



# Differences Beyond Dates

## Changes Set for 2009-10 Arkansas Deer Season

BY RANDY ZELLERS

Reporters didn't rush for the nearest computer when the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission approved the 2009-10 deer hunting season regulations. Most hunters who called were concerned only with season dates to schedule their vacations. But the 2009-10 deer season includes improvements that will make it easier for hunters to enjoy their sport.

Both of these deer are fair game for youth hunters this year thanks to simpler regulations. Photo by Tim Carr.

### Cell Check

Technology has caught up to the deer woods. Mobile mouthpieces have been used by outdoorsmen to report poachers and accidents, send distress signals and talk about successes with hunting buddies. Thanks to the AGFC's new Telecheck system, hunters will be able to check their deer via Motorola.

"The Telecheck system will replace all the check stations throughout the state," said Brad Miller, AGFC deer program coordinator.

"Instead of driving around looking for an open check station to check their deer, hunters will be able to register their harvest over the phone from their home, camp or even their deer stand."

Not only does the new system make it easier for hunters to check deer, it offers two major advantages to the AGFC – real-time reporting of harvest and more accurate data entry.

"The phone call only takes a couple of minutes to complete and we'll have much

quicker harvest results to make management decisions,” said Matthew Hodges, AGFC assistant chief of wildlife. “It will also minimize errors caused by illegible check sheets and check sheets with data that doesn’t match, such as a person accidentally filling out that they shot a doe and it had six points.”

Telecheck also conserves the limited manpower the AGFC has available.

“Last year we devoted more than 4,770 man hours to printing, distributing, receiving and entering check sheets,” Hodges said. “Telecheck will free up these hours for our field staff to do more important projects like habitat work.”

### Doe Days

Another piece of paper that was eliminated this year was the zone doe quota permit. Deer hunters in deer zones 1, 1A, 2, 3, 6, 6A, 7, 8, 8A, 10 and 11 can look forward to certain days when they can harvest a doe, instead of hoping to draw a special doe tag through a permit lottery.

“We weren’t harvesting all the does we needed to take out of the population with the doe permits,” Hodges said. “The doe days not only will help us reach that number, they will give every hunter an opportunity to harvest a doe and get some meat in their freezer.”

Miller says another goal of doe days is to simplify the hunting process.

“Based on population management goals, doe days would let us meet our objectives and it’s much simpler to understand. Managing through doe days is also a bit easier; we can add or subtract a few days to increase or reduce harvest.

### Building Blocks

“Children are the future of our sport” has become a cliché, but often it’s forgotten as soon as it’s said. The Commission took the statement to heart, and this year’s regulations reflect it.

Two changes are focused on hunters under 16 – an additional youth season after the Christmas hunt and removal of antler restrictions for youths on all bucks they shoot.

“Under previous frameworks, if they hunted with a bow or muzzleloader, youths could get their two bucks regardless of antler point restrictions for either deer, as long as the second buck

was harvested during the special youth season,” Miller said. “How’s a kid supposed to understand all that? We’re trying to make it as simple as possible for a kid to hunt without worrying about messing up. Now, youths can kill any two bucks during the season – period.”

The added youth hunt was a request from commissioners. They wanted to give youth hunters a last chance to get their deer before the season ended. Only youths will be allowed to hunt deer with modern guns Jan. 2-3, and in some zones, they can kill either a buck or a doe.


“It’s just one more way we’re trying to get kids in the woods and give them opportunities to get their deer,” Miller said.

### Four-Point Stance

The regulation that caught attention was the change from the three-point rule to a four-point/18-inch main beam length in deer zones 16, 16A and 17. Most controversy was the result of hunters thinking it was a statewide regulation.

“The new four-point/18-inch main beam length rule applies only to deer zones 16, 16A and 17,” Miller said. “The rest of the state still goes by the three-point rule.”

According to Miller, the goal of the four-point rule in these zones is in line with the three-point rule’s ultimate goal – to protect yearling bucks.

“Harvest records from the Delta have demonstrated such excellent body weight, doe lactation and antler characteristics that many yearling bucks may have antlers large enough to harvest under the three-point rule,” Miller said. “A four-point/18-inch main beam requirement in these few zones protects those yearlings and lets them be something really special for hunters the next year.” 

Read the 2009-10 *Arkansas Hunting Guidebook* for a detailed list of hunting regulations and changes for the season. It’s available from many local retailers and can be downloaded from [www.agfc.com](http://www.agfc.com). Or call (501) 223-6352 for your copy.

