



Deer Hunting 101



Why Hunt Deer in Georgia?

The white-tailed deer is classified as a big game mammal in Georgia.

Hunting is used primarily as a means of keeping the deer herd below the maximum population size of white-tailed deer that can be sustained by the environment. This keeps the herd healthy and strong, maintains habitat, and limits deer-human conflict.

The revenues generated from licenses and equipment sales are a major source of funding for wildlife and habitat restoration projects

Projects include: habitat improvements on state owned lands and population studies, as well as hunter education.

Hunting Regulations

Georgia Department of Natural Resources (GA DNR) is responsible for setting and enforcing regulations for hunting white-tailed deer.

Deer season starts in early Fall (September) and runs until mid-Winter (mid-January). The season occurs during the time of year where all fawns that were born in the Spring are old enough to survive on their own and the removal of mature deer will not negatively impact the overall health of the herd.

Hunting Regulations

While older deer may die of natural causes during the Winter, and some deer are removed from the population due to hunting, their numbers are replaced by fawns born the following Spring.

Georgia regulations allow for the harvest 10 antlerless deer and two antlered bucks. One of the two antlered deer must have a minimum 4 points, 1-inch or longer, on either antler or a minimum 15-inch outside antler spread to be legal. Some counties may have different antler restrictions, so make sure to check the regulations of the county you are hunting in.

Hunting Regulations

To hunt white-tailed deer in Georgia, a Georgia hunting license, along with a big game license must be purchased each year. A harvest record, used for reporting the number and kind of deer harvested by hunters, is also required, but is available for free. The harvest record must be obtained yearly on or after March 1 for the upcoming season.

Every deer harvested (except for Bonus Deer and Quota deer) must be reported on the harvest record and reported to Georgia Game Check via the Go Outdoors smartphone app, www.gooutdoorsgeorgia.com, or by calling 1-800-366-2661. The app also contains an electronic copy of all your licenses, making it a convenient tool to have in the field.

Identifying Gender and Species



Photo Credit: Steve Kyles

Due to the wide variety of habitat found in the state, deer size can vary depending on where they are found, with mature body weights ranging from 70 to 250lbs.

White-tailed deer are sexually dimorphic, which means the males and females have different physical characteristics that can be used to identify them.

Bucks are the Big Boys With Antlers!



Photo Credit: Steve Kyles

Males, called bucks, are typically larger in body size and grow antlers. Antlers are grown and shed every year, which makes them different from horns, which are not shed and grow continuously. Bucks begin to grow their antlers in late spring and early summer. While they grow, antlers are covered in a soft tissue, called velvet. Antlers can be damaged when they are in velvet, often leading to stunted growth for that year, or deformations that can cause a non-typical antler development.

Bucks Cont'd

As Fall arrives, antlers are fully formed for the year and bucks begin to scrape off the velvet by rubbing their antlers against trees, creating the telltale sign that hunters scout for. Antler development in Georgia is largely based on age and nutrition. While very young and very old bucks may not display impressive antler growth, mature bucks in their middle years between 4 and 6 years old, with plenty of quality nutrition available, will typically develop antlers that most hunters seek.

Does

Females, called does, are typically smaller in body size and do not grow antlers.



Photo Credit: Steve Kyles

Fawns



Photo Credit: Todd Schneider

Baby deer, called fawns, are covered in white spots when they are born, which helps to hide them from predators. As fawns mature, they lose their spots.

White-tailed Deer

White-tailed deer are classified as generalist, which means they are highly adaptable and can live in many different habitats. White-tailed deer are found throughout Georgia, from the mountains to the coast, living in hardwood forests, rural farmlands, suburbs, golf courses, pine forest, swamp and marshlands.



Patterns of Movement



Whitetail Deer are crepuscular, meaning that they are most active at and around dawn and dusk.

Typical home ranges can vary depending on habitat and herd size, with does typically having smaller home ranges than bucks.

Hunting Sequence of Events

Scouting

Selecting your hunting location

Choosing your method of hunting

Scout Your Area to Find:

Long before the season begins, hunters should scout the area they plan to hunt, looking for signs that will help them develop a hunting strategy.

This can include locating natural food sources, such as oak and persimmon trees; locating funnels and travel corridors (areas that deer will naturally want to walk through to stay concealed) and other topological features.

Scout Your Area to Find:

This also means locating rubs (where a buck has scraped off the velvet from his antlers on a tree) and scrapes (a bare patch of ground cleared by the deer and used to leave scent markers).

Using game cameras is a great way to start identifying the deer in your hunting area and what times they are typically in certain locations.

Final Location Selection

Based on the information gained from scouting, hunters should answer the following questions when deciding which locations will be best to hunt:

How likely are you to find deer at this location?

How easily can I get into this location?

How easily can I get out ... with an entire deer?

Will the wind patterns alert deer to my presence?

Blinds, Stands, and Spot and Stalk Hunting

Once a location has been picked, hunters now must decide on the method of hunting that will offer the best opportunity to harvest a deer.

There are several ways you can hunt deer. Sitting inside of specially constructed concealment called a blind, sitting in an elevated blind off the ground, in a tree stand that provides a platform high above the ground, and spot and stalk hunting.

Ground Blind

A ground blind can be made with natural materials, such as fallen trees and brush, or a portable commercially bought tent fully assembled.

They enable a hunter the ability to stretch and move to some degree while staying concealed from deer.

A ground blind also helps to protect a hunter from the elements such as wind or rain.



Elevated Blind



An elevated blind, sometimes called a tower stand, is similar to a ground blind, but situated atop a structure or platform.

These allow a hunter to see farther over brush and other objects that would block their view from the ground.

It also gets them above the sight plane of the deer.

Most importantly, elevated blinds get a hunter above the scent plane, making it harder for deer to smell the hunter.

Tree Stand

Tree stands are an elevated platform attached to a tree. There are many types including: lock-on stands, ladder stands and climbing stands.

There are several safety precautions to take into consideration when hunting from an elevated stand, including purchasing and correctly using a full body harness/ fall arrest system.



Tree stands allow a hunter to see further and get above the sight and scent plane of a deer.

Spot and Stalk



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Some hunters prefer to utilize still hunting or the spot and stalk method of hunting, which involves long periods of standing still and looking for game, with short periods of movement to a new location or for a shot.

What can you use to hunt with?

Rifles and Handguns

Shotguns

Muzzleloaders

Crossbows, Longbows, Recurve and Compound Bows.

Rifles and Handguns



Rifles and handguns- chambered for centerfire cartridges .22 caliber or larger, with an expanding bullet; there is no magazine capacity restriction for modern firearms.

Shotguns



Shotguns- 20 gauge or larger loaded with slugs or buckshot. When hunting deer, it is not required to have a plug in the magazine of the shotgun and there is no magazine capacity restriction.

Muzzleloaders

Legal Muzzleloaders are:

Muzzleloading rifles
chambered in .30 caliber or
larger.

Muzzleloading shotguns 20
gauge or larger.

Scopes are allowed.



Archery



Crossbows, longbows, recurve bows, and compound bows may all be used.

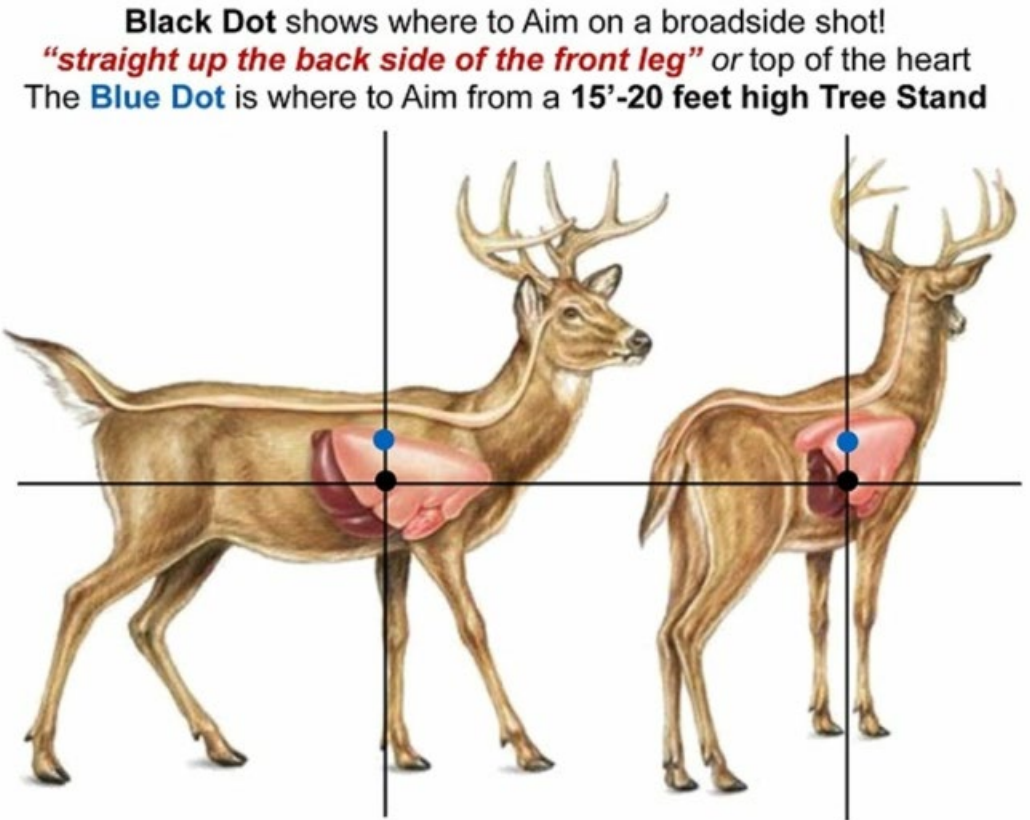
Arrows must be tipped with a broadhead.

How far is too far for a shot?

Effective ranges will vary with equipment used; it is best to make sure that you have a complete knowledge of how your firearm or bow works and assess your personal ability to ensure an ethical harvest and to reduce the chances of wounding loss. Spend time developing your marksmanship skills. Most deer harvested with a firearm in Georgia are shot at less than 100 yards and most deer harvested with a bow are shot at less than 25 yards. Always strive for the clean shot.

Recommended Shots

Broadside and quartering away shots are highly recommended, as they provide the best possible chance of an ethically and successfully placed shot.



Special Considerations for Hunting

Proper attire

Camouflage

Hunter Orange (blaze orange) or Fluorescent Pink

Safety gear and personal protective equipment (PPE)

Proper Attire and Camouflage

Hunters should dress for the weather: lighter clothing for early Fall when the days can still be very warm, and thicker, heavier clothing for later in the season as the days turn cool to cold. Dress for the weather and prepare for weather not forecast. Layers are recommended so that hunters can adapt to changing conditions throughout the hunt.

Camouflage patterns are used to help break up the hunter's outline and make it harder for the deer to see them.

Hunter Orange



Photo Credit: Michael Sellers

All hunters are required to always wear as an outer garment at least 500 square inches of hunter orange or fluorescent pink above the waist when hunting during primitive weapons and modern firearms seasons. There are many commercially available safety vests that can meet this requirement. A head covering can count towards the 500 square inch minimum.

Additional Aids and Good Ideas

Other than your firearm or bow of choice, a hunter does not necessarily have to have anything else.

As skill and confidence increase, hunters may try using scents and other attractants to help set up an advantageous shot, or using calls, rattle bags/antlers, or decoys.

A pair of binoculars can always be helpful.

Safety items including: a compass or GPS; a map of the area you are hunting; an emergency whistle; first aid equipment etc., are always recommended.

Where can I hunt?

Private Lands

Public Lands

Outfitters/Guide

Private Land

Requires permission in order to hunt.

Includes regular landowners and hunting clubs.

Permission must be gained in writing.

Private lands offer exclusive opportunities to hunters that are sometimes not offered on public land.

Public Land

There are many opportunities to hunt public lands in Georgia. A full list of the WMAs and other government owned properties where deer hunting is allowed can be found in the Georgia hunting regulations guide that is published each year and at <https://georgiawildlife.com/locations/hunting>

It is important to note that some WMAs and public lands have specific rules that pertain to them, and it is the hunter's responsibility to know the rules ahead of time and abide by them while hunting.

Outfitters/Guides

Outfitting services manage properties for deer hunting and provide opportunities to hunters for a cost.

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD)

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) was detected in South Georgia in 2025. CWD was first discovered in 1967 in Fort Collins, Colorado. CWD is a fatal neurological disease of deer, elk, and moose caused by infectious, misfolded proteins called prions. There are no current treatments or preventative vaccines.

There is no known transmission of CWD to humans. However, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that hunters harvesting a deer, elk, or moose from an area where CWD is known to be present have their animal tested for CWD prior to consuming the meat and do not consume the meat if the animal tests positive.

For more information on Chronic Wasting Disease, visit <https://georgiawildlife.com/CWD>.

Pittman-Robertson Act

Pittman-Robertson Act is an excise tax on hunting and fishing equipment.

This money goes toward wildlife conservation, restoration, and hunter education only.

Pittman-Robertson Act

The excise tax is set by law at 11% of the wholesale price for long guns, ammunition, bows, and certain archery equipment. It is 10% for handguns. It is paid by manufacturers, producers, and importers and applies to all commercial sales and imports, whether their purpose is hunting, sport shooting, or personal defense.

This tax is handled by the Department of the Treasury, which turns the funds over to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) for apportionments to states.

How are Pittman-Robertson Funds distributed to states?

- 1) \$8 million is dedicated to Enhanced [Hunter Education](#) programs, including the construction or maintenance of public target ranges.
- 2) \$3 million is set aside for projects that require cooperation among the states.
- 3) One-half of the excise tax collected on handguns is set aside for Basic Hunter Education programs.

The remainder of the trust fund is then divided in half with 50 percent apportioned to states based on the land area of the state in proportion to the total land area of the country. The remaining 50 percent is apportioned based on the number of individual paid hunting license holders in the state in proportion to the national total.

Wildlife and Sport Restoration Program

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Wildlife and Sport Fish Restoration Program (WSFR) works with states, insular areas and the District of Columbia to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, their habitats, and the hunting, sport fishing and recreational boating opportunities they provide. Insuring they will be available for generations to come.

How can you learn more?

There are many books, websites and podcasts dedicated to the subject.

Find a friend or family member who is an experienced hunter and talk to them or see if they will be a hunting mentor for you.

Videos and shows on television and online.

[Adventure Together – Hunt Georgia – Georgia Wildlife Resources Division](#)

[Deer Information & Resources | Department Of Natural Resources Division](#)