

SURVEY OF MINNESOTA DEER HUNTERS PARTICIPATING IN THE 2012 3A FIREARM SEASON

A study of hunters' opinions and activities



**A cooperative study conducted by the University of Minnesota for the
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources**

Your help on this study is greatly appreciated!

Please return your completed questionnaire in the enclosed envelope. The envelope is self-addressed and no postage is required. Thanks!

Minnesota Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit,
Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Conservation Biology
University of Minnesota
St. Paul, Minnesota 55108-6124
(612) 624-3479
sas@umn.edu

Part I. Your 2012 3A Minnesota Deer Hunting Season

The first set of questions will tell us how you hunted deer. When you purchased your 2012 firearm deer license, you indicated you intended to hunt in southeastern Minnesota during the 3A season. For reference, the 3A season refers to the 9-day firearm season in the 300-series deer permit areas (including 602) that began on November 3rd. *Please read the questions carefully and answer them as accurately as you can.*

1. Did you hunt during the 2012 3A deer season?

- Yes
- No *(Please skip to Question 22.)*

2. Which ONE deer permit area did you hunt most often during the 2012 3A firearm deer season? *(Check one.)*

- 338 345
- 339 346
- 341 347
- 342 348
- 343 349
- 344 602

3. How many days did you hunt during the 2012 firearm deer season in Zone 3A?

_____ Days

4. Including 2012, how many years have you hunted deer during the 3A Minnesota firearm deer season?

_____ Years

5. Including 2012, how many years have you been hunting deer in Minnesota?

_____ Years

6. Although the archery season is not over yet, did you hunt deer during the 2012 Minnesota archery season?

- Yes
- No

7. Do you plan on hunting the 2012 Minnesota muzzleloader deer season?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Please answer the following questions about the area you hunted most often during the 2012 Zone 3A firearm deer season (area checked in question 2 above). This is the area that you took the most trips or where you spent the majority of your time firearm hunting.

8. How much of your deer hunting did you do on each of the following types of land during the 2012 3A deer hunting season? *(Circle one number for each item.)*

	None	Some	Most	All	Don't Know
Private land that I own	1	2	3	4	9
Private land that I lease for hunting	1	2	3	4	9
Private land that I do not own or lease	1	2	3	4	9
Public land*	1	2	3	4	9

↳ **If you only hunted public land, please skip to question 12.*

9. If you hunted on private land that you did not own during the 3A season, to the best of your knowledge who hunted that land during the 3B season? (If you did not hunt private land you do not own, skip to Question 10.) (Check all that apply.)

- The landowner and/or their immediate family
- Hunter who is not a relative of the landowner
- Hunter who is a relative of the landowner
- Nobody else hunts on this property during the 3B season
- Don't know

10. If you hunted on private land that you own during the 3A season, who hunted on your property during the 3B season? (If you did not hunt private land you own, skip to Question 11.) (Check all that apply.)

- Another party that also owns the property
- Friends that do not own the property
- Family that does not own the property
- Any hunter who asks permission
- Nobody hunts my property during the 3B season
- Don't know

11. If you leased private land that you did not own, please check the primary reason you decided to lease property for deer hunting. Also, please indicate the number of acres you lease. (If you did not lease land for hunting, skip to Question 12.) (Check all that apply.)

- I lease a parcel myself so I can manage for mature bucks
- I am one of group of people leasing so we can manage for mature bucks
- I lease a parcel myself so that I have a place to hunt every year
- I lease a parcel with friends so my group has a place to hunt every year
- I lease because I was unable to get permission on private land
- Other (please list): _____

How many total acres of land did you lease during the 3A firearm deer season?

_____ Acres

Part II. Experiences & Opinions Regarding Your 2012 3A Minnesota Deer Hunting Season

We are now interested in learning about your experiences and opinions regarding your 2012 3A deer hunt.

12. Which techniques did you use to hunt deer during the firearm season? (Circle one number for each technique.)

Method	None of the time	Some of the time	Most of the time	All of the time	Don't know
Stand hunting from ground stand/blind	1	2	3	4	9
Stalking or moving slowly	1	2	3	4	9
Hunting from elevated tree stand	1	2	3	4	9
Participated in deer drives as member of a party	1	2	3	4	9

13. What was the first deer or group of deer that you saw that was within your shooting range during the 3A deer season? (*Check one.*)

- Sub legal buck (less than 4 points on one side)
- Legal buck
- Antlerless deer
- Mixed group of bucks and antlerless deer
- Did not see a deer while hunting → *Skip to question 22.*

14. From the first deer or group of deer you saw within shooting range this season, were you able to kill the deer?

- Yes → *Skip to question 16.*
- No

15. If no, why were you not able to kill the first deer or group of deer you saw within shooting range? (*Check one.*)

- I was unsure if it was a legal buck or couldn't tell if it was antlerless
- The deer did not present a good shot so I did not shoot
- I shot and missed the deer
- It was a buck that did not meet the minimum number of antler points
- It was a legal buck, but it was not big enough for me to want to shoot it
- It was an antlerless deer and I do not shoot antlerless deer
- Other (*Describe.*) _____

16. Did you kill an antlerless deer during the 2012 3A deer season?

- Yes → *Skip to question 18.*
- No

17. If no, what was the reason for not killing an antlerless deer during the 3A season? (*Check one.*)

- I did not see an antlerless deer
- The deer did not present a good shot so I did not shoot
- I shot and missed the deer
- I already shot a deer earlier in the year so I was hunting for bucks
- I could not tell if it was an antlerless deer or a sub-legal buck
- I do not shoot antlerless deer
- Other (*Describe why.*) _____

18. Did you kill an antlered buck during the 2012 3A deer season?

Yes → Skip to question 20.

No

19. If no, what was the reason for not killing an antlered buck during the 2012 3A season? (Check one.)

- I had already shot a buck during the archery season
- I did not see a legal buck
- The buck did not present a good shot so I did not shoot
- I shot and missed the deer
- It did not meet the minimum number of antler points
- It was a legal buck, but it was not big enough for me to want to shoot it
- I was unsure if the deer was legal to shoot
- Other (describe why) _____

20. In total, how many deer did you see while hunting during the 2012 3A deer season? (Write the number of deer you saw in each blank below.)

Type of deer	Deer seen
Legal bucks (at least one antler with at least 4 points)	_____
Sub-legal bucks (for example, spike, fork horn, 3-point on one side)	_____
Antlerless Deer (for example, doe or button buck)	_____
Deer that I couldn't identify as legal, sub-legal, or antlerless	_____

21. During the 2012 3A deer season, how many antlered and antlerless deer did you personally kill?

_____ Antlered Bucks

_____ Antlerless Deer

22. Please check which southeastern Minnesota deer seasons you hunted between 2009 and 2011. Then, indicate and how many antlered and antlerless deer you personally killed during those previous southeastern Minnesota firearm deer seasons?

Include all deer you killed, regardless of whether you tagged the deer or another hunter tagged the deer. Write in the number of deer you killed in each blank below. If you did not hunt deer in the southeast during a particular year, please check the appropriate box.

Year	I hunted the 3A season that year ▼	I hunted the 3B season that year ▼	Number of Antlered Deer you killed ▼	Number of Antlerless Deer you killed ▼	I did not hunt deer in southeastern Minnesota that year ▼
In 2009 I killed...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
In 2010 I killed...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>
In 2011 I killed...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	_____	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your 2012 3A firearm deer hunt. (Circle one number for each item.)

	Strongly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither	Slightly Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
I was satisfied with the <u>number of legal bucks.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	9
I was satisfied with the <u>quality of bucks.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	9
I heard about or <u>saw legal bucks while hunting.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	9
I was satisfied with the <u>total number of antlerless deer.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	9
I was satisfied with the <u>total number of deer I saw while hunting.</u>	1	2	3	4	5	9

Part III. Deer Populations & Harvest Management strategies in Southeastern Minnesota

The next section addresses deer populations and harvest management strategies in southeastern Minnesota. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability, even if you are not entirely familiar with the deer regulations. The regulations we refer to in this survey include:

- A 4-point to one side antler point restriction regulation for all deer seasons
- A prohibition on buck cross-tagging
- The 3A season was lengthened to 9 days (from 7).
- Youth hunters (17 or younger) are exempt from the regulation and can take any buck

24. Over the past 5 years, what trend have you seen in the deer population in the area you hunt and the surrounding area?

- More deer now than 5 years ago
- About the same number of deer now as 5 years ago
- Fewer deer now than 5 years ago
- Don't Know

25. In thinking about the area you hunt and the surrounding area, would you say the deer population is:

- Too High
- About Right
- Too Low
- Don't Know

26. In thinking about the area you hunt and the surrounding area, at what level do you think the deer population should be managed? (Please circle one.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Decrease 50% (Significant)	Decrease 25% (Moderate)	Decrease 10% (Slight)	No Change	Increase 10% (Slight)	Increase 25% (Moderate)	Increase 50% (Significant)

27. Which statement best describes the number of mature bucks over the past 5 years in the Zone 3A area you hunted. (This time period is from 2008 to 2012, beginning 2 years before the antler point restriction was enacted.) (Check one.)

- Fewer mature bucks now than 5 years ago
- About the same number of mature bucks now as 5 years ago
- More mature bucks now than 5 years ago
- Don't know

28. To what extent would you support or oppose a regulation that would increase the proportion of antlered bucks in the deer area you hunt most often? (Check one.)

- Strongly Oppose
- Slightly Oppose
- Neither Oppose nor Support
- Slightly Support
- Strongly Support
- Don't Know

29. The regulations that were put in place in southeastern Minnesota in 2010 were designed to put more harvest pressure on antlerless deer and at the same time protect a large percentage of yearling bucks. Thinking back to when the regulations were announced before the 2010 deer season, please indicate your level of support at that time (again, *prior* to the 2010 deer season).

- Strongly Opposed
- Slightly Opposed
- Neither Opposed nor Supported
- Slightly Supported
- Strongly Supported
- Don't Know

30. After hunting under the antler point restriction regulations, please indicate how your overall satisfaction with your deer hunting experience in southeastern Minnesota has changed over time. (Circle one.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Much Less Satisfied	Somewhat Less Satisfied	Slightly Less Satisfied	No Change	Slightly More Satisfied	Somewhat More Satisfied	Much More Satisfied

31. After hunting under the antler point restriction regulations, please indicate whether or not your support for antler point restrictions in southeastern Minnesota may have changed over time. (Circle one.)

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Much Less Support	Somewhat Less Support	Slightly Less Support	No Change	Slightly More Support	Somewhat More Support	Much More Support

32. In order for the antler point restriction to continue, the State Legislature must approve the regulation. Please indicate your level of support for the DNR to approach the legislature to continue each regulation. Again, no decisions have been made to continue the regulations; however, this information will be used to assess whether or not to seek approval through the Legislature. (Please circle one number for each item. 'Oppose' means you do not want the regulations to continue and 'Support' means you want DNR to seek approval of the regulations.)

	Strongly Oppose	Slightly Oppose	Neither	Slightly Support	Strongly Support	Don't Know
Keeping the 3A season at 9 days	1	2	3	4	5	9
Continue the 4-point to one side antler point restriction	1	2	3	4	5	9
Continue the prohibition of buck cross-tagging	1	2	3	4	5	9
Exemption of youth from the antler point restriction	1	2	3	4	5	9

Part IV. Opinions About Alternative Deer Regulations

This set of questions will address your opinions towards alternative deer regulations and factors that contribute to your hunt satisfaction.

33. Please indicate your support or opposition to the following statements regarding potential deer management changes. Responses of 'neither' mean you neither support nor oppose the proposed regulation and would continue to hunt your traditional location if regulations were changed. (Please circle one number on each line.)

	Strongly Oppose	Slightly Oppose	Neither	Slightly Support	Strongly Support	Don't Know
Delay the 3A deer season one week. The 3A deer season would open the Saturday closest to November 15 th . Currently, the season opens the Saturday closest to November 6 th , which is about one week prior to peak rut. There would be no change to the 3B season; it would start immediately after 3A ends.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Delay the 3A deer season until late November. As a result, the Zone 3B season would also be delayed. There will also be impacts to the muzzleloader season start date.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Consolidate the 3A and 3B deer seasons. The 3A and 3B deer seasons would be consolidated into a single, 16-day season where both 3A and 3B hunters could participate. This would reflect a similar seasonal framework as Zone 1, which is a continuous 16-day season.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Allowing archery deer hunters to tag an additional buck. Currently, hunters are only allowed to tag one buck per year. This change would allow archers to take what would amount to a second buck (presuming a buck was also tagged during the firearm or muzzleloader season). Under this scenario, the total number of bucks that could be tagged is 2.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Allowing muzzleloader deer hunters to tag an additional buck. Currently, hunters are only allowed to tag one buck per year. This change would allow muzzleloader hunters to take what would amount to a second buck (presuming a buck was also tagged during the archery or firearm season). Under this scenario, the total number of bucks that could be tagged is 2.	1	2	3	4	5	9

34. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statement, “If the 3A and 3B deer seasons were consolidated into one 16-day season, I (and/or my hunting party) would lose access to the property we currently hunt.” (Check one.)

- Strongly Disagree
- Slightly Disagree
- Slightly Agree
- Strongly Agree
- Don't Know

35. In lottery and hunter choice deer areas, the bag limit is one deer total per year. Please indicate your level of support for allowing a second deer to be taken either during the archery or muzzleloader season. Essentially, the regulation would allow you to take 1 deer (buck or antlerless) with a firearm and 1 deer (buck or antlerless) either by archery or muzzleloader.

- Strongly Opposed
- Slightly Opposed
- Neither Opposed nor Supported
- Slightly Supported
- Strongly Supported
- Don't Know

36. Overall, people have different reasons for supporting or opposing new hunting regulations. Please tell us how important each of the following reasons for supporting or opposing new hunting regulations are to you.

When I consider proposed hunting regulation changes, it is important to me that these factors are considered: (Please circle one number for each item.)

The deer hunting regulations ...	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
Do not result in an increased total buck harvest.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Do not result in an increased doe harvest.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase DNR's ability to control the deer population.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase hunting opportunity for bowhunters.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase hunting opportunity for muzzleloader hunters.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase hunting opportunity for firearm hunters.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase my own chances of taking an antlered buck.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase my own chances of taking a large antlered buck.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Increase my own chances of taking antlerless deer.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Encourage new people to take up deer hunting.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Lead to a better public image of hunters and hunting.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Protect the interests of farmers and other landowners.	1	2	3	4	5	9
Protect areas so that deer do not cause forest and other habitat damages	1	2	3	4	5	9
Reduce crowding of hunters on public lands.	1	2	3	4	5	9
The regulations do not result in decreased access to private land.	1	2	3	4	5	9

**37. We now want you to tell us what your ideal deer season structure in southeast Minnesota would look like.
(Please check one box for each item.)**

37a. The Zone 3A season should open in:

- early November
- middle November
- late November

37b. The 3A season should be open:

- 5 days
- 7 days
- 9 days

37c. The 3B season should be:

- 7 days
- 9 days

37d. The 3B season should start:

- immediately after the 3A season ends
- one week after the 3A season ends

37e. During both the 3A and 3B seasons, the DNR:

- should implement an antler point restriction to protect yearling bucks
- should not implement an antler point restriction to protect yearling bucks

37f. The DNR:

- should ban cross-tagging of bucks, but allow party hunting for antlerless deer
- should not ban cross-tagging of bucks, and allow party hunting for both antlered and antlerless deer.

37g. The DNR:

- should hold a 4-day youth hunt over the MEA weekend (Thursday – Sunday)
- should not hold a 4-day youth hunt over the MEA weekend (Thursday – Sunday)

38. Please tell us how **important** each of the following experiences was **to your deer hunting satisfaction** during the 2012 3A firearms season.

	Not at all important	Slightly important	Somewhat important	Very important	Extremely important
Harvesting at least one deer	1	2	3	4	5
Access to a lot of different hunting areas	1	2	3	4	5
Harvesting any deer for meat	1	2	3	4	5
Being on my own	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting with friends	1	2	3	4	5
Developing my skills and abilities	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting with family	1	2	3	4	5
Enjoying nature and the outdoors	1	2	3	4	5
Getting away from crowds of people	1	2	3	4	5
Getting food for my family	1	2	3	4	5
Getting information about hunting seasons	1	2	3	4	5
Seeing a lot of bucks	1	2	3	4	5
Good behavior among other deer hunters	1	2	3	4	5
Having a long deer season	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting areas open to the public	1	2	3	4	5
Harvesting a large buck	1	2	3	4	5
Reducing tension and stress	1	2	3	4	5
Seeing a lot of deer	1	2	3	4	5
Sharing my hunting skills and knowledge	1	2	3	4	5
Thinking about personal values	1	2	3	4	5
Using my deer hunting equipment (gun, stands, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

39. Which statement best characterizes where you hunt? (*Check one.*)

- I almost never hunt the same area every year
- I change my hunting location every 1 to 2 years
- I change my hunting location every 3 to 5 years
- I typically hunt the same area every year

40. Are you a member of an organized deer hunting group?

- Yes
- No (*Please skip to Question 41.*)

If yes, which group(s) do you belong to?

- Minnesota Deer Hunters Association
- Bluffland Whitetails Association
- Quality Deer Management Association
- Whitetails Unlimited
- Local Sportsman Group
- Other: _____

41. Please let us know how you feel about the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. (Please circle one response for each of the following statements.)

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
The MnDNR does a good job of managing deer in Minnesota.	1	2	3	4	5
When deciding about deer management in Minnesota, the MnDNR will be open and honest in the things they do and say.	1	2	3	4	5
The MnDNR can be trusted to make decisions about deer management that are good for the resource.	1	2	3	4	5
The MnDNR will make decisions about deer management in a way that is fair.	1	2	3	4	5
The MnDNR has deer managers and biologists who are well-trained for their jobs.	1	2	3	4	5
The MnDNR listens to deer hunters' concerns.	1	2	3	4	5

If you would be willing to respond to additional questions about deer hunting in Minnesota and are willing to provide your email address, please write it below. We will only use your email address for research related to deer hunting and will not share it with anyone.

e-mail address: _____

Please write additional comments below or on additional sheets.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!

Please return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope.