

Cougar

Licenses, applications, harvest reporting and general information: **1-888-248-6866**

General Information

- License Requirements and Fees (see pages 12–17).
- All Cougar Harvests Must Be Tagged (pages 37).
- Legal Sporting Arms for Cougar Hunting (see page 30).
- Hunting on Military Reservations (see page 46).
- Cougar Licenses must be purchased at least two calendar days before hunting.
- It is Legal to Harvest a Marked Animal (see page 9).

Over-the-Counter (OTC) Licenses

Cougar licenses must be purchased at least two calendar days before hunting.

An OTC Cougar License may be purchased at license vendors, NMDOW offices, online: <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov> or by telephone: **1-888-248-6866**. Before purchasing an over-the-counter (OTC) Cougar License, hunters must purchase or possess a Game-Hunting License or Game-Hunting & Fishing License. If planning to hunt within 14 days of online or telephone purchase, hunters may be required to obtain tags at a license vendor or NMDOW office.

Bag Limit: The bag limit is two cougars. No spotted kitten(s) or any female accompanied by a spotted kitten(s) may be taken.

Mandatory Cougar Identification Cours

NMDOW requires all cougar hunters to successfully complete a cougar identification course. The cougar ID number is issued upon successful completion of the course through your NMDOW online account.

Cougar Seasons

Statewide Cougar Season: April 1, 2026–March 31, 2027.

Cougar Management Zones and Harvest Limits (map page 131)

New Mexico is divided into Cougar Management Zones, enabling NMDOW to better manage regional cougar populations. Each zone has two harvest limits: 1) the total number of cougars that may be harvested (total limit); and 2) the number of female cougars that may be harvested (female limit). Harvest limits for each Cougar Management Zone are listed on page 130.

Cougar Management Zones will close and hunting will cease when harvests reach 90% of the total limit, 90% of the female limit or when the season has ended, whichever occurs first.

Zone Closures

Before hunting, hunters must verify their preferred zone is still open. Check online: <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/hunting/information-by-animal/big-game/cougar> or call: **1-877-950-5466**.

Baiting and Trapping: Baiting and trapping are not legal methods of taking cougar. If accidentally trapped, the cougar must be released. Should assistance be needed to release a cougar, contact NMDOW.

Pelt Tags Required

Harvested cougars must be both carcass tagged and pelt tagged. The carcass tag must be properly notched and attached immediately after the animal is harvested. The hunter must present the carcass tag, skull and hide for pelt tagging to any conservation officer or NMDOW office within five days of killing the cougar before the pelt can be frozen, processed, tanned or salted by a taxidermist, or before transporting the hide outside New Mexico, whichever occurs first. **Hunters who appoint a designee to transport the harvested cougar for pelt tagging are required to contact a conservation officer to receive a designee code prior to pelt tagging.** Hunters or their designee are required to present to any NMDOW office the **unfrozen skull** of any cougar killed with the mouth fixed open for removal of a premolar tooth. Hunters or their designee must provide all required information at the time of pelt tagging including, but not limited to: sex of the animal and date and location of harvest. The pelt tag must remain attached to the hide until the hide is processed. Improperly tagged hides will be seized by NMDOW.

Proof of Sex

The testicles, penis and/or baculum of a male, or the vulva of a female, must remain naturally attached to the hide and be visible to the NMDOW tagging official. NMDOW will pelt tag a cougar only if proof of sex is attached to the hide and readily visible to the tagging official. Cougar hides presented to the NMDOW for tagging without proof of sex attached will be seized.

Livestock Damage

Landowners, lessees and/or their regular employees are not required to have a license to kill any cougar that has killed domestic livestock or presents an immediate threat to human life or property. Any person taking such action **must report the incident to NMDOW within 24 hours**. Pelts, claws and other parts of depredating animals taken under this provision are the property of the State of New Mexico and must be delivered to NMDOW.

Use of Dogs

Dog use is **not allowed** on wildlife management areas (WMAs) or to pursue cougars during September 1–24 bow seasons. Dog use is **allowed** to hunt cougars elsewhere during hunts for any legal sporting arm. When dogs are used to hunt cougars, the licensed hunter who harvests the cougar must be present continuously from the time any dog is released.

Dogs may be released only during legal hunting hours. There is no pursuit or training season outside the regular open season.

Florida Mountains Hunt Area–Unit 25: Cougar hunting is not allowed in the Florida Mountains hunt area during any ibex season, except by licensed ibex hunters (only for sporting-arm type and season dates as specified on the ibex license).

Electronic calls: Electronic calls are allowed for cougar.

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Closed Areas: Sugarite Canyon State Park; Rio Grande Wild and Scenic River Area, including Taos Valley Overlook; Unit 6B (Valles Caldera National Preserve) and Fort Bliss including all of Unit 28 and portions of Unit 19.

Wildlife Management Areas: Cougar hunting by licensed deer and/or elk hunters who also possess a valid cougar license is allowed on WMAs and the Valle Vidal provided they: 1) possess a valid deer or elk license for the WMA; 2) possess a cougar license with tags; 3) use the sporting arm type specified for their deer or elk hunt; 4) hunt only during the dates of their deer or elk hunt; and 5) the harvest limit in the cougar zone has not been met. Dogs are not allowed.

Cougar Management Zones

Cougar management zone locations in New Mexico are designated in the map on page 131.

Zones and Season Limits

Zone	Open Units	Total Limit	Female Limit
A	2, 7	42	13
B	5, 6, 50, 51	25	8
C	43, 45, 46, 48, 49, 53	57	17
D	41, 42, 47, 59	15	5
E	9, 10	43	13
G	13, 17	50	15
H	18, 19, 20	29	9
I	36, 37, 38	24	7
J	15, 16, 21	84	25
K	22, 23, 24	45	14
L	25, 26, 27	19	6
M	31, 32, 33, 39, 40	25	7
N	4, 52	13	4
O	12	17	5
P	56, 57, 58	14	7
Q	28–30, 34	17	6
R	54, 55	26	8
S	8, 14	17	5

Cougar Management Zones and Game Management Units

