

§11401. Open and closed seasons for deer

1. Open and closed seasons. This subsection applies to open and closed seasons for deer.

A. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection and sections 10952, 11152, 11153, 11403 and 11404 or by rule adopted by the commissioner pursuant to subsection 2, there is an open season for deer in each calendar year in all counties of the State between September 15th and December 20th annually. In a year that the regular season extends beyond November 30th, the regular season must start no later than the 4th Monday preceding Thanksgiving. [PL 2025, c. 333, §11 (AMD).]

B. The commissioner may shorten the open season on deer in any part of the State, as long as:

(1) The demarcation of the areas with the shortened season follows recognizable physical boundaries, such as rivers and railroad rights-of-way; and

(3) The Saturday preceding the first day of open season on deer is an open day for residents of the State and for nonresidents who meet the qualifications under paragraph E. [PL 2017, c. 164, §13 (AMD).]

C. [PL 2013, c. 408, §15 (RP).]

D. [PL 2013, c. 408, §15 (RP).]

E. Notwithstanding paragraph B, subparagraph (3), a nonresident who owns 25 or more acres of land in the State and leaves that property open to hunting, holds a valid hunting license and is not otherwise prohibited by law may hunt deer on the Saturday preceding the first day of open season on deer. [PL 2017, c. 356, §1 (AMD).]

[PL 2025, c. 333, §11 (AMD).]

2. Rule. The commissioner by rule may:

A. Open any of the areas closed to deer hunting listed in rule, as long as the legislative body of each affected town approves the opening. For purposes of this subsection, "affected town" means a town, township or municipality that contains within its borders any area proposed to be opened pursuant to this paragraph; [PL 2025, c. 333, §12 (NEW).]

B. Create special hunting seasons or expanded archery seasons for the taking of deer in any part of the State to maintain deer populations in balance with available habitat, subject to the provisions of this paragraph.

(1) The demarcation of each area must follow recognizable physical boundaries, such as rivers, roads and railroad rights-of-way.

(2) The commissioner may establish limits on the number of deer taken or possessed by persons during a special season or expanded archery season. Limits established by the commissioner under this subparagraph are exceptions to the limits imposed under section 11501.

(3) The commissioner may specify types of weapons and hunting methods to be used during a special season or expanded archery season.

(4) The commissioner may specify fees for permits issued during a special season, as long as they do not exceed the fees established in section 11153; and [PL 2025, c. 333, §12 (NEW).]

C. Establish a 2-day youth deer hunting period, to be held on the Friday and Saturday preceding the Saturday designated as an open day for residents of the State pursuant to section 11401. [PL 2025, c. 333, §12 (NEW).]

Rules adopted pursuant to this subsection are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

[PL 2025, c. 333, §12 (NEW).]

SECTION HISTORY

PL 2003, c. 414, §A2 (NEW). PL 2003, c. 414, §D7 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 614, §9 (AFF). PL 2003, c. 655, §B168 (AMD). PL 2003, c. 655, §B422 (AFF). PL 2009, c. 134, §1 (AMD). PL 2013, c. 408, §15 (AMD). PL 2015, c. 401, §1 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 164, §13 (AMD). PL 2017, c. 356, §1 (AMD). PL 2025, c. 333, §§11, 12 (AMD).

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