

# Big Game Regulations

## Lawful Arms & Ammunition

### DEER AND BEAR, REGULAR SEASONS

- Manually operated (pump, lever, bolt actions, single-shot) centerfire rifles, shotguns (shotguns do not have to be plugged when hunting deer, bears or elk) and handguns (revolvers or single-shots) with all-lead bullet or ball, or bullet designed to expand on impact;
- Muzzleloading long guns of any type, 44 caliber or larger, or a muzzleloading handgun 50 caliber or larger, and;
- Long, recurve, compound bows (minimum draw weight of 35 pounds) or crossbows (minimum 125-pound draw weight), with a broadhead that has an outside diameter or width of at least 7/8 of an inch with at least two cutting edges located on the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface, and may not exceed 3.25 inches in length. The use of buckshot is not legal, except in the Southeast Special Regulations Area.

### BEAR ARCHERY SEASON

- Long, recurve and compound bows (minimum draw weight of 35 pounds), or crossbows, with a legal broadhead (see broadhead stipulations for deer below).

### DEER ARCHERY SEASONS

- Long, recurve and compound bows (minimum draw weight of 35 pounds), and crossbows, and legal broadheads (an outside diameter or width of at least 7/8 of an inch with at least two cutting edges located on the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface, and may not exceed 3.25 inches in length). Magnifying scopes and sights such as red dot on crossbows can be used. Persons hunting deer in the archery seasons may not possess a firearm, except those individuals who have a License to Carry Firearms permit, and then only those firearms authorized by the permit (most sporting arms are not authorized). Muzzleloading firearms also can be carried by bowhunters during any muzzleloading season, providing the hunter has an archery license and a muzzleloader license and meets the fluorescent orange requirements of the muzzleloader season.

### BOW & ARROW EQUIPMENT DEFINITIONS

**Arrow** - A projectile shot from a bow with an overall length exceeding the brace height of the bow with fletching designed only for guidance at the aft end and a broadhead mounted on the fore-end. No electronic tracking device shall be part of or attached to the arrow. No device, material or system capable of causing damage or injury to the animal in excess of that inflicted by the cutting edges of the broadhead shall be part of or attached to any arrow. A projectile for a crossbow is known as a bolt.

**Bow** - A device for launching an arrow, which derives its propulsive energy solely from the bending and recovery of two limbs. The energy used to propel the arrow may not be derived from another source. These limitations shall not exclude the mechanical leverage advantage provided by eccentric wheels or cams so long as the energy stored in the bent limbs of the bow is the sole result of a single, continuous and direct pulling effort by the shooter. The bowstring must be drawn and released as a direct and conscious action by the shooter. Release shall be accomplished by either relaxing the tension of the fingers or triggering the release action of

### BOW & ARROW EQUIPMENT DEFINITIONS (CONTINUED)

a manually operated release aid.

**Broadhead** - Must have a fixed or mechanical tip having sharpened cutting edges consisting of metal or naturally occurring stone. The broadhead must have an outside diameter or width of at least 7/8 of an inch, and the length of the cutting surface may not exceed 3.25 inches in length.

**Crossbow** - Must have a draw weight not less than 125 pounds.

### MUZZLELOADER DEER SEASONS

**October Antlerless Deer Season** - Any single-barrel muzzleloading long gun with flintlock, in-line or percussion ignition 44 caliber or larger, or 50 caliber or larger handgun. Scope sights permitted.

**Flintlock Season** - Flintlock-ignition, single-barrel long guns manufactured prior to 1800, or a similar reproduction of an original muzzleloading single-barrel long gun 44 caliber or larger, or 50 caliber or larger handgun, using a single projectile. It is unlawful to use telescopic sights. Late-season flintlock hunters are permitted to take an antlered deer or an antlerless deer anywhere in the state with their unused antlered deer tag.

### FALL TURKEY SEASON

- Manually operated rifles and handguns, including rimfires;
- Manually operated and semi-automatic shotguns limited to no more than three shells in the chamber and magazine combined;
- Muzzleloading shotguns, rifles and handguns, and;
- Long, recurve, compound bows (minimum draw weight of 35 pounds) or crossbows with legal broadheads (see deer and bear section to the left). Single-projectile ammunition or shotshell pellets no larger than No. 4 lead, No. 2 steel or No. 4 of any other composition or alloy of nontoxic shot approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
- During any fall season in WMU 2B, as well as in Special Regulations Area county, Allegheny, only shotguns and long, recurve, compound bows or crossbows with broadheads of cutting-edge design are permitted.

### SPRING GOBBLER SEASON

- Manually operated and semi-automatic shotguns limited to no more than three rounds in the chamber and magazine combined;
- Muzzleloading shotguns of all types and gauges; and
- Long, recurve, compound bows (minimum draw weight of 35 pounds) or crossbows with legal broadheads (see deer and bear section). Shotgun fine shot pellets only, no larger than No. 4 lead, No. 2 steel or No. 4 of any other composition or alloy of nontoxic shot approved by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Rifle/shotgun combinations may be used if ammunition is confined to shotgun shells. Possessing or using single-projectile ammunition, rifles, handguns, dogs, electronic callers or live decoys is unlawful. It is unlawful to conduct drives for turkeys. Hunting by calling only. Hunting hours are one-half hour before sunrise until noon from the opening day through the third Saturday (including the Youth Spring Turkey Hunt), and then to one-half hour after sunset for the remainder of the season. Hunters are asked to be out of the woods by 1 p.m. when closing time is noon.

# Big Game Regulations

## ELK SEASON

- Manually operated centerfire rifles and handguns at least 27 caliber using all-lead projectiles or bullets of at least 130 grains designed to expand on impact;
- Shotguns at least 12-gauge;
- Muzzleloading firearms (including handguns) at least 50 caliber propelling a single projectile weighing at least 210 grains;
- Bow with a minimum draw weight of 45 pounds;
- Crossbows with a minimum draw weight of 125 pounds
- Any arrow or crossbow bolt with a broadhead that has an outside diameter or width of at least 1 inch with at least two cutting edges located on the same plane throughout the length of the cutting surface, and may not exceed 3.25 inches in length.

## Restrictions

### BEAR SEASON

It is unlawful to 1) kill a bear in a den; 2) use a radio to locate a bear to which a radio transmitter has been attached 3) use scents or lures.

### BLINDS

Blinds can be used for big game (see turkey section for specifics for blinds while turkey hunting), however, a minimum of 100 square inches of fluorescent orange material (orange alert band will suffice) must be displayed within 15 feet of the blind and visible in a 360-degree arc during the firearms deer, bear and elk seasons. This is in addition to wearing orange while in the blind.

### DOGS

It is unlawful to use dogs to hunt elk, bears, deer or spring turkey.

### ORGANIZED DRIVES

It is unlawful to drive or herd elk. For deer and bear, an unlicensed person who has never held a hunting license in Pennsylvania or any other state may participate in a drive for a properly licensed hunter providing the following requirements are met: The person remains in sight and close to a hunter at least 18 years of age; the unlicensed person does not possess any firearm, bow or other hunting device; and the person complies with requirements for wearing fluorescent orange. The ratio of licensed hunters to non-licensed hunters must not exceed 1:1.

### HUNTING PARTIES

It is unlawful to hunt deer, elk or bears in a party of more than 25 persons.

### TREE STANDS & BLINDS

It is unlawful while hunting or preparing to hunt to 1) damage any tree on public or private property by constructing a tree stand or using a portable tree stand or device to climb a tree; 2) use or occupy a tree stand that, when constructed, damages a tree. This does not apply to landowners constructing stands on their own property, or persons who have received written permission from a landowner to build or use a tree stand; 3) tree stands on state land can be placed out not more than two weeks before the first and must be removed no later than two weeks after the final deer season in that area. Placing a tree stand does not reserve the area for its owner; other hunters can hunt there. Tree stands and portable hunting blinds left on state game lands and other Hunter Access properties under the Game Commission's management now need to be conspicuously

### TREE STANDS & BLINDS (CONTINUED)

marked with a durable and legible identification tag that includes the owner's first and last name and legal home address, or bears the CID number that appears on the owner's hunting license or a number issued by the Game Commission to the stand or blind owner. Identification numbers can be obtained at The Outdoor Shop on the Game Commission's website.

### SHOOTING AT RANDOM

During the open seasons for deer and bears, it is unlawful to shoot at any target other than legal game. Target shooting is lawful only when done: 1) on property owned by the shooter or by a guest of the property owner; 2) within 200 yards of a camp or headquarters where the shooter is either quartered or an invited guest; 3) at an established shooting range. The target must be protected by a natural or artificial barrier so that the bullet or arrow cannot travel more than 15 yards beyond it.

## Reporting Big Game Harvests

Each hunter who harvests a deer or turkey must report it to the Game Commission within 10 days (five days for turkeys or deer taken by mentored hunters, or persons required to make a homemade tag) by sending in a postage-paid report card supplied in this digest, or making a report online or over the phone. Be sure to read report cards thoroughly before filling out. Use one report card per animal harvested. For second-license turkey and DMAP antlerless deer, where reporting is required regardless of harvest success, be sure to check the "no harvest" box if no game is harvested. Hunters also can report their big-game harvests online at the agency's website: [www.pgc.pa.gov](http://www.pgc.pa.gov) by following instructions given there. Hunters and trappers also can report their deer, turkey, bobcat, fisher and other harvests over the telephone through the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) system by calling 1-855-PAHUNT1 (1-855-724-8681). Hunters will need to have their license and their copy of the carcass tags attached to harvested animals available to complete the call; along with the data captured for particular animals, such as number of points or beard length.

Hunters should record the confirmation number supplied by the IVR system for each animal reported. Harvests submitted through the IVR system will be available for review on the Game Commission's Internet harvest reporting site; go to [www.pgc.pa.gov](http://www.pgc.pa.gov) and follow the link labeled "Report Your Harvest." Within 24 hours, each person who harvests a bear or elk must take the animal, along with hunting license and bear or elk license, to a Game Commission check station for examination. Bear check stations are maintained at Game Commission offices and at other locations listed elsewhere in this digest. The Elk Check Station is located at the Old Benezette School House in Elk County located on the north side of Route 555 in Benezette, on the west side of Trout Run.

## Transporting Big Game

Deer, bear, elk and turkey under transport, including those taken outside of Pennsylvania, must have an appropriate tag completed and attached. Unmarked parts of a big-game carcass taken in Pennsylvania may be transported. Upon request of any Game Commission law-enforcement officer, the name and address of the person who killed the animal must be furnished, along with other information necessary to properly establish legal possession.

# Big Game Regulations

## Mistake Kill

Any person who by accident or mistake kills any deer (an antlerless deer in mistake for an antlered deer, an antlered deer in mistake for an antlerless deer, or an antlered deer that does not meet required antler restrictions) shall immediately, but no later than 24 hours after the kill, deliver and surrender the entire carcass, less entrails, to any Game Commission officer in the county in which it is killed and make a written, sworn statement explaining when, where and how the accident or mistake occurred. Each licensed person who kills any deer shall immediately, and before moving the carcass, fully complete the proper tag in compliance with printed instructions and attach only the tag to the deer's ear. The deer will be turned in to the officer, restitution of \$25 for each mistake deer shall be paid, and the hunter will be issued another tag to pursue another deer. Failure to report and deliver a deer killed by accident or mistake is punishable with a fine up to \$1,500 and license revocation. For information on where to deliver a deer killed by accident or mistake, or with information about anyone who has failed to report a deer killed by accident or mistake, contact the Game Commission region office servicing the area.

## Tagging Big Game

Hunters who harvest a deer, bear, elk or turkey must follow instructions printed on tags supplied with licenses. Big game must be tagged immediately after harvest and before carcass is moved. The tag must be attached to the ear of a deer or bear, or the body of an elk and remain attached until the animal is processed for consumption or prepared for mounting. Turkey tags must be attached to the bird's leg.

When multiple harvests of deer per day are authorized, only one deer at a time may be taken. Before attempting to take an additional deer, the first deer shall be lawfully tagged (This doesn't apply in the Special Regulations Areas).

Tagging requirements for persons authorized to hunt without a license are identical, except that a homemade tag must be used listing the hunter's name, address, game harvested and date, time, WMU, county and township where it was taken.

It is unlawful to possess an expired, fulfilled, revoked, suspended or invalid big-game harvest tag or hunting license while engaged in hunting or trapping activities.

## Unfit for Consumption

Any person who legally harvests any big-game animal and discovers the flesh was unfit for human consumption at the time of harvest shall, within 12 hours following the discovery, deliver the entire carcass, less entrails, but including the head and hide, to any Game Commission officer who, being satisfied that the game was unfit for human consumption at the time of harvest, shall issue written authorization to the person to harvest a second animal or bird of the same species during the unexpired portion of the season for that species.

## FERAL SWINE

Feral swine have no place in Pennsylvania. They pose a very real threat to native Pennsylvania wildlife and wildlife habitats. Not only do they damage wildlife habitats, they will kill birds, the young of many mammals, and transmit a host of dangerous diseases. Because they have no natural predators, they can live anywhere, and reproduce rapidly, and are difficult to control in the best circumstances.

In some areas of the state, protection may be removed from feral swine by an executive order of the director; however, to increase the efficiency of eradication efforts, protection may be applied to townships or counties where eradication trapping operations are being actively conducted. If you think you may encounter a feral swine, refer to the Game Commission's website, [www.pgc.pa.gov](http://www.pgc.pa.gov), for specific details on townships or counties that may have restrictions on incidental shooting of feral swine.

Feral swine may be hunted during lawful daylight hunting hours, except Sundays, with a hunting or furtaker license. However, feral swine may be taken from the first day to the last day inclusive of any big-game season only by persons lawfully engaged in hunting big game who have a valid tag. Those hunting feral swine with a firearm are required at all times to wear 250 square inches of fluorescent orange material on the head, chest and back combined.

Firearm and archery equipment is restricted to lawful arms and ammunition identified in the Game & Wildlife Code Sec. 2308. If you kill a feral swine, contact the nearest region office within 24 hours, so samples can be collected for disease testing.

## STATE FORESTS & STATE PARKS

Firearms and archery equipment may be uncased only in designated hunting areas during the seasons state recreation areas are open to hunting.

In park areas not open to hunting, or during closed hunting seasons, firearms and archery equipment must be kept in the owner's car, trailer or camp.

Hunting, trapping, pursuing or intentionally disturbing wildlife in state parks is prohibited, except that hunting and trapping by licensed hunters and furtakers is permitted in designated areas in compliance with Game Commission regulations. Trapping may be permitted in areas not designated for hunting, but only upon written approval, which is granted only when effective wildlife administration of the area requires trapping.

Dog training is permitted from the day following Labor Day through March 31 in designated hunting areas. Groundhog hunting is prohibited in state parks.

The Bureau of Forestry welcomes hunters and trappers to more than 2 million acres of state forests. Only small areas around occupied buildings are posted. Overnight camping is permitted only in areas designated by the district forester.

Required permits are available from local forestry offices. For more information about hunting on state parks, contact the Bureau of State Parks, 1-888-PA-PARKS, visit [www.dcnr.state.pa.us](http://www.dcnr.state.pa.us), or write State Parks, 8th Floor, P.O. Box 8551, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8551, or call your nearest state park.

For more information or maps concerning hunting and recreational activities on state forests, contact the Bureau of Forestry, 6th Floor, P.O. Box 8552, Harrisburg, PA 17105-8552. Phone: 717-783-7941, or your nearest forestry office.