

ZONE D-5

2025 General Deer Hunting Information

(Includes Additional Hunt J-18)

GENERAL INFORMATION

This information sheet has been prepared to assist deer hunters applying for, or planning to hunt in, Zone D-5 located in Amador and Calaveras and portions of Alpine, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne 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):

- **North Central Region Office (Region 2), 1701 Nimbus Road, Rancho Cordova, CA 95670 (916-358-2900)** encompassing Alpine, Amador, Butte, Calaveras, Colusa, El Dorado, Glenn, Lake, Nevada, Placer, Plumas, northeastern Sacramento, eastern San Joaquin, Sierra, Sutter, northern Yolo, and Yuba 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 is 1 additional hunt opportunity within Zone D-5: Hunt J-18 (Pacific/Grizzly Flat Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt). For general maps detailing the individual hunt area boundaries, visit [CDFW's Deer Hunting web page](#).

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-5 and associated hunts within the zone, the tag categories are as follows:

- 1) **Premium** Deer Hunts – **J-18**.

2) **Restricted** Deer Hunts – None.

3) **Unrestricted** Deer Hunts – **D-3-5, Archery Only (AO)**.

The deer hunting regulations specific to Zone D-5 (archery and general season) and any additional hunts are listed at the end of this sheet. To hunt deer in Zone D-5, hunters must possess a Zone D-3-5 deer tag which is valid in Zone D-3, D-4, or D-5 during the archery or general season using the appropriate method of take. Additionally, Archery Only Tags (AO Tags) are valid during the Zone D-5 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, 2025 deadline**.

Information regarding application procedures and restrictions, ALDS, zone and hunt seasons, prior year drawing and hunt statistics are contained in the 2025 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-5 contains a mixture of both public and private lands; however, most of the

public land is in the eastern portion of the zone. Remember, you must obtain and have in your possession written permission to hunt on private property. Hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced. Public lands within Zone D-5 are administered by the El Dorado and Stanislaus National Forests (USFS). In the western portion of Zone D-5, some public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) exist; however, these lands may be difficult to access. For information regarding these lands contact the following:

USFS Offices:

El Dorado National Forest, 100 Forni Road, Placerville, CA 95667 (530-622-5061).

Stanislaus National Forest, 19777 Greenley Rd., Sonora, CA 95370 (209-532-3671).

BLM Offices:

Mother Lode Field Office, 5152 Hillsdale Circle, El Dorado Hills, CA 95762; (916-941-3101).

Wilderness lands have been established within several areas of the El Dorado and Stanislaus National Forests. The Desolation, Mokolumne, and portions of the Carson-Iceberg Wilderness Areas are accessible by hiking and pack stock. Public use of the wilderness is regulated by permit. Information on wilderness area restrictions and Wilderness Permits may be obtained by contacting the El Dorado or Stanislaus National Forests.

In Zone D-5 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 the El Dorado and Stanislaus National Forest maps. USFS maps are available locally at most USFS offices; by contacting the USFS Pacific Southwest Regional Office at: 1323 Club Drive, Vallejo, CA 94592 (707-562-8737); or ordered by phone (406-329-3024), fax (406-329-3030), or mail at USDA Forest Service, National Forest Store, P.O. Box 8268, Missoula, MT 59807; or online at the [National Forest Map Store website](#).

BLM surface management maps may also be useful. 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

Major access to this zone is along Highways 49, 50, 88, and 4. Access to public lands in this zone is very good. On opening weekend of the season, most areas that have deer will have hunters. Due to the number of roads, there are very few areas where you can get away from people. Less accessible areas may have fewer hunters and thus provide better hunting.

WEATHER CONDITIONS/TRAVEL TIPS

The weather in this zone can be highly variable, so BE PREPARED. The weather is usually quite hot and dry during archery and early general season, but early storms are not uncommon. The chance for significant snowfall increases throughout the season, but heavy rains can make many roads very difficult, if not impossible, to travel. You should be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment for a variety of weather conditions.

Zone D-5 covers a large geographic area. The terrain can be very steep and rugged and vegetation can be extremely dense. As you should do in all remote areas, hunters are urged to bring a shovel, a good spare tire, extra water, etc. Use care with any off-road vehicle and check with the BLM or USFS for rules and regulations regarding vehicle and travel restrictions in the area. Horses can be useful in some portions of D-5. However, remember that it may be necessary to carry supplemental horse feed into the backcountry. Contact the local USFS and BLM office for more information regarding forage conditions for livestock.

CAMPING

There are several USFS campgrounds within the hunt zone and these are shown on USFS maps. Informal camping is allowed on USFS lands, but campfire permits are required. Permits may be obtained from any USFS, U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM), or California Department of Forestry (CDF) office. During fire season, special regulations may apply and it is best to contact the local USFS, BLM, or CDF office for the latest information.

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, including guzzlers or horizontal wells on public lands within California, is a Fish and Game violation (Title 14, Section 730). You can pack water, wildlife can't.

HERD CONDITIONS AND HABITATS

The deer population in Zone D-5 is considered stable to slightly declining, yet considerably below levels seen in the late 1960's and 1970's. As with most deer herds in California and other western states, the long-term population trend has been on a steady decline since the 1960's and 1970's. These long-term declines have been due to land management practices that have precluded fire, resulting in changes toward more mature and less diverse habitats, and reduced quality and quantity of deer habitats. Short-term fluctuations in deer populations are usually attributed to weather events that affect forage production.

The subspecies of deer inhabiting Zone D-5 include both Columbian black-tailed deer and California mule deer. The deer are considered migratory; however, resident deer occur primarily on private lands at lower elevations in the western portion of the zone. Deer in the eastern portion of the zone are migratory and reside within lands administered by the USFS during the early to mid-part of the season. From about mid-October, any significant winter storm will cause migratory deer at high elevations in the eastern portion of the zone to move down onto private lands in the west. The deer in this area generally move to higher elevations in late spring and will remain there until the first heavy fall storms force them down below the snow line. This downward movement often occurs during the hunting season, so hunters should be prepared to move to lower areas later in the season after stormy weather.

The vegetation is highly varied throughout Zone D-5 ranging from oak-woodland, mixed and montane chaparral, hardwood, hardwood-conifer, aspen and dense conifer to alpine habitats. Generally speaking, deer populations in this area respond favorably to vegetation disturbances that enhance brush species (wildfire and timber harvesting). Brush stands comprised of buckbrush, deerbrush, and bitter cherry are good areas to hunt. Riparian areas (areas along watercourses), recently burned areas, or clear cuts that have re-sprouted with brush are good areas to hunt. Areas where oaks are producing acorns may also attract deer. Typically, lower densities of deer are observed in the more densely forested areas or in older, more decadent brushlands.

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.

Historically, some of the more popular and productive deer hunting areas in Zone D-5 include:

Alpine County: Areas around Blue Lakes, Mount Reba, and Bear Valley on the north side of Highway 4; Higher elevations and peaks south of Highway 4 and around Highland Lake and Pacific Valley; Carson-Iceberg and Mokolumne Wilderness Areas, which offer some opportunity for pack-in hunting.

Amador County: Areas around Silver Lake and east of Bear River Reservoir; and Mount Plasse, Onion Valley, Foster Meadows, and southwest of Caples Lake.

Calaveras County: Areas around Black Springs/Cabbage Patch, Mattley Meadows, and Bear Trap Basin in the eastern portion of the county; Hermit Springs, Upper Bailey Ridge and Cuneo Camp at mid-elevations on a combination of USFS and private timber lands.

El Dorado County: Areas around Bunker Hill and McKinstry Peak; Van Vleck, Upper Bassi and Tells Peak; Slick Rock, Wrights Lake, Granite Springs, and Lyons Creek west to Ice House Reservoir; and Cody Meadows, Leek Springs Lookout and upper end of Alder Ridge on the south side of Highway 50.

Deer move into the intermediate range and winter range areas following October

storms. Intermediate range areas are generally between 4000 - 5500 feet. It is normal to have storms after October 20 that result in deer movement. Some of the intermediate and winter range areas include:

Peavine Ridge on the north side of Highway 50 (El Dorado County); Alder Creek area on the south side of Highway 50 (El Dorado County); along the north/south road between Iron Mountain Road and Highway 88 (El Dorado and Amador County); Blue Mountain, Lower Bailey Ridge, Summit Level Ridge and in the Westpoint/Bald Mountain area on the western edge of USFS lands (Calaveras County).

In addition, Sierra Pacific Industries (SPI) owns large blocks of land in the intermediate and winter range areas within zone D-5. Much of SPI land is behind locked gates; however, SPI allows public hunting on their property. Access to their land is by foot only and no written permit is required. No camping or fires are allowed on SPI property. Remember, you are a guest on SPI land, please carry out all refuse, be fire safe, and respect their property.

For additional information about deer hunting in California, see [CDFW's publication "Guide to Hunting Deer in California"](#) under "Related Information".

2025 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.
 - (4) Zone D-3-5.

- (A) Area: Shall include all of zones D-3, D-4, and D-5 (see subsections 360(a)(4)(A)1. through 3.).
 - 3. Zone D-5. In the counties of Amador and Calaveras and those portions of Alpine, El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties within a line beginning at the junction of Interstate 5 and the American River in Sacramento; east along the American River to the Middle Fork of the American River; northeast along the Middle Fork of the American River to the Rubicon River; east along the Rubicon River through Hell Hole Reservoir to its confluence with Miller Creek; east along Miller Creek to its junction with the new (marked) USFS Pacific Crest Trail; north on the Pacific Crest Trail one-quarter mile to a junction with the McKinney-Rubicon Springs Road (Miller Lake Road); east along the McKinney-Rubicon Springs Road to McKinney Creek (NE 1/4, section 23, T14N, R16E, M.D.B.M.); east along McKinney Creek to the west shoreline of Lake Tahoe near Chambers Lodge; south along the shore of Lake Tahoe to the California-Nevada state line; southeast along the California-Nevada state line to Highway 50; southwest on Highway 50 to the Pacific Crest Trail at Echo Summit; south along the Pacific Crest Trail to the township line between Townships 7 and 8 North near Wolf Creek Pass; due west on that township line to the road connecting Lower and Upper Highland Lakes at Lower Highland Lake; west along that road to Highland Creek; southwest along Highland Creek to the North Fork of the Stanislaus River; west along the North Fork of the Stanislaus River to the Stanislaus River; west along the Stanislaus River to Highway 99; north along Highway 99 to Bus-80/Hwy 50; west on Bus-

80/Hwy 50 to Interstate 5; north on Interstate 5 to the point of beginning.

- (B) Season: The season for zones for D-3 through D-5 shall open on the fourth Saturday in September and extend for 37 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (See subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 33,000 The Zone D-3-5 tag is valid in zones D-3, D-4, and D-5.
- (c) Additional Hunts.
 - (40) J-18 (Pacific-Grizzly Flat Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt).
 - (A) Area: Excluding Alpine, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, in those portions of El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties within the area described as zone D-5 (see subsection 360(a)(4)(A)3.).
 - (B) Season: The season for additional hunt J-18 (Pacific-Grizzly Flat Apprentice Either-Sex Deer Hunt) shall be concurrent with the zone D-5 general season as defined in subsection 360(a)(4)(B).
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One either-sex deer (see subsection 351(c)) per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 75.
 - (E) Special Conditions:
 - 1. Only junior license holders shall apply.

- 2. Tagholders shall be accompanied by an adult chaperone 18 years of age or older while hunting.
- (44) Conditions for Additional Hunts.
 - (A) When hunting on military reservations or private lands, hunters shall have in their possession a written permit signed by the landowner, which may specify where and when the permittee may hunt.
 - (B) When required, tagholders shall check in and check out of designated check stations.

§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:

 - (4) D Zones.
 - (A) Zones D-3 through D-5.
 - 1. Area: As described in subsection 360(a)(4)(A)1. through 3.
 - 2. Season: The archery season in Zones D-3, D-4, and D-5 shall open on the third Saturday in August and extend for 23 days.
 - 3. Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better per tag.
 - 4. Special Conditions: Hunters that possess a Zone D-3-5 tag may hunt in zones D-3, D-4, and D-5.

- (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!** ****