TOURISM, ARTS AND HERITAGE CABINET
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources
(Amended at ARRS Committee)

301 KAR 2:251. Hunting and trapping seasons and limits for furbearers.

RELATES TO: KRS 150.170, 150.180, 150.370, 150.399, 150.415, 150.416, 150.990, 150.995

STATUTORY AUTHORITY: KRS 150.025(1), 150.175(7), (9), 150.360, 150.400, 150.410

CERTIFICATION STATEMENT: The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources, pursuant to statutory authority to promulgate administrative regulations to carry out the provisions of KRS Chapter 150 as established in KRS 150.025 and as an independent department of state government within the meaning of KRS Chapter 12 as established in KRS 150.021(1), promulgated by the Commissioner with approval of the Commission in accordance with KRS 150.010(1), does hereby certify this administrative regulation is promulgated in compliance with Section 8 of 2025 RS HB6.

NECESSITY, FUNCTION, AND CONFORMITY: KRS 150.025(1) authorizes the department to promulgate administrative regulations to establish open seasons for the taking of wildlife, to regulate bag limits and methods of take, and to make these requirements apply to a limited area. KRS 150.175(7), (9) authorizes the department to issue licenses, permits, and tags for hunting and trapping. KRS 150.360 requires restrictions on the taking of wildlife and authorizes the department to promulgate administrative regulations establishing the requirements for hunting coyotes at night. KRS 150.400 authorizes the department to establish the types of traps that can legally be used by trappers. KRS 150.410 authorizes the department to regulate trap tags, trap visitation, and trap placement to protect domestic animals. This administrative regulation establishes seasons, bag limits, legal methods of take, and checking and recording requirements for hunting and trapping furbearers.

Section 1. Definitions.

(1) "Body-gripping trap" means a commercially manufactured spring-loaded trap designed to kill an animal upon capture.

(2) "Dry land set" means a trap that is placed so that no portion of the trap touches the water of a river, stream, pond, lake, wetland, or other water course.

(3) "Foothold trap" means a commercially manufactured spring-loaded trap with smooth, metallic or rubber soft-catch jaws that close upon an animal's foot.

(4) "Furbearer" means mink, muskrat, beaver, raccoon, opossum, gray fox, red fox, least weasel, long-tailed weasel, river otter, bobcat, coyote, or striped skunk.

(5) "Hunter" means a person legally taking furbearers by means other than trapping.

(6) "Otter Zone 1" means the following counties: Anderson, Ballard, Bath, Boone, Bourbon, Bracken, Breckinridge, Bullitt, Caldwell, Calloway, Campbell, Carlisle, Carroll, Christian, Crittenden, Daviess, Fayette, Fleming, Franklin, Fulton, Gallatin, Grant, Graves, Grayson, Hancock, Hardin, Harrison, Henderson, Henry, Hickman, Hopkins, Jefferson, Kenton, Larue, Livingston, Lyon, Marshall, Mason, McCracken, McLean, Meade, Muhlenberg, Nelson, Nicholas, Ohio, Oldham, Owen, Pendleton, Robertson, Rowan, Scott, Shelby, Spencer, Trigg, Trimble, Union, Webster, and Woodford.

(7) "Otter Zone 2" means all Kentucky counties not included in subsection (6) of this section.

(8) "Snare" means a wire, cable, or string with a knot, loop, or a single piece closing device, the deployment of which is or is not spring-assisted, but any spring-assisted

device is not for the purpose of applying tension to the closing device.

(9) "Squaller" means a hand-operated, mouth-operated, or electronic call capable of mimicking the vocalizations of furbearers.

(10) "Trap" means a body-gripping trap, box trap, deadfall, foothold trap, snare, or wire cage trap used to catch furbearers, in the set or unset position.

(11) "Water set" means a trap placed in the water of a river, stream, pond, lake, wetland, or other water course so that a portion of the trap body is underwater.

(12) "Youth" means a person under the age of sixteen (16) by the date of the hunt or the trapping date.

Section 2. License and Permit Requirements. Unless exempted by KRS 150.170, a person shall carry on his or her person a valid:

(1) Hunting license while hunting furbearers; and

(2) Bobcat hunting permit while hunting bobcat; or

(3) Trapping license while trapping furbearers.

Section 3. Furbearer Hunting Seasons. Except as established in 301 KAR 2:049, a person shall only take furbearers by hunting during the seasons established in subsections (1) through (5) of this section:

(1) Bobcat, from one-half (1/2) hour before sunrise on the third Saturday in November through the last day of February;

(2) Coyote, year-round;

(3) Raccoon and opossum, October 1 through the last day of February;

(4) All other furbearers except as established in subsection (5) of this section, from one-half (1/2) hour before sunrise on the third day of modern gun deer season through the last day of February; and

(5) Furbearers taken by falconry, September 1 through March 30.

Section 4. Furbearer Trapping Season. Except as established in 301 KAR 2:049, a person shall only take furbearers by trapping from one-half (1/2) hour before sunrise on the third day of the modern gun deer season through:

(1) The last day of February; or

(2) If using a water set, the last day of March.

Section 5. License-Exempt Youth Season. For seven (7) consecutive days beginning on the Saturday after Christmas, a youth may hunt or trap furbearers without a license, but all other statewide requirements shall apply.

Section 6. Legal Hunting Equipment. Except as established in Section 7(8) of this administrative regulation, a hunter shall only use the equipment established in subsections (1) through (7) of this section to hunt furbearers:

(1) Centerfire gun;

(2) Rimfire gun;

(3) Shotgun;

(4) Muzzleloader;

(5) Bow and arrow;

(6) Crossbow; or

(7) An air gun using pellets at least .22 caliber in size.

Section 7. Hunter Restrictions.

(1) Furbearers may be taken during daylight hours only, except for the following, which may also be taken after daylight hours:

(a) Beaver;

(b) Bobcat;

(c) Coyote;

(d) Opossum; or
(e) Raccoon.

(2) A person shall not take a raccoon or opossum during daylight hours during the modern gun deer season, as established in 301 KAR 2:172.

(3) A person hunting from a boat shall not use a light in conjunction with taking a raccoon or opossum.

(4) A person shall not use the following while chasing a raccoon or opossum from noon on March 1 through September 30;
(a) A firearm;
(b) Slingshot;
(c) Tree climber; or
(d) Any device to kill, injure, or force a raccoon or opossum from a tree or den.

(5) A person may use a squaller year-round.

(6) There shall not be a closed season on:
(a) Chasing red and gray foxes during daylight hours for sport and not to kill; or
(b) Chasing raccoons or opossums for sport and not to kill.

(7) A hunter may use a hand or mouth-operated call, electronic call, or any other attracting device during a furbearer hunting season.

(8) A person may take a coyote after daylight hours year-round, except that:
(a) It shall not be allowed in a county or area where a deer or elk firearm season is open;
(b) Artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night shall only be used from December 1 through March 31, and from May 16 through June 30 on public and private land;
(c) Any artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night shall not be connected to or cast from a mechanized vehicle;
(d) A holder of a valid Mobility-Impaired Access Permit or Hunting Methods Exemption - Vehicle Permit may use a stationary vehicle as a hunting platform and may cast lights or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night so long as the means used are not connected to the vehicle;
(e) On public land, a person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, or shotgun and shall not use a shotgun shell with a single-projectile;
(f) On private land, a person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, or shotgun and shall not use a shotgun shell with a single-projectile, except that from December 1 through March 31 and May 16 through June 30 a person may also use a muzzleloader of .54 caliber or less, a shotgun shell with a single projectile, or any modern firearm, including any rifle, pistol, or shotgun loaded from the rear of the barrel.

(9) On private land, a person may take a beaver after daylight hours, from December 1 through the last day of February, subject to the following:
(a) It shall not be allowed in a county or area where a deer or elk firearm season is open;
(b) Individuals shall be permitted to utilize artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night;
(c) Any artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night shall not be connected to or cast from a mechanized vehicle;
(d) A holder of a valid Mobility-Impaired Access Permit or Hunting Methods Exemption - Vehicle Permit may use a stationary vehicle as a hunting platform and may cast lights or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night so long as the means used are not connected to the vehicle;
(e) A person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, rimfire firearms of any caliber, straight wall cartridge centerfire firearms with a .35 caliber or less bullet

that has a shell case no larger than 2.75 inches, or shotgun and shall not use a shotgun shell with a single-projectile.

(10) A person may take a bobcat after daylight hours, from December 1 through the last day of February, subject to the following:

(a) There shall be a bag limit of one (1) bobcat taken after daylight hours.

(b) It shall not be allowed in a county or area where a deer or elk firearm season is open;

(c) Individuals shall be permitted to utilize artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night;

(d) Any artificial light or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night shall not be connected to or cast from a mechanized vehicle;

(e) A holder of a valid Mobility-Impaired Access Permit or Hunting Methods Exemption - Vehicle Permit may use a stationary vehicle as a hunting platform and may cast lights or other means designed to make wildlife visible at night so long as the means used are not connected to the vehicle;

(f) On private land, a person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, shotgun of 12 gauge or less, muzzleloader of .54 caliber or less, and any modern centerfire firearm; and

(g) On public land, a person shall not use any equipment other than a bow, crossbow, or shotgun of 12 gauge or less, and shall not use a shotgun shell with a single-projectile.

Section 8. Legal Traps.

(1) A person who is trapping with a dry land set shall only use traps as established in paragraphs (a) through (e) of this subsection:

(a) Deadfall;

(b) Wire cage or box trap;

(c) Foothold trap with a maximum inside jaw spread of six (6) inches measured perpendicular to the hinges;

(d) A snare; or

(e) Except as established in 301 KAR 2:049, a body-gripping trap with a maximum inside jaw spread of seven and one-half (7 1/2) inches measured parallel with the trigger:

1. In the center of the trap; and
2. In the unset position.

(2) There shall be no restrictions on the size or type of trap used as a water set, except that any body-gripping trap greater than twenty (20) inches in width shall be set so that the trap is completely submerged underwater.

Section 9. Trapper Restrictions.

(1) A person trapping on private land shall not place traps used as dry land sets any closer than ten (10) feet apart unless possessing written permission from the landowner or the landowner's designee, except that there shall not be more than three (3) traps placed within any ten (10) foot spacing.

(2) The trap spacing requirement established in subsection (1) of this section shall not apply to:

(a) Box or cage live traps; or

(b) Properties of five (5) acres or less.

(3) A trap shall not be set in a trail or path commonly used by a human or a domestic animal.

(4) A trapper may use lights from a boat or a vehicle in conjunction with trapping furbearers.

Section 10. Trap Tags.

(1) Each trap shall have a metal tag attached to it that clearly shows:

(a) The name and address of the person setting, using, or maintaining the trap; or

(b) A FW Customer ID or wildlife identification number issued by the department and the 1-800-25ALERT department hotline phone number.

(2) A person shall:

(a) Not use a trap tag that has an inaccurate or outdated address;

(b) Not use a trap tag that has a FW Customer ID or wildlife identification number that corresponds to an inaccurate or outdated address or phone number; and

(c) Maintain an updated address and phone number in MyProfile on the department website.

(3) A FW Customer ID or wildlife identification number shall be valid for a trap tag for the life of the holder.

Section 11. Bag Limits.

(1) There shall not be a bag limit on furbearers, except as established in subsections (2) through (6) of this section.

(2) A person shall not take more than ten (10) bobcats per season, no more than three (3) of which shall be taken with a gun, and no more than one (1) of which shall be taken at night.

(3) A person shall not take more than fifteen (15) river otters per season in Otter Zone 1.

(4) A person shall not take more than ten (10) river otters per season in Otter Zone 2.

(5) The total river otter bag limit per season shall be fifteen (15) per person, only ten (10) of which can be taken from Otter Zone 2.

(6) A falconer hunting within the falconry season, but outside the dates specified in Section 3(3) and (4) of this administrative regulation, shall not take more than two (2) of any furbearer per day.

Section 12. Harvest Recording.

(1) Immediately after harvesting a river otter or bobcat, and prior to moving the carcass, a person shall record in writing the:

(a) Species;

(b) Date;

(c) County where taken; and

(d) Sex of the river otter or bobcat.

(2) The information required by subsection (1)(a) through (d) of this section shall be documented on:

(a) The hunter's log section on the reverse side of a license or permit;

(b) A hunter's log printed from the department's Web site at fw.ky.gov;

(c) A hunter's log available from any KDSS agent; or

(d) An index card or similar card.

(3) A person shall retain and possess the completed hunter's log while hunting or trapping during the current season.

Section 13. Checking a River Otter or Bobcat.

(1) A person who harvests a river otter or bobcat shall check each animal by:

(a) Completing the telecheck process after calling 800-245-4263 or completing the check-in process on the department's Web site at fw.ky.gov:

1. Before midnight on the day the river otter or bobcat is recovered;

2. Prior to processing the carcass; and

3. Prior to transporting the raw fur, pelt, or unskinned carcass out of Kentucky; and

(b) Writing the check-in confirmation number on the hunter's log as established in this section.

(2) A person who intends to sell the raw fur of a river otter or bobcat to a licensed fur processor, fur buyer, or taxidermist or wishing to export a river otter or bobcat pelt outside the United States shall: Request a Convention on International Trade of Endangered Species of Flora and Fauna (CITES) tag by logging into a MyProfile account on the department website.

(3) A person who is transferring a river otter or bobcat that does not have an attached CITES tag shall attach to the carcass a handmade tag that contains the:

(a) Confirmation number;

(b) Hunter or trapper's name; and

(c) Hunter or trapper's phone number.

(4) A person shall not knowingly provide false information when:

(a) Completing the hunter's log;

(b) Checking a river otter or bobcat;

(c) Completing a CITES tag request form; or

(d) Creating a handmade carcass tag.

(5) A CITES tag shall be attached to the raw fur, pelt, or unskinned carcass upon receipt of the tag from the department per the instructions provided by the department and remain attached until it is processed or exported outside the United States.

(6) Possession of an unused CITES tag issued by the department shall be prohibited.

Section 14. Transporting and Processing a River Otter or Bobcat.

(1) A person shall not sell the raw fur of a river otter or bobcat except to a licensed:

(a) Fur buyer;

(b) Fur processor; or

(c) Taxidermist.

(2) A taxidermist, fur buyer, or fur processor shall:

(a) Not accept a river otter or bobcat carcass or any part thereof without a proper carcass tag or CITES tag as established in Section 13 of this administrative regulation; and

(b) Retain the information established in subparagraphs 1. through 4. of this paragraph from a hunter or trapper:

1. Name;

2. Address;

3. Confirmation number or CITES tag number; and

4. Date received for each river otter or bobcat.

(301 KAR 002:251. 20 Ky.R. 2928; Am. 3193; eff. 6-2-1994; 21 Ky.R. 1915; 2478; eff. 4-6-1995; 22 Ky.R. 1491; eff. 4-5-1996; 23 Ky.R. 3879; eff. 7-9-1997; 25 Ky.R. 1435; eff. 2-10-1999; 27 Ky.R. 214; 754; eff. 8-24-2000; 3340; 28 Ky.R. 363; eff. 8-15-2001; 2423; eff. 7-15-2002; 29 Ky.R. 2139; eff. 4-11-2003; 2964; eff. 8-13-2003; 31 Ky.R. 838; 1077; eff. 1-4-2005; 1717; eff. 6-8-2005; 32 Ky.R. 1765; eff. 6-2-2006; 33 Ky.R. 519; eff. 10-11-2006; 3426; 3604; eff. 6-13-2007; 35 Ky.R. 1008; 1743; eff. 3-6-2009; 36 Ky.R. 865; 1199; eff. 10-23-2009; 37 Ky.R. 797; eff. 11-4-2010; 38 Ky.R. 1661; 1948; eff. 6-7-2012; 39 Ky.R. 2397; 40 Ky.R. 542; eff. 9-5-2013; 2216; 2430; eff. 6-6-2014; 43 Ky.R. 440, 1176; eff. 2-3-2017; 46 Ky.R. 1610, 2397; eff. 6-2-2020; 47 Ky.R. 2637; 48 Ky.R. 790; eff. 9-15-2021; 49 Ky.R. 886, 1545; eff. 2-2-2023; 52 Ky.R. 483; eff. 3-3-2026; 52 Ky.R. 1913; 53 Ky.R. 508; eff. 11-5-2026.)

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