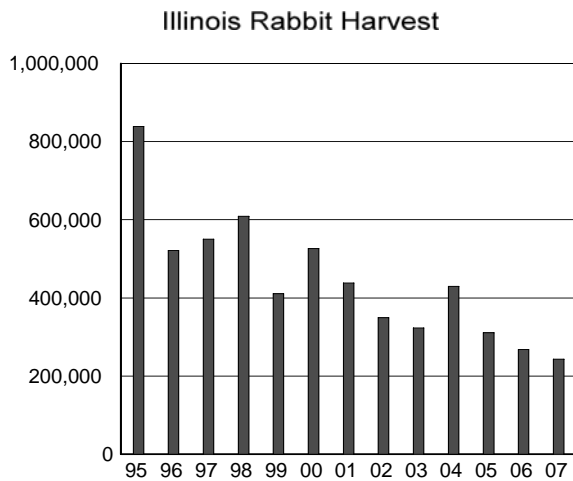


Rabbit Hunting Prospects, 2008

Upland Wildlife Program Management Notes 08-8

2007-2008 Hunting Season

Last year, 49,054 hunters harvested 243,874 rabbits, a 9 percent decrease from the 2006-07 season. This was 27 percent below the average for the last 5 years, and 42 percent below the 10-year average. Hunters went afield 271,107 days in 2007, an increase of 14 percent from 2006 but daily harvest decreased 20 percent in 2006.



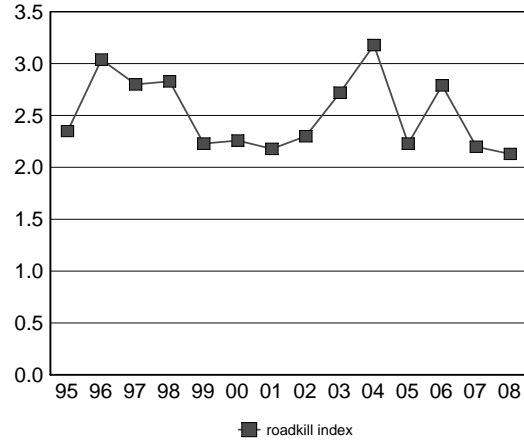
Winter Weather 2007-08

Winter weather was colder with more snow in Illinois. Temperatures were below normal. The duration and depth of snow cover were 24 percent above normal in northern Illinois and 12 percent below normal in south-central and southern Illinois.

Rabbit Population Index

The number of road killed rabbits observed by DNR biologists during June and July is positively correlated with the statewide annual harvest of cottontails. In 2008, the statewide June-July rabbit index was 6 percent below the 2007 figure. A 29 percent decrease was noted in the northern half of the state. In southern Illinois, a 10 percent increase was recorded.

Rabbit Roadkill Index



Grass/forb nest cover and escape cover available in CRP fields and filter strips has slowly increased in acreage since 1997. The quality will also improve with the use of native grasses and forbs, better mixes of cool season grasses and legumes and increased emphasis on management including burning, strip disking, herbicide spraying and legume interseeding.

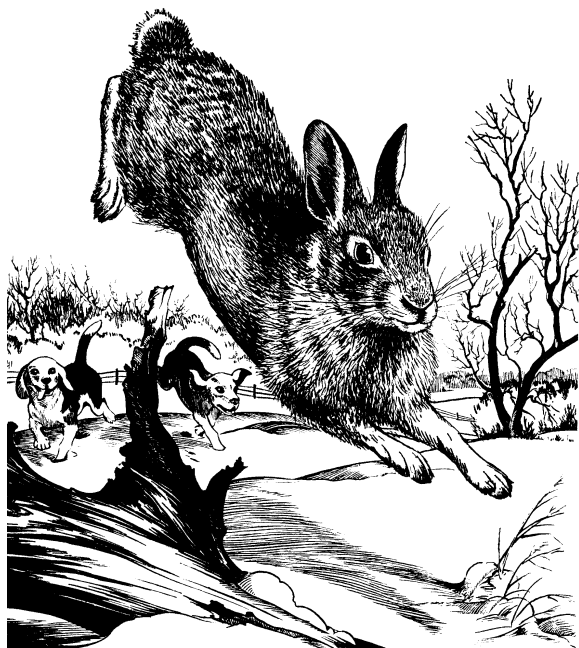
2008 Season Outlook

Rabbit numbers will be lower than last year's levels in northern Illinois and slightly higher in southern Illinois. Temperatures during the breeding season were cool with above average rainfall so production could be lower than average in the north.

Hunter success is also affected by weather and cover conditions during the hunting season. If large acreages of crops are still in the field during the hunting season, hunting will be negatively affected.

Best Areas

Look for farms with a mix of row crops, small grain and legumes with shrubby fencerows, old pasture and forest edges. The most productive areas for rabbit hunting continue to be in west-central and southern Illinois. Based on the average annual harvest estimates from 1997 through 2002, some of the top counties are: Bond, Calhoun, Clay, Clinton, Madison, Marion and Wayne.



Season Dates

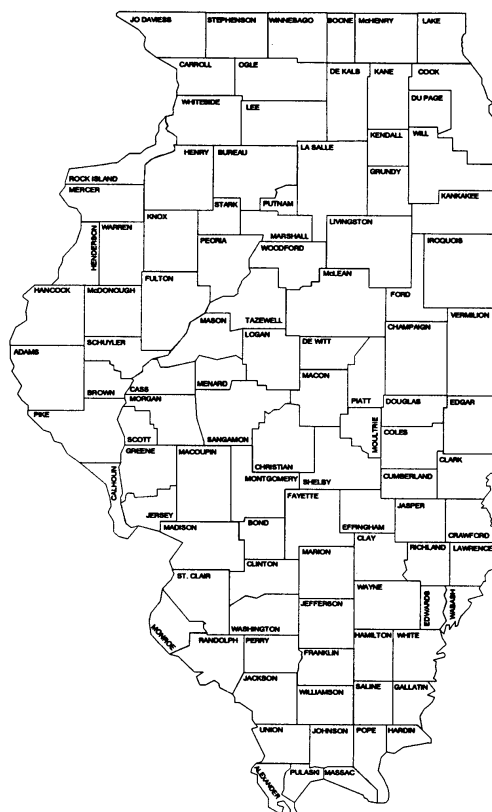
November 1 - January 8 (North)
November 1 - January 22 (South)

Hours

Sunrise to Sunset

Bag Limits

4 per day with 10 in possession after the third day



*Prepared by John Cole 9/08
Illinois Department of Natural Resources
Division of Wildlife Program Development*

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