



HSV Urban Deer Hunt Orientation

Description

On August 8, 2020, the morning began early for many area bow hunters. Three-hundred and one hunters were greeted by members of the HSVPOA Common Property, Forest and Wildlife Committee (CPFV), and POA staff. They met at the Ponce de Leon Center/Woodlands Auditorium Porte Cochere at the crack of dawn (5:00 a.m.) As they brushed the sleep out of their eyes, the committee members, along with [CPFV Manager Todd Noles](#), and [Fireman Lt. Zach Sykora](#) began the COVID-19 screening of hunters before they were allowed to register and qualify for the hunt. Amid much excitement, the temperatures of over 300 hunters and spectators were taken and COVID-19 screening questionnaires were filled out.

[Anne Shears](#), who performed COVID-19 screening said, “no one voiced objections to the mask requirement. All the hunters were in good spirits and cooperative.”

Reasons for the HSV Urban Deer Hunt:

- **Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry Program** – Noles said, “Hot Springs Village Urban Deer Hunt provides more venison than any of the other three urban deer hunts in the state combined. We keep all of our venison local. The venison our hunters donate is ground up by local butchers or made into jerky by a Missouri-based company.” Noles continued, “the jerky is distributed to the local school children attending, Jessieville, Mountain Pine, Fountain Lake, Cutter Morningstar, and Hot Springs schools in the backpack program.”
- **Increases health of the herd** – Overpopulated deer herds are more prone to diseases, interbreeding, and being underweight due to limited food supply.
- **Decreases accidents** involving motor vehicles and deer. Last year there were 51 motor vehicle accidents involving deer and this year there are 21 year-to-date deer-vehicle accidents.
- **Decreases deer tick population** – Deer ticks carry diseases harmful to humans.

- **Decreases negative effects on Village pets** who tend to ingest deer feces.
- **Reduces damage to Villagers' bushes and plants** from overpopulated deer trying to subsist on limited quantities of food.

Hot Springs Village Urban Deer Hunt Registration Packet

[HSV-Urban-Deer-Hunt-Orientation-Registration](#)

Bow Qualification

After screening, the hunters were required to qualify by shooting their arrows and hitting the red area of the target three times.

The hunters lined up in a designated area with bows and six arrows. They were given two chances to qualify with three consecutive shots each chance. They were encouraged to qualify with their best bow first. If they qualified with the first three shots, they were then given an opportunity to qualify with an additional bow. If they did not qualify the first round, they were allowed a second chance to qualify, but would not be able to hunt with two bows.

In a clear and booming voice, the qualifier called out, "Okay, three shots to the target. Aim for the center (red). If you don't do it [qualify] on your first three, I will give you three more [shots]. If you don't do it then [qualify], you will not urban hunt. To try to qualify with two weapons, be sure to use the one you know you can qualify with first. If you do not qualify with your first one, you won't get a chance with another one. Don't fire; don't shoot until I tell you to.,, SHOOT 'EM!"

The sound of men and women releasing their bows and satisfying thuds of the arrows hitting the target dominated the air as the hunters demonstrated their expertise with the bow. The hunters were clearly professionals.

The hunters were required to sign forms releasing the POA of any responsibility if they are hurt in the hunt and also received dashboard placards and the rules of the hunt. Fees were paid at the end.

Contest for most venison donated

There is a contest with a reward to the hunter who donates the most venison to "Hunters Feeding the Hungry." Last year the Hunters Feeding the Hungry donated 5,000 pounds of ground venison.

Speakers at the Orientation

Arkansas Game and Fish parked a pickup truck in front of the Porte Cochere. Using the pickup bed as a stage afforded the presenters an impressive and fitting stage.

The speakers were J. D. Crawford, Arkansas Bow Hunters Association Urban Hunt Coordinator; [Ralph Meeker, Biologist at Arkansas Game and Fish Commission](#); Ronnie Ritter, Director of [Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry](#); our very own Todd Noles, HSVPOA Manager of Common Property, Forest and Wildlife and last but not least our very own Lieutenant Zach Sykora of the Hot

Springs Village Fire Department.

Crawford explained the rules

J.D. Crawford said, “patience and flexibility are the keywords today,” because of the COVID-19 requirements. Crawford explained the rules and regulations of the urban hunt. There are rules specific to the Village. (Please see the HSV Urban Hunt packet above.) The hunters do not have a limit but are issued two tags at a time. The first deer taken by each hunter must be donated to Hunters Feeding the Hungry. The hunters are encouraged to donate as many deer as they can, but they must be adult deers.

Meeker focused on tagging and check in

Ralph Meeker thanked the hunters for participating and said without the hunters, the urban deer hunts would not be possible. “We’ve been doing the urban deer hunts since the late 1990’s and we’ve worked most of the kinks out.” Meeker talked about the tagging and checking, which he said is, “what allows them to justify the hunts.” He said, “it is important that we tag and check our deer properly...If you harvest a deer in Hot Springs Village you check it to the Hot Springs Village Urban Deer Hunt.” The harvest is checked in by cell phone, where a confirmation number is assigned. This number must be recorded on the back of the dash placard.

This year there is a change from the past, and you only have 12 hours in which to check in your deer. In the past, hunters were given 24 hours to report.

Meeker said, “let’s be courteous. We are providing a service to the city but the city is providing an opportunity for us. It works both ways.”

Ritter emphasized the benefits of Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry Program

Ronnie Ritter spoke about the benefits of the HSV Urban Bow Deer Hunt in providing food for the children and families in the surrounding community. The number of families with food instability in Garland County has increased. “This is the biggest crowd we’ve ever had,” exclaimed Ritter. We’ve provided over four million servings across food pantries, food pantries, and homeless shelters in 20 years.

Last year there were 150 deer donated which provided a lot of snack sticks for school children. Ritter said he would love to see at least 250 deer harvested this year to take care of the children’s snack stick program.

Noles praised helpers and asked hunters to help keep the Village clean

Noles thank everyone but most especially his committee members as well as the ArkansasBowhunters Association. The committee helpers are Bruce Caverly, Anne Shears, Dan Webb, TomImpellizzeri, and Paula Lane. Noles also gave special thanks to Meeker, Crawford, Ritter, Chief JasonMiller, and Lieutenant Zach Sykora both of the Hot Springs Village Fire Department. Noles said, "thegoal this year is for Ronnie Ritter to call me and say, 'hey, we've got to stop.'"

Noles said the rules changed this year and HSV Property Owners are allowed to hunt until January 31, 2021. The hunt for nonmembers will end on December 31. You are allowed two weeks to remove your equipment. (Equipment consists of deer stands, feeders, and cameras.)

Noles said, "we have a beautiful community with a beautiful forest and we want to keep it that way...We ask that you please pick up after yourself."

Manager Noles generously provided a delicious pizza lunch for the HSVPOA Common Property, Forest and Wildlife Committee, and the Arkansas Bow Hunters Association after the event was over.

Sykora talked about courtesy and his hunting accident

Sykora asked the hunters to be courteous of each other. There are plenty of areas in the Village to hunt. Sykora said, "We can do a lot of good with this hunt and the Hunters Feeding the Hungry Program."

Sykora also spoke about the hunting accident he had last year. He fell out of a tree during the Urban Deer Hunt and, "by the grace of God I am here with you today, able to talk about it." Sykora cautioned the hunters about being safe so they are not hurt. "I tied off but for some reason, that morning I did not tie onto my lifeline. I just climbed the tree." When he was packing to leave, his cable broke. It was a freak accident. He fell 25 feet and suffered many broken bones and a collapsed lung. With obvious emotion in his voice, Zach explained, "The medic was a good friend of mine that I work with. He said, 'Zach, honestly, if you had been there another 30 minutes, you probably would have died from suffocation from the pressure of your chest cavity.'" In spite of poor cell reception, Zach was able to telephone his wife and gasp, "help!"

About Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry:

"Arkansas Hunters Feeding the Hungry (AHFH) is a community-minded program that provides venison and other wild game to those in need. Organizations, businesses, and churches of many denominations have joined hunters to transform an abundant white-tailed deer population into a renewable food source for the hungry."

"With the growing number of deer in Arkansas and very liberal bag limits hunters can make a real difference in helping feeding agencies across the state. Feeding agencies have a difficult time obtaining meat or protein and that's where you can help. We provide the deer burger at "no cost" to the agencies but do have to raise money to pay for processing costs."

We would like to thank everyone involved in this massive effort. It was well organized.

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