

2017 SOUTH CAROLINA DEER HARVEST REPORT



SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DEER RESEARCH & MANAGEMENT PROJECT



Submitted by
Charles Ruth & Jay Cantrell
Wildlife Biologists, SCDNR Big Game Program

INTRODUCTION

The white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) is the most popular, sought after, economically important, and controversial game animal in South Carolina. The 2017 Deer Hunter Survey represents the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources' (DNR), Wildlife Section's ongoing commitment to conduct pertinent research related to the state's white-tailed deer resource.

The primary objectives of this survey research were to obtain valid estimates of: (1) the statewide deer harvest in 2017, (2) the harvest of deer in the constituent counties of the state, (3) hunting effort related to deer, (4) resident and nonresident hunter activities, and (5) weapons use, weapons preference, and harvest rates by weapon type. Information on hunter opinion related to certain aspects of the deer resource as well as estimates of the wild hog and coyote harvest in the state is also presented.

Due to the importance of deer as a state resource, DNR believes that accurately assessing the harvest of deer, as well as hunter participation in deer hunting, is key to the management of this species. Proposed changes in deer-related laws and regulations should have foundations in biology, therefore, the population dynamics associated with annual hunting mortality cannot be ignored. Similarly, when issues arise that do not involve biological parameters, it is important to have information related to deer hunter activities afield because they too form an important basis for managing deer.

Since the inception of the Statewide Deer Research and Management Project (Deer Project) the methods used to document the state's deer harvest have changed. Historically, deer harvest figures were developed using a system of mandatory deer check stations in the 18 county Upstate (Game Zones 1 and 2) in conjunction with reported harvests from properties enrolled in the Antlerless Deer Quota Program (ADQP) in the 28 county Coastal Plain (Game Zones 3 and 4). This system yielded an actual count of harvested deer and was, therefore, an absolute minimum harvest figure. Shortcomings in this system included deterioration of check station compliance in the Upstate and failure to report by ADQP cooperators in the Coastal Plain. Also, since the acreage enrolled in the ADQP tends to be about one-half of the deer habitat in the Coastal Plain, past harvest figures have not documented deer harvests on non-quota lands (+/- 3.2 million acres) because there

was no legal requirement to report harvested deer in the Coastal Plain. Therefore, it is suspected that historic deer harvest figures only accounted for about one-half of the total deer harvest that occurred annually in the state.

Survey Methodology

The 2017 Deer Hunter Survey represents a random mail survey that involved a single mail-out. The questionnaire for the 2017 Deer Hunter Survey was developed by Wildlife Section personnel (Figure 1). The mailing list database was constructed by randomly selecting 30,000 known Big Game Permit holders that included 8 license types. The license types included: (1) Resident Sportsman's, (2) 3-year Resident Sportsman's, (3) Resident Combination, (4) 3-year Resident Combination, (5) Resident Junior Sportsman's, (6) Resident Big Game Permit, (7) 3-year Resident Big Game Permit, and (8) Nonresident Big Game Permit. The number of individuals associated with each license type was based on an attempted sampling rate of approximately 15 percent for licenses purchased through December of 2017. Since deer seasons statewide end on January 1 there was no need to sample individuals that were licensed thereafter.

Data entry was completed by Priority Data, Inc., Omaha, Nebraska. Statistical analysis was conducted using Statistix 7 (Analytical Software, Tallahassee, FL).

Acknowledgments

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As with any mail survey, a portion of the attempted sample (30,000) was returned as undeliverable mail (269). Therefore, the actual attempted sample was 29,731 representing 17.9 percent of the entire population (166,344) of license holders. A total of 6,124 completed surveys were returned yielding a 20.6 percent response rate and 3.7 percent sampling rate on the entire licensee population.

Deer Harvest

During the 2017 deer season it is estimated that a total of 102,261 bucks and 83,025 does were harvested for a statewide total of 185,286 deer (Table 1). The overall harvest represents a 7 percent increase in harvest from 2016 (172,315) and is 42 percent below the record harvest established in 2002 (319,902). After many years of rapidly increasing during the 1970's and 1980's, the deer population in South Carolina exhibited relative stability between 1995 and 2002. Since 2002, however, the population has trended down. The overall reduction in harvest seen since 2002 can likely be attributable to a number of factors, including habitat change. Although timber management activities stimulated significant growth in South Carolina's deer population in the 1970's and 1980's, considerable acreage is currently in even-aged stands that are greater than 15 years old. According to forest inventory data, during the period 1994 to 2014 the states' timberlands in the 0 to 15 year age class decreased 34 percent while timberlands in the 16 to 30 year age class increased 104 percent. This situation simply does not support deer densities at the same level as younger stands in which food and cover is more available.

Also, coyotes are a recent addition to the landscape and are another piece of the puzzle. SCDNR has recently completed a major long-term study with researchers from the United States Forest Service Southern Research Station at the Savannah River Site investigating the affects coyotes can have on the survival of deer fawns. This research demonstrates that coyotes can be a significant predator of deer fawns, that predation by coyotes can be an additive source of mortality, and that efforts to increase fawn recruitment via coyote control provided only modest results and at high cost. Obviously one cannot apply these results uniformly across the state because habitats,

coyote densities, deer densities, etc. vary. However, coyotes are now well established in South Carolina so they should be expected to play a role in deer population dynamics at some level. That being the case, this “new mortality factor” combined with extremely liberal deer harvests that have been the norm in South Carolina are clearly involved in the reduction in deer numbers in the last decade. Given this and the difficulty and high cost of coyote control, it seems apparent that making adjustments to how we manage deer, particularly female deer, is more important now than prior to the colonization of the state by coyotes.

As it relates specifically to 2017, the modest increase in harvest is likely due to some level of “carry-over” of deer from 2015 and 2016. The 1,000-year flood spawned by hurricane Joaquin in 2015 and hurricane Matthew in 2016 each resulted in temporary season closures in some coastal counties and general access problems or decreased opportunity for hunters across much of the state. Also, each of these years saw unseasonably warm fall temperatures and there was what many called a record acorn crop in 2016. This resulted in back to back decreases in harvest. That being the case, there were likely deer that would have otherwise been harvested during those years that were carried-over to 2017.

The fall of 2017 was the first season of the “all deer” tagging system and statewide limit on antlered deer. Interestingly, the 7 percent increase in harvest was primarily a result of an increase in doe harvest (12.5%) rather than an increase in the harvest of bucks (2.5%). Increases in harvest are normally the result of increases in the buck harvest or a more equal increase in buck and doe harvest. This disproportionate harvest may be indicative of the new buck limit having the desired effect of decreasing pressure on bucks. It will likely take a few years for this to become clearer.

Harvest Per Unit Area County Rankings

Comparisons can be made between deer harvests from the various counties in South Carolina if a harvest per unit area is established. Harvest per unit area standardizes the harvest among counties regardless of the size of individual counties. One measure of harvest rate is the number of deer taken per square mile (640ac. = 1 mile²). When considering the estimated deer habitat that is available in South Carolina, the deer harvest rate in 2017 was 8.7 deer per square mile over the entire state (Table 2). Although the deer harvest in the state has declined in recent years,

South Carolina remains at the top among southeastern states, many of which have also noted a declining trend. The top 5 counties for harvest per unit area were Anderson (19.2 deer/mile²), Bamberg (17.0 deer/mile²), Hampton (14.8 deer/mile²), Calhoun (13.8 deer/mile²), and Spartanburg (12.7 deer/mile²).

Deer Harvest Rankings by County

Total deer harvest by county is not comparable among counties because counties vary in size and are, therefore, not directly comparable. However, it has become customary to rank the counties based on number of deer harvested (Table 3). The top 5 counties during 2017 were Orangeburg, Hampton, Colleton, Williamsburg, and Anderson.

Deer Harvest on Wildlife Management Areas

Deer hunting on Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) remains popular in South Carolina with approximately 60,000 licensees having a WMA Permit. Wildlife Management Areas represent lands owned by DNR, other state owned lands enrolled in the WMA Program, US Forest Service lands enrolled in the WMA Program, and private and/or corporate lands that are leased by DNR as part of the WMA Program. Deer harvest figures for coastal WMAs are from check stations and are presented only for those WMA properties that have a deer check-in requirement. Deer harvest figures for upstate WMAs (Mountain and Central and Western Piedmont Hunt Units) were estimated by extrapolating the county deer harvest rates (deer/mi²) to the acreage of WMA land that falls within the respective counties comprising the WMA. This assumes that hunters on WMA lands exhibit effort and deer harvest patterns similar to those of the general licensee database that was surveyed. Finally, the estimated deer harvest on WMA lands is included in, not additive to, the county and statewide estimates found throughout this report.

During the 2017 season it is estimated that 3,940 bucks, 2,801 does, and 12 deer if unknown sex were harvested for a total deer harvest on Wildlife Management Areas of 6,753 (Table 4). This figure represents a 2 percent increase from 2016.

Hunter Opinion Regarding the Deer Population

The 2017 Deer Hunter Survey asked participants their opinion regarding the following question. Compared to past years, how would you rate the number of deer in the area that you hunt most often? Survey participants were given 3 choices; increasing, about the same, or decreasing. Most hunters (55%) indicated that the number of deer in the area they hunted most often was about the same as in past years (Table 5). More hunters (26%) believed that the deer population was decreasing than increasing (19%). On a scale of 1 to 3 with 1 being increasing, 2 being neutral, and 3 being decreasing, the overall mean rating of 2.1 suggests that hunters viewed the deer population as slightly decreasing. The opinion among hunters that the deer population is decreasing has been consistent the last few years and recent harvest data and population reconstruction modeling supports this opinion.

Number of Deer Hunters

Even though all individuals receiving a survey were licensed to hunt deer, only 88 percent actually hunted deer. For residents, 87 percent of sampled licensees hunted deer and for nonresidents 92 percent hunted deer. Extrapolating to the respective licensee populations yields 131,371 residents (Table 6) and 14,673 nonresidents (Table 7) for a total of 146,044 deer hunters statewide during 2017. This figure represents a 5 percent increase from the 138,997 hunters in 2016. Counties with the highest estimates for individual hunters include Orangeburg, Anderson, Laurens, Spartanburg, and Newberry for resident hunters (Table 6) and Hampton, Allendale, Chester, Union, and Fairfield for nonresidents (Table 7).

Hunting Success

For determination of hunting success only those individuals that actually hunted deer were included in the analysis and similarly, success was defined as harvesting at least one deer. Overall hunting success in 2017 was 69 percent, which should be considered very good. Success rates for residents (69%, Table 6) were slightly lower than nonresidents (70%, Table 7) likely due to the fact that many nonresidents hunt commercially where considerable preparation is done for them. Estimates for resident and nonresident success rates for all counties are presented in Tables 6 and 7.

Hunter Effort

For the purposes of this survey hunter effort was measured in days with one day being defined as any portion of the day spent afield. Resident hunters averaged 15 days afield for a total of 1,932,215 days deer hunting and nonresidents averaged 13 days for a total of 192,054 days (Table 8). Total effort expended deer hunting in South Carolina during 2017 was estimated at 2,124,269 days (Table 8), up 3 percent from 2016. The number of days devoted to deer hunting in South Carolina is very significant and points not only to the availability and popularity of deer as a game species, but to the obvious economic benefits related to this important natural resource. Previous surveys conducted by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service indicate that approximately 200 million dollars in direct retail sales are related to deer hunting in South Carolina annually.

The top 5 South Carolina counties for overall days of deer hunting during 2017 were Orangeburg, Anderson, Williamsburg, Colleton, and Laurens (Table 8). Resident hunters expended the most hunting effort in Orangeburg, Anderson, Williamsburg, Berkeley, Laurens, and Colleton counties. Nonresidents hunted the most in Hampton, Allendale, Chester, Fairfield, and Union counties and these 5 counties totaled 41 percent of all the nonresident deer hunting effort that took place in South Carolina in 2017. There was more nonresident deer hunting effort in Allendale County than resident effort.

Resident hunters who were successful at harvesting at least one deer averaged nearly twice as many days (17 days) afield as unsuccessful residents (9 days) (Table 8). Similarly, successful nonresidents (15 days) averaged more days afield when compared with unsuccessful nonresidents (9 days).

The amount of effort required to harvest a deer varied between residents and nonresidents and by the county hunted. On the average it took less time for nonresidents to harvest a deer (9 days, Table 7) compared to residents (12 days, Table 6). This may be due to the fact that many nonresidents hunt commercially where considerable preparation is done prior to the hunter's arrival. Also, there may be less selectivity with respect to deer harvested by nonresidents. Counties requiring the least effort to harvest a deer included Beaufort, Barnwell, Calhoun, Bamberg, and Lee counties for resident hunters (Table 6). On the other hand, nonresidents spent less time to harvest a

deer in Berkeley, Lexington, Lee, Greenville, and Sumter counties (Table 7), however, none of these counties experienced what should be considered a high level of nonresident hunting activity.

Deer Harvest by Weapon Type and Weapons Utilization and Preference

All areas of South Carolina have long and liberal firearms seasons and the majority (80%) of deer are harvested with centerfire rifles (Table 9). Shotguns (8.5%) and archery equipment (7.1%) also contribute significantly to the overall deer harvest in the state, whereas, muzzleloaders, crossbows, and handguns combine to contribute less than 5 percent to the total harvest (Table 9).

Although rifles are used by over 90 percent of hunters, nearly 80 percent of hunters use multiple weapons during the course of the deer season (Table 10, Table 11). Resident hunters appear to be more flexible than nonresidents in their use of multiple weapons and significantly more residents use archery equipment (23%) and shotguns (21%) than nonresidents (12% archery and 6% shotguns) (Table 11). This finding has been consistent for many years and two points can likely be made. First, since most aspects of deer hunting (travel, accommodations, etc.) are typically more convenient for residents, they may have more time to devote to becoming comfortable or proficient with additional weapons, in this case archery equipment. Second, shotguns are the customary weapon related to hunting deer with dogs and the argument can be made that dog hunting is being practiced more by residents than nonresidents. The weapons utilization data supports this contention.

On the other hand, nonresidents (16%) used muzzleloaders more frequently than residents (12%). Keep in mind that muzzleloader or primitive weapons seasons on private land are only available in Game Zones 1 and 2 (the Upstate). It is suspected that the high utilization of muzzleloaders by nonresidents is related to the availability of this special season at an earlier date in South Carolina than in neighboring states. Also, the argument can be made that muzzleloaders require less commitment than archery equipment and would allow nonresidents a comparatively easy method of harvesting deer during the special season. This finding has been consistent for many years.

Unlike weapons utilization, weapons preference is the single weapon that a hunter prefers. Obviously, a majority (78%) of deer hunters prefer rifles (Table 12). Bows (12%) are the second most preferred weapon which is interesting because compared to other states, there are limited

exclusive opportunities for bow hunters in South Carolina. Nonetheless, the number of hunters indicating that bows are their preferred weapon has increased over time. Finally, there are several interesting points that can be made about preferences for other weapons based on residency. Shotguns are preferred significantly more by residents (6%) than nonresidents (2%) and muzzleloaders are preferred more by nonresidents (3%) than by residents (1%) (Table 12). The explanation of this situation is likely similar to that for weapons utilization in that, (1) residents do most of the dog hunting in the state and tend to use shotguns, and (2) nonresidents use muzzleloaders to take advantage of a special season that is not available as early in their home state.

Deer Harvest by Month of Season

The 2017 Deer Hunter Survey asked hunters to provide information on the month of kill for deer taken during the 2017 season. Although South Carolina is noted to have the longest firearms deer season in the country, the relationship between season length and deer harvest is often misunderstood. Deer naturally increase their movements during the breeding season or rut making them more susceptible to being seen and harvested by hunters. In contrast, outside of the breeding season deer movements are reduced, therefore the chances of hunters seeing and harvesting deer are reduced.

Deer harvest by month of season demonstrates this phenomenon (Figure 2). Although firearms seasons are not open in all parts of the state in late August and early September, relatively few deer are harvested during that time where the season is open. On the other hand, a disproportionately high number of deer are taken during October and November. October and November encompass the majority of the breeding season in South Carolina with over 80 percent of does conceiving during that period (Figure 3). Ultimately, timing of the season is a more important factor in determining deer harvest and quality hunting than the length of the season. Although South Carolina offers early opening seasons, there may be negative consequences as it relates to deer harvest. Hunters should understand that hunting pressure that builds prior to the breeding season can suppress daytime movements of deer during the breeding season when deer movements and hunter harvests should be greatest.

Wild Hog Harvest

The 2017 Deer Hunter Survey also asked hunters to provide information on their wild hog and coyote harvesting activities. Documenting the hog harvest became customary several years ago because wild hogs are commonly taken incidental to deer hunting. Wild or feral hogs are often thought of as “game” and there is a certain amount of sport associated with harvesting hogs. Wild hogs provide quality meat for the hunter and mature hogs can make a highly sought-after “trophy.” Wild hogs are not native to South Carolina or any part of the North American continent. They are descendants of European domestic hogs that escaped or were released dating back as far as the early Spanish explorers. Also, closed-range or fencing requirements for livestock did not arise until the 1900's and letting hogs “free-range” was common prior to fencing laws. Wild hogs were historically associated with the major river flood plain systems in Coastal South Carolina. Unfortunately, recent relocations of wild hogs by hunters appear to be responsible for the species populating areas where they were not found in the past. Wild hogs directly compete with native species like deer and wild turkey for habitat and food, and hogs can do significant damage to the habitat and agricultural production through their rooting activities. Legislation passed during the 2005 session of the South Carolina General Assembly prohibits the release of hogs in the state and legislation passed in 2010 prohibits the removal of a live hog from the woods without a permit (SC Code Section 50-16-25).

During 2017 an estimated 37,858 wild hogs were harvested by deer hunters in South Carolina (Table 13), a 33 percent increase from 2016 (25,252 hogs). Hog numbers and thus harvest, can vary substantially from year to year due to bottomland flooding during the fall and winter farrowing season which can cause mortality in piglets (and some adults), as well as, increasing vulnerability to hunters as hogs move to higher ground. With major flooding in both 2015 and 2016 the harvest was down considerably in 2016. The dramatic increase in harvest in 2017 is likely related to hog populations recovering following these two flooding events. Evidence of the presence of hogs in 46 of 46 counties was made by hunter harvest activities (45 of 46 counties in 2016). Statewide, approximately 1.7 hogs/mile² were harvested, however, this figure is deceiving because hogs only inhabit a relatively small portion of the state as a whole. The top 5 counties for wild hog harvest per unit area were Abbeville (6.2 hogs/mile²), Allendale (4.8 hogs/mile²), Richland (3.8 hogs/mile²), Charleston (3.6 hogs/mile²), and Marion (3.5 hogs/mile²).

Coyote Harvest

Unlike wild hogs which are treated like game to some degree, coyotes are typically thought of as varmints that pose a threat to native game species. Like wild hogs, coyotes are a non-native species in South Carolina. Although a popular notion among hunters is that DNR released coyotes, the agency has never released coyotes in South Carolina. The occurrence of coyotes in the state is more recent than hogs and they appear to have gotten to the state by two methods, (1) natural movements from western states and (2) illegal importation. Coyotes were first documented in Oconee and Pickens Counties in 1978 and were thought to be linked to animals that were illegally imported for hunting purposes. Evidence for this includes an illegal importation case that was made and the fact that coyotes had not been documented in adjacent counties in Georgia and North Carolina. Within a few years coyotes began to appear in the western piedmont counties of Anderson, Abbeville, McCormick, etc. indicating a southeastern expansion from the original site. In the early 1980's coyotes were documented in Allendale County and were thought to be natural immigrants from Georgia since they had previously been documented in the adjacent Georgia counties. Coyotes from this source apparently populated to the Northeast until they encountered the Santee Cooper Lakes. In the late 1980's coyotes were documented in the Pee Dee Region, again associated with illegal imports. In any event, by the mid-1990's coyotes had been documented in all South Carolina counties.

Sportsmen often voice concern over the presence of coyotes and the potential impact they have on game species such as deer. Though coyotes are one of the most adaptable animals, they are not designed to prey on big game. The coyote's diet is chiefly composed of small mammals (rats and mice), insects, and a variety of vegetable matter including fruits. On the other hand, coyotes will take deer fawns and deer that are sick or injured. SCDNR has recently completed a major study with researchers at the Savannah River Site investigating the affects coyotes are having on the survival of deer fawns. Cumulative data through the first 3 years of the study indicated approximately 70 percent total fawn mortality with coyotes being responsible for approximately 80 percent of these mortalities. If these findings even moderately represent a statewide situation, this "new mortality factor" is clearly involved in the reduction in deer numbers. This is especially true when combined with extremely liberal deer harvests that have been the norm in South Carolina.

The last 3 years of the study were for the purpose of determining if reducing coyote density through trapping increases fawn survival. It seems logical that if coyotes are preying on fawns, then significantly reducing coyote densities should increase fawn survival. Over the course of the 3 year coyote “control” phase, 474 coyotes were trapped/killed on the study areas. Overall, results showed only modest increases in fawn survival following these efforts with an overall average of about 35 percent increase in survival. Also, trapping seemed to help in some years but have little effect on predation in others. This “year” effect may have something to do with the availability of coyote food sources that may change in abundance annually. Given these results and the difficulty and high cost of coyote control, it seems apparent that making adjustments to how we manage deer, particularly female deer, is more important now than prior to the colonization of the state by coyotes.

Coyotes are not protected animals in South Carolina and hunters are allowed to harvest them throughout the year during daylight hours. During 2016, it is estimated that approximately 22,441 coyotes were harvested incidental to deer hunting in South Carolina (Table 13), a decrease of 27 percent from 2016 (28,513 coyotes). As in past years, there was evidence of coyotes being harvested in all counties. Although the number of coyotes killed by deer hunters increased exponentially since the late 1990’s pointing to the expansion of this species in South Carolina, the harvest has been down in recent years perhaps indicating a moderation in coyote populations across the South Carolina. Statewide approximately 1.0 coyotes/mile² were harvested and the top 5 counties for coyote harvest per unit area included Anderson (3.0 coyotes/mile²), Laurens (2.1 coyotes/mile²), Fairfield (1.8 coyotes/mile²), Edgefield (1.8 coyotes/mile²), and Chester (1.8 coyotes/mile²).

Supplementary Information

The following section is not related to the 2017 Big Game Hunter Survey, but is offered as information relevant to the state’s deer population.

Data related to deer-vehicle collisions for 2017 was not available from the South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS) at the time of this publication, therefore, 2016 is the most current data available (Table 14). Since reporting of deer vehicle collisions is contingent upon notification of some law enforcement agency and then SCDPS, this figure should be considered a minimum. Also, the reader should bear in mind that reporting criteria have changed over time.

Average body weights and antler characteristic of deer vary among the constituent counties in South Carolina and are dependent on deer density and available nutrition (Tables 15 and 16). Statewide averages for male deer indicate that 1.5 year old bucks average about 107 lbs. and 3.6 antler points while bucks 2.5 years old and older average about 138 lbs. and 6.5 antler points. Yearling (1.5 years old) females average approximately 88 lbs. while does 2.5 years old and older average nearly 101 lbs. This information is based on sampling completed between 1987 and 1994.

The history of the deer population and harvest in South Carolina demonstrates a trend typical of a species that initially expands into available habitat, stabilizes, and begins to decline as habitat changes (Figures 4 and 5). It is important to recognize that habitat is the primary factor controlling deer density in South Carolina, though regulated harvest is important as well. Keep in mind that between 1750 and 1900 the deer population in South Carolina experienced a tremendous decline as it did in most of North America. Although unrestricted subsistence and commercial harvest of deer was important in the decline, major changes in habitat related to clearing of land for agriculture was the controlling factor.

By 1900, deer numbers in the State were very low, perhaps 20,000. However, in the 1920's, significant drought and the cotton boll weevil had devastating consequences for farming. With the decline in farming, reforestation of the state began and was largely complete by the 1970's. Timber harvest activities that followed into and throughout the 1980's created vast areas of early successional habitat that allowed for a dramatic increase in the State's deer population. South Carolina's deer population peaked in the mid to late 1990's at just over 1,000,000 deer.

Over time, deer hunters gained a better understanding of the relationship between deer numbers, habitat, and deer quality leading to more aggressive female harvests in many parts of the state. This increased emphasis on harvesting female deer as a means to control deer densities has played a role in the stabilization and ultimate reduction in the State's deer population. Habitat is also very important. Keep in mind that the same timber management activities that stimulated the growth in South Carolina's deer population in the 1980s have resulted in considerable acreage currently being in even-aged stands that are greater than 15 years old. This habitat type simply does not support deer densities at the same level as habitat in early stages of ecological succession. As a result, a combination of habitat change, high deer harvests, and the establishment of coyotes has caused the deer population to trend down since 2000. Currently the statewide population is estimated at about 700,000 deer.

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Table 1. Estimated statewide deer harvest in South Carolina in 2017.

County	Acres*	Square Miles	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest	Harvest Rates		% Change from 2016
						Ac/Deer	Deer/Mi. ²	
Abbeville	223,113	349	2,244	1,975	4,219	52.9	12.1	35.6
Aiken	500,546	782	2,919	1,976	4,895	102.3	6.3	16.5
Allendale	216,455	338	1,960	1,721	3,681	58.8	10.9	31.9
Anderson	219,068	342	3,969	2,633	6,602	33.2	19.3	0.8
Bamberg	196,573	307	2,152	3,060	5,212	37.7	17.0	56.0
Barnwell	281,764	440	2,440	2,452	4,892	57.6	11.1	52.9
Beaufort	147,441	230	998	850	1,848	79.8	8.0	4.5
Berkeley	567,530	887	3,269	2,580	5,849	97.0	6.6	52.3
Calhoun	190,584	298	2,004	2,118	4,122	46.2	13.8	-0.8
Charleston	288,732	451	2,251	2,150	4,401	65.6	9.8	43.6
Cherokee	156,664	245	1,288	983	2,271	69.0	9.3	-0.5
Chester	300,589	470	3,010	1,710	4,720	63.7	10.0	6.6
Chesterfield	372,478	582	2,089	1,498	3,587	103.9	6.2	-11.6
Clarendon	298,087	466	1,820	1,429	3,249	91.8	7.0	-29.2
Colleton	502,666	785	3,899	3,563	7,462	67.4	9.5	9.0
Darlington	286,228	447	1,138	1,257	2,395	119.5	5.4	51.2
Dillon	214,069	334	518	640	1,158	184.8	3.5	3.6
Dorchester	302,717	473	2,438	2,020	4,458	67.9	9.4	17.6
Edgefield	246,543	385	1,625	1,131	2,756	89.4	7.2	-4.9
Fairfield	384,607	601	3,318	2,647	5,965	64.5	9.9	39.5
Florence	397,888	622	2,142	1,903	4,045	98.4	6.5	-4.3
Georgetown	399,638	624	1,326	1,498	2,824	141.5	4.5	5.4
Greenville	294,257	460	1,917	1,307	3,224	91.3	7.0	-5.1
Greenwood	204,400	319	1,795	1,142	2,937	69.6	9.2	2.9
Hampton	324,840	508	3,744	3,785	7,529	43.1	14.8	18.0
Horry	533,336	833	2,580	1,352	3,932	135.6	4.7	31.5
Jasper	309,889	484	1,335	1,422	2,757	112.4	5.7	-25.3
Kershaw	360,485	563	1,810	1,543	3,353	107.5	6.0	-22.1
Lancaster	266,382	416	1,763	1,289	3,052	87.3	7.3	-2.2
Laurens	317,916	497	3,030	1,890	4,920	64.6	9.9	-17.7
Lee	220,106	344	1,636	1,420	3,056	72.0	8.9	10.0
Lexington	280,742	439	1,832	1,099	2,931	95.8	6.7	-16.7
McCormick	212,021	331	1,701	1,094	2,795	75.9	8.4	-3.2
Marion	216,907	339	1,306	637	1,943	111.6	5.7	71.0
Marlboro	281,271	439	1,251	1,063	2,314	121.6	5.3	60.8
Newberry	317,761	497	3,085	2,101	5,186	61.3	10.4	9.7
Oconee	284,348	444	1,477	840	2,317	122.7	5.2	11.7
Orangeburg	504,516	788	4,703	4,616	9,319	54.1	11.8	-4.5
Pickens	219,926	344	1,290	652	1,942	113.2	5.7	-16.3
Richland	340,121	531	1,787	1,409	3,196	106.4	6.0	36.3
Saluda	192,173	300	1,938	1,617	3,555	54.1	11.8	12.3
Spartanburg	265,939	416	3,134	2,124	5,258	50.6	12.7	-19.6
Sumter	338,968	530	2,284	1,583	3,867	87.7	7.3	36.1
Union	258,111	403	1,964	1,727	3,691	69.9	9.2	-19.0
Williamsburg	513,851	803	3,692	3,404	7,096	72.4	8.8	32.3
York	276,650	432	2,390	2,115	4,505	61.4	10.4	-16.2
Total	14,028,896	21,920	102,261	83,025	185,286	83.4	8.7	6.9
95% Confidence Interval for harvest			(+ -) 3,402	(+ -) 3,592	(+ -) 8,251			

* Acreage shown represents the acreage of forested land and acreage of row crops considered to be significant deer habitat within each county.

Table 2. County rankings based on deer harvested per unit area in South Carolina in 2017.

County	Acres	Square Miles	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest	Harvest Rates		% Change from 2016
						Ac/Deer	Deer/Mi. ²	
Anderson	219,068	342	3,969	2,633	6,602	33.2	19.3	0.8
Bamberg	196,573	307	2,152	3,060	5,212	37.7	17.0	56.0
Hampton	324,840	508	3,744	3,785	7,529	43.1	14.8	18.0
Calhoun	190,584	298	2,004	2,118	4,122	46.2	13.8	-0.8
Spartanburg	265,939	416	3,134	2,124	5,258	50.6	12.7	-19.6
Abbeville	223,113	349	2,244	1,975	4,219	52.9	12.1	35.6
Saluda	192,173	300	1,938	1,617	3,555	54.1	11.8	12.3
Orangeburg	504,516	788	4,703	4,616	9,319	54.1	11.8	-4.5
Barnwell	281,764	440	2,440	2,452	4,892	57.6	11.1	52.9
Allendale	216,455	338	1,960	1,721	3,681	58.8	10.9	31.9
Newberry	317,761	497	3,085	2,101	5,186	61.3	10.4	9.7
York	276,650	432	2,390	2,115	4,505	61.4	10.4	-16.2
Chester	300,589	470	3,010	1,710	4,720	63.7	10.0	6.6
Fairfield	384,607	601	3,318	2,647	5,965	64.5	9.9	39.5
Laurens	317,916	497	3,030	1,890	4,920	64.6	9.9	-17.7
Charleston	288,732	451	2,251	2,150	4,401	65.6	9.8	43.6
Colleton	502,666	785	3,899	3,563	7,462	67.4	9.5	9.0
Dorchester	302,717	473	2,438	2,020	4,458	67.9	9.4	17.6
Cherokee	156,664	245	1,288	983	2,271	69.0	9.3	-0.5
Greenwood	204,400	319	1,795	1,142	2,937	69.6	9.2	2.9
Union	258,111	403	1,964	1,727	3,691	69.9	9.2	-19.0
Lee	220,106	344	1,636	1,420	3,056	72.0	8.9	10.0
Williamsburg	513,851	803	3,692	3,404	7,096	72.4	8.8	32.3
McCormick	212,021	331	1,701	1,094	2,795	75.9	8.4	-3.2
Beaufort	147,441	230	998	850	1,848	79.8	8.0	4.5
Lancaster	266,382	416	1,763	1,289	3,052	87.3	7.3	-2.2
Sumter	338,968	530	2,284	1,583	3,867	87.7	7.3	36.1
Edgefield	246,543	385	1,625	1,131	2,756	89.4	7.2	-4.9
Greenville	294,257	460	1,917	1,307	3,224	91.3	7.0	-5.1
Clarendon	298,087	466	1,820	1,429	3,249	91.8	7.0	-29.2
Lexington	280,742	439	1,832	1,099	2,931	95.8	6.7	-16.7
Berkeley	567,530	887	3,269	2,580	5,849	97.0	6.6	52.3
Florence	397,888	622	2,142	1,903	4,045	98.4	6.5	-4.3
Aiken	500,546	782	2,919	1,976	4,895	102.3	6.3	16.5
Chesterfield	372,478	582	2,089	1,498	3,587	103.9	6.2	-11.6
Richland	340,121	531	1,787	1,409	3,196	106.4	6.0	36.3
Kershaw	360,485	563	1,810	1,543	3,353	107.5	6.0	-22.1
Marion	216,907	339	1,306	637	1,943	111.6	5.7	71.0
Jasper	309,889	484	1,335	1,422	2,757	112.4	5.7	-25.3
Pickens	219,926	344	1,290	652	1,942	113.2	5.7	-16.3
Darlington	286,228	447	1,138	1,257	2,395	119.5	5.4	51.2
Marlboro	281,271	439	1,251	1,063	2,314	121.6	5.3	60.8
Oconee	284,348	444	1,477	840	2,317	122.7	5.2	11.7
Horry	533,336	833	2,580	1,352	3,932	135.6	4.7	31.5
Georgetown	399,638	624	1,326	1,498	2,824	141.5	4.5	5.4
Dillon	214,069	334	518	640	1,158	184.8	3.5	3.6
Total	14,028,896	21,920	102,261	83,025	185,286	83.4	8.7	6.9

Table 3. County rankings based on total deer harvested in South Carolina in 2017.

County	Acres	Square Miles	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest	Harvest Rates		% Change from 2016
						Ac/Deer	Deer/Mi. ²	
Orangeburg	504,516	788	4,703	4,616	9,319	54.1	11.8	-4.5
Hampton	324,840	508	3,744	3,785	7,529	43.1	14.8	18.0
Colleton	502,666	785	3,899	3,563	7,462	67.4	9.5	9.0
Williamsburg	513,851	803	3,692	3,404	7,096	72.4	8.8	32.3
Anderson	219,068	342	3,969	2,633	6,602	33.2	19.3	0.8
Fairfield	384,607	601	3,318	2,647	5,965	64.5	9.9	39.5
Berkeley	567,530	887	3,269	2,580	5,849	97.0	6.6	52.3
Spartanburg	265,939	416	3,134	2,124	5,258	50.6	12.7	-19.6
Bamberg	196,573	307	2,152	3,060	5,212	37.7	17.0	56.0
Newberry	317,761	497	3,085	2,101	5,186	61.3	10.4	9.7
Laurens	317,916	497	3,030	1,890	4,920	64.6	9.9	-17.7
Aiken	500,546	782	2,919	1,976	4,895	102.3	6.3	16.5
Barnwell	281,764	440	2,440	2,452	4,892	57.6	11.1	52.9
Chester	300,589	470	3,010	1,710	4,720	63.7	10.0	6.6
York	276,650	432	2,390	2,115	4,505	61.4	10.4	-16.2
Dorchester	302,717	473	2,438	2,020	4,458	67.9	9.4	17.6
Charleston	288,732	451	2,251	2,150	4,401	65.6	9.8	43.6
Abbeville	223,113	349	2,244	1,975	4,219	52.9	12.1	35.6
Calhoun	190,584	298	2,004	2,118	4,122	46.2	13.8	-0.8
Florence	397,888	622	2,142	1,903	4,045	98.4	6.5	-4.3
Horry	533,336	833	2,580	1,352	3,932	135.6	4.7	31.5
Sumter	338,968	530	2,284	1,583	3,867	87.7	7.3	36.1
Union	258,111	403	1,964	1,727	3,691	69.9	9.2	-19.0
Allendale	216,455	338	1,960	1,721	3,681	58.8	10.9	31.9
Chesterfield	372,478	582	2,089	1,498	3,587	103.9	6.2	-11.6
Saluda	192,173	300	1,938	1,617	3,555	54.1	11.8	12.3
Kershaw	360,485	563	1,810	1,543	3,353	107.5	6.0	-22.1
Clarendon	298,087	466	1,820	1,429	3,249	91.8	7.0	-29.2
Greenville	294,257	460	1,917	1,307	3,224	91.3	7.0	-5.1
Richland	340,121	531	1,787	1,409	3,196	106.4	6.0	36.3
Lee	220,106	344	1,636	1,420	3,056	72.0	8.9	10.0
Lancaster	266,382	416	1,763	1,289	3,052	87.3	7.3	-2.2
Greenwood	204,400	319	1,795	1,142	2,937	69.6	9.2	2.9
Lexington	280,742	439	1,832	1,099	2,931	95.8	6.7	-16.7
Georgetown	399,638	624	1,326	1,498	2,824	141.5	4.5	5.4
McCormick	212,021	331	1,701	1,094	2,795	75.9	8.4	-3.2
Jasper	309,889	484	1,335	1,422	2,757	112.4	5.7	-25.3
Edgefield	246,543	385	1,625	1,131	2,756	89.4	7.2	-4.9
Darlington	286,228	447	1,138	1,257	2,395	119.5	5.4	51.2
Oconee	284,348	444	1,477	840	2,317	122.7	5.2	11.7
Marlboro	281,271	439	1,251	1,063	2,314	121.6	5.3	60.8
Cherokee	156,664	245	1,288	983	2,271	69.0	9.3	-0.5
Marion	216,907	339	1,306	637	1,943	111.6	5.7	71.0
Pickens	219,926	344	1,290	652	1,942	113.2	5.7	-16.3
Beaufort	147,441	230	998	850	1,848	79.8	8.0	4.5
Dillon	214,069	334	518	640	1,158	184.8	3.5	3.6
Total	14,028,896	21,920	102,261	83,025	185,286	83.4	8.7	6.9

Table 4. Estimated deer harvest on Wildlife Management Areas in South Carolina in 2017.

Area	Acreage	Bucks	Does	Total	Deer/Mi.²
Mountain Hunt Unit	193,566	1,083	605	1,688	5.6
Central Piedmont Hunt Unit	159,793	1,414	1,039	2,453	9.8
Western Piedmont Hunt Unit	119,077	946	683	1,629	8.8
Subtotal for Upstate WMA's	472,436	3,443	2,327	5,770	7.8
Coastal WMA's*					
Bear Island WMA	1,519	2	9	11	4.6
Bonneau Ferry ¹	10,697	33	26	64	3.8
Botany Bay WMA	2,000	23	40	63	20.2
Crackerneck WMA	10,470	51	29	80	4.9
Cross Generating Station WMA	654	2	5	7	6.9
Donnelley WMA	8,048	11	14	25	2.0
Francis Marion WMA	252,578	130	87	217	0.5
Hamilton Ridge	13,281	30	38	68	3.3
Liberty Hill	7,876	20	22	42	3.4
Hickory Top WMA	1,836	4	4	8	2.8
Manchester State Forest WMA	25,505	90	57	147	3.7
Moultrie WMA	9,480	8	13	21	1.4
Oak Lea WMA	2,024	22	12	34	10.8
Palachucola WMA	5,947	10	28	38	4.1
Santee Cooper WMA	2,828	15	18	33	7.5
Victoria Bluff WMA ¹	800	2	2	11	8.8
Wateree River WMA	3,674	10	9	19	3.3
Webb Wildlife Center WMA	5,866	34	61	95	10.4
Subtotal for Coastal WMA's	365,083	497	474	983	1.7
Total	837,519	3,940	2,801	6,753	5.2

*Check Station data. ¹ Total includes deer of unknown sex

Table 5. Hunter opinion (percent) regarding the number of deer in the area hunted most often in South Carolina in 2017 compared to previous years.

	Increasing	About the Same	Decreasing
Residents	18.6	54.8	26.6
Non-Residents	18.3	58.3	23.4
Overall	18.6	55.2	26.2

Table 6. Resident deer hunter and deer harvest statistics in South Carolina in 2017.

County	Number Hunters	Man/Days Hunted	Percent Success	Deer/ Hunter	Days/ Deer	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest
Abbeville	3,588	51,884	71	1.2	12.6	2,191	1,940	4,131
Aiken	4,152	59,165	68	1.1	12.8	2,796	1,836	4,632
Allendale	1,273	16,919	77	1.1	12.5	709	647	1,356
Anderson	4,882	76,440	72	1.3	11.9	3,881	2,545	6,426
Bamberg	2,357	33,504	71	1.7	8.2	1,606	2,462	4,068
Barnwell	1,961	29,542	82	1.9	7.7	1,982	1,836	3,818
Beaufort	1,064	10,473	90	1.6	6.2	981	709	1,690
Berkeley	4,506	68,158	61	1.3	11.8	3,234	2,545	5,779
Calhoun	2,483	31,587	75	1.6	7.8	2,003	2,065	4,068
Charleston	3,192	39,679	72	1.3	9.5	2,128	2,044	4,173
Cherokee	1,356	23,909	58	1.4	12.5	1,147	772	1,919
Chester	3,234	50,717	64	1.0	16.0	2,024	1,147	3,171
Chesterfield	2,065	40,203	70	1.4	13.9	1,648	1,252	2,900
Clarendon	2,191	35,424	71	1.4	11.4	1,732	1,377	3,109
Colleton	4,047	65,214	78	1.7	9.5	3,547	3,317	6,864
Darlington	1,857	33,359	74	1.2	14.5	1,085	1,210	2,295
Dillon	876	14,896	74	1.3	13.5	501	605	1,106
Dorchester	3,046	48,339	68	1.5	10.9	2,420	2,003	4,423
Edgefield	2,462	32,461	63	1.0	12.8	1,502	1,043	2,545
Fairfield	4,214	53,137	72	1.2	10.5	2,754	2,295	5,049
Florence	2,670	49,485	75	1.5	12.6	2,107	1,815	3,922
Georgetown	2,420	37,593	66	1.1	13.7	1,273	1,481	2,754
Greenville	3,380	40,972	62	0.9	13.0	1,878	1,272	3,150
Greenwood	2,337	31,065	71	1.2	11.5	1,690	1,001	2,691
Hampton	2,670	34,758	78	1.5	8.9	1,878	2,024	3,901
Horry	3,025	53,910	67	1.3	13.9	2,545	1,335	3,881
Jasper	1,210	18,213	87	1.4	11.1	772	876	1,648
Kershaw	2,462	33,650	78	1.2	11.3	1,669	1,314	2,983
Lancaster	2,003	33,130	74	1.3	13.1	1,481	1,043	2,524
Laurens	4,819	65,802	64	0.9	14.4	2,837	1,732	4,569
Lee	1,606	24,409	74	1.7	8.8	1,460	1,314	2,775
Lexington	3,213	46,689	64	0.9	16.2	1,815	1,064	2,879
McCormick	1,982	27,664	67	1.1	12.4	1,314	918	2,232
Marion	1,523	28,143	71	1.3	14.7	1,293	626	1,919
Marlboro	1,168	25,786	82	1.6	13.9	1,022	835	1,857
Newberry	4,715	63,609	70	1.0	12.9	2,962	1,961	4,923
Oconee	2,316	32,608	66	1.0	14.5	1,460	793	2,253
Orangeburg	6,342	94,150	70	1.4	10.5	4,527	4,423	8,950
Pickens	2,712	31,420	56	0.7	16.7	1,273	605	1,878
Richland	3,150	40,890	74	1.0	13.2	1,752	1,356	3,109
Saluda	2,295	37,324	74	1.5	11.0	1,815	1,565	3,380
Spartanburg	4,798	62,964	65	1.1	12.2	3,046	2,107	5,153
Sumter	2,670	41,140	71	1.4	11.3	2,191	1,460	3,651
Union	3,401	40,453	54	0.8	15.1	1,419	1,252	2,670
Williamsburg	3,943	71,747	73	1.7	11.0	3,463	3,088	6,551
York	3,734	49,634	61	1.1	11.6	2,232	2,045	4,277
Total	131,371	1,932,215	69	1.3	11.8	91,045	72,956	164,001
% Change from 2016	5.2	3.7	5.8	7.6	-3.4	3.5	12.0	7.3

Table 7. Nonresident deer hunter and deer harvest statistics in South Carolina in 2017.

County	Number Hunters	Man/Days Hunted	Percent Success	Deer/Hunter	Days/Deer	Buck Harvest	Doe Harvest	Total Harvest
Abbeville	88	775	60	1.0	8.8	53	35	88
Aiken	211	3,629	75	1.3	13.7	123	141	264
Allendale	1,268	18,671	75	1.8	8.0	1,251	1,074	2,325
Anderson	106	1,339	83	1.7	7.6	88	88	176
Bamberg	687	8,437	82	1.7	7.4	546	599	1,145
Barnwell	476	6,200	85	2.3	5.8	458	617	1,075
Beaufort	123	1,286	71	1.3	8.1	18	141	159
Berkeley	53	194	70	1.3	2.7	35	35	70
Calhoun	159	1,638	55	1.0	30.0	2	53	55
Charleston	141	1,392	70	1.6	6.1	123	106	229
Cherokee	264	4,404	67	1.3	12.5	141	211	352
Chester	1,004	14,691	68	1.5	9.5	986	564	1,550
Chesterfield	423	5,584	67	1.6	8.1	440	247	687
Clarendon	88	916	70	1.6	6.5	88	53	141
Colleton	617	8,543	63	1.0	14.3	352	247	599
Darlington	70	617	50	1.4	6.2	53	47	100
Dillon	53	581	33	1.0	10.9	18	36	53
Dorchester	70	211	50	0.5	6.0	18	18	35
Edgefield	282	2,043	69	0.8	9.7	123	88	211
Fairfield	757	10,640	67	1.2	11.6	564	352	916
Florence	123	1,409	86	1.0	11.4	35	88	123
Georgetown	70	458	25	1.0	6.4	53	18	71
Greenville	53	370	33	1.4	4.9	40	36	76
Greenwood	194	2,431	64	1.3	9.9	106	141	247
Hampton	1,744	23,833	84	2.1	6.6	1,867	1,761	3,629
Horry	88	1,850	20	0.6	35.0	35	18	53
Jasper	546	6,958	71	2.0	6.3	564	546	1,110
Kershaw	335	3,629	79	1.1	9.8	141	229	370
Lancaster	476	7,046	70	1.1	13.3	282	247	528
Laurens	299	3,294	65	1.2	9.3	194	159	352
Lee	88	1,321	60	3.2	4.7	176	106	282
Lexington	18	176	70	3.0	3.3	18	35	53
McCormick	370	5,108	71	1.5	9.1	388	176	564
Marion	18	18	70	1.4	0.0	13	12	25
Marlboro	405	8,948	35	1.1	19.5	229	229	458
Newberry	229	2,642	62	1.2	10.0	123	141	264
Oconee	70	810	25	0.9	12.5	18	47	65
Orangeburg	247	2,237	64	1.5	6.0	176	194	370
Pickens	70	687	50	0.9	10.6	18	47	65
Richland	141	740	63	0.6	8.4	35	53	88
Saluda	159	1,515	67	1.1	8.6	123	53	176
Spartanburg	176	2,308	50	0.6	21.8	88	18	106
Sumter	123	1,233	43	1.8	5.7	94	123	217
Union	846	10,551	71	1.2	10.3	546	476	1,022
Williamsburg	352	4,192	70	1.6	7.7	229	317	546
York	493	6,500	46	0.5	28.4	159	70	229
Total	14,673	192,054	70	1.5	9.0	11,229	10,089	21,318
% Change from 2016	1.8	-2.6	8.5	6.6	-7.8	-5.6	16.7	4.9

Table 8. Hunting effort (man/days) by county for successful and unsuccessful resident and nonresident deer hunters in South Carolina in 2017.

County	Residents (man/days)			Total Effort Residents	Nonresidents (man/days)			Total Effort Nonresidents	Total Days
	Successful	Unsuccessful	Average		Successful	Unsuccessful	Average		
Abbeville	16.0	10.6	14.5	51,884	6.3	12.5	8.8	775	52,659
Aiken	16.4	9.7	14.3	59,165	20.1	8.3	17.2	3,629	62,794
Allendale	13.8	11.7	13.3	16,919	16.2	10.3	14.7	18,671	35,591
Anderson	18.6	8.1	15.7	76,440	14.6	3.0	12.7	1,339	77,778
Bamberg	17.0	7.2	14.2	33,504	13.7	5.9	12.3	8,437	41,942
Barnwell	15.7	12.0	15.1	29,542	14.3	5.8	13.0	6,200	35,742
Beaufort	10.5	3.6	9.8	10,473	12.8	4.5	10.4	1,286	11,759
Berkeley	19.4	8.4	15.1	68,158	3.7	6.5	3.7	194	68,351
Calhoun	15.1	5.6	12.7	31,587	13.4	16.6	10.3	1,638	33,225
Charleston	14.0	8.5	12.4	39,679	9.9	11.7	9.9	1,392	41,071
Cherokee	20.2	14.0	17.6	23,909	16.7	12.0	16.7	4,404	28,312
Chester	17.4	12.6	15.7	50,717	16.0	9.5	14.6	14,691	65,408
Chesterfield	22.4	12.4	19.5	40,203	13.8	8.0	13.2	5,584	45,786
Clarendon	18.5	10.3	16.2	35,424	10.4	15.0	10.4	916	36,340
Colleton	18.3	8.4	16.1	65,214	16.5	3.0	13.9	8,543	73,757
Darlington	19.0	15.0	18.0	33,359	9.5	3.6	8.8	617	33,975
Dillon	20.8	6.2	17.0	14,896	3.0	6.1	11.0	581	15,477
Dorchester	17.0	13.5	15.9	48,339	3.0	5.0	3.0	211	48,550
Edgefield	16.4	7.7	13.2	32,461	8.9	3.3	7.3	2,043	34,504
Fairfield	14.4	8.0	12.6	53,137	17.9	10.0	14.0	10,640	63,777
Florence	21.8	8.9	18.5	49,485	12.5	6.3	11.4	1,409	50,894
Georgetown	19.8	7.2	15.5	37,593	16.0	5.9	6.5	458	38,051
Greenville	13.5	9.9	12.1	40,972	1.0	20.0	7.0	370	41,342
Greenwood	15.9	6.9	13.3	31,065	16.1	12.8	12.5	2,431	33,496
Hampton	14.7	6.9	13.0	34,758	15.2	17.5	13.7	23,833	58,591
Horry	21.7	10.0	17.8	53,910	25.0	9.3	21.0	1,850	55,759
Jasper	15.0	15.1	15.1	18,213	12.7	6.5	12.7	6,958	25,171
Kershaw	14.9	9.3	13.7	33,650	9.1	6.5	10.8	3,629	37,279
Lancaster	19.4	8.4	16.5	33,130	17.2	12.0	14.8	7,046	40,176
Laurens	16.6	8.3	13.7	65,802	13.5	16.5	11.0	3,294	69,096
Lee	17.0	10.2	15.2	24,409	20.7	11.4	15.0	1,321	25,731
Lexington	16.6	11.0	14.5	46,689	10.0	8.7	10.0	176	46,865
McCormick	15.8	10.3	14.0	27,664	14.5	3.8	13.8	5,108	32,772
Marion	22.4	8.7	18.5	28,143	1.0	10.5	1.0	18	28,160
Marlboro	22.9	18.3	22.1	25,786	25.1	2.7	22.1	8,948	34,734
Newberry	15.8	8.3	13.5	63,609	11.6	3.3	11.5	2,642	66,251
Oconee	15.8	10.7	14.1	32,608	20.0	6.8	11.5	810	33,418
Orangeburg	16.7	10.4	14.8	94,150	12.0	13.3	9.1	2,237	96,387
Pickens	13.3	9.3	11.6	31,420	9.0	7.9	9.8	687	32,107
Richland	14.8	7.6	13.0	40,890	6.8	9.3	5.3	740	41,630
Saluda	18.9	8.7	16.3	37,324	12.7	5.1	9.6	1,515	38,839
Spartanburg	16.0	7.8	13.1	62,964	19.4	16.8	13.1	2,308	65,272
Sumter	17.2	11.0	15.4	41,140	5.7	4.4	10.0	1,233	42,373
Union	15.5	7.7	11.9	40,453	14.4	9.8	12.5	10,551	51,004
Williamsburg	21.1	10.3	18.2	71,747	13.0	3.1	11.9	4,192	75,939
York	16.7	8.0	13.3	49,634	22.5	13.8	13.2	6,500	56,134
Total	17.0	9.3	14.7	1,932,215	14.8	8.9	13.1	192,054	2,124,269
% Change from 2016	-18.2	9.4	-1.3	3.7	-15.5	8.9	-3.8	-2.6	3.1

Table 9. Estimated deer harvest by weapon type in South Carolina in 2017.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun	Total
Number of Deer Harvested	148,229	13,155	15,749	4,632	3,150	371	185,286
Percent Total Deer Harvest	80.0	7.1	8.5	2.5	1.7	0.2	100.0
Percent Hunter Success With Weapon	61.6	27.6	32.1	24.7	17.5	10.6	NA*

* Total is not applicable because individual hunters take deer with multiple weapons.

Table 10. Number of hunters using each type of weapon in South Carolina in 2017.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun
Residents	120,599	30,215	28,113	15,370	13,794	4,073
Nonresidents	13,895	1,702	836	2,406	1,233	205
Total	134,494	31,917	28,950	17,777	15,026	4,278

Total across weapons not given because hunters use multiple weapons. Total hunters = 146,044.

Table 11. Weapons utilization (percent) among deer hunters in South Carolina in 2017.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun
Residents	91.8*	23.0*	21.4*	11.7*	10.5	3.1
Nonresidents	94.7	11.6	5.7	16.4	8.4	1.4
Total	92.2	21.4	19.2	12.3	10.2	2.8

* Significant difference in weapons use category based on residency.

Table 12. Weapons preference (percent) among deer hunters in South Carolina in 2017.

	Rifle	Bow & Arrow	Shotgun	Muzzle-loader	Crossbow	Handgun	Total
Residents	77.9	12.6*	6.4*	0.9*	1.7	0.6	100.0
Nonresidents	83.7	9.1	2.1	3.3	1.5	0.3	100.0
Total	78.7	12.1	5.8	1.2	1.7	0.5	100.0

* Significant difference in weapons preference category based on residency.

Table 13. Estimated wild hog and coyote harvest by deer hunters in South Carolina in 2017.

Rank is by per unit area harvested.

County	Hog Harv.	Harv./ Mile ²	% Change from 2016	2017 Rank	2016 Rank	Coyote Harv.	Harv./ Mile ²	% Change from 2016	2017 Rank	2016 Rank
Abbeville	2,165	6.21	31.3	1	1	577	1.66	-18.7	7	11
Aiken	746	0.95	41.5	32	31	601	0.77	-55.5	29	16
Allendale	1,636	4.84	83.1	2	4	409	1.21	-15.0	16	19
Anderson	818	2.39	-20.7	13	3	1,034	3.02	18.8	1	1
Bamberg	649	2.11	66.8	17	17	216	0.70	-27.3	36	32
Barnwell	265	0.60	-11.2	38	30	481	1.09	31.3	19	35
Beaufort	168	0.73	207.6	37	46	96	0.42	138.9	42	46
Berkeley	1,347	1.52	96.0	23	27	313	0.35	-43.1	45	39
Calhoun	986	3.31	59.4	6	8	457	1.53	-33.5	10	4
Charleston	1,660	3.68	119.5	4	12	168	0.37	-38.7	44	41
Cherokee	96	0.39	-53.3	40	25	337	1.38	13.1	12	25
Chester	409	0.87	62.3	34	35	866	1.84	-16.0	5	7
Chesterfield	577	0.99	110.0	31	38	481	0.83	-36.4	26	23
Clarendon	842	1.81	162.5	19	28	337	0.72	-30.0	34	29
Colleton	1,924	2.45	110.0	11	18	385	0.49	-47.5	40	34
Darlington	842	1.88	129.7	18	26	168	0.38	-65.0	43	28
Dillon	168	0.50	-56.8	39	19	144	0.43	26.0	41	44
Dorchester	409	0.86	-18.9	35	21	409	0.86	5.0	25	36
Edgefield	96	0.25	40.0	42	43	722	1.87	-7.4	4	12
Fairfield	1,082	1.80	237.5	20	36	1,130	1.88	33.4	3	20
Florence	553	0.89	-19.5	33	20	433	0.70	-30.0	36	30
Georgetown	1,852	2.97	72.0	8	10	505	0.81	83.8	28	42
Greenville	505	1.10	69.6	29	32	457	0.99	-26.1	22	22
Greenwood	722	2.26	31.3	15	10	529	1.66	-30.0	7	3
Hampton	1,587	3.13	-5.1	7	2	770	1.52	110.0	11	38
Horry	2,020	2.42	126.2	12	21	601	0.72	101.9	34	43
Jasper	1,251	2.58	160.0	10	24	313	0.65	5.0	38	39
Kershaw	649	1.15	13.4	27	23	120	0.21	-91.5	46	2
Lancaster	529	1.27	285.0	25	39	529	1.27	-40.8	15	8
Laurens	746	1.50	117.0	24	28	1,058	2.13	15.5	2	14
Lee	529	1.54	362.0	21	39	409	1.19	-42.4	17	10
Lexington	24	0.05	240.0	46	46	361	0.82	-41.7	27	20
McCormick	890	2.69	17.7	9	7	337	1.02	-45.6	21	13
Marion	1,203	3.55	54.4	5	6	192	0.57	-30.0	39	37
Marlboro	986	2.24	59.4	16	15	409	0.93	197.5	24	45
Newberry	553	1.11	72.5	28	32	649	1.31	-25.4	14	15
Oconee	553	1.25	-38.1	26	9	337	0.76	-47.5	32	18
Orangeburg	265	0.34	-32.1	41	37	1,082	1.37	-14.1	13	17
Pickens	361	1.05	-25.0	30	16	265	0.77	-32.1	29	27
Richland	2,020	3.80	57.5	3	5	409	0.77	-36.2	29	26
Saluda	72	0.24	5.0	43	41	289	0.96	-58.0	23	5
Spartanburg	337	0.81	267.5	36	42	673	1.62	-24.6	9	8
Sumter	818	1.54	-0.8	21	13	625	1.18	18.7	18	30
Union	72	0.18	-68.5	44	34	433	1.07	-14.1	20	24
Williamsburg	1,828	2.28	59.6	14	14	601	0.75	-22.8	33	32
York	48	0.11	110.0	45	46	722	1.67	-25.0	6	6
Total	37,858	1.73	33.3	NA	NA	22,441	1.02	-27.1	NA	NA
	(+ -) 2,652					(+ -) 1,358				

95% Confidence Interval for harvest

Ranking is based on harvest per square mile

Table 14. Number of deer-vehicle collisions reported by the South Carolina Department of Transportation 2012-2016.

County	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Abbeville	9	1	10	3	9
Aiken	74	67	77	62	84
Allendale	8	9	13	9	10
Anderson	105	91	87	86	88
Bamberg	18	13	21	11	12
Barnwell	15	15	17	15	14
Beaufort	179	166	138	112	108
Berkeley	102	88	74	79	57
Calhoun	41	29	28	34	47
Charleston	244	185	185	147	199
Cherokee	26	25	22	25	15
Chester	22	18	16	16	33
Chesterfield	14	21	11	14	33
Clarendon	34	24	26	23	21
Colleton	70	82	85	66	56
Darlington	44	48	49	59	87
Dillon	28	41	25	64	54
Dorchester	81	73	71	77	67
Edgefield	7	7	5	3	8
Fairfield	35	16	15	26	28
Florence	99	91	74	118	113
Georgetown	47	47	28	34	29
Greenville	129	115	139	121	111
Greenwood	15	10	25	17	18
Hampton	12	11	20	15	10
Horry	103	135	131	184	189
Jasper	58	74	55	56	54
Kershaw	49	51	46	37	33
Lancaster	23	15	23	30	31
Laurens	15	15	20	16	16
Lee	35	23	19	21	19
Lexington	68	35	57	34	38
McCormick	7	4	7	3	1
Marion	35	43	31	39	45
Marlboro	19	22	21	21	51
Newberry	8	11	10	7	8
Oconee	18	8	14	15	7
Orangeburg	115	142	152	143	144
Pickens	25	29	23	32	23
Richland	99	71	85	54	77
Saluda	9	8	7	7	6
Spartanburg	146	160	158	136	165
Sumter	69	62	39	43	24
Union	19	15	15	10	18
Williamsburg	71	64	43	58	85
York	35	77	98	96	115
Total	2,484	2,357	2,315	2,278	2,460

Table 15. Average live body weights of deer from South Carolina counties, based on historic data.

COUNTY	Males				Females			
	1.5 Years Old		2.5+ Years Old		1.5 Years Old		2.5+ Years Old	
	N	Avg. Wt.	N	Avg. Wt.	N	Avg. Wt.	N	Avg. Wt.
Abbeville	1,390	111.7	484	145.9	466	90.4	747	102.7
Aiken	2,667	121.6	1,485	162.6	808	94.9	1,522	109.6
Allendale	6,175	108.9	3,333	146.0	2,503	87.7	5,606	100.8
Anderson	30	121.9	17	148.1	4	92.5	8	113.0
Bamberg	2,414	111.9	1,113	142.4	884	91.4	1,721	103.9
Barnwell	1,478	119.1	695	156.6	601	94.3	1,071	106.9
Beaufort	952	101.6	1,236	135.2	690	86.7	1,818	99.8
Berkeley	3,162	100.6	4,198	127.3	1,086	83.4	3,991	97.2
Calhoun	1,588	110.2	633	144.1	312	91.4	943	104.6
Charleston	1,256	97.9	2,088	123.3	422	83.3	1,581	95.8
Cherokee	1	80.0	1	139.0	9	77.8	26	89.6
Chester	1,445	105.9	963	140.1	470	87.4	1,091	99.4
Chesterfield	79	119.4	140	152.5	27	93.5	1,128	99.8
Clarendon	13	101.3	29	152.5	42	89.6	87	103.0
Colleton	5,822	105.6	6,908	135.5	3,279	87.9	8,920	100.4
Darlington	334	113.6	273	153.3	216	92.8	573	105.2
Dillon	74	112.8	46	138.5	13	92.8	50	103.9
Dorchester	1,868	107.2	2,205	137.0	653	88.0	2,055	103.0
Edgefield	556	100.9	334	133.4	159	84.6	306	96.9
Fairfield	2,048	102.1	1,444	136.5	761	86.3	2,021	99.2
Florence	696	110.8	459	139.2	198	89.6	621	102.8
Georgetown	1,881	98.7	2,281	126.1	668	85.6	1,961	97.6
Greenville	7	122.1	9	149.9	7	79.3	16	98.4
Greenwood	1,158	111.4	537	145.1	313	90.2	629	103.0
Hampton	6,103	106.7	4,710	140.0	3,034	87.2	7,236	100.5
Horry	302	96.1	311	126.1	129	79.2	301	91.3
Jasper	3,385	101.8	4,691	135.4	2,142	84.6	5,948	96.9
Kershaw	603	108.9	588	144.6	251	89.6	758	102.9
Lancaster	472	113.1	246	153.3	213	91.4	441	105.2
Laurens	240	104.7	181	132.9	107	87.3	238	96.9
Lee	472	119.6	187	151.3	162	96.6	330	108.5
Lexington	20	120.8	9	164.8	6	101.3	15	115.8
McCormick	2,354	101.5	1,056	134.5	877	85.3	1,745	97.3
Marion	690	108.5	501	138.7	256	88.6	630	98.7
Marlboro	106	115.0	62	149.8	30	95.0	70	107.8
Newberry	143	97.1	100	135.6	85	86.0	171	92.7
Oconee	74	113.1	58	152.6	33	85.3	39	99.6
Orangeburg	2,293	112.5	1,375	145.0	686	90.8	1,684	103.4
Pickens	47	109.1	41	145.4	18	79.9	48	100.5
Richland	1,320	106.1	1,274	145.2	651	92.7	1,879	106.3
Saluda	100	115.8	40	148.0	25	93.6	34	105.2
Spartanburg	34	109.3	22	142.2	13	95.0	31	98.8
Sumter	666	111.3	353	142.1	188	94.4	509	105.3
Union	958	101.7	608	135.8	439	87.9	761	97.8
Williamsburg	469	112.5	559	143.3	150	91.4	478	106.0
York	13	96.9	30	143.9	20	78.7	41	93.9
Total	57,958	107.3	47,913	137.9	24,106	88.0	61,879	100.6

Table 16. Antler characteristics of male deer from South Carolina counties, based on historic data

COUNTY	1.5 Years Old Males			2.5+ Years Old Males			% 1.5 Bucks in Antlered Harvest
	Number Points	Percent Spikes	Outside Spread	Number Points	Percent Spikes	Outside Spread	
Abbeville	4.2	32		7.2	2		74
Aiken	4.4	28	8.7	7.4	1	14.7	64
Allendale	4.0	36	7.7	7.2	3	13.7	65
Anderson	4.7	28		6.8	0		63
Bamberg	4.0	34	7.6	6.7	4	12.5	68
Barnwell	4.6	21	8.7	7.1	2	13.9	68
Beaufort	3.1	58	7.4	6.4	9	13.0	44
Berkeley	3.0	62	6.6	5.8	12	11.5	43
Calhoun	4.0	33	7.4	7.0	3	13.2	72
Charleston	2.8	69	6.2	5.4	15	10.6	38
Cherokee				7.0	0		50
Chester	3.4	47	8.7	6.7	4	13.9	61
Chesterfield	4.5	21	8.6	7.2			61
Clarendon	2.8	58	6.2	7.7	3	12.9	31
Colleton	3.3	50	6.9	6.4	7	11.7	46
Darlington	3.1	57	7.4	6.7	5	13.7	55
Dillon	3.2	54	8.1	5.7	9	11.6	62
Dorchester	3.3	53	6.6	6.0	9	11.1	46
Edgefield	3.3	50		6.6	5		63
Fairfield	3.1	55	7.5	6.4	6	13.8	59
Florence	3.4	47	7.4	6.1	9	12.1	60
Georgetown	2.8	65	6.6	5.6	13	11.0	45
Greenville	4.7	14		7.6	0		44
Greenwood	3.9	34		6.7	3		68
Hampton	3.9	39	7.7	6.9	4	13.0	56
Horry	3.0	58	6.8	6.2	8	12.1	49
Jasper	3.3	52	7.0	6.6	6	12.8	42
Kershaw	3.6	47	7.7	6.9	7	12.3	51
Lancaster	4.3	27	6.7	7.4	0	15.0	66
Laurens	3.2	53	6.7	6.0	10	13.7	57
Lee	4.3	25	8.4	6.7	2	12.9	72
Lexington	4.1	30	9.1	7.3	0	15.7	69
McCormick	3.5	47		6.8	4		69
Marion	3.3	52	7.3	6.2	10	12.4	58
Marlboro	3.1	53	7.0	6.4	10	12.6	63
Newberry	2.8	54		6.3	8	13.3	59
Oconee	3.4	52		7.3	3		56
Orangeburg	3.8	38	7.6	6.8	5	12.6	63
Pickens	4.0	43		7.2	2		53
Richland	3.3	52	7.3	6.8	5	13.5	51
Saluda	4.0	32	9.0	6.9	0	10.8	71
Spartanburg	4.0	33	6.1	7.1	0		61
Sumter	3.7	41	7.7	6.6	5	12.5	65
Union	3.3	51	7.2	6.6	5	13.6	61
Williamsburg	3.6	43	7.6	6.8	5	12.6	46
York	3.1	60	5.3	7.4	0	13.3	30
Total	3.6	44	7.4	6.5	7	12.4	55

Figure 1. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources 2017 Deer Hunter Survey

January, 2018

Dear Sportsman:

White-tailed deer are one of the most important game species in South Carolina. Therefore, it is important that this species be monitored for population status and harvesting activities. Wildlife resource managers require current and accurate information about deer harvests to aid in successfully managing this important natural resource and to optimize future hunting potential. To obtain this needed data, the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is conducting a survey of licensed Big Game Permit holders.

You are one of a group of randomly selected hunters asked to participate in this survey. To draw accurate conclusions it is very important that you complete the survey and return it. Please take time to read each question. Even if you did not hunt deer last season please indicate this by answering the appropriate questions and moving on to the next set of questions.

In addition to the questions concerning your deer hunting activities, there are questions concerning the weapons that you used to harvest deer and questions concerning the number of wild hogs and coyotes that you may have harvested. Not only is this data important to DNR game biologists, many hunters are interested in this type of information so it is important that you answer these questions too.

Please note that complete confidentiality will be given to you. There is no number on your survey form, therefore, there is no way to link your responses to you. Keep in mind that the primary purpose of the survey is to determine the deer harvest in South Carolina and not to determine whether game laws are observed. By accurately answering the survey questions you will enable DNR biologists to better manage the white-tailed deer resource for you and other citizens of the state.

Please keep in mind that in order to reduce costs, this is the only 2017 Deer Hunter Survey form you will receive. There will be no reminders or second surveys sent to individuals that do not respond to this initial survey. Therefore, it is very important that you take a few minutes to complete this survey and mail it. Return postage is prepaid.

Results of this survey will be posted on the DNR web site once completed (hopefully by June). The results from the 2016 survey can be found at www.dnr.sc.gov/wildlife/deer/2016/DeerHarvestReport.html

Thank you for your assistance.



Charles Ruth
Wildlife Biologist
Big Game Program Coordinator

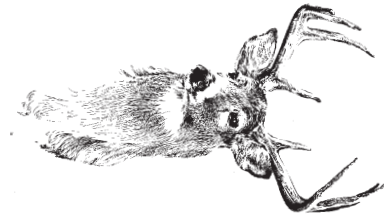
PLEASE MAIL YOUR SURVEY AFTER SEPARATING THIS HALF FROM THE SIDE ON WHICH YOUR ANSWERS HAVE BEEN ENTERED. NO POSTAGE IS NECESSARY.

If you have questions regarding this survey, please call 803-734-3886 or write 2017 Deer Hunter Survey, SCDNR, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202.

The South Carolina Department of Natural Resources prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, national origin, disability, religion or age. Direct all inquiries to the Office of Human Resources, P.O. Box 167, Columbia, SC 29202

17-11588

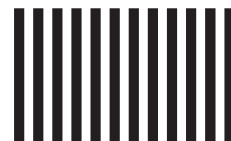
 Printed on Recycled Paper



**DEER HUNTER SURVEY
SC DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
PO BOX 167
COLUMBIA SC 29202-9976**

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NECESSARY
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UNITED STATES

Figure 1 Cont.

2017 South Carolina Deer Hunter Survey

1. Did you hunt deer in SC this past season (2017)? 1. Yes 2. No
If you answered **No** to this question please **go to question # 9.**
2. Did you harvest any deer in SC this past season? 1. Yes 2. No
3. Even if you did not harvest any deer, please record the SC counties you deer hunted and the number of days hunted in each county this past season (2017). Please begin with the county you hunted the most. If you harvested deer please record the number of bucks and does taken in each county. A day of hunting is defined as any portion of the day spent afield. Please do not give ranges (i.e. 5-10), rather provide absolute numbers (i.e. 5). Provide information only for yourself - not friends, relatives, or other hunt club members.

Counties You Deer Hunted	# Days Hunted	Number Deer Harvested	
1		# Bucks	#Does
2		# Bucks	#Does
3		# Bucks	#Does
4		# Bucks	#Does

If you did not harvest any deer in SC in 2017 please go to question # 6.

4. Please record the number of deer taken by month of season in SC last season (2017).

August	September	October	November	December	January

5. Please record the number of deer taken with each weapon in SC last season (2017).

Rifle	Bow	Shotgun	Muzzleloader	Crossbow	Handgun

6. Please circle **all** the weapons that you hunted deer with in 2017.

1. Rifle 2. Bow 3. Shotgun 4. Muzzleloader 5. Crossbow 6. Handgun

7. Please circle the **one** weapon that you **prefer to hunt deer with.**

1. Rifle 2. Bow 3. Shotgun 4. Muzzleloader 5. Crossbow 6. Handgun

8. Compared to past years, how would you describe the number of deer in the area that you hunt most often? **Circle one**

1. Increasing 2. About the same 3. Decreasing

9. If you **harvested** any wild hogs or coyotes while hunting in SC in 2017, please complete the box below.

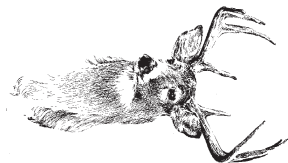
If you did not harvest any hogs or coyotes please **go to question # 10.**

County	# Hogs	County	# Coyotes
1		1	
2		2	
3		3	

10. Are you a resident of SC? 1. Yes 2. No

11. If yes, which county _____

Separate and return this portion of the survey. Postage is prepaid. Please do not staple this form.



**Help Manage
SC's Deer Herd
COMPLETE YOUR
HUNTER
SURVEY**



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SCDNR
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www.dnr.sc.gov

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Figure 2. Percent of deer harvested by month of season in South Carolina in 2017. Note that December includes January 1 which is the last day of deer season.

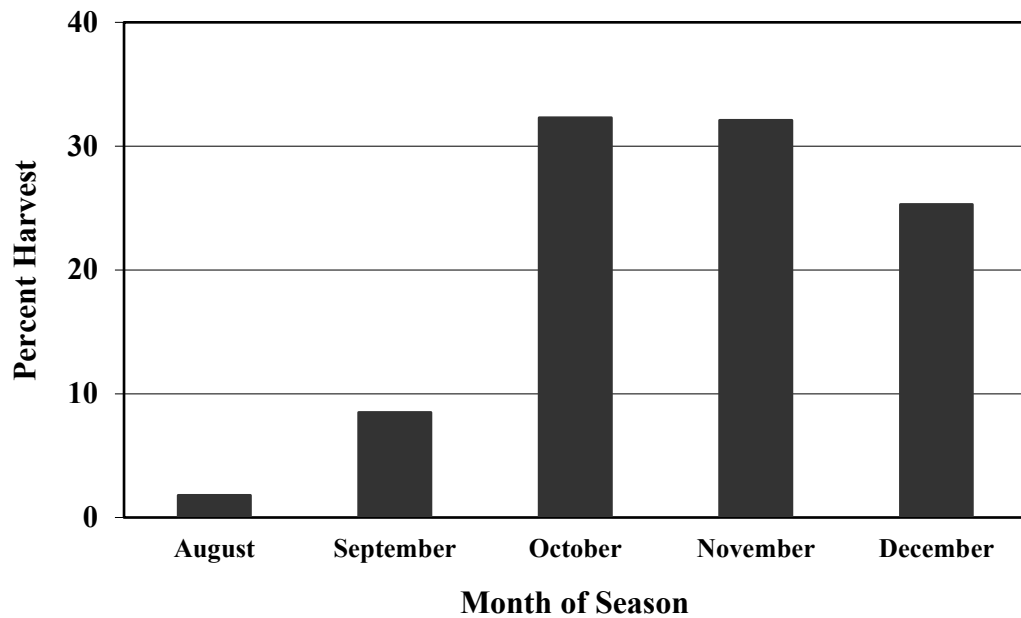


Figure 3. Percent of female deer conceiving by week in South Carolina, based on historic data.

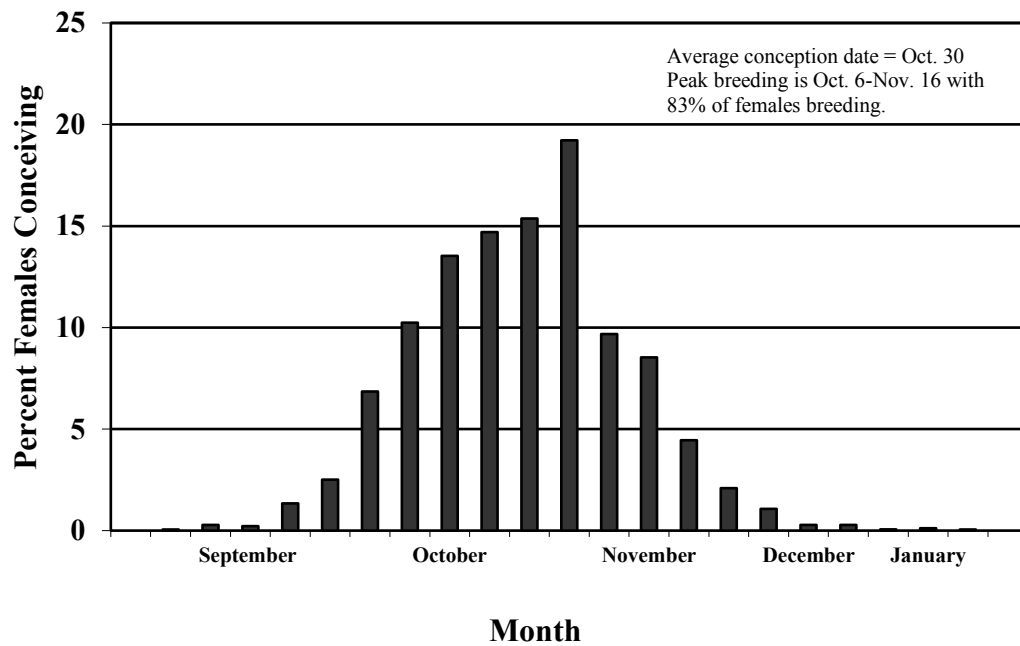


Figure 4. Estimated deer harvest in South Carolina 1972-2017.

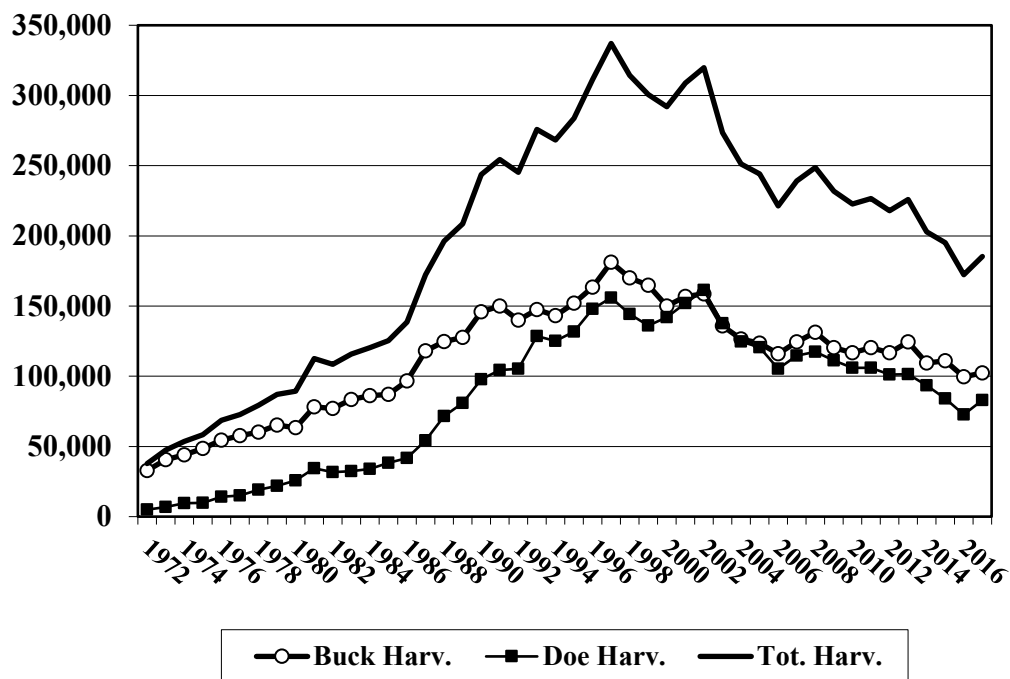


Figure 5. Estimated South Carolina deer population 1972-2017 based on population reconstruction modeling. Note that antlerless deer includes male fawns (button bucks).

