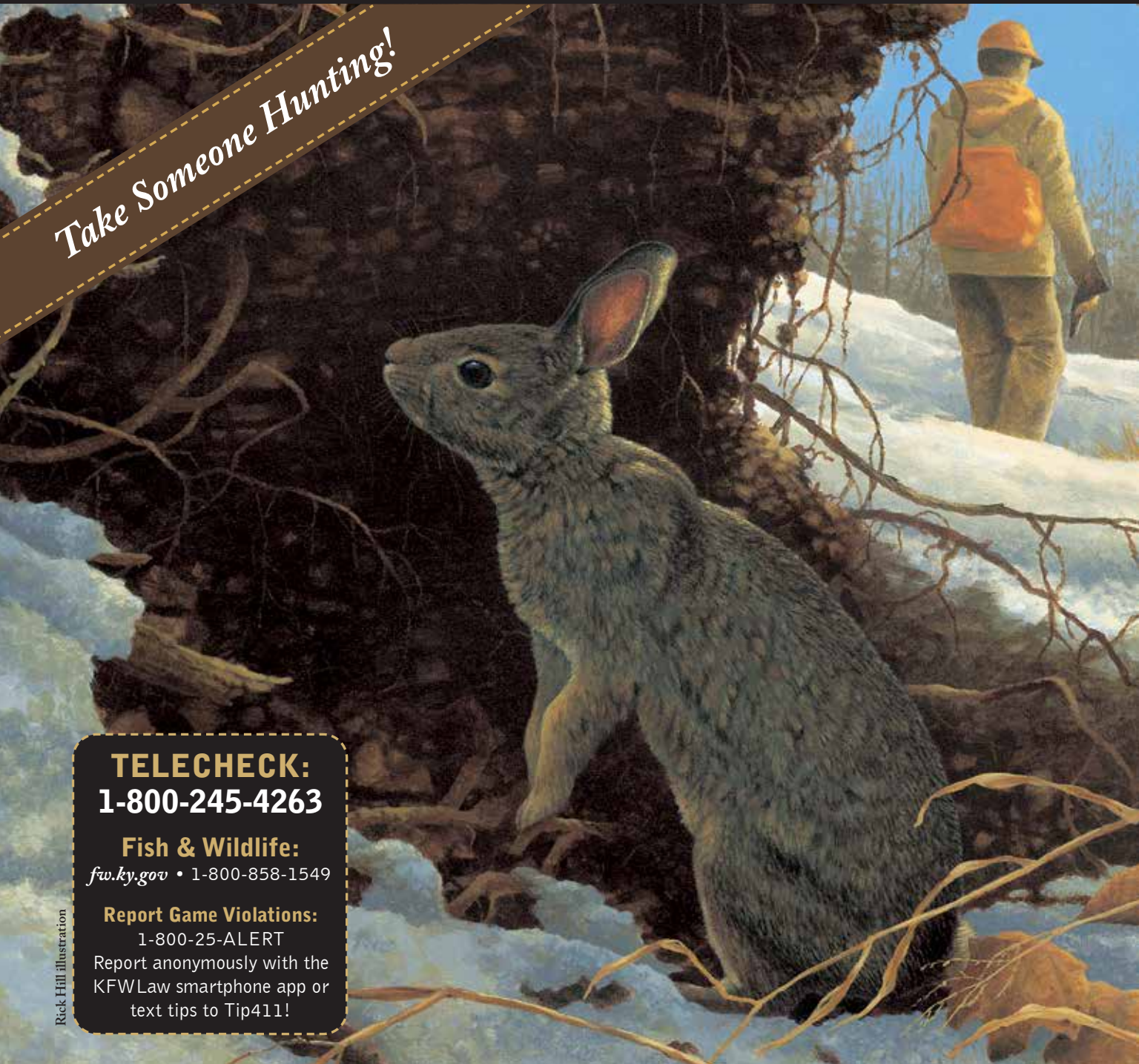




KENTUCKY HUNTING & TRAPPING GUIDE

Regulations Summary • AUGUST 2026 – MARCH 2027



Take Someone Hunting!

TELECHECK:
1-800-245-4263

Fish & Wildlife:
fw.ky.gov • 1-800-858-1549

Report Game Violations:
1-800-25-ALERT
Report anonymously with the
KFWLaw smartphone app or
text tips to Tip411!

Rock Hill illustration

KENTUCKY DEPARTMENT OF FISH & WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Serving People, Conserving Fish & Wildlife



Commonwealth of Kentucky

Andy Beshear, Governor

FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION (July 2026)

1st District: Jay Smith, Paducah
2nd District: Jeff Raymer, Morgantown
3rd District: Matthew Rhodes, Prospect
4th District: Greg Cecil, Munfordville
5th District: Josh Cummins, Owenton
6th District: Kenton Bottoms, Lawrenceburg
7th District: Chuck Meade, Staffordsville
8th District: Fred Shortridge, Mount Sterling
9th District: Walter Robertson, Russell Springs

Fish, wildlife and boating regulations are recommended by the Commission (board) and approved by the Kentucky legislature. Commission members are experienced and active anglers and hunters, who serve 4-year terms after being publicly nominated by peers in their geographic districts, appointed by the Governor, and confirmed by the Kentucky Senate.

Learn more or contact your district Commission member at fw.ky.gov/More/Pages/Commission.aspx

Department of FISH AND WILDLIFE RESOURCES

Commissioner: Rich Storm
Deputy Commissioner: Gabe Jenkins
Wildlife Director: Ben Robinson
Fisheries Director: Dave Dreves
Law Enforcement Director: Col. Jeremy McQueary
Information and Education and
Marketing Director: Kevin Kelly
Administrative Services Director: Melissa Trent
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Fish and Wildlife office hours:
Monday - Friday, 8 AM - 4:30 PM ET
#1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601
1-800-858-1549

NEW THIS YEAR

Changes from last season are **highlighted in blue** throughout this guide, which reflects the regulations in place at the time of publication.

TRAPPING

- **Furbearer trapping has been extended through March 31 for water sets (only), as defined in regulation.**

LICENSE / PERMIT FEES

- **New reduced-cost First-Time Buyer Sportsman's License available.**
- **Permit now required for use of firearms or archery equipment at Kentucky Fish and Wildlife ranges. The permit is free for residents and nonresidents who purchase any annual hunting or fishing license, including a Sportsman's License. But the permit is not automatically included – you must check the “shooting range permit” box on the order form. For those who don't buy a license, the permit includes a fee.**
- **Cost of permits/licenses was adjusted across the board in January 2026. Future adjustments, which will happen every two years, will be tied to the national Consumer Price Index.**

PUBLIC LANDS / HUNTING ACCESS AREAS

- **Many changes governing access to various tracts of West Kentucky WMA. For details, see the West Kentucky WMA page on fw.ky.gov.**
- **Czar Hunting Access Area is closed to public use due to termination of access agreement.**
- **The management of Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area formerly operated by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife has been transferred to the Meade County Fiscal Court, though Fish and Wildlife will continue to operate the shooting range there.**

WATERFOWL

- **The electronic version of the federal duck stamp is now available through Kentucky's online license purchasing system. Electronically purchased**

stamps (E-Stamps) will appear on a hunter's license and do not require a signature. Physical duck stamps, such as those purchased at a post office, must still be signed and affixed to the license.

DRONES

- **It is illegal to use manned or unmanned aircraft (drones) in the hunting of wildlife.**

TRAIL CAMERAS

- **Trail cameras placed on WMAs or public hunting areas must be labeled externally with the owner's Kentucky Fish and Wildlife customer identification number.**

DEER

- **Zone classifications that dictate how many deer can be harvested were changed for 30 counties. All 30 will see higher bag limits for the 2026-27 season. See the Deer section for specific changes.**
- **A special antlerless-only season in September for zone 1-3 counties in the CWD Surveillance Zone has been extended to four days.**

Proposed changes for fall seasons awaiting final legislative review include:

OTTER / BOBCAT

- **Expanded bag limits for otter and bobcat.**

Also awaiting review are several new laws enacted by the 2026 Kentucky General Assembly affecting deer seasons and creating night hunting seasons for bobcats and beavers. Hunters should go online to fw.ky.gov to check for updates to these seasons before going afield.

The “My Profile” feature at fw.ky.gov provides fast and easy access to your Kentucky Fish and Wildlife records. Scan this symbol with your smartphone to access it.



August 2026 – March 2027



KENTUCKY HUNTING & TRAPPING GUIDE

Kevin Kelly photo

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LICENSE FEE CHANGES

Beginning in January 2026, Kentucky implemented an inflation-based system to adjust its license, permit and boat registration fees during even-numbered years. Pricing is based on the existing cost, plus the combined inflation rate (based on the Consumer Price Index) of the previous two years. The new system adds transparency and avoids sudden and substantial rate increases. This will help the department maintain programs such as fish stocking, wildlife management and research by keeping up with inflation costs while keeping the amount of an increase lower.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This is a summary of hunting laws, intended solely for informational use. It is not a reprint of any referenced Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) or Kentucky Administrative Regulation (KAR) in its entirety and should not be used as such. The exact wording of Kentucky's hunting and trapping laws can be viewed online at fw.ky.gov. Click on "Regulations (KAR) on Fish, Wildlife & Boating" under "Important Info."

GENERAL INFORMATION

LICENSES and PERMITS

GENERAL HUNTER LICENSING

Unless license exempt, hunters and trappers in the field must carry proof that they have met the license requirements for the hunting they are doing. This proof can be any of:

- The license/permit bought in person from a vendor.
- Printed copy of license/permit bought online (printed through My Profile at fw.ky.gov).
- A Fish and Wildlife Customer ID number and – if 16 or older – identification with the license holder's picture and date of birth.
- A cell phone with a screen shot of the license/permit.

RESIDENT LICENSING

A resident is defined as:

- Any person who has established permanent domicile and legal residence and has resided in Kentucky for 30 days prior to buying a license.
- Full-time students enrolled in a Kentucky educational institution for at least six months.
- Military service personnel on permanent assignment in Kentucky.

NONRESIDENT LICENSING

A person who does not qualify as a Kentucky resident must purchase nonresident licenses and permits. That includes nonresidents who own land in Kentucky.

YOUTH LICENSING

Nonresident youth hunters have the same license and permit requirements as resident youth hunters. Not all licenses are available to nonresidents.

Ages 12-15: Hunters ages 12-15 can purchase discounted youth licenses and permits, which are valid for the entire license year if purchased before the youth turns 16.

The annual youth hunting license lets the holder hunt small game species, furbearers and migratory bird species.

With the proper permits, they can also hunt bear, deer, turkey and elk. The Youth Sportsman's License is available to resident youth. Hunters 15 and younger are exempt from purchasing a state migratory bird/waterfowl permit and a duck stamp.

Ages 11 and under: Hunters younger than 12 are not required to purchase licenses and permits but must apply if they wish to participate in quota hunts.

Hunter education certification: Hunter education certification is required for hunters 12 to 15 years old, optional for hunters 9 to 11 years old, and unavailable for hunters 8 and under.

Supervision: Hunters under 16 years old must be accompanied by an adult when hunting turkey, elk, deer or bear with a firearm. For small game, furbearers and migratory bird/waterfowl, hunters ages 9 to 15 who are hunter ed certified do not need to be accompanied by an adult. Supervision is required for hunters ages 9 to 11 who are not hunter ed certified and for all hunters 8 and under.

If not hunting, supervising adults do not need licenses or permits. One adult cannot accompany more than two hunters younger than 12 at the same time.

LICENSE-EXEMPT HUNTERS

In some cases, a resident hunter may not be required to buy a license or permit. But they must abide by bag limits and requirements related to hunter orange and harvest recording, tagging and checking. Exemptions include:

- Resident owners of farmlands, their

spouses and dependent children may hunt on their property without a license. Tenants, their spouses and dependent children may hunt without a license on farmlands where they live and work. Check online at fw.ky.gov for current information. Hunters under these exemptions are subject to license requirements when they hunt other than their own lands.

- Hunters eligible to participate in the free youth hunting and trapping week or free youth deer hunting weekend are not required to have a license or permit during these seasons. Adults who accompany a youth hunter during these seasons do not need a license or permit if they are not hunting themselves.
- Kentucky residents on military leave of more than three days in this state are exempt, but they must carry identification and papers verifying their leave status.
- Members of the U.S. Armed Forces based in Kentucky engaged in sport hunting on these Kentucky National Guard properties: Hidden Valley Training Area in Powell County and the Wendell H. Ford Regional Training Center in Muhlenberg County.

SHOOTING PRESERVE LICENSE

A shooting preserve license, available only at fw.ky.gov, is valid for only one license year and only at the shooting preserve indicated at the time of purchase.

HIP SURVEYS

Waterfowl and migratory bird hunters must complete the Harvest Information Program (HIP) survey found at fw.ky.gov through My Profile before hunting. Licensing and permit requirements apply. When the survey is complete, you will receive a confirmation number that must be written on your hunting license or Kentucky migratory bird/waterfowl hunting permit.

Lose your license or permit?

Replacements can be printed for free through the My Profile section on fw.ky.gov. Added bonus: Any animals you harvested and telechecked year to date will be printed on your harvest log.

WHICH LICENSE OR PERMIT DO I NEED?

KENTUCKY RESIDENTS	Ages 12-15	Ages 16-64	Ages 65 and older OR Disabled
Deer	Youth Hunting License* + Youth Deer Permit*	Annual Hunting License† + Statewide Deer Permit†	Senior/Disabled or Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License
Fall Turkey	Youth Hunting License* + Youth Turkey Permit*	Annual Hunting License† + Fall Turkey Permit†	Senior/Disabled or Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License
Bear	Youth Hunting License* + Youth Bear Permit	Annual Hunting License† + Bear Permit	Senior/Disabled or Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License + Bear Permit
Elk	Youth Hunting License* + Elk Quota Permit (if drawn)**	Annual Hunting License† + Elk Quota Permit (if drawn)**	Senior/Disabled or Senior Life- time Sportsman's License + Elk Quota Permit (if drawn)**
Small Game & Furbearer	Youth Hunting License*	Annual† or 1-Day Hunting License	Senior/Disabled or Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License
	Bobcat permit required for bobcat hunters		
Trapping	Annual Youth Trapping License	Annual or Landowner/Tenant Trapping License	Annual or Landowner/Tenant Trapping License
Migratory Birds (dove, snipe, woodcock, rails, gallinules, sandhill cranes)	Youth Hunting License*	Annual† or 1-Day Hunting License + Kentucky Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit†	Senior/Disabled or Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License
Waterfowl (ducks, geese, coots and mergansers)	Youth Hunting License*	Annual† or 1-Day Hunting License + Kentucky Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit† + Federal Duck Stamp	Senior/Disabled or Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License + Federal Duck Stamp

NONRESIDENTS (must buy nonresident licenses/permits)	Ages 12-15	Ages 16 and older
Deer	Youth Hunting License + Youth Deer Permit	Annual Hunting License + Statewide Deer Permit
Fall Turkey	Youth Hunting License + Youth Turkey Permit	Annual Hunting License + Fall Turkey Permit
Bear	Youth Hunting License + Youth Bear Permit	Annual Hunting License + Bear Permit
Elk	Youth Hunting License + Elk Quota Permit (if drawn)**	Annual Hunting License + Elk Quota Permit (if drawn)**
Small Game & Furbearer	Youth Hunting License	Annual, 1-Day or 7-Day Hunting License
	Bobcat permit required for bobcat hunters	
Trapping	Annual Trapping License	Annual Trapping License
Migratory Birds (dove, snipe, woodcock, rails, gallinules, sandhill cranes)	Youth Hunting License	Annual, 1-Day or 7-Day Hunting License + Kentucky Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit
Waterfowl (ducks, geese, coots and mergansers)	Youth Hunting License	Annual, 1-Day or 7-Day Hunting License + Kentucky Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit + Federal Duck Stamp

*Included in Youth Sportsman's License †Included in Resident Sportsman's License

** Out-of-Zone Elk Permit needed to harvest elk out of designated Elk Zones

HOW TO BUY LICENSES and PERMITS

Hunters who are not exempt must have the proper license before hunting. Some species require an additional permit. See the "Which License or Permit Do I Need" section for guidance, and additional details can be found online at fw.ky.gov. If you have questions, call Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-858-1549 weekdays from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Eastern time).

You will need to provide your date

of birth and Social Security number when buying a license or permit, which you can do online or in person:

Online: Licenses and permits can be purchased at fw.ky.gov with a credit card (Visa, Mastercard, American Express or Discover) or a Kentucky Fish and Wildlife gift certificate, which is sold online only at fw.ky.gov.

You will not be mailed a paper copy. Instead, you will receive an authoriza-

tion number and the option of printing the license. Either the authorization number or the printout must be carried in the field while hunting, along with a picture ID.

In person: Licenses and permits can be purchased at locations throughout the state. To find a list of license agents by county or zip code, go online at fw.ky.gov and click "Licenses."

RESIDENT SENIOR OR DISABLED SPORTSMAN'S LICENSES

Seniors and persons with qualified disabilities may purchase discounted licenses to hunt and fish. These are available only for Kentucky residents. The Senior Sportsman's License and Disabled Sportsman's Licenses include: annual fishing and hunting licenses and permits for deer, spring and fall turkeys, migratory bird/waterfowl and trout.

Senior Sportsman's License:

Available to Kentucky residents 65 or older. (Seniors may also purchase the Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License.)

Disabled Sportsman's License:

Available to Kentucky residents who meet the disability criteria in state law and obtain a disability authorization.

Note: Disabled residents 65 and older can purchase a Senior Sportsman's License instead of the Disabled Sportsman's License. Both licenses cost the same and include the same licenses and permits, but the Senior Sportsman's License requires only proof of age.

How to get a Disabled Sportsman's license:

1. Obtain proof of disability allowed by state law.
2. Submit proof of disability to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.
3. Obtain disability authorization.
4. Buy license online at fw.ky.gov or anywhere licenses are sold.

1 OBTAIN PROOF OF DISABILITY THROUGH ONE OF THE FOLLOWING AGENCIES

- **Federal Social Security Administration:** Obtain a Benefit Verification Letter certifying you are disabled and receive benefits. Forms should not be more than 6 months old. To get a Benefit Verification Letter: Contact your local Social Security office, call 1-800-772-1213 or go online to

socialsecurity.gov/myaccount. Benefit letters must show disability qualification and include your name, address, date of birth, the last 4 digits of your Social Security number and the benefit amount. A Benefit Verification Letter (BVL) differs from the annually issued Social Security award letter, which may lack required approval information; a BVL must be requested separately through Social Security and is not automatically provided.

- **Veterans Affairs:** Obtain letter verifying that you are at least 50 percent disabled as a result of a service-connected disability. The letter must include your current address and Social Security number.
- **State Workers' Compensation Board:** Request an application from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife and send the completed form to the state Workers' Compensation Board.
- **U.S. Railroad Retirement Board:** Obtain letter stating you are permanently and totally disabled and show current address.
- **Kentucky Teachers' Retirement System:** Obtain written documentation stating you are on disability retirement and show a current address.
- **U.S. Office of Personnel Management:** Obtain certification of employment, certification of 100 percent disabled from a recognized authority, and show a current address.

2 SEND PROOF OF DISABILITY TO KENTUCKY FISH AND WILDLIFE

- Online: Visit fw.ky.gov and go to My Profile. Select "Disability Authorization." Upload your file.
- By mail: KDFWR Disabled License, #1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601.

- By fax: (502) 564-9845.
- Questions? Call 1-800-858-1549 or email Info.Center@ky.gov

3 OBTAIN DISABILITY AUTHORIZATION

Disability authorization. You will receive disability authorization once your proof of disability is verified. To check your application status, access your My Profile account at fw.ky.gov. Once your status is verified, you can print your disability authorization card from My Profile, but note that you are not required to carry that card in the field. (You are, however, required to carry proof of the Disabled Sportsman's License itself while out in the field hunting or fishing.)

Expiration and renewal: Disability authorizations are valid for 3 years (although the Sportsman's License itself must be bought annually). You can check your expiration date at My Profile. If it is expired, you will be unable to buy the Disabled Sportsman's License. To renew your authorization card, simply repeat the steps on this page. However, if you received your disability authorization through Veterans Affairs, the U.S. Railroad Retirement Board or U.S. Office of Personnel Management, you may call Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-858-1549 to renew over the phone.

4 BUY LICENSE

Once you have the disability authorization, you may buy your discounted Disabled Sportsman's License online at fw.ky.gov or wherever hunting and fishing licenses are sold. Licenses are valid through the end of February each year. Go to My Profile to print or reprint your license at home anytime for free.

LICENSE / PERMIT		Resident fee	Nonresident fee
LICENSES	Annual Fishing (Shooting range permit included, must register.)	\$24.31	\$58.14
	Joint Married Couple Annual Fishing	\$44.38	Not available
	1-Day Fishing	\$7.40	\$15.86
	3-Year Fishing	\$58.14	Not available
	7-Day Fishing Nonresident	Not available	\$37
	Trout Permit	\$10.57	
	Annual Hunting (Shooting range permit included, must register.)	\$28.54	\$169.12
	1-Day Hunting (not valid for deer, elk, turkey or bear)	\$7.40	\$26.43
	7-Day Hunting (not valid for deer, elk, turkey or bear)	Not available	\$68.71
	Youth Annual Hunting (ages 12-15 only)	\$6.34	\$10.57
	Shooting Preserve Hunting (available online at fw.ky.gov only)	\$5.29	
	Annual Trapping	\$21.14	\$137.41
	Annual Landowner/Tenant Trapping	\$10.57	Not available
	Youth Annual Trapping (ages 12-15)	\$5.29	Not available
COMBOS	Combination License (Annual Combination Hunting/Fishing License)	\$44.39	Not available
	Sportsman's License* (Includes combination hunting/fishing license, statewide deer permit, spring and fall turkey permits, Kentucky Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit and trout permit. Shooting range permit included, must register.)	\$100.42	Not available
	First Time Buyer Sportsman's License* (Includes same licenses and permits as standard sportsman's license)	\$37	Not available
	Senior OR Disabled Sportsman's License* (Includes same licenses and permits as standard sportsman's license)	\$12.68	Not available
	Senior Lifetime Sportsman's License* (Must maintain Kentucky residency; includes same licenses and permits as standard sportsman's license. For residents age 65 or older.)	\$190.26	Not available
	Youth (ages 12-15) Sportsman's License* (Includes hunting/fishing license, statewide deer permit, spring and fall turkey permits and Kentucky Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit)	\$31.71	Not available
DEER	Deer Permit (statewide, four deer)	\$37	\$248.40
	Youth (ages 12-15) Deer Permit (four deer)	\$10.57	\$15.86
	Additional Deer Permit (two deer)	\$15.86	
BIRDS	Spring Turkey Permit (statewide) (two turkeys)	\$31.71	\$116.27
	Youth (ages 12-15) Turkey Permit (one turkey, spring or fall)	\$10.57	\$15.86
	Fall Turkey Permit (statewide)(two turkeys)	\$31.71	\$116.27
	(Kentucky) Migratory Bird/Waterfowl Permit	\$15.86	
	Federal Duck Stamp (E-stamp available at fw.ky.gov , physical stamp at post offices)	\$25	
	Pheasant Quota Hunt Permit (if drawn)	\$26.43	
	Sandhill Crane Hunt Drawing (quota hunt, apply in Sept. at fw.ky.gov)	\$3	\$3
ELK	Elk Hunt Drawing Application (deadline April 30)	\$10	
	Youth Elk Drawing Application (ages 15 and under)	\$10	
	Elk Quota Bull Permit (if drawn)	\$105.70	\$581.35
	Elk Quota Cow Permit (if drawn)	\$63.42	\$422.80
	Elk Quota Archery/Crossbow Permit (bull or cow, if drawn)	\$105.70	\$581.35
	Youth Elk Quota Permit (if drawn; ages 12-15; youths drawn for other permits pay full cost)	\$31.71	\$211.40
	Out of Zone Elk Permit	\$31.71	\$422.80
BEAR	Bear Permit	\$31.71	\$264.25
	Youth Bear Permit (ages 12-15)	\$10.57	\$105.70
	Bear Chase Permit (bear dog training permit)	\$31.71	\$52.85
	Youth Bear Chase Permit (ages 12-15) (bear dog training permit)	\$10.57	\$15.86
	Combo Bear/Chase Permit (bear hunting/bear dog training permits)	\$52.85	Not available
AREAS	1-Day Ballard Waterfowl Permit	\$15.86	
	Peabody WMA Permit	\$15.86	
	Land Between The Lakes Hunt Permit	\$25	
	Land Between The Lakes Hunt/Backcountry Camp	\$50	
OTHER	Bobcat Permit (required for hunters)	\$10.57	
	Annual Shooting Range Permit (Free upon registration to those with an annual hunting or fishing license; includes resident sportsman's license)	\$26.43	
	1-Day Shooting Range Permit (Free upon registration to those with an annual hunting or fishing license; includes resident sportsman's license.)	\$5.29	
	Temporary Hunter Education Exemption Permit (One-time permit valid for 1 year only; available online at fw.ky.gov only)	Free	

*Peabody and LBL permits, elk drawing application, elk quota hunt permit, out-of-zone elk permit, bear permit, federal duck stamp and trapping license not included. An additional deer permit is not included with a Sportsman's License.

Kentucky's license year begins March 1 and continues through the last day of February. New licenses are required annually, except for the 3-year fishing license and the Lifetime Sportsman's License. A 1-day or 7-day hunting or fishing license is valid only for the period shown on license. Resident and nonresident youths under the age of 12 are not required to purchase licenses or permits (except the elk hunt drawing application).

RECORDING, CHECKING, TAGGING and TRANSPORTING

These regulations apply to all deer, elk, turkey, bear, bobcat, otter and sandhill crane taken by hunters or trappers, including landowners and other license-exempt hunters.

HARVEST LOG

All hunters and trappers, including those who are license exempt, must fill out a harvest log as soon as the animal is harvested and prior to moving the carcass.

Information that must be written on the harvest log includes the species and sex of the animal, the date it was taken and the county where it was taken. After the harvest is reported via Telecheck, the Telecheck confirmation number must also be recorded.

A blank harvest log is included with licenses and permits purchased from a license agent or online. Additional harvest logs can be printed through the My Profile function at fw.ky.gov or by clicking the "Hunting" tab and then "Printable Harvest Log" under the "Other Links" menu.



Telecheck is available through the My Profile feature at fw.ky.gov. Scan here to access it.

License-exempt hunters, children younger than 12 years old, and those who have only a license authorization number may create their own harvest log by writing the required information on a piece of paper or index card.

Hunters and trappers must carry their completed harvest log when afield during the current season.

HARVEST REPORTING (TELECHECK)

The harvest of all deer, turkey, elk, bear, bobcat, river otters and sandhill cranes must be reported to the state through the Telecheck system. This can be done either by calling 1-800-245-4263 (1-800-CHK-GAME) toll-free or through the My Profile tab at fw.ky.gov. Entering false information is unlawful.

All harvested animals except for bear must be reported by midnight on the day the animal is recovered and prior to processing the carcass. Bobcats and river otters must be telechecked prior to leaving Kentucky.

Hunters who harvest a bear during any bear-hunting season must telecheck the bear by 8 p.m. (Eastern) the day that it was harvested. They also must call 1-800-858-1549 within 24 hours of harvest to arrange for a physical check

of the animal and receive a tag issued by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

If the hide or head is removed from the carcass of a harvested deer or elk before the animal is telechecked, the hunter must demonstrate proof of the sex of the deer or elk. See the deer and elk hunting sections of this guide for details.

Telecheck is available 24 hours a day while hunting seasons are open. Listen to each question carefully and provide the requested information using a phone's keypad.

Hunters – including youth hunters – will be asked their Social Security number and code for the county in which the animal was taken. County codes are listed below and on the "Telecheck Info" page online at fw.ky.gov.

Other questions address the animal's species and sex, the type of equip-

Q: Due to a cell phone dropped call, a hunter loses a confirmation number. Should the animal be checked in again?

A: Try again until you get the confirmation number, and then contact the department at 1-800-858-1549 the next business day to report the incident.

KENTUCKY COUNTY CODE NUMBERS FOR TELECHECK

001	Adair	021	Carroll	041	Grant	061	Knox	081	Mason	101	Robertson
002	Allen	022	Carter	042	Graves	062	LaRue	082	Meade	102	Rockcastle
003	Anderson	023	Casey	043	Grayson	063	Laurel	083	Menifee	103	Rowan
004	Ballard	024	Christian	044	Green	064	Lawrence	084	Mercer	104	Russell
005	Barren	025	Clark	045	Greenup	065	Lee	085	Metcalfe	105	Scott
006	Bath	026	Clay	046	Hancock	066	Leslie	086	Monroe	106	Shelby
007	Bell	027	Clinton	047	Hardin	067	Letcher	087	Montgomery	107	Simpson
008	Boone	028	Crittenden	048	Harlan	068	Lewis	088	Morgan	108	Spencer
009	Bourbon	029	Cumberland	049	Harrison	069	Lincoln	089	Muhlenberg	109	Taylor
010	Boyd	030	Daviess	050	Hart	070	Livingston	090	Nelson	110	Todd
011	Boyle	031	Edmonson	051	Henderson	071	Logan	091	Nicholas	111	Trigg
012	Bracken	032	Elliott	052	Henry	072	Lyon	092	Ohio	112	Trimble
013	Breathitt	033	Estill	053	Hickman	073	McCracken	093	Oldham	113	Union
014	Breckinridge	034	Fayette	054	Hopkins	074	McCreary	094	Owen	114	Warren
015	Bullitt	035	Fleming	055	Jackson	075	McLean	095	Owsley	115	Washington
016	Butler	036	Floyd	056	Jefferson	076	Madison	096	Pendleton	116	Wayne
017	Caldwell	037	Franklin	057	Jessamine	077	Magoffin	097	Perry	117	Webster
018	Calloway	038	Fulton	058	Johnson	078	Marion	098	Pike	118	Whitley
019	Campbell	039	Gallatin	059	Kenton	079	Marshall	099	Powell	119	Wolfe
020	Carlisle	040	Garrard	060	Knott	080	Martin	100	Pulaski	120	Woodford



OTTER, BOBCAT JAWS NEEDED

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife is requesting lower jaws from harvested bobcats and river otters to monitor populations. To request a sample packet and instructions, go online at fw.ky.gov and find the Furbearer Hunting and Trapping page by searching for the keyword "Furbearers." Scroll down to find the "We need your help!" box and click "Request a Sample Packet." Or call 1-800-858-1549.

ment used to harvest the animal, whether the land was private or public, and the type of license used.

At the end of the survey, callers are given a confirmation number that must be recorded on the hunter's log and retained throughout the season.

CARCASS TAG FOR TRANSFER

Separately, a hunter must attach a handmade tag to the carcass of any harvested deer, elk, turkey, bear, bobcat, otter and sandhill crane if transferring possession of the harvested animal to another person, including a butcher or taxidermist. That includes a head and cape. The carcass tag must include the hunter's name, phone number and Telecheck confirmation number.

A harvested animal in a hunter's possession is assumed to be theirs, unless the carcass tag states otherwise.

Hunters who harvest a bear during any bear season must attach a department-issued carcass tag given to them by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife after an in-person inspection. Call 1-800-858-1549 within 24 hours of harvest to arrange for the inspection.

CITES TAG

A Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) tag must be attached immediately upon receipt to the raw fur, pelt or unskinned carcass of any bobcat or river otter taken in Kentucky if the hunter or trapper intends to sell it or export it internationally. See the Furbearer section of this guide for details.

TRANSPORTING HARVESTED ANIMALS

An unchecked animal taken in Kentucky may not be transported out of Kentucky. Raw furs and hides may be sold only to a licensed fur buyer, fur processor or taxidermist.

Hunters may not return to Kentucky with whole carcasses of deer, elk, moose or caribou harvested in another state. Deboned meat and cleaned skulls/antlers are allowable. See the Deer section of this guide for additional requirements.

Butchers, meat processors, and licensed taxidermists shall dispose of any unused cervid carcass material or waste product by proper burial, removal by a duly licensed rendering establishment, or deposit into a contained landfill.

GENERAL HUNTING REGULATIONS

LANDOWNER PERMISSION

A person shall not enter upon the lands of another to shoot, hunt, trap, fish or for other wildlife-related recreational purposes without the verbal or written permission of the landowner, tenant, or person who has authority to grant permission. Railroad tracks and rights-of-way are privately owned property and permission to hunt, trap or fish must be obtained prior to entry.

Those who fail to obtain permission are subject to arrest and prosecution.

Landowners are under no obligation to allow hunters to retrieve game or hunting dogs from their property.

HUNTER EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS

Hunter education covers basic skills, safety and ethics. It is required of hunters born on or after Jan. 1, 1975, who are

not license-exempt. Training includes classroom work followed by a live fire exercise. Hunters must carry a hard copy or electronic copy of their hunter education certification while afield. Certification may be from any state.

In-person hunter education classes are held throughout the state, or available online at fw.ky.gov by searching the keywords "hunter education." More information about the registration process is available on the website or by calling Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-858-1549.

Children must be at least 9 years old to take the hunter education test. Children younger than 12 years old are exempt from hunter education certification.

APPRENTICE HUNTING OPPORTUNITY

Kentucky offers a free, one-time exemption permit for hunters who have

not obtained their hunter education certification. The permit is available online at fw.ky.gov.

This permit allows new hunters in Kentucky to hunt for one year without taking hunter education courses. The permit must be carried while hunting and requires its holder to hunt with a licensed, adult hunter (at least 18 years old) who meets the hunter education requirement. The adult shall be in a position to take immediate control of the exempted hunter's bow or firearm at all times while hunting, even if the exempted hunter is an adult.

After the hunter education exemption permit expires, the hunter is no longer exempt and must successfully complete a hunter education course. The temporary hunter education exemption permit is valid only in Kentucky. It is not accepted at Blue Grass Army Depot or Fort Campbell.

HUNTER EDUCATION EXEMPTIONS

Resident landowners, spouses and dependent children, tenants, their spouses and their dependent children are hunter education exempt only on property they own, or on property where they reside and work. When hunting elsewhere, they must comply with Kentucky's hunter education law.

REPLACEMENT HUNTER EDUCATION CARDS

Replacement hunter education cards can be printed for free by going to *fw.ky.gov* and clicking "Education," then "Hunter Education" and "Reprint Your Hunter Ed Card."

HUNTER ORANGE CLOTHING LAW

All hunters, and persons accompanying them, must wear outer garments of hunter orange color visible from all sides on the head, back and chest when hunting during daylight hours for any species during modern gun, muzzle-loader and youth firearm deer seasons, or a firearm elk or bear season.

Waterfowl and dove hunters are exempt from this requirement.

Hunter orange garments can be of mesh type material as long as openings in the mesh weave are no wider than one-quarter inch by any measurement. Garments may display a small portion of another color.

The following are common examples of hunter orange violations:

- Wearing camouflage-patterned hunter orange garments without additional solid hunter orange clothing on the head, back and chest.
- Taking off hunter orange clothing while on a stand or in a blind.
- Not wearing hunter orange while hunting squirrel, rabbit or quail during an open firearms deer or elk season.

Hunters using archery or crossbow equipment during deer firearms seasons must wear hunter orange clothing. This includes turkey hunters.

Whenever gun deer hunting is allowed on a WMA or in a state park, a person who will be hunting from inside a ground blind must first attach a hat or vest made of solid, unbroken hunter orange material to the blind so it is visible from all sides. Hunter orange clothing

requirements still apply for anyone inside the blind.

Hunters are not required to wear hunter orange clothing or display hunter orange on ground blinds during a firearms season on a state-owned or -managed WMA where firearms hunting for deer, elk or bear is prohibited.

SHOOTING HOURS

Unless otherwise noted, shooting hours for most species in this guide are 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset. Exceptions include waterfowl, migratory birds, raccoons, coyotes, turtles and frogs. Hunters may be in the field outside of shooting hours.

Raccoons and opossums may be taken day or night, except during modern gun deer season when raccoon and opossum hunting is permitted only at night.

See the Furbearer Hunting & Trapping section for additional exemptions, including coyotes.

HUNTING METHOD EXEMPTIONS

The department grants exemptions to hunters with certain physical disabilities to hunt with a crossbow during archery-only seasons, or to use a stationary vehicle as a hunting platform. However, persons with qualifying physical disabilities must first have an exemption form completed and signed by a licensed physician certifying why the exemption is necessary.

Forms are available online or by calling the department. A completed and signed exemption form serves as the hunter's exemption permit. It should not be returned to the department but must be carried in the field with the appropriate hunting license and permits.

PROHIBITED HUNTING METHODS

- No person shall discharge any firearm, bow and arrow, crossbow or similar device, upon or across any public roadway.
- No person shall take or attempt to take any wildlife, protected or unprotected, from an automobile, or other vehicle, except as prescribed by regulation. Hunting from boats is permitted for small game, furbearers and waterfowl. Boats cannot be under power.
- No person shall use an aircraft or drone to harass wildlife, shoot or

attempt to shoot with the purpose of capturing or killing wildlife.

- A person shall not pursue, chase or take a deer, elk or turkey (during the spring turkey season) with the aid of dogs; while on horseback; or when a deer, elk or bear is swimming. Dogs may be used to locate and flush turkeys during the fall turkey seasons only.
- It is illegal to feed bears directly or indirectly for any reason.
- No person shall take wildlife with the aid of fire, explosives, smoke or gas.
- Baiting is prohibited on all WMAs, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Daniel Boone National Forest, Jefferson National Forest, Land Between The Lakes and state parks open to hunting.
- Deer and elk hunters shall not use electronic decoys or electronic calls.
- No person shall take a turkey when the turkey is roosting. A roost is the place, typically a tree, where a turkey spends the night.
- Live wild turkeys cannot be used as decoys.
- Wild turkey, bears, waterfowl and doves shall not be hunted by the aid of bait, nor shall areas be hunted where bait is present. This includes private lands baited for deer. An area is considered baited for 30 days after all bait has been removed.
- A baited area is any place where feed, grains or other substances capable of luring game animals have been placed. An area where grains or other feeds exist as the result of a bona fide agricultural practice or manipulation of a crop (food plot) for wildlife management purposes is legal for hunting.

FIREARMS CARRY

Anyone who may legally possess firearms may carry any legal firearms while hunting, including archery seasons. However, only legal methods may be used to take game.

CONVICTED FELONS

A person convicted of a felony is prohibited from possessing or hunting with a firearm in Kentucky. This includes rifles, shotguns, handguns and muzzle-loading guns. The prohibition on handguns applies to those convicted after Jan. 1, 1975. The prohibition on other firearms applies to those convicted

after July 15, 1994. See KRS 527.040 or contact your County Attorney.

HUNTING WITH A SUPPRESSOR

Hunters with a federal permit for a firearm suppressor may use it to hunt legal game animals – including coyotes, squirrels, deer, elk and bears – with a valid hunting license.

SPOTLIGHTING

No person may deliberately cast the rays of a spotlight or other artificial light into any field, pasture, woodlands or forest, whether public or private, where wildlife or domestic livestock may reasonably be expected to be located. Shining artificial lights into private residences or other structures also is prohibited.

This does not apply to: headlights of vehicles engaged in a normal course of travel; lights being used in legitimate agricultural activities; anyone involved in activities legitimate to his or her business or occupation; circumstances including lawful hunting activities; or any landowner, his or her immediate family, or any paid employee while working on his or her land at that time.

No person shall take wildlife, except raccoons, opossums, coyotes, frogs and fish, using lights or other means designed to blind wildlife or make wildlife visible at night. Exceptions apply for coyotes. See the Furbearer Hunting & Trapping section.

GAME CALLING DEVICES and RESTRICTIONS

- Hand- or mouth-operated calls may be used in hunting all species.
- A hunter may use electronic calls or attracting devices for furbearers during the furbearer season.
- Mechanical or electronic calls may be used to take crows during crow season.
- Deer, turkey and elk hunters shall not use or possess electronic calling devices.

TRANSPORTATION and HOLDING OF LIVE NATIVE WILDLIFE

A person may not take, possess or transport live wildlife without a permit when prescribed by regulation.

A person shall not hold live native wildlife in captivity that was not legally taken or possessed. Persons shall not buy or sell – or offer to buy or sell, trade, or

barter – native wildlife or parts thereof obtained from the wild, unless in possession of the proper up-to-date commercial or noncommercial captive wildlife permit per each holding facility. Wildlife without legal permits may be confiscated and the holder fined.

Orphaned wildlife may be possessed only by a licensed wildlife rehabilitator. Persons transporting live deer, elk or moose (cervids) without proper documentation or permits, or holding live deer captive in unpermitted facilities or pens, may be fined. Animals may be confiscated or destroyed.

Legally trapped rabies vector species shall be dispatched before being moved unless immediately released at the capture site. Permit holders shall report all bites and exposure to their local county health department within 12 hours. If a legally obtained native mammal in possession bites a person or shows symptoms of a rabies infection, the animal shall be dispatched immediately. Permit holders shall immediately submit the animal heads for testing to an approved laboratory.

DOG TRAINING and HUNTING WITH DOGS

- Hunters may run or train dogs for rabbits, foxes, coyotes, raccoons and opossums year-round. Game may be harvested only during an open hunting season.
- Some WMAs have special restrictions on using dogs.
- All members of the party must have a valid hunting license (unless license-exempt) to pursue rabbits or furbearers, even when training dogs without taking game.
- Dogs may not be used to chase or hunt deer and elk.
- Dogs may be used to chase or hunt bears if a legal season is open.
- Dogs are permitted for locating and flushing turkeys during the fall turkey season only.
- Dogs on leash may track and locate dead or wounded deer, elk and bear.
- Except during the hunting season, raccoon and opossum hunters shall not use any device to force a raccoon or opossum from trees or dens.
- Raccoon squallers may be used year-round.

BOBWHITE SHOOT-TO-TRAIN SEASON

For the purpose of bird dog training on private lands only, pen-reared bobwhite quail may be harvested Aug. 15 through May 15 (excluding bobwhite hunting season), provided that prior to shooting a person:

- Submits a completed application to the department.
- Possesses a valid hunting license, or be license-exempt.
- Possesses proof of the sale/ownership of the birds.
- Possesses a captive wildlife permit for pen-reared bobwhite if more than 100 birds are in possession, or if kept for more than 10 days.
- Makes sure that the training area is free of wild quail.
- Bands pen-reared birds before release with No. 7 leg bands or department-supplied bands.
- Release the banded birds immediately before dog training or shooting.

WANTON WASTE

Hunters are required to make a reasonable effort to recover big game and upland birds harvested, including removal of edible parts from the field.

DEER HUNTING

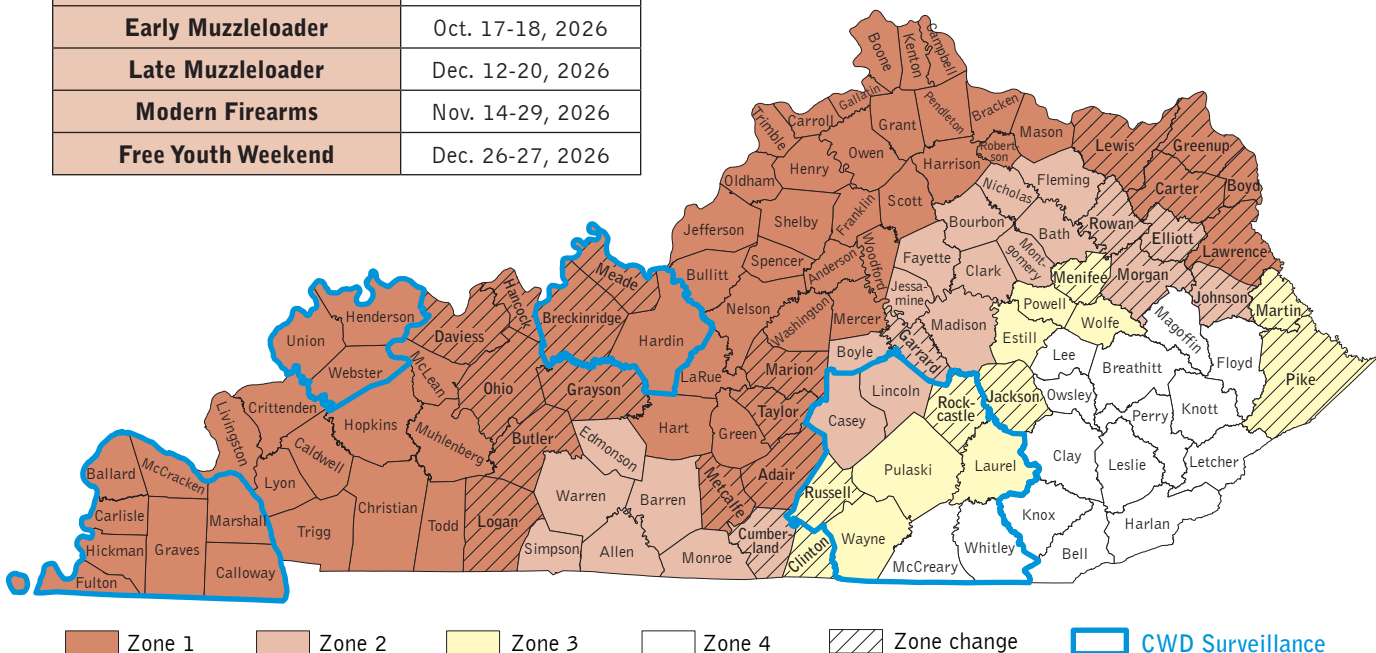
DEER HUNTING ZONES and SEASONS

DEER	Season Dates***
Archery	Sept. 5, 2026 - Jan. 18, 2027
Youth/Senior Crossbow*	
Crossbow	Sept. 19, 2026 - Jan. 18, 2027
CWD Antlerless Season**	Sept. 25-28, 2026
Youth-only Modern Firearms	Oct. 10-18, 2026
Early Muzzleloader	Oct. 17-18, 2026
Late Muzzleloader	Dec. 12-20, 2026
Modern Firearms	Nov. 14-29, 2026
Free Youth Weekend	Dec. 26-27, 2026

*Resident hunters 65 and older and youth under 16 can hunt the Youth/Senior Crossbow season.

**CWD season is for Zone 1-3 counties within the CWD Surveillance Zone. Antlerless only. Hunters can use firearms, bows or crossbows. See CWD section for testing requirements. Zone bag limits apply.

***Please see box on page 11 for a note about pending new antlerless seasons.



DEER BAG LIMITS

Only one antlered deer may be harvested statewide, regardless of zone or method.

ZONE 1	Unlimited number of antlerless deer using the statewide deer permit plus additional deer permits.
ZONE 2	Up to four deer.
ZONE 3	Up to four deer. Only one antlerless deer with a firearm or air gun.
ZONE 4	Up to two deer, only one of which can be antlerless. Antlerless deer cannot be harvested during the modern gun season, the early muzzleloader season and the first six days of the late muzzleloader season.

Hunter orange required!

During any firearms season for deer, bear or elk: Hunters, trappers and those accompanying them in counties where these seasons are open must wear solid, unbroken hunter orange visible from all sides on the head, back and chest. However, hunter orange is not required while hunting waterfowl or doves, or when hunting furbearers at night during a furbearer season.

Kentucky's deer herd is a national success story for science-based deer management. Absent from most of Kentucky in 1915, the deer herd grew to about 35,000 in the 1970s thanks to aggressive restoration. Today, the herd supports an annual harvest of nearly 150,000 animals, and Kentucky is known nationally as a top state for trophy bucks.

LICENSE REQUIREMENTS

Hunters 16 and older must buy and carry proof of a valid deer permit and an annual hunting license, unless license exempt. See also the "Hunter Education" requirements in the "General Hunting Regulations" section of this guide.

The statewide deer permit (and youth deer permit) allow for the harvest of up to four deer, although harvest limits and methods of take vary by deer zone. Hunters can also purchase additional permits, each of which is good for two additional deer, but bag limits and buck restrictions apply. Permits can be used on both private and public land, and during some quota hunts.

BAG LIMITS

Bag limits and harvest restrictions apply to all hunters, and hunters must claim any deer they harvest as their own.

There is no daily bag limit on deer.

Each county is assigned to one of four zones, each with their own bag limits. See the "Deer Bag Limits" chart in this section. A hunter may take as many deer as allowed in each zone.

No matter what hunting method is used, a hunter may not take more than one deer with visible antlers per season. Male fawns with button antlers that are not readily visible are considered antlerless deer.

One exception: on some federally controlled areas, a bonus antlered deer may be taken, as determined by the governing agency for each area. These include Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge, the Fort Campbell and Fort Knox military reservations and Blue Grass Army Depot.

CHECKING and TAGGING

All harvested deer must be recorded on a Harvest Log and reported either by phone or online through the Telecheck process.

See the "Recording, Checking,

Carry proof

Deer hunters must carry proof of a valid hunting license and deer permits while afield. This proof can be any of the following:

- Physical copy of the license/permit bought in person from a vendor.
- Printed copy of license/permit bought online (printed through the My Profile function at fw.ky.gov).
- A Fish and Wildlife Customer ID number and – if 16 or older – identification with the license holder's picture and date of birth.
- A cell phone with a screen shot of the license/permit.

Tagging and Transporting" portion of this guide for details on Harvest Logs, the Telecheck process and carcass tags. For example:

- A Harvest Log must be filled out before the carcass is moved.
- The harvest must be reported by midnight of the day the deer is recovered.
- Proof of sex must be retained for the animal if the head or hide is removed before it is telechecked.
- A carcass tag is required if a harvested deer leaves the hunter's possession for any reason.

SHOOTING HOURS

Thirty minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.

HUNTER ORANGE

During firearms seasons, all hunters and those accompanying them must wear hunter orange. This includes hunters using archery and crossbow equipment during any firearms season for deer, elk and bear – except on a state-owned or -managed WMA where firearms hunting for those game animals is prohibited. For details, see the "General Hunting Regulations" section of this guide.

HUNTING EQUIPMENT

Depending upon the season, hunters can use a variety of firearms or archery equipment to harvest deer. For details, see the "Legal Deer Hunting Equipment" item in this section.

During modern firearms seasons, hunters can also use muzzleloaders, bows and crossbows. During muzzle-

New antlerless seasons?

Proposed regulation changes would create new seasons where hunters can harvest antlerless deer with firearms in certain counties. The proposals also would open certain public Wildlife Management Areas to one or more of those seasons.

These proposals are pending. Since regulations are subject to change after the printing of this guide, hunters should go online to fw.ky.gov to verify the status of these proposals.

Donate Your Doe

Want to expand your hunting season, help manage Kentucky's deer herd and make a difference in your community all at the same time?

Just harvest an extra doe (or two), then donate the deer to an organization that feeds the hungry.

Kentucky has two nonprofit organizations who make it easy. They take care of processing and pay any costs, then take the venison to food pantries or schools to be distributed. To find out more, go online to Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry (kyhuntersforthehungry.info) or Boone Brothers (boonebrothers.org) for more information and where to drop off your field-dressed deer.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife is trying to increase the harvest of does in Zone 1 and Zone 2 counties. With the proper permits, hunters can take an unlimited number of antlerless deer in Zone 1 and up to four in Zone 2.

loader seasons, hunters can also use bows and crossbows. During crossbow season, hunters can also use bows. But hunters using bows and crossbows during firearms seasons must follow regulations and requirements for those fire-

arms seasons.

- **Tree stands:** Construction and use of tree stands on private lands is regulated by landowners.
- **Drones:** Cannot be used to harass or hunt deer.
- **Electronic decoys and calls:** Are prohibited.
- **Bait:** Is legal on private land (see CWD section for additional regulations) but prohibited on WMAs and state parks and many federal properties open to deer hunting.
- **Antler traps:** Devices used to entangle or trap a deer's antlers cannot be used.

QUOTA HUNTS and PUBLIC LANDS

See those sections of this guide for details.

SUBMIT IMAGES OF YOUR DEER'S JAW BONE FOR AGING

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife would like to age your harvested deer. Visit the webpage "Deer Hunting" at fw.ky.gov/Hunt/Pages/Deer.aspx for more information.

LEGAL DEER HUNTING EQUIPMENT

Scopes are allowed on all hunting equipment (used for statewide seasons).

MODERN GUN EQUIPMENT

- Any caliber centerfire rifle or centerfire handgun.
- Rifle, handgun or shotgun magazines may not be capable of holding more than 10 rounds.
- Rifles or handguns may not be fully automatic (capable of firing more than one round with one trigger pull).
- Full metal jacketed or tracer bullet ammunition is prohibited.
- Shotguns, no larger than 10-gauge, shooting slug ammunition only (includes sabot bullets).
- Muzzle-loading rifles, handguns, or shotguns shooting round balls, conical bullets, or sabot bullets.
- Air guns of .35 caliber or larger charged by an external tank, shooting single projectile ammunition designed to expand upon impact.

ARCHERY EQUIPMENT

- Longbows, recurves and compound bows of any draw weight (no minimum).

- Wood, carbon or metal arrows, but arrows may not be chemically treated.
- Fixed blade or mechanical broadheads at least 7/8" wide (when blades extended), but broadheads may not be chemically treated.

CROSSBOW EQUIPMENT

- Crossbows of any draw weight (no minimum), with a working safety.
- Wood, carbon or metal arrows (bolts), but arrows (bolts) may not be chemically treated.
- Fixed blade or mechanical broadheads at least 7/8" (when blades extended), but broadheads may not be chemically treated.

MUZZLELOADING EQUIPMENT

- Muzzle-loading rifles or handguns of any caliber, shooting round balls, conical bullets or sabot bullets.
- Muzzle-loading firearms equipped with open sights or telescopic sights (scopes).
- Muzzle-loading shotguns no larger than 10-gauge, shooting round balls, conical bullets or sabot bullets.

YOUTH DEER HUNTING

LICENSING

Resident or nonresident youths under age 16 may hunt deer during any open season, including special youth deer seasons. For license and hunter education requirements, see "Youth Licensing" in the "Licenses and Permits" section of this guide, as well as "Hunter Education" in the "General Hunting Regulations" section.

SUPERVISION

Hunters under 16 must always be accompanied by an adult when hunting deer with a firearm, and the adult must be in position to take immediate control of the firearm at all times. Supervising adults are not required to possess a hunting license or deer permit if the adult is not deer hunting, but by law, both the youth and adult must wear hunter orange. Supervising adults may not use firearms to take a deer during a youth-only deer season, except with a muzzleloader during the days where the general muzzleloader season overlaps with the youth-only season.

pervising adults are not required to possess a hunting license or deer permit if the adult is not deer hunting, but by law, both the youth and adult must wear hunter orange. Supervising adults may not use firearms to take a deer during a youth-only deer season, except with a muzzleloader during the days where the general muzzleloader season overlaps with the youth-only season.

YOUTH-ONLY SEASON

A special youth-only deer season begins on the second Saturday in October and lasts for nine days. Youth hunters may take deer with firearms, or any other legal method, statewide. Youth hunters ages 12-15 must have hunting licenses and deer permits, those younger than 12 are not required to have those.

hunters ages 12-15 must have hunting licenses and deer permits, those younger than 12 are not required to have those.

FREE YOUTH DEER HUNTING WEEKEND

On the first weekend following Christmas, resident and nonresident youth under 16 who are accompanied by an adult may hunt deer with firearms, or any other legal method, statewide without a hunting license or deer permit. During these seasons, youth hunters may harvest antlered or antlerless deer regardless of zone but must abide by all bag limits and other deer hunting requirements.

CWD SURVEILLANCE ZONE



CHRONIC WASTING DISEASE (CWD)

Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) – which is fatal to white-tailed deer, elk and other members of the deer family – has been detected in Kentucky and all of its border states. Kentucky continues to actively monitor for CWD and work to slow its spread with special regulations.

Statewide, these efforts include voluntary testing of harvested deer, as well as restrictions on the importing and transporting of deer carcasses, since the movement of deer is the primary reason for CWD's rapid spread.

In addition, the effort includes special restrictions and testing requirements throughout the CWD Surveillance Zone. Know and follow CWD regulations when hunting in these counties: Ballard, Breckinridge, Calloway, Carlisle, Casey, Fulton, Graves, Hardin, Henderson, Hickman, Laurel, Lincoln, Marshall, McCracken, McCreary, Meade, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, Union, Wayne, Webster and Whitley.

STATEWIDE CARCASS IMPORTATION RESTRICTIONS

It is illegal to bring whole carcasses or high-risk parts (head, intact skull or skull cap with brain material, or spine) of any member of the deer family (deer, elk, moose, or caribou, etc.) into Kentucky from other U.S. states or Canadian provinces. Hunters can bring back only the following: deboned meat, antlers,

antlers attached to clean skull cap, clean skulls, clean teeth, hides and finished taxidermy products.

IN-STATE CARCASS TRANSPORTATION RESTRICTIONS

Within Kentucky, there are restrictions on what parts of a deer may be taken outside of the CWD Surveillance Zone:

✗ Prohibited: Whole deer carcasses, high-risk parts including head, intact skull or skull cap with brain material, or spine.

✓ Allowed: Deboned meat, antlers and antlers attached to a clean skull cap, clean skulls and teeth, hides, and finished taxidermy products.

BAITING and FEEDING RESTRICTIONS

Grain, feed, mineral blocks, salt blocks and other baits to attract deer can be used within the CWD Surveillance Zone, provided that bait is not distributed through a contact feeder (e.g., trough, funnel feeders and gravity feeders without broadcasting capabilities). Hunters can also use products that are not ingested by deer, such as scent attractors and deer urine products.

CWD SAMPLING REQUIREMENTS

As part of monitoring efforts, Kentucky has a multi-tiered CWD sampling

Know before you go

You will need to provide a general harvest location when taking a deer to a staffed check station in a CWD Surveillance Zone county. You will also need to report that information when dropping off a sample (head and neck) for CWD testing from a harvested deer in any county.

This information is critical in tracking the spread of CWD across Kentucky.

It will NOT be shared publicly. And the information is general in nature – i.e. a one-mile-square box on a grid – and thus won't identify any hunter's "spot."

You can find your grid ID online. Go to fw.ky.gov/CWD and scroll down to find the "Know Before You Go" box. Either type the address or enlarge the map to find your hunting spot. The grid ID appears as a seven-character number that includes two letters and five numerals.

Report sick or dead deer or elk



Fill out an online form by scanning this code or call 1-800-858-1549 from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Eastern) weekdays.

system designed to obtain samples of harvested deer for testing.

Within the 23 counties in the CWD Surveillance Zone, requirements include mandatory in-person checks of harvested deer and mandatory drop-offs of deer heads, depending upon the season and county. Requirements apply to all hunters, including landowners, youth and license-exempt hunters.

• **Mandatory drop-offs:** Testing is mandatory for deer harvested during a special antlerless-only CWD season Sept. 25-28. That season allows the use of firearms (and other methods) in Zone 1-3 counties in the CWD Surveillance Zone. Hunters must drop off that deer's head to an unstaffed CWD Sample Drop-off Site or request a CWD Sample Mail-In kit by going online at fw.ky.gov/Wildlife/Pages/mail-in-kit.aspx. This requirement applies no matter what method of take is used, and the

antlerless restriction applies to all methods in these Zone 1-3 counties during those four days. (However, hunters in Zone 4 counties in the CWD Surveillance Zone cannot use a firearm during those four days, are not restricted to antlerless deer, and do not

have to drop off samples for testing.) See "CWD Sample Drop-off Sites" in this section for details.

- **Mandatory check:** All deer harvested during the first three days of modern firearm season (Nov. 14-16) in Pulaski, Wayne, McCreary and Henderson counties must be taken by the hunter to a staffed check station in those counties. See "Staffed CWD Check Stations" for details. They cannot be mailed in.
- **Voluntary sampling:** In CWD Surveillance Zone counties other than those four counties, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife staff will be at various processors during weekends of the modern firearms season asking hunters for voluntary samples.

Outside the CWD Surveillance Zone, testing is free and voluntary. Hunters who are concerned about CWD can have their deer tested by dropping its head off at a CWD Sample Drop-off Site or by requesting a mail-in-kit. These hunters will be entered in a giveaway. See "CWD Sample Drop-off Sites" for details.

STAFFED CWD CHECK STATIONS

- Open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. (local time), Nov. 14-16.
- **Counties:** Pulaski, Wayne, McCreary and Henderson (two stations per county).
- **What you can bring:** An intact deer, field-dressed deer, or the head.
- **What to provide:** Telecheck and license information, harvest location ("Know Before You Go" grid square number, GPS points, or address), taxidermist or processor information, if applicable.

STAFFED CHECK STATION LOCATIONS

County	Location Name/Address	City
Henderson	Henderson Co. Extension Office, 3341 Zion Rd.	Henderson
Henderson	Sloughs WMA, 9956 KY 268	Corydon
McCreary	Beaver Creek WMA, 11990 North Hwy 27	Parkers Lake
McCreary	McCreary Co. Extension Office, 131 S. Hwy 27	Whitley City
Pulaski	Pulaski Co. Extension Office, 90 UK Extension Blvd.	Somerset
Pulaski	Dabney Fire Dept., 5600 Highway 39	Somerset
Wayne	Susie Fire Dept., 7491 West KY 90	Monticello
Wayne	Rock Life Offroad, 2870 East KY 90	Monticello

Need more information?

- Visit fw.ky.gov/CWD
- Call 1-800-858-1549 from 8 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Eastern) weekdays
- Email: info.center@ky.gov

CWD SAMPLE DROP-OFF SITES

(For both mandatory and voluntary drop-offs)

- **When:** Available statewide, 24/7 throughout deer season.
- **Where:** A list of sites can be found online at fw.ky.gov/CWD. If your deer was harvested within the CWD Surveillance Zone, you must use a drop-off site located in the same zone. If harvested outside the CWD Surveillance Zone, use any drop-off site.

- **How:** Sites are unstaffed but provide instructions, bags and tags. Use your own knife or saw.
- **What:** The head with at least 5 inches of neck attached. Remove antlers of bucks before submission (caped/skull-capped heads with 5 inches of neck are acceptable).
- **Forms:** You must provide a Telecheck confirmation number, hunting license information, contact information and harvest location (see the "Know Before You Go" box in this section).

- For a "how to" video, see fw.ky.gov/CWD.
- Deer heads left at drop-off sites will not be returned. Each sample enters the hunter into the Shoot for Samples giveaway (search for "shoot for samples" at fw.ky.gov).
- Test results are typically available four to six weeks after the sample arrives at the lab. To see your results, go to the CWD Test Results Look-Up link at fw.ky.gov/CWD and follow directions.

KENTUCKY'S TOP BUCKS

200 0/8

Rachel Walbert

Metcalfe County
Non-typical
Modern Gun



171 2/8

Brayden Barnett

Rockcastle County
Typical
Modern Gun



BOONE & CROCKETT / POPE & YOUNG 2025 SEASON - TYPICAL

SCORE	Hunter	County	Method
184 5/8	Lance Hale	Clark	Modern gun
173 3/8	Jacob Coburn	Bourbon	Found
173	Scotty S. Sanders	Woodford	Crossbow
171 2/8	Brayden Barnett	Rockcastle	Modern gun
167 2/8	Colton Patrick	Bourbon	Modern gun
164 6/8	Jeffrey Hamilton	Breathitt	Modern gun
163	Shea Walling	Scott	Archery
162 1/8	Michael Upchurch	Wayne	Crossbow

BOONE & CROCKETT / POPE & YOUNG 2025 SEASON - NON-TYPICAL

SCORE	Hunter	County	Method
210 6/8	Kevin Menkedick	Harrison	Archery
201 4/8	Charles Burns	Laurel	Found
201 2/8	Christopher Key	Taylor	Modern gun
200	Rachel Walbert	Metcalfe	Modern gun
186 6/8	Andy Shepherd	Trigg	Modern gun
186 2/8	Joe White	Casey	Modern gun
185	Brady Lawson	Washington	Modern gun
185	Peyton McPeck	Martin	Modern gun

Lists only include Kentucky-harvested bucks reported to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

HOW TO GET ON NEXT YEAR'S TOP DEER LIST

To be eligible for next year's list a hunter must take a white-tailed deer in Kentucky this season that officially net scores 160 or higher typical, or net scores 185 or higher non-typical, as determined by the Boone and Crockett scoring system. Velvet deer scored under Pope and Young Club system must meet these minimums for list inclusion.

No later than May 1, send the completed and signed score sheet with a photo to Kentucky Hunting & Trapping Guide, #1 Sportsman's Lane, Frankfort, KY 40601. Include the county in which the deer was taken, and the equipment used to harvest the deer. Please send a copy as score sheets and photos will not be returned. Emailed submissions to info.center@ky.gov also will be accepted. To get a list of official Boone and Crockett Club scorers in Kentucky visit: www.boone-crockett.org.

BEAR HUNTING

SEASON DATES and RESTRICTIONS

BEAR	Zone 1	Zone 2	Zone 3
Chase-Only	June 1 - Aug. 31 and Sept. 9-30, 2026		
Hunt with Dogs	Oct. 19-23, 2026	Oct. 19-23 and Oct. 29 - Nov. 6, 2026	
Archery/Crossbow	Oct. 24-26, 2026	Oct. 24-28, 2026	Sept. 19 - Oct. 2 and Oct. 24-28, 2026
Firearm	Dec. 12-14, 2026	Dec. 12-16, 2026	

The return of black bears to Kentucky led to the state's first modern hunting season in 2009. Today, both resident and nonresident hunters can pursue bears by archery, crossbow, firearm and dog(s) in the 47 counties of the state's bear zone. There is also a separate chase-only season for dog training.

- **License requirements:** All bear hunters must purchase and possess proof of a valid hunting license (unless exempt) and a valid bear permit.
- **Youth:** Hunters 15 years old and younger who use a firearm must be accompanied by an adult who shall remain in a position to take immediate control of the youth's firearm.
- **Bag limit:** One bear per license year.
- **Gender:** Bears must weigh 75 pounds or above and may be male or female, except that a female with cubs may not be taken.
- **Equipment:** Archery, crossbow and muzzleloader equipment may be used during firearm season and hunt-with-dogs season.

Increasing harvest

Harvest of black bears in Kentucky exceeded 200 in 2025 for the second year in a row, continuing an upward trend that started at three in 2010, climbed to 87 in 2020 and reached 147 in 2023.

LEGAL BEAR HUNTING EQUIPMENT

- A modern rifle of 6.5 mm (.264 caliber) or larger, with a magazine capable of holding no more than 10 rounds.
- A muzzle-loading rifle of .45 caliber or larger.
- A muzzle-loading or breech-loading shotgun no larger than 10-gauge, and no smaller than 20-gauge, firing a single projectile (slug, round ball, conical bullet or sabot bullet) only.
- A handgun loaded with center-fire cartridges with a case length of 1.285 inches or larger, firing bullets of 6.5 mm (.264 caliber) or larger designed to expand upon impact.
- Firearms may not be fully automatic (capable of firing more than one round with one trigger pull).
- Full metal jacketed or tracer bullet ammunition is prohibited.
- Archery and crossbow equipment that is legal for deer hunting.
- During the bear hunt with dogs season, hunters may only harvest a bear using a legal weapon assisted by dogs that are actively pursuing, chasing, baying or treeing a bear prior to harvest. Dogs must be included on the department-approved breed list for bear season, found online at fw.ky.gov.

- **Other equipment:** Predator calls and decoys are allowed. Bait and other substances capable of luring bears are not allowed, including garbage.
- **Dens:** Bears in dens may not be disturbed or harvested, and bears feeding at a trash can or Dumpster may not be shot.
- **Hunter orange:** Required for bear hunters and those accompanying them (including during the hunt-with-dogs season), and any person hunting or chasing in the bear zone during a firearm season for bears, deer or elk. Not required during the archery/crossbow-only season.
- **Dogs:** Leashed tracking dogs may be used to recover wounded bears in any season. Dogs may not be used to hunt bears during the archery/crossbow or modern gun seasons. Dogs used in hunting must be on the department-approved breed list.
- **Public lands:** Public areas within the bear zone can be hunted except for the restrictions below.

TAGGING / TELECHECKING

Hunters who harvest a bear must telecheck it by 8 p.m. (EST). Prior to moving harvested bears from the Bear Zone, hunters must call Kentucky Fish

BEAR HUNTING ZONES



and Wildlife at 1-800-858-1549 within 24 hours of harvest to arrange for a physical check of the animal and to receive a tag. Bears physically checked must include a carcass or an intact hide that contains the skull and proof of sex (i.e. intact hide or genitalia attached to removed hide).

CHASE-ONLY SEASON WITH DOGS

Kentucky also offers a bear chase-only season, also known as dog training season.

- **License requirements:** Participants must purchase and carry proof of an annual hunting license (unless exempt) and either a bear chase permit, youth bear chase permit, or a combination bear (hunt and chase) permit.
- **Hours:** Bears can be chased during legal daylight hours only.
- **Bait etc.:** Hunters cannot chase bears from a baited area while bait is present or for 30 days after the bait has been removed. They also can't disturb bears from a den.
- **Seasons:** Participants with a valid chase permit can chase bears during both the chase-only season and the bear-hunt-with-dogs-season.
- **Public lands:** See below.

PUBLIC LAND RESTRICTIONS

- Bear chase ("dog training") is not permitted on any WMA until the third Saturday in August.
- Bear chase and hunting with dogs are not allowed in: Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Cane Creek WMA, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, Daniel Boone National Forest, Beaver Creek

WMA, Hensley-Pine Mountain WMA, Kingdom Come State Park, Mill Creek WMA, Miller-Welch Central Kentucky WMA, Pioneer Weapons WMA and Redbird WMA.

- Both chasing and hunting bears (by all methods) are not allowed in Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Cumberland Gap National Historical Park, Hensley-Pine Mountain WMA, and Kingdom Come State Park.

Q: Is it legal to shoot a bear that is feeding at a trash can or dumpster?

A: No. Garbage is considered bait.

MIGRATORY BIRDS and WATERFOWL

HUNTING SEASONS

MIGRATORY BIRDS (WEBLESS FEET)	Season Dates	Daily Limit	Possession Limit
Dove	Sept. 1 - Oct. 26; Nov. 26 - Dec. 6 and Dec. 19, 2026 - Jan. 10, 2027*	15	45
Virginia & Sora Rail	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9, 2026	25 singly or combined	75
Woodcock	Oct. 24 - Nov. 13 and Nov. 16 - Dec. 9, 2026	3	9
Snipe	Sept. 16 - Oct. 25 and Nov. 26, 2026 - Jan. 31, 2027	8	24
Common & Purple Gallinule	Sept. 1 - Nov. 9, 2026	3 singly or combined	9
Sandhill Crane	Dec. 7, 2026 - Jan. 31, 2027	1 or 2†	3

* Dove fields leased by the department from private landowners are open to hunting only on Sept. 1 and from Sept. 5 - Oct. 26.

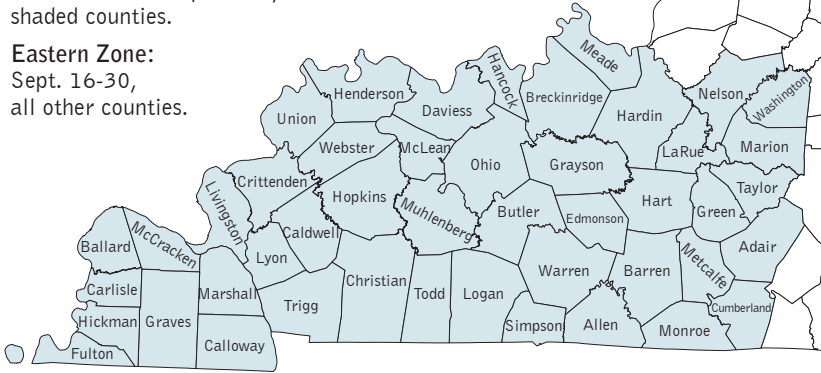
† For information on sandhill cranes' bag limits and permits, see the Waterfowl Quota Hunts section.

WATERFOWL	Season Dates	Daily Limit	Possession Limit
Teal & Wood Duck	Sept. 19-23, 2026	6; may include no more than 2 wood ducks	18; may include no more than 6 wood ducks
Sept. Canada Goose, Western Zone	Sept. 1-15, 2026	5	15
Sept. Canada Goose, Eastern Zone	Sept. 16-30, 2026	5	15
Duck	Nov. 26-29 and Dec. 7, 2026 - Jan. 31, 2027	6; may include no more than 4 mallards (only 2 of which may be hens), 3 wood ducks, 2 red-heads, 3 pintails, 2 black ducks, and 2 canvasback. 1 scaup Nov. 26-29 and Dec. 7-17; and 2 scaup Dec. 18 - Jan. 31.	Triple the daily bag limit
Coot		15	45
Merganser		5; only 2 may be hooded	Triple the daily bag limit
Canada/Cackling Goose, White-Fronted Goose & Brant	Nov. 26, 2026 - Feb. 15, 2027	5 combined; 3 Canada geese, 2 white-fronted geese and 1 brant	Triple the daily bag limit
Snow Goose (including Ross' Goose)		20	60
Youth-only Waterfowl	Nov. 21, 2026; Feb. 13, 2027	Same as regular season. Scaup limit is 2 scaup daily.	
Military/Veteran-only Waterfowl	Nov. 22, 2026; Feb. 14, 2027		
Falconry (ducks, coots & mergansers)	Nov. 26, 2026 - Feb. 21, 2027	3	9
Falconry (geese)	Nov. 26, 2026 - Feb. 15, 2027	Same as regular season	
Light Goose Conservation Order	Feb. 16 - Mar. 31, 2027	none	none

SEPTEMBER SEASON GOOSE ZONES

Western Zone: Sept. 1-15,
shaded counties.

Eastern Zone:
Sept. 16-30,
all other counties.



SHOOTING HOURS (WATERFOWL)

Regular

One-half hour before
sunrise to sunset

Exceptions:

Snow Goose Conservation Order

One-half hour before
sunrise to one-half
hour after sunset

Wildlife Management Areas

One half-hour before
sunrise to sunset, un-
less otherwise noted
in the Waterfowl
Hunting Guide, avail-
able in fall online at
fw.ky.gov.

From doves and woodcock to geese and wood ducks, Kentucky offers a variety of migratory bird and waterfowl hunting opportunities throughout the fall and winter.

The following section provides general information. For complete regulations, season details and additional hunting opportunities, visit fw.ky.gov and review the migratory birds and waterfowl webpages and the annual Kentucky Hunting Guide for Migratory Birds and Waterfowl.

LICENSE / SURVEY REQUIREMENTS

All hunters who pursue migratory birds and waterfowl in Kentucky must adhere to four requirements:

- Obtain and carry a hunting license (unless exempt).
- Obtain and carry a state-issued migratory bird/waterfowl permit (unless exempt and unless under 16).
- Obtain, carry and sign a federal duck stamp before hunting waterfowl (unless under 16). **(Federal duck stamps are now available through Kentucky's license purchasing system. Electronically purchased stamps (E-Stamps) will appear on a hunter's license and do not require a signature. Physical duck stamps purchased in person must still be signed.)**
- Complete the Harvest Information Program migratory bird harvest survey through the My Profile function at fw.ky.gov. Make sure to record the confirmation number on your hunting license or permit. Or, if you reprint your license, the confirmation number should appear on it.

SHOOTING HOURS (MIGRATORY BIRDS)

Dove, private land

Sept. 1 only: 11 a.m. to sunset. Remainder of dove season: one-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Dove, public land (WMAs, leased fields)

Sept. 1 - Oct. 26: 11 a.m. to sunset (when fields are open). Second and third segments of dove season: one-half hour before sunrise to sunset

Sandhill crane

Sunrise to sunset (quota hunt only)

All other species

One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

SEASONS / SHOOTING HOURS / BAG LIMITS

Pay close attention. Seasons, bag limits, shooting hours and legal equipment vary by species and sometimes by location and within a season itself. "Daily limit" refers to the number of birds which may be taken during a one-day period. "Possession limit" refers to the maximum number of birds a hunter may possess after two or more days of hunting. You cannot possess more than a one-day limit in the field.

OTHER REGULATIONS

- **Bait:** Hunting doves or waterfowl over a baited field is illegal.
- **Shot:** Lead shot is prohibited when hunting waterfowl or sandhill cranes. It is also prohibited for doves and certain other migratory birds on some public lands.
- **Shotguns:** Must be plugged to hold a maximum of three shells, except during the light goose conservation order season.
- **Bird ID:** Many birds and waterfowl require a fully feathered wing or the head to be left on each bird after field-dressing.

PUBLIC LANDS

Kentucky offers many opportunities for migratory bird and waterfowl hunters, including public dove fields, quota hunts, youth-mentor hunts and waterfowl-focused Wildlife Management Areas. For details, see the Public Lands and Quota Hunts sections of this guide, as well as online resources at fw.ky.gov.

MILITARY, YOUTH-ONLY WATERFOWL SEASONS

Additional waterfowl hunting days are available for youth, active-duty military personnel and veterans. Youths must be under the age of 16 on the day of the hunt. Military seasons are for military on active duty and honorably discharged veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces only. Per federal rule, National Guard members and reservists are eligible only if they are on active duty. License requirements apply.

ELK HUNTING

DATES, RESTRICTIONS and HOW TO APPLY

QUOTA ELK	Bull (antlered)	Cow (antlerless)
Firearms	Week 1: Sept. 26-30, 2026 Week 2: Oct. 3-7, 2026	Week 1: Nov. 28 - Dec. 2, 2026 Week 2: Jan. 2-6, 2027
Archery / Crossbow (either sex)	Sept. 12-25 and Dec. 5-11, 2026	
Youth-only Quota (either sex)	All seasons as noted above	

The restoration of Kentucky's elk herd, by far the nation's largest east of the Mississippi River, presents exciting opportunities for hundreds of hunters each year. With a few exceptions, hunters who want to pursue elk in the state must apply for a quota permit and be chosen during the annual quota hunt drawing.

QUOTA HUNTS

- **Applications:** Elk quota applications go on sale Aug. 1 each year for the following year's elk hunts, and hunters must buy their applications before midnight (EST) on April 30 of the hunt year. Applications can be purchased online at fw.ky.gov or wherever licenses are sold.
- **Permit types:** Residents and nonresidents may apply for up to three permit types (bull firearm, cow firearm or either sex archery/crossbow), but hunters can be drawn for only one permit

Elk hunt deadlines

Aug. 1: First day to apply for an elk hunt (for the following year).

April 30: Last day to apply for an elk hunt (for that year's hunt).

June 15: Deadline for drawn hunters to buy permit; unclaimed permits redistributed for elk loyalty redraw.

June 30: Deadline for elk loyalty redraw winners to buy permit.

June 30: Deadline to apply for hunting unit; unit assigned to those who do not apply.

type. The application for each costs \$10. Only one person is allowed on each application.

- **Youth:** Hunters under 16 may apply during the same application period for a separate youth-only quota hunt. They also may apply for the regular elk quota hunts. They can be drawn for only one hunt in the same year and if drawn must buy the permit that applies to that hunt – youth permit for the youth-only quota hunt, and full price antlered or antlerless elk permit for the regular quota hunt. A youth hunter may only be drawn only once for a youth-only permit in their lifetime.
- **Selection:** A random computer drawing held in May will select the names of hunters eligible to hunt for each of the quota permit types and the specific time periods they are allowed to hunt. Hunters can verify whether they were drawn by accessing My Profile on fw.ky.gov, the website of Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. Drawn hunters will obtain additional information about their hunt on My Profile.
- **License requirements:** Unless license exempt, hunters drawn for a quota elk permit must buy both an annual hunting license and a permit. Hunters must buy their permit by midnight (Eastern time) June 15 or lose it. Permits are available online at fw.ky.gov or through hunting license vendors. Hunters awarded an elk permit cannot reapply for three years.
- **Loyalty redraw:** Permits not purchased by the deadline will be reassigned to the Elk Loyalty Redraw program, a secondary drawing that favors long-

LEGAL ELK HUNTING EQUIPMENT

- A modern rifle of .270 caliber or larger with a magazine capable of holding no more than 10 rounds.
- A muzzle-loading rifle of .50 caliber or larger.
- A muzzle-loading or breech-loading shotgun no smaller than 20-gauge, firing a single projectile (slug, round ball, conical bullet or sabot bullet) only.
- A handgun loaded with center-fire cartridges with a case length of 1.285 inches or larger, firing bullets of .270 caliber or larger designed to expand upon impact.
- Firearms may not be fully-automatic (capable of firing more than one round with one trigger pull).
- Full metal jacketed or tracer bullet ammunition is prohibited.
- Crossbows or archery equipment (long bows, recurves or compound bow) loaded with a fixed blade or mechanical broadheads at least 7/8" wide (when blades extended), but broadheads may not be chemically treated. Crossbows must have a working safety.
- Note: Hunters may use archery or crossbows during the bull or cow firearms hunts.

time Kentucky applicants who have never been drawn (note these hunters' names are automatically entered if they applied for that year's elk hunts).

- **Where to hunt:** Quota hunts take place within one of six hunting units that make up the 4.1 million-acre Kentucky Elk Management Zone. Counties in this zone are: Bell, Breathitt, Clay, Floyd, Harlan, Johnson, Knott, Knox, Leslie, Letcher, Magoffin, Martin, McCreary, Perry, Pike and Whitley. Each unit contains a mixture of public and private land in addition to regulated areas, which allow restricted public access. Hunters will be assigned to a unit via a separate drawing in July. Details on how to apply for preferred units can be found on the elk webpage on fw.ky.gov and in the letter found on My Profile. Once hunters are assigned a unit, it is their responsibility to find a place to hunt in that unit. Hunters must get landowner permission to hunt on private land.

ELK HUNTING REGULATIONS

- **Vehicle tag:** All elk hunters must display a department-issued hang tag in their vehicles while hunting.
- **Assistants:** Elk hunters may be accompanied by any number of assistants, but only the permit holder is allowed to hunt.
- **Baiting:** Hunting over a baited area within 30 days of bait being removed is prohibited. Baiting for elk is prohibited on public lands.
- **Calling:** A person shall not mimic the sound of an elk on public land open to elk hunting from Sept. 1 until the opening of the elk archery/crossbow season.
- **Shooting hours:** Elk may be hunted only during daylight hours, from 30 minutes before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.
- **Bag limit:** The season bag limit on elk is one per hunter per season, regardless of permit type. Hunters who take an elk during a quota elk hunt may not take an out-of-zone elk during the same season.
- **Hunter orange:** Elk hunters and those who accompany them

must comply with the hunter orange clothing law, as must any other person hunting public or private lands in the elk zone during firearm elk seasons.

- **Checking and tagging:** Hunters must immediately record all harvested elk on their hunter harvest log. They also must report the harvest via Telecheck at 1-800-245-4263 or online by midnight on the day the animal is harvested or recovered. See the "General Information" section for details.
- **Head removal:** After harvesting an elk and recording the animal on a harvest log, a hunter may remove its head to facilitate its removal from the field prior to it being telechecked (although the Telecheck requirements still apply). If the hide or head of the elk is removed in the field – to quarter the animal, for example – it is necessary to demonstrate proof of sex by retaining the head or keeping the genitalia attached to the carcass.
- **Carcass tag:** A carcass tag is required if a harvested elk leaves the hunter's possession for any reason.

OUTSIDE THE ELK ZONE

Non-drawn hunters may harvest an elk outside the 16-county elk zone during legal deer-hunting seasons if they buy an annual hunting license and an Out-of-Zone Elk Permit. Those hunters must use only legal elk hunting equipment

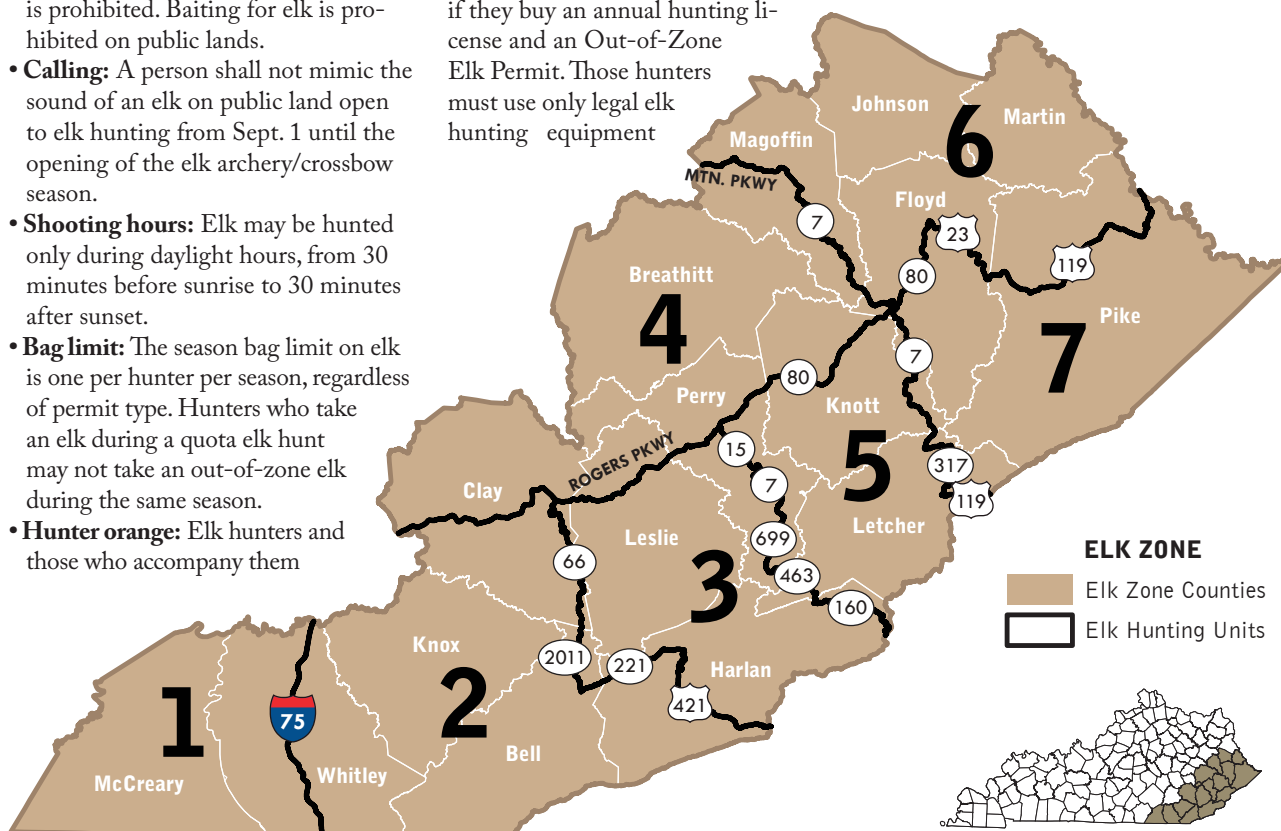
and follow deer season regulations, although they are not required to possess a statewide Deer Permit.

POST-SEASON ELK HUNTING SURVEY

All quota elk hunters (regardless of whether they harvest an elk) must complete a postseason survey no later than the last day of February after the season. The survey will be accessible through the My Profile feature on the website. Any elk hunter who fails to submit the completed survey will be ineligible to apply for any state-administered quota hunt (deer, waterfowl or upland game) or a no-hunt option the following year.

ATTENTION LANDOWNERS

If you own or lease 100 or more acres in the 16-county elk management zone, you can earn an elk hunting permit for yourself or a friend through the Voucher Cooperator Elk Permit Program. Through the program, you allow elk quota permit hunters access to your property. Once those hunters take 10 animals, you receive an either-sex elk hunting permit good during the following season. To learn more, fill out a contact form on the elk hunting webpage or call 1-800-858-1549.



FALL TURKEY HUNTING

SEASON DATES and RESTRICTIONS

FALL TURKEY	Shotgun	Archery	Crossbow
	Oct. 24-30 and Dec. 5-11, 2026	Sept. 5, 2026 - Jan. 18, 2027	Oct. 1-18 and Nov. 14 - Dec. 31, 2026

BAG LIMITS

Properly licensed hunters can take up to two turkeys during the fall season (but only one a day) using a variety of take methods, even if they harvested two birds in the spring. Of the two birds that can be harvested in the fall, only one may have a beard 3 inches or longer, and only one may have no beard or a beard under 3 inches.

PERMIT REQUIREMENTS

Adult hunters: Unless exempt, turkey hunters ages 16 and older must carry in the field proof of a valid Kentucky annual hunting license and fall turkey permit, which is valid for the fall archery, crossbow and shotgun turkey seasons. (Both the license and permit are included in the resident-only Sportsman's, Senior, and Disabled licenses). One- and seven-day hunting licenses are not valid

for turkey hunting.

Youth hunters: Turkey hunters younger than 12 are not required to buy a hunting license or turkey permit but must abide by season limits, harvest restrictions and supervision requirements. Turkey hunters ages 12-15, unless exempt, must carry in the field proof of a valid Kentucky hunting license and turkey permit.

Youth hunters ages 12-15 may buy a youth turkey permit. This allows them to take one turkey during the fall or spring turkey seasons. (Youths can buy more than one youth permit but must abide by season bag limits and harvest restrictions.) Resident youth hunters also may use a Youth Sportsman's License. This allows them to take two turkeys each season, spring and fall.

A hunter who turns 16 during a license year can use a youth hunting license and permits during the entire license year as long as they were bought before that 16th birthday.

Children under 16 who are hunting turkeys must be accompanied by an adult in position to take immediate control of the firearm at all times.

HUNTING REGULATIONS:

• **Caller/assistant:** Callers and helpers who are not hunting are not required to possess a hunting license or turkey permit and may carry equipment, including guns, while in the field.

• **Baiting:** Hunters may not use bait to lure wild turkeys. This includes sites baited for other wildlife, such as deer. Fall turkey hunters shall not hunt within 600 feet of a baited site nor for 30 days after bait is removed. This prohibition does not apply to agricultural practices or planted food plots.

• **Roosting:** It is illegal to shoot a roosting turkey.

• **Decoys:** Live turkeys cannot be used as decoys.

• **Dogs:** Dogs may be used in the fall season to locate and flush turkeys.

• **Method of take:** Special equipment restrictions may apply on some WMAs.

• **Hunter orange:** Not required for turkey hunters, except in areas where deer, bear or elk are being hunted with a firearm.

• **Calling devices:** Hunters can use hand- or mouth-operated calls but not electronic calling devices.

• **Recording and tagging:** All harvested turkeys must be recorded on a hunter's harvest log and reported by phone or online via Telecheck. Consult the "General Information" section of this guide to learn about harvest logs, Telecheck and carcass tags.

• **Bands:** Hunters who harvest a turkey with a green or silver metal leg band should report band information. Search for "turkey band" at fw.ky.gov to learn more.

LEGAL FALL TURKEY HUNTING EQUIPMENT

- Breech-loading or muzzle-loading shotguns no larger than 10 gauge and no smaller than .410.
- Breech-loading shotguns must be plugged to hold a maximum of three shells (two in magazine and one in chamber).
- Lead or non-toxic shot no larger than No. 4.
- Longbows, recurve bows and compound bows of any draw weight (no minimum).
- Crossbows of any draw weight (no minimum) with a working safety device.
- Non-barbed broadheads with a minimum cutting diameter of 7/8-inch, whether expandable or non-expandable.

HELP WATCH FOR TURKEYS IN SUMMER

Help Kentucky Fish and Wildlife track trends in turkey populations by recording all observations of turkeys – not only hens and poults but also gobblers – during July and August. Report your observations either online, via a smart phone app or by mail. For details and a form (and to see past results), search for "turkey brood survey" at fw.ky.gov.



FURBEARER HUNTING and TRAPPING

SEASON DATES and RESTRICTIONS

FURBEARERS	Hunting	Trapping
Raccoon & Opossum	Oct. 1, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027, day* or night (exceptions apply)	Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027 Water sets: Nov. 16, 2026 - March 31, 2027
Coyote	Year-round, day or night (exceptions apply)	
Bobcat†	Nov. 21, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027 (daylight hours only)**	
River Otter, Muskrat, Mink, Beaver, Red Fox, Gray Fox, Weasel & Striped Skunk	Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027 (daylight hours only)**	
Free Youth Hunting & Trapping Week	Dec. 26, 2026 - Jan. 1, 2027	

FURBEARER BAG LIMITS	
Raccoon & Opossum	No limit
Coyote	No limit
Bobcat†	5; no more than 3 of which shall be taken with a gun**
River Otter	10; only 6 of which can be taken from Otter Zone 2**
Muskrat, Mink, Beaver, Red Fox, Gray Fox, Weasel & Striped Skunk	No limit

A “furbearer” means mink, muskrat, beaver, raccoon, opossum, gray fox, red fox, least weasel, long-tailed weasel, river otter, bobcat, coyote, or striped skunk. See the “furbearer” page at fw.ky.gov for comprehensive information about these species, as well as hunting and trapping regulations.

COYOTES

Coyotes may be hunted year-round

† Bobcat permit required for bobcat hunters.

*See exception in “Raccoon and Opossum” section.

**See the “Changes Pending” box on page 25.

on private land and public land (with some exceptions), day or night. A hunting license is required.

Lights: Hunters may use artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night only during these periods: Dec. 1 – March 31 and May 16 – June 30. Artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night cannot be connected to or cast from a mechanized vehicle.

Coyote hunters with valid Mobility-Impaired Access Permits or Hunting Methods Exemption Vehicle Permits may use a stationary vehicle as a hunting platform and may use lights or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night so long as the means used are not connected to the vehicle.

Method of take: See the “Legal Methods and Equipment” box in this section for approved hunting methods during daylight hours. Legal methods differ after daylight: On private land and on public lands open to nighttime coyote hunting, coyote hunters after daylight hours may use only a bow,

crossbow, or shotgun loaded with a multiple projectile shell. However, Dec. 1 – March 31 and May 16 – June 30, hunters on private land at night may also use a muzzleloader of .54-caliber or less, a shotgun firing a single projectile, and any modern firearm loading from the rear of the barrel.

Coyotes can be trapped only during furbearer trapping seasons.

Prohibited areas: Hunting for coyote is prohibited on Cedar Creek Lake and Miller-Welch Central Kentucky WMAs.

Night hunting is not allowed in a county or area where a deer or elk firearm season is open. Also, night hunting for coyotes is prohibited on Kentucky lands managed by Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Daniel Boone National Forest (including Beaver Creek, Cane Creek, Mill Creek, Pioneer Weapons and Redbird Wildlife Management Areas), George Washington and Jefferson National Forests, Land Between The Lakes National Recreation Area, Clarks River National Wildlife

RIVER OTTER ZONES

ZONE 1: Anderson, Ballard, Bath, Boone, Bourbon, Bracken, Breckinridge, Bullitt, Caldwell, Calloway, Campbell, Carlisle, Carroll, Christian, Crittenden, Daviess, Fayette, Fleming, Franklin, Fulton, Gallatin, Grant, Graves, Grayson, Hancock, Haradin, Harrison, Henderson, Henry, Hickman, Hopkins, Jefferson, Kenton, LaRue, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, Mason, Meade, McCracken, McLean, Muhlenberg, Nelson, Nicholas, Ohio, Oldham, Owen, Pendleton, Robertson, Rowan, Scott, Shelby, Spencer, Trigg, Trimble, Union, Webster and Woodford. **ZONE 2:** All other counties.

LEGAL METHODS and EQUIPMENT FOR HUNTING FURBEARERS

(see Special Hunting Restrictions section for exceptions)

- Centerfire or rimfire rifle.
- Muzzle-loading rifle or handgun.
- Muzzle-loading or breech-loading shotguns no larger than 10 gauge. Breech-loading shotguns must be plugged to hold a maximum of three shells (two in magazine and one in chamber). There is no limit on shot size. Shotguns must be shouldered fired.
- Shot shells with a single projectile may only be used during daylight hours.
- Bow and arrow or crossbow.
- Air guns with pellets that are at least .22 caliber in size.
- Manual or electronic calls, or attracting devices.
- Falconry.
- Dogs.

Refuge, Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge, Green River National Wildlife Refuge, and Fort Knox Military Reservation..

Calls, decoys: Hand- or mouth-operated calls – including electronic calls that imitate wounded prey and coyote calling – are legal. Static or electronic decoys are also legal.

Bait: It is legal to hunt coyotes over animal carcasses, which are considered bait. However, a hunter shall not place or distribute bait or otherwise participate in baiting wildlife on all WMAs, Big South Fork National River and Recreation Area, Daniel Boone National Forest, Jefferson National Forest, Land Between The Lakes and state parks open to hunting.

BOBCATS

Bobcat hunters must carry a valid hunting license (unless exempt) and a bobcat permit.

RACCOONS and OPOSSUMS

During modern gun deer season, raccoon and opossum hunters may not hunt during daylight hours, which start 30 minutes before sunrise and end 30

LEGAL METHODS and EQUIPMENT FOR TRAPPING FURBEARERS

Trappers may use lights from boats or vehicles to check traps.

Traps may not be placed in trails or paths commonly used by people or domestic animals.

There are no restrictions on the size or type of trap used as a water set, except that any body-gripping trap greater than 20 inches wide must be placed so the trap is completely submerged under water. A water set is a trap placed in the water of a river, stream, pond, lake, wetland or other body of water so that a portion of the trap body is underwater.

The following equipment is permitted for dry land sets. A dry land set is a trap placed so that no portion of the trap touches the water of a river, stream, pond, lake, wetland or other water course.

- Deadfall.
- Wire cage or box trap.
- Foothold traps with a maximum inside jaw spread of 6 inches measured perpendicular to the hinges.
- On private land, a body-gripping trap with a maximum inside jaw

spread of 7½ inches measured parallel with the trigger.

- On wildlife management areas, a body-gripping trap with a maximum inside jaw spread of 5¼ inches.
- Snare. A snare means a wire, cable, or string with a knot, loop, or a single piece closing device, the deployment of which is or is not spring-assisted, but any spring-assisted device is not for the purpose of applying tension to the closing device.

On wildlife management areas, dry land sets may not be placed closer than 10 feet apart.

On private land, dry land sets may not be placed closer than 10 feet apart unless the person trapping has written permission from the landowner or the landowner's designee, except there shall not be more than three traps placed within any 10-foot spacing. The trap spacing requirement does not apply to wire cage or box traps or on properties of 5 acres or less.

minutes after sunset. This prohibition begins 30 minutes before sunrise on Saturday, Nov. 14.

A hunter shall not use a light from a boat to take raccoons or opossums.

A person shall not use the following while chasing raccoon or opossum from noon March 1 through Sept. 30: a firearm, a slingshot, tree climber or any device to kill, injure or force a raccoon or opossum from a tree or den.

SPECIAL TRAPPING RULES

Trap tags: All traps must bear a metal tag giving either 1) the trapper's name and address or 2) the trapper's Kentucky Fish and Wildlife customer ID number (or trapper identification number) along with the 1-800-25-ALERT hotline phone number. Any trap found without a tag can be immediately confiscated by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. Trappers must keep their address and phone updated through My Profile.

Monitoring: All traps must be visited at least once every 24 hours and all

animals removed. Trappers must harvest furbearers upon capture, unless they possess a captive wildlife permit from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

Hunter orange: Trappers must adhere to hunter orange requirements during the day in any area where a firearm season is in session for deer, elk or bear.

Protected: Spotted skunks are protected year round and may not be taken or possessed. Report incidental trappings to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

Interference: It is illegal to intentionally obstruct or disrupt the right of a person to lawfully take wildlife by trapping.

HARVEST REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Harvested bobcats and otters must be documented on a hunter harvest log or index card before moving the carcass. In addition, the harvest must be reported via the Telecheck system by either calling 1-800-245-4263 or going online at fw.ky.gov by midnight on the day the

animal is recovered. Other Telecheck and harvest log requirements apply. The harvest must be reported before processing the carcass and before transporting the raw fur, pelt or unskinned carcass out of Kentucky.

A hunter or trapper who is having a bobcat or otter mounted must provide their name, telephone number and Telecheck confirmation number to the taxidermist and attach a tag to the carcass with that information.

CITES TAGGING

A Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) tag, issued by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, must be attached to the raw fur, pelt or unskinned carcass of any bobcat or river otter taken in Kentucky if the hunter or trapper intends to sell it or export it internationally.

You can request a CITES tag through My Profile at fw.ky.gov. It must be attached immediately to the animal or pelt upon receipt. If not used, the CITES tag must be returned to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

BUYING and SELLING HIDES

There is no time restriction on the holding of raw furs of furbearers by a trapper or hunter after the close of fur-

Changes pending

Proposed regulation changes would increase the bag limits for otter and bobcat and change the hours during which beaver and bobcat could be hunted.

These proposals are pending. Since regulations are subject to change after the printing of this guide, hunters should go online to fw.ky.gov to verify the status of these proposals.

bearer season. Raw furs may be sold only to licensed taxidermists, licensed fur buyers or licensed fur processors.

FREE YOUTH WEEK

Resident and nonresident youth hunters and trappers under 16 may hunt and trap furbearers without a hunting or trapping license for seven consecutive days starting the Saturday after Christmas, which this year is Dec. 26.

Hunter orange clothing must be worn by all hunters and trappers Dec. 26-27, 2026, since youth hunters can hunt deer with firearms at that time.

Youth hunters must comply with equipment regulations and bag limits for furbearers when hunting or trapping.



OTTER, BOBCAT JAWS NEEDED

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife is requesting lower jaws from harvested bobcats and river otters to monitor populations. To request a sample packet and instructions, go online at fw.ky.gov and find the Furbearer Hunting and Trapping page by searching for the keyword "Furbearers." Scroll down to find the "We need your help!" box and click "Request a Sample Packet." Or call 1-800-858-1549.

Hunter education is not required for license-exempt hunters. Adults accompanying youth hunters/trappers do not need a license if they are not hunting/trapping.

SMALL GAME HUNTING and TRAPPING

SEASON DATES and RESTRICTIONS

SMALL GAME		Hunting	Trapping
Squirrel		Aug. 15 - Nov. 13 and Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027	Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027
Rabbit	Eastern Zone	Nov. 1-13 and Nov. 16, 2026 - Jan. 31, 2027	Nov. 16, 2026 - Jan. 31, 2027
	Western Zone	Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 10, 2027	Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 10, 2027
Quail	Eastern Zone	Nov. 1-13 and Nov. 16, 2026 - Jan. 31, 2027	No trapping
	Western Zone	Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 10, 2027	
Ruffed Grouse (Grouse Zone only)		Nov. 1-13 and Nov. 16, 2026 - Feb. 28, 2027	
Falconry		Sept. 1, 2026 - March 30, 2027	
Free Youth Hunting & Trapping Week		Dec. 26, 2026 - Jan. 1, 2027	

RABBIT and QUAIL ZONES

Western Zone = shaded counties.
Eastern Zone = all other counties.

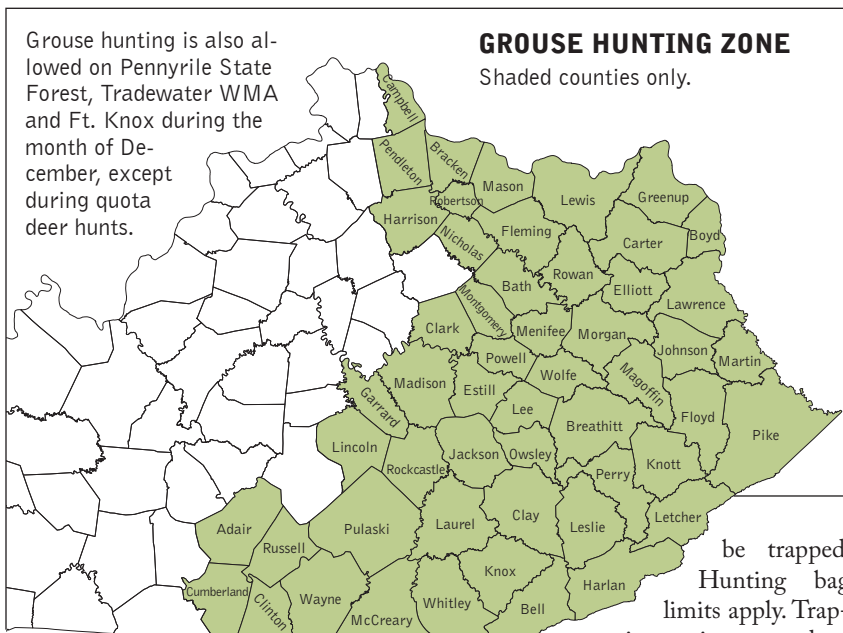
Rabbit trapping permitted only when rabbit hunting season is open in each zone.



Grouse hunting is also allowed on Pennyrite State Forest, Tradewater WMA and Ft. Knox during the month of December, except during quota deer hunts.

GROUSE HUNTING ZONE

Shaded counties only.



Kentucky's huntable small game consists of squirrels, rabbits, northern bobwhite (quail) and ruffed grouse, each with their own seasons and bag limits.

Seasons on Wildlife Management Areas and other public hunting lands not managed by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife may be different from statewide seasons. Individual area listings are available online at fw.ky.gov.

BAG LIMITS

- Squirrel: Daily limit is 6; possession limit is 12.
- Rabbit: Daily limit is 4; possession limit is 8.
- Quail: Daily limit is 8; possession limit is 16.
- Grouse: Daily limit is 4; possession limit is 8.

TRAPPING

Only rabbits and squirrels may be trapped. Quail and grouse may not

be trapped.

Hunting bag limits apply. Trapping equipment and restrictions are the same as those

listed in the furbearer section.

A trapping license is required for anyone 12 years of age and older. Trappers must harvest squirrels and rabbits upon capture, unless they possess a captive wildlife permit from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.

FREE YOUTH WEEK

Resident and nonresident youth hunters and trappers under age 16 may hunt and trap small game without a hunting or trapping license for seven consecutive days starting the Saturday after Christmas, which this year is Dec. 26.

Hunter orange clothing must be worn by all hunters Dec. 26-27, 2026, since youth hunters can hunt deer with firearms at that time.

Youth hunters must comply with equipment regulations and bag limits for small game when hunting or trapping. Hunter education is not required for license-exempt hunters. Adults ac-

LEGAL SMALL GAME HUNTING EQUIPMENT and METHODS

Hunters may only use the following to take small game during the fall and winter seasons:

- A rimfire rifle or rimfire handgun.
- .410 gauge handgun.
- Muzzle-loading or breech-loading shotguns no larger than 10-gauge. Breech-loading shotguns must be plugged to hold a maximum of three shells (two in magazine and one in chamber).
- Lead or non-toxic shot no larger than No. 2.
- Muzzle-loading rifles.
- Archery or crossbow equipment.
- Pellets fired from .177, .20, .22 or .25 caliber air guns.
- Falconry.
- Slingshots with manufactured hunting ammunition.
- Dogs may be used to aid in the hunt.

companying youth hunters/trappers during the free youth hunting and trapping week do not need a license if they are not hunting/trapping.

FALCONRY SEASON

The bag limit for this hunting method adjusts depending upon the season: When only falconry season is open, the limit is two animals of any small game or furbearer species per falconer per day. But when the hunting season is open for a species using other methods (such as firearms), the bag limit for that species is the same as for those methods.

Falconers must possess a falconry permit, which is valid for three years, and a valid Kentucky hunting license, unless license exempt. They must obey all applicable state and federal laws.

Q: Do I have to telecheck my small game?

A: No. However, hunters can supply valuable information by keeping a harvest log of every hunt. Go to fw.ky.gov and search for "Hunter cooperator" to find the forms.

OTHER SPECIES

SEASON DATES and RESTRICTIONS

OTHER SPECIES	Hunting
Crow	Sept. 1 - Nov. 7, 2026 and Jan. 4 - Feb. 28, 2027
Bullfrog	Noon May 16 - Midnight Oct. 31, 2026
Groundhog	Year-round
Turtles*	Year-round, day or night

* Alligator snapping turtles may not be harvested.

Report game violations

Anonymous tips about suspected illegal activity related to fish, wildlife or boating can be submitted through the KFWLaw smartphone app. For non-smartphones with texting capability, text the keyword "KFWLAW" along with your tip to 847411 (tip411).

BIRDS

- **House sparrows and starlings:** May be hunted year-round, with no limit, but a hunting license is required unless the hunter is license exempt.
- **Birds of prey and native songbirds:** Are protected under state and federal laws and may not be taken.
- **Pheasants:** See the Quota Hunts page for pheasant hunting seasons at Green River Lake WMA, Yellowbank WMA and Clay WMA.

BULLFROGS

Daily limit (noon to noon) is 15. Possession limit is 30. License requirements: Hunting license if taken by gun or bow and arrow. Fishing license if taken by pole and line. Either hunting license or fishing license if taken by gig or by hand. Illegal to possess a gig on a stream or lake, or in a boat, from Nov. 1 through Jan. 31.

CROWS

Hunters need hunting license (unless license exempt) but do not need a Migratory Bird/Waterfowl permit or to complete the HIP survey. Electronic or mechanical calling devices may be used during open seasons. Shooting hours are 30 minutes before sunrise until sunset. No daily or possession limit on crows.

GROUNDHOGS

Groundhogs may be hunted statewide, year-round, with no bag limit. Hunting license required (unless license exempt). Shooting hours are 30 minutes

before sunrise to 30 minutes after sunset.

HOOFED EXOTIC WILDLIFE

Exotic, non-native hooved wildlife may be hunted year-round. (This does not apply to native animals such as white-tailed deer or elk.) No license required, no bag limits, no checking requirements. However, fallow deer are not legal to hunt on Land Between The Lakes National Recreation Area.

WILD PIGS

As part of an ongoing effort to eradicate invasive wild pigs, wild pig hunting was prohibited June 6, 2024. The ban on hunting – which is an ineffective eradication strategy – removes incentives for their illegal release. Trapping by professional wild pig experts is a proven, effective means of removing wild pigs from the landscape. Wild pigs must be eradicated in Kentucky to prevent destruction of wildlife habitat, decimation of wildlife food sources such as acorns, and displacement of deer and turkey, which can affect hunter harvest.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, in partnership with USDA Wildlife Services, offers free professional trapping services to anyone experiencing damage from wild pigs. Landowners may still shoot any wild pig damaging their property, during daylight hours only, as spelled out in Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS) Chapter 150.170. Any take of a wild

pig must be reported to a game warden within 24 hours. For more information, visit online at fw.ky.gov/wildpigs.

Report wild pig sightings, damage or the release of wild pigs to www.squealonthepigs.com or download the Squeal on Pigs! app.

SPOTTED SKUNKS

The spotted skunk, a rare species found in eastern Kentucky, is protected and may not be taken. All federally threatened or endangered species are protected under state and federal laws and may not be harvested.

TURTLES

Snapping turtles (except alligator snapping turtles) and softshell turtles may be taken year-round with no bag limit but may not be harvested for commercial purposes. A hunting license is required if turtles are taken by gun or bow and arrow. Consult the Kentucky Fishing and Boating Guide at fw.ky.gov for information on other legal means of harvest.



Spotted Skunk - Protected Statewide

PUBLIC LANDS HUNTING

OVERVIEW

The Wildlife Management Area & Public Lands Search feature on fw.ky.gov is a go-to source for information about where to hunt, fish, hike and more in Kentucky.

WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife owns, leases or manages nearly 1.7 million acres across more than 130 public land areas, with one goal being to provide opportunities for hunters and others. The department also has agreements that allow public access to privately owned lands known as Hunting Access Areas.

Some public-use areas require a permit, and many have special hunting regulations and season dates that are different from statewide regulations and seasons. For information about game listed in this guide that is specific to a Wildlife Management Area (WMA), go online at fw.ky.gov and search for “public lands hunting.”

If you intend to hunt (or otherwise visit) a WMA owned or managed by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, you must comply with these guidelines, *unless otherwise noted under a specific area listing*:

- **Deer bag limits:** County zone deer bag limits apply to all WMAs. Quota deer hunters may take up to two deer on a quota hunt in Zones 2, 3 and 4, only one of which may be antlered. See the deer quota hunt listings for details. Any buck taken during a WMA quota hunt counts toward the statewide one-buck limit.
- **Two-day closure:** Hunting for squirrels, rabbits, quail, grouse and furbearers is closed the first two days of modern firearms season for deer on WMAs.
- **Dogs and leashes:** Dogs must remain leashed on WMAs from March 1 until the third Saturday in August, with these exceptions: One, if squirrel hunting during spring squirrel season. Two, during department-authorized field trials. Three, when training a retriever or other water dog if the activity is authorized by a sign at the body of water. The dog must remain leashed except while training, or within 100 feet of the water, or as stated under the area listing or posted on the WMA.
- **Quota hunts:** Quota hunts for deer, dove, waterfowl, elk, sandhill crane and pheasant require advance application, as explained in the Quota Hunts and Elk sections of this guide. Advance application is not required for other listed hunts.
- **Camping:** Camping is not allowed on WMAs unless the area has a designated location for camping. Check WMA maps at fw.ky.gov or call the WMA office.
- **Parking:** Parking only in designated parking areas if such areas exist. If no parking area is designated, parking is generally allowed alongside maintained roads provided you don't block a road or gate or prevent access to a portion of the area.
- **Vehicle access:** Mechanized vehicles (excluding wheelchairs) are permitted only on maintained roads open to public use, unless otherwise authorized by Kentucky Fish and Wildlife.
- **Damage:** It is unlawful to cut trees or fences, dump trash or litter, or damage any property or habitat in any fashion.
- **Trapping:** Before trapping on a WMA, you must complete a Public Area Trapping Registration Form and have it signed by a department Public Lands Manager/Biologist. The form is available at department offices and online at fw.ky.gov by searching for “furbearer hunting and trapping.”
- **Restricted areas:** Hunters are prohibited from entering or hunting in areas that have been designated

During quota hunts...

During a WMA deer quota hunt, as well as the open youth firearm deer hunt at Grayson Lake WMA, only participating hunters and accompanying non-hunting assistants (limit one per hunter) are allowed to be on those WMAs. Exceptions include waterfowl hunters in some areas that may be open, and if a part of the WMA is otherwise open as noted in the following area listings. Non-hunting assistants must check in and check out with the quota hunter that they are accompanying and abide by hunter orange requirements.

closed by signs.

- **Safety:** It is illegal to discharge a firearm within 100 yards of a residence or occupied building located on or off the area. It is illegal to shoot a firearm, bow or crossbow across any public roadway.
- **Baiting ban:** A person must not distribute or place bait, hunt over bait or otherwise participate in baiting wildlife on a WMA.
- **Group events:** A group of 10 or more people who gather for any event or organized activity on a WMA must apply for a permit from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at least 30 days before the date of the event. The form is available online at fw.ky.gov by searching for “Special Permits” (case sensitive) and then scrolling to the bottom of the page. An application can be denied, restricted, or rescheduled if it doesn't meet WMA user guidelines, to avoid user conflicts or for other legitimate reasons. Events may also be canceled in progress if participants fail to comply with user guidelines or create hazards or disruption for others.
- **Horses:** Horseback riding is permit-

ted on some WMAs during certain times of the year with certain restrictions. Unless hunting, horses must be ridden on designated public lands hunting horse-riding trails or a maintained public road open to vehicular traffic. Horses must not be ridden on WMAs during firearms seasons for turkey, deer, bear or elk unless participating or assisting in a legal elk hunt.

- **Deer stands, etc.:** On all WMAs and Daniel Boone National Forest, a person must not use nails, spikes, screw-in devices, wire, or a tree climber to attach a tree stand or climb a tree. A portable stand or climbing device that does not injure a tree may be used. Stands must be marked with the hunter's name and address. They also must be placed no more than two weeks before the opening of the season and removed within one week following the last day of each hunting period. A person must not use an existing permanent tree stand.
- **Trail cameras:** Trail cameras placed on WMAs or public hunting areas must be labeled externally with the owner's Kentucky Fish and Wildlife customer identification number.
- **Drones:** It is illegal to use manned or unmanned aircraft to hunt wildlife.
- **Hunter orange (ground blinds):** A hunter using a ground blind during a firearms season on a WMA or in a state park must first attach a hat or vest made of solid, unbroken hunter orange material to the blind so it is visible from all sides. Hunter orange clothing requirements still apply for anyone inside the blind.

WMA EXPLORER

Scout Kentucky's Wildlife Management Areas from the comfort of your home with Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's WMA Explorer app. The app's aerial mapping function reveals roads, forests and open fields of each WMA. More intensively managed WMAs include information about burned areas, food plots and timber management.

Start your journey online at fw.ky.gov. Click the "HUNTING" tab, then scroll down and select the "WMA Explorer" button.

Hunter orange required!

During any firearms season for deer, bear or elk: Hunters, trappers and those accompanying them in counties where these seasons are open must wear solid, unbroken hunter orange visible from all sides on the head, back and chest. However, hunter orange is not required while hunting waterfowl or doves, or when hunting furbearers at night during a furbearer season.

- **Hunter orange exceptions:** Hunters are not required to wear hunter orange clothing or display hunter orange on ground blinds during a firearms season on a state-owned or -managed WMA where firearms hunting for deer, elk or bear is prohibited.
- **Bird hunting:** For information about migratory bird and waterfowl hunting on public lands, visit fw.ky.gov.

MOBILITY-IMPAIRED HUNTER ACCESS TO WMAS

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife offers exceptions to certain hunting regulations on WMAs for persons who are mobility impaired. A mobility-impaired access permit is required.

To find the permit, go to fw.ky.gov and search for "mobility impaired access" or call Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-858-1549. The permit document – which requires a signature from a licensed physician – includes eligibility requirements, instructions, a list of WMA hunting tracts with mobility-impaired access areas and a list of exceptions to hunting regulations, including those related to road access, assistants and discharge of a firearm from a vehicle.

The completed application serves as the permit. Mobility-impaired individuals must carry it at all times while participating in such activities, along with required hunting licenses and permits.

The My Profile feature at fw.ky.gov provides fast and easy access to your Kentucky Fish and Wildlife records. Scan this symbol with your smartphone to access it.



A map of public hunting areas with mobility-impaired hunter access can also be found by searching for "mobility impaired access" on fw.ky.gov.

STATE PARK DEER HUNTS

These State parks allow open deer hunts on the following dates with the following restrictions. Contact the host state park for details, including the number of available slots, equipment restrictions, bag limits and check-in and check-out procedures. Hunters must follow Telecheck requirements.

- **Yatesville Lake State Park and Lawrence County Recreation Area** (606-673-1492). Muzzleloader on Dec. 14-16, 2026.

Mobility-Impaired Hunts

Hunters must meet mobility-impaired eligibility requirements, with a Mobility-Impaired Access Permit required at check-in. Hunters must check in and out on hunt days. Hunters may be accompanied by another person, but that person will not be permitted to hunt.

- **Jenny Wiley State Resort Park** – 1,415 acres, Floyd County. (1-800-325-0142). Open Jan. 9-10, limit two deer, only one of which may be antlered. The statewide limit of one buck per session still applies. Limited to the first 15 mobility-impaired hunters who check in at the park Ranger's Station on Jan. 8, the day before the hunt.
- **Taylorsville Lake State Park** – 1,200 acres, Spencer County. (1-800-325-0142). Open Jan. 16-17. Zone 1 bag limits apply and permit requirements apply. Limited to the first 15 mobility-impaired hunters who check in at the park Ranger's Station on Jan. 15, the day before the hunt.

YOUTH HUNT

An open youth hunt is held at Grayson Lake WMA on Nov. 7-8 for youths ages 15 and under.

Changes pending

Proposed regulation changes could affect the fall hunting seasons. Check online at fw.ky.gov before going afield this fall.

KENTUCKY'S PUBLIC HUNTING AREAS: CATEGORIES & WMA MANAGEMENT LEVELS

Every public lands property in Kentucky is unique – varying by location, ownership, land and water features, local wildlife, and recreational opportunities. To help you find the right spot for your intended outdoor activities – anywhere, anytime – the information below explains what to expect based on different public lands designations.

To ensure the most enjoyable time afield possible, take some time to research the opportunities, regulations and boundaries of possible destinations. Always consult Kentucky's hunting and fishing guides because regulations differ between areas and sometimes change. Be aware of applicable hunting seasons or quota (drawing) hunts, which could impact your plans. If you have additional questions, call 1-800-858-1549, email Info.Center@ky.gov, or call your local public lands office.

Scan this QR code for detailed information about Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and maps.



Wildlife Management Areas

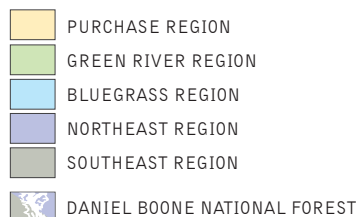
Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) are properties owned or managed by the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources for conservation and public access. They are categorized into high, moderate and low intensity management levels. High intensity typically includes areas with offices and active management, such as dove fields or food plots. Low intensity areas offer a wilder experience to those

seeking it. The new system does not rate how good an area is for hunting or wildlife watching; low intensity areas may offer better hunting due to less pressure.

HIGH MANAGEMENT LEVEL

These areas are continually managed and typically have onsite staff, infrastructure, marked access sites and parking lots. These areas tend to be larger and are either owned or leased long-term by the department.

Fields may be managed by planting native grasses, wildflowers, clover or annual grains. Fields may also be managed through mowing, disking, or prescribed fire, controlling invasive species, or leasing to local farmers for row crops or hay. Wetlands may be managed by planting, disking, mowing or managing water



H=High Management Level M=Medium Management Level L=Low Management Level

PURCHASE REGION

1. Ballard WMA - H
2. Big Rivers WMA & State Forest - H
3. Boatwright WMA - H
4. Doug Travis WMA - M
5. Lake Barkley WMA - L
6. Livingston County WMA & SNA - M
7. Ohio River Islands WMA - L

8. Pennyryle State Forest
9. Tradewater WMA - L
10. West Kentucky WMA - M
11. Beechy Creek WMA - L
12. Coil Estate WMA - L
13. Ferguson Creek WMA - L
14. Jones-Keeney WMA - L
15. Kaler Bottoms WMA - L

16. Kentucky Lake WMA - L
17. Obion Creek WMA - L
18. Winford WMA - L
- A. Clarks River Nat. Wildlife Refuge
- B. Fort Campbell Military Reservation
- C. Land Between The Lakes NRA
- D. Reelfoot National Wildlife Refuge

levels. Forests may be managed by prescribed burns, forest stand improvement, harvests, tree plantings or the control of invasive species.

“High” level management WMAs may have onsite staff and resources and a direct point of contact for current conditions and management activities. You are welcome to stop by to talk to the friendly and informative staff to get information; but be aware that employees are often out managing the land and are not always in the office.

MODERATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL

WMAs that are managed at a “moderate” level are obviously not as intensively managed, and staff are typically not on-site. Management is limited to habitat maintenance through prescribed fire, mowing, upkeep of access sites and boundaries and long-term habitat work such as forest stand

improvement or wetland development and manipulation. Several of the Moderate Level WMAs plant and prepare fields for dove hunting opportunities as well. These areas are owned or leased by the department and offer ample acreage for hunting, fishing, hiking and sight-seeing throughout the state.

LOW MANAGEMENT LEVEL

WMAs designated as “low” management intensity level are typically remote and receive little or no active management. Practices are limited to general maintenance and marking boundaries, though some long-term habitat work may be ongoing. These areas may be difficult to access, with terrain more demanding for visitors to traverse. However, these areas can provide excellent hunting and wildlife viewing opportunities, sometimes because they may attract less attention or be less accessible.

Other Public Lands

HUNTER ACCESS AREAS (HAAs)

These areas are accessible through agreements with landowners to provide public hunting access. Some HAAs may only be open to certain activities. Special regulations may be in place for hunting, fishing and other recreational opportunities on particular HAAs.

SHOOTING SPORTS and DOG TRIAL AREAS

Three of the WMAs in the moderate management level category are primarily used for shooting sports, dog training and field trials: Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA, Miller Welch-Central Kentucky WMA and West Kentucky WMA. Although some hunting is allowed on these areas, activities are strictly managed to minimize conflicts between hunters, anglers and other WMA user groups.

GREEN RIVER REGION

1. Barren River Lake WMA - H
2. Higginson-Henry WMA - H
3. Marrowbone State Forest & WMA - M
4. Nolin River Lake WMA - L
5. Peabody WMA - H
6. Sloughs WMA - H
7. Yellowbank WMA - H
8. Blackford Oaks WMA - L
9. Clear Creek WMA - L
10. Gabbard Branch WMA - L
11. Green River State Forest
12. Harris-Dickerson WMA - M
13. L.B. Davison WMA - L
14. Lee K. Nelson WMA - L
15. Rough River Lake WMA - L
- A. Fort Knox Military Reservation
- B. Green River National Wildlife Refuge
- C. Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area

BLUEGRASS REGION

1. Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA - M
2. Decker WMA - L
3. Dr. James R. Rich WMA - M
4. Dr. Norman & Martha Adair WMA - L
5. Griffith Woods WMA - M
6. John A. Kleber WMA - M
7. John C. Williams WMA - L
8. Kentucky River WMA - H
9. Knobs State Forest & WMA - L
10. Miller Welch-Central Ky. WMA - M
11. Mullins WMA - L
12. T. N. Sullivan WMA - M
13. Taylorsville Lake WMA - H
14. Twin Eagle WMA - L
15. Veterans Memorial WMA - M
16. Marion Co. WMA & State Forest - L
17. Rolling Fork WMA - M
18. Stephens Creek WMA - L
- A. Bluegrass Army Depot

NORTHEAST REGION

1. Clay WMA - H
2. Continental Hunting Access Area
3. Dewey Lake WMA - M
4. Fishtrap Lake WMA - L
5. Fleming WMA - M
6. Grayson Lake WMA - H
7. Legacy-LLC WMA - L
8. Paintsville Lake WMA - M
9. Pioneer Weapons WMA - L
10. RH Group Hunting Access Area
11. South Shore WMA - M
12. Yatesville Lake WMA - M
13. Betterment Wildlife Hunting Access
14. Ed Mabry-Laurel Gorge WMA - L
15. Elk Horn Coal Hunting Access Area
16. Horse Mill Branch WMA - L
17. Old Trace Creek WMA - L
18. Pocahontas WMA - L
19. Simon Kenton WMA - L
20. Sunny Brook WMA - L
21. Tygarts State Forest
- A. Daniel Boone National Forest
- B. Ohio R. Islands Nat. Wildlife Refuge

SOUTHEAST REGION

1. Asher Hunting Access Area
2. Beaver Creek WMA - H
3. Big South Fork NRR
4. Cane Creek WMA - M
5. Cedar Creek Lake WMA - L
6. Continental Hunting Access Area
7. Dennis-Gray WMA - M
8. Dix River WMA - L
9. Green River Lake WMA - H
10. Hensley-Pine Mountain WMA - L
11. Hidden Valley Training Area
12. Lake Cumberland WMA - M
13. Mill Creek WMA - M

14. Mud Camp Creek WMA - L
15. Paul Van Booven WMA - M
16. Ping-Sinking Valley WMA - M
17. R. F. Tarter WMA - L
18. Redbird WMA - L
19. Robinson Forest WMA - L
20. Rockcastle River WMA - M
21. RH Group Hunting Access Area
22. University of the Cumberlands WMA - L
23. Betterment Wildlife Hunting Access
24. Boone Forestlands WMA - M
25. Buck Creek WMA - M
26. Buckhorn Lake WMA - L
27. Burchell-Beech Creek WMA - L
28. Carr Creek Lake WMA - L
29. Cumberland Forest WMA - M
30. Cranks Creek WMA - L
31. Dale Hollow Lake WMA - L
32. Elk Forest WMA - M
33. Elk Horn Coal Hunting Access Area
34. Fortner-Davis WMA - L
35. Hoskins WMA - L
36. Jefferson National Forest
37. Kentenia State Forest
38. Kentucky Ridge Forest WMA/
Kentucky Ridge State Forest - M
39. Martins Fork Lake WMA - L
40. Martins Fork WMA & SNA - L
41. Meadow Creek WMA - L
42. Pocahontas WMA - L
43. Ross Creek WMA - L
44. Shillalah Creek WMA - L
45. Stone Mountain WMA & SNA - L
46. Wells Hunting Access Area
- A. Daniel Boone National Forest

PUBLIC LANDS AREAS QUICK REFERENCE

Charts of public lands regulations are now available online at fw.ky.gov instead of in the guide. Scan this QR code to access the online charts.



Want to learn more? Go online at fw.ky.gov and type the following words in the search bar to access a trove of information about hunting, game animals and public land in Kentucky. (*Note search terms are case sensitive and sometimes require hyphens*):

"Quota Hunts" ... to learn about quota hunts, which limit the number of hunters allowed on a property during certain dates. Species include deer, waterfowl,

doves, pheasants and sandhill cranes. This page includes detailed information about deer quota hunt choices on public land throughout the state

"WMA Maps" ... to access links to a number of resources, including lists, acreages and contact information for managers of various properties around the state. The "get directions" tabs on the "WMA and Public Lands Search" link takes you to road maps and satellite images of each area.

"Deer Reports" ... to find annual reports with a wealth of information for hunters about deer and deer hunting in Kentucky. Statistics include deer population estimates, county-by-county deer harvest results, quota hunt results, deer permit sale trends and more.

"Harvest Results" ... to find harvest results for deer, turkey, elk, bear, bobcat, otter and sandhill cranes. Results are available not only from the most recent season but back to 1999.

"Learn to Hunt" ... to find basic information about how to hunt squirrel, deer, dove, turkey and elk. Links include hunter education courses and tips on preparing your harvest for the table.

"Shooting-range-information" ... for information on Kentucky Fish and Wildlife's eight public shooting ranges and a map of all shooting ranges across the state. A permit is required to shoot at the public ranges. They are generally closed on Mondays and all but one (Veterans Memorial WMA in Scott County) are unstaffed.

QUOTA HUNTS

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife conducts quota hunts for deer, pheasant, mourning doves, sandhill cranes and waterfowl. Quota hunts limit hunter numbers and harvests to provide quality hunting opportunities for participants.

Some hunts are mentored hunts for youth and accompanying adults. Some hunts are open to mobility-impaired hunters only.

Any resident or nonresident may apply for quota hunts. For quota hunts that allow a drawn hunter to bring a guest(s) to hunt, the hunter must be present for the guest(s) to hunt. Substitutions are not allowed.

Drawn hunters must meet all requirements, including applicable licenses and permits.

HOW TO APPLY

Quota hunt applications are available online only at fw.ky.gov. The non-

refundable application fee is \$3 per hunter for each hunt. Hunters may apply at the same time for multiple quota hunts for different species.

To see if you were drawn for a hunt, go to My Profile at fw.ky.gov. You may also call Kentucky Fish and Wildlife weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (Eastern time) at 1-800-858-1549.

WHEN TO APPLY

Apply for dove quota hunts Aug. 3-21. Apply for deer, pheasant, waterfowl and sandhill crane quota hunts Sept. 1-30.

QUOTA DEER HUNTS

Deer quota hunts are held on numerous Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) and in several state parks. Additionally, there are quota deer hunts for mobility-impaired hunters on several WMAs. See the chart in this section for details.

Follow the rules!

Hunters who do not comply with quota hunt requirements are ineligible to apply for any quota hunt the following year (including deer, pheasant and waterfowl), and will lose any accumulated preference points.

Hunters who are not drawn for a quota hunt will receive a preference point. Preference points increase a hunter's chances of being drawn in the future. If applying for a deer quota hunt as a group, each applicant's preference points will be used to calculate an average point total for the group. A group

Complete details for all quota hunts are available online. Click the "Hunt" tab on fw.ky.gov, choose "Quota Hunts" from the dropdown menu and scroll to the appropriate hunt.

with a higher preference point average will be randomly selected before a group with a lower preference point average.

A maximum of 10 percent nonresidents can be drawn in each deer quota hunt pool.

Drawn quota hunters may bring one non-hunting person along on their hunt. That guest does not need a license and is not required to have applied for the quota hunt but must check in and out with the quota hunter.

Participants must abide by hunter orange requirements. Ground blinds used for gun quota hunts for deer must have a hat or vest made of solid, unbroken hunter orange material attached to the blind so that it is visible from all sides. Occupants in a blind must wear orange on their head and torso.

DOVE QUOTA HUNTS

Kentucky also offers general quota dove hunts Sept. 1 and Sept. 5. Any legal hunter may apply.

Youth hunters and an accompany-

ing adult may participate in one-day quota mentored dove hunts in September on a limited number of public fields. The adult mentors can hunt but must be properly licensed. Apply at fw.ky.gov from Aug. 3-21. Locations of mentored hunts will be published in the Dove and Early Waterfowl Guide, available at fw.ky.gov in early August.

PHEASANT QUOTA HUNTS

"Put-and-take" pheasant quota hunts are held on Yellowbank WMA, Green River Lake WMA and Clay WMA. See the Quota Hunts page at fw.ky.gov for dates. All drawn pheasant hunters must buy (regardless of attendance) and carry while hunting a pheasant quota hunt permit, available online or from license vendors. Permits are not transferable.

SANDHILL CRANE QUOTA HUNTS

• Apply in September at fw.ky.gov for a sandhill crane permit, good for hunting statewide. A hunter may be drawn

for one to three permits, though only two can be filled in a day. Check the Quota Hunts page in early October to see if you're drawn.

- Hunters must pass a migratory bird identification test before receiving their sandhill crane permit.
- Harvested birds must be telechecked.
- Permit holders must complete a post-season survey, even if they don't hunt. If they don't, they will be ineligible the following year.

MOBILITY-IMPAIRED QUOTA HUNTS

Persons with severe mobility restrictions may apply for mobility-impaired quota hunts for deer, as well as certain blinds during waterfowl quota hunts. At check in, drawn hunters must show a WMA Mobility Impaired Access Permit, available in advance of the hunt date from Kentucky Fish and Wildlife. Criteria are available online at fw.ky.gov by searching for "mobility access permit," or by calling Kentucky Fish and Wildlife at 1-800-858-1549.

WATERFOWL QUOTA HUNTS

This section provides an overview of waterfowl and migratory bird regulations and opportunities. Find in-depth information in the Hunting Guide for Migratory Birds and Waterfowl, available online at fw.ky.gov.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife conducts drawings for both waterfowl quota hunts and for season-long blinds. Several WMAs are open for general waterfowl hunting as well.

Blind locations and months being drawn include Doug Travis WMA (August), Lake Barkley WMA (September), Green River Lake WMA (September) and Barren River Lake WMA (October). Check the waterfowl guide for dates and locations.

Public land quota hunts include Ballard, Boatwright and Sloughs WMAs. Apply in September. Unclaimed quota hunt spots may be available through stand-by drawings. Consult the online waterfowl guide for details.

PUBLIC LAND HUNTING

Ballard WMA (Ballard County)

- Hunters are not restricted to maintained blinds; they may hunt any-

where within their assigned unit.

- Quota drawing for individual dates only.

Sloughs WMA - Sauerheber Unit (Union and Henderson counties)

- Some units require hunting from a maintained blind.
- For remaining areas, hunters may hunt anywhere within their assigned unit.
- Quota drawing for individual dates only.
- Hunters must check in the Sunday prior to the hunt.

Sloughs WMA - Jenny Hole Unit (Henderson County)

- Unit is a quota hunt-only area.
- Hunting spots assigned by weekly drawings held Monday evenings at Sloughs WMA office. Only one member of a hunting party needs to be present at the drawing. Two spots available through quota draw.
- Access is limited to drawn hunters only, and only on quota hunt days, with no access after 2 p.m. (local time).

Boatwright WMA (Ballard County)

- Hunters are not restricted to maintained blinds. They may hunt anywhere within their assigned unit but must remain at least 50 yards away

from a property boundary and 200 yards from other hunting parties.

- Drawing for hunters and units held Mondays.
- Boats may be used as blinds in units that allow boats.

MENTOR / MOBILITY-IMPAIRED HATCHERY HUNTS

Minor Clark and Pfeiffer Fish Hatcheries (Rowan and Franklin counties)

- Open to mobility-impaired hunters with access permit, and youths under the age of 16 accompanied by an adult mentor. A mentor may hunt.
- Hunters must apply online between Nov. 1-15.
- Hunt dates available each weekend in January 2027.
- Mentor/youth hunt groups limited to four hunters, with no more than two hunting adults.

Doug Travis WMA Mobility-impaired Hunt (Carlisle and Hickman counties)

- Hunts offered November through January.
- Apply in September.
- Call 1-800-858-1549 for details.

2026-27 DEER QUOTA HUNT CHOICES

Public Land choices		Dates	# of slots	Min. # pref. pts. of 2025 participants		Hunt Remarks (Quota hunts are for either sex deer unless otherwise noted)
				All	Non Res.	
1	Ballard WMA	Nov. 7-8	65	2	3	Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four. Scouting permitted through Oct. 14.
2	Beaver Creek WMA	Nov. 7-8	330	0	0	Antlered deer only.
3	Big Rivers WMA & State Forest #1	Oct. 25-Nov. 30	130	1	4	Archery and crossbow only. Closed during (and day before) the two-day quota hunt that starts the first Saturday in November. Department issued hang tags required. Telecheck harvested deer.
4	Big Rivers WMA & State Forest #2	Nov. 7-8	100	1	3	
5	Cane Creek WMA #1	Oct. 25-Nov. 30	30			Archery and crossbow only. Closed during (and day before) the two-day quota hunt that starts the first Saturday in November. Department issued hang tags required. Telecheck harvested deer.
6	Cane Creek WMA #2	Nov. 7-8	22			Department issued hang tags required. Telecheck harvested deer.
7	Clay WMA	Nov. 7-8	225	1	1	Limit four, only one of which may be antlered, during quota hunt. Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
8	Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA	Nov. 14-21	20			Department issued hang tags required. Telecheck harvested deer.
9	Dewey Lake WMA	Nov. 7-8	150	0	0	Limit two, only one of which may be antlerless, during quota hunt.
10	Fishtrap Lake WMA	Nov. 21-22	200	0	0	Limit one during quota hunt.
11	Green River Lake & Dennis-Gray WMAs	Nov. 7-8	400	0	0	Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
12	Green River Lake & Dennis-Gray WMAs Mobility-Impaired*	Nov. 7-8	15	0	0	Open only to mobility-impaired persons. Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
13	Higginson - Henry WMA #1	Oct. 25-Nov. 30	60	2	4.5	Archery and crossbow only. Closed during (and day before) the two-day quota hunt that starts the first Saturday in November. Department issued hang tags required. Telecheck harvested deer.
14	Higginson - Henry WMA #2	Nov. 7-8	45	1.66	2	
15	Kentucky River WMA	Nov. 7-8	65	0.66	0.5	
16	Kleber and Rich WMAs #1	Nov. 7-8	200	0	0	
17	Kleber and Rich WMAs #2	Dec. 5-6	200	0	0	
18	Paintsville Lake WMA	Nov. 7-8	125	0	0.4	
19	Pennyryle State Forest/Tradewater WMA	Nov. 7-8	300	0	1	Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
20	Taylorsville Lake WMA #1	Nov. 7-8	268	0.8	1	Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
21	Taylorsville Lake WMA Mobility-Impaired* #1	Nov. 7-8	7	0.2	0	Open only to mobility-impaired persons. Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
22	Taylorsville Lake WMA #2	Dec. 5-6	268	0	0	Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
23	Taylorsville Lake WMA Mobility-Impaired* #2	Dec. 5-6	7	0	0	Open only to mobility-impaired persons. Hunters awarded one preference point for each antlerless deer harvested, up to four.
24	Veterans Memorial WMA	Nov. 7-8	50	0.8	0	
25	West Kentucky WMA	Nov. 21-24	135	0	0	Shotgun and muzzleloader only. Tract 1 is closed to public access.

Public Land choices	Dates	# of slots	Min. # pref. pts. of 2025 participants		Hunt Remarks (Quota hunts are for either sex deer unless otherwise noted)
			All	Non Res.	
26 West Kentucky WMA youth mentor	Nov. 21-24	4	0	0	Shotgun only, youth mentor hunt on portions of "A" tracts. Only youth hunters apply. No more than two youth hunters may accompany an adult mentor. No more than one adult can mentor a youth hunter. An adult mentor may take a deer during the hunt.
27 Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park #1	Nov. 20-22	50	0	0	Telecheck harvested deer.
28 Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park #2	Dec. 4-6	40	0	0	Youth only. Telecheck harvested deer.
29 Greenbo Lake State Resort Park	Dec. 17-20	25	0	0	Hunters must check in and out daily at lodge and submit hunt reports. Telecheck harvested deer.
30 Green River Lake State Park #1	Dec. 10-13	55	0.4	1	Archery and crossbow only. Telecheck harvested deer.
31 Green River Lake State Park #2	Dec. 17-20	55	0	0	Archery and crossbow only. Telecheck harvested deer.
32 Kenlake State Resort Park #1	Nov. 19-22	25	0	2	Archery and crossbow only. Telecheck harvested deer.
33 Kenlake State Resort Park #2	Dec. 3-6	25	0	0	Telecheck harvested deer.
34 Kincaid Lake State Park #1	Dec. 3-6	10	2	0	Telecheck harvested deer.
35 Kincaid Lake State Park #2	Dec. 11-14	10	1.5	0	Telecheck harvested deer.
36 Lake Barkley State Resort Park #1	Nov. 2-6	25			Archery and crossbow only. Drawn hunters will be randomly assigned specific hunt unit within park. Hunters must check in and out daily and submit hunt reports.
37 Lake Barkley State Resort Park #2	Jan. 5-6	20			Drawn hunters will be randomly assigned specific hunt unit within park. Hunters must check in and out daily and submit hunt reports.
38 Zilpo Mobility-Impaired*	Dec. 12	12	0	0	Open only to mobility-impaired persons.

*Only hunters who are mobility-impaired as described on page 29 can apply and be drawn for this hunt.

Antlered deer taken during quota hunts count against the statewide limit of one antlered deer per hunter, per season.

DONATE YOUR DOE

Hunters can make a difference in their communities by donating their field-dressed deer to organizations that feed the hungry. Not only will you help feed families, but you will strengthen your role in helping manage Kentucky's deer herd – especially in Zone 1 counties with an unlimited bag limit of does.



Go online to Kentucky Hunters for the Hungry (kyhuntersforthehungry.info) or Boone Brothers (boonebrothers.org) for more information and processor locations. Both are nonprofit organizations; processing fees are not charged.



kyhuntersforthehungry.info

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