

## 2025-2026 New Hanover Township Deer Management Report

02/10/2026

### Overall Summary

This was the inaugural year of the New Hanover regulated archery hunting program. While we didn't quite hit our target of 18 harvests, we successfully removed 15 deer. For a first-year program, I consider this a success. We have gained valuable data that will help us improve for next season.

I would like to thank each member of the Ad Hoc Deer Committee—Bill Moyer, Marty Weller, Boone Flint, Dennis Ubert, and Karl Stuart—for their dedication and help in making our first year a success.

### Background

White tail deer are an important big game species in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the overpopulation of which can generate public health and safety concerns related to traffic accidents, Lyme disease density, Chronic Wasting Disease, depletion of the understory of woodlands, and damage to private landscaping. It is the responsibility of the Township to recommend and enact means of deer population controls that help mitigate these concerns. Regulated hunting using guidelines established by the Pennsylvania Game Commission is an important tool. Through a regulated whitetail deer hunting program on the Township's Properties, New Hanover Township seeks to better manage the whitetail deer population by permitting the harvesting of white tail doe populations on such property consistent with current seasons, bag limits and objectives established by the Pennsylvania Game Commission.

In January 2025, Rusty Oister proposed the formation of a temporary committee to address the increasing deer population in the Township. His proposal is to develop a program that could eventually transition into a permanent committee, tasked with presenting a comprehensive deer management plan to the Board of Supervisors (BOS). This plan would prioritize safety, legal compliance, ethical standards, and effective population reduction on Township properties, with a target for implementation prior to the 2025-2026 hunting season, beginning in September 2025. *Following this proposal, Rusty was appointed as the ad-hoc chair in February, with Boone Flint, Bill Moyer, and Marty Weller joining as committee members. In April, the Board appointed Dennis Ubert and Karl Stuart as the final members of the committee.*

The committee's proposal included an in-house, archery-only program to be conducted on Township and New Hanover Township Authority (NHTA) properties, with a total of 32 hunters. The Board of Supervisors approved a three-year pilot program at the June 4, 2025 meeting.

The regulated hunting on the Township's Properties was permitted in limited areas and was only authorized by permit issued by the Township to qualified archery hunters. This controlled hunting permit was limited to antlerless deer only using **Pennsylvania Game Commission's Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP)**. Participants were issued a DMAP coupon which they could use at any issuing agent to purchase their DMAP tag.

## Season & Harvest Breakdown

The Early Season was the most productive period of the program. It is important to note that the Mid-Season numbers are somewhat skewed; Rusty Oister, who was originally assigned to Zone 2 for the Early Season, stepped in to hunt Zone 1 during the Mid-Season as it was largely under-utilized. During this “flex” period, he recorded 15 hunts and 53 hours, harvesting 2 deer.

Without these contributions, the Mid-Season would have seen 26% fewer hunts and 28% fewer hours than the Early Season, with zero deer harvested.

## Season Stats

	Total Hunts	Total Time (hrs.)	Total Deer Seen	Bucks Seen	Total Deer Harvested
Early	73 43%	263 46%	195 37%	32 35%	9 60%
Mid	58 34%	187 33%	241 46%	51 56%	4 27%
Late	40 23%	125 22%	89 17%	8 9%	2 13%
Total	171	575	525	91	15

The chart below shows totals without Rusty Oister flexing into Zone 1 Mid season hunting.

	Total Hunts	Total Time (hrs.)	Total Deer Seen	Bucks Seen	Total Deer Harvested
Early	73 47%	263 50%	195 49%	32 42%	9 69%
Mid w/o R Oister	43 28%	134 26%	110 28%	36 47%	2 16%
Late	40 26%	125 24%	89 23%	8 11%	2 16%
Total	156	522	394	76	13

## Harvested by Zone

	# Deer Harvested
Zone 1 – Wassmer	4
Zone 2 – NHTA	3
Zone 3 – Moyer Rd. North	3
Zone 4 – Moyer Rd. South	0
Zone 5 – Deep Creek Park	0
Zone 6 – Parestis	3
Zone 7 – Hickory Park	2
Total	15

**Community Impact:** Two deer from our program were donated to “Hunters Sharing Their Harvest” through the Pennsylvania Game Commission. Statewide, over 287,000 pounds of venison were donated to food pantries this year.

## Key Observations & Analysis

### 1. Participation & Requirements

56% of hunters did not meet our 15-hour minimum, suggesting that expectation was unrealistic. However, 66% recorded at least 10 hours. We also had one hunter harvest a deer with less than 10 hours of hunting. I believe reducing the requirement to 10 hours will better reflect actual participation capabilities.

Hours hunted	0 hrs	0.1-5 hrs	5.1-10 hrs	10.1-15 hrs	15.1-25 hrs	> 25 hrs
# of hunters	4	4	3	7	10	4
% of hunters	12.5%	12.5%	9.4%	21.9%	31.3%	12.5%

### 2. Deer/Vehicle Collisions

Reports show 64 collisions in 2025 compared to 121 in 2024. While I would like to attribute this 57-count decrease to the program, there appears to be inconsistency in how these collisions are reported (Reportable vs. Non-Reportable). Therefore, no firm conclusions can be made at this time.

\*\*\*Reports are either Reportable/Non-Reportable MVA's or Animal injured or deceased\*\*\*\*\*

Year	# Deer Collisions Reported
2023	73
2024	121
2025	64

### 3. Field Observations (Zone 1 & 2)

**Overpopulation:** In the Wassmer Tract (Zone 1), I frequently saw 10–19 deer at once. I estimate the home range population there is roughly 50 deer. Undergrowth is being severely damaged by over-browsing.

**Wildlife Diversity:** Despite the deer issues, the habitat is rich. I observed 5 species of woodpeckers, Great Horned Owls, Sharp-shinned Hawks numerous other bird species, foxes, rabbits, voles and mice supported by the abundant Cedars, Pin Oaks, and Black Haw Viburnum.

**Property Concerns:** There is significant litter in the Wassmer Tract. Silt socks from previous construction near the soccer field at Garnet Dr. were never removed and are now buried. Also, the resident at 157 Garnet Dr. is using township open space to park trucks and trailers, leaving deep muddy ruts. Remnants of blinds and tree stands from prior years were observed in the Wasmer Tract and the New Hanover Township Authority property.

### Operational Notes & Miscellaneous items

- **Injuries & Alternates:** Prior to the Early Season, one participant's ladder stand collapsed during setup. He sustained rib injuries and dropped out; he was replaced by an alternate

who hunted 11 times for 45 hours. Another hunter dropped out prior to the beginning of the season. He was replaced by an alternate who only hunted 1 time for 3 hours.

- **Resident Conflict:** One reportable resident conflict occurred. While the police report stated the hunter was "likely not violating any state laws or program parameters," the situation was not properly de-escalated after unpleasant words were exchanged.
- **DMAP Compliance:** Game Warden Alex Cook encountered a hunter attempting to hunt with a DMAP coupon rather than the actual tag; this was corrected. Additionally, several hunters who harvested their first deer needed to contact me for a second coupon because only one was issued initially. Even though DMAP procedures were reviewed at the safety meeting, going forward we should provide each participant a written copy of the rules and regulations and DMAP procedures. Mandatory reporting for all DMAP permits was due by **February 3, 2026**.
- **Log sheets:** The current system of emailing/texting photos of log sheets is disorganized. Ashlee's "Deer Management Master Log" is excellent, but having data in two locations is difficult to manage. Some participants also forgot to send logs, requiring reminders.
- **Signage & Weather:** High winds and snow have knocked over some signs on stakes. Once the snow melts, we will remove all stake signs; signs on trees will remain. Due to recent extreme snowfall, an email will be sent asking hunters to remove remaining stands and blinds once it is safe to do so.
- **Frontier Archery Club:** We had a scheduling conflict for proficiency shooting. I will contact them to confirm better dates for next year.
- **Participant Survey:** Send out a brief survey to gather hunter feedback.

## Recommendations for 2025-2026

The following items will be discussed at our February 10, 2026 Committee Meeting:

1. **Lower Hour Requirements:** Lower the minimum required hours from 15 to 10. (Currently, 56% of hunters did not meet the 15-hour requirement).
2. **Flex Alternates:** Instead of being locked into one zone, committee members should act as "flex alternates" to hunt under-utilized zones as needed.
3. **In Season Flexibility:** As the season progresses, if participation drops off, the Deer Committee Chair should have the ability to move people around or bring in qualified alternates
4. **Sunday Hunting:** Allow Sunday hunting consistent with Pennsylvania Game Commission regulations to increase total hours and harvest numbers.
5. **Issue Two DMAP Coupons:** Provide two coupons at the initial Safety Meeting to prevent delays after a first harvest.

6. **Updated Lottery/Selection:**

- a. Give preference to hunters who successfully harvested deer this year.
  - b. Prioritize residents and non-residents who met the 10-hour minimum.
  - c. Encourage alternates to complete proficiency shoots so they are "ready to go" if participation drops in a zone.
7. **Communication & Tech:** Use the **Ragic! App** for logging in/out. We should also set up a group email available to the Chair to alert all hunters when a deer is harvested in a specific zone to keep motivation high.