

TWA Notes Big Changes in Hunting Regulations, Seasons, Bag Limits and Permits

Hunters, guides and land managers need to be aware of the BIG changes in hunting regs and permitting for the upcoming season. Below are key changes to licenses, substantial and sweeping changes to deer regs, tagging and cold storage, new early deadlines for TTT site inspections (before the regular season ends), enhanced dove bags limits, and proposed late season waterfowl regs. Please refer to the TPWD Outdoor Annual that can be obtained where you buy a hunting license, or at TPWD website at

http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/nonpwdpubs/media/regulations_summary_2009_2010.pdf

Licenses: Licenses go on sale on Saturday, August 15, and most licenses were increased 3-5% (about \$2-\$4). The Super Combo will be \$68, but it is still the best bargain. Waterfowl hunters should note that the federal migratory stamp (Duck Stamp) will cost \$15-\$17, depending on where you buy. The Annual Public Hunting Permits remained \$48. The big change is that the Lifetime License will go from \$1,000 to \$1,800 on September 1! If you think you or your loved ones may be moving out of state at some point (could still hunt and fish as a Texas resident), or you consider increasing license fees over the long haul, now would be the time to act before it jumps.

White-tailed Deer: In one of the largest regulation changes in many years, the TPW Commission approved the special antler restrictions (13-inch minimum inside spread and a “spike” – see specific rules in outdoor annual) **in 52 counties** from the east Texas Pineywoods, through the Post Oak, and over into north central Texas. You need to check you county listing. TPWD noted the antler restrictions have significantly improved age structure while maintaining ample hunting opportunity, based on data to date in the 61 counties where the rule is currently in effect.

The department increased whitetail bag limits in several areas of the state with growing deer numbers or populations sufficient to support additional hunting opportunity, increasing the bag limit in most Cross Timbers and Prairies and eastern Rolling Plains counties from three deer (no more than one buck, no more than two antlerless) or four deer (no more than two bucks and no more than two antlerless) to five deer (no more than 2 bucks). Counties effected include: Archer, Baylor, Bell (West of IH35), Bosque, Callahan, Clay, Coryell, Hamilton, Haskell, Hill, Jack, Jones, Knox, Lampasas, McLennan, Palo Pinto, Shackelford, Somervell, Stephens, Taylor, Throckmorton, Wichita, Wilbarger, Williamson (west of IH35), and Young.

In addition, the department is increasing the bag limit from four deer to five deer in Pecos, Terrell, and Upton counties. White-tailed deer densities throughout the eastern Trans-Pecos are very similar to densities on the Edwards Plateau, where current rules allow the harvest of up to five antlerless deer.

Panhandle counties that had the special short season for white-tailed deer now get the full north Texas season, the first Saturday in November through the first Sunday in

January. Those counties are: Dallam, Hartley, Moore, Oldham, Potter, and Sherman. Dawson, Deaf Smith, and Martin counties, which had no open season on white-tailed deer, now get the regular open season.

Areas of the state having sufficient antlerless deer populations to warrant additional hunting opportunity will be getting more doe days this fall. The department is increasing antlerless deer hunting in the following areas:

- from 16 days to full-season either-sex in Dallam, Denton, Hartley, Moore, Oldham, Potter, Sherman and Tarrant counties;
- from 30 days to full-season either-sex in Cooke, Hardeman, Hill, Johnson, Wichita, and Wilbarger counties;
- from four days to 16 days in Bowie and Rusk counties;
- from four days to 30 days in Cherokee and Houston counties;
- from no doe days to four doe days in Anderson, Henderson, Hunt, Leon, Rains, Smith, and Van Zandt counties.

The department is also expanding the late antlerless and spike season into additional north central Texas counties, and it expanded the muzzleloader season in the eastern part of the state (again, check county listings).

The department also established a one buck only, antlerless by permit, nine-day mule deer season for Parmer County, the first ever deer season for that county.

Youth Only Deer Season: The department is also adding one additional weekend and 10 additional weekdays in January to the current youth-only season, so it would now be opening Oct 31-Nov1, then again January 4-17.

Archery: The Legislature authorized the use of crossbows as a legal means within the Archery Only Season. Guidelines are contained within the TPW Outdoor Annual on pg 56.

Laser Sights: Laser sighting devices approved for hunters with a disability that makes it impossible to use traditional firearm sighting devices.

Tagging Requirements: A tag is required until the deer reaches its final destination (see definitions on pg 55 of Outdoor Annual) and is quartered (used to be finally processed, quartered now defined as hindquarters, forequarters and backstraps – note the trimmings of neck and ribcage are no longer required to be maintained with a quartered carcass and kept in an edible condition). Remember the tag goes with you and the meat, and a Wildlife Resource Document (WRD) goes with the antlers or other parts and meat that are given away. A WRD is available on pg 93 of the Outdoor Annual. Note that deer are to be kept in edible condition, but that inedible parts, such as gunshot meat, are not required to be retained. Deer meat may be given away or consumed. Keeping game animal and game bird meat in an edible condition for consumption by humans is the responsibility of the hunter or any person possessing the

game. A new diagram of what are quarters is on pg 55. TPWD recommends for your protection that you retain the tag or WRD with meat or parts.

The Cold Storage or Processing Facility: The Cold Storage or Processing Facility record book is not required for a private, noncommercial, family-owned cold storage or processing facilities unless the facility is located on a hunting lease (see Definitions, pg. 26 of Outdoor Annual) and is made available to persons other than the landowner, the landowner's **nonpaying** family members, or the landowner's **nonpaying** guests. If the facility is located on property leased for hunting and made available to paying customers, all game animals and game birds placed in the facility must be entered in the cold storage record book. The carcass of a deer or antelope that is properly tagged and placed in a private cold storage or processing facility is not required to be entered in a cold storage record book; however, if a deer that is placed in cold storage is quartered and the tag is removed, then deer must be entered in the record book. Game birds or game animals may be stored indefinitely, provided they are maintained in an edible condition. It is unlawful for a hunter or angler, the cold storage facility owner, operator, or lessee, or any other person to store or receive for storage wildlife resources in numbers greater than the legal possession limits or that were not lawfully taken. **Free Cold Storage Record Books are available at TPWD Law Enforcement offices or online at http://www.tpwd.state.tx.us/publications/pwdforms/media/pwd_172_l2000_cold_storage_record.pdf**

Trap, Transport and Transplant (TTT): Note that the deadline to ensure the department staff can process a TTT request has not changed and is still November 15; however, NEW for this year the Trap Site and Release Site inspection forms must now be submitted by the first business day in January. CWD tests may still be submitted at a later date. TWA recommends if you are potentially considering TTT as an option that you talk with the TPWD biologist and discuss this as part of your wildlife management plan prior to the first of January deadlines. Note this is generally prior to collection of all harvest data, and we recommend this be considered before the holidays to consult TPWD staff.

Dove Bag Change: The dove zones are about the same 70-day seasons, with the North and Central Zone opening September 1 , and the South Zone opening on Friday September 18, but the bag limits are now 15 birds in all zones (mourning, white-winged and white-tipped (or white-fronted), but no more than 2 white-fronted). The federal framework allowed the new changes to the bag limit based on surveys of mourning doves.

Lesser Prairie Chicken: The commission approved a temporary, indefinite suspension of the current lesser prairie chicken two-day season in October until population recovery supports a resumption of hunting.

Late Season Waterfowl - PROPOSED: The Texas Parks and Wildlife Commission will adopt these on August 27, and they are not YET SET, but look for a 5-day closure on

mottled ducks (including black ducks and Mexican-like ducks – collectively called “dusky ducks”) at the first part of the season. Otherwise expect the liberal framework of the last few years and an overall 6 bird duck bag (no more than 5 mallards, only 2 of which can be hens, 3 wood ducks – an increase, 2 scaup, 2 redheads and 1 pintail, with only 1 canvasback, and 1 dusky duck after the first 5 days of the season). The opening day North and South Duck Zones follow the calendar shift and are proposed to move forward to Oct 31 and will not open the same day as the deer season, and the youth weekend is proposed Oct 24-25. The High Plains Mallard Management Unit is proposed to open Oct 24-25, then again Oct 30, while youth weekend is Oct 17-18 in the Panhandle.

Geese in the East Zone is proposed to open for Light Geese, White-fronted and Canadas on Oct 31, but will close earlier for White-fronts on Jan 10 as opposed to Jan 24 for the light and Canada geese (20 Light geese, 3 Canada, 2 White-fronted). The West Zone is proposed to open November 7-February 7 (20 Light geese, 4 Canada, 1 White-front). The Light Goose Conservation Order opens Jan 25-March 28 in the East Zone and February 8-March 28 in the West Zone.

Sandhill Cranes: Sandhill cranes in Zone C (middle coast) may open 1 week earlier than the calendar shift, but that is yet of be decided. Also new this year, sandhill crane permits may be obtained in person at no cost only through TPWD Law Enforcement offices and TPWD headquarters in Austin. Permits are also available anytime online through TPWD’s online license sales and by calling 800-792-1112 (option 5, menu 2) or 512-389-4820 between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. For online and phone orders, a confirmation number will be issued in lieu of a permit and a \$5 transaction fee will be charged.

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