

Back to the Woods

Posted on Nov 15, Posted by [Kathleen Vinehout, State Senator 31st District](#) Category [Wisconsin](#)



Sen. Kathleen Vinehout writes about the upcoming deer hunting season and some of the changes hunters will experience as new regulations go into effect.

ALMA, WI - “See that scrape?” Lisa pointed to a large area of bare dirt. “That’s not made by a tractor tire.”

“And look at the branches above,” she said. “They are all broken. The buck was standing here pawing his hooves and tossing his head.”

We were on the edge of one of our hay fields, just where the field dropped into a ravine. I could see over several pastures and fields to the northwest and through the woods to my neighbor’s pasture in the southeast – a commanding spot.

Lisa and I were tracking a big ten-point buck. I saw him many times - even running after a doe right outside my study window as I wrote last week’s column. He was muscular and alert with wide, heavy antlers – a deer hunter’s dream.

We were following a line of scrapes and rubs, which is deer hunter's lingo for pawed earth and scraped up tree trunks. Bucks use these methods to mark their territory. Early in the year, bucks rub against the tree trunks to remove the velvet from their antlers. But during the rut – the breeding season – bucks mark their territory by rubbing their antlers against tree trunks - the larger the tree trunk, the bigger the buck.

Deer numbers have increased in most areas of Wisconsin. Two mild winters helped population growth. This summer two does camped out in the tall weeds behind our machine shed. Three fawns spent the summer eating our lawn, tasting our newly planted apple trees and occasionally munching on our pots of inpatients on the front steps. As they munched on these tasty delights, I couldn't help but think about the testy venison we will be preparing this fall.

Hunting season is upon us and deer hunters need to be aware of changes this year. New laws do not require a back tag. The Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has a new computer system that allows you to print your license and tags at home. (www.GoWild.wi.gov). There is a new DNR app, which gives you loads of information including the exact hunting times. You can find the app, called the Wisconsin Pocket Ranger, at the app store or at www.dnr.wi.gov and search for "mobile app."

I have a slow Internet connection and no cell coverage at my farm, so websites and mobile apps aren't helpful. I was delighted to discover that I could still buy my license and pick up a paper copy of the 2016 Wisconsin Deer Hunting Regulations at my local Kwik Trip.

The ladies were helpful and friendly. The shiny green tags and license have been replaced with ordinary printer paper. Tags must be cut out of the normal sized paper. The ladies suggested I put the tags in zip lock plastic bags and cover the license with clear packing tape.

The tag requires a confirmation number. You receive this number when you register your deer.

Registration is required and must be done by 5:00 pm the day after harvest. Like last year, registration is completed on-line or by phone. You can register online by going to www.gamere

g.wi.gov

or

by calling 844-426-3734. There are some in-person registration sites and you can find these sites at

www.dnr.wi.gov

and search for “registration sites.”

Unfortunately, chronic wasting disease continues to be a problem across the state. Testing for the disease is available at many of the in-person registration sites. If you do kill a CDW infected deer, DNR will issue a replacement tag to you.

Officials are asking hunters who observe sick deer to contact the local game warden or biologist. You can find a list of contacts on the DNR website by typing “sick deer” in the search field.

As the sun went down, we watched as two heifer-sized deer and an older doe headed for the hay field. I turned to say “good-bye” to my friend, and saw another large doe lurk from the woods to my lawn.

The forecast calls for cold, rain and sleet opening weekend. This means getting out the long underwear in addition to the plastic bag and clear packing tape. But like many Wisconsinites, I will be prepared and ready to go.

I wish everyone a safe and successful hunt!

Tags: Untagged