2019 BEAR SEASONS

Vermont’s bear population, less than 1,500 fifty years ago, is now at approximately 5,000 – a successful, planned result of hunting regulation changes. The 2010-2020 Big Game Management Plan population objective is 4,500-6,000 bears. Incidents of bear damage and bear-human interactions have increased, especially in areas where few bears existed earlier. The ‘early season’ bear hunting regulation changes are intended to help stabilize the bear population while providing the Fish & Wildlife Department with information that is important in improving Vermont’s bear management program.

**EARLY SEASON:** September 1, 2019 through November 15, 2019.

Requires a separate early season bear tag – residents $5, nonresidents $15.

**LATE SEASON:** November 16, 2019 through November 24, 2019.

The “late season” bear tag is included on each hunting license except the nonresident small game license.

**HUNTING HOURS:** Hunting hours are one-half hour before sunrise to one-half hour after sunset.

**LIMIT:** The annual limit for bears has not changed. A hunter may harvest only one bear per calendar year.

**LICENSE REQUIREMENTS**

There is a separate “early season bear tag” required for those hunters who want to hunt bear prior to the beginning of the November deer rifle season. It costs $5 for residents and $15 for nonresidents. **Hunters will continue to get a “late season” bear tag along with their deer tag on their general hunting license at no additional cost, which is valid during the first nine days of the November deer rifle season.**

The additional tag will enable the department to gather essential information about hunter effort and success, as well as an idea of overall bear hunter numbers. The early season tag gives department biologists a better understanding of how many hunters are actively pursuing bears before the November rifle season.

Hunters who hunt with a **permanent license** (licenses for resident hunters 66 and older) do not need to buy an early season bear tag no matter when their license was bought, and they will not be charged for an early season bear tag. Their tag is valid for both early and late bear seasons every year in perpetuity.
Hunters who purchased a *lifetime license* before January 1, 2013 also do not need to buy an early season bear tag. Their tag is valid for both early and late bear seasons every year in perpetuity. This includes hunters whose license was purchased before 2013 but whose license will not be activated until they take a hunter’s education course, such as a license purchased for a young child.

However, hunters who purchased a lifetime license on or after January 1, 2013 must purchase an early season bear tag to hunt bear prior to the November deer rifle season.

A bear hunter using a bow or crossbow must have either a bow license or a certificate showing completion of the bow hunter education course in addition to a hunting license.

### Purchase a License Online
### Hunting Black Bear FAQs

### LIFETIME AND PERMANENT LICENSE RENEWAL

If you intend to hunt, fish, or trap in 2019, you must update your lifetime, permanent disability, or permanent license regardless of whether or not you used your tags. This is a statutory requirement which was put in place to allow the department to collect accurate harvest and licensing information for lifetime license holders.

This updated license will include current year tags. You may update your license at no cost on-line at our [website](#). If you are unable to go on-line, you may go to any authorized license agent or Fish & Wildlife Office and request to have your license updated. You can also call us at 802-828-1190 to be updated. A license agent may charge you up to $1.50 for a reprint.

### Update a Permanent License

### BEAR TOOTH COLLECTION IS REQUIRED

The Fish & Wildlife Department needs your help. Knowing the age of the bears that are harvested by hunters is a very important part of Vermont’s scientific bear management program. A pre-molar tooth is now required by regulation to be submitted by the hunter from every bear harvested in Vermont.

Any person who harvests a bear shall collect a premolar tooth and submit the tooth to a game warden, official Fish and Wildlife Department Reporting Station, or to a person designated by the Commissioner to receive the biological collection, within 48 hours of taking the bear.

Removing the bear’s pre-molar tooth is easy and does not affect the mounting quality of the bear. Please ask the reporting station operator for a tooth envelope for you to insert the tooth in before placing in the tooth bucket found at the reporting station. Every tooth we receive from hunters helps the bear project.

We will publish the age information on our website in the spring.

### Bear Tooth Removal Instruction Video
### Check the Ages of Black Bears You’ve Harvested

### PRE-HUNT PLANNING

Bear hunting is a physically demanding activity, especially removing a harvested bear from the woods. Pre-hunt planning is very important to a successful and rewarding bear hunting experience.

Long before harvesting a bear, the hunter must decide how the meat will be processed and how the hide will be used. Hunters should arrange to have help available for all aspects of handling a harvested bear and have plans made ahead of time to ensure that the meat and hide are properly processed.
Bears have a tremendous amount of fat and a thick hide that provide great insulation. Both the meat and the hide can spoil quickly especially at temperatures above freezing. A dead bear can be large and cumbersome. Skinning, processing, and transporting a bear can be a difficult task and may be physically demanding without assistance.

As a result, it is imperative that the hide be removed as soon as possible to prevent meat spoilage. In temperatures above freezing, if there is going to be a delay in getting your harvested bear to a cooler, you should consider quartering it to allow the heavier portions to cool more quickly. Before taking your bear out from the place it is killed, pack bags of ice in the body cavity or around the quarters. You may dismember the carcass to pack it out of the place of kill as long as the identity of the sex is not destroyed.

**Know Your Capabilities.** To help ensure the future of bear hunting, and all hunting, it is important to instill respect for the outdoors and acceptable hunting ethics for all hunters. Making a clean kill as humanely as possible is a fundamental component of ethical hunting. Incorrect shot placement on a black bear can lead to unnecessary suffering, wounding, and failure to retrieve the animal.

Making a clean kill should be the top priority for hunters who decide to shoot a bear. An animal that is harvested humanely shows more character in a hunter than just a lucky shot. Especially if you are taking a youth or apprentice hunter bear hunting, help it be a positive experience by emphasizing ethics and making a clean kill.

To be ethical, all hunters need to be proficient with their firearm or bow, understand their personal effective range, and have an understanding of basic bear anatomy for shot placement. This will help lead to a quick and effective kill and minimize the chance for wounding the bear.

**Planning the Shot.** The following are some general tips to help ensure correct shot placement:

- Hunters must understand that bears are built differently than deer and other big game animals. The chest of a bear is compressed compared to that of a deer when looking at it from the side.
- If you make a poor shot, a wounded bear can run for considerable distances before dying. Heavy bones, hides, and fat layers may prevent quick-clotting blood from dripping and leaving a good trail, making an injured bear hard to track.
- **KNOW YOUR CAPABILITIES AND KNOW YOUR SHOT!**
- A bear’s most vital area is an 8” circle behind the front shoulder.
- The best shot opportunity is a broadside shot or “quartering away” for penetration into the vital organs.
- To take your shot, wait for the bear to step forward with the near side leg exposing the heart/lung area.
- Shots directly in the shoulder bone are not recommended. Bears have massive, muscular shoulders and heavy bones. A hunter who shoots ahead of the front shoulder may miss or injure the animal.
- A head shot is not recommended since a bear skull is very dense. The blunt, rounded shape may cause bullets or arrows to glance off or become lodged in the skull without penetrating.
- Frontal shots or shots from directly overhead (like might occur from a tree stand) are not recommended because they offer little opportunity for penetration of the vital organs (especially with archery equipment).
- NEVER take a shot you are unsure of, at a bear that is not clearly visible, or one that is positioned in such a way that you cannot cleanly hit the vital area.

The National Bowhunter Education Foundation has created an excellent document called *Advanced Black Bear Anatomy and Shot Placement Guide* for both archery and firearm hunters (including muzzleloaders); the
following photos have been adapted from the NBEF publication.

Best shot placement for gun or bow.

Shoulder and leg bones protect the heart and lungs when the near front leg is behind during stride. Wait until the near front leg is in front or ahead during stride.

CROSSBOWS

A crossbow may be used by anyone 50 years of age or older. Anyone 49 years of age or younger may hunt with a crossbow, provided they possess a crossbow disability permit. The crossbow disability permit is issued to a person so physically impaired that he or she cannot operate a standard bow and allows that person to hunt with a crossbow. A permit applicant must produce a licensed physician’s certificate certifying that the disability requires the use of a crossbow. Obtain an application from Fish & Wildlife before visiting your doctor. Applicant must also appear before a state game warden to obtain a crossbow license. Be sure to make an appointment ahead of time.

Crossbow Disability Permit Application (49 years and younger)

CROSSBOW SAFETY

Keep these tips in mind when using a crossbow to ensure a safe and enjoyable hunt.

USING A CROSSBOW:

- Keep the string waxed and lubricate the rail periodically.
- Make sure your fingers are well away (below rail) from the path of the string and cables.
- Never dry-fire a crossbow.
- Make sure the limbs are free of obstructions before firing; be particularly careful if you are hunting from a ground blind.
- Never use a cocking device to uncock unless you have a model that is specifically designed to do so. Most are not.
- To uncock, shoot a specially-designed unloading point or a field tip into soft ground; or shoot a field tip into a target.
- Practice often and avoid shots at game that are beyond your effective range, generally less than 40 yards.

TREE STANDS AND CROSSBOWS:

- Always cock the crossbow without a bolt on the ground before climbing into the stand.
- Once seated and secured, pull up your unloaded crossbow with a haul line.
- Do not place bolt on the crossbow until you are safely secured in your stand.
**PROHIBITIONS**

- A hunter may take only one black bear in a calendar year.
- Bears may not be taken alive.
- Bears may not be trapped.
- Hunters may not use bait or a baited area to take a bear. A “baited area” is defined as an area where meat, carrion, honey, or any other substance capable of luring or attracting bear has been placed or deposited.
- It is illegal to shoot a bear that is visiting a bird feeder.
- It is illegal to feed bears, even when not hunting for them.

**TAGGING BEAR**

Bear must be tagged immediately when taken. The tag must be placed on the carcass open to view and remain there until the carcass is cut up for consumption.

**OPTIONAL VERMONT BIG GAME TAG**

Optional Vermont Big Game Tags are available free from license agents as durable alternatives to the paper tags on licenses. Optional tags may be used to tag deer, bear, turkeys, or moose. Record your CONSERVATION ID number (top left corner of your license) on the Optional Big Game Tag. A qualifying landowner may use the tag by writing “landowner” in the same space.

The existing paper tag that comes with a license may also be used. Optional Big Game Tags may only be used by a person who has purchased the appropriate license and tag for the species they are hunting.

**REPORTING A BEAR**

A person taking bear shall within 48 hours report the taking and exhibit the carcass to the nearest game warden, official Fish & Wildlife Department Reporting Station, or to a person designated by the commissioner to receive the reports.

It is now mandatory that the hunter provide a premolar tooth from the bear. Tooth envelopes are available at all check stations as well as green buckets for the envelopes that contain teeth. No bear carcass shall be transported out of state without first being reported.

A hunter must take a warden to the kill site of a bear if requested to do so by a warden.

**Bears must be field dressed prior to reporting.**

It is also legal to skin the bear and cut it up in order to carry it out of the woods. Although the bear must be reported within 48 hours, Fish & Wildlife urges doing so quickly to cool the meat.

**TRANSPORTING**

A tagged bear may be transported only during the open season and for 20 days thereafter.

**USE OF DOGS TO HUNT BEAR**

Any person hunting, pursuing, harvesting, or in any manner involved in the taking of a black bear with the use of dogs must hold a Vermont Big Game Hunting License, use only Department Registered Dogs and have purchased a valid bear tag. In addition, the person hunting, pursuing, harvesting, or in any manner involved in the taking of a black bear with the use of dogs must hold a valid bear dog permit or accompany a bear dog permit holder. The permit shall be carried at all times by the permittee while hunting with dogs or taking black bear and exhibited to a game warden, landowner, or law enforcement officer upon demand.
PERMIT REQUIRED: Hunters may use dogs to take bear only when the person in control of the dogs has a bear-dog permit available from the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department. The permit is required to pursue black bear with the aid of dogs for training purposes or for hunting and taking a bear. It is unlawful to shoot a bear that was pursued by dogs without a permit. Non-residents possessing a hound permit can only train their dogs in Vermont during the time period when the training season is open in their home state.

A person shall not advertise, barter, exchange goods or services, expose or otherwise sell the use of a dog or dogs for the purpose of taking black bear. It is unlawful to take a bear that is being pursued by hounds if you are not a permit or sub-permit holder.

Non-resident bear hound hunters may not hunt in Vermont until September 15th.

Additional changes to Vermont’s bear hound hunting laws have been made and will be included with information provided in a bear hound hunter’s permit.

Bear-Dog Permit Application Form
(Resident)
Bear-Dog Permit Application Form
(Non-Resident)

BEAR HUNTING SAFETY TIPS

Although wearing fluorescent orange clothing is not mandatory for hunting in Vermont, hunters and others are urged to wear a fluorescent orange vest and hat while in the woods. Use caution in identifying your target as anyone hunting deer during archery season, waterfowl, or turkeys will normally wear camouflage clothing.

DON’T SHOOT SOWS WITH CUBS

Bears are normally solitary animals and any groups of bears seen in the autumn are most likely females and their young. The department recommends not shooting sows accompanied by cubs or a bear that is part of a group of bears as bears seen together in the fall are most likely a female accompanied by her cubs.

SALE OR PURCHASE OF GAME

BIG GAME: The only time it is legal to buy or sell big game or the meat of big game within the state is during the open season and for 20 days after the season ends. The meat of big game animals is not to be bought or sold to be transported out of the state. It is illegal to buy or sell anadromous Atlantic salmon taken in the Connecticut River Basin and/or to buy or sell wild turkey at any time.

Other than the meat mentioned above, a person may buy or sell at any time:

- The head, hide, and hoofs of legally taken deer or moose; or
- The head, hide, paws, and internal organs of a legally taken black bear.

BEAR PARTS: International trade in hides, claws, skulls, or teeth of black bear is regulated by federal law and international treaty. If you plan to sell bear hide or parts outside of the United States, you must
obtain an export permit (for a fee) from the Federal Wildlife Permit Office, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Arlington, VA 22203, 1-800-358-2104. These products must be shipped through one of eleven designated ports (Boston is the nearest), or through another port under special permit (for a fee) from the same office. You do not need export permits and declarations to sell to domestic or foreign buyers within Vermont or the rest of the United States, or to sell through brokers who possess the necessary permits.

WHERE CAN I HUNT IN VERMONT?

Vermont has more than 800,000 acres of federal and state public land open to hunting: National Wildlife Refuges, the Green Mountain National Forest, and all state forests. State Parks are open to hunting outside the operating season.

Perhaps the crown jewel of hunting in Vermont is the state’s system of 99 Wildlife Management Areas, or WMAs. All WMAs are open to hunting, trapping, fishing and other wildlife related outdoor activities.

Information about shooting ranges is available on our website:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wildlife Management Areas</th>
<th>Vermont Dept. of Forests, Parks &amp; Recreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge</td>
<td>Silvio O. Conte National Fish &amp; Wildlife Refuge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Mountain National Forest</td>
<td>Vermont Shooting Ranges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammond Cove Shooting Range</td>
<td>West Mountain Shooting Range</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2018 BEAR HARVEST BY TOWN AND WMU

VERMONT HABITAT STAMP

Monies raised from sales of Vermont Habitat Stamps go to the Species and Habitat Conservation Fund, which is used to purchase and maintain Wildlife Management Areas.

Projects Supported by the Fund Include:

- Purchase lands for Wildlife Management Areas
- Improve public access to land for fish and wildlife-based activities such as bird-watching, hunting, fishing, enjoying wildlife or simply connecting with nature
- Protect and improve wetlands
- Protect and restore state-owned riparian stream banks
- Protect and enhance deer wintering areas
Implement habitat enhancement for turkeys, bears, deer, songbirds, bats, moose, aquatic organisms, and all of Vermont’s native wildlife.

Use our [online donation form](#).

**Hunting and Fishing License Purchase**: Donate when purchasing a hunting or fishing license by simply including your contribution when applying.

When you purchase a Vermont Habitat Stamp, you help improve wildlife habitat and open land for outdoor recreation.

Please note: A stamp is not required to hunt, fish or trap, nor do you have to buy a sporting license to donate for a stamp.

[Vermont Habitat Stamp Online Donation Form](#)

**HUNT, POST, SHARE, LIKE**

Vermont Fish & Wildlife suggests the following tips to accurately reflect a positive hunting experience in social media.

- Display respect for the animal in its life and in its death. Ask yourself if your non-hunting friends would view the photo as respectful of this animal’s life.

- Make sure the animal looks its best. Place the tongue back in mouth and try to minimize blood in the photo to instead focus on the beauty of the animal. Try to take a photo of a successful hunt in the animal’s natural habitat. Blue sky, forest, and mountains place hunting in the context of its natural surroundings.

- Don’t just post ‘grab and grin’ photos after a successful hunt. Show all the aspects of the hunt to give people a more complete picture of what hunting means to you. Post photos of a silent snowy forest or quality time spent outdoors with friends and family.

Include posts from after the hunt too. A photo of you enjoying a plate of tasty venison with friends and family will help people make the connection that wild meat is a healthy, local, sustainable food source.

If you see friends posting unethical behavior, don't be afraid to speak up. Please forward any posts that include illegal activity to the [Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s Facebook page](#) so our wardens can look into it.

If done properly, social media can be a great opportunity to show non-hunters why you are passionate about hunting and to inspire conservation and spark interest.

**HUNTERS, TICKS AND LYME DISEASE**

Lyme disease has started to become more prevalent in Vermont during the last 10 years. Ticks that cause Lyme disease are still active in the fall in Vermont so hunters that spend time in tall grass, weed, and brushes, along with successful hunters handling a deer, should follow a few simple tick-repelling precautions.

Treat your clothing and gear with permethrin before you hunt, making sure to follow the product instructions. Tuck your pants into your socks or boots to keep ticks from crawling up your legs. After returning from the hunt, check all over your body for ticks including your hair, and shower immediately.

Successful hunters handling a deer should remain vigilant for ticks even after they’ve returned from the field. Place a pan of soapy water under a hanging deer to kill any ticks that fall off the deer.

[B烨 Tick Smart Prevention Factsheet](#)
**RECIPES**

### Marinade for Skewered Bear Meat

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>½ cup soy sauce</td>
<td>1. Cut bear meat into bite-size pieces.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tbsp. honey</td>
<td>2. Mix all the ingredients together and put into a plastic zip lock bag or glass bowl with lid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ cup peanut oil</td>
<td>3. Add bear meat and place in fridge for several hours turning to coat as needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ cup lemon juice</td>
<td>4. Soak skewers in water for an hour and thread bear meat onto skewers along with any veggies you may want or the bear meat alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 tsp. curry powder</td>
<td>5. Grill to your preference of doneness.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1 tsp. chili powder</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1 onion, large finely chopped</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 garlic cloves, mashed</td>
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<tr>
<td>½ tsp. salt</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¼ tsp. pepper</td>
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From: [https://www.geniuskitchen.com/recipe/marinade-for-skewered-bear-meat-126266](https://www.geniuskitchen.com/recipe/marinade-for-skewered-bear-meat-126266)

### BBQ Shredded Bear

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ingredients</th>
<th>Directions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 to 3 lb. bear roast</td>
<td>1. Chop up all your pepper and onion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 yellow onion</td>
<td>2. Place your bear roast in the crockpot and add in all of your pepper, onion, and broth. Place the lid on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 red pepper</td>
<td>3. Set crockpot to high and cook for 8 to 9 hours until internal temperature reaches 200 degrees. Use temperature gauge to probe the meat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 box of vegetable or beef broth</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your favorite BBQ sauce</td>
<td>4. Once the roast reaches the right temperature, remove it from the pot and place it on a tray to shred it. Once that is done, try to get pepper and onion out of the pot, and drain the broth out into the sink. Put the meat and pepper/onion back in the pot and add in your favorite BBQ sauce and stir.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temperature gauge</td>
<td>5. Throw this on a bun, in a tortilla, or just on a plate with nothing, and enjoy!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From: [https://www.gohunt.com/read/skills/three-bear-recipes-you-cannot-resist#gs.d6gjg0](https://www.gohunt.com/read/skills/three-bear-recipes-you-cannot-resist#gs.d6gjg0)

**HUNTERS SHARING THEIR BEAR**

Successful hunters willing to share their bear can do so by donating it directly to a food shelf or meal site. Proper processing and labeling instructions are available at [www.vtfoodbank.org](http://www.vtfoodbank.org).

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**VERMONT FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT**

1 National Life Drive, Dewey Bldg.
Montpelier, VT 05620-3208

Phone: (802) 828-1000

[www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)

[www.facebook.com/vtfishandwildlife](http://www.facebook.com/vtfishandwildlife)

7/24/2019