

Big-Game & Turkey Rules

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

License Requirements and Fees: See page 8–13.

Understanding Hunt Codes: The hunt code printed on your license indicates the species, legal sporting arms, dates, area, fee type and bag limit for the license issued.

For example: **DER-1-101**

- **"DER"** indicates a deer hunt.
- **"1"** indicates any legal big-game sporting arm (2 = bow only; 3 = muzzleloader, crossbow or bow only).
- **"101"** indicates an individual hunt for specific dates, area, fee type and bag limit.

This example (DER-1-101) found on page 49 is a deer hunt for any big-game sporting arm, standard fee, valid in GMU 2A from October 28–November 1 with a bag limit of one fork-antlered deer (FAD).

Legal Sporting Arms

Legal sporting arms for deer, elk, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, ibex, oryx, Barbary sheep and bear (big-game sporting arms): Any centerfire firearm at least .22 caliber or larger, any muzzle-loading firearm at least .45 caliber or larger, any shotgun .410 caliber or larger firing a single slug (including muzzle-loading shotguns), any bow or any crossbow. All firearms, except handguns, must be designed to be fired from the shoulder. Hunters must use only bullets designed to expand or fragment upon impact. Full metal jacket (FMJ) and tracer bullets are illegal. No fully automatic firearms may be used. Arrows and bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows and crossbows may not project light (lighted pins are acceptable). No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and they cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

Legal sporting arms for cougar, javelina and furbearers: Any firearm, muzzleloader, compressed air gun, shotgun, bow or crossbow. All firearms, except handguns, must be designed to be fired from the shoulder. For cougar and javelina, compressed air guns must be .22 caliber or larger and shotguns must fire a single slug or #4 buckshot or larger. Arrows and bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows and crossbows may not project light. No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and they cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

Bow only: Any compound, long or recurve bow. Draw locks are illegal. Arrows must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows may not project light (lighted pins are acceptable). No drugs may be used on an arrow, and arrows cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

Muzzleloader, crossbow or bow only: Hunters may use any legal muzzleloader with open or "iron" sights, any legal bow or any legal crossbow during regular muzzleloader hunts (see also restricted muzzleloader). Scopes, red dots or other similar sights are not allowed on muzzleloaders during a muzzleloader hunt. See

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definition of muzzleloader on page 125. Sabots and in-line ignition may be used with muzzleloaders except during restricted muzzleloader deer hunts. No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and arrows and bolts (see arrow and bolt on page 122) cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air. Airbows and all guns firing arrows or bolts are illegal.

Restricted Muzzleloader for deer: Only a muzzle-loading rifle using open sights, black powder or equivalent propellant and firing a full bore diameter bullet or patched round ball is legal. The use of in-line ignition, scopes, and smokeless powder are prohibited. Bows and crossbows are legal during restricted muzzleloader deer hunts.

Legal sporting arms for turkey: Any shotgun firing shot, bow and crossbow. Arrows and bolts must have broadheads (fixed or mechanical) with cutting edges. Sights on bows and crossbows may not project light. No drugs may be used on arrows or bolts, and they cannot be driven by explosives, gunpowder or compressed air.

All Big-game and Turkey Harvests Must Be Tagged (E-Tag instructions, page 30)

1. Immediately after harvesting any big-game animal or turkey, the carcass tag must be notched. The carcass tag must be attached to the kill before leaving the kill site. Instructions for notching and attaching are listed below 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 or handwritten E-Tag.

4. Bear and cougar must be both carcass tagged and pelt tagged. Bear or cougar must be presented for pelt tagging within five days after harvest (pages 108–109, 114).
5. The carcass tag or handwritten E-Tag authorizes possession of the big-game animal or turkey for one 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!

Tagging Instructions



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

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Tagging Instructions — continued.

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 above) 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. If multiple trips are required to transport the animal from the field, NMDGF recommends the tagged portion be transported first.
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 physically remain 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, as close to the base as possible, where it will not slide off. **Leave entire face of tag visible and readable.**

E-Tag Instructions

If the E-Tag option is chosen, hunters must be able to show their license in the NM E-Tag app on their smartphone. Upon harvesting a big-game animal or turkey, hunters must click the Tag My Animal link in the app to receive their E-Tag number and other required information. The E-Tag number, CIN and date of kill must be hand written on a durable material (e.g. duct tape or flagging ribbon) in permanent ink and then attached to the animal (see *Tagging Instructions*, above). This procedure must be repeated for antlered/horned game as described above.

Mandatory Harvest Reporting: Deadlines see Page 6.

Harvest reporting is mandatory for all Barbary sheep, deer, elk, ibex, javelina, oryx, pronghorn, turkey and trapper license holders, whether or not a hunt or harvest occurred. 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. Harvest reports can be submitted online or by telephone. Remember to keep your confirmation number!

One License per Species

It is illegal to apply for, buy or use more than one license for any big-game species during any license year—except when permitted by rule.

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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 all male Barbary sheep, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, ibex, oryx or pronghorn. Immature males must be accompanied by the scalp and both ears. Females must be accompanied by either the scalp and both ears or the external genitalia naturally attached to one quarter. **The external genitalia of any bear or cougar must remain naturally attached to the hide** and be readily visible until the hide has been inspected and pelt tagged by a NMDGF representative. The beard must remain with the carcass when the bag limit is a bearded turkey.

Possession, Donation or Sale of Game

It is unlawful to possess any protected species or parts thereof without a properly notched carcass tag, handwritten e-tag or other 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. Only the skins, heads, antlers, horns, rendered fat, teeth or claws of legally taken or possessed protected species, any parts of furbearers, and the feathers of non-migratory game birds may be bartered or sold.

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. A sample certificate is provided on page 119 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

A properly notched carcass tag or handwritten E-Tag must remain with the meat, and authorizes 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. 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), a handwritten E-Tag, or a possession (donation) certificate. **Keep your tags!**

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Use of Dogs: Dogs may not be used to hunt big game, except bear and cougar. 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 big game. If dogs are used to locate wounded or dead big game, **hunters must keep the dog(s) on a leash, and no more than two dogs may be used at a time.**

Blaze Orange: Hunters on military properties must wear a minimum of 244 square inches of blaze orange. Ft. Bliss requires a blaze orange vest. Hunters participating in any firearm elk hunt on Valles Caldera National Preserve must wear a minimum of 244 square inches of blaze orange. Though not required elsewhere by law, NMDGF strongly encourages hunters to wear 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.**

Nongame Hunting License: Residents do not need a license to take nongame species. Nonresidents must purchase a nonresident nongame license or any New Mexico nonresident hunting license. Nongame species include prairie dogs, ground squirrels, Himalayan tahr, porcupine, rabbits, coyotes and skunks. Nongame hunting is not permitted on wildlife management areas (WMAs) unless otherwise posted, except Water Canyon WMA, where hunting nongame species is permitted January 1–March 31, 2024.

Feral Hogs: Feral hogs are an unprotected species that can damage habitat, contaminate water and compete with native wildlife. Because of the negative impact this non-native intruder causes, anyone may hunt feral hogs year-round without a license. Basic hunting rules apply—such as obtaining permission if hunting on private land. Hunting with the aid of an artificial light and discharging of firearms within 150 yards of an occupied dwelling is illegal. Feral hogs should not be confused with javelina, which look similar but are a protected game species. Javelina are smaller than feral hogs and do not have a tail. Javelina also have a white stripe of hair near the shoulders and neck, giving them the common name collared peccary. For information about where to hunt feral hogs contact the USDA: **505-346-2640.**



Feral hog



Javelina