

# General Hunting Regulations

## Baiting

Baiting is allowed in the Southeast Special Regulations Area by permit only. Elsewhere in the state, 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.

## 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, mailboxes 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.

## Decoys

Decoys simulating food – such as artificial corn to attract turkeys or waterfowl – are considered artificial bait and are illegal. The use of living decoys is prohibited for all hunting and trapping. Electronic crow decoys can be used solely for hunting crows. Electronic decoys can now be used for waterfowl hunting, and electronic dove decoys can be used solely for hunting doves.

## Disturbance of Game or Wildlife

It is unlawful for any person to drive or disturb game or wildlife except while engaged in lawful hunting or trapping. It is unlawful to dig out or take any wild bird or animal from its den or place of refuge.

## Drugs & Alcohol

It is unlawful to hunt wildlife while under the influence of controlled substances or alcohol.

## Electronic Devices

It is unlawful to hunt with any electronic contrivance or device, but following are exceptions: Electronic callers to hunt bobcats, coyotes, foxes, raccoons and crows, and snow geese in the conservation season can be used. 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. 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 can be used. Portable, two-way radios and cellphones 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 not only is 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. 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. 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 can be used. Electronic rangefinders, including handheld devices and those contained within a scope or archery sight can be used. This authorization may not be construed to permit a device that emits any light beam, infrared beam, ultraviolet light beam, radio beam, thermal beam, ultrasonic beam, particle beam or other beam that is visible outside of the device or on the target. Electronic devices used for locating dogs while training and hunting are permitted. Electronically heated scent or lure dispensers, and electronic devices that distribute ozone gas for scent-control purposes can now be used.

## Field Possession Limits

It is unlawful on the opening day of a hunting season to 1) possess more than the daily limit; 2) after the second day possess more game than may be legally taken in three 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.

## Firearms – Handguns

A Sportsman's Firearms Permit or a License to Carry Firearms permit is required to carry a handgun, or have it 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.

## Firearms – Loaded in 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 in, on or against any motor vehicle (or any attachments to the 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 loaded muzzleloader or crossbow 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. There is no restriction on magazine capacity for semiautomatic rifles used to hunt small game and furbearers.

# General Hunting Regulations

## Firearms & Devices — Unlawful & Permitted

It is unlawful to hunt with automatic firearms. Semiautomatic (autoloading) **rifles**, and air- or gas-operated rifles and manually operated handguns may be used for hunting small game and furbearers. Semiautomatic rifles **may not** be used for hunting deer, bear, turkey or elk. Hunting with semiautomatic handguns is prohibited. Semiautomatic centerfire shotguns that propel single-projectile ammunition can now be used while hunting deer, bear and elk.

## Fluorescent Orange

Those hunting waterfowl, furbearers (some exceptions with coyotes), doves, spring turkeys or crows, and hunters participating in the after-Christmas flintlock muzzleloader deer season, are not required to wear fluorescent orange. Archery hunters also carrying a muzzleloader during any muzzleloader season must meet the fluorescent orange requirements for the muzzleloader season. See the two-page Fluorescent Orange Requirements section in this digest for more information.

## 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 Game Commission officer, complete in duplicate and return them to the officer, or mail to the Game Commission's 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.

## License Information

It is unlawful to hunt or trap wildlife without first obtaining the required hunting or furtaker licenses. All hunters should be sure 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. It's unlawful to carry the license of another person while hunting, or in transit to or from hunting. The possession of expired, fulfilled, revoked, suspended or invalid licenses or harvest tags while hunting or trapping also is unlawful. While afield, in addition to their licenses, hunters 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.

## 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.

## Lures & Scents

Except in CWD Disease Management Areas, 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 is legal, as well as electronically heated scent or lure dispensers, with legal scents and lures, and electronic devices that distribute ozone gas for scent-control purposes. The use of scents or lures while hunting bears is prohibited.

## 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 are killed by mistake and do not meet the minimum points requirements must be tagged with an antlered deer tag. (See the big-game regulations 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 entitled you to hunt legally.

## 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.

## Road-killed 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 or "put out of its misery" any injured wildlife; again, call the region office. It is unlawful to give to another person the whole or edible parts of a deer killed on a highway. It is not lawful to keep, for example, antlers from road-killed deer or the beard or spurs from a road-killed 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. It is unlawful to take a road-killed deer into possession to be used to bait coyotes. Holders of a valid furtaker 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. A fee will be charged to possess a road-killed furbearer picked up during the closed season.

## Road Hunting

It is unlawful to 1) hunt from a vehicle; 2) aid or assist another while hunting from a vehicle; 3) shoot at wildlife on a public road or right-of-way open to public travel; 4) shoot across a road unless the line of fire is high enough to preclude any danger to road users; and 5) 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 may never be placed in, on or against any motor vehicle, its trailer or other attachments, at any time.**

# General Hunting Regulations

## 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, farmhouse 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, also is prohibited. It is unlawful to discharge a firearm within 150 yards of a Game Commission vehicle if its 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.

## Spotlighting Wildlife

It is unlawful to 1) spotlight wildlife while in possession of a firearm, bow and arrow, or other device capable of killing wildlife. Individuals who have a License to Carry Firearms permit are excepted, but only regarding their carrying of firearms authorized by the permit. Most sporting arms are not authorized. 2) spotlight wildlife during the regular firearms deer seasons, including those days separating the seasons, as well as any late extended firearms deer seasons in the Special Regulations Area counties; 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 may not use a flashlight or spotlight that projects a laser light beam.

## Sunday Hunting

It is unlawful to hunt wildlife, except foxes, crows and coyotes, on Sundays.

## Tracking Dogs

Dogs are not permitted to hunt big game, except for turkeys during the fall. **Leashed** tracking dogs can be used to track a white-tailed deer, bear or elk to recover an animal that has been legally killed or wounded during any open season for deer, bear or elk. No permit is required. The tracker cannot dispatch game that was wounded and will be tagged by another hunter. The tracker must be properly licensed for the animal being tracked. The tracker must abide by hunting hours and wear the required amount of fluorescent orange clothing for the season. All laws pertaining to the taking of game apply. Trackers cannot charge for their services on state game lands. Permission is needed before entering private property.

## 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. Hunters and trappers are responsible for knowing rules and regulations on lands they intend to hunt or trap.

## DOG TRAINING REGULATIONS

**All State Game Lands are closed to all dog-training activities from the Monday prior to the start of the youth pheasant season until the opening day of the statewide pheasant season.** On Wild Pheasant Recovery Areas, dog training is prohibited from March 1 through July 31 each year.

- There is no closed season for training dogs, see exceptions above.
- A hunting or furtaker license is not required for dog training.
- Dogs may not be trained on private land on Sunday without the landowner's permission.
- A person may not carry a rifle, shotgun or bow and arrows while training dogs.
- Dogs are not permitted to injure or kill wildlife. Owners are liable for any wildlife killed or injured by dogs. When training dogs, hunters need to be aware of and avoid areas, especially wetlands, where birds are nesting.
- All hunters are urged to respect dog owners and their sport. Dogs can be attracted by electronic calling devices, as well as turkey calls. Be sure of your target. While the law requires dogs to be under the control of their owner or handler at all times, dogs often are not within sight of their handler while tracking game. Dogs cannot read no-trespassing signs and do not heed fences. If you see a hunting dog running or barking, its handler probably isn't far behind. It is unlawful for dogs to chase or pursue big game, however, the Game Commission recommends that dogs not be shot unless they are actually in the act of attacking a big-game animal and there is no other option. If you see a dog or dogs chasing any deer, bear, elk

or turkey, please contact the Game Commission and report the violation. Hunting-dog owners have significant amounts of time and money invested in their dogs, and they consider their dogs hunting partners and friends. Please do not shoot hunting dogs just because you do not immediately see their handler.

- There are appropriate penalties in the Game and Wildlife Code to deter owners from permitting their dogs to chase big game. If you shoot a dog that is not attacking a big-game animal you could be subject to prosecution under the Crimes Code as a misdemeanor offense, with penalties of up to \$5,000 and two years imprisonment, as well as civil liability for the restitution of the dog. Any person who destroys a dog (licensed or unlicensed) attacking a big-game animal must report the incident to the dog's owner or a Game Commission officer within 48 hours, as required by law.

- Electronic devices may be used for locating dogs while training or hunting, including such devices as e-collars, radio-telemetry dog tracking systems and beeper collars.
- In areas that are identified as woodcock habitat management areas, dogs are prohibited for any reason from April 1 to July 15.

**Dogs should be handled in a safe and humane manner, with adequate consideration to temperature and ventilation in transportation cages and compartments.**