

State Senator Robert Mayer The Mayer Memo

Senator Robert Mayer - Serving Butler, Dunklin, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Stoddard & Wayne Counties



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Missouri Deer Season Opens

JEFFERSON CITY — The firearms season for deer hunters is underway through Nov. 25, and this year's hunting conditions for area hunters may be a little more favorable due to the near elimination of this year's acorn crop.

The hard freeze that struck Missouri in the spring of 2007 really hurt the crop of acorns from red oak trees, whose nuts don't mature until the year after they are set. As I'm sure most hunters know, acorns are the staple for deer in southern Missouri. When the red oaks produce few or no acorns, deer are more likely to emerge from these denser, red oak woods and congregate near less dense white oaks or in forest openings, making it easier for hunters to locate them.

An average deer harvest is expected across state, although numbers might be a little off here due to an increased incidence of epizootic hemorrhagic disease. Hunting conditions may not be as favorable in northern Missouri, where wet weather delayed the corn planting in many areas, which leaves a lot of corn still standing. That could negatively impact the harvest there because deer will use the corn as protective cover. A lower-than-average deer harvest is expected in southwestern Missouri, I'm told, because of lower deer numbers in recent years. Last year, 260,162 deer were harvested during the firearms season.

This year, the four-point rule was extended to 36 new counties to encourage harvesting more does, but does not affect the seven counties within the 25th senatorial district.

The hunting season is much anticipated, with many family members hunting together, out-of-state family and friends coming in to take advantage of deer season, and countless stories told of hunting victories and near-misses. You see an unmistakable sea of camouflage and orange around town, with hunters hitting the road before dark — usually stopping somewhere for breakfast — and then walking by flashlight to their favorite hunting spots. The Missouri Department of Conservation reminds hunters to wear their hunter orange and to abide by hunter safety rules at all times. Hunting is still one of the safest sports, and we want to keep it that way.

If you are successful this hunting season, I hope you will consider sharing your bounty through

the Missouri Department of Conservation's Share the Harvest Program, which gives hunters a chance to donate deer meat to the needy. Last year, 5,569 hunters donated 260,908 pounds of venison to be distributed to food banks, feeding centers, and directly into the hands of those less fortunate. In some cases, the processing fee might even be waived, so please consider this worthy way of feeding the hungry in our state.

Good luck hunters, and I hope that you and your family enjoy hunting in beautiful outdoor Missouri!

As always, if you have comments or questions about this week's column or any other matter involving state government, please do not hesitate to contact me. You can reach my office by phone at 1-877-291-5584.

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