

Frequently Asked Questions

Bowhunter Observation Survey, Iowa Dept. of Natural Resources

➤ **How are hunters selected for the Bowhunter Observation Survey?**

Every 3-5 years the DNR sends postcards to avid bowhunters (i.e., those who have obtained an archery deer license for each of the previous 3 years), and hunters are asked if they would like to participate in the bowhunter survey for the next 3-5 years. Those who respond to this mailing comprise the core group of participants.

The mailing list for the annual bowhunter observation survey is first filled with core group participants and then supplemented by a random sample of avid bowhunters who are not in the core group. Only a limited number of hunters are selected from each county, so hunters in the core group may not get a survey each year if the number of core group participants exceeds number of participants needed in a given county.

➤ **How do I get on the mailing list for the Bowhunter Observation Survey?**

The first criteria for becoming a participant in the Bowhunter Observation Survey is that you must be an avid bowhunter, as demonstrated by obtaining an archery deer license for each of the past 3 years. The DNR periodically builds a mailing list of core group participants, but even if you are not in this group you might receive a survey if the number of individuals in the core group is less than the number of participants needed in your county.

➤ **I received a bowhunter observation survey but I'm not bowhunting this year. Is it OK to give it to a friend?**

Absolutely, but the DNR would prefer that you give it to a hunter who has several years of bowhunting experience.

➤ **Should I record my observations when I'm participating in a special hunt such as a city hunt or state park hunt?**

The "rule of thumb" is to record observations only while bowhunting outside the city limits. If you are hunting within city limits, please do not record anything on your bowhunting form.

➤ **Should I record animals that I see as I walk to my tree stand or ground blind?**

Yes, record any animals you see as you walk to your tree stand or ground blind. DO NOT record any animals you see as you are driving a vehicle to your hunting location.

➤ **I'm sure that I'm seeing the same animals over and over again. Should I count them again even though I'm sure they are the same animals I already counted?**

Yes, record all animals you see regardless of whether you believe they are the same animals you saw a few minutes ago, a few hours ago, or a few days ago. Please remember that the purpose of the bowhunter observation survey is NOT to estimate how many individual animals are in an area. Instead, the DNR is interested in observation rates (i.e., the number of animals observed per hour(s) hunted). The idea is that as populations increase (decrease), these observation rates will also increase (decrease).

➤ **I would like to make some comments on my survey form. Should I write them on the survey form?**

No, please do not make any comments or other distinguishing marks on the survey form itself. Comments are welcome, but PLEASE include them on a separate sheet of paper. All survey forms are electronically read by a scanner and computer, and it tries to interpret any comments as actual data. In addition, if you place comments on the survey form, it is highly likely that human eyes will not see them. Any comments on a separate sheet of paper will be sent to the appropriate DNR contact.

➤ **Why does the DNR want this survey returned at the end of the first split of the bow season?**

The bowhunter observation survey is only conducted during the first split of the bow season. The reason for this is that the first split is typically free of snow cover, while the second split is highly variable with respect to snow cover. Animals are much easier to detect against a white background. By eliminating the second split from the survey, most of the observational variability associated with snow cover is eliminated.

➤ **Why do you require the use of black or blue ink when filling out the information on the survey form?**

All survey forms are electronically read by a scanner and computer, and responses written in blue or black ink provide the greatest contrast and are more easily read by the computer. Please DO NOT use a pencil or a red pen to record any information on the form.

➤ **Should I record zeros for animals that I did not see?**

If you did not see a given species during a hunting trip, please leave a blank response for that species. All blanks are interpreted as a zero. Please remember that all survey forms are electronically read by a scanner and computer, and excess zeroes are occasionally read incorrectly and slow down the data entry process.

➤ **Why should I record the date, county hunted, and hours hunted if I didn't see any animals during a bowhunting trip?**

Please remember that the DNR is interested in calculating the number of animals observed per hour(s) hunted. Therefore, it is just as important to record bowhunting trips when no animals were seen as it is to record bowhunting trips when many animals were seen. Any time you expend bowhunting effort, the date, county hunted, and hours hunted must be recorded.

➤ **I'm a very avid bowhunter and there is not enough space to record all of my bowhunting trips. Can I make a photocopy of the original form, or should I get another form?**

Please do not make any photocopies of the bowhunter observation form. If you need additional forms, please contact the DNR at (515) 432-2823 x112 and request additional form(s).

➤ **I often take 2 or more bowhunting trips during the day (e.g., one in the morning and one in the evening) or I hunt 2 different counties on the same day. How should I record that on the form?**

The best way to record multiple bowhunting trips during the day is to use separate lines on the form (i.e., record your morning hunt on one line, and your afternoon or evening hunt on the next line). Each bowhunting trip requires a separate line on the form. Never fill in more than one bubble per line to indicate the county hunted.

If space on the form is a concern, you may wish to combine the information from the multiple hunts and place the daily totals on one line (as long as all hunts are in the same county). This practice is highly discouraged but acceptable. The DNR would much rather send you additional forms.

➤ **I also hunt deer during other seasons, such as the youth season or early muzzleloader season. Should I include the observations during these other seasons?**

No, only record observations made while bowhunting. Hunting methods are often different when hunting deer during other seasons. Consistency in hunting methods is very important to this survey.