

# 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 7).
2. A big-game or turkey license, carcass tag and permit (if required) for the species hunted (pages 7, 9). Successful draw-license applicants will be mailed a tag. Restrictions may apply for online big-game license purchases.
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.

## Legal Sporting Arms for Big-game Hunting

Legal sporting arms for hunting big-game species (page 137) are: centerfire rifle or handgun; shotgun no smaller than 28 gauge, firing a single slug; bow and arrows; crossbow and bolts; and muzzleloading rifle. **Sporting arm exceptions and caliber restrictions are noted in each species section.**

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

Sights on bows may not project light (lighted pins are acceptable). 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 only during bow seasons. Crossbow use is legal by all hunters during "Any Legal Sporting Arm" and "Muzzleloader" hunts. Sights on crossbows may not project light. 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 except during "Restricted Muzzleloader" (page 140) deer hunts.

## All Big-game and Turkey Harvests Must Be Tagged

1. Immediately after harvesting any big game or turkey, the carcass tag must be notched. Carcass tag must be attached to the kill before leaving the kill site. Instructions for notching and attaching are listed on page 21 and are provided on the reverse side of the tag.
2. Antlered or horned big game require an antler/horn tag be attached in addition to a carcass tag. Instructions for attaching are listed below and provided on the reverse side of the tag.
3. Any big-game or turkey kill left unattended in the field, in a vehicle or in camp must have a properly notched carcass tag and antler/horn tag (if applicable) attached.

It is unlawful to possess any big-game species or turkey in the field without a properly notched carcass tag.

4. Bear and cougar must be both carcass tagged and pelt tagged. Bear or cougar must be presented for pelt tagging within five (5) days after harvest (pages 115, 121).

## Tagging Instructions

The carcass tag authorizes possession of the big-game animal or turkey for one (1) year from date of kill. Bear and cougar carcass tags authorize possession of the animal for five days or until pelt tagged, whichever occurs first. Keep your tags!

1. Do not remove backing on the carcass tag until you are ready to tag.
2. Upon killing your big-game animal or turkey, immediately and completely notch the month and day of kill on the carcass tag and then attach to the hock tendon of the animal or above the leg spur of the turkey (see illustrations below) prior to moving the big-game animal or turkey from the kill site. For bear and cougar the carcass tag may be wrapped around a hind leg above the foot if skinned.
3. Do not leave any backing material on the tag. Wrap the tag on carcass as shown, matching the ends together and pressing adhesive sides together evenly and tightly. **Leave entire face of tag visible and readable. Do not overlap tag ends or cover any of the print.**
4. Tags must remain attached until the big-game animal or turkey arrives at a taxidermist, meat processing facility or place of final storage (e.g. your home), or if required, until it is inspected, documented or pelt tagged by a NMDGF official.
5. If a big-game animal is boned out or when a javelina is killed and nothing is removed or only the skull is taken, fold and adhere the carcass tag to itself leaving the entire face of the carcass tag visible. The adhered carcass tag must remain physically with parts of the animal that are removed and possessed.

## Antlered and Horned Game Tag Instructions

When ready to tag, detach antler tag from backing. Attach the antler/horn tag to the main beam of the antler or horn where it will not slide off. **Leave entire face of tag visible and readable.**



Left to right:  
Carcass tag, turkey  
tag and antler tag.

## Seal Required for Bighorn Sheep Ram Head

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 (see page 95). Bighorn sheep heads found in the field in New Mexico remain the property of the State (see page 136).

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## Mandatory Harvest Reporting

Harvest reporting is mandatory for all Barbary sheep, deer, elk, ibex, javelina, oryx, pronghorn antelope, turkey and trapper 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 hunts, private-land licenses and trapper licenses. Results can be reported online or by telephone.

### Harvest Reporting Deadlines

**Feb. 15, 2018:** Deer, elk, pronghorn antelope and turkey license holders. Failure to report by March 21 will result in rejection of all applications.

**April 7, 2018:** 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 (page 4–5). If reporting online, license holders must select the correct year (2017) in the drop-down menu.

## 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 animals include all four quarters, backstraps, tenderloins and the neck meat. 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 go to the place where the animal sustained the wound or may have sustained the wound and make a reasonable attempt to track and kill the animal. This requirement does not authorize trespass.

## Proof of Sex

Hunters must keep proof of sex with all game species (except javelina) 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 properly notched carcass tag 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.

Any person giving 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.

Licenses, applications, harvest reporting and general information: [www.wildlife.state.nm.us](http://www.wildlife.state.nm.us)

### *Possession, Donation or Sale of Game—continued.*

A sample certificate is provided on page 136 and downloadable at [www.wildlife.state.nm.us](http://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

A properly notched carcass tag must remain with the meat. The carcass tag authorizes possession and storage for one (1) year from the date of kill. To store or possess meat after this date, individuals must have a storage permit from NMDGF. Bear and cougar carcass tags authorize possession of the animal for five days or until pelt tagged, whichever occurs first.

Trophies taken to a taxidermist or carcasses taken to a meat processor must be accompanied by a properly notched carcass tag and antler/horn tag (if applicable) or a donation certificate.

**Keep your tags!**

## Transportation of Game

Properly tagged game may be transported within and outside the state. Bighorn sheep ram heads also must have a seal. Bear, cougar and bobcat hides must have a pelt tag. See page 48 for details on transporting harvested deer or elk from units where CWD has been confirmed.

## 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.

## Transportation of Horses

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