

TENNESSEE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION  
PROCLAMATION 15-21  
MANNER AND MEANS OF HUNTING, TAKING, AND TRAPPING

Statewide and on Wildlife Management Areas and State Refuges

Pursuant to the authority granted by Tennessee Code Annotated, Sections 70-4-107 and 70-5-108, the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission hereby proclaims the manner and means of hunting, taking, and trapping.

NOTE: All sections contained herein apply to statewide and management area hunting. Special restrictions may apply on some wildlife management areas. Legislative Private Acts also apply in some counties.

SECTION I. LEGAL HUNTING DEVICES – All firearms, hunting devices, and ammunition listed in the below table are legal for hunting purposes according to the individual species listed. If a firearm, hunting device, or ammunition is not listed in the below table it is illegal to hunt with within the State of Tennessee. Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) may have restrictions on some legal hunting devices.

Firearm, hunting device and ammunition	Big Game				Small Game		
	Deer	Bear	Elk	Turkey	Migratory Birds	Furbearers <sup>4</sup> and Crow	All Other Small Game
Shotguns (including muzzleloading shotguns) using ammunition loaded with Number Four (4) or smaller shot	No	No	No	Yes	Yes <sup>3</sup>	Yes	Yes
Shotguns (including muzzleloading shotguns) using ammunition loaded with T shot (0.20 inch diameter) or smaller	No	No	No	No	Yes <sup>3,6</sup>	Yes	No
Shotguns (including muzzleloading shotguns) using ammunition loaded with single solid ball or slugs	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes <sup>1</sup>	No
Rifles and handguns using rimfire ammunition and air guns (.25 caliber or smaller)	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Rifles and handguns using centerfire ammunition (full metal jacketed ammunition prohibited)	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes <sup>1,5</sup>	No
Muzzleloading firearms (rifles and handguns) .36 cal. or larger	Yes <sup>7</sup>	Yes <sup>7</sup>	Yes <sup>7</sup>	No	No	Yes <sup>1,7</sup>	Yes <sup>1,7</sup>
Muzzleloading firearms (rifles and handguns) less than .36 cal.	No	No	No	No	No	Yes <sup>7</sup>	Yes <sup>7</sup>
Archery equipment (longbows, recurves, compounds, and crossbows)	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes <sup>2</sup>	Yes	Yes	Yes

- (1) If using this equipment while hunting during deer, elk or bear season you must be a legal big game hunter. (see Section VII, 8)
- (2) For big game hunting arrows and bolts must be equipped with sharpened broadheads. For all other game any points are allowed.
- (3) Waterfowl may only be hunted with non-toxic shot of size T or smaller.
- (4) Furbearers are defined as beaver, bobcat, coyote, fox, groundhog, mink, muskrat, opossum, river otter, raccoon, skunk, and weasel.
- (5) It is illegal to use rifles and handguns using centerfire ammunition from 30 minutes after sunset to 30 minutes before sunrise.
- (6) Migratory birds, except waterfowl, may only be hunted with ammunition loaded with Number (4) or smaller shot.

- (7) Muzzleloading firearms are defined as those firearms which are incapable of being loaded from the breech.

## SECTION II. PROHIBITED ACTS

- (1) Possession of ammunition except that as specifically authorized is prohibited while hunting.
- (2) The use or possession and/or the accompanying of anyone using or possessing raccoon calls, squallers, weapons, ammunition, or climbers while training dogs is prohibited during training season, except raccoon calls may be used during authorized field trials.
- (3) The use of dogs in taking or attempting to take deer or elk is prohibited. Taking or attempting to take deer being pursued by dog, or dogs, is prohibited.
- (4) Juveniles under the age of eighteen (18) are prohibited from using handguns for the purpose of hunting.
- (5) No person shall make use of bait to take wildlife unless the bait has been removed and any electronic feeder disabled at least 10 days prior to hunting.
- (6) Possession of firearms prohibited while chasing coyote, fox, and bobcat with dogs from the first Saturday in November through the end of the deer season.
- (7) Use or possession of the following equipment is prohibited:
  - (a) Predator calls while night hunting.
  - (b) Pod arrows (any pod-type device for holding drugs or chemicals on an arrow) or any drugs or chemicals used in pod arrows while archery hunting.
  - (c) Explosive arrowheads and explosive broadheads are strictly prohibited.
  - (d) Firearms capable of fully automatic fire.
  - (e) Firearms or archery equipment with any device utilizing an artificial light capable of locating wildlife.
  - (f) Any electronic light amplifying night vision scope or device while in possession of a firearm or archery tackle between sunset and sunrise.
  - (g) Electronic calls or live decoys while hunting wild turkey, foxes, and waterfowl (except electronic calls are legal during the Conservation Season for Blue, Snow, and Ross' geese).
  - (h) Rifles or handguns with full metal jacketed ammunition.
  - (i) Rifles or handguns with centerfire ammunition between 30 minutes after sunset and 30 minutes before sunrise.
  - (j) Any loose shot other than non-toxic (as approved by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) or any shotgun shell loaded with shot other than non-toxic while hunting waterfowl, coots, gallinules, Virginia rails, and sora rails.
  - (k) Any firearm including air guns using archery bolts.
  - (l) Tracer ammunition

### SECTION III. LEGAL TRAPPING DEVICES AND DEFINITIONS

- (1) Steel traps may only be used in accordance with TCA §70-4-120. Steel leg-hold traps must have an outside measure of jaw spread that is 9 inches or less, as measured at the widest point. Steel square instant-kill traps must have an exterior jaw measurement 16 inches or less, as measured at the widest point, and steel circular instant-kill traps must have an exterior measurement 12 inches or less, as measured at the widest point.
- (2) Live traps are legal for taking any species of wildlife listed as having a trapping season. Live traps are defined as those traps that act as a cage after capture.
- (3) Steel cable snares having a minimum cable diameter of 5/64 inch and a maximum cable diameter of 3/32 inch are legal for all legal furbearer species during the legal trapping season. All snares shall have affixed a tag bearing the name of the owner. Spring activated snares other than Collarum snares prohibited.
- (4) Commercially available dog-proof traps, also known as species-specific traps, are legal for trapping.
- (5) Cushion-hold traps as defined in TCA §70-1-101 with an outside measure of jaw spread that is 9 inches or less, as measured at the widest point, may be used for all sets in accordance with TCA §70-4-120.
- (6) For trapping purposes "water set" is defined to mean traps set in water adjacent to and part of streams, ponds, lakes, wetlands or other water courses and includes floating sets.
- (7) Trappers shall mark all of their traps with their name or TWRA ID number.

### SECTION IV. LEGAL HUNTING HOURS

1. All big game and small game species (except bullfrogs, raccoons, opossums, migratory birds, and the chasing of foxes and rabbits) daylight hours only (30 minutes before official sunrise and until 30 minutes after official sunset) except turkey open only until official sunset.
2. Hunting of bullfrogs, raccoons, opossums, the chasing of foxes and rabbits, and the trapping of furbearers is permitted day or night unless restricted by Proclamation. No foxes or rabbits may be shot while chasing/training at night.
3. Hunting of migratory birds is to comply with federal regulations for migratory birds, unless restricted by proclamation.

### SECTION V. MIGRATORY BIRD REGULATIONS

1. Federal regulations relative to baiting, firearms, bag and possession limits, wanton waste, tagging, and methods of hunting are hereby adopted and will be applicable to hunting and/or taking of species listed.
- (2) No person shall hunt migratory game birds, except crows, with a shotgun of any description capable of holding more than three (3) shells, unless it is plugged with a one-piece filler, incapable of removal without disassembling the gun, so its total capacity does not exceed three (3) shells.
- (3) All persons who hunt migratory game birds are required to have in their possession a valid Tennessee Migratory Bird Permit (TMBP) in addition to other required Tennessee licenses and permits, with the following exceptions:

1. disabled veterans
  2. landowners hunting on their own land
  3. lifetime license holders
  4. residents of Tennessee under 13 years of age
  5. residents of Tennessee who are 65 or older
  6. Military personnel on leave or furlough
1. Refer to federal regulations 50 CFR Ch. 1 (21.41 and 21.43) for conditions and restrictions applicable to the taking of crows in certain depredation or health hazard situations outside of the crow sport hunting season.
  - (5) Pursuant to federal regulations, during the Conservation Season for Blue, Snow, and Ross' Geese, waterfowl hunters may use unplugged shotguns and electronic calls. Hunting is allowed from 30 minutes before to 30 minutes after official sunset. There is no daily bag or possession limit. No Federal or state waterfowl stamps are required to hunt during the Conservation Season. Hunters must possess a Light Goose Conservation Season Permit and have a valid hunting license, but the license may be from any state.

#### SECTION VI. BIG GAME CHECK IN

1. Big game animals shall be checked in at any approved TWRA checking station, on the TWRA website, or by the TWRA mobile application before leaving the state or being gifted to another, and before the end of the calendar day. Evidence of the big game animal's species and sex must be available for inspection by TWRA personnel until the animal is checked in. After check in, documentation on approved TWRA forms or TWRA mobile application shall be available for inspection by TWRA personnel until time of final processing. This documentation of a confirmed check in shall accompany any big game animals taken to a taxidermist or meat processor or gifted to another.

Evidence of the animal's sex, species, and antlered status (if applicable) must remain with the animal while afield.

- (2) All harvested bears must be checked in at any approved checking station (excluding internet and mobile applications). Bears may be whole or field dressed, but must weigh 75 pounds or greater when checked in. If bears are quartered or boned out, the total of the meat, hide, etc., must equal or exceed 75 pounds. The reproductive sex organs shall remain attached to each bear harvested at least until the bear has been officially checked out at any official checking station.
- (3) Elk shall be checked in as instructed in the hunter's informational packet.
- (4) By completing the required check in information, whether on paper or electronic form, the hunter is affirming that the information as it appears on the permanent record is valid and correct.

#### SECTION VII. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Where hunting is allowed from vessels, it is legal to hunt from any vessel, so long as the vessel is not under forward motion from any influence of mechanical means or sail. On private property, it is legal to hunt from any motorized vehicle (to include ATVs, golf carts, etc.), provided the vehicle is stationary. Nothing in this subsection (1) shall be construed as authorizing hunting from a vessel, automobile or other motor vehicle while under power. Nothing in this subsection permits hunting from or across a public road or right-of-way.
2. Hunters who have filled their seasonal or daily bag limit for any species may continue to accompany other hunters provided they are not in possession of any ammunition or any weapon. This person must also comply with all other legal requirements. Access for hunters accompanying may be limited on some WMAs. A bear hunter who has filled the daily or seasonal limit may continue to carry a firearm and take hogs where incidental taking is allowed.

3. Every game animal, wounded or unwounded by hunting and/or trapping and taken into possession by the hunter or trapper shall be immediately slain and become part of the daily bag limit. No person shall, at any time, or by any means, possess or transport live animals taken under the authority of hunting season proclamations.
4. Gigs, angling equipment, archery, rimfire, and air firearms are legal for taking bullfrogs.
- (5) Archery equipment is permitted during the archery, muzzleloader and gun seasons. Muzzleloader equipment is permitted during the muzzleloader and gun seasons.
- (6) Pursuant to TCA 39-17-1351, persons with a valid handgun carry permit may possess a handgun the entire year while on the premises of any TWRA refuge, public hunting area, state owned wildlife management area or, to the extent permitted by federal law, national forest land maintained by the state, and private land. For other federally managed properties hunters should contact that specific facility or location. Nothing in this subsection shall authorize a person to use any handgun to hunt unless such person is in full compliance with all wildlife laws, rules and regulations.
- (7) During a deer archery only season, a fall turkey hunter may not be in possession of both archery equipment and firearms.
- (8) During archery deer/bear seasons a properly licensed big game hunter may use air guns .25 caliber or smaller to hunt small game while archery hunting for deer/bear. During the muzzleloader and gun deer/bear season, a legal deer or bear hunter may use rimfire or air guns .25 caliber or smaller to hunt small game.
- (9) During an archery only or muzzleloader/archery only deer, bear or elk season, furbearers may not be taken with rifles and handguns using centerfire ammunition. During the gun/muzzleloader/archery seasons, furbearers may be taken by legal big game hunters licensed for the weapon they are using.
- (10) The use of suppressors/silencers is legal for persons possessing the required federal license from the United States Department of Treasury. Hunters using these devices must have proof of such license on their person.

SECTION VIII. REPEAL OF PRIOR PROCLAMATION

This proclamation repeals Proclamation No. 15-06.

Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission

  
Chairman

I certify that this is an accurate and complete copy of a proclamation lawfully promulgated and adopted by the Tennessee Fish and Wildlife Commission on the 21st day of August, 2015.

  
Secretary



Subscribed and sworn to before me this the 25 day of August, 2015.

Jana Crawford  
Notary Public

My commission expires on: 3-10-2019

Proclamation No. 15-21 received and recorded the 26<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2015; to be effective the 24<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2015.

Tre Hargett  
Tre Hargett, Secretary of State

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