

Few changes made for hunting rules

By Tom Betz

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There are few changes in Kansas hunting regulations this year, the second that the pheasant season will open the first weekend in November.

Mike Hopper, wildlife conservation officer for Sherman, Cheyenne and Wallace counties, said the first step for any hunter should be to pick up a copy of the 2007 Kansas Hunting and Furharvesting Regulations Summary.

The 48-page booklet is available at any license vendor or on the Internet at www.kdwp.state.ks.us.

Hopper said the pheasant season start is probably the biggest change in recent years. This is the second year the season will start early, on Saturday, Nov. 3.

He said the opening day last year did not produce the spurt in hunters the state was hoping for, but he thinks it might take time for people to accept the change.

"A lot of pheasant hunters have been coming out to western Kansas for the second weekend in November for years," he said, "and a lot of them have said they will keep coming out at that time because they have scheduled their trip for the same weekend for years."

The state Department of Wildlife and Parks changed the pheasant hunting date last year to try to be more competitive with surrounding states who open their season the first weekend

of November.

Ringnecks were first introduced in Kansas with the release of 3,000 birds in 84 counties in the spring of 1906, according to a history from the state Department of Wildlife and Parks. The species adapted well to the state's climate conditions and populations gradually increased.

The first pheasant season in Kansas was opened statewide in 1917 from December 1-15. Pheasant season was closed from 1921 to 1931, but limited seasons on ringnecks resumed in 1932.

Seasons were gradually liberalized over the next five decades until a stabilized season format opening the second Saturday in November was instituted in 1982. The season runs through Jan. 31, with a bag limit of four cocks per day until last year.

Last year, the pheasant season opened on the first Saturday in November and ran through the end of January. The daily bag limit did not change.

The bag limit, or the number of birds you can shoot in a day, he said, is four cocks (male roosters). You can't shoot hen (female) pheasants.

He said the possession limit is four cocks at the end of day one, eight at the end of day two, 12 at the end of day three and 16 after the fourth day.

While hunters are transporting the birds, Hopper said, they must make sure they have plumage or a foot attached to identify them as cocks.

Hunting hours for upland birds are one-half

hour before sunrise to sunset.

For upland birds, the quail season opens Saturday, Nov. 10, statewide. Quail season ends on Jan. 20 this year.

Sandhill crane hunters must take an online crane identification test before buying a permit. The test is found at <https://secure.ksfishandwildlife.org/crane/>.

In the big game classification, deer hunters will find changes coming next year, and while there will be some extended deer hunting seasons in January, none of northwest Kansas is included in that hunt.

The voluntary program dealing with chronic wasting disease, which affects elk and deer, will continue this year, the department says, but there will not be any mandatory deer check stations.

The firearm deer season runs from Wednesday, Nov. 28, through Sunday, Dec. 9. Hopper said hunters can shoot one deer per tag. Deer can be hunted from one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

Turkey hunters have three seasons again this year, starting Oct. 1 through Tuesday, Nov. 27. The second turkey season is from Monday, Dec. 10, to Monday, Dec. 31, and the third is Monday, Jan. 7 through Thursday, Jan. 31. There is a spring season, but the state has not set the dates.

Turkeys can be hunted from one-half hour before sunrise to sunset.

When you go out into the field this year, Hopper said, hunt only in allowed areas. He said if you don't own the property where you want to

hunt, you must get permission. Areas that are marked "No hunting without permission," should not be entered without written permission.

Some places have "walk-in" hunting, Hopper said, and you can find information in the Kansas Hunting Atlas about the walk-in hunting leases in all 105 Kansas counties. He added that walk-in means just that — walk — hunters can't drive into these fields.

He recommends that hunters wear orange to prevent accidents, though it's required only for rifle deer hunters.

Especially when bird hunting, he said, it's easy for hunters to become focused on the game and forget about other hunters.

"Most people know they have to have a license," Hopper said.

Anyone 16 to 65 must carry a license at all times, he said, including nonresidents. People born after July 1, 1957, must have a hunter safety card to buy a license.

"Use a lot of common sense," he advised, and think safety.

Questions can be directed to officers across the state. Page 41 of the hunting guide, he said, contains the contact numbers for every officer in the state.

Those numbers, he said, are handy for anyone who sees a hunting violation. He said if you see something happening, call the county sheriff's department or dispatcher, or the nearest wildlife officer.

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