



HUNTERS SHARING THE HARVEST

PENNSYLVANIA'S VENISON DONATION PROGRAM

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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Anticipating record donations, Hunters Sharing the Harvest seeks additional financial support

Greenville, PA – November 27, 2024 – With Pennsylvania's statewide firearms deer season beginning this weekend, Hunters Sharing the Harvest is anticipating another record-breaking year of donations. Donations from archery season already indicate an upward trend from last year. But the state's nationally recognized venison donation program needs funding support to sustain its record growth.

Pennsylvania hunters once again broke a record for venison donations with 261,672 pounds of venison donated from 6,905 deer and six elk statewide during the 2023-24 hunting seasons. The record donations resulted in more than 1 million individual servings of lean, high-protein venison. Executive director Randy Ferguson expects that record to fall again when the dust settles on the 2024-25 hunting season.

"Pennsylvania's hunting public has led the nation in this novel approach to hunting as a social service," said Ferguson. "Each year, more hunters hear about our program through social media from HSH and its supporters, news media and word-of-mouth. They experience the joy of sharing their harvest with the hungry in their communities. They tell their friends. It's heartwarming to watch our numbers grow and it makes me proud to be a Pennsylvania hunter."

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The record-breaking growth in participation comes with a hefty price tag for this independent nonprofit charitable organization. Hunters pay nothing to donate a deer at one of HSH's 100-plus participating processors across the state. Instead, the organization reimburses those processors for every deer donated. Last season, those reimbursement costs reached an all-time high of approximately \$500,000.

Of particular concern are rising costs associated with deer donated via hunting opportunities aimed at reducing crop damage by deer on farmers' fields. Programs such as Ag Tag (formerly Red Tag), Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) and crop depredation permits are becoming more widely utilized due to communication efforts by the Pennsylvania Farm Bureau, Pennsylvania Game Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, legislators and advocacy groups. While helping HSH feed more families, crop damage deer are the driving factor in HSH's rising operational expenses, and a cause for increased financial need for the organization, according to Ferguson.

"When I started in this role almost four years ago, we saw a couple hundred deer a year that we could identify as crop damage related. Last year, that number was nearly 1,300 deer," Ferguson states. "The crop damage category of donated deer is doubling year over year, while deer donated during the regular archery and rifle seasons continue to grow at a healthy and manageable pace."

HSH is encountering a common issue in the nonprofit world when program growth outpaces fundraising efforts. The organization is actively seeking additional financial support from individual donors, corporate sponsors, other charitable organizations and state agencies.

HSH board president Bill Sordoni is quick to point out the existing support HSH receives, while emphasizing the need for more.

"We couldn't execute this mission from year to year without the tremendous support of the public, private and voluntary sectors that consistently step up for us," said Sordoni. "Our hope is that more agencies, corporations, foundations and individual donors might see the monumental impact of this organization and want to help sustain its growth."

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The HSH program is a coordinated effort of more than 100 participating deer processors who accept donated deer from hunters and process the deer into packages of ground venison for distribution to regional food banks and local hunger relief agencies.

Since 1991, HSH has coordinated distribution of approximately 2.8 million pounds of hunter-donated venison, providing nearly 15 million servings to hungry Pennsylvanians.

Hunters interested in donating a deer need only to legally harvest, tag and field dress the deer and take it to a participating processor near them. The list of participating processors by county can be found at <https://sharedeer.org/meat-processors/>.

A volunteer force of nearly 60 county coordinators ensures that processors have the resources they need and that the public is aware of the program and the ways they can support the HSH mission. Those interested in being a coordinator are encouraged to visit <https://sharedeer.org/get-involved/>.

Businesses wishing to support the mission of Hunters Sharing the Harvest can become sponsors. HSH offers multiple levels of sponsorship. These supporting sponsors are a crucial source of operational support for the organization. Potential business sponsors should contact Ferguson at 866-474-2141 or email him at randy@sharedeer.org.

Individual donors can support Hunters Sharing the Harvest with a monetary donation of any amount online at <https://sharedeer.org/support-our-mission/>.

More information on Hunters Sharing the Harvest can be found at www.ShareDeer.org.

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