

How Calendar Shifts Affect Spring Gobbler Seasons

Mary Jo Casalena, Wild Turkey Biologist, June 2013

The regular spring gobbler season is set according to two major guidelines, in accordance with the Pennsylvania Wild Turkey Management Plan (2006-2015): 1) The season opens the Saturday closest to May 1 to coincide with the average peak of turkey nest incubation, and 2) The season includes 5 Saturdays to maximize hunting opportunity while guarding against population decline. In addition, in 2011 the Board of Commissioners approved extending the season to May 31.

To meet these guidelines, the opening date and season length change from year to year according to calendar shifts – sometimes by several days from one year to the next. The 2014 season is an example of this type of multi-day calendar shift – it will open May 3, as opposed to April 27 in 2013. This is simply due to May 1 falling on a Thursday in 2014, and the Saturday closest to May 1 is May 3. Despite the difference in opening dates between the 2013 and 2014 seasons, both contain 5 Saturdays as specified by the management plan. Opening the 2014 season on Saturday, April 26 would have diverged from the management plan by not opening the Saturday closest to May 1 and by producing a 5-week, 6-Saturday season, which could result in an overharvest of adult gobblers. Looking ahead to future calendars, note that the management plan calls for a 2015 spring gobbler season from May 2 to May 30 (May 31 falls on a Sunday) for the same reasons as above. For more information on the biological considerations of setting the spring turkey season see [“How We Set Spring Turkey Seasons”](#).