



104TH GENERAL ASSEMBLY

State of Illinois

2025 and 2026

HB5153

Introduced 2/10/2026, by Rep. Patrick Windhorst

SYNOPSIS AS INTRODUCED:

520 ILCS 5/2.25

from Ch. 61, par. 2.25

Amends the Wildlife Code. In provisions regarding allowing hunting deer with muzzleloading rifles, allows hunting deer with muzzleloading pistols. Provides that, within one year, the Department of Natural Resources shall adopt rules that allow for hunting deer with a muzzleloading pistol in the same seasons and under the same or similar restrictions as hunting deer with a muzzleloading rifle.

LRB104 16097 BDA 29397 b

1 AN ACT concerning wildlife.

2 **Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,**
3 **represented in the General Assembly:**

4 Section 5. The Wildlife Code is amended by changing
5 Section 2.25 as follows:

6 (520 ILCS 5/2.25) (from Ch. 61, par. 2.25)

7 (Text of Section before amendment by P.A. 104-58)

8 Sec. 2.25. It shall be unlawful for any person to take deer
9 except (i) with a shotgun, handgun, single shot centerfire
10 rifle, muzzleloading pistol, or muzzleloading rifle or (ii) as
11 provided by administrative rule, with a bow and arrow, during
12 the open season of not more than 14 days which will be set
13 annually by the Director between the dates of November 1st and
14 December 31st, both inclusive, or a special 3-day, youth-only
15 season between the dates of September 1 and October 31. For the
16 purposes of this Section, legal handguns and rifles are
17 limited to centerfire handguns that are either a single shot
18 or revolver and centerfire rifles that are single shot. The
19 only legal ammunition for a centerfire handgun or rifle is a
20 bottleneck centerfire cartridge of .30 caliber or larger with
21 a case length not exceeding one and two-fifths inches, or a
22 straight-walled centerfire cartridge of .30 caliber or larger,
23 both of which must be available as a factory load with the

1 published ballistic tables of the manufacturer showing a
2 capability of at least 500 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle.
3 The barrel of a handgun shall be at least 4 inches. Full metal
4 jacket bullets may not be used to harvest deer.

5 The Department shall make administrative rules concerning
6 management restrictions applicable to the firearm and bow and
7 arrow season.

8 It shall be unlawful for any person to take deer except
9 with a bow and arrow during the open season for bow and arrow
10 set annually by the Director between the dates of September
11 1st and January 31st, both inclusive.

12 It shall be unlawful for any person to take deer except
13 with (i) a muzzleloading pistol or a muzzleloading rifle or
14 (ii) bow and arrow during the open season for muzzleloading
15 pistols and muzzleloading rifles set annually by the Director.

16 The Director shall cause an administrative rule setting
17 forth the prescribed rules and regulations, including bag and
18 possession limits and those counties of the State where open
19 seasons are established, to be published in accordance with
20 Sections 1.3 and 1.13 of this Act.

21 The Department may establish separate harvest periods for
22 the purpose of managing or eradicating disease that has been
23 found in the deer herd. This season shall be restricted to gun
24 or bow and arrow hunting only. The Department shall publicly
25 announce, via statewide news release, the season dates and
26 shooting hours, the counties and sites open to hunting.

1 The Department is authorized to establish a separate
2 harvest period at specific sites within the State for the
3 purpose of harvesting surplus deer that cannot be taken during
4 the regular season provided for the taking of deer. This
5 season shall be restricted to gun or bow and arrow hunting only
6 and shall be established during the period of September 1st to
7 February 15th, both inclusive. The Department shall publicly
8 announce, via statewide news release, the season dates and
9 shooting hours, and the counties and sites open to hunting.
10 The Department shall publish suitable prescribed rules and
11 regulations established by administrative rule pertaining to
12 management restrictions applicable to this special harvest
13 program. The Department shall allow unused gun deer permits
14 that are left over from a regular season for the taking of deer
15 to be rolled over and used during any separate harvest period
16 held within 6 months of the season for which those tags were
17 issued at no additional cost to the permit holder subject to
18 the management restrictions applicable to the special harvest
19 program.

20 Beginning July 1, 2019, and on an annual basis thereafter,
21 the Department shall provide a report to the General Assembly
22 providing information regarding deer management programs
23 established by the Code or by administrative rule that
24 includes: (1) the number of surplus deer taken during each
25 separate harvest season; (2) the number of deer found to have a
26 communicable disease or other abnormality; and (3) what

1 happens to the deer taken during each separate harvest season.

2 Within one year after the effective date of this
3 amendatory Act of the 104th General Assembly, the Department
4 shall adopt rules regarding hunting deer with a muzzleloading
5 pistol that allow for hunting deer with a muzzleloading pistol
6 in the same seasons and under the same or similar restrictions
7 as hunting deer with a muzzleloading rifle.

8 (Source: P.A. 101-66, eff. 7-12-19; 102-314, eff. 1-1-22;
9 102-932, eff. 1-1-23.)

10 (Text of Section after amendment by P.A. 104-58)

11 Sec. 2.25. It shall be unlawful for any person to take deer
12 except (i) with a shotgun, handgun, single shot centerfire
13 rifle, muzzleloading pistol, or muzzleloading rifle or (ii) as
14 provided by administrative rule, with a bow and arrow, during
15 the open season of not more than 14 days which will be set
16 annually by the Director between the dates of November 1st and
17 December 31st, both inclusive, or a special 3-day, youth-only
18 season between the dates of September 1 and October 31. For the
19 purposes of this Section, legal handguns and rifles are
20 limited to centerfire handguns that are either a single shot
21 or revolver and centerfire rifles that are single shot. The
22 only legal ammunition for a centerfire handgun or rifle is a
23 bottleneck centerfire cartridge of .30 caliber or larger with
24 a case length not exceeding one and two-fifths inches, or a
25 straight-walled centerfire cartridge of .30 caliber or larger,

1 both of which must be available as a factory load with the
2 published ballistic tables of the manufacturer showing a
3 capability of at least 500 foot pounds of energy at the muzzle.
4 The barrel of a handgun shall be at least 4 inches. Full metal
5 jacket bullets may not be used to harvest deer.

6 The Department shall make administrative rules concerning
7 management restrictions applicable to the firearm and bow and
8 arrow season.

9 It shall be unlawful for any person to take deer except
10 with a bow and arrow during the open season for bow and arrow
11 set annually by the Director between the dates of September
12 1st and January 31st, both inclusive.

13 It shall be unlawful for any person to take deer except
14 with (i) a muzzleloading pistol or a muzzleloading rifle or
15 (ii) bow and arrow during the open season for muzzleloading
16 pistols and muzzleloading rifles set annually by the Director.

17 The Director shall cause an administrative rule setting
18 forth the prescribed rules and regulations, including bag and
19 possession limits and those counties of the State where open
20 seasons are established, to be published in accordance with
21 Sections 1.3 and 1.13 of this Act.

22 The Department may establish separate harvest periods for
23 the purpose of managing or eradicating disease that has been
24 found in the deer herd. This season shall be restricted to gun
25 or bow and arrow hunting only. The Department shall publicly
26 announce, via statewide news release, the season dates and

1 shooting hours, the counties and sites open to hunting.

2 The Department is authorized to establish a separate
3 harvest period at specific sites within the State for the
4 purpose of harvesting surplus deer that cannot be taken during
5 the regular season provided for the taking of deer. This
6 season shall be restricted to gun or bow and arrow hunting only
7 and shall be established during the period of September 1st to
8 February 15th, both inclusive. The Department shall publicly
9 announce, via statewide news release, the season dates and
10 shooting hours, and the counties and sites open to hunting.
11 The Department shall publish suitable prescribed rules and
12 regulations established by administrative rule pertaining to
13 management restrictions applicable to this special harvest
14 program. The Department shall allow unused gun deer permits
15 that are left over from a regular season for the taking of deer
16 to be rolled over and used during any separate harvest period
17 held within 6 months of the season for which those tags were
18 issued at no additional cost to the permit holder subject to
19 the management restrictions applicable to the special harvest
20 program.

21 If the Department is using its sharpshooting program to
22 manage chronic wasting disease in a deer herd that is found in
23 a county in the State and if no cases of that disease have been
24 identified in that herd in the preceding 3 calendar years,
25 then the Department shall end the use of that program to manage
26 chronic wasting disease in that county. However, the program

1 may be reinstated within the county if chronic wasting
2 disease is again identified in that herd.

3 Beginning July 1, 2019, and on an annual basis thereafter,
4 the Department shall provide a report to the General Assembly
5 providing information regarding deer management programs
6 established by the Code or by administrative rule that
7 includes: (1) the number of surplus deer taken during each
8 separate harvest season; (2) the number of deer found to have a
9 communicable disease or other abnormality; and (3) what
10 happens to the deer taken during each separate harvest season.

11 Within one year after the effective date of this
12 amendatory Act of the 104th General Assembly, the Department
13 shall adopt rules regarding hunting deer with a muzzleloading
14 pistol that allow for hunting deer with a muzzleloading pistol
15 in the same seasons and under the same or similar restrictions
16 as hunting deer with a muzzleloading rifle.

17 (Source: P.A. 104-58, eff. 1-1-26.)

18 Section 95. No acceleration or delay. Where this Act makes
19 changes in a statute that is represented in this Act by text
20 that is not yet or no longer in effect (for example, a Section
21 represented by multiple versions), the use of that text does
22 not accelerate or delay the taking effect of (i) the changes
23 made by this Act or (ii) provisions derived from any other
24 Public Act.