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“WHERE THE BEST COME TO STAY”



State changes deer management

By Tom Betz

The Goodland Star-News
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In 40 years, deer management in Kansas has evolved from a highly restricted and simple system to one that is complicated but offers many opportunities, state officials say.

Changes this year will simplify the system, says Lloyd Fox, big game program coordinator with the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks in Emporia.

“A new system of permits, seasons and units will allow flexibility in how this natural resource may be used,” Fox said. “With those opportunities come greater responsibilities for hunters and landowners. Personal decisions, not manipulation of the number of permits by the Department of Wildlife and Parks, will shape the herd that develops from this new system.”

In summary, Fox said, the changes will allow resident hunters more options on when they may hunt, the equipment they may use and the places where they may seek access. He feels Kansas landowners will find the new system easier and more predictable.

Landowners wishing to hunt deer with their family, even family members who may have moved outside the state, will find they all qualify to hunt on their land, and the landowner will not need to give up their permit to allow a family member to hunt, he said.

Nonresidents will find more permits available, Fox said. Landowners who want to lease the hunting opportunities on their property will find the hunters they want will get the permits they need.

One of the biggest changes Fox said is one of emphasis on hunter responsibility.

“The previous system placed emphasis on the number of permits the department authorized for each unit,” he said. “That system worked when the deer herd was small and many hunters were available. We are reaching the limit of the number of people who want to hunt deer in our state. The new system will rely on hunters and landowners to decide the herd levels on farm- and ranch-size units.”

A special deer task force was created three years ago, Fox said, to review the historic way deer have been managed since the first season in 1965. He said over a two-year period, members examined public input and scientific data from the past 40 years. The legislature approved the recommendations last year to become effective this year.

Fox said under the new law, resident deer hunters will be able to purchase a whitetail either-sex deer permit over the counter that will be valid during any season with equipment (archery, muzzleloader or firearm) legal for that season. These permits will be valid statewide, on public and private land.

All hunters will be allowed one permit per year to harvest a buck. For those hunters who only hunt with archery equipment, a statewide archery, either-species, either-sex, permit will be available over-the-counter.

Nineteen management units will be in place to direct and control whitetail antlerless deer harvest, Fox said. All resident whitetail antlerless permits will cost \$15. The first one purchased by a hunter will be valid statewide, during any season with equipment legal for that season, on public and private land.

Fox said the simplicity for resident hunters will be the ability to buy two whitetail permits that will allow them to hunt anywhere in the state during any season with the legal equipment.

He said residents can apply for a limited number of firearms or muzzleloader either-species permit, which allow the hunter to take either a mule deer or a white-tailed deer. These permits are restricted to one of two large units in western Kansas.

Nonresident hunters will apply for a permit in one of 18 management units, and they will be able to select one adjacent unit in which they can hunt, he said.

Nonresident hunters who apply for an archery or muzzleloader whitetail either-sex permit in Units 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 16, 15, or 18 (all in the western half of the state) will have the option of entering a drawing for a limited number of mule deer stamps. These stamps will cost an additional \$100 and allow those archers or muzzleloader hunters to harvest either a white-tail or mule deer.

Fox said landowners will find they can increase their potential income by managing both the deer population and the habitat on their property. The future of deer habitat in Kansas will be with private landowners and federal farm programs, he said.

Nonresident deer hunters will have greater opportunities to enjoy deer hunting in Kansas, Fox said. The level of nonresident permits allotted this year was set at or above the average level of demand in recent years, and he said few nonresident deer hunters will be excluded.

“I get many letters, e-mails and phone calls each year from nonresident deer hunters,” Fox said, “and one of the most promising comments they make is how nice the people of Kansas have been to them. It is important to maintain that friendly atmosphere in Kansas.

“Part of the solution will be to maintain a balance between resident and nonresident deer hunters. We need to have enough nonresident hunters to provide an economic boost to rural communities and yet have sufficient places for resident hunters to use so that they will not feel alienated in their own state.”



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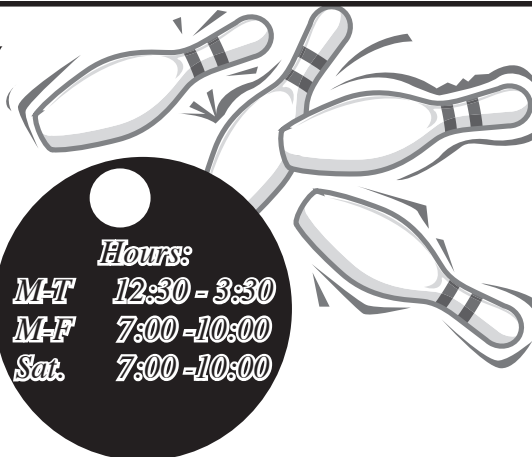
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