

# Deer Permits For Farmers

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sym- pathies and anti-hunting by non-hunting landowners.

Ironically, at the same time some farmers surrounded by private woodlands report seeing a hundred or more deer in their crop fields at night, hunters have been complaining about low numbers of deer on public lands and blaming liberal deer harvesting rules and a perceived lack of proper game-lands management for deer.

Farmer frustration over deer

damage has come from the fact that their crops have been feeding deer, and they have had no easy recourse.

A fact about crop-damaging deer is that they are mostly active at night, preventing effective control.

They also can quickly become accustomed to devices intended to scare them away from crops.

Further, some farmers who have destroyed deer in their crop fields have reported that following such

kills, there have been significant incidents of vandalism to their equipment, such as slashed tractor tires.

Though mostly unable to name individuals responsible for the acts, the farmers have said they suspect local deer hunting enthusiasts as most likely to have done the vandalism. The suspicion is that the acts are done as a sort of terrorism to dissuade the farmer from killing additional crop-damaging deer.

Another problem for the farmer — especially today with economic pressures forcing many to utilize idle land — is that most of the crop-damaging deer spend most of their time in adjacent woodlands, not on the farm.

In many cases, those adjacent woodlands are not open to public hunting, and the deer population is little affected by public hunting on the crop-damaged farm.

Also, regular deer hunting seasons are held when crops are at harvest stage and fields either provide the deer with dense concealment and food from a mature crop, or offer nothing to attract or hold the deer on the farm.

Thus the opportunity for a regular season deer hunter to kill crop-damaging deer is limited.

From the hunter's point of view, hunting deer-damaged farms is generally best during the early archery season, before general season hunting pressures force the deer to seek refuge on non-public woodlands.

A little more than two years ago the Game Commission attempted to better resolve the problem of farmers by instituting a Deer Damage Area Program, also referred to as the commission's "Hot Spot" program.

Under that program, farmers must allow public deer hunting on their land. Signs are posted along the perimeter of the property, and, upon request by a hunter, the regional headquarters of the Game Commission also directs hunters to

program lands.

According to some farmers enrolled in the program, success has been limited.

Generally the complaint from farmers has been that the general hunting public has not had much success in killing deer because the deer take refuge on surrounding private lands.

Last year, hunters on Hot Spot farms were allowed to harvest deer during extended seasons.

This year, during the regular antlered season, hunters with antlerless deer licenses will be allowed to fill that tag.

The new permitting program is different. It targets a period of time when hunting and crop protection effectiveness can coincide.

As a prerequisite to eligibility to participate, farmers must have their farms enrolled in the Commission's Hot Spot program for two years.

After that condition has been met, the farmer can make an application for a deer control permit. (Can be made through a district wildlife conservation officer (WCO) on a Game Commission form.)

At the time of application, the applicant is to provide a copy of a deed or lease that shows the applicant to either be the owner of the land or have control of the hunting rights on the land.

In addition to the state's general ban on Sunday hunting, on general

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## Statement of Ownership, Management, and Circulation

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1 Publication Title Lancaster Farming		2 Publication No. 3 0 4 0 - 4 0		3 Filing Date 10/01/95	
4 Issue Frequency Weekly		5 No. of Issues Published Annually 52		6 Annual Subscription Price \$25.00	
7 Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication (Street, City, County, State, and ZIP+4) (Not Printer) 1 East Main St., P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522					
8 Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher (Not Printer) 1 East Main St., P.O. Box 609, Ephrata, PA 17522					
9 Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher, Editor, and Managing Editor (Do Not Leave Blank)					
Publisher (Name and Complete Mailing Address) Lancaster Farming, Inc., Lancaster, PA John M. Buckwalter, Lancaster, PA President					
Managing Editor (Name and Complete Mailing Address) Everett R. Newswanger, Ephrata, PA					
10 Owner (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereafter the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of the total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) (Do Not Leave Blank)					
Full Name Lancaster Newspapers, Inc.		Complete Mailing Address 8 West King St., P.O. Box 1328 Lancaster, PA 17603			
11 Known Bondholders, Mortgagees, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities. If none check here <input type="checkbox"/> None					
Full Name		Complete Mailing Address			
12 For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes. (Check one) <input type="checkbox"/> Has Not Changed During Preceding 12 Months <input type="checkbox"/> Has Changed During Preceding 12 Months (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement)					
13 Publication Name Lancaster Farming		14 Issue Date for Circulation Data Below 9/30/95			
15 Extent and Nature of Circulation		Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months		Actual No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date	
a Total No. Copies (Net Press Run)		51,300		50,500	
b Paid and/or Requested Circulation		164		182	
(1) Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, and Counter Sales (Not Mailed)					
(2) Paid or Requested Mail Subscriptions (Include Advertisers' Proof Copies/Exchange Copies)		49,709		48,934	
c Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation (Sum of 15b(1) and 15b(2))		49,873		49,116	
d Free Distribution by Mail (Samples, Complimentary, and Other Free)		1,062		1,066	
e Free Distribution Outside the Mail (Carriers or Other Means)		-		-	
f Total Free Distribution (Sum of 15d and 15e)		1,062		1,066	
g Total Distribution (Sum of 15c and 15f)		50,935		50,182	
h Copies Not Distributed		278		227	
(1) Office Use, Leftovers, Spoiled					
(2) Return from News Agents		87		91	
i Total (Sum of 15g, 15h(1), and 15h(2))		51,300		50,500	
Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation (15c / 15g x 100)		97.22%		97.26%	
16 This Statement of Ownership will be printed in the 10/14/95 issue of this publication <input type="checkbox"/> Check box if not required to publish					
17 Signature and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner John M. Buckwalter, President & CEO, Date 10/01/95					
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