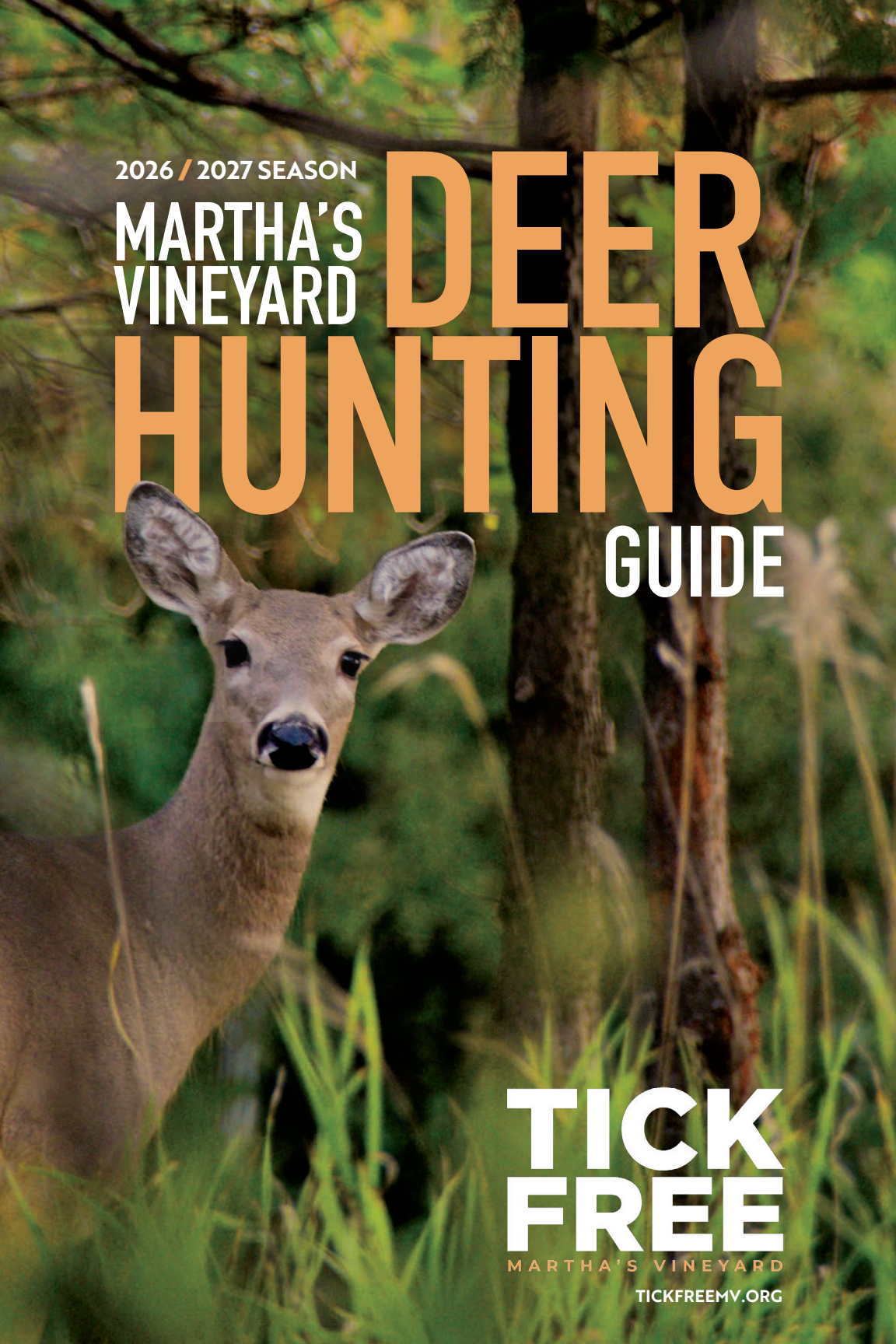




2026 / 2027 SEASON

MARTHA'S
VINEYARD

DEER HUNTING

GUIDE

TICK
FREE

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

[TICKFREEMY.ORG](https://tickfreemy.org)



DEER HUNTING ON MARTHA'S VINEYARD

A long season, a high density of white-tailed deer, and thousands of acres of huntable land make Martha's Vineyard a distinctive New England hunting destination.

Martha's Vineyard, widely known as a summer vacation destination, may not immediately spring to mind when considering a white-tailed deer hunting trip. But increasingly, off-Island hunters are discovering that the Island, located three miles off the southeast coast of Massachusetts, offers an untapped opportunity for a memorable outdoor experience.

At the core of the Island's appeal are its high deer density and an extended hunting season. Martha's Vineyard is Wildlife Management Zone 13, one of only two zones in the state, Zones 13 and 14, that offer extended deer seasons. MassWildlife estimates the Vineyard's deer density at over 55 deer per square mile – and over 100 deer per square mile in some hot spots – on lands with hunting access – second in the state only to neighboring Nantucket. With deer seasons running from mid-September through mid-February and unlimited antlerless permit availability, Zone 13 offers hunting groups maximum flexibility to fill tags and make the most of their time in the field. Supportive local resources include a community deer storage cooler and incentives payments (\$150 per doe and \$100 per buck) for hunters who donate deer to the state's Share the Harvest Program.

Beyond the hunt itself, an off-season visit captures the best of Island living. Traveling during the fall and winter means no summer crowds, easy navigation via free Island bus transit, and open year-round local spots for a great meal after a long day outdoors. It combines productive hunting with classic New England hospitality for a tradition you'll want to return to every year.

After all, where else in New England can you hunt deer while listening to the crash of surf and a ferry whistle echoing in the distance?



At the start of the Island deer hunting season, I generally hop out of bed by 5 a.m. so I can be in my deer stand at the start of legal shooting time, one-half hour before sunrise.

My brain doesn't work very well at that time in the morning. The neurons fire just enough so I can turn on the coffeemaker.

Last season, a few weeks into the archery season and after plenty of early mornings in the woods, I reached for one of the many coffee cups hanging from hooks in the kitchen cupboard. A singular mug which sports a drawing of a bemused buck, a gift from my wife Norma, was tucked into a corner where I'd put it at the end of deer hunting season the previous year. I had forgotten an important deer season ritual, and judging by my results so far, it had affected my luck. I was not drinking my morning coffee from my deer mug, one of the intangibles of my hunting kit.

Does my mug help? I don't know but hunting an animal with an acute sense of smell and hearing, and that is very good

HUNTING TALISMAN

This guide was developed by Tick Free Martha's Vineyard with the expertise and writing of **Nelson Sigelman**. A retired newspaperman and outdoor writer, Sigelman is the author of "Martha's Vineyard Outdoors, Fishing, Hunting and Avoiding Divorce On a Small Island," and "Martha's Vineyard Fish Tales, How to catch fish, rake clams, and jig squid, with entertaining tales about the sometimes crazy pursuit of fish.

For more, go to marthasvineyardoutdoors.com.

at avoiding humans, takes skill and some luck to put the odds in your favor.

For hunters new to Martha's Vineyard, this information is intended to help you fill your tags. But don't forget your lucky coffee mug.



MASSWILDLIFE REGULATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

Hunters must meet Massachusetts licensing requirements and have any permits, stamps, and tags required for the season and method of take. Youth hunters are subject to separate licensing and supervision requirements. Hunters should review the current MassWildlife regulations before hunting.

Non-residents are strongly advised to review Massachusetts firearms laws before planning to enter the state to hunt. The MassWildlife guide, "Hunting with a Firearm in Massachusetts," provides

IMPORTANT NOTE:

The summary below highlights key state requirements, but it does not represent a complete list of all game laws. Every hunter is responsible for reviewing the full, official regulations on the [MassWildlife Deer Hunting Regulations](#) website before taking to the field.

HARVEST REPORTING & CHECK STATIONS

- **Online Check-In:** Harvested deer must be reported online through MassFishHunt within 48 hours.
- **Mandatory Physical Check Station:** During the first week of shotgun season, all harvested deer must be brought in person to a physical check station for biological data collection on or off-Island. Deer harvested during the second week of shotgun season and during all other deer hunting seasons may be reported online through MassFishHunt.



mass.gov/info-details/hunting-with-a-firearm-in-massachusetts

FIELD RULES & SAFETY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Blaze Orange Requirements:** All deer hunters—including archery hunters—must wear at least 500 square inches of hunter orange on the chest, back, and head during Youth Deer Hunt Day, Early Deer, Shotgun, Primitive Firearms, and Winter Deer seasons. Blaze orange is not required during the exclusive archery season.
- **Legal Shooting Hours:** Hunting hours begin one-half hour before sunrise and end one-half hour after sunset.

LOCAL REGULATIONS & PROPERTY ACCESS

The Island comprises six towns—Aquinnah, Chilmark, West Tisbury, Tisbury, Oak Bluffs, and Edgartown—each with its own bylaws governing firearm discharge and hunting on municipal land.

Significant portions of Martha's Vineyard are permanently protected by government agencies and private conservation groups. Access rules, permit requirements, and seasonal restrictions vary widely by managing entities. Public hunting is primarily available in the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest and on properties managed by organizations including the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank and The Trustees of Reservations.

Local requirements differ significantly across municipal boundaries. Hunters should check the applicable town bylaw before hunting on municipal or private property.

Rule of Thumb: Before hunting anywhere on the Island, confirm the property-specific permission and permit requirements and carry all required documentation with you while hunting.

Digital Scouting & Navigation: Hunters are strongly encouraged to use digital mapping applications such as onX Hunt or HuntStand when scouting and navigating unfamiliar properties. These tools can help identify property



boundaries and access points, but hunters should not rely solely on GPS or digital property lines when determining where they are permitted to hunt.

PUBLIC RESPECT & GAME RECOVERY

Respecting property boundaries is vital to maintaining positive relationships between hunters and local landowners. Always observe land lines when tracking or recovering game. Do not enter private property without permission from the landowner or legal occupant. If a wounded deer crosses onto property where you do not have permission to hunt, contact the landowner or local law enforcement for guidance before retrieving the animal. Help avoid disturbing non-hunting members of the community. Please field-dress deer well out of sight off public walking paths, parking areas, and dwellings. Please remember to pick up shell casings and discarded gloves.

- **Non-Emergency Dispatch:** Contact the Dukes County Regional Communications dispatch center at 508-693-1212 to reach local town police departments or the Massachusetts Environmental Police.
- **Emergencies:** Always dial **911**.

HUNTING SEASON

Martha's Vineyard is located in **Massachusetts Wildlife Management Zone 13 (WMZ 13)**, with deer hunting seasons from September through February.

2026 SEASON	DATES	PERMITTED EQUIPMENT
Early Deer (Zones 13 & 14 only)	Sept. 21–Oct. 1	Archery / muzzleloader
Youth Deer Hunt Day	Oct. 3	Shotgun / muzzleloader / archery
Archery	Oct. 5–Nov. 28	Archery
Paraplegic Hunt	Oct. 29–31	Shotgun / muzzleloader / archery
Shotgun	Nov. 30–Dec. 12	Shotgun / muzzleloader / archery
Primitive Firearms	Dec. 14–31	Muzzleloader / archery
Winter Deer (Zones 13 & 14 only)	Jan. 1–Feb. 14	Muzzleloader / archery



HUNTING ACCESS

Martha's Vineyard offers substantial deer hunting opportunities on both public and private lands. Thousands of acres of conservation land are open to hunting, including properties managed by state and local government agencies and private conservation organizations. Many Island landowners also provide hunters access to private property. Access requirements vary by property. Hunters should obtain any required permits or permissions and familiarize themselves with property boundaries before heading into the field.

MANUEL F. CORRELLUS STATE FOREST

The 5,300-acre State Forest, managed by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation, is located in the middle of the Island. Dirt firebreak roads divide the forest into a series of blocks, and trails criss-cross the fields and woodlands. In the Manuel F. Correllus State Forest, permanent tree stands are prohibited. Portable tree stands may be used, but may not damage trees or remain in place for more than 30 days.

Except during shotgun season or with special permission from the forest superintendent, vehicles are not allowed. No special permit is required to hunt in the state forest. **For more information, call 508-693-2540.**

MARTHA'S VINEYARD LAND BANK

The Land Bank is a public conservation agency that currently conserves 4,300 acres, or more than 80 properties, from the Gay Head Cliffs to Cape Poge on Chappaquiddick. Thirty-two Land Bank properties are open to deer hunting, providing some of the Island's most productive public hunting opportunities.

Hunters must have a free hunting permit issued by the Land Bank and must carry the permit while hunting. The Land Bank generally does not limit the number of hunters who may hunt on a property at one time. There are important exceptions, however. During the two-week deer shotgun season, hunting permits are

allocated by lottery for designated properties, with a set number of hunters permitted on each property on each hunting day. In addition, a small number of properties have limits or lotteries during the archery season. Hunters should check the Land Bank's current hunting regulations and property-specific requirements before hunting. **For more information, call 508-627-7141.**

SHERIFF'S MEADOW FOUNDATION

Sheriff's Meadow Foundation is Martha's Vineyard's largest private land trust, protecting more than 3,500 acres across the Island. Archery hunting for white-tailed deer is permitted by written permission on a limited number of designated properties. Firearm hunting is not permitted on Sheriff's Meadow Foundation properties. Hunters must obtain a Sheriff's Meadow hunting permit, which is free and property-specific. For current properties, application procedures, and hunting restrictions, contact the Sheriff's Meadow Foundation. **For more information, call 508-693-5207.**

THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS

The Trustees of Reservations (TTOR) is Massachusetts oldest and largest nonprofit land conservation and historic preservation organization. It owns and manages numerous pristine Island properties, including Menemsha Hills in Chilmark, Long Point Wildlife Refuge in West Tisbury, and Cape Poge Wildlife Refuge on Chappaquiddick. Authorized

HUNTING ACCESS (CONT'D)

seasonal hunting is allowed on these properties with written permission for waterfowl and deer hunting for a limited number of hunters through a deer management program administered by The Trustees. For more information about **The Trustees hunting program**, you can visit thetrustees.org/content/hunting-on-trustees-properties. For specific information about The Trustees deer management program on Island properties, email islands@thetrustees.org.

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

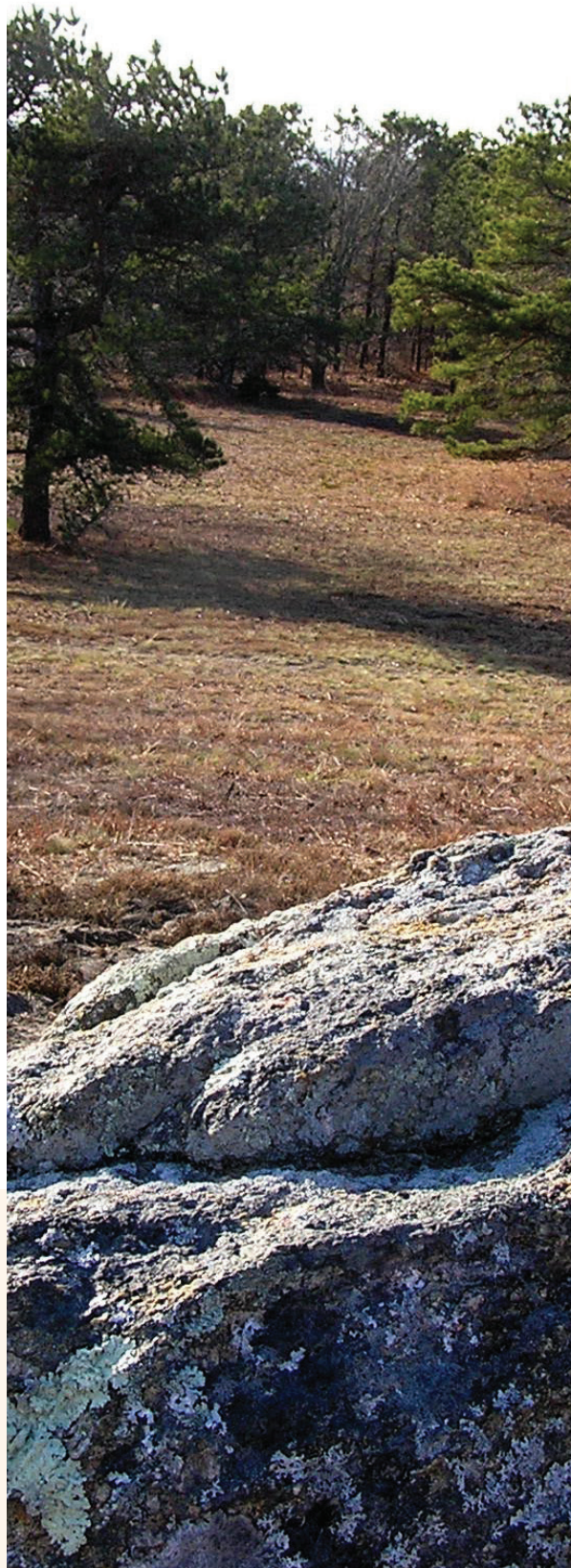
The Nature Conservancy (TNC), a worldwide conservation organization, owns 1,000 acres across seven properties on Martha's Vineyard. Hunting is allowed on selected properties on a case-by-case basis, based on ecological management goals and not for recreational purposes. For more information, contact TNC Island and Southeast Mass Stewardship Manager Rebekah Myers at 508-693-6287.

MUNICIPAL PROPERTIES

Chilmark - one of 6 towns on Martha's Vineyard - permits deer hunting on designated town-owned properties. Hunters should contact the Town of Chilmark before hunting municipal property to confirm current access, permit, and property-specific requirements. For up-to-date information and restrictions, contact the town administrator at 508-645-2101.

PRIVATE LANDS

Many property owners on Martha's Vineyard grant access to hunters. Hunters should always obtain explicit permission before hunting private land and should strictly respect property boundaries. Never assume that unposted land is open to hunting. Town bylaws may impose additional permission requirements, and written permission is required to hunt posted property.



COMMUNITY DEER COOLER, DEER DONATION INCENTIVE & LOCAL RESOURCES

Recognizing the need for a place where hunters can hang deer in a refrigerated environment, the Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society, maintains a **Community Deer Cooler** behind the Ag Hall off Panhandle Road in West Tisbury.

The seasonal use fee is \$20 for Ag Society members and \$50 for non-members. This fee can be waived with a donation of deer to the Venison Donation Program. Dues and registration can be completed in advance on the Ag Society website or when the deer is dropped off.

Deer must be field-dressed, skin on, legs cut off at the knees, and properly tagged with the registration number written on the field tag. Legs can be cut off upon drop-off at the cooler. The field tag must be visible for inspection and attached to the animal. Deer may hang for up to five days, or longer if space is available.

Help avoid disturbing non-hunting members of the community. Please field-dress deer well out of sight off public walking paths, parking areas, and dwellings. Cover all entrails with sticks and leaves before leaving the area.

The Deer Cooler and Donation Program is administered by biologist Patrick Roden-Reynolds. Patrick's hours during hunting season are 8 AM to 8 PM for drop-offs or pick-ups. For more information, text 540-216-9618.

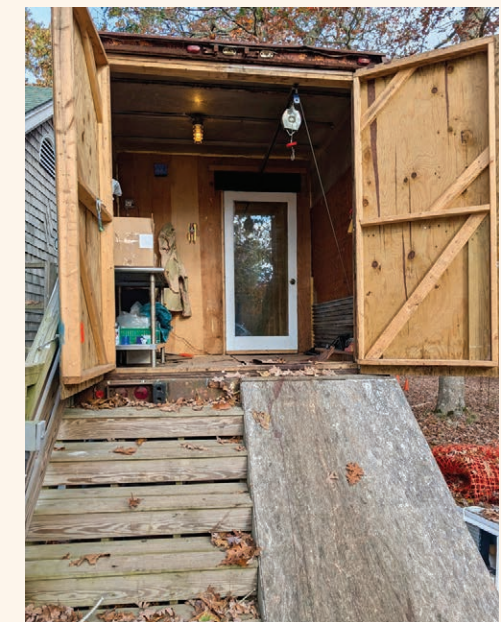
The Venison Donation Program is part of MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest program, which provides donated venison to food pantries and families in need across Massachusetts. Local partners include Island Grown Initiative and the MV Hunt Club. For each whole deer donated, the hunter will receive a no-cost replacement

Antlerless Deer Permit valid for any of the following zones: 1, 3, 4S, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, or 14.

For every two whole deer donated in zones 13 and 14 (Vineyard & Nantucket), the hunter will receive a no-cost replacement **Either-Sex Permit** that will be valid for use in only zones 13 and 14.

This 2026/27 deer hunting season, Tick Free MV, a nonprofit actively working to reduce the Island deer herd as part of a public health effort directed at tick-borne illness, is offering hunters incentive payments of \$150 per doe and \$100 per buck. The incentive is available for each animal checked in to the Community Deer Cooler and donated to the Share the Harvest program, subject to the availability of funding.

The **Martha's Vineyard Hunt Club**, based at the Runamok Farm in West Tisbury, manages hunting on various properties for club members and is one of two DFW-approved Island processors, along with the Island Grown Initiative. In the 2025/26 season, the club processed more than 6,000 venison meals for the Hunters Share the Harvest Program. For more information about Martha's Vineyard Hunt Club visit mvhuntclub.org.



HUNTING SAFETY



Hunting on Martha's Vineyard presents many of the same safety considerations as hunting elsewhere in New England, along with a few that are specific to the Island. Hunters should be prepared for changing weather, varied terrain, dense vegetation, ticks, and areas where public and private lands are closely interspersed.

Before heading into the field, let someone know where you plan to hunt and when you expect to return. Carry a fully charged cell phone, dress appropriately for the weather, and consider carrying basic first-aid supplies. A GPS-enabled hunting app can be useful for maintaining awareness of your location and property boundaries. Use particular care when hunting unfamiliar terrain. The Island's thick scrub oak, greenbriar, wetlands and wooded areas can make navigation difficult and visibility limited. Be certain of your target and what lies beyond it before taking a shot, and remain aware that hikers, dog walkers and other recreational users may be present on conservation lands.

When using a tree stand, inspect the stand and equipment before use and wear an appropriate safety harness. Firearms should remain unloaded except when actively hunting and should always be handled in accordance with basic firearm-safety practices.

Island residents and visitors should be aware of the presence of ticks and consistently take steps to prevent tick bites, even in colder months. Black-legged ticks, sometimes called deer ticks, are responsible for spreading Lyme disease, babesiosis, anaplasmosis, *Borrelia miyamotoi*, and Powassan virus. Lone

star ticks, which can transmit alpha-gal and trigger an allergy to red meat, other mammalian products and dairy, known as the Alpha-Gal Syndrome, are active March through October on the islands. Because tick bite risk is year-round, always use tick repellents, perform daily tick checks, and let your healthcare provider know about tick exposure if you develop any illness. Learn more about tick-borne disease prevention here (mass.gov/info-details/tick-borne-disease-prevention).

Hunters needing medical care while on the Island may contact Martha's Vineyard Hospital, Martha's Vineyard Medical, or Island Healthcare. In an emergency, dial 911. **For non-emergency assistance, including contacting local police or the Massachusetts Environmental Police, call Dukes County Regional Communications at 508-693-1212.**

HUNTING GEAR

Hunters looking to pick up shotgun shells, black powder supplies, archery gear, or replacement blaze orange clothing can find gear at the following local suppliers:

Cottage City Outdoor Power Equipment (Oak Bluffs) stocks shotgun ammunition, muzzleloader supplies, scent control products, and safety apparel. **Call 508-693-2294 for details and current inventory.**

Larry's Tackle Shop (Edgartown) stocks a full range of archery and firearms products, including broadheads and shotgun shells. **Call 508-627-5088.**

GETTING HERE

The Steamship Authority (SSA) is the only way to travel to the Island with a vehicle. You will need a reservation. Although the pace of Island life slows down in the off-season, there are also fewer ferry trips, so it's best to book as early as possible.

Hunters traveling to Martha's Vineyard with firearms should comply with Massachusetts firearm transportation requirements and Steamship Authority procedures. Firearms should be unloaded and securely

stored during transportation. Hunters traveling without a vehicle should contact the Steamship Authority in advance for instructions on transporting firearms aboard the vessel.

Harvested deer may now be concealed during transportation, including while traveling by ferry. Hunters must still comply with all tagging and reporting requirements before transporting the deer as required by Massachusetts law.

For reservation information, call 508-477-8600 or go to www.steamshipauthority.com.

WHERE TO STAY & EAT

While Martha's Vineyard slows down after the summer rush, visiting hunters will find plenty of lodging and dining options throughout the fall and winter hunting seasons. A number of inns, hotels, and guesthouses remain open year-round, as do many of the Island's restaurants, making it easy to find a comfortable place to stay and enjoy a good meal after a day in the field. In

addition, the Island offers numerous private short-term rentals and Airbnbs. Many local hosts cater to off-season sportsmen by offering hunter-friendly amenities. Whether you prefer a town-center inn within walking distance of restaurants and shops or a private rental close to your preferred hunting grounds, you'll find accommodations to fit your needs. The Vineyard Gazette is a good source of information for "What's Open on Martha's Vineyard" for both lodging and restaurants in the off-season.

RESOURCES AND CONTACTS

**Tick Free
Martha's Vineyard**
tickfreemv.org
info@tickfreemv.org

**Martha's Vineyard
Chamber of Commerce**
www.mvy.com
info@mvy.com
508-693-0085

MV Hunt Club
www.mvhuntclub.org
508-962-2477

MassWildlife
mass.gov/orgs/division-of-fisheries-and-wildlife
Mass.Wildlife@mass.gov
508-693-6300

**MassWildlife Southeast
District Office Supervisor**
jason.zimmer@mass.gov
508-759-3406

**Manuel F. Correllus State
Forest**
www.mass.gov/locations/manuel-f-correllus-state-forest
508-693-2540

**Martha's Vineyard
Land Bank**
www.mvlandbank.com/properties/hunting
508-627-7141

**Sheriff's Meadow
Foundation**
sheriffsmeadow.org
508-693-5207

**The Trustees of
Reservations**
islands@thetrustees.org
508-693-7662

The Nature Conservancy
www.nature.org/en-us/get-involved/how-to-help/places-we-protect/hoft-farm-preserve
508-693-6287

Town of Chilmark
www.chilmarkma.gov
508-645-2101

TICK FREE

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

TICKFREEMV.ORG / INFO@TICKFREEMV.ORG

This guide is provided by Tick Free Martha's Vineyard (TFMV) for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal, regulatory or safety advice of any kind. TFMV assumes no liability for injury, property damage, or legal violations arising from use of this guide. By using this guide, you acknowledge and assume all such risks. Hunters are solely responsible for independently verifying all applicable regulations, required permits, and obtaining appropriate property access with the relevant homeowners and authorities before hunting. TFMV makes no representations or warranties, express or implied, regarding the accuracy, completeness, or currency of any information contained in this guide, including third-party contact information, program details, or property listings, all of which are subject to change without notice and without obligation on TFMV's part to update this guide. This disclaimer is governed by the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.