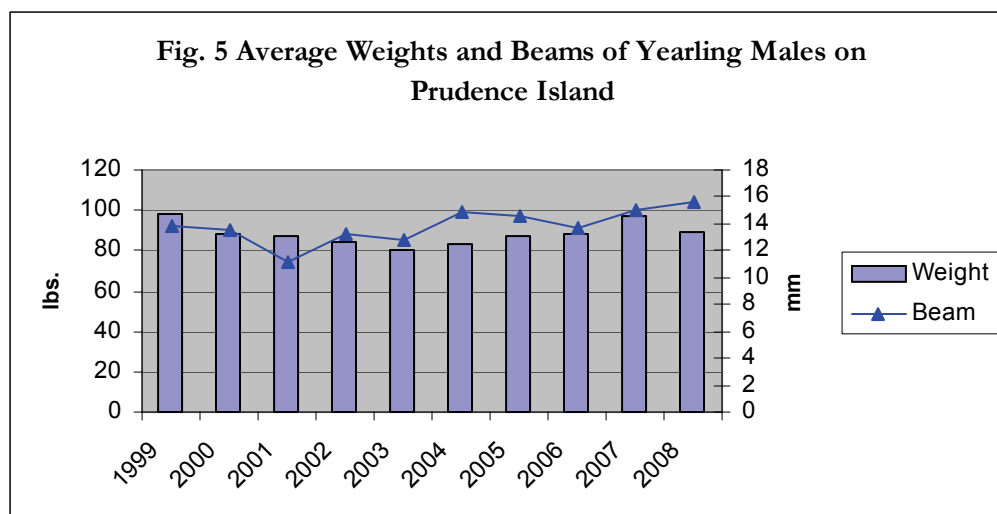
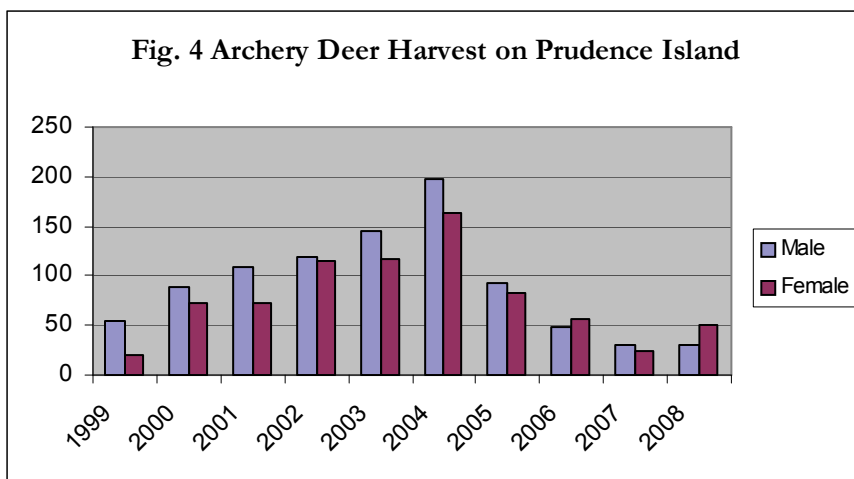


Auto Kill by Town

<u>Kent County</u>		<u>Washington County</u>	
Coventry	62	Charlestown	39
E. Greenwich	27	Exeter	49
W. Greenwich	43	Hopkinton	44
W. Warwick	10	Narragansett	30
Warwick	58	New Shoreham	3
		N. Kingstown	90
		Richmond	25
		S. Kingstown	92
		Westerly	36
<u>Providence County</u>		<u>Bristol County</u>	
Burrillville	42	Bristol	10
Central Falls	1	Barrington	5
Cranston	30	Warren	4
Cumberland	28		
E. Providence	10		
Foster	37		
Glocester	42		
Johnston	27		
Lincoln	54		
N. Providence	2		
N. Smithfield	34		
Pawtucket	0		
Providence	6		
Scituate	67		
Smithfield	34		
Woonsocket	7		
		<u>Newport County</u>	
		Jamestown	15
		Little Compton	7
		Middletown	5
		Newport	2
		Portsmouth	10
		Prudence Isl.	0
		Tiverton	31
		Total	1118

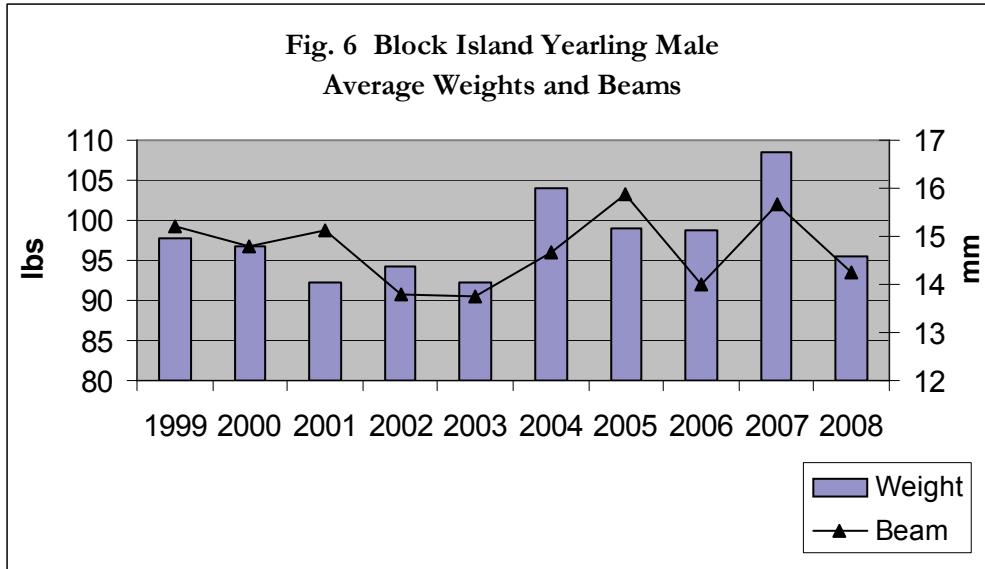
Prudence Island

Prudence Island has one of the most concentrated white-tailed deer herds in Rhode Island. Located in Narragansett Bay, Prudence Island has undergone many changes, both in terms of land use and deer population. Prudence Island was heavily farmed in the 1600's, resulting in deforestation and elimination of the deer herd. Laws to protect deer followed soon thereafter. It was not until the early 1900's and the advent of the Industrial Revolution, that farms were abandoned and the Island reverted to forest. The deer herd rebounded, with additional recruitment from deer which swam across from the mainland. The land underwent serious changes for a second time when the US Navy occupied the southern portion of the Island and stripped off the topsoil to reinforce bunkers and make roadways. By the late 1970's, deer population had reached levels that exceeded the island's 5.5 square mile habitat, and the deer began to die of starvation. The Division of Fish and Wildlife was asked to assist the Island in developing a management plan to control the deer population. Restrictions against deer hunting were lifted, and bow hunting seasons were established. Harvest quotas continued to expand until 1996. A perception of low population numbers halted the high harvests in the late 1990's, and the deer population quickly rebounded. The Division responded by increasing the quota in 2004 by allowing hunters to take three deer (1 antlered & 2 antlerless), resulting in a record 360 deer. For the 2005 season, hunters were allowed 1 either sex and 1 antlerless and harvested 178 deer. In 2006, The Division focused on shifting the harvest to private parcels while still maintaining interest in the hunt. A total of 111 deer were taken by archery and paraplegic shotgun hunters. Hunter and residents also began seeing coyotes on the Island. In 2007, hunters saw far less deer than in previous years and only 54 were harvested. Residents and the hunters began expressing angst about the increase in coyotes and lack of deer. 2008 saw an increase in number of deer taken from Prudence and Patience Islands, with 78 taken from Prudence and 10 from Patience Island. The Division remains committed to balancing the habitat with the concerns of the residents and hunters through these changing times. Additionally, the Division will continue to enhance habitat by maintaining openings and combat invasive species through a combination of mechanical means and prescribed burning to improve the habitat and recycle nutrients into the soil.



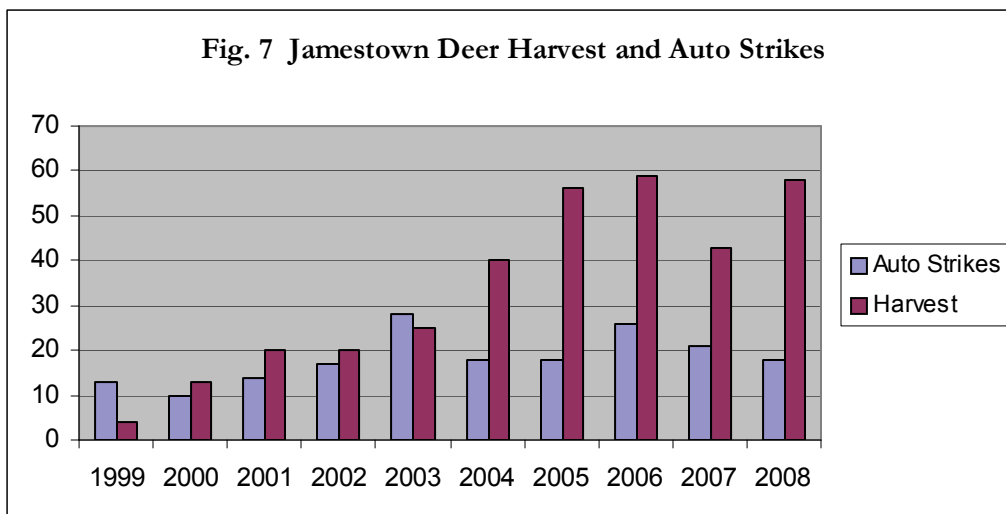
Block Island

Deer were introduced to Block Island in 1967 at the request of the Block Island Town Council. The deer population grew rapidly, resulting in numerous complaints of deer damage. Herd growth was not controlled, as there are no predator species on Block Island and hunting was not permitted. Complaints were addressed through deer damage permits, however, the herd size was estimated at 700 in 1994. A regulated hunting season was introduced in 1996, with a referendum to drastically reduce the deer herd. Block Island residents are primarily concerned about Lyme disease and public safety. Hunting has been restricted to private land. Harvest limits were increased to maximize hunter take, and the population has been reduced to approximately 250 deer. Further herd reductions are hampered by limited access to open space. Herd health is measured by average yearling weights and antler beams.



Jamestown

The presence of deer on Jamestown is relatively new. A breeding population was established on Conanicut Island in 1985. Initially, the deer were seen by residents as novel, with some concerns about Lyme disease. There was no hunting tradition on the island, which enabled the population to grow rapidly. Auto strikes were an increasing concern, and in some years, collisions with cars killed more deer than hunters. The Division of Fish & Wildlife alerted the Jamestown community to the rapid deer population expansion and suggested a regulated hunting season on the island. Currently, the Division coordinates a limited bow hunt on Beavertail State Park. Hunter effort has led to some improvement with regard to road kill mortality.



Chronic Wasting Disease

What is chronic wasting disease? Chronic wasting disease, or CWD, is a rare neurological disease that affects deer and elk. It attacks the brain, producing small lesions that eventually result in death. CWD was first recognized in the late 60s in Colorado and has recently been found in New York State. **Although domestic livestock and humans are not known to be susceptible to CWD, currently there is not enough information to prove that they are safe from the disease. Also, there is no connection between CWD and BSE (mad cow disease).**

Requirements for Marking Imported Carcasses and Parts:

All carcasses and parts of any cervids imported into Rhode Island must have a legible label bearing the following information: the species of animal, the State, Province or Country where the animal was taken or where the shipment originated, the name of the person who took the animal or the name of the shipper, the address of the taker or shipper and, for transport through the State, the destination of the shipment. Hunter harvested carcasses; parts or meat taken outside Rhode Island shall also bear the marking, tagging or labeling required by the State where the animal was taken.

Feeding and baiting Cervids in Rhode Island: No person shall feed cervids at any time in Rhode Island except:

- Under a license or permit issued by the Department of Environmental Management for scientific research.
- By planting, cultivating, or harvesting of crops directly associated with agricultural practices, including planted wild-life food plots;
- By distribution of food materials for livestock directly associated with agricultural practices;
- By distribution of food material for legally possessed captive cervids, pursuant to a permit;
- By cutting of trees or brush;
- By elevated bird/squirrel feeders providing seed, grain, fruit, worms, or suet for birds or squirrels located within 100 feet of an occupied dwelling.

Distribution of Certain Food Materials: No person shall feed wild or captive cervids with any material that contains protein derived from any mammalian tissues.

POSSESSING AND IMPORTING CERVID PARTS AND CARCASSES IN RHODE ISLAND		
Cervids from CWD Endemic Areas	Possessing or importing PROHIBITED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain, eyes, spinal cord, lymph nodes, tonsils or spleen.
	Possessing or importing Permitted:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The hide or cape, the skull-cap with antlers attached, the antlers, finished taxidermy, tanned hides, and the upper canine. • Meat that is boned, cut up, packaged and wrapped, and not mixed with the meat of any other animal.
Cervids from Non-CWD Areas:	Possessing or importing PROHIBITED:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brain, eyes, spinal cord, lymph nodes, tonsils or spleen from any captive or captive bred cervid originating outside of Rhode Island.
	Possessing or importing Permitted:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any parts or carcasses from wild animals or captive RI cervids.

Rhode Island CWD Surveillance – Deer Head Collection Quota and Criteria

Deer heads will again be collected from deer **18 months of age and older** throughout the state during the upcoming deer season. **We are obligated to submit 180 deer heads** from all areas of the state. We are also collecting samples from deer that appear sick. Call (401) 222-3070 immediately with exact location of sick deer. **Your cooperation is essential.** We cannot be declared CWD-free without meeting our quota for deer testing. Hunters submitting deer heads must supply the following information: Name, address, and location of harvest, date, sex & age of deer. Heads may be submitted at all state check stations and the field office. Check station addresses located on page 21. Field office located at 277 Great Neck Rd., West Kingston, RI 02892 ph. (401) 789-0281. For more information see <http://www.dem.ri.gov/topics/wltopics.htm>.