

# KDFW: Deer season yields a top-five harvest total

## Hunter numbers in 2020 surge despite pandemic

By LEE MCCLELLAN  
KENTUCKY AFIELD

Amid the worldwide pandemic, hunters in Kentucky turned to the woods and fields during the annual deer season to lift their spirits and produced another top-five total deer harvest.

Deer hunters not only bring home healthy venison for their families and help keep the deer population in check, but they also contribute heartily to Kentucky's economy. Each year, deer hunting generates over \$550 million in economic impact through retail expenditures, yields over \$86 million in tax revenues to sustain public services and supports more than 13,000 jobs in the Commonwealth.

"We're very pleased with the 2020-21 harvest numbers," said Ben Robinson, assistant director of the

Wildlife Division at the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. "Despite rainy and windy weather during the November modern gun season, hunter turnout and number of deer taken were both outstanding."

Hunters harvested 141,631 deer overall, making it the fifth-highest harvest total on record behind only the 2015-16, 2019-20, 2018-19 and 2013-14 seasons.

The 2020-21 season total surpassed the 10-year average of 137,008.

Hunters started the season by setting a new record harvest for September by taking 7,980 deer, and they closed it out with the second highest January harvest at 3,229 deer.

"Deer season began with a strong September archery harvest, including the highest archery opening week-



end harvest on record," Robinson said.

An expanded crossbow season combined with an already generous archery season also helped the season-end total. Hunters harvested more than 30,000 deer with archery and crossbow equipment.

Muzzleloader season saw a slight jump in harvest numbers, with the department's Telecheck harvest re-

porting system tallying 4,670 deer during the October muzzleloader season and 8,402 during the December muzzleloader season. The nine-day December black-powder season ranked ninth overall in harvest numbers.

As for the modern gun season, Robinson noted, "A lot of the main factors that affect deer harvests have to do with the weather.

The opening Sunday of the modern gun season had high winds and not a lot of people made it out."

Still, on opening day, hunters achieved the sixth-highest harvest on record. Hunters harvested 94,683 deer overall during the 16-day modern gun season.

Hunter numbers surged last year.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife sold more

than 320,000 hunting licenses in 2020, a significant jump from the previous year's total of slightly less than 308,000 licenses. More than 20,800 new hunters purchased a license last year.

The 2020-21 license year runs through the end of February. Licenses for 2021-22 already are available online from the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife website at fw.ky.gov.

The next deer season starts Sept. 4, with the opening of archery season, and continues through Jan. 17, 2022. Per state regulation, the archery season opens on the first Saturday in September then closes on the third Monday in January, on which Martin Luther King, Jr. Day is celebrated. Modern gun season, the most popular season for deer hunters, will be Nov. 13-28.

# Renewing 'Ag Tag' could help KY's agriculture youth



Agriculture  
Commissioner  
Ryan  
Quarles

One of the greatest honors of serving as Commissioner of Agriculture is the opportunity to travel around the state, put the tailgate down on a farm truck, and have a conversation with a farmer about how the year looks. Oftentimes when I do that, that farm truck is proudly displaying an "Ag Tag," a license plate with the Kentucky Proud, FFA, and Kentucky 4-H symbols on it. That "Ag Tag" means a lot to producing locally-grown leaders across our state.

Every year when farmers go to renew their farm license plates, they have the opportunity to donate \$10 to the "Ag Tag" fund. That \$10 donation can make a huge difference for our state's agriculture youth. Last year, Kentuckians donated almost \$612,000

through the Kentucky Ag Tag Fund when they purchased or renewed their farm license plates at their county clerk's office. That simple "Ag Tag" donation helps invest funds back into our communities to develop locally-grown leaders for Kentucky's agricultural future.

Ag Tag donations are equally divided among Kentucky 4-H, Kentucky FFA, and the Kentucky Department of Agriculture (KDA) for youth development and promotional programs. Each of the organization uses the dollars to promote the future of Kentucky agriculture and invest in future leaders.

At KDA, the funds support initiatives that promote agriculture in Kentucky, such as the Kentucky Leopold Conservation Award and the Kentucky Ag Athletes of the Year scholarship program conducted annually with the Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KH-SAA). The funds also support many commodity organizations and events, ranging from the Kentucky Agricultural

Leadership Program (KALP) to AgLand at the Kentucky State Fair. In recent years, the Ag Tag Fund has even assisted industry groups such as Kentucky Women In Agriculture in sponsoring its annual conference.

Kentucky FFA uses the donated funds to support more than \$20,000 in agriculture program grants to make a capital investment in curriculum or facilities. FFA also provides \$1,000 to each of the 12 FFA regions to recognize students at regional FFA banquets and for travel scholarships for Kentucky FFA members who are competing at the National FFA Convention. It also supports statewide initiatives such as the Kentucky FFA website, state officer leadership development, and support for teacher educators at the university level.

The Kentucky 4-H Foundation uses its portion of its Ag Tag funds to support statewide programs such as engineering events, the Issues Confer-

ence, the Performing Arts Troupe, the 4-H Summit, and state officer scholarships.

Half of the 4-H and FFA donations are returned to local councils and chapters, meaning when you donate, leaders in your community are able to use those funds to cover the cost of 4-H and FFA camp and other leadership programs for your youth. County 4-H councils use Ag Tag dollars to provide opportunities, such as 4-H camp scholarships and travel for life-changing, educational experiences, to enable local 4-H youth to grow as leaders and engaged citizens. FFA chapters are free to use the money to meet the greatest needs in their community, such as FFA jackets for students in need or helping cover travel costs to leadership events.

At the end of the day, the donation goes back into your community to support statewide programs impacting 274,000 students. This year's challenge is for Kentucky farm fami-

lies to continue to invest in Kentucky's agriculture future. Even in a pandemic, it is more important than ever to keep investing in the future of our agricultural youth.

As you head to your

county clerk's office this month or next, think about the impact you are making into our locally-grown leaders. There's no greater return on investment than through the "Ag Tag" program.

# Farmers can possibly earn \$10,000 in Cooperative Dove Field Program

## Enrollment period ends March 1

Farmers can earn extra money and support Kentucky's hunting heritage by participating in the Cooperative Dove Field Program offered by the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources. The program leases privately owned and managed fields for public dove hunting in the fall. Enrollment is open through March 1, 2021.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife is particularly interested in landowners willing to sow multiple crops. Landowners can receive up

to \$10,000 in the program by earning \$300 per acre planted.

Under state law, landowners who allow the public to use their property for outdoor recreation without charging a fee are provided legal protections. These protections extend to those who lease land to the department for public hunting access.

"We want farmers to sow strips or plots of wheat, millet, corn and sunflowers," said Wes Little, a biologist with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. "Multiple crops are best because if you have a failure of one crop, you still have three others to attract doves."

Participating fields must be at least 10

acres. Additional lease payments are available for landowners who plant borders around the hunting fields.

Little said dove field leases usually run from 20 to 30 acres. Payment amounts can vary based on the number of acres enrolled, crop type and fulfillment of the field management agreement with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife is interested in reaching agreements with property owners who have acreage in underserved areas that have significant numbers of dove hunters. In the western part of the state, this includes Caldwell, Calloway, Christian,

Daviess, Fulton, Grayson, Hardin, Hart, Hickman, LaRue, Logan, Lyon, Simpson, Todd and Trigg counties. Boyle, Cumberland, Laurel, Lincoln, Pulaski and Wayne counties are areas of interest in southcentral Kentucky.

The department also encourages applications from counties near cities with populations greater than 20,000 for the program. To get the process started, contact your regional Fish and Wildlife private lands biologist or Natural Resources Conservation Service liaison.

For more information, visit fw.ky.gov or call 1-800-858-1549 from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (EST) on weekdays.

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**THURS., FEB. 18 @ 3:37 PM EST**  
**LOCATION:** Hart Co., KY. Magnolia Community - From Magnolia, take US 31E South, Approx. 1.9 miles to the intersection of Hammons-ville School House Road & US 31E - turn right into Hammons-ville School House Road and go 0.9 miles to property - **SIGNS POSTED - NOTE:** Sale will be held at The Nest Venue, 195 Lee Oak Dr. Hodgenville, KY. 42748. (Right off Lincoln Parkway)  
**REASON FOR SALE:** By order of the Honorable Judge Joan A. Lloyd - United States Bankruptcy Court - Western District of Kentucky, Case #19-11177-JAL, David C. Owen and Mary A. Owen, Debtors in Possession, have commissioned Harned Auctioneers to sell the following described property under the hammer!! **REAL ESTATE:** See Our Website For Complete Details.  
(www.billyfrankharned.com) **TERMS:** 20% down day of sale in the form of cash, cashier's check, or personal check with current bank letter of credit addressed to Harned Auctioneers, LLC. -Balance on or before 60 days w/ delivery of deed. A 10% Buyers Premium will be added to all winning bids.  
**TAXES:** Pro-rated to scheduled closing date.  
**POSSESSION:** w/deed. **OWNERS:** David C & Mary A Owen, Debtor's in Possession. **In an abundance of caution, the CDC protocol for the COVID 19 virus, will be followed throughout this auction. Inspections: Wednesday Feb 3 & Saturday Feb 13-2 to 4 pm EST**  
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**Crossword Puzzle Answers**

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Crossword puzzle found on page 5A