ZONE D-9

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-9 located in central Kern County. 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):

- **Central Region Office (Region 4), 1234 E. Shaw Avenue, Fresno, CA 93710 (559-243-4005 ext. 151)** encompassing Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Stanislaus, Tulare, and Tuolumne 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 of 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-9.

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-9 and associated hunts within the zone, the tag categories are as follows:

1) **Premium** Deer Hunts – None**.**

2) **Restricted** Deer Hunts –.None.

3) **Unrestricted** Deer Hunts – **D-9 and Archery Only (AO).**

The deer hunting regulations specific to Zone D-9 (archery and general season) and any additional hunts are listed at the end of this sheet. To hunt deer in Zone D-9, hunters must possess a Zone D-9 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-9 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-9 contains a mixture of both 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. A substantial portion of Zone D-9 is composed of public lands, including the Sequoia National Forest (USFS), and lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). For information regarding these lands contact the following:

USFS Offices:

Sequoia National Forest, 1839 South Newcomb Street, Porterville, CA 93257 (559-784-1500).

BLM Offices:

Bakersfield Field Office, 35126 McMurtrey Ave., Bakersfield, CA 93308 (661-391-6000).

In Zone D-9 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 map of the area is the Sequoia National Forest map. 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

Most of the public land in Zone D-9 is located in the northern and eastern portions of the zone. Major access to the public land is from State Highways 178, 58, and 14; however, the road network within the forest is somewhat limited, but adequate. Hunting activity is highest on the opening and closing weekends.

WEATHER CONDITIONS/TRAVEL TIPS

The weather in this region is highly variable, so BE PREPARED. Early in the season, temperatures are usually mild to hot with cold nights. Light to moderate rain and/or snow and possibly fog may occur at any time, but generally during the latter half of the season. Hunters should be prepared for this possibility, with appropriate clothing and equipment for a variety of weather conditions.

Zone D-9 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 Zone D-9. 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 Forest Service campgrounds within Zone D-9. The developed campsites are shown on the Forest Service maps. Informal camping is allowed on Forest Service lands, but campfire permits are required. Permits may be obtained from any USFS, BLM, or California Department of Forestry (CDF) office. During fire season, special regulations may apply, and it is always 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 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

The deer population in Zone D-9 is considered stable, although populations are still considerably below those 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-9 is the California mule deer. The Piute Deer Herd is primarily a non-migratory (resident) deer herd; however, shifts in elevation may occur during the year in response to weather and vegetation availability.

The vegetation is highly varied throughout Zone D-9, ranging from oak-woodland, mixed chaparral, hardwood, hardwood-conifer, conifer, and juniper-pinyon to desert habitats. Generally speaking, deer populations in this area respond favorably to vegetation disturbances that enhance brush species (wildfire and timber harvesting). 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.

Start looking in areas which have been burned in the last five to ten years or where the oak acorns are ripe and abundant. Although meadows provide good forage for deer, especially does and fawns, bucks should utilize areas with better cover during hunting season: rougher terrain (ridges, etc.), denser vegetation, etc. After heavy snow storms, deer will rapidly move toward the winter range or hold in transitional areas. Look in areas with shrubs or preferred browse plants at intermediate elevations.

No one location is guaranteed to have deer on any given date; however, the following areas have historically been some of the more popular and productive areas to hunt:

The Breckenridge Mountain area (east of Bakersfield) including: Golf Meadow area; Squirrel Meadow to top of the mountain; O'Brian Springs area; and lower slopes on the Kern River side. Typically, hunter success has been 15-17 bucks on average per season.

The Piute Mountains area (east of Breckenridge Mountain and south of Lake Isabella) including: areas around Brown Meadow; Saddle Springs; Landers Meadow; Mace Meadow; Sorrell Peak and Piute Peak. Typically, hunter success has been 35-37 bucks on average per season.

The Scodie Mountains (southeast of Lake Isabella) located entirely within USFS

wilderness area. This area receives very light hunting pressure; however, on average fewer than five bucks are taken each season.

For additional information about deer hunting in California, see CDFW's publication "Guide to Hunting Deer 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.
    - (8) Zone D-9.
        - (A) Area: In that portion of Kern County within a line beginning at the intersection of Highways 99 and 178; northeast along Highway 178 along Lake Isabella and through Walker Pass to Highway 14; southwest along Highway 14 to Highway 58; northwest along Highway 58 to Highway 99; north along Highway 99 to the point of beginning.
        - (B) Season: The season in Zone D-9 shall open on the fourth Saturday in September and extend for 30 consecutive days.
        - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (See subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
        - (D) Number of Tags: 2,000.

§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:
    - (B) Zones D-6 through D-10.
        - 1. Area: As described in subsection 360(a)(5)(A) through (9)(A).
        - 2. Season: The archery season in zones D-6 through D-10 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.
- (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! ******