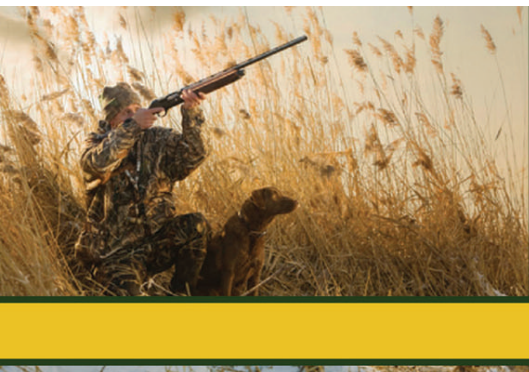




2025 Hunting Guide



Hunting season safety tips

Hunting is a popular pastime across North America. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) reports there were 14.4 million hunters across the United States in 2022, noting those hunters spent a total of \$42.5 billion. According to Statistics Canada, Canadians spent \$678.6 million in the second quarter of 2023 on hunting, fishing and camping equipment. The B.C. Wildlife Federation found there were 1.27 million hunters in Canada in 2019.

Hunting is a popular way to enjoy the outdoors and is a carefully monitored activity that places strict limits on game collected. Safety protocols must be followed when hunting. The following guidelines can help hunters and non-hunters remain safe.

Ensure you can be seen

Visibility is essential during hunting season. Wearing blaze orange can help minimize the chances of anyone being mistaken for game animals. Deer are not colorblind, but they lack the

ability to distinguish colors like red and orange from green and brown, says the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife. Wearing blaze orange will not make hunters stand out to deer, but it can make them visible to other hunters.

Be safe in tree stands

Perching above the landscape can give hunters a clear view of game below. Permanent tree stands are more likely to deteriorate over time due to the weather; hunters should use temporary tree stands only for the season. Falls tend to be the most common cause of injuries, notes the Mayo Clinic Health Systems. Hunters should pay attention to their surroundings to avoid being startled by animals while in tree stands. Also, checking equipment and using safety belts can help prevent falls. The average fall from a tree stand is 15 feet.

Acknowledge your own physical limitations

Activities inherent to

hunting, which include walking over rough terrain, carrying and shooting a rifle and dragging an animal carcass push the body to work harder. This may increase the risk of heart attack in people unaccustomed to strenuous exercise. Take frequent breaks, and hunters may want to go out in pairs so that someone can call for help or administer first aid or CPR, if necessary.

Dress accordingly

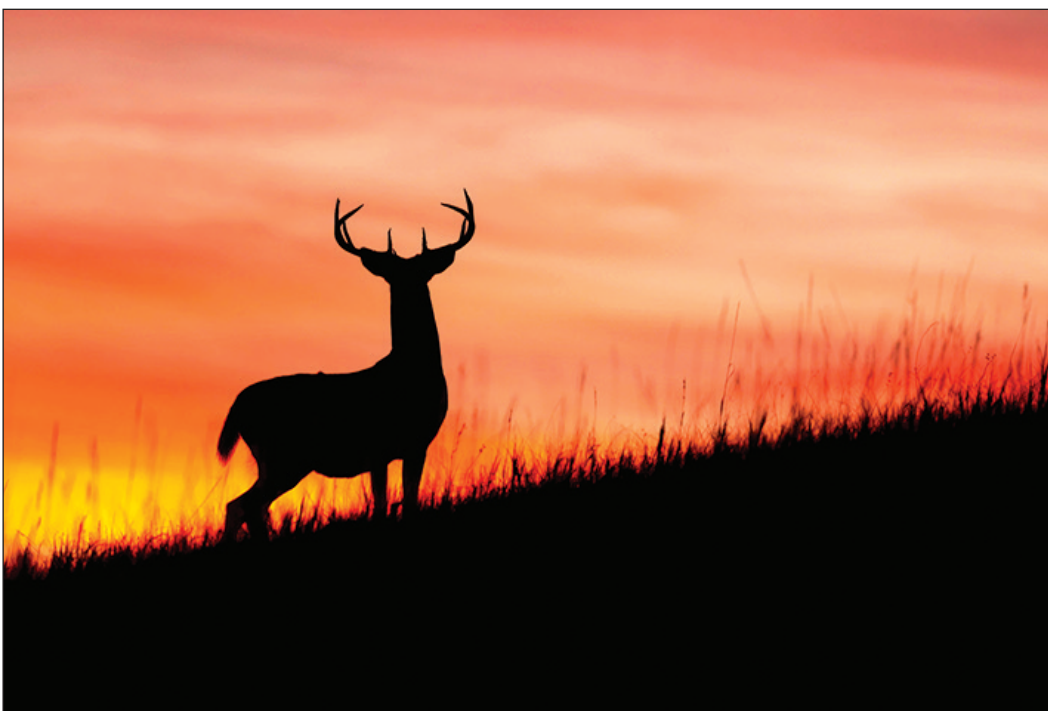
In addition to wearing blaze orange, hunters should be dressed for the weather to avoid frostbite and hypothermia. Layering clothing can be helpful, as layers can be taken off or added to stay comfortable.

Be sure of your target

The FWS advises certifying a target before taking a shot. This can help ensure people, pets or other animals are not in the line of fire.

Recognize hunting seasons and lands

Non-hunters must practice safety during hunting season as well,



The following guidelines can help hunters and non-hunters remain safe.

even if they are not participating. FWS advises nature lovers to learn where and when hunting is taking place and plan recreational activities based on this information. Staying out of designated hunting areas is essential. It's also important for non-hunters to choose bright clothing to be visible when in the woods. A brightly colored bandana

or piece of fabric tied around a dog's neck will help to protect the animal. Sticking to trails also improves the safety of the public and will reduce the likelihood of entering designated hunting areas.

Treat every firearm as if it is loaded

Hunters should treat every firearm as if it is

loaded. The muzzle should be pointed in a safe direction, and the only time a finger should be on the trigger is when one is ready to shoot. Never assume a firearm is unloaded.

Fall is prime season for hunting, and hunters and non-hunters can benefit from a refresher course in hunting safety.

Candidates sought for Fish and Boat Commission board

HARRISBURG — The Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation is seeking qualified candidates interested in serving the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) as commissioners in the following regions:

✓ District 3: Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Elk, Jefferson, McKean, and Potter counties

✓ District 6: Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Lancaster,

Lebanon, Perry, and York counties

✓ At-large: member who is experienced in boating and water safety education and shall be a registered boat owner and shall represent various geographical sections and boating interests in this Commonwealth

Title 30 of the Pennsylvania Code provides that commissioners are appointed for four-year terms with the opportunity to be reappointed for

two additional four-year terms and can serve for six months after their term expires, or until their replacement is named, whichever occurs first.

"With more than 1 million hunters and anglers and nearly 5 million acres of public lands, it is easy to see why hunting and fishing continue to be among the most popular segments of Pennsylvania's \$19 billion-dollar outdoor recreation economy," said Derek Eberly,

director of the advisory council. "The Shapiro Administration seeks a diverse group of applicants, one of whom will be nominated by the Governor. We encourage anyone interested in volunteering to serve on the board to send a letter of intent and their professional resume."

Per Pennsylvania Code, individuals interested in serving as a district commissioner shall be persons well informed on

the subject of conservation, restoration, fish and fishing, boats and boating, and a resident of the district. Commissioners receive no compensation for their service but are reimbursed for travel expenses.

Candidates will be interviewed by the advisory council regarding their professional and volunteer experience with wildlife conservation and activities related to hunting and fishing. Appoint-

ments to the PFBC Commission are made by Governor Josh Shapiro and require the advice and consent of the Senate of Pennsylvania.

Individuals interested in applying should email a resume and cover letter to Derek Eberly, Director of the Governor's Advisory Council for Hunting, Fishing and Conservation, deeberly@pa.gov

Applications will be accepted until 5 p.m., Friday, December 5.

The basics of hunting seasons



Hunting has been around a long time. According to Britannica, hunting as many know it today began in ancient Greece. Various game were hunted to provide food, fuel and materials to make clothing and blankets. In the Middle Ages, hunting was the privilege of nobility and linked to land ownership. Hunting is now strictly regulated in many countries and is typically used as a way to control wildlife populations that would otherwise overrun certain areas.

Hunting limits and clearly defined hunting seasons are often spelled out in detail in local hunting laws. Wildlife commissions across states, provinces and territories set up strict time periods that govern which game

can be hunted. Legislation also dictates size limits and the amount of game that can be killed. The North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission breaks down hunting seasons into big game, waterfowl, small game, and web-less migratory game birds. Seasons vary depending on where hunters live.

The hunting education resource Hunter-Ed says hunting seasons are determined by the type of animal, the environment and animal characteristics like mating season. Wildlife biologists in various regions study animal populations and make recommendations on hunting seasons. "Open season" is when a species may be legally hunted, and tends to coincide with when the pop-

ulation of that species is at its highest, without interfering with breeding times.

Many hunters eagerly await "opening day" so they can start their hunting right away. The season is "closed" when hunters are no longer allowed to go after that game. Food shortages, extreme temperatures and low population numbers may affect season duration. Archery seasons tend to begin before firearm seasons in many states. Hunting outside of seasons is known as poaching and is punishable by law.

Turkey is typically hunted in the spring or fall. Migratory waterfowl hunting tends to open in late September and early October. The seasons to hunt deer, and their close cousins

like caribou, moose and reindeer, open in late September and early October, continuing into November for firearms hunting. However, according to the hunting guide CleverHunters.com, deer seasons open up in the summer in Florida, South Carolina and Idaho.

Hunters will be

required to obtain a hunting license. At the time of licensure, hunters also may be given tags for their game animals. A tag is a physical permit the hunter carries with him or her that must be attached to an animal immediately after it is felled. Hunters are reigned in by the number of tags they have, which will coor-

dinate with game limits. The tag will need to be completed with the date and time of harvest and the location.

To learn more about hunting seasons where you live, contact your local fish and wildlife organization or visit www.huntingseason-hq.com for a state-by-state listing of hunting seasons.



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Gifts for avid hunters, anglers and outdoorsmen

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services' National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation unveiled that more than 90 million United States residents aged 16 or older participated in some sort of wildlife-related activity. Wildlife recreationists spend nearly \$150 billion per year on their activities. With this in mind, those who have hunters, anglers or outdoorsmen on their holiday shopping lists may find that gifts facilitating these specific pursuits can be the ideal fit this holiday season.

Rather than scouring the mall for hours, a visit to the nearest sports outfitter can yield a bevy of appropriate gift ideas. For some inspiration, consider these gifts for the outdoor enthusiast.

- Binoculars: Scoping out territory and looking for game is often part of the hunt. A set of durable new binoculars can give hunters an edge.
- Heated shoe insoles: Hunting and fishing often require long wait periods - sometimes in chilly weather. Heated shoe insoles and hand warmers can keep outdoorsmen warm.
- GPS/digital watch: Although many smartphones tell time and offer GPS services, lightweight watches may be more convenient than phones.
- All-season tent: Camping out is not just a summer activity. A tent that is rated to withstand various temperatures and conditions can be an asset.
- Waders: Anglers sometimes need to get up close and personal with

- their prey. A sturdy pair of breathable waders is ideal for those who venture out of the boat or off of the coast.
- Wool socks: They may be a basic item, but hikers, hunters and other sports people can't stock up enough on warm, sweat-wicking wool socks that will keep their feet comfortable and dry on all excursions.
 - Folding knife: Knives are ideal for cutting fishing line, twigs for a campfire and much more. A sturdy, quality knife that fits easily in a pocket or backpack is a must-have for hunters, campers and anglers.
 - Water-resistant pouch: A day on the boat or near the water requires gear that can get wet without soiling items stored inside. Choose a pouch that can



- fit a camera, keys, phone, and other necessities.
- Climbing stand: Hunters frequently spend time up in the trees to get a better view of oncoming game. Stationary tree stands may remain for the season, but lightweight offerings fold and can be transported from area to area.

Proper Care and Handling of Venison from Field to Table

To reduce the risk of food-borne illness, hunters need to handle, process, and prepare deer properly, being careful to prevent contamination from the field to the table.

Bring These Items When You Hunt

- A sharp knife
- A small hatchet
- A whetstone or steel for sharpening
- Several feet of rope or nylon cord
- Six-inch rubber bands
- Clean cloths or paper towels
- Sealable storage bags
- A large cooler full of ice or snow
- Disposable gloves for dressing
- Clean drinking water

Field Dressing

- To reduce the risk of exposure to disease, wear disposable gloves while handling deer.
- Use clean water, pre-moistened wipes, or alcohol swabs to clean the knife frequently or between cuts to avoid dragging bacteria into the meat.
- Place the deer on its back, elevate its front legs, and spread its hind legs. Support the carcass in this position with rocks or sticks.
- Cut around the anus to loosen the bung so it will come out when the entrails are removed. Tying off the bung with rope, cord, or rubber bands will prevent feces from contacting the carcass during removal.
- Using a clean knife, cut along the midline from the breastbone to the genitals. Make the cut by lifting the skin and muscle together.
- Avoid cutting the paunch and intestines; bacteria associated with foodborne illness may be found in these organs.
- If the organs smell offensive or exhibit greenish discharge, black blood, or blood clots in the muscle, do not consume meat from this carcass. Discard the carcass properly.
- Cut the diaphragm free from the rib cage.
- Cut the windpipe and gullet at the base of the throat.

- Pull out the lungs, heart, and entrails. Place variety meats in a plastic storage bag and store on ice or refrigerate as soon as possible.
- Hints for Field Dressing
 - Dress the carcass as soon as possible.
 - Remove all visible dirt, feces, hair, and blood-shot areas.
 - Wipe out the cavity with individual paper towels. Prop the cavity open with a clean stick or hang the carcass to aid in air circulation.
 - If you wash the cavity with water, dry the area quickly to prevent spoilage.
 - To prevent bacterial growth, quickly cool the carcass to 35-40°F (3-4°C).
 - After cleaning the cavity, you can place ice or snow sealed in plastic storage bags and pack them in the cavity. Secure the bags in place by tying the cavity shut with rope or cord.
 - Keep the carcass out of direct sunlight and allow for adequate air circulation.
- The hide should be left on the carcass during transport to protect the meat from contamination and to prevent it from drying out.

Transporting and Processing Game

- Keep the carcass cool during transport. Keep it out of sunlight. Do not tie the deer across the hood or roof of a car. Do not put a deer in the trunk while it's still warm. Allow for adequate air circulation.
- Transport the eviscerated carcass to the processing facility as soon as possible. Processing should be done only by businesses with fully refrigerated facilities.
- If you are processing your own game, hold the carcass at 40°F (4°C) or below for two to three days, at most.
- If you are using the meat for sausage, aging is not necessary.
- During processing, frequently clean your knife between cuts to avoid contaminating the meat.
- Wash your knife, hands, and cutting boards

often with warm, soapy water.

Kitchen Processing

- Store any unfrozen meat in the refrigerator, and use it within two or three days.
- Keep raw meat separated and on trays with a lip to prevent cross-contamination in the refrigerator.
- If marinating, do so in the refrigerator.
- Thaw all frozen meats in the refrigerator; under cold, running water; or microwave and cook immediately.
- To reduce the risk of foodborne illness, cook all game meat to the correct final internal temperature: whole cuts, steaks, and roasts to 145°F (63°C) (medium rare); ground meat to 160°F (71°C); soups, stews, casseroles, and leftovers to 165°F (74°C); and jerky to 160°F (71°C) before drying. Use a calibrated food thermometer to ensure proper cooking temperature is reached.
- Jerky should be dried sufficiently after processing and can be stored for one to two months under refrigeration (< 40°F [4°C]).
- Meat must be canned in a pressure canner. Dial gauge canners should be checked yearly for accuracy. Follow guidelines from USDA, the National Center for Home Food Preservation, or your local extension office.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize all equipment, including the tabletop meat grinder, before and after use.

Freezing Tips

- Cut and package the meat into meal-size portions (about one pound).
- Use heavily waxed paper, freezer wrap, heavy-duty aluminum foil, vacuum bags, or plastic freezer storage bags for meat storage.
- Wrap meat tightly, and remove all air from the bag before sealing.
- Using a permanent marker, label packages with contents and dates.
- Space packages in freezer to allow proper air circulation for cooling and freezing.

- Once packages are solidly frozen (within 24 hours), you can restack them within the freezer.
- Properly wrapped game meat will store in the freezer for 9-12

- months. According to the Pennsylvania Game Commission, it is legal to have venison in home freezers year-round.
- To avoid quality deterioration, do not

refreeze thawed products.

Prepared by Catherine N. Cutter, associate professor and food safety specialist.

How to prepare for a child's first hunting trip

Millions of individuals across the globe are avid hunters. The passion many of those people have for hunting began on their first childhood hunting trip, and countless hunters fondly recall this milestone moment in their lives.

If there's a first time for everything, parents know that kids' initial forays into any activity comes with ups and downs. Hunting is no exception to that trend, but parents can consider these measures as they prepare their youngsters to go hunting for the first time.

- Emphasize the importance of safety. Safety is of the utmost importance on any hunting trip. Kids should be aware of all safety protocols pertaining to their guns and the hunting grounds. Hunter's education courses can teach kids about hunting safety, but parents can quiz youngsters in the days leading up to the trip to reinforce safety protocols.

Explain how hunting trips typically unfold. Giving kids an idea of how a hunting trip may unfold is another good idea. Explain the timing of the trip and why it's beginning when it is. Kids without such knowledge may be less enthusiastic about early morning hunting excursions if they don't understand why they need to get out of bed early



on a day off. But they might be more excited if they recognize they're more likely to see wildlife and enjoy a successful trip if they're willing to sacrifice sleeping in.

- Bring some extra activities for kids to do. Screens are a no-no, as they could deter wildlife. But hunting requires patience, which is not exactly a virtue many youngsters possess. So bring some books along or encourage kids to keep a diary of their first trip, describing it in detail so they have something to look back on as they get older.

Purchase comfortable hunting attire. Kids will likely be wearing new attire on their first trip, so parents should have them try the clothing on prior to the trip. When shopping for hunting clothing, make sure it meets all safety

standards and is functional for hunters, but don't overlook comfort. Hunting involves a lot of waiting, and the trip will be more enjoyable for everyone if kids are comfortable throughout the slow periods.

- Recognize the day could be emotional. A child's first hunting trip can be an emotional roller coaster, as kids may feel excited, bored, nervous, sad, and even guilty at any point during the day. Parents must allow kids to express any of these emotions during the day and emphasize that it's alright to express their emotions.

A child's first hunting trip is a milestone moment. Parents can take steps leading up to the trip to ensure their children are ready for what's to come.



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