

Major changes on horizon for turkey and deer hunters

Kentucky's hunting and fishing license year ends February 28, and beginning March 1, there will be some major regulatory changes for turkey and deer hunters in the upcoming seasons.

Those who've already bought next year's licenses at Wal-Mart, county clerk offices and other outlets may have already noticed that the license itself looks different, and there's an important reason for that.

For the more than 250,000 people in the commonwealth who hunt turkey and deer, new laws concerning recording and reporting the harvest

of these game animals will be in effect with the April 15 opening of spring turkey season.

In past years, hunters who bought paper turkey and deer permits received carcass tags as part of those purchases. Successful hunters were required to mark those carcass tags to indicate when the animal was taken and attach it to the animal.

This year, turkey and deer permit buyers will not receive carcass tags with a permit purchase, but will be required to follow a different, simpler procedure for recording, tagging and checking in their turkey and deer.

That's where the new license design comes in.

On the back of all 2002-03 licenses, hunters will notice a pre-printed series of six boxes to be used to record the harvest of a deer or turkey. The back of the license is called a Hunter Harvest Log. Blanks for the species, date, county and sex of the animal must be completed at the time of harvest and before the animal is moved from the spot it was found. When the animal is later checked in by phone, the telecheck confirmation number must be written in the blank. After it is completely filled out, the Hunter Harvest Log is to be kept in the hunter's possession throughout the turkey or deer season, whichever applies. In most cases, the log is on the back of a permit or license that the hunter must carry in the field anyway to be legal. The Hunter Harvest Log is NOT to be used as a carcass tag. The spring turkey season limit is two birds with visible heads, but only one may be taken per day. Hunters who take their first bird must have a fully filled-out hunter log that includes proof of checking in their first bird, before they can return to the field legally to hunt for a second gobbler.

This year, new tagging laws will also be in effect. The only time hunters who take a turkey or deer will be required to make and place a carcass tag on the animal is when the carcass leaves the hunter's possession. This tag must include the hunter's name and phone number, and a valid check-in confirmation number that proves the animal has been checked in. The tag must be attached to the carcass before the carcass leaves the hunter's possession, and attached in such a way that it remains on the carcass until processing begins.

Examples of when a carcass tag is needed include turkey or deer taken and left with a commercial meat processor or taxidermist. If the animal is left with someone else or transported in a vehicle that the hunter who took the animal isn't in, a carcass tag must be used. Deer left to hang in a landowner's barn must be tagged when the hunter who took the animal is not with the carcass.

Hunters who take a turkey or deer, have the carcass in a vehicle with them until they get home to call and check it in, and then personally butcher and package it for the freezer, do not have

to see a carcass tag.

Complying with the check-in requirements for a harvested turkey or deer is easy and free. Hunters simply make a toll-free phone call, provide the requested information, and then write down the confirmation number given at the end of the call on the Hunter Harvest Log they used in the field to record the animal they are checking in. It takes about five minutes.

Turkeys must be checked in on the same day they are taken. The toll-free phone call can be made from any touch-tone phone, 24 hours a day during the season. In fact, the number is call is preprinted on the back of every license.

Hunters not required to purchase a license or permit or those who buy licenses by phone or over the Internet, will still be required to make their own hunter log, or obtain a free log sheet from any license vendor. All turkey and deer hunters, including landowners, will be required to follow the same recording, tagging and checking procedures, regardless of whether they are required to buy licenses and permits.

According to KDFWR officials, the new recording, tagging and checking procedure will increase compliance with big game harvest reporting laws. Under the new system, wildlife enforcement officers

will be able to quickly determine whether or not every hunter they encounter in the field has complied with the check-in requirement and other season laws. In fact, they will be able to tell if hunters complied with the check-in requirement for months after the season closes. Hunters found with a harvested turkey, but who haven't filled out the required information on their harvest log for that the bird are subject to citation. Hunters found with a turkey who have filled in the species, date, county and sex, but not the confirmation number can easily be checked for compliance after midnight. (Turkeys must be checked in the same day the bird is taken.) When an officer checks a hunter's permit and harvest log, and the log indicates that a turkey was taken on a previous day, but no confirmation number appears on the log, hunters are subject to citation.

As a final reminder, it is very important that hunters realize they can

not use their hunter harvest log sheet as a carcass tag, if they are in a situation where a carcass tag is required. Hunters should never tie or attach any portion of a paper license or permit they buy to a harvested turkey or deer. Use an index card to tag harvested animals when you need to.

All hunters are strongly urged to obtain and read a copy of the 2002 Kentucky Turkey Hunting Guide booklet, available in March from li-

cense dealers and from the KDFWR by calling 1-800-858-1549 weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Eastern. A sample hunter harvest log and carcass tag is included in the guide.

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