



PENNSYLVANIA GAME COMMISSION



Managed Dove Fields

The Game Commission maintains six region offices.

Northwest Region

Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Jefferson, Lawrence, Mercer, Venango and Warren counties

814-432-3187

Southwest Region

Allegheny, Armstrong, Beaver, Cambria, Fayette, Greene, Indiana, Somerset, Washington and Westmoreland counties

724-238-9523

Northcentral Region

Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Lycoming, McKean, Potter, Tioga and Union counties

570-398-4744

Southcentral Region

Adams, Bedford, Blair, Cumberland, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Mifflin, Perry, Snyder and York counties

814-643-1831

Northeast Region

Bradford, Carbon, Columbia, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Montour, Northumberland, Pike, Sullivan, Susquehanna, Wayne and Wyoming counties

570-675-1143

Southeast Region

Berks, Bucks, Chester, Dauphin, Delaware, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Montgomery, Northampton, Philadelphia and Schuylkill counties

610-926-3136

Pennsylvania Game Commission

State Headquarters

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What you need to know about this hunting opportunity.

Dove Hunting & Managed Dove Fields

Mourning doves and other migratory birds are a national resource protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and state law. The mourning dove is the most hunted migratory game bird in North America, and dove hunting is a popular sport in many parts of the country. Federal and state laws ensure that these birds continue to thrive.

During 2018, Pennsylvania adopted regulatory changes made by the federal government in 1999 that define key terms for hunters and landowners with respect to baiting and clarify conditions under which a person may hunt doves and other migratory game birds. The goal of these rules is not to regulate farming, but to ensure that the public understands those practices that are compatible with dove hunting and those that are not.

As a hunter or land manager, it is your responsibility to know and obey all federal and state laws that govern recreational hunting. This pamphlet reviews federal and state law concerning baiting and summarizes other federal and state regulations for dove hunting.

Please remember that federal and state law are more restrictive for waterfowl hunting than for dove hunting.



Manipulation of Crops and Other Vegetation

Agricultural crops and natural vegetation may be manipulated to improve dove hunting. Manipulation means the alteration of agricultural crops or natural vegetation by activities such as mowing, shredding, discing, rolling, chopping, trampling, flattening, burning, or herbicide treatments. Manipulation does not include the distributing or scattering of seeds, grains, or other feed after removal from or storage on the field where grown. Manipulation does not include the placement of grain in piles or other artificial concentrations.

You may hunt doves over manipulated grain crops, such as wheat, milo, sorghum, millet, sunflower, and buckwheat. You should be aware that although you can hunt doves over manipulated agricultural crops, **you cannot hunt waterfowl or other wildlife species over manipulated agricultural crops** except after the field has been subject to a normal harvest and removal of grain recognized as a normal agricultural process. A managed dove field, which has had a crop manipulated, is off limits to hunting of all other species until 30 days after the manipulated grain and/or its residue is removed from the field.

Agricultural activities other than planting or harvesting also scatter grain or other feed in agricultural areas. You can hunt doves in such areas provided the agricultural operation involved is a normal agricultural practice. A normal agricultural planting is a planting undertaken for the purpose of producing or gathering a crop. Normal plantings do not involve the placement of grain in piles or other concentrations. You cannot, however, hunt in an area where grain, salt, or other feed has been placed to improve dove hunting.

DIY Dove Field Management

Doves feed on seeds from native and cultivated plants and need bare ground to maneuver. Heavy grass thatch is a deterrent and should be removed for best results. Pokeweed, ragweed, and foxtail often found in abandoned fields, provide a great native food source. Spur these plants from the seedbank by disking in fall or winter. Fallow strips, with bare ground and a native seed source, are a great compliment between crop plantings.

Millet, buckwheat, sorghum, and sunflower are some of the best crop food sources for doves.

Time your planting so you have mature seeds prior to September 1. Sunflowers typically take 120 days to mature so they should go in the ground in late April or early May, while millet and buckwheat can be planted a little later. Consider planting winter wheat in late fall as an early seed source for the following year. Regardless of the field composition, doves need seeds to be available on relatively bare ground, which will require some type of soil manipulation in most cases.

The Hunter's Responsibility

As a hunter, you are responsible for determining whether or not a field is baited. Before hunting, you should:

- Familiarize yourself with federal and state migratory game bird hunting regulations.
- Ask the landowner, your host or guide, and your hunting partners if the area has been baited.
- Suspect the presence of bait if you see doves feeding in unusual concentrations or displaying a lack of caution.
- Look for grain or other feed in the area. Where crops have been manipulated or harvested, look for the presence of grain that may not be related to the manipulation or harvest.
- Look closely for seed and grain on prepared agricultural fields. Is it present solely as the result of a normal agricultural planting or a planting for agricultural soil erosion control? Know what planting, harvesting, and other agricultural practices are recommended for the areas that you hunt.
- Abandon the hunt if you find grain or feed in an area and are uncertain about why it is there.
- Remember that the rules for hunting doves, waterfowl, and other species are **not** the same. Additional restrictions apply to the hunting of waterfowl and other species.



Overview of Other Regulations

Other federal and state regulations apply to hunting doves and other migratory game birds, including the following:

Licenses required: A hunting license or mentored youth permit and migratory game bird license (HIP) are required to hunt doves in Pennsylvania.

Unplugged shotguns: You cannot hunt migratory game birds with a shotgun that can hold more than three shells, unless you plug it with a one-piece filler that cannot be removed without disassembling the gun.

Motorized vehicles: You cannot hunt migratory game birds from or by means, aid, or use of any motor vehicle, motor-driven land conveyance, or aircraft.

Hunting hours: Hunting hours for migratory birds, including doves, in Pennsylvania are one half hour before sunrise to sunset. The noon start time for the early dove season has been eliminated.

Closed season: You cannot hunt migratory game birds during the closed season. Check the current Hunting & Trapping Digest for season dates.

Daily bag limit: You can take only one daily bag limit in any one day. The daily bag limit for doves in Pennsylvania is 15.

Wanton waste: You must make a reasonable effort to retrieve all doves that you kill or cripple and keep these birds in your actual custody while in the field. You must immediately kill any wounded birds that you retrieve and count those birds toward your daily bag limit. Your birds must remain in your possession while in the field.

Tagging: You cannot put or leave migratory game birds at any place or in the custody of another person unless you tag the birds with your signature, address, number of birds identified by species, and the date you killed them.

Protected birds: federal and state laws prohibit the killing of non-game migratory birds. Examples of protected birds that you may encounter while dove hunting include songbirds, eagles, hawks, owls, vultures, killdeer, kestrels, and woodpeckers.