



## Good Season Forecast for White-Tailed Deer Hunting

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10 October 2023

Despite a hot and dry summer that led to drought conditions across much of the state, the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) is forecasting a good white-tailed deer season for hunters.

“Deer season is looking to be in pretty good shape this year,” Alan Cain, TPWD Big Game Program director, said. “That’s probably a surprise to most hunters considering how hot and dry it was this summer, but in reality, we had really good rainfall this spring and going into early summer across the vast majority of the state.”

The mild and wet spring led to “fantastic” antler growth.

“We’re seeing that. I’m starting to receive photos from landowners who have cameras out, and they’re seeing good quality antlers this year,” Cain said. “That speaks volumes to the importance of moisture in the spring and good spring vegetation and how important it is to get bucks back into better body condition coming out of the rut.”

Does are in good shape, as well, which led to good fawn production.

“I think the heat probably had a toll on some of those, and maybe we won’t recruit as many as we’re expecting in the fall, but we did have decent numbers,” Cain said. “For example, in South Texas where it’s been extremely hot and dry, [some individuals] are reporting upwards of 50-70% fawn crops on some of those ranches. Obviously, that depends on habitat conditions.”

If a property is overgrazed, fawn survival is down, and antler quality declines.

“For the most part, everything across the board is going to be better than it has been in the last several years—maybe even a little bit above average this year as far as antler quality goes,” Cain said.

Deer populations vary across the state.

“The Texas Hill Country—that area around Fredericksburg, Llano, Mason and Kerr County—has the highest deer population in the state with a couple million deer,” Cain said. “Moving back toward the east and southeast between San Antonio and Houston, the Post Oak Savannah region, generally holds a pretty good deer population.”

South Texas also has good deer numbers.

“It’s a bit harsher down there. You don’t always have the large fawn crops or the densities that you see in the Hill Country partly because people often manage for trophy quality deer. They try to keep the deer population at a level that can be supported by that native habitat so they can take advantage of all that nutrition and maximize that on an individual deer basis,” Cain said.

East Texas has a healthy deer population, as well.

The Texas Panhandle, from Lubbock up to Amarillo, typically has lower deer densities than other parts of the state.

“There are good deer numbers where you have some habitat and always great body condition and body size up in that particular part of the state,” Cain said.

In areas like the Texas Hill Country where deer numbers are higher, one deer to every four or five acres, hunters may consider taking a doe this year.

“Hunters should definitely consider harvesting antlerless deer this year,” Cain said. “That’s an important part of deer management because the females are the reproductive segment of that population. Controlling those numbers helps control growth.”

Having too many deer in one area can cause over-browsing on some shrubs and woody plants, which Cain said can impact the deer population and other animals that rely on the native habitat.

Some parts of the state have “doe days” to help landowners manage the population.

Hunters are encouraged to check the Outdoor Annual or [OutdoorAnnual.com](https://www.outdoorannual.com) for full deer hunting regulations, information on chronic wasting disease zones and mandatory harvest reporting.

The general deer season for the North Zone is Nov. 4 through Jan. 7.

In the South Zone, the general season is Nov. 4 through Jan. 21.