



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Iowa's furbearer season begins Nov. 4



The outlook for 2017 Iowa furbearer season is good as populations are stable to increasing statewide. The season opens Nov. 4. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Iowa's furbearer season opens Nov. 4, and the outlook for 2017 is good as populations are stable to increasing statewide.

Vince Evelsizer, furbearer biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said that while prospects for a good season are there, the number of participants usually follows the fur market.

"When prices are good, we have higher participation. When the market is forecasted to be down, like it is again this year, so is participation. But that lack of competition provides an

opportunity to introduce someone new to trapping or someone who's been out of the sport for a while to come back," he said.

The recent peak in trapping came in 2013 when nearly 21,000 Iowans purchased a furharvester license. In 2016, about 14,500 furharvester licenses were sold. Eversizer expects participation in the 2017 season will be similar to 2016.

"This is another opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, enjoy trapping, even if the market isn't great," he said.

Furharvester population trends and market forecast

Muskrats - Population, particularly in northern Iowa, is doing well. Prices likely similar to 2016.

Raccoons – Population is strong, but market forecasts are low. Best opportunity is for large adults in prime condition – from Thanksgiving through December.

Coyotes – Population and price is steady. Coyote fur price has been buoyed by the international trim trade.

Beaver – Population is trending up slightly but varies by region.

Mink – Population is steady.

Bobcats – Population is expanding in western and eastern Iowa and increasing in numbers. Prices are similar to 2016.

Otters – Population is stable to slightly increasing. Prices are similar to 2016.

Regulations and Ethics

There are no new regulations for 2017. Furharvesters must have a valid furharvester license and habitat fee to hunt or trap all furbearers except coyotes and groundhogs. Coyotes and groundhogs may be hunted with a hunting or furharvester license.

Furharvesters are reminded to respect private property, property boundaries, and the 200 yard separation distance from occupied dwellings or driveways. Traps not submerged must be checked every 24 hours and all traps must be tagged with the trappers name and address.

Otters and bobcats

Furharvesters are required to contact a conservation officer within seven days of taking an otter or bobcat to receive a CITES tag which must remain with the animal until it is sold. They are also asked to turn in the lower jaw or skull of all otters and bobcats harvested to the Iowa DNR, which is used for a population and harvest monitoring.

Coyotes versus wolves

While there are no known wolves currently in Iowa, an occasional wolf will wander through. The Iowa DNR has information at <http://www.iowadnr.gov/Conservation/Iowa-Wildlife/Occasional-Wildlife-Visitors> showing how to distinguish coyotes from wolves.

“Wolves are state and federally protected. If it looks too big or something doesn’t look right, take a second or third look before pulling the trigger,” he said. “Be sure of the target before taking the shot.”

While wolves are protected, bears and mountain lions are not.

“We encourage anyone who comes across a bear or mountain lion to enjoy the incredible experience but leave them alone unless there is a safety threat,” EVELSIZER said.

Media Contact: Vince EVELSIZER, Furbearer Wildlife Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-357-3517.

Time to start pruning oaks

Cold weather is here and now is the time to start pruning oak trees with minimal to no risk of spreading oak wilt.

“There have been several days in a row where temperatures were at or near freezing and the risk of oak wilt is very minimal,” says TIVON FEELEY DNR Forest Health program leader. This low risk zone for pruning oaks will last until about March first.

Oak wilt has been present in Iowa for many years, and is caused by a fungus. The trees in Iowa most commonly impacted by this disease are species such as red, black, and pin oak, but it can also infect white and bur oak. If black, pin, or red oak are infected by the fungus that causes this disease, they usually die within the same summer they are infected. White oak and bur oak can often take a number of years before they succumb to this disease.

A healthy tree can be infected by the fungus in two different ways. The first is through open wounds during the growing season. The fungus is carried from a diseased tree to a healthy tree with an open wound by a small beetle.

The second is through root grafts between oak trees of the same species. For example, if a red oak is infected and there is another red oak within 50 to 100 feet there is a good chance that the roots of these trees are grafted and the fungus can move from the diseased tree to the healthy tree.

Symptoms to look for on infected trees usually include leaves turning a bronzed brown along the outer margins of the leaves. These leaves can often still have some green on them as they fall from the tree. The defoliation tends to start at the top of the tree.

The best way to prevent the spread of oak wilt is to avoid pruning and prevent any wounding to oak trees during the growing season - the end of March through the first hard freeze. If a tree is wounded from storm damage or pruning is required during the growing season, treat

the wounds immediately with a wound dressing such as acrylic paint. Do not purchase pruning paints/sealants because those products slow the tree's ability to seal over the wound.

More information on oak wilt prevention and control can be found at http://na.fs.fed.us/pubs/howtos/ht_oakwilt/identify_prevent_and_control_oak_wilt_print.pdf

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