Deer harvest reporting FAQs

- **What is mandatory harvest reporting and when does it take effect?**
  Online harvest reporting is a new requirement of every successful deer hunter to report their deer harvest through our website or mobile app beginning in 2022. The system will allow us a near real-time estimate of deer harvest as it occurs, something Michigan has never experienced before.

- **Why is there no option to report by phone?**
  Providing both a phone-in harvest reporting option and an internet harvest reporting option would have forced the DNR to maintain two reporting systems with different technological capabilities. The quality of the data we received would have varied, and we would have had no control over how many deer hunters use each system. Alternately, relying on a phone-in only reporting system would have limited us in our ability to collect important information, such as precise location information, for deer management and burdened some deer hunters with an older technology.

  Given the overwhelming and increasing adoption of internet-based technologies -- currently over 93% of U.S. adults have access to these technologies -- and the enhanced value to deer management and deer-disease surveillance, we chose to implement one internet-based system. Michigan has had a long history of estimating deer harvests through a post-season harvest survey. We are one of the later states to adopt this new harvest reporting technology. With declining response rates for our deer harvest surveys, it makes sense to switch to this new method of collecting reliable deer harvest data.

- **Why is the Michigan DNR adopting mandatory harvest reporting for deer?**
  Since the 1950s, we have used mail surveys that were sent to randomly selected hunters to estimate harvest. Estimates were accurate if the hunters responding to surveys were representative of all hunters. This assumption generally is easier to make when most hunters in the sample respond to the survey. Unfortunately, the proportion of hunters returning mail surveys has declined from an average of more than 70% in the early 2000s to 33% in 2021. Low response rates can lead to inaccurate estimates. Because declining response rates are not likely to reverse, another approach to estimating harvest was needed.

- **Who is required to report their deer harvest?**
  All successful deer hunters with a state issued deer license, including those with Deer Management Assistance Permits, will be required to report their deer harvest beginning in 2022.

- **How do I report my harvest?**

  - ✓ **Report through eLicense**

    Visit Michigan.gov/HarvestReport on a computer or mobile device to go directly to the reporting page. Enter your kill tag license number and date of birth to begin the report.

If you don't have your hunting license/kill tag number, you can [log in to eLicense](#) (using your driver's license and birthdate, or user ID and password) then click on the Harvest Report tab to see the tags available to report. If you don't already have an account, you will have the chance to create one to enter your report.

✓ **Report using the new Hunt Fish App**

There is now a mobile app available in the app stores:

- [Get the Hunt Fish app in the Apple Store](#)
- [Get the Hunt Fish app the Google Play Store](#)

Once the app is downloaded, and you've signed in or created an account, you can enter the harvest report information.

Once your harvest report is completed, you will be given a confirmation number and the option to receive a copy by email.

- **Do I still need to tag my deer?**
  You must continue to attach a DNR-issued kill tag to a harvested deer. The kill tag should remain with the head if the head and body of the deer are separated. Anyone in possession of a deer after the harvest reporting timeframe expires should be able to present the confirmation number. [How to Properly Tag and Report Your Deer - YouTube](#)

- **How long do hunters have to report their harvest?**
  Hunters will need to report their deer harvest within 72 hours of recovering their deer or prior to transferring possession of the animal to someone else, like a deer processor.

- **Why doesn't the DNR allow more time to report?**
  Currently, over two thirds of states in the US have mandatory reporting requirements for deer hunters. Among the 15 states that had high harvest reporting compliance, 12 states required harvest reporting within 24 hours. Among, the three states with poor compliance, one required a harvest report within 2 days, one required the report within 7 days, and one required it within 10 days. Ultimately, 72 hours was chosen in an attempt to strike a balance between maintaining higher compliance, while still giving hunters ample time to report.

- **Is there a penalty for not reporting your deer harvest?**
  Harvest reporting falls under the following portion in the Wildlife Conservation Order: 3.103 Issuance of deer or elk kill tags; validation of deer or elk kill tag; unlawful acts. The potential penalty for failure to comply with harvest reporting is a 90-day misdemeanor. The fines and costs for such a violation can range from $50-$500. While the regulation is written in our Wildlife Conservation Order, which is where all of our deer regulations reside and allows conservation officers to enforce violations, this first year we will emphasize an educational approach to hunters rather than enforcement in most circumstances.

- **What options are available to hunters to report their harvest?**
  Hunters can report their deer online at Michigan.gov/DNRHarvestReport, or on our new mobile app, available in the Google Play store (for Android devices) and the Apple App Store.

- **What if I need help reporting my harvest?**
  The reporting system allows for a family member, friend or hunting buddy to easily report a harvest for you.

  The DNR will also provide assistance for those experiencing technical difficulties at a variety of locations around the state, or by calling 517-284-9453 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

  You can also Email: dnr-wildlife@michigan.gov.

- **What if I make a mistake on my harvest report?**
  Call the DNR licensing and customer service center at 517-284-6057 during normal business hours.
  Normal business hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

- **What information is collected on the harvest report?**
  All successful hunters will be asked to report the unique kill tag license number that was attached to the deer, the hunter's date of birth, the exact harvest location, the type of deer harvested (fawn/antlered/adult doe), number of antler points (if a buck), and date of kill. In addition, some hunters will be asked an additional management-related question such as what type of hunting device was used to take their deer. Most hunters should be able to complete the process in about three minutes.

- **What documentation is required when transferring possession of a harvested deer?**
  The successful hunter is required to report their harvest before transferring possession of their animal (e.g., before taking it to a processor or giving the animal to a friend or taxidermist). When transferring the possession of a harvested deer, the hunter should provide the harvest confirmation to the person accepting the animal. The person that accepts the animal should record the confirmation number. This confirmation number is proof that the hunter has legally reported their harvest.

- **Will the public be able to see the location where a hunter harvested their deer?**
  Please provide a complete and accurate report of your harvest. Data that identifies you or the specific location of your harvest will not be disclosed except where specifically required by law. The DNR will utilize harvest data to better understand deer populations and hunter activities for management purposes.

- **How will the accuracy of the data collected be verified?**
  The DNR can verify the data reported by hunters for animals that are submitted for disease testing. In addition, the DNR can verify the data reported by hunters when they observe deer at meat processors or taxidermists.

- **Will the public be able to get harvest data faster than in the past?**
  The system will provide real-time summaries of the number and types of deer harvested by county and management units.

- **How will hunters show proof of reporting their harvest?**
  After a hunter has successfully reported their harvested animal, the hunter will be issued a harvest confirmation number. This confirmation number will serve as proof that the hunter has legally reported their harvest.

- **How will a conservation officer know if a deer has been reported or if a confirmation number is real?**
  By linking every harvested deer to a unique kill tag license number, the department can track all harvested deer reported by a hunter and investigate potential problems. Conservation officers can verify the confirmation number through their laptop computer or mobile device app.

- **What if a hunter does not have cell service?**
  Hunters have up to three days to report their harvest. If they cannot report their harvest due to lack of cell service, they can seek assistance from a family member or friend and provide them with their kill tag license number, date of birth and harvest location, to report on their behalf.

  Reporting by phone to the DNR is not possible because of the need for accurate harvest location data, which is provided by selecting the location on a digital map.

  While it is not possible to suggest a personalized recommendation on accessing the internet for each person to report their harvest due to limited information about location, routes regularly taken, etc., - there are some resources that may be useful in finding the closest location to report a harvest.

  - The FCC has created an interactive map that shows LTE data coverage for the major carriers on their website. You may find this map useful in finding the nearest location of LTE access to report your harvest. Note that most smaller carriers and prepaid phones lease connectivity from the major carriers.
  - For areas that do not have adequate LTE coverage, another option would be free Wi-Fi hotspots. This map shows locations available throughout the state of Michigan. To date, more than 300 Wi-Fi hotspot locations are available from the parking lots of public schools, libraries (which also have computers inside for use), and other locations across the state. Additionally, Wi-Fi hotspot maps are also available for Xfinity and Spectrum customers looking for access points on the go. You can also visit a DNR location during posted business hours for assistance in reporting your deer.

- **Does a hunter have to have the deer with them when they report their harvest?**
  A hunter does not have to be in immediate physical possession of the deer when they report their harvest, but it may be helpful to answer some of the questions, like how many antler points is on the left beam of the animal you harvested. Hunters will have to report their harvest before giving their deer to a processor or taxidermist.

- **How do I get a successful hunter deer patch?**
  Hunters who want a patch to commemorate the season will be able to purchase one online at Michigan.gov/DNRLicenses, or from the DNR mobile app starting on September 15, 2022, while supplies last. The cost is $8 and includes shipping. This is an option that has been requested over the years, particularly by hunters who had to travel longer distances to get to a check station. It is not possible to send hunters free patches for reporting their deer online as it could incentivize some to report a deer on an unused tag that was not actually harvested to get a free patch. This would skew the harvest data and negatively impacting management recommendations provided to the Natural Resources Commission.

- **Will there still be deer check stations?**
  Check stations have long since provided sites to understand the age of deer being harvested, as well as sites for collecting disease samples for bovine tuberculosis (bTB) and chronic wasting disease (CWD). However, they've never been integral for estimating season-long deer harvest.

  While check stations won't go away completely, there will be fewer of them. These locations will primarily serve as disease sample collection sites for bTB and CWD.

- **Is there still a way for hunters to submit deer for disease testing?**

  Our new reporting system should make it easier for hunters to understand if they are in a location where the department is looking for volunteers to submit their deer for testing. If a hunter indicates they are in one of the disease surveillance zones, they will see a message on the harvest report confirmation page asking them to submit their deer head for testing, along with locations of where they can submit their deer head or sample for testing. You can also find a list of disease sample collection sites here.

  Check stations will be focused in places where we need to gather physical samples for disease testing. This allows us to maximize our use of staff resources for disease surveillance purposes. Harvested animal must be reported using harvest reporting system. Hunters will continue to have the opportunity to submit samples to MSU and WI labs directly for a fee.

- **Are there other states that use this system or is Michigan the first?**
  Michigan has had a long history of estimating deer harvests through a post-season harvest survey, so we are actually one of the later states to adopt this technology. With declining response rates for our deer harvest surveys, it makes sense to switch to a new way to collect deer harvest data.

- **Why do you need to know the location of my harvest?**
  The location of the harvest is needed for any animal submitted for disease surveillance purposes. Any animal processed by our laboratory has ideally been reported with a harvest location that is within a one-mile block of where the harvest actually occurred. This information helps us better understand where a disease like CWD or TB is or isn't on the landscape.

  Additionally, we know that deer are not distributed evenly across the landscape. In some instances, counties experience higher deer populations (and harvest) in one

part over another, even though they are managed similarly. By building a network of harvest locations over time, we can review our management guidelines to better align with harvest numbers. This all can improve our management recommendations to account for natural variation and changes seen on the landscape, independent of county boundaries. These changes are only possible, however, with accurate reporting from hunters. By asking this question, we are really putting control of the data in the hunter's hands. It then becomes our responsibility to use that data to make informed management recommendations that are in the best interest of the deer herd. If large levels of erroneous data are being submitted, the result could be incorrect management recommendations for parts of the state.

- **Is the DNR getting rid of its traditional deer harvest survey?**
  The DNR will continue to do its traditional post-season deer harvest survey for a few years so we can compare harvest estimates from both the old and new systems, but eventually the traditional mail survey will be reduced in scale and frequency.