

# What’s new for 2023 from the MnDNR

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**Crossbows**  
Hunters who purchase an archery deer license may take deer with a crossbow throughout the archery deer season. Archery hunters may be asked at registration if they harvested their deer with a crossbow or vertical bow.

People who purchase a spring archery wild turkey license may take wild turkeys with a crossbow throughout the spring archery wild turkey season.

Crossbows are allowed during the fall wild turkey and bear seasons.

**Blaze orange requirements**  
A person in a fabric or synthetic ground blind on public land must have a blaze orange safety covering on top of the blind that is visible from all directions or a patch made of blaze or-

ange material that is at least 144 square inches (12x12 inches) on each side of the blind. This regulation applies year-round on all public land.

**Deer hunting**  
• Portable deer stands may be left overnight in certain wildlife management areas in the northwest.

- A licensed hunter who lawfully harvests an escaped farmed deer or elk is not liable to the owner, but they must notify the DNR within 24 hours. If you harvest a deer or elk with ear tags or other identification, contact a conservation officer.

- Youth may not tag antlerless deer or legal bucks taken by another individual.

The definition of muzzle-

loader has changed. Muzzleloaders that are loaded from the muzzle but charged from the breech may be used during the muzzleloader deer season. The previous definition required muzzleloaders to be both loaded and charged from the muzzle.

**Chronic wasting disease**  
CWO testing is available for hunters statewide.

Mandatory CWD testing will be in effect for the opening weekend of Firearms A season in all CWD surveillance and management zones. This includes several new CWD areas and several areas where sampling was voluntary in 2022.

New areas where CWD sampling is mandatory this year include DPAs 101, 201, 256, 257, 260, 262, 263, 265 and 268 in northwest Minnesota, DPAs 259 and 287 (Itasca State Park) in north central Minnesota, and DPAs 233, 293, 341 and 342 in southeast Minnesota.

Deer permit areas 343 and 344 have been added to the southeast CWD management zone and are re-numbered 643 and 644.

- A new OND management zone, deer permit area 684 (formerly DPA 184), was added near Bemidji in response to two positive deer detected during fall 2022.

• After three years of sampling with no additional positives, sampling will be discontinued in DPAs 157, 159, 213, 225, and 273.

## Hunting Myths

By Tom Dickson, DNR information officer

If you don't hunt, you might wonder what's so appealing about this activity. Why, for example, would anyone sit for hours in a chilly duck blind? Or trudge mile after mile through soggy cattail sloughs? And what's the thrill in trying to kill an animal, anyway? If hunters want to be outdoors and see animals, can't they just watch wildlife without shooting them?

Hunting, with a half-million Minnesota participants, must certainly stir the curiosity of those who don't take part.

Why someone hunts is a personal matter. Many do it to spend time outdoors with friends or family. Others hunt to continue a tradition passed down from their parents and grandparents. Some go for the satisfaction of providing their own meat or the challenge of outwitting a wild animal. Many hunt simply because they feel an urge to do so. As environmentalist and hunter Aldo Leopold put it, "the instinct that finds delight in the sight and pursuit of game is bred into the very fiber of the race."

It's hard to generalize

what hunters are doing when they go afield each fall. But it is possible to explain what hunters are not doing, and to shed light on some aspects of hunting that might puzzle those who don't participate. Hunters aren't killing animals needlessly.

People who say there's no need to kill animals for meat when it can be bought in a grocery store don't understand how food happens: Whether someone eats venison or beef, a big brown-eyed mammal has to die first. The animal doesn't care whether you pay someone else to kill it or you do it yourself.

Of course, vegetarians don't kill animals. Or do they? Most vegetable production is done at the expense of wild creatures, either by converting wildlife habitat to cropland or requiring the application of chemical pesticides and fertilizers. Soybeans and corn, for example, are often grown on wetlands that have been drained and plowed. Without a place to nest, a hen mallard doesn't die, but she doesn't raise any young, either.

1. Hunters aren't being cruel to wild animals.

Most wild animals don't pass away in comfort, sedated by veterinary medication. They usually die a violent, agonizing death. Though a hunter's bullet or arrow can cause a wild animal pain and trauma, such a death is no worse than the other ways wildlife perish. A deer not shot eventually will be killed by a car, predator, exposure, or starvation. An old, weakened pheasant doesn't die in its sleep. It gets caught by a hawk and eaten.

Of course, hunters don't do individual wild animals any favors by killing them, but they also don't do anything unnaturally cruel.

2. Hunters aren't dangerous, inept, or trigger-happy.

Hunting would seem more prone to accidents and fatalities than outdoor activities that don't use firearms. Not so. According to National Safety Council statistics, far more people per 100,000 participants are injured while bicycling or playing baseball than while hunting. And the Council's most recent statistics show that while roughly 100 people die nationwide in hunting accidents each year, more than 1,500 die in swimming-related incidents.

One reason for hunting's safety record: Most

states require young hunters to pass a firearms safety course. In Minnesota alone, 4,000 volunteer instructors give firearms safety training to 20,000 young hunters each year.

Just as they handle their gun cautiously, so do most hunters strive to kill game as cleanly as possible. Hunters practice their marksmanship, study wildlife behavior and biology, and take pains to follow a wounded animal to ensure any suffering ends quickly.

As do all activities, hunting has its share of scofflaws. But most hunters obey the law and act ethically. To nab the wrongdoers among them, hunters created Turn In Poachers, a nonprofit organization that offers rewards for information leading to the arrest of fish and game law violators.

3. Hunters aren't harming wildlife populations.

Hunters see to that out of self-interest. That's why they support state and federal conservation agencies limiting seasons to just a few weeks or months a year, limiting the number of animals they kill, and placing restrictions on killing females of some species. These regulations help ensure that wildlife populations stay healthy. They also make the pursuit of game more difficult, requiring hunters to use their wits, patience, and hunting skills.

4. Hunters aren't using non-hunters' tax dollars.

Hunters pay their own way, and then some. Minnesota hunters fund almost all Department of Natural Resources habitat acquisition and wildlife research with their license fees and a federal excise tax on hunting equipment. In addition, their financial support pays to improve populations of non-game wildlife. Wetland destruction has wiped out the habitats of many bird species, causing their numbers to decline. Were it not for wetlands bought and improved with state and federal waterfowl stamp revenue and with the contributions of hunting conservation organizations, hunters and others who like to watch wildlife would today see fewer marsh wrens, pied-billed grebes, Forster's terns, and other wetland birds. These are some things that hunters aren't doing.

What I suspect most are doing – if they hunt for the reasons I do – is fulfilling a need to be part of the natural world that observation alone can't satisfy.

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