

C. J. Winand, a wildlife biologist and NBEF Board Member, often compiles data from interviews with Provincial and State wildlife agency biologists regarding deer, elk, and black bear harvests, viability, and hunting regulations. The crossbow information below is part of his recent information gathered.

CROSSBOW HARVEST STATISTICS - Have you ever wondered, “What percentage of successful hunters use crossbows? Or “What percentage of deer harvested in the archery season are harvested using crossbows”? To obtain this data, I reached out to all US and Canadian wildlife agencies. Ohio leads with 67.6% of the archery harvest using crossbows. This is followed by Michigan (66.9%), Delaware (64.2%), New Jersey (63.1%), and Maryland (56.1%).

Eleven states in 2019 had an archery harvest of 50% or more from crossbow harvests. In 2018, there were eight states. Regionally, the mid-Atlantic states have the highest percentage of crossbow harvests with an average of 59.2% of all archery kills. Although crossbow harvest numbers are slowly increasing in many states, it seems states average around 2/3 of the archery harvest are harvested using crossbows. Interestingly, all states in the Southeast allow crossbows, but vertical bow harvest still dominates. The Northeast is entirely different as 10 states allow crossbows and crossbow harvests exceed vertical bow in eight states. Nine Midwest states also allow them, but crossbows exceed vertical bow harvest in only three states.

Even with increased crossbow harvests, no state has reduced the length of their archery season. In fact, archery season in some of these states has been extended. Even with the increase of recreational days afield with crossbows and increased harvest rates, the majority of state and provincial wildlife agencies still depend on firearm hunters to control deer populations.

Three states (Ohio, Michigan, and Pennsylvania) have nearly 2/3 of their total archery harvest made up of crossbow kills. These statistics are evidence that the inclusion of crossbows in the archery season has had a major impact on who is taking what during the archery season. But again, the data does not appear to be a biological concern in relation to the over harvest of deer in any state or province.

Maine recently became the latest state to allow crossbows in the entire archery season. To purchase a crossbow hunting permit you must complete a hunter or bowhunter education class, plus a crossbow hunting education class. Existing license holders who have already held an archery or hunting license and want to try crossbow hunting need only complete either the on-line crossbow course for \$30, www.crossbow-ed.com, or attend one of the in-person crossbow courses (often free but facility fees may apply) that the Department offers periodically to become eligible to purchase a crossbow permit. Alaska also requires a crossbow education course prior to obtaining a crossbow hunting license.

Requiring a crossbow education class will help reduce the number of injuries to hunters using crossbows. Although the data is difficult to prove, many would argue there are more self-inflicted crossbow injuries than from all other hunting equipment combined. Most of these injuries are due to negligence on how to safely handle a crossbow both in hunting and during practice situations.

NOTE: While many speculate the vast differences in crossbow deer harvest numbers, perhaps it is due to the high hunter per square mile ratios and smaller bag limits in some regions which could skew overall state and regional numbers.



C. J. Winand is the proud father of two daughters. He is shown in the photo above with 9 year old daughter, Jesse, and her first crossbow deer harvest.