

BARBARY SHEEP, ORYX, AND PERSIAN IBEX PROPOSED RULE CHANGE SUMMARY

Date of update: 3/23/2026

**The Department remains actively engaged in reviewing biological data and considering public input as the rule development process progresses. Please check back regularly for updates and additional information as decisions are finalized.*

SPECIES BIOLOGY

Exotic species in New Mexico are managed using species-specific strategies based on biological considerations, management objectives, and land-use constraints.

ibex are managed with the objective of maintaining a high-quality, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to harvest mature males. The Department also seeks to keep ibex geographically isolated to the Florida Mountains. Historically, ibex license numbers have fluctuated widely. The Department is working to move away from these large swings toward a more stable population size and more consistent annual license numbers. Ibex populations are monitored through aerial surveys.

Barbary sheep are managed to provide sustainable hunting opportunities in southeastern New Mexico. The Department is not managing for population expansion outside of these areas; therefore, licenses are offered over the counter. Population trends for barbary sheep are monitored primarily through hunter harvest index data.

Oryx are managed for sustainable hunting opportunities on White Sands Missile Range (WSMR). The Department works closely with WSMR personnel to develop hunt structures that are compatible with the Range's primary mission as a Department of Defense military installation. Oryx hunts on WSMR are unique and most either sex oryx hunts on range are offered as once-in-a-lifetime opportunities. Off the Range, the Department offers more liberal oryx hunting opportunities with longer seasons.

PROPOSED CHANGES TO EXOTICS HUNTING

Require the purchase of a license at least one day prior to hunting. For hunts where published season dates are less than 6 days, hunters will no longer be able to buy a license once the hunt starts.

Persian ibex

- Similar to bighorn sheep, shift ibex license numbers to be “up to,” allowing the Department to adjust draw licenses up or down depending on population surveys
 - o It is possible that the Department may draw zero licenses for certain hunts (for example, F-IM, based on population metrics).
 - o For once-in-a-lifetime hunts, up to 15 licenses
 - o For archery, up to 40 licenses (over 2 hunt periods)
 - o For F-IM, up to 40 (with 2 hunt periods)
 - o For muzzleloader, up to 15
 - o For youth-only, up to 5
- Adjust season dates where necessary and shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.

Oryx

- Increase the number of off-range licenses by 5%, as harvest success rates for off-range oryx are high, suggesting there is more opportunity.
 - o For youth hunts 24 → 25 licenses
 - o For regular licenses → 96 → 101 licenses
- Require a ranch registration process for OTC private-land oryx licenses, similar to the current registration process used for private land elk hunting in Secondary Management Zones.
- Adjust season dates where necessary. This includes adjustments of hunt dates on military ranges consistent with access and military missions (Fort Bliss and White Sands Missile Range). And shifting start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.
- Shift the 70 years and older hunt based on public comment to allow hunters of any age to apply.
- Clarify the definition of a broken-horned oryx to ensure hunters know they can take an oryx with no horns.
 - o Proposed clarifying definition: “Broken-horned oryx” or “BHO” shall mean an oryx of either sex that has at least one horn missing at least 25% of its normal growth, or any oryx which has no horn(s) shall be considered a broken horned oryx.

Barbary sheep

- In collaboration with McGregor Range (Fort Bliss) several changes are recommended:
 - o Increase the 2 ES hunts (1 military and 1 civilian hunt) from 10 to 20 licenses.
 - o Increase F-IM hunts by 20 (from 130 to 150) and spreading the licenses out over 1-month hunt windows. Hunters will be able to access the range over all weekends in that month when there is not a military mission occurring.
- Require a ranch registration process for purchase of private land Barbary sheep license.
- Adjust season dates where necessary. Including adjustments of hunt dates on military ranges consistent with access and military missions (Bliss, WSMR). And shift start dates to maintain hunts beginning on Saturday or adjusting to calendar day starts for consistency.
- Split draw hunts in GMUs 29 & 30, maintaining the same number of total licenses but distributing hunters across the GMUs to address overcrowding issues.
 - o For hunts of 200 licenses, the split would be 75 licenses in GMU 29 and 125 in GMU 30
 - o For hunts with 75 licenses, the split would be 25 licenses in GMU 29 and 50 in GMU 30

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Department continues to receive public comment. If you would like to comment on the proposals, please send an email to: DGF-Exotics-Rule@dgf.nm.gov