

QUWF



Quail & Upland Wildlife Federation

Making a Difference for Wildlife and Clean Streams, One Acre, One Stream, at a Time

THE HABITAT GUIDE

Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation

Notes from the Dashboard: The change is real!

In this issue:

Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials are reminding waterfowl hunters to take precautions to protect themselves and domestic animals from highly pathogenic avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu. This fall, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has [reported increasing outbreaks of HPAI](#) in commercial and backyard poultry flocks, including new detections in counties with popular waterfowl hunting destinations, [Page 2](#)

Under Alabama's Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Zone Regulation (220-2-.167), all deer harvested in the High-Risk Zone and the Buffer Zone of the state's CWD Management Zone (CMZ) must be submitted for CWD testing during specific weekends of the 2025-2026 white-tailed deer season, [Page 16](#)

Probably the first attachment most will acquire after purchasing a tractor is a rotary cutter, commonly referred to as a "Bush Hog" the leading brand in this category but versions are made by several other companies, [Page 19](#)



By Craig Alderman — One of the most popular accessories for the hunter, farmer or outdoor enthusiasts was the ATV. That is changing quickly. Even here at QUWF, we use the RTV side by side nearly exclusively now for farm chores, pulling wagons, habitat work, and fence work as the ATV sits idle, only used occasionally.

The ATV grew in popularity through the '80s (remember the Honda 3 wheeler) and '90s, and the 2000s, then saw a boom during the COVID mess as an outdoor vehicle providing access to the great outdoors. However, the aged users are now switching to side by sides (SxS), UTV or RTV variations. Youths are losing the passion for playing in the outdoors, exploring, trail riding or getting muddy and learning how to care for and maintain their own machines.

These larger, higher horsepower SxS versions do not require throwing an old leg over the ATV horse, getting bugs in your teeth, or my favorite, getting spiders in your face. They come with windshields (no spiders in the face), cabs, heaters, air conditioning, GPS mapping, radios, heavy duty winches (do not get one without it installed) and carrying/pulling capacity for any farm or landowners need. The other neat social advantage, your passenger(s), up to 6 now in some models, have a comfortable seat, with a seat belt. The accessories created for these machines dwarfs anything even considered for ATVs, including LED lighting systems of every design.

Further, the costs of ATVs, along with just about everything else, has skyrocketed with much more electronic wizardry but not too much innovation or design change. Used ATVs are much more numerous in any brand or version, driving prices down for dealers who are much more hesitant to take on new inventory. Parts for repairs are hard to get with just about anything you have.

What is amazing is that the SxS versions are much more expensive, nearly double an ATV for a basic model to start but have strong sales today. Some of the deluxe, fully dressed out models like the Bombardier Defender series can push the \$55,000 base or more in cost.

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Continued from Page 1 – That is the cost of a small truck. They do require a stronger, longer trailer for one, a much larger budget for repairs, not as much from breakdowns as from smashing into rocks and trees. Most brands and models have good roll cages as roll-overs, which can run in the tens of thousands of dollars in repairs, are quite common. That sense of safety security increases the “here, hold my beer” mentality. We rode one of the emerging Off Road Park’s trail ride where two of the SxSs in our group had their front A frame assemblies literally torn off from rock outcrops they misjudged with high speed adding to the impact. They estimated the repairs would be around \$8,000 each. Sorry, this ol’ boy cannot afford that type of misuse and repair. When they tried to load it on a hydraulic slide trailer, it failed as well.

The other hard to understand fact, these machines, for the super majority have CVT transmissions, a belt driven expanding clutch system used originally on snowmobiles. They burn up \$80 belts climbing over and up rocks and hills regularly with most carrying two or more as spares.

When riding in groups of 15 or so, you may see one ATV, if that.

I guess the good economic news, they are about 50% to 60% less than a fully tricked out BASS boat, with engine and trailer. However, the repair budget bucket appears just as big or bigger and more often, albeit self-inflicted. Catch you across the creek.

Craig Alderman is the QUWF executive director.

DNR advises hunters to safeguard against bird flu

Editor’s Note: Bird Flu is still an ever-present danger as more waterfowlers take to the rivers and marshes. This article is a very good guideline no matter where you live or hunt, be watchful and careful.

Michigan Department of Natural Resources officials are reminding waterfowl hunters to take precautions to protect themselves and domestic animals from highly pathogenic avian influenza, commonly known as bird flu. This fall, the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development has [reported increasing outbreaks of HPAI](#) in commercial and backyard poultry flocks, including new detections in counties with popular waterfowl hunting destinations.

The DNR reports more HPAI detections in 2025 than were found in 2024; 130 wild birds have tested positive for HPAI in Michigan, with most detections in Canada geese, bald eagles and red-tailed hawks. Wildlife detections and pending cases are posted on the DNR’s [HPAI webpage](#).

The disease has been found in every Michigan watershed, indicating that it has occurred throughout the state.

HPAI has been detected in surrounding states and other parts of the U.S. as well. Hunters traveling out of state are advised to follow all health and safety precautions regardless of where they are hunting. Visit the [USDA H5N1 Influenza webpage](#) for more information about national detections and response.

Michigan’s earliest waterfowl season opened Sept. 1 and the final season closes Feb. 15. Learn more at [Michigan.gov/Waterfowl](#).

“Make sure to take appropriate precautions when field dressing wild birds. In order to kill the virus, use a food thermometer to ensure that meat is cooked to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit,” said Dr. Scott Larsen, DNR wildlife veterinarian. “It’s also important to properly clean and disinfect gear and equipment before coming into contact with domestic birds.”

HPAI is a highly contagious respiratory disease that causes sickness and sometimes death in wild birds and mammals. HPAI infections can occur at any time of the year, but upticks are expected during spring and fall waterfowl migrations. Wild birds can carry HPAI without appearing sick.

Anyone who observes a die-off of six or more wild birds should report it through the [DNR Eyes in the Field?](#) online tool or a local [DNR field office](#).



Continued on Page 3

Continued from Page 2 — Precautions for waterfowl hunters

The risk of HPAI infecting people is low, but the virus can spread through direct contact with infected animals or material. Hunters should always take precautions when handling wild birds to avoid contracting or spreading bird flu:

- Do not harvest or handle wild birds that are obviously sick or found dead.
- Process wild birds in the field. Remains from processed birds should be buried on-site or double-bagged and disposed of with household trash.
- Wear rubber or disposable gloves while handling and cleaning wild birds, and wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand cleanser, even if hands are not visibly soiled.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth when handling wild birds.
- Do not eat, drink or smoke while handling or cleaning wild birds.
- Cook all meat to an internal temperature of 165 degrees Fahrenheit to kill any viruses.
- Thoroughly clean and disinfect all knives, equipment and surfaces that come into contact with wild birds.
- If you have close contact with obviously sick or dead wild birds, or surfaces contaminated by them, monitor for these symptoms for 10 days after your last exposure:
 - Fever with temperature over 100 degrees Fahrenheit or chills. Fever may not always be present.
 - Sore throat.
 - Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
 - Eye tearing, redness or irritation.
 - Runny or stuffy nose.
 - Muscle or body aches.

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Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration accelerated

Vital wetland conservation work, led by Ducks Unlimited (DU) in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, received a major boost today, thanks to a \$2.5 million grant from DU’s longstanding partner, the James M. Cox Foundation.

The grant will be used to advance critical habitat restoration projects to support waterfowl and wildlife and provide essential ecosystem services—such as clean water, coastal resilience and flood protection—for the more than 18 million people who live in the watershed in Virginia and across the Northeast.

"Thanks to the generous support of the James M. Cox Foundation and Jim Kennedy, we are achieving conservation outcomes that benefit both wildlife and communities," said Emily Purcell, DU Director of Conservation Programs. "These projects demonstrate that wetland restoration and land protection are investments in clean water, healthy ecosystems, and economic vitality for Virginians in the Mid-Atlantic region."

The grant to Ducks Unlimited marks the continuation of the Foundation’s long-term commitment to restoring America’s wetlands. Jim Kennedy, chairman emeritus of Cox Enterprises and chairman, James M. Cox Foundation, is DU’s single-largest donor. In honor of Kennedy’s philanthropic legacy, Cox Enterprises recently announced a \$100 million gift for DU’s land trust, Wetlands America Trust, to help conserve North America’s prairie region. That announcement was then followed with an additional \$2.5 million grant to DU to support wetland conservation efforts in Louisiana earlier this year. In total, DU has received more than \$200 million in combined support from the Foundation, Cox Enterprises and Kennedy.

"Cox is deeply committed to improving lives in the communities we serve, and that includes safeguarding our natural environments," said Jeff Merritt, Hampton Roads market vice president for Cox Communications – and a regional executive sponsor of the Cox Conserves Council, the company’s national sustainability program launched by Kennedy in 2007. "The Bay is a cornerstone of Virginia’s environmental health and economic vitality, and thanks to the James M. Cox Foundation, Ducks Unlimited can continue to champion and help protect this irreplaceable resource."

The Chesapeake Bay, one of America’s most important estuaries, drives a robust outdoor recreation economy valued at over \$63 billion, with the commercial seafood industry in Virginia and Maryland fueling \$2.8 billion in annual sales.

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CWD detected in two Wyoming deer hunt areas

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has confirmed the presence of chronic wasting disease in deer for the first time in two new hunt areas: Deer Hunt Area 106 in the Cody Region, and Deer Hunt Area 150 in the Jackson Region.

Game and Fish confirmed the presence of CWD in a hunter-harvested adult male mule deer in Deer Hunt Area 106. The area is bordered by four CWD-positive deer hunt areas: 105 (detected in 2019), 110 (detected in 2016) and 111 (detected in 2016), as well as Yellowstone National Park (detected in 2023). Deer Hunt Area 106 is part of the Clark's Fork mule deer herd. CWD was first detected in this herd in 2019.

In Deer Hunt Area 150, Game and Fish found CWD in an adult, male, white-tailed deer. This area is adjacent to two CWD-positive deer hunt areas: 152 (detected in 2019), 155 (detected in 2022), as well as Grand Teton National Park. Deer Hunt Area 150 is part of the Sublette mule deer herd. CWD was first detected in this herd in 2017. To ensure the public is informed, Game and Fish announces when CWD is found in a new hunt area or a state-run elk feedground.



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Allegiance Flag Co: showallegiance.com

RotopaX: Mountable container systems

WoodMaxx: PTO & Skid Steer MX series wood chippers, American made with American parts, veteran founded & focused *QUWF Habitat Sponsor

Continued from Page 6 — CWD is 100% fatal to infected deer, elk and moose. Continued monitoring of CWD is important to help Game and Fish understand the potential impacts of the disease and to evaluate future management actions. Hunters can assist in data collection by submitting samples for free CWD testing, especially when hunting in priority or mandatory CWD testing areas. More information on providing test samples can be found on the [Game and Fish website](#).

A map of CWD endemic areas, along with more information, is available on the Game and Fish's [CWD webpage](#). The public is asked to contact the nearest Game and Fish office if an animal appears sick or injured.

Take a winter wagon ride with elks in Utah

HYRUM, UTAH — Another season of bundling up and riding a sleigh or wagon through the middle of hundreds of wild elk is almost here! The winter season at the Hardware Wildlife Management Area begins Dec. 5 and will offer a variety of fun activities for visitors.

Rides through the elk herds

Haviland's Old West Adventures has contracted with the Division of Wildlife Resources to offer horse-drawn sleigh or wagon rides on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from Dec. 5 through Feb. 15.

New this year, in addition to rides being available on the weekends, they will also be offered during some additional days at the end of December:

- Dec. 22 and 23
- Dec. 29, 30 and 31

Rides start at 10 a.m. and end at 4:30 p.m. each day. Each ride lasts about 45 minutes. The fee to go on a ride is \$12.50 for those 9 years of age or older and \$5 for those 4 to 8 years old. Those 3 years of age or younger ride for free.

Tickets are only sold at the Hardware Wildlife Education Center, and you must buy them in-person on the day of your ride. Before or after your ride, you can also buy food from a food trailer near the sleigh ride line.

Activities and displays

In addition to the unique experience of riding through the middle of hundreds of elk, you can also spend time warming up and learning more about elk in the Hardware Wildlife Education Center. An "All About Elk" exhibit will be available to tour in the center. Fun activities for families will also be held each day that rides are offered.

"Making Christmas ornaments using sagebrush, bitterbrush and other plants found at the WMA is a fun and popular activity each winter," DWR Hardware Wildlife Education Center Director Marni Lee said. "We'll offer the ornament making for visitors during December."

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Continued from Page 7 — Visiting the education center and participating in the indoor activities is free.

For more information about the wagon/ sleigh rides and other activities, visit the [DWR website](#). You can also call the Hardware WMA at 435-753-6206 or email Lee at marnilee@utah.gov.

Brucellosis concerns

The elk that visitors to Hardware WMA will see this winter have been known to migrate long distances. Elk at the Hardware WMA that have received GPS collars have traveled as far as Montpelier, Idaho and Cokeville, Wyoming.

However, the farther north the elk migrate, the greater the chance they'll contract brucellosis and bring it back to Utah. While the disease has not yet been detected in elk in Utah, brucellosis is affecting elk and bison in the Greater Yellowstone Area of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho.

Brucellosis in cattle, elk and bison is caused by the bacterium *Brucella abortus*. The disease causes abortions and low fertility rates in animals that contract it. Animals contract the disease when they come in contact with an aborted, infected fetus or contaminated birth fluids. In elk, the risk for abortions is highest from February through June.

“Congregating many animals in one area during the high-risk period increases the risk that elk will contract the disease,” DWR Northern Region Wildlife Manager Jim Christensen said. “The prevalence of brucellosis in elk wintering on feeding grounds in Wyoming is much higher than it is among elk wintering outside the feeding grounds. Ending the viewing and feeding season at Hardware in early February should cause the elk to disperse at exactly the time when cow elk that might have the disease start aborting their fetuses, and will reduce the risk of other elk contracting the disease.”

You can reach the Hardware WMA by traveling 16 miles east of Hyrum on state Route 101. You'll drive through scenic Blacksmith Fork Canyon on your way to the WMA.

FALL CAUTION: Anything with a battery that will not be used much during the winter months from tractors, grain trucks, dozers, z-movers, ATVs, UTVs should have a battery charger hooked up or the battery removed and stored in a warm location with chargers. We use and recommend the NOLO brand available from Amazon. It does a great job and adjusts for temperature changes and charging rates.

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The wild turkey's contribution to Thanksgiving

One of our native wildlife species historically played an important role on Thanksgiving Day. North America's native wild turkeys were the ancestors of the Thanksgiving turkey on our dinner table.

Originally found only in the wild, turkeys now exist as meat-producing domesticated varieties -- the broad breasted white, broad breasted bronze, white Holland, bourbon red, and a host of other breeds -- all of them descended from our native wild turkey.

More than 140,000 servings of Vermont wild turkeys are harvested each year -- that's 140,000 servings of free-ranging, wild and sustainably harvested protein.

Wild turkeys exist throughout Vermont today, but that was not always the case. Wild turkeys disappeared from Vermont in the mid-to-late 1800s due to habitat destruction when land was cleared for farming and only 25 percent of the state was covered by forest.

The wild turkeys we see in Vermont today originated from just 31 wild turkeys stocked in Southwestern Vermont by the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department in 1969 and 1970 when Vermont's forest habitat was once again capable of supporting turkeys. State wildlife biologists moved groups of these birds northward, and today Vermont's population of turkeys is estimated at close to 50,000.

This is just one of many wildlife restoration success stories we can be thankful for in 2025. Funding for Vermont's wild turkey restoration was derived from the sale of hunting licenses and a federal tax on hunting equipment.



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West-Central MT hunter check stations report harvest uptick

With two weeks left of general big game general hunting season, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks hunter check stations in west-central Montana are collectively reporting harvest totals slightly up from last season for deer and just about the same as last for elk. The deer harvest continues to pick up pace as hunters are beginning to report rutting behavior in white-tailed bucks.

“Harvest increased considerably this weekend, and I expect the rut to be in full swing through the week and into next weekend,” said Lee Tafelmeyer, FWP biologist in charge of the Bonner hunter check station.

The Bonner check station saw over twice as many white-tailed deer this past weekend compared to the weekend before and has seen more hunters this season than average. Elk harvest is on par with last season region-wide, while mule deer and white-tailed deer harvest are up slightly overall.



Ryan Klimstra, Missoula-based wildlife biologist who runs the Fish Creek wildlife check station in Mineral County said that harvest started off slow at his station on Saturday but picked up Sunday along with the rut. “Fog and warm temperatures have been making this hunting season challenging in some places,” Klimstra added.

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QUWF welcomes All veterans. All the time.

The Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation was formed to focus on and help veteran landowners, veteran sportsmen, and all veterans who are interested in the great outdoors.

QUWF staff will help all veterans find and get benefit assistance through the Disabled American Veterans (DAV) or other resources.

You are NOT alone.

Veterans who served our country honorably deserve and have earned the right now to enjoy its freedoms and receive the support and benefits they deserve.

We are the **ONLY VETERAN FORMED** and managed national wildlife and conservation organization in the U.S. QUWF and our chapters support veteran businesses as well. Let us know.



Notes from the Road:

Wall of worry exists even in wildlife management



By Nick Prough — If I added up all the different “obstacles” and things that landowners continuously worry about week after week and year after year when they are trying to improve their wildlife habitat or trying to increase their wildlife population trends on their lands, then I would often need a whole lot more than two hands to count them on.

In fact, in most years I would probably need a calculator. Wildlife management is not different from many other aspects of tasks we try to manage in our lives — our finances, our jobs, our educations, our kids, our relationships, our home/auto repairs, our retirements, our health, our insurance premiums tripling, and so on and so on. There are many things that arise each and every year that can become a direct or indirect obstacle to achieving our goals we have set for the property we own or are managing. In financial management, they often talk about the “wall of worry” and how there are so many items on the wall during certain years that the wall becomes beyond overwhelming to even begin to tackle and no-matter what comes off the wall two more things generally replace it.

Well, in wildlife management, in some years or sets of a couple years as it often occurs that same wall of worry can become ominous itself. I heard a few years ago on the news a news anchor say, “How can we have a 100-year flood three years in a row?” That can be hard to comprehend for many reasons to many of us, and although science can explain it in detail (not enough space in this column to do so), it is rather hard to often try to overcome major weather extremes that occur back-to-back or other major factors beyond your control when you are trying to work on long term farm management or habitat management on a specific tract of ground. Especially when several of those factors occur simultaneously or in concurrent years.

The “wall of worry” can exist and even grow over a couple years with even exact opposite things to worry about occurring during that short amount of time, and this has definitely been seen before and will be again. For example, going from extreme drought to intense flooding all in the matter of 1 to 2 years time period. Here are just a few off the top of my head the many wall of worry candidates that landowners have called me about the past few years — extreme drought, extreme floods, Chronic Wasting Disease, hemorrhagic disease (EHD), tick borne illnesses, invasive species, more invasive species, over harvest, under harvest, overgrazing, under grazing, nest predators, nesting issues, adjoining property management or sale of, erosion, tree diseases, timber stolen, right of way issues, log jams, too many of a species, too few of a species — the list as you can see goes on and on and that is by no means a complete list just a 3-minute brainstorm of just a few of the calls on the ever-growing wildlife management wall of worry.

All of these concerns have a place on specific landowner’s wall of worries I am certain in their minds and although all of them probably won’t occur on any one tract at the same years-time period if even a few of those occur every few years it can feel to a landowner and land manager that they are in the process of taking two steps forward and three steps back or walking in circles for many years without much true measurable gain in your long-term goals.

As a biologist and land manager myself for now well over three decades, I can fully understand the wall of worry, and yes, honestly, I have my own wall of worry as well for many different landowners and habitat projects ongoing each and every year. However, I have learned over many years of doing this that just as in life we can only control the things we can control, the rest is truly out of our hands and yes out of our control, so to worry about those is just a futile process that gets us nowhere and not anywhere closer to our long term goals for the property.

To quote a patient of a doctor landowner I know his patient once said to him, “I even worry about worrying these days.” So, as we begin to start to look toward yet another brand-new year and yet another item or two, we think has been added to our wall of worry keep this one point in mind.

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Continued from Page 10 — FWP reminds hunters that hunting for antlered buck mule deer on the general license ended on Sunday, Nov. 16 in Hunting Districts 204, 212, 213, 214, 215, 217, 240, 292, and 298.

Hunters have a few more weeks of the season left. The general big game season closes on Sunday, Nov. 30. Although wildlife check stations sample a relatively small portion of the overall effort and harvest, they capture important trends and biological information, and by stopping to report a harvest or an experience, hunters are helping with wildlife management in Montana. FWP reminds hunters they must stop at all wildlife check stations that they pass, even if they have not harvested any animals.

CWD sampling locations

Hunters can help with chronic wasting disease (CWD) management by submitting samples from harvested deer, elk, and moose for testing. In west-central Montana, the wildlife check stations near Bonner, Darby and Anaconda are all collecting CWD samples, as well as specific CWD sampling locations in Drummond (Friday 10am-2pm; Saturday, Sunday and Monday from 10a.m.-dark), and at the Missoula FWP office (Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5p.m.). For a complete list of [stations and hours](#) across the state, visit fwp.mt.gov/cwd. Hunter can also take samples themselves and mail them to the wildlife lab for testing.

Although CWD testing is voluntary, samples from hunter-harvested deer, elk and moose are critical to FWP's understanding of this fatal disease. Most big game hunting districts around west-central Montana are [Priority Surveillance Areas for CWD](#), which are areas where FWP is making a concerted effort to gather more samples. All sampling is offered for free to hunters. Hunters play a key role in understanding CWD by providing data and in minimizing the spread by disposing of wildlife parts properly. Read more: fwp.mt.gov/cwd.

New Iowa snowmobile law streamlines permit requirements for residents

Iowa snowmobilers are no longer required to purchase and display an annual trail user permit, according to a new law that went into effect July 1, 2024.

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Continued from Page 12 — The law folded the trail user permit into the annual snowmobile registration fee, which will now be \$30 plus administration fees. The previous price for each type was \$15.

Registration and permit fees for snowmobiles are placed in a dedicated account for snowmobile programs in Iowa, including the Iowa Snowmobile Trail Grant Program, which is administered through the Iowa State Snowmobile Association. The grant program supports snowmobile trail development and grooming; equipment purchases and maintenance; and trail signage in cooperation with snowmobile clubs all across Iowa.

Snowmobilers who own a new machine or have not yet entered the snowmobile into the state registration system need to go to the County Recorder’s office in their county of residence to start the registration process. To renew an existing registration, visit the County Recorder or go online to www.gooutdoorsiowa.com.

Nonresident snowmobilers will still need to purchase and display the trail user permit, which are available at any County Recorder’s Office, through retailers that sell hunting and fishing licenses, or online at www.gooutdoorsiowa.com.

FALL CAUTION – Bring in all of your 18V, 12V, 20V etc. batteries for your various tools and equipment. Check to make sure there are none left in your tools. They do not do well trying to recover from a winter freeze and we all know they are very expensive to replace. The same thing goes for any freezable liquids, glues or adhesives you may have stored in your barn or repair shop.

CONTACT US!

For all your Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation chapter insurance needs, please call Leslie Casanova ([leslie](mailto:leslie@casanova.com)) at Sportsman Insurance Agency at 1-800-925-7767. In most cases, Leslie can have your insurance the same day!

Do you have any questions concerning banquets and/or vendor programs? If so, please call the QUWF National Office at (417) 345-5960.

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Dedicated to restoring habitats and populations of all upland wildlife species

Continued from Page 11 — One of the biggest truly justified worry’s I have for landowners and land managers these days is that they worry so much about the obstacles to doing some habitat work that they do nothing at all instead. I see this on so many tracts of land over the years where almost nothing has been done for 10-20 years and the results then usually are something that someone will definitely have to worry about for many years to come. That I truly believe is the biggest worry we have in wild management to overcome in the next decade.

If we tackle the things we can work on and keep on keeping on with our wildlife habitat management plan we have for our long- term goals on the landscape then the remaining things on our current wall of worry with eventually cancel one another out and leave us with some great looking habitat we have helped create in the process.

Keep up all the great work out there that each of you, your landowners, your chapters and conservation partners are doing on crucial wildlife habitat projects, youth field day events, as well as all your other conservation outreach efforts, you are working on in your local communities each and every day, as you are definitely ... “Making a Difference for Wildlife One Acre at a Time!”

Nick Prough is the QUWF chief wildlife biologist and landowner liaison.

FALL CAUTION REMINDER: QUWF RECOMMENDS ONLY USING NON-ETHANOL GAS in your chain saws (mixed with oil), pole saws, splitters, snowblowers, snowmobiles, or any small gas engine including ATVs, UTVs or RTVs, tractors.

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Donate deer to Hunters Helping the Hungry

Editor’s Note: If you manage private lands for deer populations, the harvest of doe is an integral part of management. If you can donate field dressed deer in any state, we encourage the support of assisting in feeding those who need the food and support.

Hunters are reminded they may donate whole field-dressed deer to the Hunters Helping the Hungry program at 10 processor locations in Nebraska.

The participating meat processors are:

- Amherst – Belschner Custom Meats
- Elmwood – Elmwood Meat Plant
- Lindsay – Melcher Locker & Produce
- Minden – Midwest Meat Company
- Norfolk – R&M Meats
- North Platte – Kelley’s Custom Pack
- Plattsmouth – Meat Garden Butchery
- Table Rock – Den’s Country Meats
- Ulysses – The Butchery
- Wahoo – Wahoo Locker LLC

Hunters pay no processing costs for harvested deer donated to processors for this program.

The HHH program is funded solely by tax-deductible contributions. Ground venison is distributed by charitable organizations to Nebraskans in need.

Hunters should first talk with processors but may keep antlers, head and cape and donate the rest of the deer. Processors accept only whole deer in good condition to ensure a good yield of pure ground venison.

The Nebraska Game and Parks Commission also is seeking cash donations to HHH, which was created by the Nebraska Legislature in 2012, so it can continue to feed Nebraskans. Each dollar donated provides two meals of ground venison. More than 900,000 meals have been distributed since the program began.

Learn more at OutdoorNebraska.gov.



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AL: Mandatory testing dates for CWD management

Under Alabama’s Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) Management Zone Regulation (220-2-.167), all deer harvested in the High-Risk Zone and the Buffer Zone of the state’s CWD Management Zone (CMZ) must be submitted for CWD testing during specific weekends of the 2025-2026 white-tailed deer season.

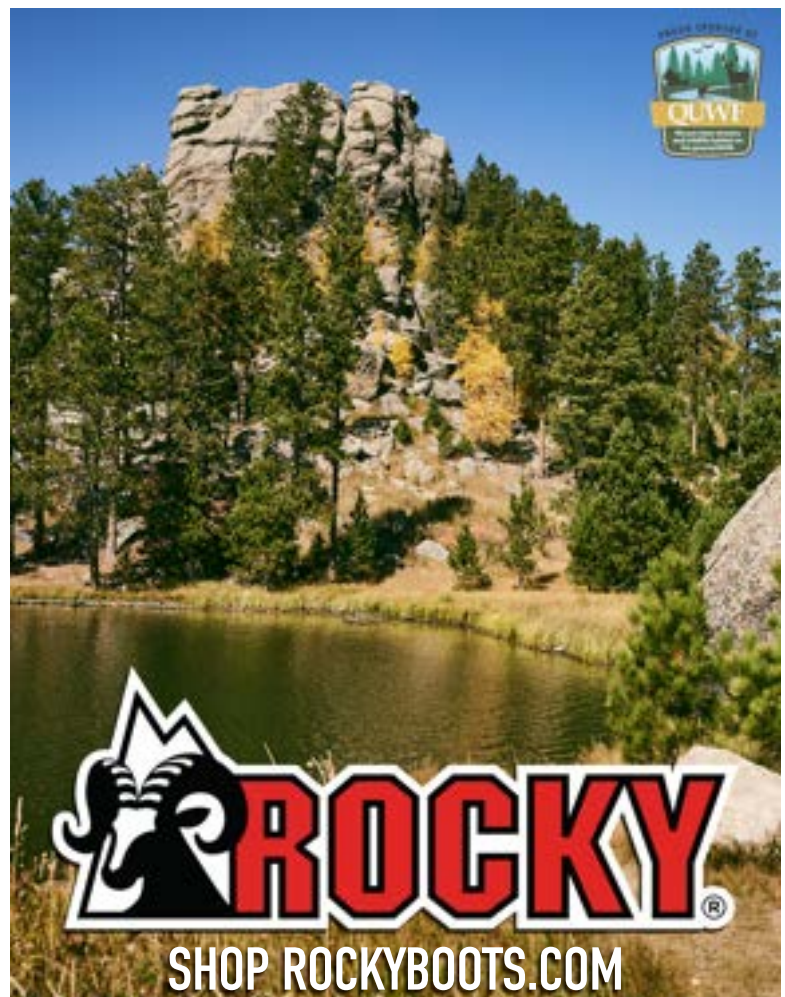
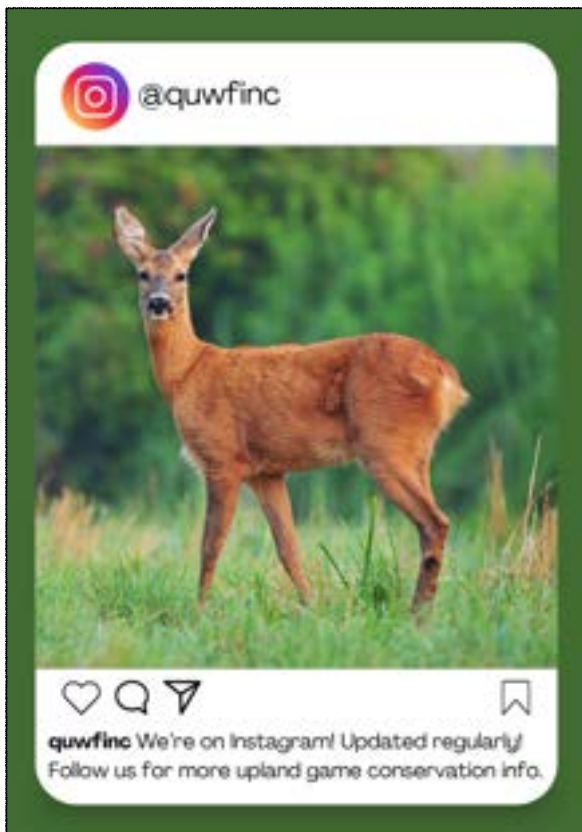
The mandatory sampling weekends in the High-Risk Zone of the CMZ are November 22-23, 2025; December 6-7, 2025; and January 17-18, 2026. The mandatory sampling weekends in the Buffer Zone of the CMZ are November 22-23, 2025, and January 17-18, 2026. The mandatory CWD sampling weekends apply to all of Lauderdale and Colbert counties and part of Franklin County in northwest Alabama.

Mandatory weekends for the High-Risk Zone and Buffer Zone correspond with peaks in Alabama’s deer harvest, the season’s opening weekend and the rut in northwest Alabama.

Outside of those weekends, hunters are encouraged to voluntarily drop off samples for testing at the self-service freezers located in the appropriate CMZ zone. For the remainder of the state outside of the CMZ, hunters are also encouraged to voluntarily drop off samples for testing at self-service freezer locations. Sampling locations throughout the state can be found at www.outdooralabama.com/cwd/cwd-zone-map.

All deer harvested by hunters on certain public land in the CMZ are required to be sampled throughout the season.

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Continued from Page 16 — Those public lands include the Freedom Hills, Lauderdale, and Seven-Mile Island wildlife management areas (WMAs); the Cherokee Physically Disabled Hunting Area; and the Riverton Community Hunting Area.

As an incentive to increase CWD samples submitted for testing on scheduled mandatory testing dates, hunters who harvest a deer from within the CMZ and submit their harvest for CWD testing on the mandatory sampling dates of November 22-23, 2025, and January 17-18, 2026, are eligible to receive a CWD Sampling Permit from ADCNR to harvest one additional antlered deer from within the CMZ for each sample submitted. CWD Sampling Permits are only available at WMA check stations and ADCNR mobile sampling locations. No more than two additional CWD Sampling Permits will be issued per hunter above the season bag limit, combined for the High-Risk and Buffer zones. CWD Sampling Permits are non-transferable.

Carcass restrictions are in place under the CWD regulation that prohibit the transport of harvested deer from the CMZ to areas outside the Buffer or High-Risk zones. Deer harvested within the High-Risk Zone must remain and be disposed of within the High-Risk Zone. Deer harvested within the Buffer Zone must remain and be disposed of within the CMZ. Deboned meat, cleaned skull plates and raw hides with no visible brain or spinal cord tissue may be taken outside of these zones. Transporting deer carcasses out of the management zone can potentially spread CWD to currently unaffected areas.

Hunting license and Game Check requirements apply to all white-tailed deer harvests statewide.

CWD is a contagious neurological disease of white-tailed deer and other deer species. It belongs to a group of diseases known as transmissible spongiform encephalopathies. The disease is caused by a mutated protein called a prion. It is always fatal for white-tailed deer. The first case of CWD in Alabama's deer herd was detected in Lauderdale County in January 2022.

For more information about CWD in Alabama, visit www.outdooralabama.com/cwd-info.

ADCNR promotes wise stewardship, management and enjoyment of Alabama's natural resources through four divisions: Marine Resources, State Lands, State Parks, and Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries. Learn more at www.outdooralabama.com

Apply for nonresident disabled veteran deer/elk tags

Editor's Note: As a Disabled American Veteran, I commend the state of Idaho for offering programs for veterans. It should be noted that those that served and came home with as yet undiagnosed medical issues or good health served this country, none the less, honorably and should deserve the benefits as a veteran. They should not be singled out because of it to not receive these programs. They are not a lesser deserving group of veterans.

Nonresident Disabled American Veterans applying for tags in the Nonresident Tag Drawing for 2026 general season deer and elk hunts will have opportunities in two drawings.

Continued on Page 18



Continued from Page 17 – Those eligible for DAV privileges, which require a service-connected disability rating of 40% or greater, will be eligible to apply for 500 discounted deer tags, and 300 discounted elk tags for 2026.

To apply, nonresident disabled veterans must buy a hunting license, which is discounted to \$31.75, but there is no additional application fees.

Tags available to DAV hunters:

- The 500 DAV deer tags are valid statewide, but the hunter must select a DAV Regular Deer tag, or DAV White-tailed Deer tag
- The 300 DAV elk tags will be limited to uncapped elk zones
- Nonresident disabled veterans can also enter the general Nonresident Tag Drawing, so DAV hunters can submit a total of four applications: DAV elk, non-DAV elk, DAV deer, and non-DAV deer

All DAV deer and elk tags will be available at the discounted prices. If successful in a non-DAV drawing, the DAV hunter will pay the full nonresident tag prices. If a DAV hunter is successful in both the DAV drawing and the Nonresident Tag Drawing for the same species, the person will have to pick a single tag for that species.

Group applications are allowed for the DAV drawing for up to four hunters, but all applicants must be DAV eligible to apply for the discounted tags.

Application period for the Nonresident Tag Drawing (including DAV) is Dec. 5-15, 2025. Results will be announced in early January 2026.

[The 2026 Nonresident General Tags brochure](#) shows the hunt numbers for each unit and zone that can be applied for (similar to controlled hunt numbers). The brochure also denotes capped and uncapped zones for DAV applicants. Hunters can get all other hunt details in the [Big Game Seasons and Rules brochure](#).

Continued on Page 19

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Continued from Page 18 — Required Documentation for DAV Reduced Fees

To receive DAV reduced fees, veterans must provide a copy of their official VA Disability Percentage Rating letter, and the letter must verify a service-connected disability rating of 40% or greater.

The letter is also called a "Benefits Summary Percentage Letter," and typically is one page. The letter may bear any date prior to license application.

Documentation for the resident DAV license will be required only for the initial application and will not be required for subsequent applications. Please do not provide the multi-page medical determination report your physician sends to the VA Case Manager for adjustments.

- **How to get your VA Disability Percentage Rating letter:** You may get a copy of your letter by calling: (800) 827-1000 or your local VA office, or by online access at: www.ebenefits.va.gov using your premium account login (all recently separated personnel are required to have a premium account; if you don't have an account, you will need to set one up to access your letter).

What to do with your letter: Letters can be submitted via email to our Licenses office at Licenses@idfg.idaho.gov

Letters can also be brought to any [regional office](#) or mailed to:

Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game - Licensing Section
P.O. Box 25
Boise, ID 83707



Choosing a rotary cutter, like a Bushhog (QUWF 25-02)

Probably the first attachment most will acquire after purchasing a tractor is a rotary cutter, commonly referred to as a "Bush Hog" the leading brand in this category but versions are made by several other companies. The rules for choosing one for your tractor are pretty much the same.

Here is what you must know to purchase the right model for your tractor and use.

1. Rotary Cutter models and brands like a Bush Hog, are sized for the cutting capacity of the cutter and blades, stated as the diameter of the brush it can cut, in the manual. The first size is normally up to 1-inch diameter, requires less Power Take Off horsepower and is 5 foot wide for smaller tractors. The second size is for 2-inch diameter brush, takes more horsepower and is generally about 6.5 feet wide. **This is the most common size in use by small farms and hobby farmers. There are larger units for much more horsepower.**
2. **Ensure you know the Power Take Off (PTO) Horsepower of your tractor to match the cutter you want to buy. The most common 6-foot model takes about 40 horsepower or more to run.**
3. **Make sure your tractor has the lift capacity at the 3-point hitch to lift the cutter. On average the 6-foot cutter comes in over 950 pounds. A 7-foot model can be 1300 pounds.**
4. Third, make sure the width of the rotary cutter is the same or slightly larger than the rear tire width of your tractor. Otherwise, you will be flattening grass and brush making it harder for the cutter to mow. This may require another pass to clean up.



5. **We highly suggest and recommend you purchase the front and rear guards for the cutter.** They help prevent chips and rocks or other debris from flying out from under the cutter while in operation, they can be very dangerous if you are hit.
6. **Finally, READ THE MANUAL before the first use, and reread it before each season. Know how to set the height above ground at the front and rear. Know how to increase it if you have rocky pastures like we do. Keep good records of what you did and when. January and February are good months to hit your library of manuals. When was the last time you read the tractor manual for example?**
7. **General Notes on the Cutter:**
8. **The cutter requires regular maintenance and service!** Grease the fittings about every 8 hours of use and check the gear box gear oil each season, change it if it appears a milky color. To change the gearbox oil, most require a suction pump to draw the oil out through the filler cap, they are not expensive, so have one at the ready before you need it. There is no bottom drain due to the stump jumper blade assembly.
9. Know whether you have a slip clutch PTO shaft or a shear pin shaft and how to **regularly** service and check each.
10. **SAFETY ALWAYS** - When operating the rotary cutter, stay alert at all times. Never turn on the cutter with other people standing around. Look for any object in front of you that could damage the cutter like metal pieces in the field, large stumps or other objects. Be ready to lift the cutter or shut the cutter off quickly if need be. Wear hearing protection and eye protection. Pay attention to what things sound like and listen for anything out of the ordinary.
11. **Always start the cutter at low RPMs then throttling up to the PTO 540 setting.**



This info sheet 25-02 is available on line at QUWF.net, Information and Reference, Rotary Cutters for download.

Check out QUWF 25-03 Info Sheet for “Setting the Rotary Cutting Height” instructions. It is a PDF so you can download on the QUWF web site, Information and Reference, Rotary Cutters.

Craig A. Alderman, executive director

admin@quwf.net

Nick Prough, chief wildlife biologist and wildlife partnership coordinator

chiefbiologist@quwf.net

Betty Richardson, seed program manager

habitatseedmgr@quwf.net

Calvin Chainey, social media and research coordinator intern, College of the Ozarks

Laura Hazelett, American Falconry

Conservancy president

Advertising and circulation

admin@quwf.net

Membership

membership@quwf.net

Website Design

Wehrenberg Design Company, Springfield, MO

QUWF Email

Information Systems, Springfield, MO

Select Photography

Mountain Girl Photography, Cody, WY

THE HABITAT GUIDE

Quail and Upland
Wildlife Federation
PO Box 947
Buffalo, MO 65622
417-345-5960

www.quwf.net

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