

Free

HUNTING

2022



A supplement to
TIMES JOURNAL,
Cobleskill, NY



Deer season looks promising

With deer hunting seasons that span four months, vastly different habitat types, and nearly 4 million acres of public land to be explored, New York

offers unique opportunities for hunters to pursue white-tailed deer.

For the 2022-23 deer hunting season, the Department of Envi-

ronmental Conservation expects another very productive year for deer hunters.

Statewide, deer populations benefited from a relatively mild

winter and favorable weather conditions during fawning season and early summer.

The deer food supply across the state is generally in good condition, though some portions of New York have been dry and gypsy moth caterpillars have taken a toll on forests in portions of the eastern Adirondacks and Finger Lakes, which will impact mast production in those areas.

Statewide, DEC anticipates the antlered buck harvest this fall will be similar to 2021. Of course, regional variations will occur as deer populations are managed separately within each Wildlife Management Unit (WMU). Yet within WMUs, DEC anticipates only minor fluctuations in buck harvest from last year, probably unnoticeable to hunters.

The exception will be in portions of the Hudson Valley and eastern shore of Lake Ontario most heavily impacted by Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease last year. In those areas, buck harvest will likely be reduced.

New Hunting Opportunities

2021 was a year of many changes for big game hunting in New York. Harvest data and feedback from hunters revealed the benefits for deer management and hunters, and deer hunt-

ers may continue to enjoy these new opportunities in the 2022-23 seasons.

- 12- and 13-year old hunters may hunt deer with a firearm or crossbow in counties that passed a local law to participate in the opportunity. See Junior Big Game Hunting for a map of participating counties.

- Antlerless-only deer season in mid-September (9/10-9/18/2022) using firearms, crossbows, and vertical bows in WMUs 3M, 3R, 8A, 8F, 8G, 8J, 8N, 9A, and 9F, and using only vertical bows in WMUs 1C, 3S, 4J, and 8C. DMPs and DMAP tags only.

- Daily hunting hours for deer and bear extended to 30 minutes before sunrise until 30 minutes after sunset.

- Hunters must wear a fluorescent orange or fluorescent pink hat or vest when hunting deer or bear with a firearm.

- Antlerless harvest allowed again during the early muzzleloader season in Northern Zone WMUs 6A, 6F, 6J.

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on next page.



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Deer season. . .

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from previous page.

• Holiday Deer Hunt is an extension of the late bow and muzzleloader season from December 26-January 1 in the Southern Zone. Hunters and other recreationists are encouraged to Share the Snow.

Deer Population Objectives

Because deer can have profound and long-lasting negative impacts on forests and personal property, keeping these impacts at a sustainable level is a top priority of our deer program. DEC determines desired deer population changes using data on public preferences and deer impacts to forests.

Older Bucks

Though a mandatory antler point restriction continues in a few WMUs, in the rest of the state where hunters can choose what type of buck they want to harvest, most are choosing older bucks.

Based on voluntary choice of hunters, buck harvest has shifted from more than 60 percent yearlings to about 60 percent 2.5-year old and older bucks in recent years. Even more pronounced, in several WMUs in southeastern New York without mandatory restrictions, 70-75

percent of the bucks taken by hunters are now more than or equal to 2.5 years old.

Hunters are Crucial

Hunters should take the threat of Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) very seriously. CWD is always fatal to deer. If introduced, CWD could spread rapidly and be practically impossible to eliminate once established, threatening the future of New York's deer population, hunting tradition, and many of the other benefits associated with deer.

The most effective disease management strategy is to prevent CWD from entering New York. Hunters can help protect New York's deer herd from CWD by following these tips:

- If you hunt any type of deer, elk, moose, or caribou outside of New York, debone your animal before bringing it back, and follow the law about importing carcass parts from outside of New York. DEC will confiscate and destroy illegally imported carcasses and parts.

- Avoid natural deer urine products. Prions (abnormal proteins) are shed in the bodily flu-

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Deer season. . .

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ids (saliva, feces, urine) of infected deer before they appear sick. Prions bind to soil and plants where they remain infectious for years. There is no way to ensure that urine products are free of prions. Choose synthetic alternatives.

- Hunt only wild deer and support fair chase hunting principles.

- Report any deer that appears sick or acting abnormally.

Help Make Deer Management Successful

Report your harvest. It's important for deer management and it's the law. Hunters are the only source of two critical pieces of harvest information - when and

where deer are taken. These data are used, together with reporting rates, to estimate the number of deer harvested in each Wildlife Management Unit throughout the State.

In 2021, 49 percent of successful deer hunters reported their harvest. New York hunters can improve the quality of data that DEC deer managers use by following through on all of their

harvest responsibility to Take It · Tag It · Report It.

Make the most of your hunting by helping DEC track deer and other wildlife populations.

If you are a bowhunter, DEC welcomes your participation in the Bowhunter Sighting Log. Keep a diary of your bowhunting activity and the number of animals you see for your records and DEC's. You can also become an AVID volunteer by collecting information about how deer are impacting the woodlands in which you hunt. These data will help our biologists ensure deer populations are being managed at levels that encourage healthy and sustainable forests.

Use Non-Lead Ammunition

When lead and lead-core bullets strike a deer, hundreds of tiny lead particles scatter throughout the tissue-up to 18 inches from the wound.

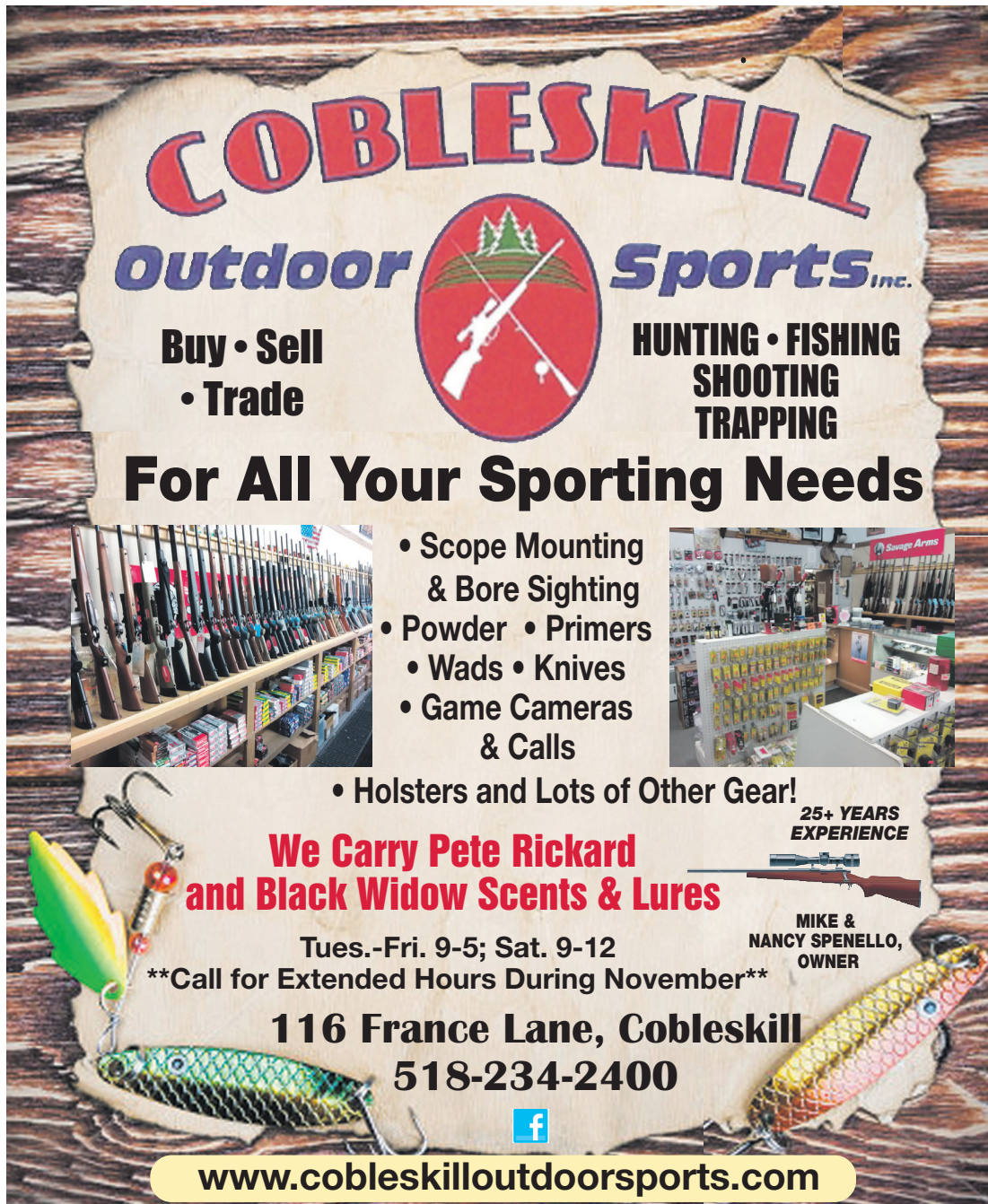
Some of these fragments are too small to be seen, felt, tasted, or removed. These lead particles can ruin the quality and yield of game meat and pose a risk to human consumers and scavenging animals.

Find a Place to Hunt

Hunters seeking solitude and freedom to cover lots of ground will enjoy the Adirondack Mountains in northern New York and the Catskill Mountains in southeastern New York, which offer thousands of square miles of wilderness hunting.

Hunters who want to maximize their success should explore the western Finger Lakes Region or seek access to hunt public or private lands in and surrounding various suburban areas throughout the state.

For hunters seeking the greatest prospects for large-antlered bucks, the Lake Ontario Plains of western New York is a good option.



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Deer numbers in 3 counties

With plentiful food supplies and a mild winter, the prospects for a successful deer season look pretty good.

If so, that would reverse a trend that saw the deer harvest drop over the past two years in Schoharie, Delaware and Otsego Counties.

In Schoharie County, the total deer take in 2021 was 3,150, which includes 1,974 adult bucks, 76 male fawns, 1,013 adult does and 87 female fawns.

The total take in Schoharie County in 2020 was higher: 1,865 adult bucks, 150 male fawns, 1,301 adult does and 161 female fawns, for a total of 3,477.

Although the dropoff from 2020 to 2021 was relatively minor in Schoharie County—about 300 total—the decrease was steeper in Delaware and Otsego Counties.

In Delaware, the total take was 5,330 last year, with 3,488 adult bucks, 131 male fawns, 1,578 adult does and 133 female fawns.

The 2020 take was about 800 higher, at 6,111, with 3,497 adult bucks, 233 male fawns, 2,123 adult does and 258 female fawns. Although the year-to-year adult buck take was about the same, there were steep drops in the other three.

Otsego County's total take in 2021 was 5,519: 3,178 adult bucks, 190 male fawns, 1,941 adult does and 210 female fawns.

In 2020, the buck take was slightly lower, but the other three were much higher, resulting in a total harvest of 6,424: 3,088 adult bucks, 337 male fawns, 2,627 adult does and 372 female fawns.



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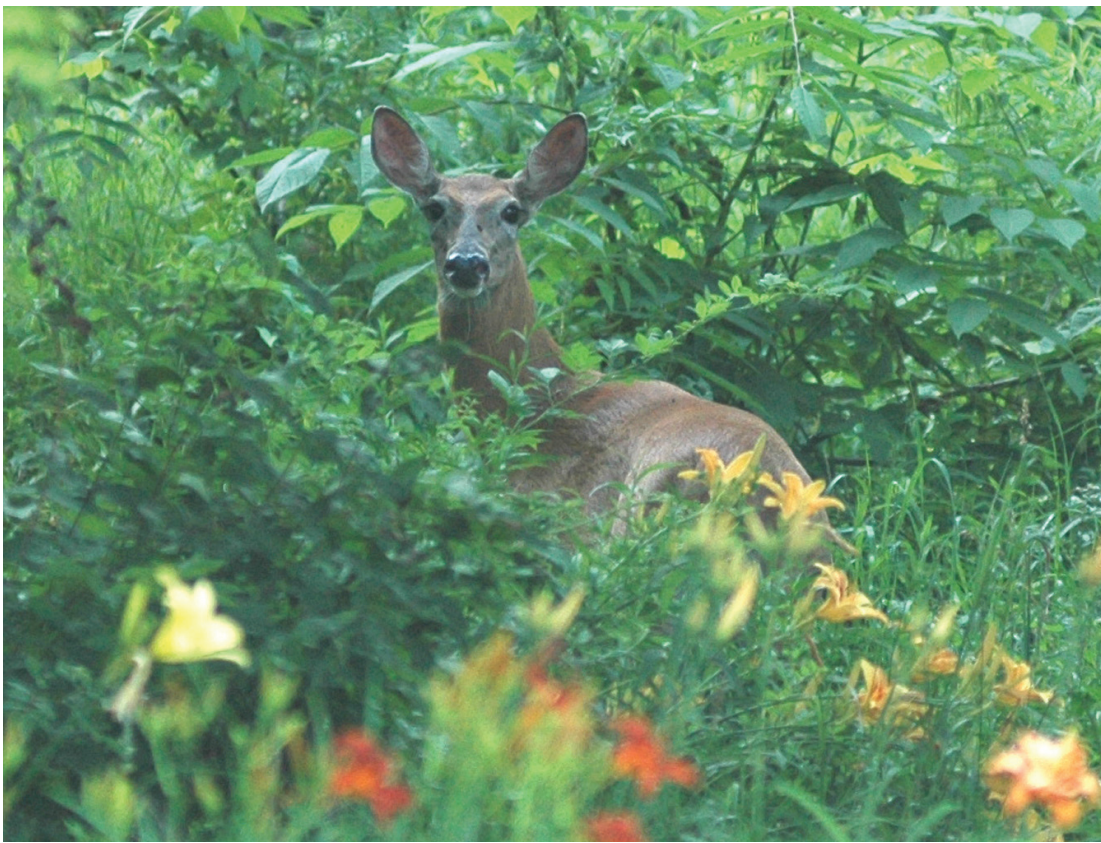
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Turkey numbers vary

It's possible that the fall turkey season could be a good one.

Unlike past years, the spring in 2022 was warm and dryer, allowing polts to mature.

The fall turkey harvest has been generally low in recent years in Schoharie, Delaware and Otsego Counties, but it could rebound this year.

The fall harvest for 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2021 for each county:

Schoharie, 46, 38, 24, 35.
Delaware, 153, 86, 133, 71.
Otsego, 80, 46, 76, 67.

Statewide, the turkey harvest fluctuated over those four seasons: 2,270, 1,549, 2,333, 1,552.

The Department of Environmental Conservation attributed the overall decrease to:

- Poor reproductive success in 2021.
- Abundant food sources restricting bird movements and reducing vulnerability to harvest.
- A decline in hunting participation compared to fall 2020.

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Opportunities abound in small game season

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos announced that several small game hunting seasons open October 1 across New York State, including special youth hunts and new hunting opportunities for active-duty military members and veterans.

"Public and private lands across the state present a diverse array of small game hunting opportunities," Commissioner Seggos said. "Pursuing small game is a great way to introduce someone to hunting and in addition to our youth hunting seasons, DEC is offering waterfowl hunts this year specifically for active military and veterans.

"I encourage experienced hunters across the state to take advantage of these opportunities, bring a new hunter afield, and follow hunter safety requirements to have a rewarding experience this fall."

Several special youth-only hunting seasons for pheasants and waterfowl occur prior to the start of the regular season. Season dates, bag limits, and other hunting regulations for New York's small game species are available in the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide, which can be obtained from a license-issuing agent or on DEC's website.

Ruffed Grouse Hunting

Ruffed grouse hunting season runs from October 1 through the last day of February in most areas of the state. In Northern New York, the season opened on September 20, and runs through the last day of February. In New York City and Long Island, the season is closed.

Ruffed grouse hunters in the Northern Zone are reminded to

positively identify quarry before shooting. The Northern Zone, specifically Wildlife Management Units 5C, 5F, 6F, and 6J, is also home to the spruce grouse, a State-endangered species that is not legal to hunt. Loss of a single spruce grouse, particularly a female spruce grouse, could be a significant setback for a small lo-

cal population.

Spruce grouse exist in lowland conifer forests in the Adirondacks. Although ruffed grouse occur in upland hardwoods statewide, during the fall and winter, ruffed grouse may

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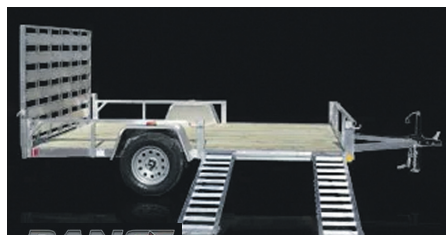
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Small game...

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be found in spruce grouse habitat.

Small game hunters in the

Adirondack region must be able to distinguish between these species so that spruce grouse are not shot by mistake. For tips on how to discern the two species, view the Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide or the Ruffed

Grouse Hunting Information page on DEC's website.

DEC encourages ruffed grouse hunters to take part in the grouse hunting log program and submit feathers from harvested birds in order to assess

recruitment (number of young produced per adult female grouse) for different parts of the state. Interested hunters should visit the DEC website.

Pheasant Hunting

Approximately 30,000 adult pheasants will be released on lands open to public hunting for the upcoming fall pheasant hunting season.

The pheasant hunting season begins:

- October 1 in northern and eastern portions of New York;
- October 17 in central and western portions of the state; and
- November 1 on Long Island.

All release sites for pheasants provided by state-funded programs are open to public hunting.

Pheasants will be released on state-owned lands prior to and during the fall hunting season and at several sites on New York City Watershed lands thanks to a partnership with New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

Pheasant hunting opportunities have also been augmented by private landowners who have opened their land to public hunting. DEC is grateful for their help

in providing high quality hunting experiences for New York's hunters.

A list of statewide pheasant release sites and sites receiving birds for the youth-only pheasant hunt weekends can be found on DEC's website.

Squirrel and Rabbit

Opportunities to pursue squirrels and rabbits can be found throughout the state, including on many public lands.

Squirrel seasons started September 1 in Upstate New York and begin November 1 on Long Island. Rabbit hunting begins on October 1 in Upstate New York and on November 1 on Long Island.

With ample opportunities and mild weather, squirrel and rabbit hunting are great ways to introduce novices to hunting.

Snowshoe hare (or varying hare) season starts October 1 in the Northern Zone. Hare hunters in the Southern Zone, where the season starts in late fall or early winter, are encouraged to report their observations to

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Small game...

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from previous page.

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Wild Turkey

Wild turkeys enjoyed better reproductive success this summer compared to last year. As a result, turkey hunters can expect to see more birds while afield this fall.

Wild turkeys are less vulnerable to harvest in areas with abundant food (e.g., hard and soft mast), because they don't have to roam far and wide foraging, so scouting before the season is important. Season dates for fall 2022:

- October 1-14 in the Northern Zone;
- October 17-30 in the Southern Zone; and
- November 21 - December 4 in Suffolk County, Long Island.

The statewide season bag limit is one bird of either sex. Hunting hours are sunrise to sunset.

Hunter Safety

While statistics show hunting in New York is safer than ever, mistakes are made every year. DEC believes every hunting-related shooting incident is preventable, and Commissioner Seggos is encouraging hunters to use common sense this season and to remember what they were taught in their DEC Hunters Education Course.

Firearms safety:

- Point your gun in a safe direction.
- Treat every gun as if it were loaded.
- Be sure of your target and beyond.
- Keep your finger off the trigger until ready to shoot.



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Safety is essential while turkey hunting

New York has both spring and fall hunting seasons. The most successful turkey hunters use a variety of calls (e.g., box calls, slate calls, mouth calls) to bring a bird within gun range (usually 30 yards or less).

Head-to-toe camouflage helps hunters to stay undetected prior to the shot.

Movement must only occur when the bird is behind a tree or other obstacle.

Few hunting experiences can rival the excitement as a turkey approaches a hunter.

Turkey hunters need to be

extremely careful, however, before taking a shot.

The excitement of a turkey hunt should sharpen the hunter's awareness of key safety rules: Always identify the target before shooting, and be sure that no other person is in harm's way. Some people are tempted to try to stalk a wild turkey.

Forget it. First, it is extremely difficult to approach a turkey undetected. You will be much more successful calling the bird to you. Second, stalking turkeys puts both you and other hunters at risk. Let the bird do the walking.

Tips for a successful and safe turkey hunting season

- Don't stalk. More than half of turkey hunting injuries happen when one hunter stalks another.

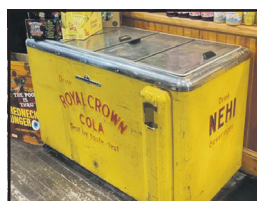
- Always assume any call or footsteps you hear are from another hunter. Don't shoot until you clearly see the whole turkey and know its sex.

- If you see another hunter,

Continued on next page.



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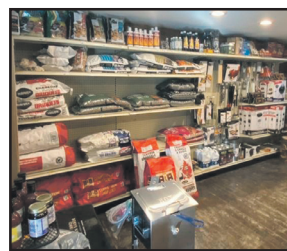
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Turkey season. . .

Continued
from previous page.

talk to him or her clearly, and don't move. Never wave or use a turkey call to alert another hunter.

- Turkeys are tough. You need to be close (30 yards or less is best). You need to get a clear head and neck shot. Do not try to shoot them in the body or when they are flying.

- Smaller shot, no. 4, 5, and 6, work better than larger shot, due to denser shot patterns.

- When calling, sit still with your back against a big tree, to hide you from turkeys and stalkers.

- Never wear turkey colors — red, white, or blue.

- Wear hunter orange when going in or out of the woods and

when walking around.

- When sitting still waiting for a turkey, put hunter orange on a tree near you.

- If you take a turkey or carry a decoy, wrap it in hunter orange.

Here are some rules

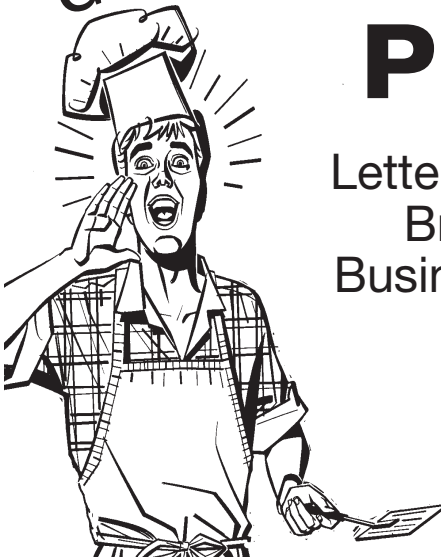
- You will need a hunting license and a turkey permit.

- You may hunt with a bow or crossbow, but you may not hunt turkey with a crossbow in the fall in the Northern Zone if you are using dogs. A crossbow may not be used in Westchester or Suffolk counties.

- You may hunt with a shotgun or handgun only when using shot no larger than #2 and no smaller than #9.

- You may not take a turkey with a rifle, or with a handgun firing a bullet.

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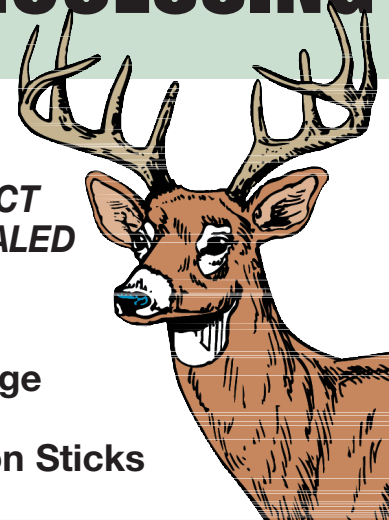


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