



ᏍᏏᏉ ᏚᏂᏏ  
**CHEROKEE NATION®**  
Wildlife Conservation



**Cherokee Nation  
Wildlife Harvest Report**

**2024-2025**

# Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation

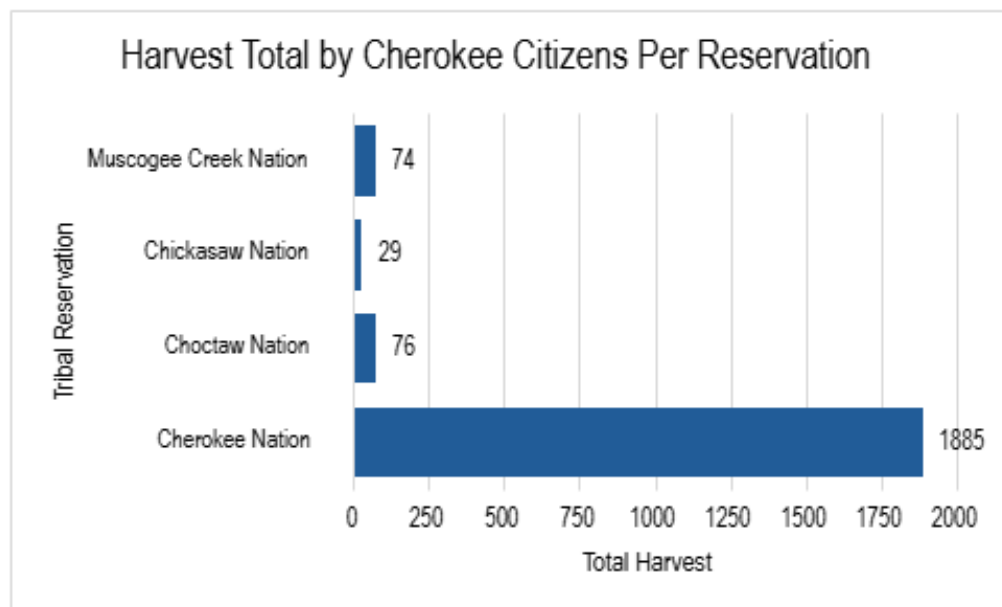
## Harvest Report 2024-2025

The 2024-2025 hunting season for Cherokee Nation saw strong participation across all segments of the community. With a focus on sustainable hunting practices and honoring traditional ties to the land, the season was marked by successful harvests and active engagement in controlled hunts. These efforts continue to foster a deep connection to nature while supporting Cherokee Nation's ongoing conservation initiatives.

### Deer Harvest:

The 2024 deer season was another successful year for Cherokee citizens, with a total of 2,064 deer harvested across four tribal reservations:

- Cherokee Nation Reservation: 1,885 deer
- Chickasaw Nation: 29 deer
- Choctaw Nation: 76 deer
- Muscogee Creek Nation: 74 deer



This total reflects the expanded hunting opportunities provided by the Five Tribes Wildlife Management Reciprocity Agreement, which allows Cherokee citizens to hunt within participating tribal nations. The agreement has provided increased access to hunting lands, supporting traditional practices and improving food security for Cherokee families.

For comparison, in 2023, before the reciprocity agreement took effect, 2,153 deer were harvested within the Cherokee Nation Reservation alone. While the total harvest numbers have slightly decreased, the opportunity to hunt across multiple tribal reservations has created greater flexibility for Cherokee hunters. This expansion ensures continued access to sustainable hunting and promotes intertribal collaboration in wildlife conservation and management.

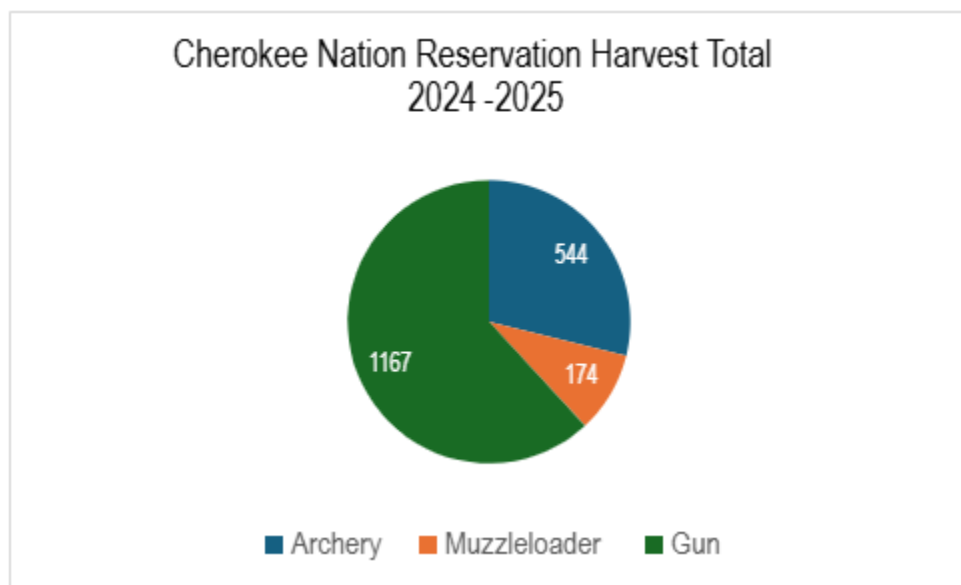
# Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation

Harvest Report 2024-2025

## Cherokee Nation Reservation Season Harvest:

During the 2024-2025 deer season, hunting activity within the Cherokee Nation Reservation showed a clear preference for gun hunting. Of the 1,885 total harvest reports submitted, 1,167 were from gun hunting, accounting for 61.9% of the total. Archery followed with 544 reports (28.9%), while muzzleloader accounted for 174 reports (9.2%).

The data highlights gun hunting as the dominant method, with archery serving as a notable alternative and muzzleloader playing a smaller yet consistent role. These trends may reflect factors such as hunter preference, equipment accessibility, or seasonal regulations.



## Youth Harvests:

Cherokee Nation continues to prioritize youth participation in hunting. In 2024, youth hunters harvested 418 deer and 1 elk, reflecting a growing interest among young people. These initiatives not only contribute to the overall harvest but also help preserve Cherokee cultural heritage and conservation practices by passing down traditional hunting skills.

## Elder Harvests:

In the 2024 season, elder hunters harvested a total of 194 deer. The Cherokee Nation remains dedicated to providing opportunities for elders to participate in controlled hunts and other activities, ensuring they stay connected to their cultural heritage. Special accommodations are made to support their specific needs, allowing for a meaningful and accessible hunting experience.

# Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation

Harvest Report 2024-2025

## Controlled Hunts:

The strong number of applications underscores the community's high level of interest and the value placed on these hunts. Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation acknowledges the challenges Cherokee Speakers face when applying for controlled hunts. To enhance their participation, we will increase outreach efforts and provide additional support when applications open in 2025, ensuring they have the necessary resources to successfully complete the process.

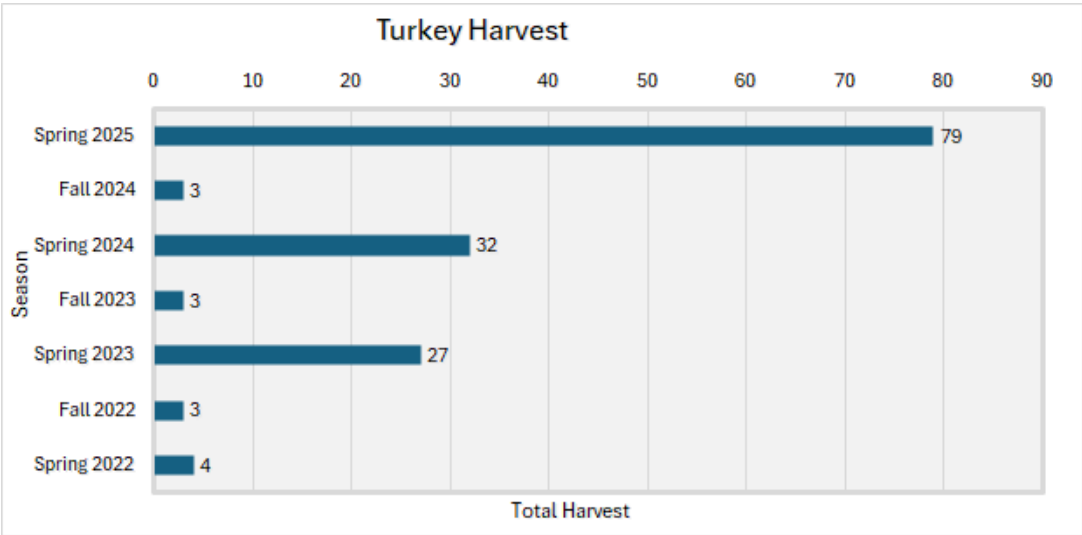
Hunt Category	Applications
Hunt Cherokee Speakers App	8
Hunt Elder App	370
Hunt Open App	2536
Hunt Veteran App	247
Hunt Youth App	291
Total	3452

## Chronic Wasting Disease Testing:

In 2024, Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation received a USDA/APHIS-backed grant to test for Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) in whitetail deer. Samples were collected during two of the five controlled hunts. Among the 16 hunters who participated, 8 successfully harvested deer, and all 8 samples tested negative for CWD, confirming the disease’s absence in the harvested population.

## Turkey Harvests:

The wild turkey has long been a vital food source for the Cherokee people. Although the species has experienced a nationwide decline, the local population remains stable enough to support a sustainable harvest each spring. While the fall turkey season has been less productive, spring harvest numbers have shown a steady increase since 2022. With the 2025 spring season now concluded, final harvest data shows that 79 turkeys were reported—representing a 146.88 percent increase from the 32 reported in 2024. This significant rise is likely influenced by increased public awareness of Cherokee Nation’s wildlife harvest reporting process. Ongoing outreach and education efforts have encouraged more hunters to report their harvests using the Gadugi Portal, contributing to more comprehensive data collection..





# Cherokee Nation Wildlife Conservation

Harvest Report 2024-2025

## **Food Sovereignty:**

Hunting remains integral to Cherokee Nation's efforts toward food sovereignty, which encompasses the right to culturally appropriate healthy food produced in sustainable and responsible ways. The 2024 deer harvest contributed not only to the cultural and spiritual traditions of the Cherokee people but also to providing locally sourced, nourishing food for the community. By continuing controlled hunts and implementing responsible wildlife management practices, Cherokee Nation strengthens its food systems, promotes self-sufficiency, and ensures future generations have access to healthy sustainable food sources.

## **Conclusion:**

The 2024-2025 hunting season was a testament to Cherokee Nation's commitment to conservation, cultural heritage, and community engagement. The Five Tribes Wildlife Management Reciprocity Agreement provided expanded opportunities for Cherokee citizens to hunt across multiple reservations while maintaining sustainable practices. Despite environmental challenges, participation remained strong, reinforcing the community's enduring connection to the land and traditional hunting practices. Initiating CWD testing was a significant milestone, and plans are in place to expand these efforts in the upcoming season to further protect wildlife health. Additionally, the continued emphasis on food sovereignty highlights Cherokee Nation's dedication to providing opportunities for healthy, locally sourced food for its citizens. Looking ahead, Cherokee Nation remains focused on preserving these essential traditions and enhancing conservation efforts for future generations.