



Advisory Announcement

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Contact: Anthony Crupi,
Regional Supervisor, 907-465-4348,
anthony.crupi@alaska.gov

Department Will Not Extend Deer Hunting Season in Southeast

(Douglas) – The Alaska Department of Fish and Game will not extend the state Sitka black-tailed deer hunting season in Region I in response to recent record snowfall and public requests for an extension.

While winter severity can increase deer mortality, extending the hunting season is not an effective management action to minimize winter mortality. Snow conditions vary widely across the region, with some areas currently experiencing deep snow while others remain largely snow-free. This return to warmer, rainy conditions could significantly contribute to deer survival. Extending the season based on short-term weather conditions risks impact to the deer population due to harvest of pregnant does.

Winter mortality is a natural ecological process and targeting the deer that might be lost due to severe snowfall is difficult. The deer most likely to survive harsh winters are prime-aged, pregnant does that are critical to population recovery. Winter hunting increases the risk of harvesting pregnant does, particularly because bucks have often lost antlers, making selective harvest difficult. Increased hunting pressure also adds stress to already compromised deer, potentially increasing overall mortality.

Historically, January deer seasons result in low harvest and do not meaningfully reduce winter mortality. Extending the state season on state lands would further complicate the situation with separate federal regulations. For those users hunting under federal regulations, we encourage you to not target female deer. Buck and fawn deer are the least biologically important age classes during these periods. As a reminder, state and private lands in Southeast Alaska are closed to the taking of deer in January.

These lands include areas below the high mean water line where most of the deer will be concentrated. If current conditions cause the population to decline, reproductive females will be vitally important to population recovery.

The department discussed extending the season and took input on extending the season from several, long-time Southeast Alaska residents. Based on the best available biological information and management experience, extending the deer hunting season is not warranted. The Department appreciates the continued stewardship and engagement of Alaska's hunting community.

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