

Big Game Rules

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

While in the field, you must have all of the following:

1. A Game-hunting License or Game-hunting & Fishing License (page 5).
2. A license and/or permit if required for the species hunted (pages 5, 7).
3. A Habitat Management & Access Validation (Applicable for all hunters 18 years of age or older, except 100% disabled resident veterans in conjunction with their free licenses, page 10).
4. A Habitat Stamp if hunting on BLM or Forest Service lands (page 10).
5. Written permission from the landowner if hunting on private land.
6. A Hunter Education or Mentored-Youth Program number if younger than 18 years of age.

Legal Sporting Arms for Big-Game Hunting

Legal sporting arms for hunting big-game species (page 133) include: centerfire rifle or handgun (see individual species for caliber restrictions); shotgun no smaller than 28 gauge, firing a single slug; bow and arrows; crossbow and bolts; and muzzleloading rifle. **Sporting arm exceptions are noted in each species section.**

Hunters may use only soft-nosed, hollow-pointed or plastic-tip bullets. Full metal jacket (FMJ) or tracer bullets are illegal. No fully automatic firearms may be used.

Sights on bows may not magnify targets or project light. Arrows must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with steel cutting edges. No drugs may be used on a hunting arrow and arrows cannot be driven by explosives.

Crossbow use is legal by certified mobility-impaired hunters during any seasons. Crossbows can be used during "Any Legal Sporting Arm" hunts and "Muzzleloader" hunts. Sights on crossbows may not magnify targets or project light if used by certified mobility-impaired hunter for an archery-only hunt. Bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with steel cutting edges. No drugs may be used on bolts. Bolts cannot be driven by explosives.

Scopes, sabots, in-line ignition and belted bullets may be used with muzzleloaders but not Restricted Muzzleloaders (page 136, 'Glossary of Terms').

All Harvests Must be Recorded on License

1. Immediately after killing any big game or turkey, the species must be recorded (properly blacked out or punched) in the space designated on the license.
2. Date and time of the kill(s) must be recorded on the license immediately upon arrival at a vehicle, camp or place of storage.
3. Any kill left unattended in the field, in a vehicle or in camp must be accompanied with a properly recorded license (see above, 1., 2.) or with specific, permanently written license information, including the hunters full name, license number and date of the kill. It is unlawful to possess any big-game species or turkey in the field, place of storage or residence without a properly recorded license (see above, 1., 2.) or without the required written licensee information.
4. Bear, cougar and bobcats also must be tagged with a pelt tag (see pages 112, 117, 123) and must be accompanied by a properly recorded license (see above, 1., 2.).

Harvested Game or Turkey Must be Recorded on License—continued.

5. Every bighorn sheep ram head taken in or imported into New Mexico must have a seal inserted into one horn by NMDGF or another wildlife agency. The seal authorizes possession and transport of the head within New Mexico. Bighorn sheep heads found, in the field, in New Mexico remain the property of the State (see page 95).

Mandatory Harvest Reporting

Harvest reporting is mandatory for all Barbary sheep, deer, elk, ibex, javelina, oryx, pronghorn antelope, turkey and trapping license holders. Big-game, turkey and trapper license holders who do not report will be ineligible the following year for all draw hunts, population management authorizations, private-land authorizations and trapper licenses. Results can be reported online or by telephone.

Free Harvest Reporting Deadlines

Feb. 15, 2016: Deer, elk, pronghorn antelope and turkey license holders.

April 7, 2016: Barbary sheep, ibex, javelina, oryx and trapping license holders.

Harvest reporting after these deadlines will be subject to an \$8 late fee. Failure to report will result in rejection of all big-game applications (pages 4, 121).

Waste of Game

Anyone who takes a Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx, pronghorn antelope or turkey must transport from the field the 'edible portions' for human consumption. The edible portions of game mammals include all four quarters with 90% of the meat taken. Backstraps, tenderloins and at least 75% of the neck meat must be included. Hunters are not required to remove the rib cage or organs of game mammals from the field. The edible portions of turkey include the breast, legs and thigh meat. Anyone who wounds or may have wounded any big-game species must make a reasonable attempt to track and kill the animal. This requirement does not authorize trespass.

Proof of Legal Game

Hunters must keep proof of sex with all game species 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 Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx or pronghorn antelope (except females or immature animals which must be accompanied by the detached, but intact, scalp and both ears). **The external genitalia of any bear or cougar must remain attached to the hide** and be readily visible until the hide has been inspected and pelt tagged by a NMDGF representative. The beard and a small patch of feathers surrounding the beard of a turkey must remain attached when the bag limit is a bearded turkey.

Possession, Donation or Sale of Game

It is unlawful to possess game without a proper license or 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. However, the skins, head, antlers, horns and claws of legally taken protected species and the feathers of nonmigratory game birds may be sold, bartered or donated.

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Possession, Donation or Sale of Game—continued.

Any person conveying 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 95 and downloadable at www.wildlife.state.nm.us. It is unlawful to possess the head, horns or antlers of any big-game species found in the field without a receipt from NMDGF (except for shed antlers).

Storage

Either a properly recorded big-game and/or turkey license or licensee information (including the hunter's full name, license number and date of kill) must remain with the meat. Licenses authorize possession and storage for one year from the date of kill. To store or possess meat after this date, individuals must have a storage permit from NMDGF.

Trophies taken to a taxidermist or carcasses taken to a meat processor should be accompanied by a written statement of the species and number of game involved, the date of delivery, and the name and license number of the hunter delivering the game to the taxidermist or processor.

Transportation of Game

Game accompanied with a properly recorded license or by a written statement may be transported within and outside the state. However, bighorn sheep ram heads must have a seal. Bear, cougar and bobcat hides must have a pelt tag. It is unlawful to transport portions of deer or elk taken in areas where chronic wasting disease (CWD) has been confirmed (see page 44).

Use of Dogs

Dogs may not be used to hunt big game, except bear and cougar. Furbearers may be hunted with dogs. 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 pronghorn antelope, elk, deer and javelina, but may not be used to locate Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, ibex and oryx. If dogs will be used to locate wounded or dead game, hunters **must register** at the local NMDGF area office before hunting.

Blaze Orange

Though not required by law, NMDGF strongly encourages hunters to wear blaze orange. Hunters on military properties must wear a minimum of 244 square inches of blaze orange. Hunters participating in any firearm hunt on the Valles Caldera National Preserve must wear a minimum of 244 square inches of blaze orange. See specific requirements for each military reservation.

Transportation of Horses

All horses being transported must be inspected by a local livestock inspector. Nonresidents with horses must have proof of ownership. For further information contact the New Mexico Livestock Board: (505) 841-6161.