

Rules 2026

City of Ames Urban Deer Management Hunting Rules

All participants in the controlled urban hunt must abide by the following rules:

Proficiency Test:

1. Hunters must pass an authorized archery proficiency test each year with the weapon they will use to hunt with in Ames. The tests will not allow for any warm up shots and will only allow for a maximum of two attempts each year to successfully complete the test.
2. The test will consist of 20 total shots: ten at 15 yards and ten at 20 yards. The hunter must score at least an 80% in the vital area of a life-sized 3-D target. Similar proficiency testing from other cities will be accepted at the discretion of the Police Department Hunt Coordinator.
3. Tests must be administered by a certified International Bowhunter Education Foundation (IBEF/NBEF) instructor.
4. Hunters must demonstrate that they have passed a one-time Bowhunter safety course administered by the DNR (these are taught by a certified NBEF instructor).

Tree Stands

1. All shots must be made from an elevated stand toward a deer that is not more than 75 feet from the hunter's location.
2. Elevated stands must be at least eight (8) feet off the ground.
3. Stands must be located at least **85** feet from any maintained roads, recreation trails or organized activity site, and at least 200 feet from any residence or building.
4. The elevated stands must be portable with no permanent stands erected.
5. There can be no screw in steps, with no nails or lag screws driven into trees.
6. Tree stands can be erected no sooner than one week prior to local season and must be removed no longer than one week after.

General Rules:

1. The Urban Deer Management season is specific to individual deer management areas during 2026-2027.
2. Bow hunting hours are limited to those described in relation to the specific deer management zones.
3. After completion of the proficiency test and safety course hunters must obtain a special use permit for the area to be hunted from the Ames Police Chief or Hunt Coordinator at 515 Clark Street in Ames. Hunters must be 18 years of age or older.

4. Hunters must meet with or receive and acknowledge understanding of the detailed instructions from the hunter coordinator or designee.
5. Hunters must comply with the City of Ames Hunting ordinance as well as Department of Natural Resources (DNR) rules and regulations for the State of Iowa.
6. Hunters must know the boundaries of the DPMZ.
7. All bows must be cased while traveling to and from the hunting stand site.
8. The number of hunters allowed in each DPMZ at a time may be controlled and subject to a waiting list to avoid congestion.
9. Hunters are allowed to harvest only antlerless deer per tag (unless issued a special any-sex tag specific to the urban area).
10. Shots shall not exceed 75 feet and must be oriented away from maintained roads, trails, and structures.
11. Hunters must be aware of what is downrange and always attempt to retrieve arrows.
12. A hunter shall not dispose of deer entrails on public property.
13. All deer taken shall be processed for meat or the meat given to charity.
14. A hunter who wounds a deer and is unable to locate the deer shall report to the Ames Police Department (515-239-5133) within three (3) hours of the wounding.
15. Hunters must always carry their Iowa hunting license, proof of paid habitat fee, and special use permit.
16. A hunter shall not harvest more than three (3) deer in a single day under a DPMZ permit. A state license shall be required for each deer.
17. If necessary to cross private property to access a DPMZ, permission first must be received by the hunter from a property owner who has agreed to allow access.
18. Hunters must remove themselves immediately from any harassment situation and contact the Ames Police Department at 515-239-5133.
19. Hunters must cover harvested deer or have them enclosed so they are not visible when transporting from hunting area/zone.
20. Deer management notification signage will be posted in parking lots and other appropriate locations within each identified park or public area during the authorized bow hunting season.
21. Hunters must report any violators to these rules to Ames Police Department at 515-239-5133.
22. Hunters found in violation of any of these rules or any DNR regulations will be subject to having their permits revoked.

Authorized Deer Population Management Zones (Hunting Areas)

NON-PARK / PUBLIC AREA

Wooded City property south of the Hunziker Youth Sports Complex:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise and ending at 11:00 AM, September 19 to November 13

Weekends: No hunting until November 14

Daily beginning November 14, DNR legal hunting hours (following the conclusion of the youth sport season)

City property north of the landfill in east Ames off Watt Street:

DNR legal hunting hours beginning September 19

PARKLAND AREAS

South River Valley Park:

Weekdays: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 4 PM September 21 to October 23 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Weekends: One-half hour before sunrise ending by 8 AM, September 19 to October 25 (hours not used by sport leagues)

Daily beginning October 26 DNR legal hunting hours (following the conclusion of sport leagues)

Gateway Park: Restricted to the west timber

Daily beginning September 19: DNR legal hunting hours

Homewood Golf Course:

Daily following course closure for the season (anticipated closure October 31)

Inis Grove Park:

Daily beginning after the close of Homewood Golf Course-limited locations designated by Parks and Recreation staff.

Munn Woods: Restricted to southwest portion, designated locations only

Daily beginning September 19: DNR Legal hunting hours

All dates subject to adjustment by the Ames Police Department for safety related issues. Hunting may be temporarily suspended by the Ames Police Department in any location for safety-related reasons.

Reporting Harvest:

Hunters must have their deer checked within 12 hours after harvest at the Ames Police Department, 515 Clark Avenue (park on the east or west side of City Hall and walk into the Police 24-hour lobby entrance on the north side). Date of harvest, location and basic information about the deer will be gathered when you check the deer. Deer must be checked in to provide herd management information and to qualify for an incentive license (see Urban Hunt Buck Incentive License Format information). Data is important to the overall success of this hunt and we will keep a tally.

Additional Locations-Non-City Property

Additional hunting locations can be approved if they are at least three (3) acres in size and all landowners or those in control of the property agree to allow participation.

Properties will be classified by the hunt coordinator into one of two types:

1. Primarily Agricultural or Wooded area
2. Residential area (Residential areas are subject to additional review requirements including notification of all property owners within 400 yards **and** signature approval from all property owners within 200 yards of the proposed stand.)

Applicants must submit a map and any additional rules proposed for the property to the Ames Police Department, Urban Deer Hunt Coordinator for review. If approved, property owners must sign a participation agreement. Hunters must have written permission to hunt the property in their possession. All other Urban Deer Management rules apply unless waived by the property owner and, in writing, by the Hunt Coordinator (Police Department).

Properties included in the urban deer hunt shall be marked with one or more signs indicating that bowhunting may occur on the property.