

BY TRAVIS LAU

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Joe Kosack

S H O U L D E R S

NO ARMS

During the archery deer season's overlap with the weeklong October muzzleloader deer season, a properly licensed hunter lawfully can carry both a bow and an inline, and use either to take deer.

The muzzleloader can be used for longer-range shots at antlerless deer, with the bow or crossbow providing insurance a quality chance at a close-range buck won't be missed.

It sounds simple enough, but the topic often leads to questions – especially this year, when the October muzzleloader and special firearms seasons are open statewide to both deer hunters and bear hunters. The same rules do not apply to deer hunters and bear hunters.

So let's take a look at what the law provides.

Generally speaking, Pennsylvania hunters taking part in an archery season are prohibited from possessing firearms while hunting. There are two exceptions to this law. Citizens who are licensed to carry firearms may possess their permitted firearms while bowhunting. And archery deer hunters carrying bows or crossbows also may possess muzzle-

loading firearms during overlaps of early archery and muzzleloader deer seasons, as well as the late archery and flintlock deer seasons.

Only hunters who are properly licensed to take deer with both a bow and muzzleloader may carry both arms afield. That means a hunter needs archery and muzzleloader licenses, as well as a general license. Because the October muzzleloader deer season is open only to antlerless deer hunting, the hunter needs at least one antlerless deer license or Deer Management Assistance Program permit.

And chances are, the hunter will have a valid antlered deer tag, as well, since the opportunity to take a buck seems the primary motivation for carrying both arms in October.

When carrying two arms, hunters must meet whichever fluorescent orange requirement is greater. While archery deer hunters no longer are required to wear fluorescent orange during overlaps with firearms deer or turkey seasons, hunters carrying both a bow and muzzleloader must adhere to the orange requirement for muzzleloader hunters – 250 square



THE ARCHERY DEER HUNTING EXCEPTION

inches of orange on the head, chest and back combined, visible from 360 degrees, and worn at all times while hunting.

Even if a buck is within bow range, a hunter possessing both a muzzleloader and bow may not remove any of the required orange.

Firearms deer and bear hunters in blinds not only must wear 250 square inches of orange material at all times, including while in the blind, they must post at least 100 square inches of orange, visible from 360 degrees, within 15 feet of the blind. And, except in the state's Special Regulations Areas, a hunter harvesting a deer with either arm is required to tag it immediately before continuing to hunt. Big game must be tagged in accordance with the instructions printed on the tag. For deer, the tag must be completed and attached to the ear. And the animal must be tagged before the carcass is moved.

DEER AND ONLY DEER

It's important to take note, too, that the exception that allows carrying a muzzleloader while bowhunting applies only to deer hunters.

While muzzleloader and special firearms bear seasons that mirror with the muzzleloader and special firearms deer

seasons are being held this year – all within the statewide archery deer season – bowhunters are not permitted by law to possess a muzzleloader to hunt bears.

That's not to say the law won't someday change, but this October, hunters pursuing bears with muzzleloaders must leave any archery tackle behind, even if they have a valid archery license and deer tag, in addition to their bear license.

Participants in the special firearms deer and bear seasons are permitted to use other approved sporting arms. So those hunters technically could carry both arms, but they could use them only to take antlerless deer or bears.

Otherwise, they're subject to the prohibition on possessing firearms while archery deer hunting.

While many bowhunters who also use muzzleloaders likely prefer to avoid the hassle of carrying both arms afield during overlapping deer seasons, others undoubtedly take advantage of the opportunity to expand their deer-hunting options within these windows.

And whether a big doe steps into a clearing 70 yards out, or a shooter buck picks up a trail that leads past their tree stand, they'll be ready for whatever the hunt provides. **GN**

COVER PAINTING BY DOUG PIFER

"Where in the world were you when I was in my tree stand with my bow," you mumble begrudgingly to yourself, as this bruiser steps out of the brilliant October foliage, 20 yards away, seemingly out of nowhere and catching you completely by surprise. It's the irony of ironies, as the scoped inline you're carrying is useless now for this buck during the antlerless-only October muzzleloader season. Maybe you'll cross paths again when the rut kicks in, and by then, with luck, you will have filled an antlerless tag.

