A Hunter's Harvest is for Food, Forests, Farms and Families

Deer hunters in New Jersey can provide a wide range of benefits to our state's residents.

In a diverse state like New Jersey, people have a variety of preconceived notions about hunting, so mutual respect is always important when discussing the topic.

- Conversations should be patient and cheerful.
- Express and listen to varying thoughts and values.
- Instead of trying to "change minds," **seek mutual personal respect,** which is the most important result of a conversation.

Hunters can explain

- Their personal story of how and why they became a hunter.
- The extent to which they honor every animal and appreciate the food it provides.
- The quality of NJ wild, sustainable venison, and the satisfaction of knowing where one's food comes from.
- Their training and experience, and the care in following state law, local ordinances, and residents' expectations.
- Respect for community norms and the landowners who grant permission to hunt on their property.
- The deeper feelings they may experience when taking a life in order to provide food and nourish life around you, the way our ancestors have done for millennia.



Hunters can listen for

- Non-hunters' questions and concerns.
- Specific experiences that people have had with hunters
- Preferences pertaining to hunting locations and methods
- Each person's love of wildlife and a wish to see diminished suffering
- Different ways that people use New Jersey's open spaces
- Different interpretations of the many challenges we face in our shared landscape

It can be very helpful to discuss:

- In quite a few places in New Jersey, deer herds can be ten times what native forests evolved to handle. Deer numbers have been measured over 100 per square mile in many places.

- This is often because human homes, buildings and other construction create far more light patches ("edge habitat") where the plants that deer favor grow very quickly, because human neighborhoods offer safety for deer, and because hunting has declined in recent decades in New Jersey.
- Deer evolved under heavier hunting and predation pressures than they face in most places in New Jersey today, so they are able to increase their population at 30-60% rate per year when conditions are favorable.
- It is an act of responsibility and fairness to hunt deer ethically while fully respecting state law, local ordinances and community norms.

Hunters are also:

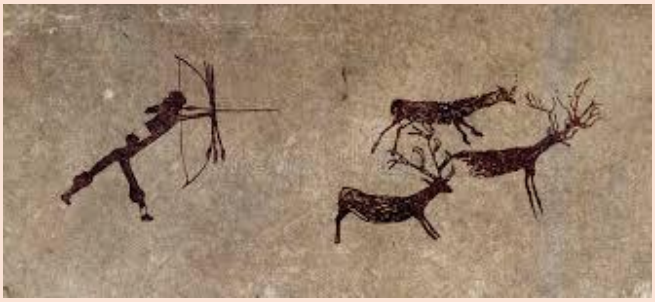


- **Protecting native forests and wildlife diversity**, because high numbers of deer today reduce the habitat that hundreds of other species need to survive, including birds and pollinators. Having forests in the future depends on stewardship we do today.
- **Reducing high levels of deer-vehicle collisions**, currently far more than the 25,000 collisions reported to insurance companies each year in New Jersey.
- **Securing local farms and food production** from herd damage, which has caused 25% of farmers to abandon fields and 36% to grow a less-preferred crop.
- **Reducing the threat of tick-borne illnesses**, which many studies show are correlated with high deer herd numbers.



- **Providing high quality affordable, sustainable food** to New Jersey families and people in need. There are nearly 1,000,000 food-insecure residents of NJ, including 270,000 children. Each year, over 1,000 deer are provided to families in need. A single deer provides an average of 144 servings of meat.
- **Supporting the health of deer herds**. High deer density can cause excessive competition among deer and also lead to more rapid transmission of illness.

For more than 20,000 years in North America, people have been hunting and eating white-tailed deer. Yet today, many tons of farmed venison are imported from 9,000 miles away in New Zealand, when we have an abundance of sustainable venison right here. Today, hunters in New Jersey harvest approximately 40,000 deer annually, **practicing forest-to-table, sustainable self-sufficiency while providing very nutritious food to our families**, friends, non-profits events, and soup kitchens.



Considerate, law-abiding deer hunters who care deeply for our natural world can provide many services to our state.

Respecting the values and opinions of all residents – even if common ground isn't found right away – helps keep open the lines of communication for everyone.

DEER NEW JERSEY,

Let's Find Balance for Our Forests, Farms and Families

Mission: To achieve natural balance in New Jersey by leading a deer stewardship movement for the people, wildlife and land we love.

Vision: A future where New Jersey's land, wildlife, and communities thrive in natural balance—stewarded by the people who call this place home

We collaborate to support stewardship of deer towards a balance with biological and cultural goals

www.deernj.org