

Gobbler season to open today

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HARRISBURG — Pennsylvania's thirteenth spring gobbler hunting season will get underway throughout the state one half hour before sunrise on Saturday, April 26. The season ends on May 17.

In recent years, normal nesting activities during spring months have been delayed by cold, wet weather, generally resulting in a slow start during the scheduled spring gobbler hunt.

Although there have been losses of birds during severe weather in recent winters, there were no reports of dead birds having been found during the 1979-80 winter months. Preliminary reports indicate that there should be a sufficient number of gobblers available to provide exciting

hunting opportunities throughout most of the primary range.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has designed the spring gobbler season to make maximum use of renewable resource. After breeding has occurred, gobblers have fulfilled their primary purpose and they then become "excess baggage" and expendable in the overall turkey picture.

By late April and early May, gobblers can be removed without adversely affecting the future supply of birds. In most states which have only one turkey season, hunting is usually done in the spring, rather than in the fall.

Game Commission personnel urge hunters to be more conscious of safety requirements during the

spring gobbler season. A bird, to be legal, must have a beard. If the hunter positively identifies the beard, there can be no possibility of anyone being shot in mistake for a turkey during the spring gobbler season.

To make the spring season even more sporting, hunters might choose to pass up bearded hens, although these birds are legal. A hen has a dull slate grey or greyish-blue head, while gobblers usually have colorful red, white and blue heads.

Successful gobbler hunters are reminded that many tom turkeys have a soft breast sponge at this time of year. This is simply a mass of gelatinous material located under the skin on the breast of the turkey. It can be removed before cooking the bird. The presence of the breast sponge has no detrimental effect on the quality of flavor of the bird's meat.

Hunters are required to call in and properly identify a turkey. They should not shoot at birds which are flying or running and haven't been carefully identified.

Hunters are reminded of the following special regulations in effect for the spring gobbler season:

Only bearded turkeys will be legal game. Hunting hours are from one half hour before sunrise until 11 a.m. Hunters should be out of the woods by 12 o'clock noon.

A hunter may enter the woods prior to one half hour

before sunrise providing no attempt is made to call, hunt for, or kill a turkey prior to the legal shooting hour.

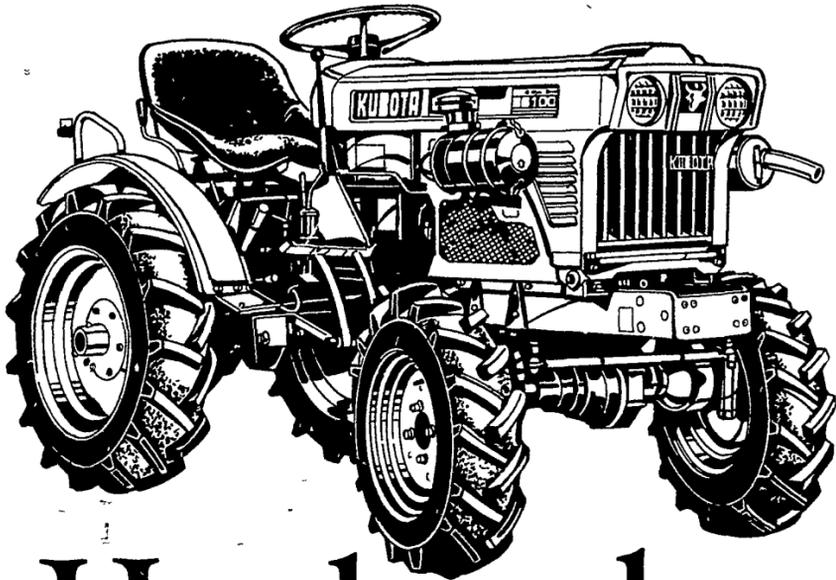
Hunting shall be by calling only (manually operated hand and/or mouth calls).

The only firearm that may be used is a shotgun with shot no larger than No. 2. A combination over-under rifle-shotgun is permissible providing the hunter does not have single ball ammunition for the rifle in his or her possession. Bows and arrows can also be used, if the arrows are of a cutting-edge broadhead design.

A successful hunter who harvests a bearded turkey is required to detach the spring turkey tag supplied with the hunting license and attach the tag to the leg of the bird within one hour, and before transporting or removing the turkey in any manner from where it was killed.

If the bird is lawfully taken by a person not required to obtain a license (such as a farmer hunting on his own or adjacent land), the hunter must make and attach a homemade tag within the time specified after such killing. The tag must bear the name and address of the hunter and the date, time and county where the bird was taken.

Successful gobbler hunters are required to submit a turkey kill report to the Game Commission within five days after the harvesting of the bird. Report cards are available from Game Commission field division offices, game protectors, etc.



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