

COTTONTAIL & SQUIRREL

The 2023 cottontail rabbit and tree squirrel seasons covered 1 September 2023 - 29 February 2024. Harvest surveys were sent to resident and nonresident hunters after the close of the pheasant season on 31 January 2024. It is assumed that this captured the majority of cottontail and squirrel hunting and harvest.

For cottontail, the daily limit was 10, possession 30, and the season was open statewide. For squirrel, the daily limit was 5, possession 15, and the season was open statewide. Residents holding small game, 1-day small game, adult or senior combination, or youth small game licenses were eligible to participate in the season. Nonresidents were required to obtain either a small game or a youth small game license to hunt upland game.

In 2023, there were 84,610 resident and 81,380 nonresident licenses issued that allowed holders to hunt small game. Approximately 15,000 residents and 15,000 nonresidents were surveyed for the small game seasons. Survey response rates were 28% for residents and 29% for nonresidents.

Based on survey responses indicating at least one day of hunting cottontails, there were a projected 4,158 resident and 688 nonresident cottontail hunters. Based on survey responses indicating at least one day of hunting squirrels, there were a projected 2,096 resident and 107 nonresident hunters. An estimated 26,951 cottontails and 8,495 squirrels were harvested during the 2023 small game seasons.

When asked their satisfaction on the season, (1 being least satisfied, 7 being most satisfied), resident hunters reported an average satisfaction level of 5.19, while nonresidents reported a rating of 5.51.

Comparison of the 2014 - 2023 cottontail and squirrel harvests

Year	Cottontails				Squirrels			
	Hunters		Harvest		Hunters		Harvest	
	Resident	Nonres	Resident	Nonres	Resident	Nonres	Resident	Nonres
2014	5,366	754	28,276	1,591	2,552	150	9,587	241
2015	5,779	1,020	37,407	2,397	2,870	171	13,311	180
2016	5,584	754	35,649	2,224	2,786	181	11,614	262
2017	4,628	607	22,711	1,561	2,571	87	9,850	260
2018	4,341	475	19,386	937	2,302	141	8,241	293
2019	3,563	437	19,329	604	2,542	87	12,077	116
2020	4,871	597	27,026	928	3,174	119	12,757	239
2021	4,063	754	19,385	754	2,248	74	8,014	59
2022	5,333	796	33,910	1,943	2,466	80	9,949	48
2023	4,158	688	25,148	1,803	2,096	107	8,281	214

Survey design changed in 2010 and 2014 so results may not be directly comparable to previous years.

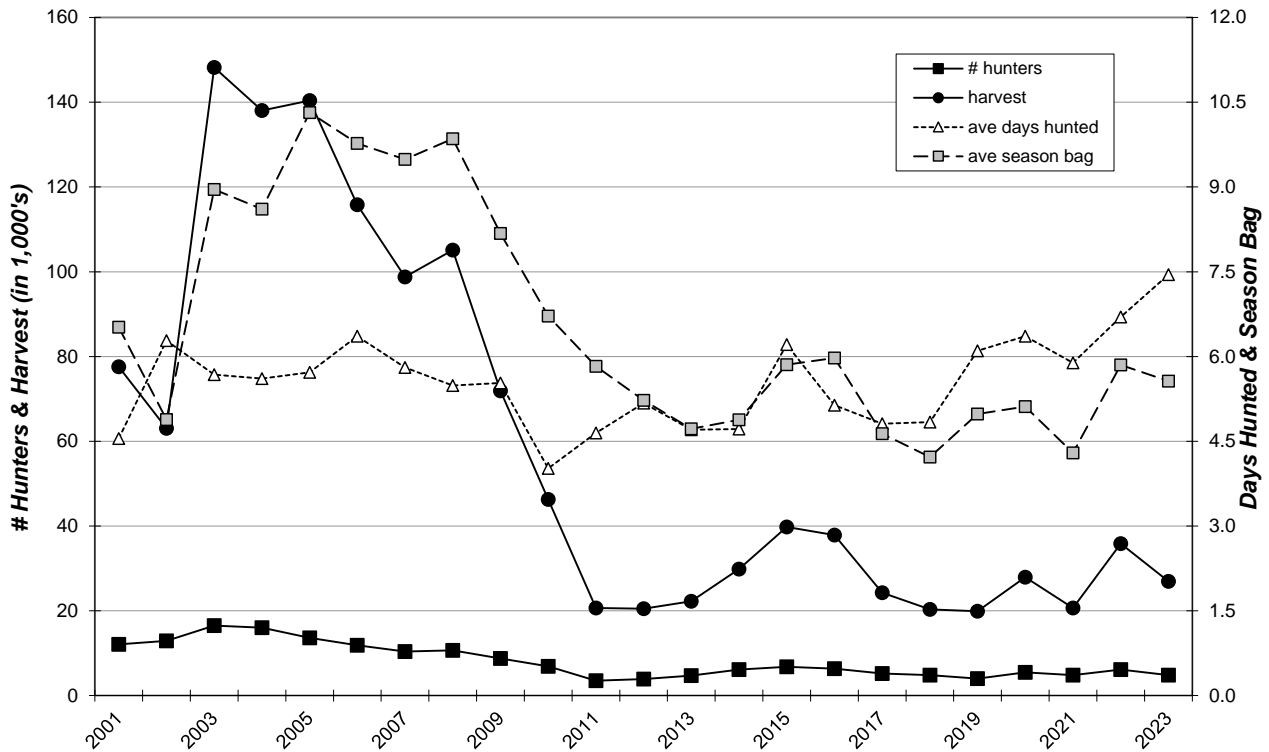
UPLAND GAME HARVEST PROJECTIONS FOR 2023

Last Revised: 14 Aug 2024

	RESIDENT TOTALS BY LICENSE TYPE					NONRESIDENT TOTALS		
	Comb- ination	Senior Combo	Small Game	Youth SmGm	Sum Estimates	Nonres Sm Game	Youth Sm Gm	Sum Estimates
Licenses Sold	46,849	11,549	20,154	6,058	84,610	78,120	3,260	81,380
Projected ACTIVE UPLAND GAME HUNTERS	2,359	506	1,135	627	4,628	695	46	741
Number Sampled by Survey	8,586	1,952	3,391	1,055	14,984	14,439	552	14,991
Number Responded to Survey	2,482	844	639	203	4,168	4,292	70	4,362
% Responded and Participated in Season	5%	4%	6%	10%	5%	1%	1%	1%
Responded and Participated in Season	125	37	36	21	219	39	1	40
Responded but DID NOT HUNT	2,357	807	603	182	3,949	4,253	69	4,322
Survey Response Rate	28.9%	43.2%	18.8%	19.2%	27.8%	29.7%	12.7%	29.1%
No. Hunters Reporting Cottontail Days	110	30	35	19	194	36	1	37
Sum Cottontail Hunted Days	956	286	238	124	1,604	161	1	162
Average Days Hunted Cottontails	8.69	9.53	6.80	6.53	8.27	4.47	1.00	4.38
Sum Cottontails Bagged	803	182	164	78	1,227	96	2	98
Average Cottontail Bag for Season	7.30	6.07	4.69	4.11	6.32	2.67	2.00	2.65
Projected Days Cottontail Hunting	18,045	3,914	7,506	3,700	33,165	2,870	46	2,916
Projected No. Cottontail Hunters	2,076	411	1,104	567	4,158	642	46	688
Projected Cottontail Bag	15,157	2,490	5,173	2,328	25,148	1,711	92	1,803
TOTAL COTTONTAIL HARVEST =						26,951		
No. Hunters Reporting Squirrel Days	63	19	12	9	103	6	0	6
Sum Squirrel Hunted Days	423	167	61	19	670	27		27
Average Days Hunted Squirrels	6.71	8.79	5.08	2.11	6.50	4.50	0.00	4.50
Sum Squirrels Bagged	259	139	34	14	446	12		12
Average Squirrel Bag for Season	4.11	7.32	2.83	1.56	4.33	2.00	0.00	2.00
Projected Days Squirrel Hunting	7,984	2,285	1,924	567	12,760	481	0	481
Projected No. Squirrel Hunters	1,189	260	378	269	2,096	107	0	107
Projected Squirrel Bag	4,889	1,902	1,072	418	8,281	214	0	214
TOTAL SQUIRREL HARVEST =						8,495		
Mean Satisfaction Score *	5.10	5.03	5.69	5.14	5.19	5.53	5.00	5.51

* Based on scale of 1-7 with 1="very dissatisfied" and 7="very satisfied"

SOUTH DAKOTA COTTONTAIL HARVEST, 2001-2023



SOUTH DAKOTA SQUIRREL HARVEST, 2001-2023

