

## **2025 Hunting Incident Recap**

### **January 8, 2025      Bremer      White-tailed Deer      Property Damage**

On January 8, 2025, a Bremer County officer responded to a report from homeowners in Janesville, IA of a bullet striking their house. Their neighbor admitted to shooting at a deer with a .50 caliber muzzleloader just minutes before the incident. Further investigation, including a scene analysis by a Conservation Officer, concluded that the bullet, consistent with the type the neighbor was shooting, came from his direction. The timing and elevation also matched, leading the officer to conclude the neighbor was the shooter. The homeowners were informed of the findings and did not wish to press charges, having already ordered a replacement window costing around \$660.00. The shooter was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of target fixation where there is a failure to be aware of what was in front of or beyond the target.

### **July 7, 2025      Linn      Groundhog      Personal Injury**

An investigation was initiated on July 7, 2025, into a hunting incident at a Cedar River cabin in rural Linn County, where the shooter was interviewed by an investigator and State Park Ranger. The shooter admitted to accidentally shooting a 9-year-old boy fishing on the riverbank with a .410 shotgun while attempting to shoot a groundhog, having mistaken moving leaves for the animal. Upon arriving at the scene on July 10, 2025, the investigator noted multiple residences were within 200 yards of the shooting location. The victim, who initially thought he was stung by a bee, was treated by EMS, taken to the University of Iowa Hospitals, and later released, though he has pellet marks and his mother was advised he would require monitoring for lead levels. The Linn County Sheriff's Office secured the evidence, and State Park Ranger Wagner issued the shooter with seven citations, prohibited him from possessing firearms, and was coordinating with the Linn County Attorney's Office regarding additional charges. The shooter was not a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of target fixation where there is a failure to be aware of what was in front of or beyond the target.

### **September 21, 2025      Cherokee      Squirrel      Personal Injury**

On September 21, 2025, at 11:20 AM, two hunters were hunting at Martin's Access County Park in Cherokee County. The victim entered the woods with a .22 rifle while the shooter stayed near the edge. A few moments later they shot their 20-gauge shotgun after hearing rustling and claiming to see a "turkey face," striking the victim in the abdomen, face, and leg. Due to a dead cell phone, the shooter drove the injured victim to his Storm Lake residence, as requested by the victim, before calling an ambulance. The victim was transported to Buena Vista Regional Medical Center and then Lifeflighted to Omaha Hospital, where they underwent surgery to remove pellets from their liver, spleen, and colon. Pellets remain in their head and right leg and was later released in stable condition. The shooter was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of not positively identifying the target.

### **September 27, 2025      Washington      Squirrel      Fatality**

On September 27, 2025, a conservation officer was notified of a hunting incident near Brighton and responded to the property, where they met a hunter, who was directing emergency personnel. The hunter had been squirrel hunting with the shooter and victim, and reported hearing a shot followed by yelling that the victim had been shot. They were approximately 80 yards west of the victim, and had heard two shots in total that day. Shortly after, the conservation officer spoke with the shooter near the victim, where they admitted to shooting once mistaking the victim's head for a squirrel, hearing a "thud" and seeing the victim fall. The bullet struck the victim in the back of the head near the base of the skull, killing them. The shooter was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of not positively identifying the target.

### **October 25, 2025      Palo Alto      Pheasant      Property Damage**

On October 25, 2025, a Conservation Officer was dispatched to a report of hunters shooting too close to a building near Ayrshire, IA. Upon arrival, the officer found a bullet hole in a horse barn and a slug inside. The property owner had already left to find the pheasant hunters, whom the officer located shortly thereafter. The shooter admitted he believed he hit the building, explaining they shot twice at a pheasant and the second shot "didn't sound right." The hunters showed the officer their position, and the scene was documented with photographs and GPS. Later, the officer confirmed the projectile was a 12-gauge slug, not birdshot, and the shooter was cited the next day for shooting a slug over a roadway. The shooter was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of target

fixation where there is a failure to be aware of what was in front of or beyond the target and not using the correct ammunition for quarried game.

**October 25, 2025      Butler      White-tailed Deer      Elevated Stand**

On Saturday, October 25, 2025, a Conservation Officer responded to a hunting-related incident after a radio call for an individual who had fallen from a tree. Upon being notified that the incident was hunting-related, Officers proceeded to the location where they found the injured individual, with his wife and son. The victim was transported to Mercy North Iowa with multiple serious injuries, including several broken ribs, air leakage outside of the lungs, internal bleeding, and a broken lumbar vertebra, but was expected to recover fully after surgery. It was reported that the victim called his wife after falling from the tree stand, stating he felt something wasn't right while climbing in and fell while attempting to exit. The son, who had set up the stand, confirmed that his father, Lyle, was not wearing a safety harness, and the officers observed that the tree stand, which was secured with two ratchet straps, had a detached top strap. The victim was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of improper treestand installation and the lack of wearing a safety harness.

**November 22, 2025      Butler      Upland Bird      Property Damage**

On November 22, 2025, a pheasant hunter fired two shots at a rooster pheasant flying east while hunting along the north-south fence line on the west edge of his farmed field. Based on the recovered shotgun shells, the shooter was approximately 86 yards from a nearby residence at the time of the shots, with a clear line of sight to a window. Evidence suggests that one of the two rounds of #4 shot fired likely struck the home, causing the observed damage. The shooter was not a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of target fixation where there is a failure to be aware of what was in front of or beyond the target.

**November 27, 2025      Decatur      Waterfowl      Personal Injury**

On the morning of November 27, 2025, a Conservation Officer investigated a self-inflicted hunting accident at Lake LaShane in Decatur County. While waterfowl hunting with four others, the victim attempted to un-sling his shotgun from his back when the firearm became entangled in cedar limbs attached to a duck blind boat. This caused the weapon to discharge into his right thigh, prompting his companions to apply a makeshift belt tourniquet before emergency services arrived. The victim was a hunter education graduate and the cause of the incident was careless handling of a firearm.

**December 2, 2025      Butler      Pheasant      Personal Injury**

On December 2, 2025, an investigator was notified of a potential hunting injury in Butler County. The shooter was instructed to remain at Cedar Falls Hospital for an interview while the victim was transported to Mercy One Hospital in Waterloo for treatment of a gunshot wound to the right thigh. The shooter stated that his firearm, a Winchester Super X3, discharged while he was exiting the vehicle striking the victim whose statement was consistent with this, suggesting the gun discharged upon hitting the car door. The shooter was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of careless handling of a firearm while removing it from a vehicle.

**December 6, 2025      Ringgold      White-tailed Deer      Property Damage**

On December 6, 2025, a Conservation Officer and a Ringgold County Deputy investigated a report of a cow shot by a deer hunter near Clearfield, Iowa. The property was being used by hunters with the landowner's permission. The cattle owner reported the hunters called him after shooting the cow and agreed to pay him \$4,000 for it. He allowed them to butcher the cow and leave. The shooter admitted to shooting the cow. He stated he heard a noise he thought was a deer while walking into a snowy field at dawn and shot into the wooded draw from approximately 30 ft. The animal ran into a harvested bean field, where they shot it a second time, realizing it was a cow after it went down. The shooter was a hunter education graduate and this incident appears to be the result of not positively identifying the target.

**December 8, 2025      Iowa      White-tailed Deer      Personal Injury**

On December 10, 2025, a Conservation Officer interviewed the victim at his residence regarding a hunting incident that occurred on December 8, 2025. The victim was a "blocker" in a seven-person deer hunting group, and explained that he was taking a knee with his Browning A-Bolt 12-gauge shotgun loaded (safety must be off to chamber a round). While attempting to move the safety to the "on" position with his right-hand finger, his finger slipped and his thumb struck the

trigger. The gun fired, and the 12-gauge, Hornady 300 grain bullet entered and exited his left hand. Fellow hunters came to his aid, and transported him to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics.