

571—106.11(481A) Deer depredation management. The deer depredation management program provides assistance to producers through technical advice and additional deer licenses and permits where the localized reduction of female deer is needed to reduce damage. Upon signing a depredation management agreement with the department, producers of agricultural or high-value horticultural crops may be issued deer depredation permits to shoot deer causing excessive crop damage. If immediate action is necessary to forestall serious damage, depredation permits may be issued before an agreement is signed. Further permits will not be authorized until an agreement is signed.

106.11(1) *Method of take and other regulations.* Legal weapons and restrictions will be governed by 571—106.7(481A). For deer shooting permits only, there are no shooting hour restrictions; however, taking deer with an artificial light is prohibited by Iowa Code section 481A.93. The producer or designee must meet the deer hunters' orange apparel requirement in Iowa Code section 481A.122.

106.11(2) *Eligibility.* Producers growing typical agricultural crops (such as corn, soybeans, hay and oats and tree farms and other forestlands under a timber management program) and producers of high-value horticultural crops (such as Christmas trees, fruit or vegetable crops, nursery stock, and commercially grown nuts) shall be eligible to enter into depredation management agreements if these crops sustain excessive damage.

- a. The producer may be the landowner or a tenant, whoever has cropping rights to the land.
- b. Excessive damage is defined as crop losses exceeding \$1,000 in a single growing season, or the likelihood that damage will exceed \$1,000 if preventive action is not taken, or a documented history of at least \$1,000 of damage annually in previous years.
- c. Producers who lease their deer hunting rights are not eligible for the deer depredation management program.
- d. Crops in confined storage areas (such as hay, grain, silage, corn gluten) will not be considered eligible unless exclusionary measures (such as fencing, gates) have been implemented to protect agricultural products.

106.11(3) *Depredation management plans.* Upon request from a producer, field employees of the wildlife bureau will inspect and identify the type and amount of crop damage sustained from deer. If damage is not excessive, technical advice will be given to the producer on methods to reduce or prevent future damage. If damage is excessive and the producer agrees to participate, a written depredation management plan will be developed by depredation biologists in consultation with the producer.

a. The goal of the management plan will be to reduce damage to below excessive levels within a specified time period through a combination of producer-initiated preventive measures and the issuance of deer depredation permits.

(1) Depredation plans written for producers of typical agricultural crops may require preventive measures such as harassment of deer with pyrotechnics and cannons, guard dogs, and temporary fencing, as well as allowing more hunters, increasing the take of antlerless deer, and other measures that may prove effective.

(2) Depredation plans written for producers of high-value horticultural crops may include all of the measures in (1) above, plus permanent fencing where necessary. Fencing will not be required if the cost of a fence exceeds \$1,000.

(3) Depredation permits to shoot deer may be issued to Iowa residents to reduce deer numbers until long-term preventive measures become effective. Depredation permits will not be used as a long-term solution to deer damage problems.

b. Depredation management plans will normally be written for a three-year period with progress reviewed annually by the department and the producer.

- (1) The plan will become effective when signed by the depredation biologist and the producer.
- (2) Plans may be modified or extended if mutually agreed upon by the department and the producer.
- (3) Depredation permits will not be issued after the initial term of the management plan if the producer fails to implement preventive measures outlined in the plan.

106.11(4) *Depredation permits.* Two types of permits may be issued under a depredation management plan.

a. Deer depredation licenses. Deer depredation licenses may be sold to resident hunters only for the regular deer license fee for use during one or more legal hunting seasons. Depredation licenses will be available to producers of agricultural and horticultural crops.

(1) Depredation licenses will be issued in blocks of five licenses up to the number specified in the management plan.

(2) Depredation licenses may be sold to individuals designated by the producer as having permission to hunt. No individual may obtain more than three depredation licenses per management plan. Licenses will be sold by designated department field employees.

(3) Depredation licenses will be valid only for hunting antlerless deer, regardless of restrictions that may be imposed on regular deer hunting licenses in that county.

(4) Hunters may keep any deer legally tagged with a depredation license.

(5) All other regulations for the hunting season specified on the license will apply.

(6) Depredation licenses will be valid only on the land where damage is occurring and the immediately adjacent property unless the land is within a designated block hunt area as described in subparagraph (7). Other parcels of land in the farm unit not adjacent to the parcels receiving damage will not qualify.

(7) Block hunt areas are areas designated and delineated by wildlife biologists of the wildlife bureau to facilitate herd reduction in a given area where all producers may not qualify for the depredation program or in areas of persistent deer depredation. Depredation permits issued to producers within the block hunt zone are valid on all properties within the delineated boundaries. Individual landowner permission is required for hunters utilizing depredation licenses within the block hunt boundaries. Creation of a given block hunt area does not authorize trespass.

b. Deer shooting permits. Permits for shooting deer outside an established hunting season may be issued to producers of high-value horticultural crops when damage cannot be controlled in a timely manner during the hunting seasons (such as late summer buck rubs in an orchard and winter browsing in a Christmas tree plantation) and to other agricultural producers who have an approved DNR deer depredation plan, and on areas such as airports where public safety may be an issue.

(1) Deer shooting permits will be issued at no cost to the applicant.

(2) The applicant or one or more designees approved by the department may take all the deer specified on the permit.

(3) Permits available to producers of high-value horticultural crops or agricultural crops may be valid for taking deer outside of a hunting season depending on the nature of the damage. The number and type of deer to be killed will be determined by a department depredation biologist and will be part of the deer depredation management plan.

(4) Permits issued due to public safety concerns may be used for taking any deer, as necessary, to address unpredictable intrusion which could jeopardize public safety. Permits may be issued for an entire year (January 1 through December 31) if the facility involved maintains a deerproof fence and signs an agreement with the department.

(5) Disposal of deer killed under these permits shall be coordinated with the local conservation officer. All deer killed must be recovered and processed for consumption.

(6) The times, dates, place and other restrictions on the shooting of deer will be specified on the permit.

(7) Antlers from all deer recovered must be turned over to the conservation officer to be disposed of according to department rules.

(8) For out-of-season shooting permits there are no shooting hour restrictions; however, taking deer with an artificial light is prohibited by Iowa Code section 481A.93.

c. Depredation licenses and shooting permits will be issued in addition to any other licenses for which the hunters may be eligible.

d. Depredation licenses and shooting permits will not be issued if the producer restricts the legal take of deer from the property sustaining damage by limiting hunter numbers below levels required to control the deer herd. This restriction does not apply in situations where permits are issued for public safety concerns.

106.11(5) *Disposal.* It shall be the producer's responsibility for shooting permits to see that all deer are field dressed and removed immediately from the field. Dead deer must be handled for consumption, and the producer must coordinate through the local conservation officer the disposal of deer offered to the public. Charitable organizations will have the first opportunity to take deer offered to the public. No producer shall keep more than two deer taken under depredation shooting permits. By express permission from a DNR enforcement officer, the landowner may dispose of deer carcasses through a livestock sanitation facility.