

# General Rules

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

## It is unlawful to:

- Recklessly or carelessly handle a firearm.
- Hunt or trap while under the influence of alcohol or other intoxicants, including marijuana.
- Litter and/or pollute streams, lakes and other waters.
- Leave a fire unattended or improperly control fire.
- Hunt or trap protected species without a license and all applicable permits, tags, stamps or validations or fail to tag any big game or turkey.
- Hunt or trap protected species using licenses, tags, permits, stamps or validations belonging to another individual, or take or attempt to take a protected species for another person, except as permitted when assisting a licensed mobility-impaired hunter (page 20).
- Kill more than one of the following: elk, pronghorn, Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, ibex, javelina, oryx, bear or deer during any license year, except as permitted by rule.
- Apply for, buy or use more than one license for any species per license year.
- Shine spotlights or other artificial lights into areas where big-game species or livestock may be present, while in possession of any sporting arm.
- Take or attempt to take game species by baiting. An area is considered to be baited for 10 days after the removal of the bait. It is also unlawful to take bear by the aid of scent.
- Use live protected species as decoys to take or attempt to take game species.
- Use electronically or mechanically recorded calling devices, except for cougars, bears, javelina, furbearers, nongame species and during the Light Goose Conservation Order.
- Use tracer ammunition, full-metal jacketed bullets or fully automatic weapons.
- Park any motor vehicle or camp within 300 yards of any man-made water hole, water well or watering tank used by wildlife or domestic stock without the prior consent of the private landowner, private-land lessee, public-land lessee or public-land management agency.
- Shoot at protected species or artificial wildlife from a motor vehicle.
- Shoot at game on, from or across any paved, graded or maintained public road or within the fenced right-of-way of any paved, graded or maintained public road.
- Shoot at, pursue, harass, harrass, drive or rally any protected species by any means, except while legally hunting.
- Use motor-driven vehicles on roads closed under the Habitat Protection Act or other federal regulation.
- Hunt or shoot at any animal from an aircraft or drone or fly an aircraft in any manner that causes any non-domesticated animal to move from its place of rest or change its direction of travel.
- Make false statements when purchasing or applying for a license or alter any license issued by NMDOW.
- Hunt from an aircraft, use aircraft to signal locations of protected species to hunters, or harass game species with an aircraft; hunt protected species observed from aircraft within 48 hours of observation; or hunt protected species the same day of air travel, except by commercial airline or direct flight to a landing strip.
- Discharge a firearm within 150 yards of a dwelling or building (not including abandoned or vacated buildings on public land) without the permission of the owner or lessee.
- Take any animal that is protected by law but not listed as a game species and/or any animal that is listed as an endangered or threatened species.
- Use any cellular, Wi-Fi or satellite camera for the purpose of hunting or scouting remotely for any big game animal.
- Hunt any protected species outside of established season for that species.
- Exceed the daily bag limit or the legal possession limit of any small-game species.
- Hunt for game species outside of legal shooting hours.
- Hunt or trap on private land without written permission.
- To place a trap or snare on public land, see page 132.

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## License Requirements and Fees: See page 12–17.

**Understanding Hunt Codes:** The hunt code printed on your license indicates the species, legal sporting arms, dates, area, fee type and bag limit for the license issued.

For example: **DER–1–101**

- **"DER"** indicates a deer hunt.
- **"1"** indicates any legal big-game sporting arm (2 = bow only; 3 = muzzleloader, crossbow or bow only).
- **"101"** indicates an individual hunt for specific dates, area, fee type and bag limit.

This example (DER–1–101) found on page 55 is a deer hunt for any big-game sporting arm, standard fee, valid in GMU 2A from November 1-5 with a bag limit of one fork-antlered deer (FAD).

## Legal Sporting Arms

**Legal sporting arms for deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, ibex, oryx, Barbary sheep and bear (big-game sporting arms):** Any centerfire firearm at least .22 caliber or larger, any muzzle-loading firearm at least .45 caliber or larger, any shotgun .410 caliber or larger firing a single slug (including muzzle-loading shotguns), any bow or any crossbow. All firearms, except handguns, must be designed to be fired from the shoulder. Hunters must use only bullets designed to expand or fragment upon impact. Full metal jacket (FMJ) and tracer bullets are illegal. No fully automatic firearms may be used. Arrows and bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows and crossbows may not project light (lighted pins are acceptable). No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and they cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

**Legal sporting arms for cougar, javelina and furbearers:** Any firearm, muzzleloader, compressed air gun, shotgun, bow or crossbow. All firearms, except handguns, must be designed to be fired from the shoulder. For cougar and javelina, compressed air guns must be .22 caliber or larger and shotguns must fire a single slug or #4 buckshot or larger. Arrows and bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows and crossbows may not project light. No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and they cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

**Legal sporting arms for turkey:** Any shotgun firing shot, bow and crossbow. Arrows and bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows and crossbows may not project light. No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and they cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

**Legal sporting arms for upland game:** Quail and pheasant may be taken with shotguns and muzzle-loading shotguns firing shot, bows, and crossbows. Eurasian collared-dove, grouse and squirrels may be taken with shotguns firing shot, muzzle-loading shotguns, rim-fire and muzzle-loading firearms, bows, crossbows and compressed air guns firing a pellet .177 or larger.

**Legal sporting arms for migratory game birds:** Migratory game birds may be taken with a shotgun fired from the shoulder, provided it is no larger than 10-gauge and is not capable of holding more than three shells. Migratory game birds also may be taken with muzzle-loading shotguns firing shot, bow and arrows, and crossbow and bolts.

**Bow only:** Any compound, long or recurve bow. Draw locks are illegal. Arrows must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows may not project light (lighted pins are acceptable). No drugs may be used on an arrow, and arrows cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air. Crossbow use is allowed only with reasonable accommodation permit or mobility impaired card.

**Muzzleloader, crossbow or bow only:** Hunters may use any legal muzzleloader with open, "iron" or peep sights, any legal bow or any legal crossbow during regular muzzleloader hunts (see also restricted muzzleloader). Scopes, red dots or other similar sights are not allowed on muzzleloaders during a muzzleloader hunt. See definition of muzzleloader on page 161. Sabots and in-line ignition may be used with muzzleloaders except during restricted muzzleloader deer hunts. No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and arrows and bolts (see arrow or bolt definition on page 158) cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air. Airbows and all guns firing arrows or bolts are illegal.

**Restricted Muzzleloader for deer:** Only a muzzle-loading rifle using open sights, black powder or equivalent propellant and firing a full-bore-diameter bullet or patched round ball is legal. The use of in-line ignition, scopes and smokeless powder are prohibited. Bows and crossbows are legal during restricted muzzleloader deer hunts.

## **Mandatory Harvest Reporting: Deadlines see Page 10.**

Harvest reporting is mandatory for all Barbary sheep, deer, elk, ibex, javelina, oryx, pronghorn, turkey and trapper license holders, whether or not a hunt or harvest occurred. Harvest reports can be submitted online or by telephone. Failure to report by the deadline(s) will result in rejection of all draw applications. Remember to keep your confirmation number!

## **One License per Species**

It is illegal to apply for, buy or use more than one license for any game species during any license year, except when permitted by rule.

## **Proof of Species, Sex and Bag Limit**

Hunters must keep proof of sex with all game species (except javelina) until the game has been transported where it will be consumed or stored. The antlers or horns must remain attached to the skull or skull plate of all male Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx or pronghorn. Immature males must be accompanied by the scalp and both ears. Females must be accompanied by either the scalp and both ears or the external genitalia naturally attached to one quarter. **The external genitalia of any bear or cougar must remain naturally attached to the hide** and be readily visible until the hide has been inspected and pelt tagged by a NMDOW

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representative. The beard must remain with the carcass when the bag limit is a bearded turkey. The head or leg of each pheasant, one foot of each quail and one fully feathered wing of each migratory game bird, (dove and band-tailed pigeons are exempt) must remain attached to the bird until it is at a residence, taxidermist, meat processing facility or place of final cold storage.

## Possession, Donation or Sale of Game

It is unlawful to possess or transport any live game animal (including birds) or any protected species or parts thereof without a valid license, a properly notched carcass tag, handwritten e-tag if applicable or other evidence the game has been taken legally. Carcasses, meat and internal organs of game mammals and game birds may not be sold or bartered but can be donated. Only the skins, heads, antlers, horns, rendered fat, teeth or claws of legally taken or possessed protected species, any parts of furbearers, and the feathers of non-migratory game birds may be bartered or sold. Any person giving items to another person must supply the recipient with a written description which states: the parts (skin, head, antlers, horns, claws, feathers, etc.) and/or the kind and number of game; the date when and county where game was taken; the conveyor's name, address and hunting license number used to take the game; and the date and place of the transaction or donation. A sample certificate is provided on page 157 and downloadable at <https://wildlife.dgf.nm.gov/hunting/>. It is unlawful to possess the head, horns or attached antlers of any big-game species found in the field without a receipt from NMDOW.

## Storage

For big game and turkey, a properly notched carcass tag or handwritten E-Tag must remain with the meat, and for furbearers, upland game and migratory game birds, a license or possession certificate must remain with the meat. Possession and storage is authorized for one year from the date of kill. To store or possess meat after this date, individuals must have a storage permit from NMDOW. Bear and cougar carcass tags authorize possession of the animal for five days or until pelt tagged, whichever occurs first.

Trophies taken to a taxidermist or carcasses taken to a meat processor must be accompanied by a properly notched carcass tag and antler/horn tag (if applicable), a handwritten E-Tag, or a possession (donation) certificate. **Keep your tags!**

## Use of Dogs

Dogs may be used to hunt upland game, waterfowl, furbearers, bear and cougar only. Dogs may not be used to hunt any other game species. Certain exceptions apply (see specific species sections). When dogs are used to hunt bear or cougar, the licensed hunter must be present continuously once any dog is released. Leashed dogs may be used to locate wounded or dead big game. If dogs are used to locate wounded or dead big game, hunters **must keep the dog(s) on a leash, and no more than two dogs may be used at a time.**

## Blaze Orange

Hunters on military reservations must wear a minimum of 144 square inches of blaze orange. Ft. Bliss, including McGregor Range (GMU 28), requires a blaze orange vest. Hunters participating in any firearm elk hunt on Valles Caldera National Preserve must wear a minimum of 244 square inches of blaze orange. Though not required elsewhere by law, NMDOW strongly encourages hunters to wear blaze orange.

## Transportation of Horses

All horses being transported must be inspected by a local livestock inspector. Non-residents with horses must have proof of ownership and health papers. For further information contact the New Mexico Livestock Board: **505-841-6161**.

## Nongame Hunters

Nongame species include prairie dogs, ground squirrels, Himalayan tahr, porcupine, rabbits, coyotes and skunks. Nongame hunting is not permitted on wildlife management areas (WMAs), except Water Canyon WMA from Jan. 1 to March 31, 2026, and Prairie Chicken Areas from Nov. 1 - March 15, 2027.



Feral hog



Javelina

## Feral Hogs

Feral hogs are an unprotected species that can damage habitat, contaminate water and compete with native wildlife. Because of the negative impact this non-native intruder causes, anyone may hunt feral hogs year-round without a license. Basic hunting rules apply—such as obtaining permission if hunting on private land. Hunting with the aid of an artificial light and discharging of firearms within 150 yards of an occupied dwelling is illegal. Feral hogs should not be confused with javelina, which look similar but are a protected game species. Javelina are smaller than feral hogs and do not have a tail. Javelina also have a white stripe of hair near the shoulders and neck, giving them the common name collared peccary. For information about where to hunt feral hogs contact the USDA: **505-346-2640**.

## Skulls Are State Property

Skulls are both fascinating and valuable. When found in the field, the skulls of all protected species remain the property of New Mexico—unless from an animal legally taken by a licensed hunter during an approved hunting season. This rule applies to all individuals, whether hunting or not. This important law enables conservation officers to better regulate the illegal taking of big-game animals solely for the head or trophy.

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Although possession of shed antlers is legal (page 12), possession of antlers attached to a skull found in the field is not. Antlered skulls may be available for purchase from NMDOW. If purchased, the receipt must be retained by the owner. Should probable cause suggest an animal was killed or is possessed unlawfully, conservation officers may confiscate such skulls. If you find the skull of a protected animal, leave it where it is found and contact a NMDOW conservation officer.

## Vehicle Use: Driving Off-Road or on a Closed Road

1. During the seasons established for any protected species, it is unlawful to drive or ride in a motor vehicle which is driven off an established road on **public land** or on a closed road on public land when the vehicle bears a licensed hunter, angler or trapper.
2. During the seasons established for any protected species, it is unlawful to drive or ride in a motor vehicle which is driven off an established road on **private land**, without written permission from the landowner, when the vehicle bears a licensed hunter, angler or trapper.
3. It is unlawful to drive or ride in a motor vehicle which is being driven off an established road or on a closed road when gathering or searching for shed antlers on public land.
4. EXCEPTION: Snowmobiles may be driven off established roads and lawfully taken game may be retrieved in areas not closed to vehicular traffic.
5. Public land as used in this section shall mean any federally owned or managed property; any state-owned or managed property; any private property which is part of a unitization hunting agreement, ranch-wide agreement or unit-wide agreement for the species being hunted; any private property NMDOW has paid for public access for the species being hunted; or any New Mexico State Wildlife Commission-owned or managed property.

## Established Road Means:

1. A road, built or maintained by equipment, which shows no evidence of ever being closed to vehicular traffic by such means as berms, ripping, scarification, reseeding, fencing, gates, barricades or posted closures;
2. A two-track road which shows use prior to hunting seasons for other purposes such as recreation, mining, logging, and ranching and which shows no evidence of ever being closed to vehicular traffic by such means as berms, ripping, scarification, reseeding, fencing, gates, barricades or posted closures.

## Harassment of Legal Hunters, Anglers and Trappers

New Mexico Law (Chapter 17–2–7.1, NMSA 1978) prohibits interference with another person who is lawfully hunting, trapping or fishing in an area where those activities are permitted. The first offense is a petty misdemeanor; the second offense is a misdemeanor.

If a person committing interference possesses a license, certificate or permit issued to him/her by the New Mexico State Wildlife Commission, the license, certificate or permit will be subject to revocation.

## Interference means:

1. Intentionally locating one's person where human presence may affect the behavior of a game animal, bird or fish, where human presence may interfere with the taking or killing of a game animal, bird or fish, and/or where human presence may interfere with another who is lawfully hunting, trapping or fishing.
2. Intentionally creating a visual, auditory, olfactory or physical stimulus to affect the behavior of a game animal, bird or fish and interfere with another person who is lawfully hunting, fishing or trapping.

3. Intentionally altering, removing or affecting the placement or condition of personal property used for taking a game animal, bird or fish.

If you witness any violation, please document the vehicle description, license plate number or aircraft tail number and contact Operation Game Thief: **1-800-432-4263**.

## **Waste of Game**

Anyone who takes a Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx, pronghorn, turkey, migratory game bird or upland game must transport the edible portions for human consumption from the field. The edible portions of game animals include all four quarters, backstraps, tenderloins and the neck meat. The edible portions of turkey include the breast, legs and thigh meat. Anyone who wounds or may have wounded any big-game species must go to the place where the animal sustained the wound or may have sustained the wound and make a reasonable attempt to track and kill the animal. This requirement does not authorize trespass on private land. Call **1-800-432-4263** for assistance recovering a wounded animal that enters private land.

Anyone who takes or kills a Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx, pronghorn or turkey outside of the legal season or without a valid license, which taking or killing results in waste of the animal, is guilty of a fourth-degree felony. Waste of the animal consists of removing from the animal only the head, antlers or horns or abandoning any of the four quarters, backstraps or tenderloins of the carcass. A violation of the provisions of this paragraph is intended to be separate from and cumulative to any other violation of Chapter 17 NMSA 1978.

## **License Privileges Can Be Revoked**

Points are assessed against privileges based on the type of violation committed. Any person accumulating 20 points or more within any consecutive three-year period shall be considered for revocation of the following: all hunting, fishing and trapping license privileges; any guiding and outfitting registration; landowner authorizations; and/or any permit or certificate issued under Chapter 17, NMSA 1978 and its implementing rules.

New Mexico is a member of the Interstate Wildlife Violator Compact (IWVC) and may recognize the suspension or revocation of license privileges of any person listed as a wildlife violator by another participating state. New Mexico will notify IWVC of all revocations, and other states may reciprocate New Mexico's revocations. Contact NMDOW Field Operations for specific information at: **505-476-8065**.

## **Federal Law**

Transporting illegally taken game across state lines is a violation of the federal Lacey Act, and may be classified as a felony.

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## Parental Responsibility Act

The Parental Responsibility Act requires the New Mexico State Wildlife Commission to suspend the recreational and professional licenses of anyone who does not comply with court-ordered child support obligations. Hunting and fishing privileges are suspended until court-ordered child support payments are up-to-date and a \$25 reinstatement fee has been paid. For more information, please contact NMDOW Field Operations: **505-476-8065**.

## Forfeitures

Sporting arms may be seized and forfeited if used in the following crimes: possession or transportation of big game during closed season, killing big game during closed season, spotlighting or hunting with the aid of artificial light or exceeding the bag limit on any big game species during open season. Any motor vehicle may be seized and forfeited if used while spotlighting or hunting with the aid of artificial light.

All shed antlers collected in violation of any New Mexico State Wildlife Commission, state or federal land closure, in violation of section 30-14-1 NMSA 1978 or in violation of any of the provisions of Chapter 17 or State Wildlife Commission rule remain property of the State of New Mexico and shall be seized.

## Criminal Penalties

Poachers may incur criminal penalties, including:

- **First offense:** Up to \$1,000 in fines and one year in jail.
- **Second offense:** Up to \$4,000 in fines and one year in jail.
- **Third offense:** Up to \$6,000 in fines, mandatory 90 days in jail and up to one year in jail.
- **Felony waste of game:** Up to \$5,000 in fines and 18 months in prison.

## Substantial Civil Assessments for Poaching

To recover the loss of the state's wildlife, the New Mexico State Wildlife Commission has adopted substantial civil assessments for the illegal taking of trophy game animals.

The assessments are:

Elk	\$10,000*	Ibex	\$10,000*	Barbary sheep	\$6,000*
Deer	\$10,000*	Oryx	\$10,000*	Turkey	\$500*
Bighorn sheep	\$10,000*	Pronghorn	\$8,000*	Trout	\$150*

\* Higher dollar amounts may be sought in certain cases.

# Carcass Tag Instructions

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## All Big-Game and Turkey Harvests Must Be Tagged

1. Immediately after harvesting any big-game animal or turkey, the carcass tag must be notched. The carcass tag must be attached to the kill before leaving the kill site. Instructions for notching and attaching are listed below and are provided on the reverse side of the tag.
2. Antlered or horned big game require an antler/horn tag be attached in addition to a carcass tag. Instructions for attaching are listed below and provided on the reverse side of the tag.
3. Any big-game or turkey kill left unattended in the field, in a vehicle or in camp must have a properly notched carcass tag and antler/horn tag (if applicable) attached.  
*It is unlawful to possess any big-game species or turkey in the field without a properly notched carcass tag or handwritten E-Tag.*
4. Bear and cougar must be both carcass tagged and pelt tagged. Bear and cougar must be presented for pelt tagging within five days after harvest (pages 123, 129).
5. The carcass tag or handwritten E-Tag authorizes possession of the big-game animal or turkey for one year from date of kill. Bear and cougar carcass tags authorize possession of the animal for five days or until pelt tagged, whichever occurs first. Keep your tags!

## Tagging Instructions

1. Do not remove backing on the carcass tag until you are ready to tag.
2. Upon killing your big-game animal or turkey, immediately and completely notch the month and day of kill on the carcass tag and then attach to the hock tendon of the animal or above the leg spur of the turkey (see illustrations above) prior to moving the big-game animal or turkey from the kill site. For bear and cougar the carcass tag may be wrapped around a hind leg above the foot if skinned.
3. Do not leave any backing material on the tag. Wrap the tag on carcass as shown, matching the ends together and pressing adhesive sides together evenly and tightly. Leave entire face of tag visible and readable. Do not overlap tag ends or cover any of the print.
4. Tags must remain attached until the big-game animal or turkey arrives at a taxidermist, meat processing facility or place of final storage (e.g. your home), or if required, until it is inspected, documented or pelt tagged by a NMDOW official. If multiple trips are required to transport the animal from the field, NMDOW recommends the tagged portion be transported first.
5. If a big-game animal is boned out or when a javelina is killed and nothing is removed or only the skull is taken, fold and adhere the carcass tag to itself leaving the entire face of the carcass tag visible. The adhered carcass tag must physically remain with parts of the animal that are removed and possessed.



Carcass tag



Turkey tag



Antler tag

## Antlered and Horned Game Tag Instructions

When ready to tag, detach antler tag from backing. Attach the antler/horn tag to the main beam of the antler or horn, as close to the base as possible, where it will not slide off. **Leave entire face of tag visible and readable.**

## E-Tag Instructions

If the E-Tag option is chosen, hunters must be able to show their license in the NM E-Tag app on their smartphone. Upon harvesting a big-game animal or turkey, hunters must click the Tag My Animal link in the app to receive their E-Tag number and other required information. The E-Tag number, CIN and date and time of kill must be hand written on a durable material (e.g. duct tape or flagging ribbon) in permanent ink and then attached to the animal (see *Tagging Instructions*, above). This procedure must be repeated for antlered/horned game as described above.