ZONE D-12

2026 General Deer Hunting Information

(No Additional Hunts Scheduled)

GENERAL INFORMATION

This information sheet has been prepared to assist deer hunters applying for, or planning to hunt in, Zone D-12 located in portions of Imperial, Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The following information should be useful to hunters for archery and general seasons as well as any “additional hunts” within this geographic area. For more specific information or additional questions regarding this area, contact the following California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) office(s):

- **Inland Deserts Region Office (Region 6), 3602 Inland Empire Boulevard, Suite C-220, Ontario, CA 91764 (909-484-0167)** encompassing Imperial, Inyo, Mono, Riverside, and San Bernardino counties.

REGULATIONS

Laws and regulations are designed to conserve wildlife and to provide for an equitable distribution of game mammals. All hunters should read and be familiar with the Current Hunting Regulations. Remember, if you are hunting on private property you must obtain, and have in your possession, written permission to hunt on private property. Hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced.

NON-LEAD RESTRICTIONS

As of July 1, 2019, all hunters must use nonlead ammunition when taking any wildlife in California, except when hunting with a pellet rifle for approved species.

- CCR T14 250.1(d)(3) Effective July 1, 2019, it shall be unlawful to use, or possess with any firearm capable of firing, any projectile(s) not certified as nonlead when taking any wildlife for any purpose in this state.
- CCR T14 475(f) The take or attempted take of any nongame bird or nongame mammal with a firearm shall be in accordance with the use of nonlead projectiles and ammunition pursuant to Section 250.1 of these regulations.

For more information including a list of certified non-lead projectiles/ammunition that may be used in firearms for the taking of deer or other big game mammals, and links to other related topics, visit CDFW's Nonlead Ammunition in California web page.

DEER HARVEST REPORTING

USED AND UNUSED TAGS MUST BE REPORTED

Accurate harvest information is a crucial element in developing population estimates, tag quotas, assessment of current hunt programs, and in the development of new opportunities. Regulations require all deer hunters to submit a harvest report card (online or by mail) to CDFW. Any deer hunter who does not submit a harvest report for each deer tag issued will be required to pay a non-reporting fee upon application for the next hunt season.

Successful hunters are reminded to immediately fill out both portions of the tag and permanently mark the date of kill; record the appropriate "Unit Number" where the deer was killed; attach the tag to the antlers, or ear, if antlerless; have the tag validated and countersigned; and return the completed report card portion.

WHEN TO REPORT

Successful deer hunters must report the take of a deer within 30 days of harvest or by January 31 – whichever date is first. Unsuccessful deer hunters (including hunters that received a tag but did not hunt) must report that they were unsuccessful or did not hunt by January 31.

HOW TO SUBMIT A REPORT

- Online – Both successful and unsuccessful hunters are encouraged to submit their harvest reports online. Hunters will be able to report their hunt results online via CDFW's Online License Service. Hunters logging into the system will be able to view all their tags requiring reports. Reporting through the Online License Service is easy, fast, and convenient. When you report online, you receive instant confirmation that your harvest report card has been received and accepted. You must record the confirmation number in the space provided on the harvest report card and retain the harvest report card until March 1 of that year. Tags reported online must be surrendered to CDFW upon demand.

- By Mail – Any deer tag holder who does not submit a harvest report for their deer tag online, must return the report card portion to CDFW to the following address: CDFW – Wildlife Branch, P.O. Box 944209, Sacramento, CA 94299-0002.

ADDITIONAL DEER HUNTS

There are no additional deer hunts scheduled in Zone D-12.

OBTAINING DEER TAGS

Beginning in late 2010, CDFW began implementation of the new Automated License Data System (ALDS). Under this computer data system, all licenses, stamps, and tags are applied for, and issued through Internet Point-of-Sale terminals (IPOS) located at various CDFW license offices, over 1,400 license agents statewide or online at CDFW's

Licenses and Permits page. Under ALDS, much less paperwork is required to apply for, and receive tags. In addition, licenses, tags, and entry into the Big Game Drawing can all be accomplished with one trip to a license agent. Once your personal information is entered and stored in the database, the database controls and tracks what you have applied for, or been issued, as well as preference points. For more specific information on ALDS, application procedures and zone/hunt information, check out the current Big Game Hunting Digest available online at CDFW's California Hunting Digest page.

For deer tag distribution purposes, zones and hunts are classified based upon the date in which the zone or hunt tag quota is filled in the prior year. The three tag categories include:

1) "**Premium**" zone/hunt tags are only issued through the Big Game Drawing using a First-Deer Tag Drawing Application, except that junior hunters may use their Second-Deer Tag Drawing Application to apply for Apprentice (J) Hunts. Hunters will lose all accumulated deer preference points if drawn for their first choice in the Big Game Drawing;

2) "**Restricted**" zone/hunt tags are available upon application with a First-Deer Tag, or a Second-Deer Tag after August 1; and

3) "**Unrestricted**" zone/hunt tags are available at any time using either a First- or Second-Deer Tag.

For Zone D-12 and associated hunts within the zone, the tag categories are as follows:

1) **Premium** Deer Hunt Tags – **D-12.**

2) **Restricted** Deer Hunt Tags – None.

3) **Unrestricted** Deer Hunt Tags – **Archery Only (AO).**

The deer hunting regulations specific to Zone D-12 (archery and general season) and any additional hunts are listed at the end of this sheet. To hunt deer in Zone D-12, hunters must possess a Zone D-12 deer tag which is valid during the archery or general

season using the appropriate method of take. Additionally, Archery Only Tags (AO Tags) are valid during the Zone D-12 archery or general season using archery equipment only.

Typically, tags for additional deer hunts are in high demand and distributed through CDFW's Big Game Drawing held in June. To receive tags for many of these hunts, hunters must plan ahead and apply before the midnight **June 2, 2026 deadline**. Information regarding application procedures and restrictions, ALDS, zone and hunt seasons, prior year drawing and hunt statistics are contained in the 2026 Big Game Hunting Digest available online at CDFW's California Hunting Digest page.

HARVEST INFORMATION

Information on deer harvest for this area is available in tables contained on the Department's Deer Harvest Data page. For the purpose of applying for hunts in a specific area, tables containing harvest success, antler class information, and Big Game Drawing statistics are the most useful in selecting a zone or hunt in which to apply. The harvest tables found on this web page may also contain more recent harvest analyses than information contained in the Big Game Hunting Digest due to the early production deadline dates for the publication.

LAND OWNERSHIP/PUBLIC LAND OPPORTUNITIES

Zone D-12 contains a mixture of public and private lands. Remember you must obtain, and have in your possession, written permission to hunt on private property. Hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced. There are numerous private holdings throughout the zone, which may or may not be posted, however the majority of Zone D-12 consists of public lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). For information regarding these lands contact the following:

BLM Offices:

El Centro Field Office, 1661 South Fourth Street, El Centro, CA 92243 (760-337-4400).

Needles Field Office, 1303 S. Hwy 95, Needles, CA 92363 (760-326-7000).

Palm Springs South Coast Field Office, 1201 Bird Center Dr., Palm Springs, CA 92262 (760-833-7100).

Fourteen wilderness areas are found within Zone D-12. Hunting is allowed in these wilderness areas, but vehicles are not. Hunting is not permitted in the Joshua Tree National Park located in Riverside County. **There is no public access or hunting in the Chocolate Mountain Aerial Gunnery Range located in Imperial and Riverside Counties.**

In Zone D-12 and other zones throughout California, additional deer hunting opportunities may exist on private property licensed through the Department's Private Lands Management Program (PLM). For more information on the PLM and to obtain a list of participating ranches, visit CDFW's PLM web page.

MAPS

For general maps detailing individual zone or additional deer hunt boundaries, visit CDFW's Deer Hunting web page.

The most comprehensive maps of the area are BLM surface management maps. However, because Zone D-12 covers such a large area, several maps may be needed to depict it entirely. BLM maps of use to Zone D-12 hunters include: Yuma, Trigo Mountains, Salton Sea, and El Centro. These maps can be purchased at local BLM district offices; the BLM at 2800 Cottage Way, Suite W-1623, Sacramento, CA 95825 (916-978-4400); or online at BLM's California Maps web page.

U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) topographic maps are very helpful, especially for topographic features that are not displayed on USFS or BLM maps. USGS maps may be available from many sporting goods, backpacking or engineering stores; by contacting the USGS directly at: Rocky Mountain Mapping Center, Branch of

Information Services, Box 25286, Denver, CO 80225 (888-ASK-USGS); or online at the USGS Store website.

ACCESS/MAJOR ROADS

There are several roadways available to access Zone D-12. In the north, the zone is bounded by State Highway 62 and US Highway 95, both of which provide access to improved and unimproved roads**.** Access roads in the northern areas of the zone include the Havasu Landing Road, State Highway 62, US Highway 95, and the Rice Valley Road, which is partially paved. Interstate Highway 10 runs east/west through the zone, while State Highway 78 runs south and west through the zone and provides access to several maintained dirt roads such as Milpitas Wash and the Bradshaw Trail. In the extreme southern end of the zone, Ogilby Road runs south from State Highway 78 to US Highway 8 and provides access to Indian Pass Road as well as the Hyduke Mine Road. The zone is bounded on the east by Highway 111. Throughout the zone, numerous unimproved dirt roads provide good access, but it is strongly suggested that the open route maps be obtained from BLM prior to venturing into the zone to avoid any conflicts.

WEATHER CONDITIONS/TRAVEL TIPS

The weather in this region is highly variable, so BE PREPARED. During general hunting season in November, usually pleasant conditions prevail, but occasional warm or cold temperatures can occur. Hunters should be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment for a variety of weather conditions.

Zone D-12 encompasses a large geographic area with topography ranging from flat in the lower elevation to extremely steep and rocky in the mountain ranges. Most services are located within the various cities and towns scattered along the main highways, including Needles, Blythe, Brawley, El Centro, and Yuma, Arizona. Hunters are advised to have full gasoline tanks when entering the field and to carry a shovel, serviceable spare tire, and extra food and water. Four-wheel-drive vehicles are strongly

recommended and should be used when traveling on unimproved roads and sandy desert washes within the zone. Be sure to use extra caution when driving off-road, and check with BLM regarding any vehicle travel restrictions that may be in place.

CAMPING

Most of the area is open for camping, but hunters should check with BLM for restrictions.

Please, DO NOT camp or hunt for prolonged periods near water sources important to wildlife and livestock. Remaining for over 30 minutes and within 200 yards of an artificial water source on public lands within California, or any wildlife watering place such as waterholes, springs, seeps, and man-made watering devices within the California Desert Conservation Area on BLM land, is a Fish and Game violation (Title 14, Section 730). You can pack water, wildlife can't.

HERD CONDITIONS AND HABITATS

Population trends for the deer herd in Zone D-12 are generally stable. Short-term fluctuations in Zone D-12 deer populations are usually attributed to weather events that affect forage production, the availability of water and fawn survival.

The subspecies of deer inhabiting Zone D-12 is the Burro or Desert mule deer. While population trends remain stable, these are desert mule deer and the number of bucks taken is usually low. Hunter success remains around 3 to 5 percent. Nevertheless, a few trophy bucks are taken each year.

The vegetation in Zone D-12 is comprised of numerous desert plant communities ranging from desert dunes and desert scrub to riparian forests and Joshua tree woodlands. Deer are usually dispersed throughout the zone, but are most commonly found in washes that contain ironwood, and palo verde vegetation.

HUNTING TIPS AND WHERE TO LOOK FOR DEER

Successful hunters often spend a considerable amount of time scouting pre-season, locating individual or groups of deer, recently used deer trails, and feeding and bedding areas. You may not see many deer from the roads in this area and, generally, the more successful hunters do more hiking to locate deer. Binoculars and/or spotting scopes can be very helpful for locating and identifying deer at greater distances. In general, attempt to hunt areas that are away from other activities such as concentrations of hunters, vehicles, and/or livestock.

Deer in this desert environment occur in scattered populations at extremely low densities which are generally associated with permanent water sources. Deer populations may disperse somewhat following periods of significant rainfall that have resulted in flushes of vegetation. After opening day of the season and due to hunter pressure, some deer may move into the mountains and rocky areas. Most deer in Zone D-12 are taken south of Interstate 10, and a small number of deer are harvested in the Whipple Mountains and Riverside Mountains north of Interstate 10.

For additional information about deer hunting in California, see CDFW's publication "Guide to Hunting in California" under “Related Information”.

2026 ZONE AND ADDITIONAL HUNT SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

For more information, see the current Mammal Hunting Regulations.

§360. Deer.

Except as otherwise provided in Title 14, deer may be taken only as follows:

- (a) A, B, C, and D Zone Hunts.

- (11) Zone D-12.
    - (A) Area: Those portions of Imperial, Riverside and San Bernardino counties within a line beginning at Highway 62 and the Twentynine Palms-Amboy Road in Twentynine Palms; east along Highway 62 to Highway 95 at Vidal Junction; north on Highway 95 to Interstate 40; east on Interstate 40 to the California-Arizona state line; south along this state line to the U.S.-Mexican border; west along the U.S.-Mexican border to Highway 111 in Calexico; north on Highway 111 to Interstate 10; north and west on Interstate 10 to Highway 62; north and east on Highway 62 to the point of beginning.
    - (B) Season: The season in Zone D-12 shall open on the first Saturday in November and extend for 23 consecutive days.
    - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (See subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
    - (D) Number of Tags: 950.

§361. Archery Deer Hunts.

- (a) Archery Hunting with General Deer Zone Tags.
  Deer may be taken during the archery season only with archery equipment specified in Section 354 as follows:
    - (D) Zone D-12.
        - 1. Area: As described in subsection 360(a)(11)(A).
        - 2. Season: The archery season in Zone D-12 shall open on the first Saturday in October and extend for 23 consecutive days.

- 3. Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better per tag.

- (c) Archery Hunting with Archery Only Tags.
  Deer may be taken only with archery equipment specified in Section 354, during the archery seasons and general seasons as follows:
  - (1) Number of Archery Only Tags Permitted. A person may obtain an archery only tag using a one-deer tag application and a second archery only tag using a second deer tag application.
  - (2) Zones in Which Archery Only Tags are Valid. An archery only tag is valid for hunt G-10, and during the archery season and general season in all zones except C-1 through C-4 and X-1 through X-12.
  - (3) Areas: As described in subsections 360(a) and (c).
  - (4) Seasons: The archery season and general seasons are provided in subsection 361(a) above and in subsections 360(a) and (c).
  - (5) Bag and Possession Limit: All bag and possession limits per zone are the same as those described in subsections 360(a) and (c).

- (d) Hunting Area Limitations. Archers not in possession of an archery only tag may hunt only in the zone, zones, or areas for which they have a general tag or an area-specific archery tag. (Refer to subsection 361(c)(2) for zones in which archery only tags are valid).

- (e) Crossbow Prohibition. Except as provided in subsection 354(j), crossbows may not be used during any archery season or during the general season when using an archery only tag.

****** GOOD LUCK! ******