

# GENERAL HUNTING REGULATIONS

**License Information:** It is unlawful to hunt or trap wildlife without first obtaining the required hunting or furtaker licenses. All hunters should be sure that they have the proper and applicable licenses and tags in their possession for the seasons and species they intend to hunt or trap before heading afield. While afield, in addition to their license, sportsmen are required to have in their possession additional cards or papers that must be shown to an officer or landowner upon request to confirm identification.

**Possession Limits:** It is unlawful on the opening day of a hunting season to 1) possess more than the daily limit; 2) thereafter possess more game than may be legally taken in two days. A Field Possession Limit is the maximum number of legally taken wildlife of a species that a person may legally possess or transport between the place of taking and the person's permanent place of residence.

**Roadkilled Deer/Possessing Wildlife:** It is unlawful at any time to possess live wildlife, except foxes for which a permit has been issued, or animals, or parts of animals, killed on highways. **Pennsylvania residents** may possess deer or turkeys killed by a motor vehicle for personal consumption only if they secure a **permit number** from the Game Commission within 24 hours after taking the deer or turkey; call the appropriate region office. It is not legal to kill "put out of its misery" any injured wildlife; again, call the region office. It is unlawful to give the whole or edible part of a deer killed on a highway to another person. It is not lawful to keep, for example, antlers from roadkilled deer or the beard or spurs of a roadkilled turkey. It is unlawful to sell inedible parts from game or wildlife lawfully taken (including taxidermy mounts), unless such parts are disposed of by the original owner within 90 days after the close of the season in which the game or wildlife was taken. Holders of a valid furtakers license may possess a furbearer killed on a highway, except for bobcats, fishers or river otters. Persons taking possession of any furbearer killed on a highway during the closed season for taking that furbearer shall within 24 hours contact any Game Commission region office to make notification of said possession.

**Safety Zones:** It is unlawful to hunt for, shoot at, trap, take, chase or disturb wildlife within 150 yards of any occupied residence, camp, industrial or commercial building, farm house or farm building, or school or playground without the permission of the occupants. It is unlawful to shoot into a safety zone, even if you are outside of the zone. Driving game, even without a firearm or bow, within a safety zone without permission is unlawful. For comparison, think of a safety zone as about one and a half football fields. Hunting on hospital and institutional grounds, and in cemeteries, is also prohibited. It is unlawful to discharge a firearm within 150 yards of a Game Commission vehicle whose occupants are releasing pheasants. The safety zone for **archery hunters** statewide, including those using crossbows, is **50 yards**. Archery hunters carrying muzzleloaders during any muzzleloader season must abide by the 150-yard safety zone regulation. Around playgrounds, schools, nursery schools or day-care centers, the safety zone remains 150 yards.

**Fluorescent Orange:** See the two-page Fluorescent Orange Requirements section elsewhere in this Digest and the species-specific pages for more fluorescent orange requirements information. **Waterfowlers, furtakers hunting furbearers** (some exceptions with coyotes), **dove, spring turkey** and **crow** hunters, and hunters participating in the after-Christmas flintlock muzzleloader deer season (see Special Regulations Areas section elsewhere in this Digest), are not required to wear fluorescent orange. Archery hunters also carrying a muzzleloader during any muzzleloader season must meet the fluorescent orange requirements of the muzzleloader season.

**Road Hunting:** It is unlawful to 1) hunt from a vehicle; 2) shoot at wildlife on a public road or right-of-way open to public travel; 3) shoot across a road unless the line of fire is high enough to preclude any danger to road users; and 4) alight from a vehicle and shoot at any wildlife until the shooter is at least 25 yards from the traveled portion of the roadway. **NOTE:** These provisions do not prevent an individual,

who may not qualify for a Disabled Person's Permit, but who has health concerns or problems to sit in or near a legally "parked" vehicle and watch for game. **Loaded firearms, or attachments, may never be placed in, on or against any motor vehicle at any time.**

**NOTE:** It is unlawful to dig out or take any wild bird or animal from its den or place of refuge.

**Unlawful Firearms & Devices:** 1) Automatic and semi-automatic (autoloading) rifles and handguns; 2) air or gas operated rifles and handguns.

**Loaded Firearms - Vehicles:** A firearm is considered loaded when there is live ammunition in either the chamber or attached magazine. It is unlawful to 1) have a loaded firearm, or attachments, in, on or against any motor vehicle, regardless of whether the vehicle is moving or stationary; and 2) have a loaded firearm in watercraft under power, or shoot from a powered watercraft until the motor has been shut off and the craft has come to a complete stop. Holders of License to Carry Firearms Permit are exempt, but keep in mind that **most** sporting firearms are not authorized by the permit.

It is prohibited to have any muzzleloading firearm that has a live charge of ammunition in its firing chamber and a primer, flash powder or a battery, whichever is applicable, properly positioned in the firing mechanism of the firearm rendering it capable of discharge, in, on or against any conveyance propelled by mechanical power. Any crossbow that has been cocked and has a bolt affixed onto the string or positioned into the firing mechanism of the device is prohibited in, on or against any conveyance propelled by mechanical power. For safety, a muzzleloader or crossbow bolt should be fired into soft ground before those devices are transported in a vehicle.

**Firearms - Magazine Capacity:** Manual or autoloading shotguns to hunt small game, furbearers, turkeys, waterfowl or crows must be limited to a 3-shell capacity in the chamber and magazine combined. A plug must be a one-piece filler installed so it cannot be readily removed without disassembling the gun or magazine.

**Firearms - Handguns:** A Sportsman's Firearms Permit or a License to Carry Firearms is required to carry a handgun, or have in a motor vehicle. Licenses to Carry Firearms permits are issued by county sheriffs or the Philadelphia Chief of Police. The License to Carry Firearms permit only entitles bowhunters or spotlighters, for instance, to carry firearms that fall within this classification. County treasurers issue Sportsman's Firearms Permits. **A person holding a Sportsman's Firearms Permit may not carry a concealed handgun or a loaded handgun in a vehicle, and may not carry a handgun while bowhunting or spotlighting.**

**Electronic Devices:** It is unlawful to hunt with any electronic contrivance or device except: 1) Electronic callers **may be used** to hunt bobcats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and crows, and snow geese in the conservation hunt season. 2) Lighted pins on bow sights and scopes with lighted reticles may be used as long as they don't cast a beam. Any device used as a sight or scope on any firearm, bow or crossbow that projects a light beam of any kind onto the target is unlawful. 3) Portable, two-way radios and cell phones may be used for general communications with another hunter, but may not be used to direct or alert another hunter of the presence or location of live game or wildlife. The use of electronic communication devices to alert hunters to live game is not only a violation of the Game & Wildlife Code, but violates the concept of Fair Chase. The use of portable radios does not satisfy the legal requirement of accompanying a junior hunter. The accompanying adult must be close enough to give verbal instructions without the aid of an electronic device. 4) Electronic sound amplification devices that are incorporated into hearing protection devices and completely contained in or on the hunter's ear may be used to hunt or take wildlife. The following devices may be used to hunt or take wildlife: Any manually operated firearm that uses an electronic impulse to detonate the primer or main powder charge of the ammunition, unless such firearms are specifically prohibited devices. Electronic illuminating devices that are affixed at the aft end of a bolt or arrow and used solely for the purpose of locating or tracking bolt or arrow flight after being launched from a crossbow or bow.

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**Spotlighting Wildlife:** It is unlawful to 1) spotlight wildlife while in possession of a firearm, except by individuals who have a License to Carry Firearms permit, and only with firearms authorized by the permit (most sporting arms are not authorized), bow and arrow, or other device capable of killing wildlife; 2) spotlight wildlife during the regularly scheduled statewide antlered and antlerless deer seasons (Nov. 26-Dec. 8), including those days separating the seasons **and including the late extended firearms deer seasons in WMUs 2B, 5C & 5D**; and 3) cast an artificial light upon any building, farm animal or photoelectric cell. Recreational spotlighting is lawful between sunrise and 11 p.m., except as previously noted. Spotlighting includes handheld lights, accessory spotlights on vehicles and vehicle headlights when intentionally used to locate or view wildlife. A person hunting raccoons, skunks, opossums, bobcats, weasels, foxes and coyotes on foot may use a handheld light, including a gun-mounted light. Furbearer hunters still may not use a flashlight or spotlight that projects a **laser light beam**.

**Cultivated Lands:** It is unlawful to 1) hunt in unharvested buckwheat, corn, sorghum or soybean fields without permission from the owner or caretaker; 2) operate a motor vehicle on any cleared field or private property without the landowner's permission; 3) block lanes to cultivated fields, mail boxes or private property; 4) leave gates open; 5) damage real or personal property; 6) break down or damage fences, or 7) harass, injure or kill livestock.

**Baiting:** It is unlawful to hunt in or around any area where artificial or natural bait, food, hay, grain, fruit, nuts, salt, chemicals or minerals, including their residues, are used, or have been used within the past 30 days, as an enticement to lure game or wildlife regardless of the type or quantity. Hunters are responsible for ensuring that the hunting area has not been baited before they begin hunting. They should physically inspect the area and question landowners, guides and caretakers. This section does not pertain to hunting near areas where accepted farming or habitat management practices are taking place (example: hunting near food plots on game lands is legal). Any natural or manmade nonliving bait can be used to attract **coyotes** for hunting or trapping.

**Decoys:** Decoys simulating food are considered artificial bait and are illegal. Examples: artificial corn to attract turkeys or waterfowl. Any decoy, including electronic decoys, with the exception of living decoys, used in the trapping or hunting of **furbearers** is permitted.

**Lures & Scents:** Estrous scents and lures, or other non-food source cover scents are legal for deer. **Scents and lures that contain any form of natural or artificial food stuff, including, but not limited to, corn, apple and acorns are not legal.** Use of drip devices are legal, with legal scents and lures, as long as they don't violate the prohibition against electronic devices. The use of scents or lures while hunting bears is prohibited.

**Littering:** It is unlawful while hunting or trapping to leave or deposit any garbage, bottles, cartons, containers, glass, paper or debris, except in a receptacle for that purpose.

**Recovering Dead or Injured Wildlife:** It is unlawful for a hunter to refuse or neglect to make a reasonable effort to retrieve any killed or injured game or wildlife. Hunters attempting to recover wildlife are not permitted to enter private property without permission. **A hunting license does not give you the right to trespass on private property. In fact, a wildlife conservation officer can issue a citation for trespassing on private property to hunters in violation of the Game & Wildlife Code or regulations.**

**Sunday Hunting: It is unlawful to hunt wildlife, except foxes, crows and coyotes, on Sundays.**

**Drugs & Alcohol:** It is unlawful to hunt wildlife while under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol.

**Injury Reports:** If you are involved in an incident resulting in injury by a firearm or bow and arrow, either as a victim or the person causing injury (including self-inflicted), you must report the incident to the Game Commission within 72 hours. Obtain the proper forms from a PGC officer, complete in duplicate and return them to the officer, or mail to the PGC Harrisburg Headquarters. It is unlawful not to submit this report, or to flee, fail or refuse to render immediate and full assistance to an injured person.

**Mistake Kill:** Any person who kills any wildlife while hunting or trapping by accident or mistake shall immediately field-dress any edible game and deliver the carcass to a Game Commission officer in the county where it was killed. Big game killed by accident or mistake must be tagged with the appropriate big game tag that is attached to the license before moving the carcass from the kill location. Use the tag you would have used for

the animal you are legally licensed to take. Examples: An antlerless deer killed in mistake for an antlered deer must be tagged with the antlered deer tag; an antlered deer killed in mistake for an antlerless deer must be tagged with an antlerless deer tag; a hen turkey killed by mistake during the spring gobbler season must be tagged with a spring gobbler tag. Antlered deer that do not meet the minimum points requirements killed by mistake must be tagged with an antlered deer tag. (See the deer section for more details on how to handle a mistake deer kill.) If you have previously used a tag for a prior legal kill and need that tag for a mistake kill, use the tag you have remaining that you were legally hunting with.

**Additional Regulations & Restrictions:** Many landowners (federal, state and local governments) open areas to hunting and trapping, but apply more restrictive regulations. An example is the Erie National Wildlife Refuge in Crawford County, where the use or possession of toxic shot is prohibited for shotgun hunting for all species, except turkeys and deer. Sportsmen are responsible for knowing rules and regulations on lands they intend to hunt or trap.

## STATE GAME LANDS SHOOTING RANGE REGULATIONS

- 1) Rifle and handgun ranges are open from 8 a.m. until sunset Monday through Saturday, and from noon to sunset Sundays, unless otherwise posted. (Exception: The Sunday immediately preceding the regular antlered and antlerless deer season and bear season the hours are 8 a.m. to sunset.)
  - 2) A range may be reserved for exclusive use by an organized group from January 1 through October 1. Arrangements must be made with the appropriate PGC region office at least 20 days in advance. An individual may not use the range when it has been reserved.
  - 3) An individual or organized group using a range is responsible for keeping the area clean and free of debris and may not discard, deposit or leave litter, except in refuse containers. Users shall remove targets from backboards.
  - 4) The Game Commission is not responsible for anyone injured on a range. An individual using a Game Commission range does so at his or her own risk and assumes all responsibility for injuries to a person or property.
  - 5) When more than one person is using a range, a range officer shall be designated.
  - 6) Individuals under the age of 16 may not use a range unless accompanied by a person 18 years of age or older.
  - 7) A PGC region director may close a range by the posting of signs.
- Prohibited Acts: At rifle and handgun ranges located on land under Game Commission ownership, except when authorized:
- 1) Possess a loaded firearm, except at an established shooting station on the firing line.
  - 2) Discharge a firearm, except from an established shooting station on the firing line at a paper target placed on a permanent backboard.
  - 3) Discharge armor-piercing, incendiary, explosive, tracer or multiple-projectile ammunition.
  - 4) Be intoxicated, use or possess alcohol or a controlled substance.
  - 5) Possess an automatic firearm.
  - 6) Possess, load or discharge a firearm that contains more than three rounds of single projectile ammunition, except at a PGC facility specifically designated as a handgun range an individual is permitted to load and discharge a handgun containing a maximum of six rounds of single projectile ammunition at any one time.
  - 7) Shoot clay birds anywhere except areas designated by the PGC Executive Director by signs stating that clay bird shooting is permitted.

## STATE GAME LANDS SHOOTING RANGE PERMITS

Permits are now required for individuals who do not possess a valid Pennsylvania hunting or furtaking license to use Game Lands shooting ranges, including designated clay bird shooting areas. Range permits will be issued to persons 16 years of age or older. A permitted person is allowed one guest. Permits must be in possession, but do not have to be displayed. Permits are \$30 and must be purchased by credit card through The Outdoor Shop on the Game Commission website, or at PGC region offices and Harrisburg headquarters. Permits are effective from July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014.