

# Delaware Deer Management Plan Required Content

Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control  
and  
Delaware Department of Agriculture

This document specifies the required content of a deer management plan to properly manage the deer population on a farm property(ies) to reduce crop damage caused by deer. The purpose of a deer management plan is not solely, but may be a requirement, of deer management assistance programs.

The deer management plan should cover multiple farm properties under single proprietorship, but must assess the deer population and establish associated deer management measures for those specified farm parcels located within geographic proximity to be affected by deer crop damage (i.e., the deer management plan shall be at sufficient spatial resolution to justify and guide implementation or authorization of targeted deer damage assistance measures).

Deer management plans will be in effect for three consecutive years from the date of plan approval by DNREC's Division of Fish & Wildlife, after which each plan will be reassessed by the Division of Fish & Wildlife to determine if the plan holder needs to update the plan, including deer harvest goals, based on a reassessment of the farm deer population and/or deer crop damage.

The minimum required content of a deer management plan is:

- General background on deer biology and ecology in Delaware, including basic information on fecundity/birth rate, survival, breeding and gestation periods, harvest data, sex ratios and applicable results and findings from deer research projects, including deer research in Delaware.
- Background information on property/farm/parcel (e.g., landcover composition, acreage, types of crops planted, etc.), including a map(s) of the property/farm/parcel covered by the deer management plan. The plan should consider and address the type of crops planted and planned annual changes in crop rotation, including assessment of crop type vulnerability to deer damage and associated need for deer management.
- The estimated deer population on the property/farm/parcel covered by the deer management plan, including methodology used to determine such; an actual deer population survey should be performed when practicable.

- Deer Harvest Goals – These goals shall include for the property/farm/parcel: desired and attainable deer population, annual deer harvest, crop damage, sex and age ratio, quality buck goals and habitat improvement goals. The harvest goals are to properly manage the deer population on the property to sufficiently reduce crop damage and not solely to meet eligibility requirements of deer management assistance programs. Annual deer harvest goals are to be established for and achieved within the August 15 – May 15 time period under a required crop damage permit as may be issued.
- A statement indicating that all deer shot should be retrieved and that all harvested deer must be utilized for human consumption to avoid the illegal wanton waste of deer.
- A general description on how harvested deer will be utilized for human consumption by the landowner and/or their hunters and/or donated to the Sportsmen Against Hunger (SAH) Program.
- A statement that all harvested deer must be registered within 24 hours of harvest using the Delaware Division of Fish & Wildlife’s Hunter & Trapper Registration System to help accurately document and monitor harvest goals. Guidance is to be included that when registering each deer harvested on the property/farm parcel, including those that are not harvested and tagged under a crop damage assistance program (e.g., antlered deer or deer harvested during an established statewide deer season using the prescribed method of take for that season and tagged with a tag issued with an individual’s hunting license), the following is to be entered into the registration system:
  - Whether the deer was harvested on a farm enrolled in a crop damage assistance program.
  - For farms enrolled in a crop damage assistance program, the provided four-digit Farm Identification Number.
- Consideration of nonlethal methods to address the deer population such as propane cannons, planting schedules, fencing (vegetable crops), repellents, scarecrows, etc. In addition, if there are fields that have chronic/significant deer damage, the use of these fields as deer diversion areas should be considered. If the decision is to take land out of production to help alleviate deer damage, state and federal incentive programs (CRP, CREP, WHIP, etc.) should be identified for enrollment consideration to still make this acreage profitable.
- A communication protocol between the landowner, hunters and, if different from the landowner, the farmer to assure that the deer management plan is being implemented and the goals are being achieved.
- Deer Harvest/Hunting Suggestions – Basic methods to improve deer harvest using recreational hunting such as stand location, wind direction, group vs. individual deer harvest, hunter management expectations, hunter attrition, hunter incentives, adding and removing hunters, food plots, baiting, diversion strips, leasing hunting rights to offset crop loss, tracking detailed harvest records (number of deer, by whom, type of deer, harvest date, etc.), Sportsmen Against Hunger program, working with neighboring

landowners (cooperatives), liability law for landowners (25 Del.C. §1501), liability insurance information if they choose to charge hunters a lease fee or a liability release form that hunters and the landowner could sign and factors that motivate hunters (obtaining meat, spending time outdoors, socializing with friends and family, relaxation, etc.).

- Data sheet for harvested deer to record harvest information to include date, sex, method and other relevant information.
- Hunting license and hunter education requirements. License Exempt Number (LEN) information (link, phone number and description). Hunter Trapper Registration (HTR) information (link, phone number and description).
- Master Hunter Program information and contact info for Master Hunters to hunt the property.
- Overview of Delaware Deer Damage Assistance Programs with contact information and link to website where the applications are located.
- Link to Delaware's Hunting and Trapping Guide.
- Phone numbers and addresses for the Division of Fish & Wildlife (main office and McKay for the Deer Biologist and Enforcement (including the 24-hour hotline)); nearest hospital address and phone number.
- Sportsmen Against Hunger website link and program description.
- Link to Delaware's white-tailed deer web page, which contains helpful information for farmers and the development of deer management plans.

Deer management plans must be written by a qualified individual and include documentation that the author of the plan meets the following minimum qualifications:

- Successful completion of Level II Deer Stewardship training from The Quality Deer Management Association (QDMA) and three years of experience in deer management.

OR

- Successful completion of at least a Bachelor's of Science (B.S.) in wildlife biology or closely related field and six months experience in deer management.