



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

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An estimated 50,000 hunters are expected to be afield when the 2017 pheasant hunting season opens at 8 a.m., Oct. 28. Iowa's pheasant population is similar to 2016 when hunters harvested 250,000 roosters. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Iowa's pheasant hunting season opens Oct. 28

An estimated 50,000 blaze orange clad hunters will dot Iowa's countryside at 8 a.m. on Oct. 28, for the opening of Iowa's 2017 pheasant hunting season.

This annual event melds generations of Iowans who reconnect with their hunting heritage. While most hunters will generally only spend the first week or two in the field, those who venture out later will likely be rewarded with success.

"Hunters can expect to find similar bird numbers to last year, but the October rain has our harvest running behind schedule so opening weekend may not be as successful as years

past,” said Todd Bogenschutz, upland wildlife research biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources. “However, a late harvest could lead to success later in the season.”

Results from the statewide August roadside survey indicate higher pheasant numbers were found in a line of counties stretching from northwest to southeast, but birds are available everywhere quality habitat is found.

Bogenschutz said he expects almost a repeat of 2016 pheasant season, where hunters harvested about 250,000 roosters.

Quail season opens Oct. 28, too

Iowa’s quail population is at a 30 year high and landowners report seeing quail in areas that they had not seen them in years but the bulk of the quail population is in the southern three tiers of counties.

“Quail hunting is different than pheasant hunting. Quail are found in the shrubby patches near crop ground versus in fields of habitat,” he said. “Quail hunters will have less competition so if someone wants to give it a try, I would encourage them to knock on doors to get permission, don’t be shy.”

Iowa’s partridge season opened Oct. 14. Partridge hunting primarily takes place in the north-central counties.

Places to Hunt

The Iowa DNR’s online hunting atlas lists nearly 700,000 acres of public hunting land, including more than 20,000 acres of land enrolled in the popular Iowa Habitat for Access Program (IHAP) allowing hunter access to private land.

Each area on the atlas includes a link to a map with property boundaries, the size of the area, habitat type, species of wildlife likely found, if nontoxic shot is required and more. The map is available as a downloadable pdf that can be printed or saved to a smartphone.

To view the atlas, go to www.iowadnr.gov/hunting and click on Places to Hunt and Shoot in the left column.

Rules

There are no new regulations this year.

- Shooting hours are 8-4:30 daily. Hunters are required to wear one piece of blaze orange of which at least 50 percent must be solid color.
- Hunters may harvest three rooster pheasants each day with a possession limit of 12.
- Hunters may harvest eight quail of either sex each day with a possession limit of 16.
- When transporting pheasants, either a fully feathered head, fully feathered wing or foot must remain attached for identification purposes.

Media Contact: Todd Bogenschutz, Upland Wildlife Research Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-432-2823 ext. 111.

Think safety before opening day

Hunters heading to the field for the opening weekend of pheasant season are encouraged to review safe hunting practices before they head out.

Megan Wisecup, hunter education administrator with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said hunters should get reacquainted with the techniques used to hunt pheasants – be sure to walk in a straight line and know where members of the hunting party are at all times, especially in low visibility areas like terraces, tall switch grass and standing corn.

“Go through the zones of fire with each member of the hunting party, talk about avoiding target fixation and swinging on game,” Wisecup said. “Wear plenty of blaze orange especially on the upper one third of your body. We are encouraging hunters to wear more blaze orange than the minimum required. The goal is to be seen by other hunters.

“The top pheasant hunting incidents all are related to not being seen. The shooter swings on a rooster, the victim is out of sight of the shooter or the rooster flew between the shooter and the victim.”

Wisecup said safety also extends to the canine companions.

“Avoid low shots to prevent injuring your hunting dog,” she said.

“The hunting plan and safety practices are all part of a responsible hunt. The goal at the end of the day is for everyone to return home safely.”

Tips for a Safe Hunt

- Iowa law requires hunters to wear at least one of the following articles of visible, external apparel with at least 50 percent of its surface area solid blaze orange: hat, cap, vest, coat, jacket, sweatshirt, shirt or coveralls.
- Hunters should stay in communication with each other and to stay in a straight line while pushing a field.
- Discuss the hunting plan that spells out how the hunt will take place, each person’s role in the hunt and where each person will be at all times.
- Know exactly where standers will be located, especially when hunting standing corn or tall switch grass to avoid having the standers get shot by the pushers as they near the end of the field and the birds begin to flush.
- Make sure to unload the gun when crossing a fence or other obstacle to avoid it accidentally discharging.
- Properly identify the target and what is beyond it especially if hunting in fields that still have standing corn.
- If hunting with a dog, never lay a loaded gun against a fence. Hunting dogs are usually excited to be in the field and could knock the gun over causing it to discharge.
- Share the hunt. Take someone new along to help keep Iowa’s great hunting tradition alive.

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