

Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies

TITLE 26. Fisheries & Game

Agency

Department of Energy and Environmental Protection

Subject

Deer Hunting

Inclusive Sections

§§ 26-86a-1—26-86a-12

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Deer Hunting

Sec. 26-86a-1. Check Stations and Reporting

(a) Any person taking a deer during the seasons as established pursuant to section 26-86a of the Connecticut General Statutes shall report within 24 hours by the method specified in the hunting and trapping guide published annually by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. All persons issued a deer permit that are contacted by the Department for the purposes of surveying deer hunting activity shall complete a hunting season activity report by the method specified in the hunting and trapping guide published annually by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection.

(b) Any person, taking a deer with a shotgun, rifle, revolver, muzzleloader or bow and arrow on days or deer management zones specified in the hunting and trapping guide published annually by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection shall register such deer and have a metal possession seal affixed to the carcass at an official Department of Energy and Environmental Protection deer check station. Such deer shall be registered on the same date taken. This provision shall not apply to owners and other persons hunting with a free landowner deer season permit.

(c) No person shall register or allow to be registered in their name, any deer which they did not legally kill.

(d) No person shall possess any deer affixed with a metal possession seal unless such deer has been registered at an official deer check station.

(e) The metal possession seal shall remain attached to any deer so marked until it is cut up and packaged for consumption.

(f) Any deer registered at an official deer check station shall be subject to the collection of biological data, including, but not limited to, the removal of teeth, lower jaw and organs.

(g) No person shall submit any deer killed other than during a regulated sport hunting deer season to be recognized by the state for any official trophy program or officially verified by the state for use in any national official record book entries.

(h) No person shall affix a metal possession seal to any deer not properly tagged in accordance with section 26-86a-2 (c) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

(i) No person other than an authorized operator of an official Department of Energy and Environmental Protection check station shall possess or affix a metal possession seal to any deer carcass. The authorized check station operator or their designated employee shall personally affix the metal possession seal on the deer carcass being registered.

(j) The operator of any deer check station shall maintain accurate records of any information required by the department in registering legally taken deer and or in operating such check station. Such records shall be made available for inspection by any State Conservation Officer or other Department official during normal business hours.

(Effective May 16, 1996; Amended April 27, 2005; Amended August 3, 2009; Amended September 9, 2013; Amended July 7, 2016)

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Sec. 26-86a-2. Permits and Tags

(a) The issuance of firearm permits on state-owned lands designated by the commissioner and listed in the applicable annual Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide shall be on the basis of a random computer selection of single accurately completed applications. The number of permits to be issued shall be predetermined by the commissioner and announced prior to the actual selection of permits. No person may be selected for more than one state land firearms deer permit.

(b) No deer permit may be used unless it is validated by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection and signed by the hunter upon receipt. A state land deer permit is valid only for the area for which it is identified. A landowner deer permit is valid only for the property listed on the application by which such permit was obtained. A valid deer permit shall be carried while hunting.

(c) Immediately upon killing a deer, and before moving the carcass in any manner from where it was killed, a person shall write their conservation identification number; name; date and time of kill; town of kill; and permit type on a tag and then sign their name. This tag, signed and with complete information shall be kept with the deer at all times until the carcass is cut up and packaged for consumption.

(d) No person shall change or alter deer permits or loan to another or permit another to have or use such permit issued to himself or use any permit issued to another.

(e) No person shall obtain more than one of the same type deer permit in any one year other than as specified in section 26-86a-8(c) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

(f) Information contained in the application for such deer permits, which is determined to be false or misleading shall be cause for rejecting or revoking such applications or permits.

(g) No landowner shall make more than one application for the free landowner deer season permit for the same person.

(h) Persons checking antlerless deer legally harvested pursuant to private land deer permits at designated deer check stations may be issued a replacement antlerless only deer tag. Such tag shall be valid in the designated management zone during the designated season indicated on such tag by the commissioner only. Any person who checks a total of three antlerless deer at designated check stations may be issued a replacement either-sex deer tag for use during that same season in the designated management zones designated on such tag by the commissioner.

(i) Persons checking antlerless deer legally harvested pursuant to state land deer permits at designated deer check stations may be issued a replacement antlerless only deer tag. Such tag shall be valid on designated state lands indicated on such tag by the commissioner. Any person who checks a total of three antlerless deer at designated check stations may be issued a replacement either-sex deer tag for use during that same season on state lands designated on such tag by the commissioner.

(j) Deer taken as antlerless-only with a private land shotgun/rifle permit may only be

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taken on days and in the zones specified on the permit.

(Effective May 16, 1996; Amended May 29, 1998; Amended April 27, 2005; Amended August 3, 2009; Amended September 9, 2013; Amended February 4, 2020)

Sec. 26-86a-3. Repealed

Repealed December 18, 2002.

Sec. 26-86a-4. Firearms and Ammunition

(a) Persons hunting subject to a state land shotgun deer permit may hunt with a 12, 16, or 20 gauge shotgun incapable of holding more than three shells containing a single projectile, or a muzzleloader, as defined in section 26-86a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

(b) Persons hunting subject to a private land rifle/shotgun deer permit on lands less than ten acres may hunt with a 12, 16 or 20 gauge shotgun using shells containing a single projectile, or muzzleloader, as defined in section 26-86a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

(c) Persons hunting subject to a private land rifle/shotgun deer permit on lands of ten or more acres may hunt with a 12, 16 or 20 gauge shotgun using shells containing a single projectile, a centerfire rifle or a muzzleloader, as defined in section 26-86a of the Connecticut General Statutes.

(d) No person shall possess an electronic ignition firearm with the battery connected, a capped percussion lock firearm, or a flintlock firearm having powder in the pan, where a loaded firearm is prohibited.

(Effective May 16, 1996; Amended September 9, 2013)

Sec. 26-86a-5. Written consent

(a) No person shall hunt deer with bow and arrow on private land without carrying dated written consent of the landowner for the current season on forms provided by the commissioner.

(b) No person shall hunt deer with firearms on private land except landowners and lineal descendants hunting their own property, without carrying dated written consent of the landowner for the current season specifying the firearm(s) type to be used on forms provided by the commissioner.

(Effective February 16, 1994)

Sec. 26-86a-6. Open Seasons

(a) The hours for hunting deer authorized under the regulated sport hunting season permits shall be one-half hour before sunrise to sunset—prevailing time standard. The hours for hunting deer authorized under deer damage permits issued per Connecticut General Statutes section 26-82 shall be from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset—prevailing time standard.

(b) The open seasons shall be:

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(1) for archery deer hunting on state lands open to archery deer hunting and firearms deer hunting, from September 15 through the second Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day and from the fourth Wednesday after Thanksgiving Day through December 31;

(2) for archery deer hunting on state lands open to archery deer hunting and closed to firearms deer hunting, and on private lands, from September 15 through December 31;

(3) for archery deer hunting on private lands in deer management zones designated by the commissioner and listed in the applicable annual Connecticut hunting and trapping guide, from September 15 through January 31;

(4) for muzzleloader deer hunting on state lands, from the second Wednesday after Thanksgiving Day through the fourth Tuesday after Thanksgiving Day;

(5) for muzzleloader deer hunting on private land, from the second Wednesday after Thanksgiving Day through December 31;

(6) for shotgun deer hunting on state lands, from the second Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day through the second Tuesday after Thanksgiving Day;

(7) for shotgun or rifle deer hunting on private land, from the second Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day through the second Tuesday after Thanksgiving Day;

(8) for revolver, as defined in section 29-27 of the Connecticut General Statutes, with a cartridge of .357 caliber or larger and subject to the revolver carry permit provisions of subsection (b) of section 29-28 of the Connecticut General Statutes, deer hunting on 10 or more acres of private land, the seasons shall be:

(A) by persons authorized to hunt deer pursuant to a free private land deer permit, as provided for in section 26-86a of the Connecticut General Statutes, and a revolver deer permit, from November 1 through December 31;

(B) by other residents of the state authorized to hunt deer pursuant to a private land shotgun rifle deer permit and a revolver deer permit, from the second Wednesday before Thanksgiving Day through the second Tuesday after Thanksgiving Day.

(c) Special seasons shall be:

(1) for rifle, shotgun or muzzleloader on private land in areas of the state designated by the commissioner for antlerless deer only, from the fourth Wednesday before Thanksgiving through the second Tuesday before Thanksgiving Day;

(2) for shotgun deer hunting on state land by persons authorized to hunt deer pursuant to a Connecticut junior firearms hunting license and a state land shotgun deer permit, and accompanied by an adult simultaneously authorized to hunt deer pursuant to a Connecticut hunting license and a deer permit, from the third Saturday through the second Saturday before Thanksgiving Day. The adult mentor shall not carry a firearm and shall remain within physical contact of, and in a position to provide direct supervision and instruction of, the junior hunter at all times.

(3) for shotgun or rifle deer hunting on private lands by persons authorized to hunt deer on the subject property pursuant to a Connecticut junior firearms hunting license, a private land shotgun rifle deer permit and written permission of the landowner, the junior firearms permit holder shall be accompanied by an adult who is authorized to hunt deer on the subject

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property simultaneously authorized to hunt deer on the subject property pursuant to a Connecticut hunting license, private land shotgun rifle deer permit and written permission of the landowner, from the third Saturday through the second Saturday before Thanksgiving Day. The adult mentor shall not carry a firearm and shall remain within physical contact of, and in a position to provide direct supervision and instruction of, the junior hunter at all times.

(Effective January 1, 1995; Amended August 30, 1999; Amended December 18, 2002; Amended August 3, 2009; Amended September 9, 2013; Amended February 4, 2020)

Sec. 26-86a-7. Fluorescent orange clothing (Repealed)

Repealed June 11, 2014.

(Adopted effective August 30, 1999; Repealed June 11, 2014)

Notes: For 2014 repeal, see Sec. 54 of Public Act 14-187. (June 11, 2014)

Sec. 26-86a-8. Deer permit limit

(a) Each deer permit shall limit the number of deer by sex or antler class.

(b) When it is shown to the satisfaction of the commissioner that a deer is unfit for human consumption at the time it was taken during a regulated deer season, upon surrender of the carcass to a biological deer check station or to a wildlife biologist, the commissioner may issue the taker a special replacement deer permit of the same type, provided that season is still open.

(c) The commissioner may issue replacement tags for specific permit types to persons reporting deer taken during the regulated seasons as required at such times and places designated by the commissioner when it is determined to be biologically prudent for the resource and/or habitat.

(Effective February 16, 1994; Amended August 3, 2009)

Sec. 26-86a-9. Daily regulated deer hunting areas

(a) On areas identified in the hunting and trapping guide published annually by the Department of Environmental Protection or designated by posting as wildlife management study areas, hunters and others using the area shall be required to observe the following:

- (1) Enter and leave the area only at authorized check stations;
- (2) Use the area by permit only; such permit shall be obtained at the check station or from an authorized issuing agent;
- (3) Wear at all times while on the area an arm band or other visible identification furnished at the check station;
- (4) As a condition of permit issuance, cooperate in the study, which may require that deer killed not be field dressed prior to submission to the check station and/or that the removal of teeth, jaws, body organs and tissue samples from deer killed be allowed.

(b) The issuance of permits by any agent for any daily regulated deer hunting area shall be on a first come, first served basis, and on days and at times approved by the department

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and advertised to the public.

(Effective January 1, 1993; Amended August 3, 2009)

Sec. 26-86a-10. Hunting option

(a) In such areas of the state as designated by the Commissioner and listed in the applicable annual Connecticut Hunting and Trapping Guide, during the private land muzzleloader season specified in Section 26-86a-6(f) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies and during the private land shotgun/rifle season as specified in Section 26-86a-6(d) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies, a person possessing a valid archery permit may use a bow and arrow to hunt deer on private land provided:

(1) Any deer killed with a bow and arrow during the said muzzleloader and shotgun/rifle seasons shall be identified with a tag pursuant to section 26-86a-2(c) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies. In addition, any deer killed with a bow and arrow on days specified in the hunting and trapping guide published annually by the Department of Environmental Protection shall be registered at an official deer check station pursuant to section 26-86a-1(b) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

(2) Any person hunting with a bow and arrow during the said muzzleloader and shotgun/rifle seasons shall wear above the waist a minimum of 400 square inches of fluorescent orange clothing visible from all sides at all times except as provided in section 26-66-1(r) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

(Effective February 16, 1994; Amended August 30, 1999; Amended April 27, 2005; Amended August 3, 2009)

Sec. 26-86a-11. Deer management for Bluff Point

(a) **Hunting at Bluff Point.** No person shall hunt at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve except for deer pursuant to an authorization lawfully obtained from the Commissioner under this section of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies. All deer hunting at Bluff Point shall be conducted in accordance with subsections (d), (e), (f), (h), (I), (l) and (m) of section 26-66-1, section 26-86a-3 and this section of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies.

(b) **Seasons for deer hunting, hours and deer hunting closure procedures.**

(1) Through the issuance of press releases or using similar means, the Commissioner may declare a deer hunting season when the deer population as estimated by the Commissioner in November preceding the calendar year in which a hunt will occur exceeds by at least ten deer the population goal established under subsection (c) of this section. The Commissioner shall estimate the deer population on the basis of aerial survey data, night spotlight data, and any other scientifically recognized deer population survey methods that the Commissioner deems appropriate.

(2) If the Commissioner declares a deer hunting season, it may run for up to, but no more than, 20 days beginning no earlier than the first Monday in January and ending no later than the last day of March. During any such season, no person shall hunt on Sunday if such hunting is prohibited by law.

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(3) The Commissioner shall close a deer hunting season when 90 percent of the harvest quota has been tagged at the check station. If 90 percent of the harvest quota is reached prior to 12:00 noon, the season shall close at sunset of that day. If 90 percent of the quota is reached after 12:00 noon, the season shall close at 12:00 noon on the following day. Upon conclusion of the deer hunting season, all permits issued for that season by the Commissioner for deer hunting at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve shall be null and void.

(4) The hours for hunting deer during a deer hunting season shall be from one half hour before sunrise until sunset.

(5) During a deer hunting season no person shall enter Bluff Point State Park or Bluff Point Coastal Reserve except for persons with lawful authorization from the Commissioner issued in connection with the taking of deer or state personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.

(c) Population goals and hunting quotas.

(1) Each year the Commissioner shall establish a deer population goal. The Commissioner shall establish such goal considering (A) any biological data collected from deer harvested at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in previous years, (B) any data collected during field research at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve, and (C) any other relevant data or information, including, without limitation, vegetation conditions and deer health. The Commissioner's policy in establishing a deer population goal is to maintain the deer herd at a level consistent with sound principles of wildlife management, which include the health of the deer and of the Bluff Point Coastal Reserve ecosystem. For the first year following the effective date of this section, the Commissioner shall establish a deer population goal of 25. Thereafter, the Commissioner shall establish the deer population goal in accordance with the policy and procedures described in this subsection.

(2) Each year in which the Commissioner declares a deer hunting season, he shall establish a deer harvest quota. The deer harvest quota shall be the number of deer which is equal to the Commissioner's deer population estimate minus the deer population goal.

(3) In any year in which there has been a deer hunting season but the deer harvest quota has not been achieved, the Commissioner may take as many deer as necessary to achieve such quota. In any year in which there has not been a hunting season but the deer population exceeds the deer population goal, the Commissioner may take as many deer as necessary to achieve such goal. The Commissioner may take deer pursuant to this subsection and he may close Bluff Point State Park and Bluff Point Coastal Reserve for such purpose or he may take deer during hours when Bluff Point State Park and Bluff Point Coastal reserve are not open to the public. The Commissioner may use any legal method for any such taking.

(d) Restrictions on hunters. The Commissioner may limit the number of persons allowed on any day to hunt deer, and at no time shall that number exceed 30. Only graduates of Connecticut's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety program or an equivalent training program from another state or governmental entity and who possess a current valid Connecticut hunting license shall be eligible to receive a permit from the Commissioner to

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hunt deer at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve.

(e) Check station and reporting.

(1) Any person engaged in deer hunting shall, prior to beginning hunting on any day, check in at the Department of Environmental Protection Bluff Point Coastal Reserve deer check station and, after completing hunting on such day, check out at such station.

(2) Any person who takes a deer shall register such deer, and have a metal possession seal affixed thereto, at the official Bluff Point Coastal Reserve deer check station. Such deer shall be registered on the same date taken. No person shall register, or allow to be registered in his name, any deer which such person did not lawfully take. Employees of the Department of Environmental Protection may collect biological data, including removing teeth, jaws, or organs, from any deer registered at the Department of Environmental Protection deer check station for scientific or management purposes. No person shall hinder or interfere with the collection of such biological data.

(f) Firearms and ammunition. No person shall hunt deer except with a 12, 16, or 20 gauge smooth or rifled bore shotgun using ammunition loaded with a single soft alloy projectile. Any shotgun used to hunt deer shall be capable of carrying no more than three shells and shall be plugged with a one piece filler that cannot be removed unless the gun is disassembled.

(g) Clothing color requirements. No person shall hunt, pursue, wound or kill any deer during a deer hunting season at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve unless such person is wearing at least 400 square inches of fluorescent orange clothing visible from all sides.

(h) Permits and tags.

(1) No person shall apply for or be issued more than one permit to hunt deer at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve in a calendar year. The Commissioner shall issue permits for deer hunting at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve on the basis of a random selection of completed applications by applicants who possess a current valid Connecticut hunting license and who have completed Connecticut's Conservation Education/Firearms Safety Course or an equivalent training program from another state or governmental entity. Prior to selecting applicants, the Commissioner shall determine the number of permits to be issued. For the first deer hunting season following the effective date of this section, if the deer harvest quota is 49 or less deer, up to 200 permits will be issued, and if the deer harvest quota is 50 or more deer, up to 360 permits will be issued; thereafter, the Commissioner may make reasonable adjustments to the number of permits to be issued based upon experience from prior hunts, the factors set forth in subsection 26-86a-11(c)(1) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies or any other factor aimed at promoting, or consistent with, sound principles of wildlife management.

(2) Any permit issued pursuant to this section shall contain conditions reasonably deemed necessary by the Commissioner relating to the hunt. These conditions may include the number of days a person can hunt, the number of deer a person may take, the locations or areas within which a person can hunt, the allowable or non-allowable hunting methods or any condition related to the safety of the hunt.

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(3) Each person who takes a deer shall, immediately upon taking such deer, detach a deer tag from his permit, punch out and remove the proper areas on the tag indicating the month and day the deer was killed, and immediately attach the tag to the carcass.

(4) No person shall (A) change or alter a permit issued by the Commissioner to hunt deer or a deer tag, (B) loan a permit or tag issued to himself to another person or allow another person to have or use such permit or tag, or (C) use any permit or tag issued to another.

(5) The Commissioner shall not issue to any person more than one deer hunting permit during any calendar year, except that the Commissioner may issue a replacement deer hunting permit to a permittee if such permittee makes a complete application therefore, pays the application fee established under section 26-86a of the general statutes, and demonstrates that the original permit has been lost, destroyed or mutilated beyond recognition.

(6) False or misleading information contained in an application for a deer hunting permit or replacement deer hunting permit shall be cause for the Commissioner to deny such application or revoke a permit issued pursuant to such permit.

(i) **Definitions.** For the purposes of subsection 26-86a-11(a)-(h) of the Regulations of Connecticut State Agencies:

“Check station” means the Department of Environmental Protection’s deer check station at Bluff Point Coastal Reserve.

“Commissioner” is defined as in section 22a-2 of the general statutes.

“Person” is defined as in section 22a-2 of the general statutes.

“Taking” is defined as in section 26-1 of the general statutes.

(Effective October 4, 1995; Amended February 14, 2013)

Sec. 26-86a-12. Method of Take

(a) No person shall use a deer decoy to take or attempt to take any deer during the firearms deer hunting seasons as defined in subdivisions (4), (5), (6), (7) or (8) of section 26-86a-6(b).

(b) No person shall transport a deer decoy during the bow and arrow deer season, as defined in subdivisions (1), (2) and (3) of section 26-86a-6(b), unless such decoy displays at least 400 square inches of fluorescent material visible from all sides.

(Effective October 4, 1995; Amended February 14, 2013)