

Hunters Urged to Take Precautions to Keep CWD Out of New York

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation urges hunters to take precautions to prevent chronic wasting disease from entering the state, warning that the fatal disease poses a serious threat to wild deer and moose populations and is nearly impossible to eliminate once established.

Hunters who pursue deer, elk, moose or caribou outside New York must follow restrictions on bringing carcasses and animal parts back into the state to help prevent the spread of chronic wasting disease, commonly known as CWD.

Only deboned venison and permitted parts may be imported, including cleaned skullcaps or antlers, raw or processed hides, cleaned teeth or lower jaws, and finished taxidermy products. The DEC will confiscate and destroy illegally imported carcasses and parts.

Hunters who harvest an animal in an area where CWD is known to occur are encouraged to submit samples for testing in that state before consuming the venison. If a test is positive, hunters should contact the DEC for instructions on proper disposal.


image courtesy of NYSDEC

The DEC recommends several additional precautions to help keep New York free of the disease:

• Use synthetic deer scents. Avoid natural deer urine-based attractants and lures, which could contain CWD.

• Hunt wild deer. Support fair-chase hunting practices. The spread of CWD has been linked to the movement of deer and deer products between captive deer facilities.

• Avoid meat from sick animals. Do not consume venison from deer that appeared ill or diseased.

• Do not feed wild deer. Feeding deer is illegal in New York and can concentrate animals in one area, increasing the risk of disease transmission.

• Dispose of carcass waste properly. Take waste to a landfill or leave it at the harvest site to avoid spreading the disease to new areas.

Autumn Foraging: Wild Turkeys Search the Forest Floor


image courtesy of John Lehmann

Three hen turkeys scratch through fallen leaves in search of seeds and acorns in the Red Kill Valley in Fleischmanns on Oct. 24th.

'Choose a Doe' This Season

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is launching its "Choose a Doe" campaign to encourage hunters to harvest more female deer and help keep populations in balance.

Before 2015, New York hunters harvested more does than bucks. That trend has reversed in recent years, contributing to growing deer populations across much of the state, according to the DEC.

High deer populations can harm deer health, damage wildlife habitat, affect hunting opportunities and increase risks to the public. The DEC highlights five reasons to choose a doe this hunting season:

• Help the herd: Overpopulated herds are more vulnerable to disease, and deer may have smaller bodies and antlers.

• Help the habitat: Too many deer can damage plants that provide essential food and shelter for other wildlife.

• Help the hungry: A donated doe can provide up to 200 nutritious meals for New Yorkers experiencing food insecurity.

• Help the hunt: An imbalanced buck-to-doe ratio can reduce breeding-season activity, making buck sign and sightings less common. Late breeding can also reduce fawn survival.

• Help the hometown: Deer cause at least 65,000 vehicle collisions annually in New York and hundreds of millions of dollars in damage to farms, orchards and communities. High deer populations also contribute to the spread of tick-borne diseases.

The DEC said new deer hunting regulations offer hunters greater opportunities and incentives to harvest does.

The agency encourages hunters to choose a doe this season as a way to support healthier deer herds, protect habitat and reduce conflicts between deer and people.

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HUNTING GUIDE 2026

Every Harvest Tells a Story – Collect Yours

Hunters and trappers of any age can now commemorate their harvest with a species – specific sticker and a letter from DEC. Hunter Achievement Awards recognize hunters and trappers who harvest any of the 24 eligible game species and submit a picture on our entry form. Be sure to check out entry rules before entering your harvest. Entries must be submitted within 30 days of the season closing.

Deer Hunters: If you harvest a deer this season:

- Report your harvest
- Snap a photo
- Submit the Hunter Achievement Awards entry form to get your sticker, here: https://dec.ny.gov/things-to-do/hunting/new-york-hunter-achievement-awards



image courtesy of NYSDEC

Good luck to all New York hunters and trappers this season.

Big Game Hunting Regulations

It is illegal to hunt big game using:

- A fully automatic firearm
- A firearm or bow aided by any artificial light or a laser that projects a beam toward the target
- Any firearm equipped with a silencer
- An autoloading firearm with a capacity of more than 6 shells (one which requires that the trigger be pulled separately for each shot), except an autoloading pistol with a barrel length of less than 8”
- A firearm using rimfire ammunition
- A shotgun of less than 20 gauge or any shotgun loaded with shells other than those carrying a single projectile
- A bow with a draw weight less than 35 pounds or a crossbow with a draw weight less than 100 pounds
- Dogs
- Aircraft of any kind
- Bait or salt licks
- An air gun or air bow
- Traps or snares
- Arrowheads less than 7/8” at the widest point or with less than 2 sharp cutting edges
- Arrows with barbed broadheads (see picture). A barbed broadhead is one in which the angle formed between the trailing or rear edge of any blade and the shaft is less than 90 degrees. A notch at the base of the blade extending no more than 2 millimeters from the shaft is not considered a barb. Broadheads with mechanical blades are legal if the blades freely swing into a non-barbed position without external force beyond gravity upon withdrawal of the arrow.
- Big game hunters are permitted to carry a .22 caliber rim-fire handgun during the regular deer season or early and regular bear seasons, if they possess a NYS pistol permit. The .22 caliber rim-fire handgun cannot be used as a primary or secondary weapon to take deer or bear. It is illegal to possess a firearm of any kind when bowhunting or when accompanying a person bowhunting during bowhunting seasons.
- It is illegal to harvest deer or bear while the animal is in water.
- It is illegal to sell deer or bear meat. Other than meat, the parts from legally taken and reported deer and bear may be sold only if tagged prior to sale. The tag must be provided by the hunter or the buyer and include the hunter’s license number, date of birth, signature, printed name and the town and county of kill.
- Bear gallbladders and bile cannot be possessed or sold unless the original copy of the bear carcass tag is attached. Taxidermists must also keep records of all bear gallbladders and bile received or sold.
- A legally antlered deer must have at least one antler that is at least three inches in length measured from the base of the burr to the tip of the antler. Special regulations apply in Wildlife Management Units that have mandatory Antler Point Restrictions.
- In the Southern Zone, you may not shoot a cub or a bear that should be known to be a cub, shoot any bear from a group of bears, or shoot or take a bear from its den.
- Resident and nonresident hunters may take one bear by gun or bow each license year. The number of deer a hunter may take depends upon the licenses and privileges purchased. If a licensed hunter has the proper tags, they are permitted to shoot more than one deer in a day.

See Crossbow Hunting for additional information about hunting with a crossbow.

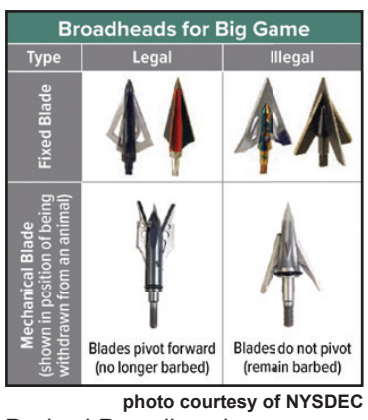


photo courtesy of NYSDEC
Barbed Broadheads

Featured Recipe: Squirrel Pot Pie

Small game seasons are in full swing, which means there’s no better time to try out new recipes using wild game meat. Below is a featured pot pie recipe that uses one of New York state’s most abundant small game species: squirrel!

Squirrel Pot Pie

Ingredients:

At least one squirrel*
Olive oil
3 tbsp butter
1 diced yellow onion
1 large carrot
2 celery stalks
½ pound of fresh button mushrooms
2 bay leaves
Black pepper and salt to taste
¾ cup dry white wine
½ cup heavy cream
3 cups of chicken broth
½ cup flour
⅔ cup frozen peas

**This recipe works using 1-3 squirrels. If using one squirrel, add extra carrot and celery for volume. For best results, use two or three squirrels. Alternatively, try the recipe with a cottontail rabbit or snowshoe hare.*


image courtesy of NYSDEC

Directions:

1. Prep the squirrel in advance. Brine in salt water in the refrigerator for at least 24 hours before cooking. For this recipe, hind legs, front legs, torso, and belly flaps work best. For even browning, quarter the squirrel rather than leave whole.
2. Set a large pot over medium heat and add enough olive oil to coat the bottom of the pan. When the oil shimmers, place the meat in and brown evenly on all sides. Remove the meat and set it aside.
3. Add butter to the pot. Once melted, add onion, carrots, celery, mushrooms, and bay leaves. Season with salt and pepper. Cook until the vegetables are soft and the onion is transparent, about 10 minutes. Pour in wine and deglaze the pan using a wooden spoon.
4. Add the squirrel meat back into the pot. Add cream and chicken stock and bring the mixture back to a boil. Cover and reduce it to a simmer. Leave to simmer on the stove for at least an hour, stirring occasionally. For extra flavor and softer meat, simmer for 1.5 - 2 hours.
5. Turn off heat, transfer meat to a plate and allow it to cool. Discard the bay leaves. Once the meat isn’t scalding, shred the meat off the bones, removing as much as possible. Once the liquid cools and the fat rises to the top, use a spoon to skim it into a measuring cup.
6. Preheat the oven to 400 degrees.
7. Combine half a cup of skimmed fat with flour until it forms a thick paste. Stir into the pot and bring it back to a boil. Reduce back to a simmer and cook until it thickens and no longer tastes like raw flour. Add shredded squirrel meat and frozen peas. Stir to combine, taste, and add salt and pepper as needed. Remove from heat.
8. Using either homemade or premade pie dough, roll out into a lightly greased glass pie dish. Add the filling and place a top layer of pie dough across the top. Cut slits in the dough to allow steam to escape. Place it on a baking sheet and cook for 30-35 minutes, until the dough is golden brown.
9. Let it cool and enjoy

Hunting Season Safety Tips

Hunting is a popular way to enjoy the outdoors and is a carefully monitored activity that places strict limits on game collected. Safety protocols must be followed when hunting. The following guidelines can help hunters and non-hunters remain safe.

Ensure you can be seen

Visibility is essential during hunting season. Wearing blaze orange can help minimize the chances of anyone being mistaken for game animals. Deer are not color-blind, but they lack the ability to distinguish colors like red and orange from green and brown, says the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Wearing blaze orange will not make hunters stand out to deer, but it can make them visible to other hunters.

Be safe in tree stands

Perching above the landscape can give hunters a clear view of game below. Permanent tree stands are more likely to deteriorate over time due to the weather; hunters should use temporary tree stands only for the season. Falls tend to be the most common cause of injuries, notes the Mayo Clinic Health Systems. Hunters should pay attention to their surroundings to avoid being startled by animals while in tree stands. Also, checking equipment and using safety belts can help prevent falls. The average fall from a tree stand is 15 feet.

Acknowledge your own physical limitations

Activities inherent to hunting, which include walking over rough terrain, carrying and shooting a rifle and dragging an animal carcass push the body to work harder. This may increase the risk of heart attack in people unaccustomed to strenuous exercise. Take frequent breaks, and hunters may want to go out in pairs so that someone can call for help or administer first aid or CPR, if necessary.

Dress accordingly

In addition to wearing blaze orange, hunters should be dressed for the weather to avoid frostbite and hypothermia. Layering clothing can be helpful, as layers can be taken off or added to stay comfortable.

Be sure of your target

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service advises certifying a target before taking a shot. This can help ensure people, pets or other animals are not in the line of fire.

Recognize hunting seasons and lands

Non-hunters must practice safety during hunting season as well, even if they are not participating. FWS advises nature lovers to learn where and when hunting is taking place and plan recreational activities based on this information. Staying out of designated hunting areas is essential. It’s also important for non-hunters to choose bright clothing to be visible when in the woods. A brightly colored bandana or piece of fabric tied around a dog’s neck will help to protect the animal. Sticking to trails also improves the safety of the public and will reduce the likelihood of entering designated hunting areas.

Treat every firearm as if it is loaded

Hunters should treat every firearm as if it is loaded. The muzzle should be pointed in a safe direction, and the only time a finger should be on the trigger is when one is ready to shoot. Never assume a firearm is unloaded.

Fall is prime season for hunting, and hunters and non-hunters can benefit from a refresher course in hunting safety.

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Regulations for Tagging, Transporting, and Reporting Harvested Deer and Bear

Harvested deer and bear are in a hunter's legal possession only when they are tagged, transported, and reported appropriately.

E-Tag Users: Take It, Report It, Tag It If You Leave It

E-tags are electronic records of a hunter's unreported and reported carcass tags for deer, bear, and turkey in the HuntFishNY mobile app.

• Hunters using e-tags who harvest a deer or bear must immediately electronically "tag" the carcass by reporting the harvest via the HuntFishNY mobile app.

• Once reported, e-tag users do not need to attach anything to the carcass while in possession of it, including in their vehicle and at home. If the carcass is not in their possession (e.g., brought to a meat processor or taxidermist), the hunter must attach a tag that includes their name, hunter ID number, and reporting confirmation number (available in the mobile app).

• E-tag users who need to leave the carcass somewhere other than their home or vehicle can also print and use a paper carcass tag with confirmation number from their (DECALS) account.

• E-tags are not currently available for transferred DMPs or DMAP tags. Transferred DMPs must be paper tags.

Paper Tag Users: Take It, Tag It, Report It

1. **Tag the harvested deer or bear with an appropriate, completed, and legible carcass tag.** Follow the below steps to ensure your harvested deer or bear is legally tagged.

Step 1. Get your paper tags from a license-issuing agent or print them from the PDF sent to your email upon purchase of your hunting license.

Step 2. Cut the appropriate tag from the sheet of paper. Ensure you select the proper tag for the species and season you are hunting in.

Step 3. Fill in the tag with the required harvest information and sign it using ink that won't erase. The month and date of harvest must be marked in ink on the carcass tag.

Step 4. Place the tag in a weatherproof case or bag.

Step 5. Attach the weatherproof case or bag to the animal, keeping the tag visible. You do not need to attach the tag to the carcass while it is being dragged or physically carried from the place of kill to a camp, home, or point where transportation is available. Attach the carcass tag immediately upon arriving at one of these locations.

Step 6. Keep the tag attached to the carcass until it is cut up and prepared for consumption.

Step 7. Report your harvest within 48 hours. DEC considers unreported deer and bear to be illegally taken. Hunters in possession of illegally taken deer and bear are subject to penalty.

2. **Transport the harvested deer or bear appropriately.**

• Harvested and tagged deer and bear may be transported either inside or outside a vehicle by the hunter who harvested the animal, or in their attendance. A hunter transporting their own e-tagged deer or bear does not need to attach a tag to the carcass.

• If someone other than the hunter who harvested the deer or bear is transporting the carcass, the hunter must attach an additional tag of their own making to the carcass that includes the names, addresses, and signatures of the hunter and person(s) transporting the carcass.

• All portions of deer or bear meat being transported must be individually labeled with the name, address, carcass tag Doc #, date that the portions were cut, and the signature of the hunter who harvested the deer or bear. Packaged or boxed portions of venison need only one label with "venison" on the outside of the box. If someone other than the hunter is transporting the portions, the hunter must attach an additional label to each portion that includes the names, addresses, and signatures of the hunter and person(s) transporting the portions.

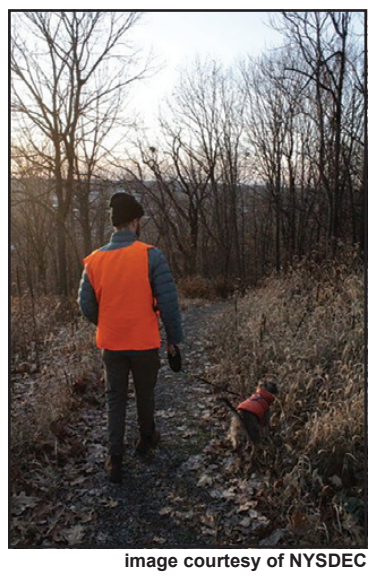
• A deer carcass with head removed can be transported as described above, but evidence of the sex of the deer must be intact. The deer carcass tag must be affixed to the carcass, and the hunter must attach a tag of their own making that includes the name and address of the taxidermist where the head was sent. A hunter transporting their own e-tagged deer without the head does not need to attach a carcass tag, but must attach a tag of their own making showing the name and address of the taxidermist where the head was sent.

• Heads of male deer may be transported to a taxidermist only if a tag of the hunter's own making is attached that includes the hunter's address, signature, carcass tag Doc #, number of points on each antler, and the name and address of the taxidermist where the head is being sent. The head of a doe with antlers that are at least 3" in length can also be removed for mounting and transported following these same procedures.

• Hunters who harvest a deer or bear in remote areas may wish to quarter and pack out the meat. This is lawful, but you must retain the carcass tag with the quartered meat. A hunter transporting quartered meat from their own e-tagged deer or bear does not need to attach a tag to the quartered meat.

Share the Woods: Both Hunters and Hikers Recreate on Public Lands

With hunting seasons underway and fall hiking still at its peak, DEC is encouraging outdoor enthusiasts to follow safety precautions while recreating this fall and winter. Whether you are a hiker, nature photographer, mountain biker, hunter, or trapper, following a few simple safety measures can make your experience as safe as possible this season.


image courtesy of NYSDEC

Tips for both hikers and hunters afield this fall:

• Tell someone where you're going and when you're planning to return. If your plans change, notify them.

• Dress for the weather; account for both location and elevation changes.

• Become familiar with the trail you plan on hiking or the area you plan on hunting.

• Wear bright clothing; blaze orange or blaze pink. Bright colors allow others to see you more easily and from farther away.

• Make sure you pack your bag with the 10 Essentials, especially, a light source, map, and first aid kit.

Hikers should be aware that they may meet hunters bearing firearms or archery equipment while hiking on trails. Hunters are fellow outdoor recreationists and hunting occurs on most DEC lands. Though hunters use firearms and bows, hunting is exceptionally safe and accidents are extremely rare. This is a testament to DEC's robust hunter safety program and hunters' conscientiousness and care.

If you decide to adventure with your pet, make sure to keep them on a leash. Loose pets can cause problems with other recreators and can get into trouble with wild animals. Also, to make pets more identifiable in the woods, give them a brightly colored collar, leash, or other covering.

DEC maintains hiking trails and permits hunting in many areas of Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, as well as in State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and Unique Areas.

Regulations to Keep Hunters Safe

New York is one of the safest states in the nation for deer and bear hunting. Regulations have been established to help ensure that strong safety record continues, and to reduce the likelihood for hunting-related shooting incidents.

Under these regulations deer and bear hunters are:

1. **Required to wear fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink clothing while hunting with a firearm.** Any person who is accompanying someone hunting deer or bear with a firearm must also wear fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink clothing. The clothing must be:

• a minimum of 250 square inches of solid fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink material worn above the waist and visible from all directions; or

• a minimum of 250 square inches of patterned fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink consisting of no less than 50% fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink worn above the waist and visible from all directions; or

• a hat or cap with no less than 50% of the exterior consisting of solid fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink material and visible from all directions.

2. **Only allowed to hunt deer and bear from 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.** These hunting hours help ensure there is enough natural light for hunters to effectively identify their target and what's beyond it before taking a shot, while maximizing opportunities for hunters to harvest deer and bear during the times of day when these species are most active.

Refer to the sunrise-sunset table on the last page of the annual Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide to determine the exact legal hunting hours for where you hunt.

Learn more about the basics of hunting safety by visiting DEC's Hunter Education Program webpage.



