

# Deer Season Frequently Asked Questions



## 1. What are the benefits of reducing the deer population in our area?

Overpopulation of deer has three main impacts; degradation of our forests, increased rates of tick borne diseases, and increased number of deer/vehicle accidents. While there are options to decrease the impact of deer overabundance, such as driving slower, the only solution to deal with all three problems is reducing the number of deer.

Impacts to our ecology from excessive deer density, is the least known problem in the community. Deer have effectively eaten away our native shrubs and eaten the young seedlings and saplings of the canopy trees. Without the understory shrubs and saplings, the forest cannot properly heal following a blowdown, it cannot support the songbirds that rely on the shrubs for nesting and food.

Deer are also the essential large mammal host that allows deer ticks to successfully reproduce. If the ticks don't find a deer to feed on, they die before they can lay eggs.

Reducing deer to densities of 8 per square mile or fewer has been shown to dramatically reduce the population of the tick that spreads Lyme disease, Ehrlichiosis and Babesiosis to the human population.

## 2. I am not familiar with hunting, how safe is it?

Hunting is among the safest of all outdoor activities and has one of the lowest accident rates for all forms of outdoor recreation. Hunting accidents are rare and most injuries while hunting are self-inflicted or involve members of the same hunting party. The safety record of hunters has improved substantially over the years due in large part to mandatory hunter education which has produced an extremely safety-conscious generation of hunters. The latest data from the International Hunter Education Association indicate a national rate of 6 hunting related firearms accidents per 100,000 hunters for all kinds of hunting.

Connecticut enjoys one of the best safety records among the states. In a 24 year period, Connecticut has had an average of 4 accidents per year, which includes all incidents, such as a hunter suffering a heart attack, falling from a tree stand, or tripping and falling, again from all types of hunting. This is among some 60,000 firearms hunters and 13,000 archery hunters, who spend a conservative estimate of 1 million+ days afield each year during the various seasons.

Since 1982 when collection of hunting related injury information in Connecticut became standardized, there have been 9 fatalities and 101 non fatal accidents recorded through 2010. Among the fatalities that occurred while hunting, 1 was self-inflicted, 1 was a fall from a tree stand, 2 were from natural causes (heart attack), and 2 were among those illegally hunting (poaching). The largest percentage of non-fatal accidents in Connecticut involve relatively minor injuries among upland bird hunters (pheasant, grouse, woodcock) using shotguns, at distances to victim of 50 yards or less, where the injured person is in the line of fire (while swinging on game, when the victim was out of sight of the shooter).

**3. If I am interested in having someone hunt on my property, how do I find a qualified person?**

Hunters can be found through word of mouth, at various websites or by requesting a hunter be assigned to you at [DeerCommittee@wiltonct.org](mailto:DeerCommittee@wiltonct.org). Wilton has a list of hunters who have expressed an interest in hunting locally. The Deer Committee annually compiles a list, requiring participants to undergo a background check and a proficiency test in addition to the one they passed with the CT DEEP.

Regardless of how you come by a hunter you should always ask for his licensing information and references, which need to be checked out. You are encouraged to get to know the basic laws so that when you are speaking with the hunter you have the opportunity to get a sense if that person is knowledgeable about the laws he must work within. The Deer Committee has assembled a list of questions you can use when interviewing a prospective hunter. The list can be found on the town's website. Click on the Environmental Affairs Department in the "Departments" dropdown on the homepage. From here choose "Deer Committee".

**4. How much property is needed to hunt with bow? Shotgun? Rifle? Muzzleloader?**

There is no minimum acreage established by the State for bow hunting. There is a 10 acre minimum for rifles. There is no minimum acreage for shotguns or muzzleloaders, although no firearms may be discharged within 500 feet of habitable buildings, which in effect drives the need to have a larger parcel. However, simply because your property meets the minimum acreage and setback does not mean it is appropriate for hunting. All landowners are encouraged to have an experienced hunter(s) evaluate their property taking into consideration the lot configuration, topography and proximity of neighboring homes. The best approach in our suburban neighborhoods is to get several abutting neighbors together to create a larger area for hunting. Hunting for deer reduction is often carried out from elevated tree stand which makes it possible to hunt safely in a smaller area.

Regardless, we encourage landowners to communicate their intentions with neighboring property owners and to accommodate their desires as practical. Property boundaries should be marked or at least walked with the hunter so trespassing is not an issue

**5. When does hunting season open and close for bow?**

Fairfield Co. as been designated by the CT DEEP as an area with excessive numbers of deer. Consequently, we have an elongated season, running from September 15th through January 31st.

**6. When does hunting season open and close for firearms?**

For 2015, Shotgun/Rifle hunting begins on November 18th and ends on December 8th. Muzzleloader season then opens on December 9th and runs through the 31st.

**7. Can I, as the property owner set the days and times for the hunter to hunt?**

Yes, you are the property owner and can refine hunting times within those established by the state. Beginning on October 1st, the state law allows hunting any day of the week, from sunrise to one half hour before sunset. From September 15th through October 1st there is no hunting allowed on Sundays (new law passed by the state to allow Sunday hunting is not effective until October 1st).

Be aware however, that the deer are most active in the early morning and late afternoon and your hunter would most likely want access during this time to allow them a fair hunting opportunity. You should candidly speak to your hunter about school bus times, the number of days you are willing to allow access, or any other scheduling issues or concerns. While the mutual goal is to

harvest as many deer as safely possible, you need not feel as though your property is out of your control.

**8. If I invite a hunter to come to my property should we sign anything?**

The hunter is required to have you sign a “Landowner Consent Form”. On that form, you will be able to specify what seasons (bow, firearms, turkey, and deer) you are giving permission for. You may rescind your permission at any time.

**9. What happens if the hunter gets hurt on my property?**

Connecticut law provides protection from liability to landowners who allow, without a fee, the recreational use of their property (G.C.S. 52-557g). Hunting is identified as a recreational use.

**10. Do I need to let the town know if I invite a hunter on my property?**

No, there is no obligation to notify anyone.

**11. Do I need to let my neighbors know if I have a hunter on my property?**

It is a good idea to inform your neighbors about this, but you are not required to do so. By speaking with them, you can advise them of an unusual parked car in the area and be aware of why a stranger may be in the area. This is also a good opportunity to answer any questions they may have or accommodate particular concerns (i.e. “my son waits for the bus from 7-7:15 and I don’t want a deer removed from the woods during that time”). A little information and consideration can go a long way to quelling concerns. Another possibility is that they may also be interested in allowing the hunter on their property, which would be a benefit to all.

**12. If a deer is taken on my property, what happens to the venison meat?**

Hunters routinely take the venison to stock their own freezers and those of family and friends. They are also likely to share the venison with the property owner. Beyond this, the deer can be donated to a butcher who will in turn donate the venison to various food banks. The cost to butcher and donate venison in Connecticut is approximately \$80. If the meat is donated to New York food banks via Amato’s in Katonah, NY, the state of New York will pay for the butchering.

**13. What happens if the deer is shot, and then falls just across the property line?**

If you spoke with your neighbor ahead of time, permission to retrieve the deer could have been given then. Otherwise the hunter is required to get permission from the affected landowner to retrieve the deer. If the landowner refuses, the hunter then contacts a state game warden for assistance.