

Draft Changes for 2022-2023 Hunting Regulations

Deer and Elk statewide questions:

We are interested in hearing your thoughts about Montana's deer and/or elk hunting season length, timing, and transitions from one season to another.

- Should elk and/or deer seasons begin earlier, later, run longer or shorter, or have more time between archery and rifle seasons?
- Would a 2-3 week antlerless elk season consistently applied before and/or after the general seasons for over objective hunting districts be a good replacement for existing shoulder seasons that often vary significantly in their start and stop dates from one area to another? After 2-3 weeks of antlerless elk hunting, any elk management needs up to Feb 15 would be addressed primarily through localized game damage response.
- **Biological implications:** Seasons and quotas could still be tailored to meet harvest objectives.
- **Social implications:** None to date – let us know what you think!

We also are interested in gathering your input about whether restrictions should be imposed on bull elk permit holders. Currently, permits valid for buck deer or bull elk allow a hunter to pursue those animals in hunting districts unavailable to general license holders without a permit. For mule deer, the permits limit the hunter to hunting mule deer bucks only in the drawn permit district. This is not the case for bull elk.

- If a hunter draws a limited bull elk permit, should they be restricted to hunting only that district during that season or should they also be allowed to hunt in other hunting districts where their general license is valid? *Note: A hunter holding a limited archery elk permit could only hunt bull elk in that hunting district during the archery season, but would be allowed to hunt bull elk during the general rifle season in any other general season hunting district.*
- Should buck deer and bull elk permits be limited to first choice only in the drawing? This would mean hunters only would apply for one hunting district for buck deer and bull elk permits.
- **Biological implications:** Seasons and quota could still be tailored to meet harvest objectives.
- **Social implications:** None to date – let us know what you think!

FWP would like to collect your input on the following statewide draft change:

Currently, spring turkey season runs from the second Saturday in April to the third Sunday in May. FWP is proposing a spring turkey season that is established based on set calendar dates, April 15–May 31 each year.

- **Biological implications:** The department does not anticipate any biological implications. The slightly later start date may allow more breeding to take place prior to hunting season. Biological effects of this date change are expected to be minimal.
- **Social implications:** Hunters routinely describe turkeys as being inaccessible during early seasons due to snow or road conditions. Slightly later season dates may reduce this in some years, and later end dates may allow hunters access during drier and warmer times of the spring.