

ZONE X-9b and Area-Specific Archery Hunt A-17

2025 General Deer Hunting Information

(Includes Additional Hunt G-3)

GENERAL INFORMATION

This information sheet has been prepared to assist deer hunters applying for, or planning to hunt in, Zone X-9b located in portions of Inyo County. The following information should be useful to hunters for archery season (A-17; Zone X-9b Archery Hunt), Zone X-9b general season, and 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 (Region 6), Bishop Field Office** (760-872-1171).

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

One additional hunt opportunity exists in Zone X-9b: 1) Hunt G-3 (Goodale Buck 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 X-9b and associated hunts within the zone, the tag categories are as follows:

- 1) **Premium** Deer Hunts – **X-9b, A-17, and G-3.**
- 2) **Restricted** Deer Hunts – None.
- 3) **Unrestricted** Deer Hunts – None.

General Season Tags (Zone X-9b): The deer hunting regulations specific to Zone X-9b

and any additional hunts are listed at the end of this sheet. To hunt deer during the general season in Zone X-9b, a hunter must possess a Zone X-9b tag. This tag is valid in Zone X-9b, but only during the prescribed general season. Zone X-9b tags may not be used to hunt deer during the Hunt A-17 archery season, even with archery equipment.

Archery Season Tags (Hunt A-17): To hunt deer during the archery season in Zone X-9b, hunters must possess an Area-Specific Archery Hunt A-17 tag. This tag is only valid during the Hunt A-17 archery season and may not be used to hunt deer during the general zone season, even with archery equipment. Additionally, Archery Only Tags (AO Tags) are not valid in any X zone or archery hunt within an X zone.

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

The majority of Zone X-9b is public land; however, private lands are found at lower elevations and near towns. Remember, you must obtain, and have in your possession, written permission to hunt on private property. Hunter trespass laws are strictly enforced. Public lands are administered by the Inyo National Forest (USFS) or the Bureau of Land Management (BLM). For information regarding these lands contact the following:

USFS Offices:

Inyo National Forest, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 200, Bishop, CA 93514 (760-873-2400).

BLM Offices:

Bishop Field Office, 351 Pacu Lane, Suite 100, Bishop, CA 93514 (760-872-5000).

Ridgecrest Field Office, 300 S. Richmond Road, Ridgecrest, CA 93555 (760-384-5400).

In Zone X-9b 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 Inyo National Forest map. In addition, the Mono Basin National Forest Scenic Area map, and the Eastern High Sierra Recreation Topo Map are good sources. 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. The Bishop and Mt. Whitney BLM maps are good sources. 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](#).

In addition, the Lone Pine (760-876-4444) and Bishop (760-873-8405) Chambers of Commerce have Visitor and Motor Guides that give a general layout of the area. Another map that may be of value is the American Automobile Association (AAA) map of Bishop, CA.

ACCESS/MAJOR ROADS

U.S. Highway 395 is the primary route of access through Zone X-9b. This major north-south highway parallels the eastern escarpment of the Sierra Nevada between the city of Bishop to the north and the town of Lone Pine to the south. Highway 168 is the only other major highway within the zone going west out of Bishop. Other improved roads include Whitney Portal Road and Horseshoe Meadows Road out of Lone Pine and Glacier Lodge Road out of Big Pine. These highways and roads provide access to dozens of improved and unimproved dirt roads that penetrate the zone's interior. Access at higher elevations is generally limited to hiking trails. Many of these trails are fairly steep and can include considerable elevation gains.

WEATHER CONDITIONS/TRAVEL TIPS

The weather in this region is highly variable, so BE PREPARED. Warm days and cold nights with below freezing temperatures are common during the first half of the season. During the latter half of the season, cool days and cold nights are the general rule with snow often developing at the higher elevations. Thundershowers are common. You should be prepared with appropriate clothing and equipment for a variety of weather conditions.

The topography within Zone X-9b ranges from flat in the lower elevation valleys to very steep and rocky in the higher mountains of the Sierra Nevada. Most services are located within the various towns scattered along the base of the Sierra Nevada escarpment, including Bishop, Big Pine, Independence, and Lone Pine. Hunters are advised to have full gasoline tanks when entering the field and to carry snow chains, shovel, serviceable spare tire, and extra food and water. Four-wheel-drive vehicles should be used when traveling on unimproved roads within the zone. Be sure to use extra caution when driving off-road and check with USFS or BLM regarding any vehicle travel restrictions that may be in place.

CAMPING

Inyo County has a wide variety of camping opportunities on USFS, BLM, and county lands. For campground information, contact the USFS (Inyo National Forest; 760-873-2400); BLM (Bishop Office, 760-872-5000; or Ridgecrest Office, 760-384-5400); or for Inyo County campgrounds, the County Department of Parks and Recreation, County Services Building, 785 N. Main Street, Suite G, Bishop, CA 93514 (760-873-5577). Overnight camping is not allowed on Los Angeles Department of Water and Power lands.

For areas where dispersed camping is allowed, you need to obtain a California Campfire Permit for the use of any open flame (including gas stoves, lanterns, wood fires, charcoal fires, or smoking). These permits can be obtained at no cost from any

Inyo National Forest Ranger Station and BLM office. Open flame of any kind may be restricted during times of high fire danger; check with the local Forest Service office for current 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, 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 X-9b is considered stable to slightly increasing. Short-term fluctuations in deer populations are usually attributed to weather events that affect forage production and the availability of water.

The subspecies of deer inhabiting Zone X-9b is the Inyo mule deer. The deer herd found within the boundaries of Zone X-9b is referred to as the Goodale Deer Herd. Deer in Zone X-9b are migratory, spending summers at higher elevations (8,000-14,000 feet) in the Sierra Nevada and winters at lower elevations (4,500-7,500 feet) in Inyo County, California. Deer migration between these summer and winter ranges occurs twice annually, once during spring and then again in the fall. Migrations generally follow traditional routes oriented along major topographic features, such as drainages or the bases of mountain ranges. Fall migration back to the winter range is generally patterned by snowstorms and freezing temperatures at the higher elevations. This migration generally begins in late October and follows the same traditional routes used by deer in the spring. During heavy fall snowstorms, deer will migrate together from the summer range, often making the trip to the winter range in just a few days. As the snowline lowers and the days become progressively shorter, deer concentrate on the winter range for the breeding season, which begins in mid-November.

Zone X-9b is an ecologically diverse zone comprised of numerous plant communities ranging from desert scrub at the lowest elevations (3,700 feet) near Lone Pine to alpine at the highest elevations (10,000-14,000 feet) along the Sierra Nevada Crest. The

highest peak in the continental United States, Mt. Whitney (14,496 feet), can be found in this zone. Deer habitat in this area is characterized by open sagebrush scrub and montane chaparral brush fields interspersed with open meadows and groves of aspen and pine forest. Many steep drainages flow east from the Sierra Nevada Crest and these typically support perennial water and lush riparian vegetation. Deer typically occur in association with these riparian areas, as well as other habitats that provide the adequate combinations of food, cover, and water.

The deer in Zone X-9b primarily inhabit elevations between 4,500 and 9,000 feet. These elevations support Great Basin type vegetation. The winter range consists of sagebrush scrub and pinyon woodland plant communities. Sagebrush scrub occurs at the lower elevations from approximately 4,500 to 6,500 feet. Common species associated with this plant community include big sagebrush, antelope bitterbrush, Mormon tea, rabbitbrush, buckwheat, Indigo bush, black brush, and native bunchgrasses. The pinyon woodland plant community occurs from approximately 6,500 to 9,500 feet. Pinyon pine is the dominant tree and big sagebrush is the dominant shrub in this area. Other common species include antelope bitterbrush, Mormon tea, rabbitbrush, and mountain mahogany. Common herbaceous species are June grass, Indian rice grass, and squirreltail grass. The upper elevation is dominated by Jeffrey pine forest.

Subalpine forest occurs from 9,500 feet to 11,500 feet in elevation. The Jeffrey pine, whitebark pine, foxtail pine, and limber pine are the dominant tree species in this plant community up to the tree line. Common shrubs include sagebrush, mountain mahogany, mountain whitethorn, chinquapin, fernbush, and creambush. The alpine tundra plant community occurs from 11,500 to 14,496 feet (Mount Whitney peak). Vegetation is extremely sparse at these elevations and mainly consists of low growing perennial shrubs and annuals.

Riparian vegetation occurs within all these plant communities, except the alpine tundra. Riparian areas can be important in providing escape cover and fawning habitat. At lower elevations, cottonwood, black oak, interior live oak, and willow are the dominant species. At the upper elevations, in the pinyon woodland area, birch, wild rose, and

willow species dominate the riparian habitat. Groves of quaking aspen can be found in drainages within the subalpine forest.

Deer winter ranges exists on alluvial fans at elevations of 4,500 to 6,000 feet. Alluvial fans occur when intermittent streams, resulting mostly from bursts of infrequent rain, rush down steep canyons scouring boulders, soil, and other debris. The flood of water carries the whole mass with it and deposits it on the valley floor at the canyon's mouth. In years of little snow, however, many deer in the Goodale herd spend much of the winter at elevations as high as 8,000 to 9,000 feet. The portion of the winter range with the greatest concentration of deer is that area from Big Pine Creek to Oak Creek.

Intermediate ranges or holding areas are those sites where migrating deer pause for a time when traveling from one seasonal range to another. Use of holding areas by the Goodale deer herd varies greatly from year to year depending on the amount of snow. Some deer will remain on these areas until forced down by deep snow, while others travel to lower elevation winter ranges before any substantial snowfall has occurred. Known intermediate ranges are Stecker Flat, Shinglemill Bench, and the area above Scotty Spring. In years of little snow, significant numbers of deer remain on these areas through January. This may be important in reducing use of browse plants on key winter ranges at lower elevations. The major mountain passes are used extensively by deer as migration routes. Their probable order of use by numbers of deer is Taboose, Sawmill, Bishop, and Kearsarge. Some use has been noted over Shepherd and Vacation passes.

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 occur throughout the entire zone during the general hunting season. Deer habitat in this area is characterized by open sagebrush scrub and montane chaparral brush fields interspersed with open meadows and groves of aspen and pine forest. Many steep drainages flow east from the Sierra Nevada Crest and these typically support perennial water and lush riparian vegetation. Deer typically occur in association with these riparian areas, as well as other habitats that provide the adequate combinations of food, cover, and water. Vehicle access to the west of Highway 395 and south of Bishop is generally limited to improved roads within major drainages, such as Bishop Creek, Big Pine Creek, Lone Pine Creek, and Cottonwood Creek. In addition, numerous unimproved dirt roads also skirt the base of the Sierra Nevada escarpment.

Specific areas to the west of Highway 395 that hunters may want to investigate include South Lake, Palisade/Sage Flat, McMurry Meadows, Onion Valley, Grays Meadow, and Cottonwood Lakes. Much of the zone can only be accessed by hiking. Some of the more commonly used trails are in the South Lake area, Big Pine Canyon, Shepherd Pass, Mt. Whitney area, and New Army Pass/Cottonwood Lakes. Other more difficult and less frequented trails include Taboose Pass, Sawmill Pass, Baxter Pass, and Junction Pass.

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:

- (b) X-Zone Hunts.
 - (14) Zone X-9b.
 - (A) Area: That portion of Inyo County within a line beginning at the intersection of Highway 395 and Cottonwood Creek; northwest along Cottonwood Creek to the Horseshoe Meadow Road; south along the Horseshoe Meadow Road to the Cottonwood Pass Trail; west along the Cottonwood Pass Trail through Horseshoe Meadow to the Inyo-Tulare county line at Cottonwood Pass; north on the Inyo-Tulare and the Inyo-Fresno county lines to the Piute Pass Trail; east along the Piute Pass Trail to the North Lake Road; east and south on the North Lake Road to Highway 168; north and east on Highway 168 to Highway 395; south on Highway 395 to the point of beginning.
 - (B) Season: The season in Zone X-9b shall open on the third Saturday in September and extend for 24 consecutive days.
 - (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better per tag.
 - (D) Number of Tags: 230.
 - (c) Additional Hunts.
 - (2) G-3 (Goodale Buck Hunt).
 - (A) Area: In that portion of Inyo County within a line beginning at the intersection of Highway 395 and Lone Pine Creek; west along Lone Pine Creek to the Inyo-Tulare county line; northwest along the

Inyo-Tulare and Inyo-Fresno county lines to Taboose Creek; east along Taboose Creek to Highway 395; south along Highway 395 to the point of beginning.

- (B) Season: The season for additional hunt G-3 (Goodale Buck Hunt) shall open on the first Saturday in December and extend for 16 consecutive days.
- (C) Bag and Possession Limit: One buck, forked horn (see subsection 351(a)) or better, per tag.
- (D) Number of Tags: 25.
- (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.

- (b) Archery Hunting with Area-specific Archery Tags.

Deer may be taken only with archery equipment specified in Section 354, only during the archery seasons as follows:

 - (15) A-17 (Zone X-9b Archery Hunt).
 - (A) Area: As described in subsection 360(b)(14)(A).
 - (B) Season: The archery season for hunt A-17 (Zone X-9b Archery Hunt) shall open on the third Saturday in August 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: 210.
- (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!** ****