

FAQs

2017 Deer Tagging System

1) I am a resident hunter. How will I get my tags?

If you are a resident of SC and you purchase a Hunting License & Big Game Permit **OR** if you currently have an active Hunting License & Big Game Permit that will be valid when deer season begins, you will automatically receive a base set of deer tags at no cost prior to deer season or 7-10 days after you purchase the Hunting License and Big Game Permit if deer season has already started. That base set of tags includes: 3 unrestricted antlered buck tags and 8 date-specific antlerless deer tags. Each antlerless tag is only valid on one specific day and cannot be used on any other day (similar to past “doe days”).

2) I have a Lifetime License. Will I automatically get a set of deer tags?

No. Lifetime Licensees will have to request their base set of free tags annually. Tags may be requested after July 1 by phone at **1-866-714-3611** or online at: <http://dnr.sc.gov/purchase.html>. Tags will not be mailed until early August. Tags will also be available over-the-counter after August 1 at SCDNR offices located in Charleston, Clemson, Columbia (downtown and Farmers Market), Florence, and York.

The reason you have to request the tags is it would be wasteful to send all Lifetime License holders a set of tags because many of them are not deer hunters. There are more than 200,000 of these license holders and it costs about \$1 to issue a set of tags. (Note: Lifetime License holders who now live out-of-state should contact SCDNR directly at 803-734-3833 to request their base set of tags).

3) I have a Senior License (or Gratis License or Disability License). Will I automatically get a set of deer tags?

No. Senior, Gratis & Disability License holders will have to request their base set of free tags annually. Tags may be requested after July 1 by phone at **1-866-714-3611** or online at: <http://dnr.sc.gov/purchase.html>. Tags will not be mailed until early August. Tags will also be available over-the-counter after August 1 at SCDNR offices located in Charleston, Clemson, Columbia (downtown and Farmers Market), Florence, and York.

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4) Are youth hunters required to have tags?

Yes. Youth hunters, regardless of age, will have to have deer tags to legally hunt. Youth can receive a free base set of tags by request. If you are an adult requesting tags for a youth, make sure you have the youth’s contact information, date of birth, and SSN. The youth will be given a customer ID for future use. Tags may be requested after July 1 by phone at **1-866-714-3611** or online at: <http://dnr.sc.gov/purchase.html>. Tags will not be

mailed until early August. Tags will also be available over-the-counter after August 1 at SCDNR offices located in Charleston, Clemson, Columbia (downtown and Farmers Market), Florence, and York.

5) Are non-resident youth required to have tags?

Yes. Non-resident youth will receive a base set of tags for free by request just like resident youth. They may also purchase one antler restriction buck tag (\$50) and up to 4 individual antlerless tags (\$10 each).

6) What is included in the base set of tags?

That base set of tags includes: 3 unrestricted antlered buck tags and 8 date-specific antlerless deer tags. Each antlerless tag is only valid on one specific day and cannot be used on any other day (similar to past “doe days”).

7) Can I buy my tags at Walmart?

No. Deer tags *will not* be available over-the-counter at point-of-sale vendors (Walmart, Cabelas, Dick’s Sporting Goods, local hunting stores or hardware stores; etc.). They will be available over-the-counter after August 1 at SCDNR offices located in Charleston, Clemson, Columbia (downtown and Farmers Market), Florence, and York. Tags may be requested after July 1 by phone at **1-866-714-3611** or online at: <http://dnr.sc.gov/purchase.html>.

8) I live in South Carolina. How many optional tags can I buy?

Residents including youth hunters and Lifetime/Senior/Disability license holders may purchase 2 additional antler restriction buck tags for \$5 each. The restriction is the buck must have 4 points on one antler or a minimum 12-inch inside spread. You may also purchase up to 4 individual antlerless tags for \$5 each just like in the past. Tags are valid on any day beginning September 15 in Game Zones 2, 3, and 4 and October 1 in Game Zone 1 until the end of the deer hunting season.

9) I’m a non-resident hunter. Do I get the free tags and how many tags can I buy?

Non-resident adults receive no free tags with the purchase of their Hunting License & Big Game Permit and must also purchase deer tags in order to deer hunt. Non-residents can purchase up to 4 antlered buck tags (2 unrestricted antlered buck tags & 2 antler restriction buck tags, *4 points on one antler or a minimum 12-inch inside spread*). The cost is: \$50 for first antlered buck tag, \$20 for each additional (\$110 for all 4). After the purchase of an unrestricted buck tag, there is no particular order in which the buck tags must be purchased or used. You may also purchase up to 4 individual antlerless tags as in the past. Tags are valid on any day beginning September 15. Cost for non-resident antlerless tags is now \$10 each.

10) What is considered an antlerless deer? Isn’t that just a doe?

Not necessarily. In SC, there are some bucks that are legally considered antlerless deer. An antlerless deer is defined as a deer with no antlers or a deer with less than 2 inches of visible antler above the hairline and would be tagged with an antlerless deer tag (*this includes does, button bucks, and small spike antlered males with antlers of less than 2*

inches). A deer with 2 or more inches of antler is considered an antlered deer and would be tagged with an antlered deer tag (buck tag).

11) How will tags work with dog drives?

Whoever kills the deer should tag it with their personal tag or, if the property is in the quota program, one of the tags issued to the property should be used to tag the deer. This is no different than it has always been.

12) We split up the meat at our hunt club after the dog drive. What do we do about the tag?

A deer only has to be tagged from the point of kill until it is processed and cut up. That means once you start cutting it into quarters or parts or boning it out and it's no longer a whole carcass or skinned carcass, the tagging requirement goes away. At that point, it is meat and no longer a deer carcass and does not need a tag.

13) I process my own deer at home. When can I remove a tag?

A deer only has to be tagged from the point of kill until it is processed and cut up. That means that it needs to be tagged in the field where you harvest it and remain tagged during transport and if it is being hung whole in a cooler (hide on or skinned & gutted). Once you start cutting it into quarters or parts or boning it out and it's no longer a whole carcass or skinned carcass, the tagging requirement goes away. At that point, it is meat and no longer a deer carcass and does not need a tag.

14) I take my deer to a processor but, to save money, I skin and gut it myself and take it to the processor in a cooler already quartered or boned out. Does it need to be tagged?

A deer only has to be tagged from the point of kill until it is processed and cut up. That means that it needs to be tagged in the field where you harvest it and remain tagged during transport and if it is being hung whole in a cooler (hide on or skinned & gutted). Once you start cutting it into quarters or parts or boning it out and it's no longer a whole skinned carcass, the tagging requirement goes away. At that point, it is meat and no longer a deer carcass and does not need a tag. However, if you are transporting those parts to a processor, it would probably be a good idea, even though it's not required, to have the tag(s) with the meat. It will make the processor feel better and may save you some time and questions if you encounter a law enforcement officer along the way.

15) Do I have to buy all of my tags at the same time?

No. You can buy tags at different times during the season. You can buy them one at a time if you wish. The system will keep track of what you have already purchased and which privileges you still have remaining to purchase.

16) I hunt on Wildlife Management Areas (WMA land). How does this affect me?

All deer must be tagged, including deer taken on WMAs. The statewide WMA bag limit for all seasons and methods combined is 5 deer (only 2 of those 5 can be antlered (buck) deer). This is the same statewide WMA limit that has been in place for several years. If you are hunting on a WMA lottery hunt, SCDNR staff will provide tags for harvested deer. Otherwise, you have to utilize your personal deer tags when hunting WMA land.

17) How will this be enforced if deer don't have to be taken to check stations?

Check stations are not a primary enforcement tool. They are simply a way to collect information regarding how many deer are harvested, where they are harvested, and some basic biological data. The primary enforcement tool under the new system is the requirement to tag all deer. If someone chooses to take the risk of not tagging a deer, they are in jeopardy of being seen by a SCDNR officer, another law enforcement agency, or being reported by another hunter. Also, deer processors will not take untagged deer because taking possession of an illegal deer is a violation. Those who choose not to tag their deer are at risk of being caught from the time they move the deer from the location of harvest until they get it home and processed. That risk is significant with a fine that can reach \$1,080. Someone who chooses to take that risk is surely not going to stop at a check station.

18) I'm a bow hunter and, in the past, have been able to take antlerless deer any day without tagging during archery and primitive weapons seasons. What about now?

All harvested deer must be tagged regardless of the weapon. However, there was an effort made as part of the new tagging approach to afford archers opportunities similar to the past. Starting September 15, during any archery-only or primitive weapons season in Game Zones 1 and 2, or on any WMA statewide during an archery-only or primitive weapons-only season, you can take an antlerless deer on any day as long as it is tagged. You can accomplish this two ways. The free date-specific antlerless tags that residents receive are dual purpose tags and have a section that you will fill out if used for archery during those seasons. You can use any of these date-specific tags that come with your Big Game Permit with the understanding that you would have to properly validate the tag for this special "archery" use and it would no longer be available for use on the actual day it was intended to be used. Or you could use one of the optional individual antlerless tags that most buy. Either way or any combination of ways will work as long as all deer are tagged.

19) So I can kill 17 deer in a season now?

If you hunt in Game Zones 1 and 2, there will be a limit on the number of antlerless deer you can take regardless of how many tags you have. This is no different than when there were more than 20 "doe days" some years ago (you could only take a certain number of antlerless deer). The maximum number of antlerless deer that can be taken in a season in Game Zone 1 is 4, 5 in Game Zone 2. You will see this in the SCDNR Rules & Regulations guide when it comes out. So, if someone bought the 2 optional antler restriction buck tags, the limit would be 9 deer total in Game Zone 1 and 10 deer total in Game Zone 2. In each case, this is fewer deer than in the past when the ultimate limit was additive between the limits during the archery season + primitive weapons season + gun season.

In Game Zones 3 and 4, the limit could in fact be 17 deer because there is no "season limit" posted on antlerless deer. That being the case, the limit would be 5 bucks, 8 antlerless deer that would have to be taken using the date specific tags, and 4 antlerless deer taken with the optional antlerless deer tags.

Non-residents can take up to 8 deer (4 bucks, two of which have the antler restriction, and 4 does).

20) I thought the state's deer population was down. Why are we able to kill so many now?

This new approach is in fact a more conservative approach than in the past. Keep in mind that, in Game Zones 3 and 4, there has been no limit on antlered bucks. Now, it is a base limit of 3 with the option of getting the 2 optional antler restriction buck tags. In Game Zones 1 and 2, there has always been a limit of 5 antlered bucks "on paper." Now, it is a base limit of 3 with the option of getting the 2 optional antler restriction buck tags. With the tagging requirement, this will be highly enforceable. As far as antlerless deer are concerned, the new approach is more conservative in Game Zones 1 and 2, whereas, in Game Zones 3 and 4, it is the same as last year (See question 19).