



Maryland Department of Agriculture

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Maryland Department of Agriculture Legislative Comment Date: February 4th, 2026

BILL NUMBER: HB 186
BILL TITLE: Natural Resources - Bow Hunting - Sundays
MDA POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

The Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) offers the following information regarding HB 186, which would expand Sunday bow hunting opportunities in Maryland.

From an agricultural perspective, deer overpopulation continues to present real and ongoing challenges for Maryland farmers, particularly through crop damage. Deer damage remains one of the most frequently cited wildlife-related impacts to agricultural production, and farmers consistently emphasize the need for practical, effective tools to manage deer pressure on and near agricultural lands.

MDA has been actively engaged in ongoing discussions regarding deer management and Sunday hunting. At the request of the House Environment and Transportation Committee, MDA participated in the committee-directed effort to study Sunday hunting policies, definitions, and implementation considerations in collaboration with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Through this process, agricultural stakeholders underscored that no single tool is sufficient on its own, and that a combination of approaches, tailored to local conditions, is often necessary to meaningfully reduce crop losses.

In recent years, MDA has also partnered with DNR to support farmers experiencing deer damage. In 2024, MDA and DNR launched a joint Deer Management Initiative designed to improve coordination between farmers and hunters, expand awareness of existing deer management tools, and encourage increased antlerless deer harvest where appropriate. This initiative was informed by feedback from producers who reported persistent crop damage despite existing hunting seasons and permit options.

MDA remains committed to working collaboratively with DNR, legislators, and stakeholders to ensure Maryland farmers have access to practical and balanced deer management strategies that support agricultural viability while respecting public safety, local concerns, and wildlife management goals.

MDA appreciates the consideration of the above information in the Committee's deliberations.

If you have additional questions, please contact Harrison Palmer, MDA Chief of Staff at Harrisonb.palmer@maryland.gov or (410) 980-9887.