

## MDC to host 50th Annual Antler Measurement Day

Deer hunting comes with traditions shared by families and friends, hunts afield and good times in camps. For half a century, the Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) has shared one more tradition with northwest Missouri hunters, answering the question of whether their trophy deer qualify for record books. MDC will host the 50th annual Antler Measurement Day 9 a.m. to noon on Saturday, Aug. 25, at the East Hills Mall, 3702 Frederick Ave., in St. Joseph, Mo.

MDC's Northwest Region staff organizes the free event and measures antlers to assist hunters. The antler measurements provide a score that hunters can use to see if their deer trophy qualifies for honors from private organizations such as Boone & Crockett, Pope & Young, Long Hunter Society, and Show-Me Big Bucks.

"The record books are to honor the animal, not the hunter," said Conservation Agent Dave Carlisle, event organizer. "This is another way hunters honor the animal, and, I think everyone wants to know how their deer measures up."

Another organizer is Conservation Agent Parker Rice, whose grandfather started the event in 1968. Phil Rice, a former MDC Protection regional supervisor, first scored antlers for hunters in the basement of his house. In 1937, when voters approved the Missouri Conservation Commission, the state's deer herd numbered only a few hundred in the southeastern Ozarks. Science-based conservation and support from citizens brought them back. But in 1968, deer were still less plentiful in northwest Missouri than today.

"When this was started back in the day, if somebody killed a big buck, it was a big deal," Rice said. "Everybody still likes to see big bucks. I don't think that's changed in the last 50 years."

Deer antlers are given scores based on counts and measurements that are applied to a formula. For example, scorers count or measure the number of tines, distance between tines, circumferences, inside spread between the main beams, and other factors. Hunters decide if they want to send paper work in to an organization for consideration.

Scoring stations will be set up in the mall. Hunters will check the trophy in with MDC staff and then check them back out after scoring. Found antlers that were shed or that are attached to a skull cap will also be scored. An antler can be scored if only one shed antler from a pair is found. Only deer will be measured, no other antlered species such as elk will be measured. The public is invited to drop by the mall and observe the deer antlers being scored.

MDC will also have staff on hand to answer hunter questions about white-tailed deer ecology, deer hunting, or any other upcoming hunting seasons. They will answer questions about hunter education classes and requirements. Another topic is the comprehensive deer study ongoing in northwest Missouri and the southeast Ozarks. Staff will also answer questions about deer diseases such as chronic wasting disease (CWD) and hemorrhagic

disease, also called bluetongue.

For more information, call the MDC Northwest Regional Office in St. Joseph at 816-271-3100. For information about white-tailed deer and deer hunting in Missouri, visit <https://short.mdc.mo.gov/Zki>.