



# Idaho Department of Fish and Game

# NEWS RELEASE

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Headquarters

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## **Some elk hunters can exchange tags due to fire closures**

Idaho Fish and Game is extending the deadline to exchange tags for some early elk hunts that are about to start, or have already started, in the Panhandle, Clearwater and McCall areas that have large land closures due to wildfires.

Fish and Game will not refund tags, but hunters who bought the following tags have until Sept. 11 to decide if they want to keep their tags, exchange them for a different elk tag, or turn in their tags for a receipt they can redeem at no cost for another tag later this year. Tags can only be exchanged at regional offices, but hunters choosing the receipt option can redeem it for a tag at any Fish and Game license vendor.

Elk tags eligible are:

- Panhandle Zone A and B tags.
- Lolo Zone A tags
- Dworshak Zone A and B tags
- Elk City Zone A and B tags.
- McCall Zone A tag.

Elk hunters who have the above tags and want a receipt can also mail their tags to any regional Fish and Game office, which must be postmarked by Sept. 11. After hunters get the receipt, they can redeem it for any general season elk tag, except elk zones where tag quotas are in place and the quota is already sold out.

Some of the above hunts will have already opened by Sept. 11, which typically means hunters would have to decide whether to exchange their tags prior to the beginning of the hunt. With large land closures affecting those hunts, Fish and Game officials wanted to allow those elk hunters as much time as possible to make informed decisions.

Hunters still have the option of exchanging other tags at any Fish and Game regional office, but they must do so before their hunt starts.

All hunters should consider that fire conditions can change quickly with favorable weather and forests can reopen. Fire season tends to taper off by mid-September and is usually over by mid-October when most any-weapon hunts start.

Fish and Game officials are monitoring the fire situation throughout the state and will consider changes on a limited basis, where necessary, to ensure hunters are treated fairly.

Hunters can get current fire information at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/fire>.

Fish and Game's standard policy is to not change hunts or rules due to fire closures because entire hunting units are rarely closed, and fire restriction rarely last through the entire hunting season. But this is an unusual fire season, particularly in the Panhandle and Clearwater areas that are experiencing the worst fire season since the 1920s.

## **Today is the last day for discounted second general season tags**

August 31 is the last day for hunters to purchase a second general season deer or elk tag at a discount price.

During August, resident and nonresident hunters can buy remaining nonresident general season tags to be used as second tags for discounted prices of \$199 for deer and \$350 for elk. Starting

tomorrow, September 1, the second tag prices will return to their regular price of \$300 and \$415. These prices do not include the \$1.75 vendor fees.

Any hunter who has purchased a hunting license and a 2015 deer or elk tag at the regular resident or nonresident prices can buy a discounted second general season tag for the same species. Tags are sold on a first come, first served basis and supplies are limited to the available nonresident tag quota.

Tags are available at Fish and Game offices and license and tag vendors, online at <https://fishandgame.idaho.gov>, or by calling 1-800-554-8685. For more information about the second tags, go to <https://fishandgame.idaho.gov/2tags>.

## 10 tips for hunters during fire season

With hunting seasons starting and Idaho seeing some of its worst fires in decades, hunters should do their part to ensure they aren't contributing to the problem.

Here are 10 things every hunter can do during fire season:

1. **Plan ahead:** Check your hunting area in advance of your hunt and see if there are fire closures or access restrictions due to fire danger. (The first is where wildfires are happening, the second is where land managers restrict access to prevent fires.) You can check Idaho Fish and Game's dedicated fire page at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/fire>.
2. **Be patient:** Most fires are typically extinguished or under control by October hunts. However, some archery, upland bird and other late-summer hunts are being affected. If you know fires are burning in your hunting area, you may want to delay your hunts, or choose another area.
3. **Be careful with all fires:** Whether a campfire, gas lantern, cook stove, barbecue, etc., all can quickly start fires in tinder-dry forests and deserts. Firefighting resources are stretched thin this year, so you don't want to add to the problem. Know the fire

restrictions for the area you're hunting and abide by them. Even after rain or snow, forests can remain dry and flammable.

4. **Be careful with vehicles and other motorized equipment:** Parking vehicles on dry grass can ignite fires. Chainsaws, generators and other machines with gas engines can start fires. Use them wisely and within the rules of fire restrictions.
5. **Be on the lookout for fires:** If you spot a wildfire, report it immediately by calling 911. Hunters may want to carry a shovel and water jug in their vehicle and put out any campfires they see left unattended.
6. **Stay away from fire-fighting activities and abide by closures:** Sometimes area closures seem to extend far beyond the actual fire, and hunters may be tempted to sneak into their favorite spot. It is illegal to enter a closed area. Wildfires can also move fast, and rescues require taking resources away from firefighting.
7. **Avoid burned areas:** They can be hazardous in many ways, including falling trees, holes, loose rocks, etc. They also aren't much fun to hunt. Give them a rest and let the land recover.
8. **Beware of rainstorms:** They will help put out any remaining fires, but rain can also cause flash flooding and landslides on newly burned areas.
9. **Expect some closures even when the fires are out:** Land managers are cautious with newly burned areas and may keep restrictions in place well into winter and possibly longer.
10. **Understand fires aren't all bad:** Fires can have tragic consequences, as we have seen with lost lives, burned homes and disrupted lives and livelihoods. But fires can also improve wildlife habitat, and in most wildlands, are part of the natural cycle.

## Hunting with motorized vehicles: Do you know the rules?

*By Jennifer Jackson, Conservation Educator, Southeast Region*

There is a lot to do to get ready for hunting season—buy your license and tag (or find where you put them), get your gear together, practice with your bow or rifle, double check changes in the regulations. However, Fish and Game asks that you take a few moments to do one more thing—review the rules for hunting with motorized vehicles.

### **What are the rules?**

First, it is important to understand what is meant by a motorized vehicle. Idaho statute defines a motorized vehicle as any water, land, or air vehicle propelled by means of steam, petroleum products, electricity, or any other mechanical power. For the purposes of the Motorized Hunting Rule, this includes pickup trucks, jeeps, SUVs, UTVs, three-wheelers, four-wheelers, motorcycles, snowmobiles, and other similar vehicles.

Second, if you are hunting in a unit with the Motorized Hunting Rule in effect, you cannot use your motorized vehicle as an aid to hunting. Many hunters think this simply means that they cannot discharge a weapon from the seat of their four-wheeler. That is only a small part of the regulation.

Hunters using motorized vehicles in a unit with motorized vehicle restrictions must remember:

- Motorized vehicles can travel anywhere full-sized vehicles are legally allowed (open established roadways), but can NOT be used on off-road trails as an aid to hunting efforts. Using a motorized vehicle to travel off roadways (even if on a legal trail) to and from hunting spots, to transport hunters or hunting equipment, to scout for game, or to actually hunt are some examples of aids to hunting.
- The rule is applicable only to hunting big game animals, including moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goat. The rule does not apply to the hunting of upland game birds or upland game animals.
- The rule is only in effect in 30 of the 99 Game Management Units in Idaho. However, 10 of those units are in southeast and east Idaho.
- The rule is in effect from August 30 to December 31 each year.

- Hunters are allowed to transport weapons on their motorized vehicles while conducting legal activities like transporting camping gear to or from a campsite, or retrieving a downed game animal.

### **What are the exceptions to the Motorized Hunting Rule?**

- Holders of a valid disabled person's motor vehicle hunting permit may use a motorized vehicle as an aid to hunting. Just be sure that the trails you access are actually open to travel. Pay attention to trail signs and printed travel maps you can pick-up from the Forest Service or BLM. Never take your motorized vehicle on a closed trail or pioneer new trails.
- Hunters may use a motorized vehicle to retrieve downed game if such travel is allowed by the land owner or manager. Remember, cross-country travel is not allowed. Always stay on legal roads and trails.
- Hunters may use a motorized vehicle to pack camping equipment in or out if such travel is allowed by the land owner or manager, but hunters may not hunt while doing so.
- Private landowners on their private land, their authorized agents and persons with written landowner permission are exempt from the motorized hunting rule restrictions.

### **How Can Fish and Game Regulate Motorized Vehicles?**

The Fish and Game Commission rule regarding the use of motorized vehicles as an aid to hunting is not an "ATV regulation". It is a hunting regulation-- no different than the hunting regulations that restrict the amount of let-off on a bow, permit the use of certain weaponry in a particular hunt, or set the length of a season, to name just a few examples.

### **Why Have a Motorized Hunting Rule?**

The rule is in response to concerns expressed by many hunters. In fact, the mule deer hunter survey completed in 2007 indicated that most hunters, including those who use motorized vehicles, are concerned about how the use of off-road vehicles can disrupt hunts and disturb hunters. Other concerns include maintaining the "fair chase" ethic of hunting.

Besides the social aspect to the rule, there is the biological component. For Fish and Game wildlife managers, the increase in the vulnerability of game when hunters introduce the use of motorized vehicles (from ATVs to full-sized pickup trucks) is of particular concern.

Motorized vehicles have made secluded, secure areas for wildlife more rare and human access to these areas quicker, easier, and more frequent. The end result is a dramatic change in the hunting experience for all hunters and increased vulnerability of deer and elk to hunters.

Bottom line: The rule is intended to manage conflicts among hunter user groups and address the potential vulnerability of game while striving to meet biological objectives.

### **Want to Know More?**

For a complete description of Fish and Game's motorized vehicle rules, please pick up the latest version of the Motorized Hunting Rule brochure at any Fish and Game office. You can also find this information at <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/public/hunt/?getPage=152>. Questions can also be answered by calling your nearest Fish and Game office.

## **Hunters urged to act responsibly when hunting private land**

Responsibility is an important attribute of ethical hunting and with many of Idaho's hunting seasons just getting started, Idaho Fish and Game urges hunters to be conscious of their actions and act responsibly when hunting private land.

"We are fortunate that the majority of hunters are ethical and considerate to landowners. But each year, we deal with problems related to irresponsible hunter behavior," said Sal Palazzolo, private lands coordinator for Idaho Fish and Game.

Whatever the complaint, most circumstances boil down to a lack of common sense and lack of respect for both private property and wildlife.

"Be the best ambassador of hunting that you can be," said Palazzolo. "Remember to always treat the landowner as you would like to be treated and treat their land as you would like yours to be treated."

Below is a list of guidelines Fish and Game recommends for hunters to follow when hunting private land.

- **Always ask first.** Plan to obtain permission whether the land that you would like to hunt is posted or not, as it is a courtesy and act of respect to the landowner. Be polite, friendly, and ask in advance. If your request is denied, be understanding and remain polite, whether or not the landowner explains the reason for the decision.
- **Always respect the rights of landowners.** By always asking permission in advance and every time one hunts, hunters can adhere to the landowner's wishes. Many times this involves keeping safe distances from livestock and buildings, knowing the property boundaries and where not to hunt, closing gates, and keeping vehicles off dry, fire-prone vegetation or even muddy roads.
- **Exchange Landowner/Sportsmen Courtesy Cards.** The two-part, pocket-sized booklet of six cards provides hunters with a handy way of exchanging essential information with landowners, who in turn, feel more secure knowing who's hunting on their property and how to contact them. The courtesy cards are free and available at Fish and Game offices.
- **Always leave the area better than you found it.** Again, this is just good manners and shows respect. This includes picking up litter including that left by others, and not cleaning birds or other game in road ditches or in areas frequented by people or livestock. .
- **Thank the landowner.** When you are completed hunting, drop by and thank the landowner for allowing you access. Often times, hunters will send a thank you card, gift certificate to a local restaurant, or even offer to do something for the landowner such as helping with chores.
- **Mentor the future.** For many, one of the most exciting and memorable hunting experiences will be that of mentoring a young hunter. As part of the mentoring process, it is important that they understand that if we are to preserve our hunting heritage, we must respect landowners and their land. Consider providing a young hunter with an opportunity to ask a landowner for permission and to express their appreciation after the hunt.

Remember that responsible hunters do not have to harvest to have a successful day. One can have a great day by recognizing the challenge of the hunt, the pleasures of being out in nature, sharing companionship of friends, and being an ambassador to the sport.

## **Hunt Idaho expo video now online**

About 300 people, including dozens of Lewiston-area families learned all about big game hunting at the Idaho Fish and Game Clearwater Region's Hunt Idaho Expo held August 21-22 in Lewiston.

Participants learned how to hunt, harvest, process, and prepare tasty meals with wild game meat.

The Hunt Idaho Expo was sponsored by the Idaho Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

Watch the video at: <https://fishandgame.idaho.gov/content/hunt-expo>

## **Ask Fish and Game: Migratory bird (HIP) permit**

**Q.** A friend and I are planning to hunt doves this weekend, and he told me I needed a Migratory Bird HIP permit? What is a HIP permit?

**A.** Anyone hunting mourning doves, sandhill crane, or waterfowl in Idaho must have a valid Idaho hunting license with Migratory Bird (HIP) permit. The HIP permit costs \$1.75 for residents and \$4.75 for nonresidents, and it is available at any license vendor. Information from the Migratory Bird HIP permit allows migratory game bird managers to estimate more accurately the annual harvest of waterfowl, shorebirds, and doves to gain a better understanding of bird populations and their management.

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