

Hunting Equipment

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Issue 1: Allow the use of cell phone trail cameras during established hunting seasons for big game

Species: All Big Game

WAC(s): TBD

Background: Technological advancements now make it possible for people to use their cell phone or computer to receive real-time images or videos from trail cameras they have deployed in the field. Some hunters have expressed a concern that these capabilities are unethical and suggest they should be illegal to use during established hunting seasons for big game. It is currently legal for hunters to use trail cameras with these capabilities during an established hunting season. Because some people use these cameras for purposes other than hunting, it could prove difficult to enforce this rule if it were adopted.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Make it illegal for hunters to use cell phone trail cameras during established hunting seasons for big game.

Issue 2: Decrease the minimum caliber size for deer from .24 to .223

Species: white-tailed deer, mule deer, black-tailed deer

WAC(s): [220-414-020](#)

Background: Some hunters have continually advocated for a reduction in the minimum caliber size for deer from 0.24 to .223. In most other states, it is legal to use .223 ammunition. The main arguments associated with reducing caliber requirements in Washington are associated with reducing recoil, making it easier for youth or smaller framed adults to participate. The main arguments against reducing the minimum caliber size are typically related to concerns about hunters being able to ensure a clean and ethical kill. The .223 caliber is also common for many “self-loading” or semi-automatic firearms with larger magazine capacities, which requires many states where they are allowed for hunting deer to also develop rules that limit the number of rounds that can be loaded in the magazine while hunting. It’s likely the Department would also develop similar rules limiting magazine capacity.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Decrease the minimum caliber size for deer from .24 to .223 as proposed.

Issue 3: Allow the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-060](#)

Background: Under current rule, sights on muzzleloading firearms must be open, peep, or of other open sight design. Optic sights are allowed, but telescopic sights or sights containing glass are not. The Department routinely receives requests from hunters to allow the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms. Common arguments in support of allowing them to be used are related to increased hunter participation, hunter retention, and ensuring a clean and ethical kill. One-power scopes do not magnify the target, but rather provide a clearer sight window, in much the same way eyeglasses correct someone's vision (i.e.—they make the target clearer, but don't make it bigger). Common arguments against their use are typically related to the use of scopes not adhering to the spirit of primitive weapons. The Department is not opposed to allowing the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms because we do not anticipate it would result in more animals being harvested.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of 1x scopes on muzzleloading firearms as proposed.

Issue 4: Allow the use of crossbows during established muzzleloader seasons

Species: Deer and Elk

WAC(s): [220-415-020](#), [220-415-050](#)

Background: Currently, hunters can only use muzzleloading firearms as defined under WAC 220-414-060, or bow and arrow, as defined under WAC 220-414-070 during established muzzleloader seasons for deer and elk. This proposal aims to also allow the use of crossbows during established general and special permit muzzleloader seasons for deer and elk because it is considered a “lesser” weapon than a muzzleloading firearm.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of crossbows during established muzzleloader seasons as proposed.

Issue 5: Allow the use of range-finding bow sights on archery equipment

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-070](#)

Background: Currently, it is unlawful for hunters to have any electrical equipment or electric device(s), except for illuminated nocks, attached to the bow or arrow while hunting. It is also unlawful to hunt wildlife with any bow equipped with a scope. The main argument for allowing the use of range-finding bow sights is related to improving the likelihood of a clean and ethical kill. Because the sights do not magnify the target, they also would not qualify as a scope. Of the products reviewed by the Department, the sights simply produce a digital reading of the estimated distance that is visible to the shooter while they are looking at the sight pins. The Department is not opposed to the use of range-finding bow sights because we do not feel it will result in more animals being harvested.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of range-finding bow sights on archery equipment.

Issue 6: Allow the use of breadcrumb nocks on archery equipment

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-070](#)

Background: Currently, it is unlawful for hunters to have any electrical equipment or electric device(s), except for illuminated nocks, attached to the bow or arrow while hunting. Breadcrumb nocks use Bluetooth technology via a cell-phone and app downloaded on the cell-phone to assist with the recovery of arrows that miss an intended target. Although some may advocate this technology would also assist with recovering wounded game, that is unlikely because the range limit on a breadcrumbnock is 50 yards. The Department is not opposed to the use of breadcrumb nocks because we do not feel it will result in more animals being harvested.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of breadcrumb nocks as proposed.

Issue 7: Allow the use of verifiers for peep sights on archery equipment

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-070](#)

Background: Verifiers are small glass inserts for peep sights that are designed to allow shooters who are farsighted (i.e., unable to see things clearly that are close) to see their sight pins more clearly. They are manufactured with several different magnification powers, to fit the needs of the user. Although they are made of glass and clarify the sight pins, they do not magnify the target. The main argument for allowing the use of verifiers is related to increasing the likelihood that hunters make clean and ethical kills. The current rules defining archery requirements do not specifically address the use of verifiers but do make it unlawful for hunters to hunt wildlife with any bow equipped with a scope, which some would interpret to mean verifiers are also illegal. This proposal seeks to clarify the rule by allowing the use of verifiers because they do not magnify a target in the same way a scope does. The Department is not opposed to the use of verifiers for peep sights because we do not feel it will result in more animals being harvested.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of verifiers for peep sights as proposed.

Issue 8: Allow video-cameras to be mounted to archery equipment and muzzleloading firearms

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-070](#), [220-414-060](#)

Background: Currently, it is unlawful for hunters to have any electrical equipment or electric device(s) attached to archery equipment or muzzleloading firearms. By rule, this precludes any archery or muzzleloader hunter from mounting a video camera to their weapon for the purpose of filming their hunt. Filming hunts has become an extremely common practice with hunters, but this is difficult for hunters that prefer to hunt without other hunting companions. Allowing video-cameras to be mounted to archery equipment and muzzleloading firearms would make it easier hunters to film their hunts while in the field alone.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow video-cameras to be mounted to archery equipment and muzzleloading firearms.

Issue 9: Allow the use of telescopic scopes on muzzleloading firearms

Species: All game species

WAC(s): [220-414-060](#)

Background: Under current rule, sights on muzzleloading firearms must be open, peep, or of other open sight design. Optic sights are allowed, but telescopic sights or sights containing glass are not. The Department received a formal petition to allow the use of telescopic scopes on muzzleloading firearms. This proposal differs from the one presented under **Issue 3** because it would allow the use of scopes that magnify the target, whereas that proposal only included 1x scopes, which do not magnify the target. Common arguments in support of allowing telescopic scopes to be used are related to increased hunter participation, hunter retention, and ensuring a clean and ethical kill. Common arguments against their use are typically related to the use of telescopic scopes not adhering to the spirit of primitive weapons. It is the Department's recommendation that telescopic scopes not be allowed on muzzleloading firearms.

Alternatives:

1. No change.
2. Allow the use of telescopic scopes on muzzleloading firearms as proposed.