

Wildlife Management Proposals for 2026-2027

Chronic Wasting Disease

H1. General Description of Proposed Change:

Establish CWD Management Area counties (Cumberland, Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes, and Yadkin counties) and deer seasons. Shift the timing of blackpowder and gun seasons to open one week earlier in Forsyth, Stokes, Surry, Wilkes, and Yadkin counties. The opening date for archery season would not be changed, but archery is shortened by one week since blackpowder season will open earlier.

Justification:

The proposed changes shift harvest timing earlier in the hunting season and before peak breeding which increases the opportunity for hunters to take adult bucks that are making long-distance excursions and yearling bucks that are dispersing from natal ranges. The additional buck harvest during this time should help reduce disease transmission and help achieve the Wildlife Management Division's goal for CWD herd management of 70% or more of buck harvest occurring before peak breeding time.

15A NCAC 10B .0502 CWD MANAGEMENT AREAS

H2. General Description of Proposed Change:

Establish a two-day early season (Velvet Season) for antlered buck-only on all lands (public and private) on the weekend of the 4th Saturday in August in all CWD Management Area counties. All lawful weapons would be allowed. The normal 2-buck season limit would apply plus any CWD MAP tags that have been issued to individuals.

Justification:

Create a unique and special opportunity in the CWD counties to encourage additional antlered buck harvest, which are the segment of the deer population most likely to have, and therefore spread, CWD, and to increase the opportunity for hunters to take adult bucks and yearling bucks prior to dispersal.

15A NCAC 10B .0502 CWD MANAGEMENT AREAS

H3. General Description of Proposed Change:

Change the carcass transportation rules to emphasize disposal, requiring non-edible portions to be disposed of in a lined landfill, buried under specific conditions, or left on the ground within the county of origin.

Justification:

Current cervid carcass transportation rules are complex and not being followed by many hunters. Hopefully, this simplification will lead to better adherence by hunters and better overall CWD management. Implementation of this would

be statewide. This will not change the importation rules from out of state.

15A NCAC 10B .0503 SURVEILLANCE AREA

15A NCAC 10B .0504 DISPOSAL OF CERVID CARCASSES

White-tailed Deer

H4. General Description of Proposed Change:

Remove the CWD Management Area counties from the Deer Rule. Increases Either-Sex season on private lands in six Western Season counties (Avery, Burke, Caldwell, Madison, Michell, Yancey), and increase Either-Sex season on private lands in three Northwestern Season counties (Cleveland, Polk, Rutherford).

Justification:

The harvest objective of at least 1.0 antlered buck per square mile is being met on private lands in these counties. Additionally, long-term trends in harvest data and deer hunter observation surveys continue to show these herds growing. Additional antlerless harvest is sustainable, will provide hunters with additional hunting opportunity, and help to improve balance in the adult sex ratio.

15A NCAC 10B .0203 WHITE-TAILED DEER

Squirrels

H5. General Description of Proposed Change:

Adjust the opening of the spring gray squirrel season to ensure no overlap with turkey season and expands the spring gray squirrel season to game lands.

Justification:

This rule change is necessary to avoid overlap of the spring gray squirrel season with the last week of turkey season and will extend hunting opportunities over Memorial Day weekend. The shift would have no biological impact on gray squirrel populations.

15A NCAC 10B .0206 SQUIRRELS