

DNR: Focus on safety for a successful spring turkey season

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MADISON — Approximately 80,000 hunters will be heading to the field for the 2018 spring turkey hunting season, with the first period starting April 18.

Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Conservation Warden and Hunter Education Administrator Jon King says there are two key factors needed for safe turkey hunting.

“The two most critical ingredients for a successful spring hunt are a detailed hunting plan in one hand and a firm grip on firearm safety in the other,” King said.

DNR statistics show 80 percent of accidents during turkey hunting seasons involve hunters mistaking other hunters for game, or hunters failing to positively identify their target. The other 20 percent of accidents are self-inflicted, usually the result of violating one of the four firearm safety rules.

“Turkey hunters, like all hunters, must practice these four basic safety guidelines when handling their firearms,” King said. “Treat every firearm as if it is loaded, always point the muzzle in a safe direction, be sure of your target and what’s beyond it, and keep your finger outside of the trigger guard until ready to shoot.”

It’s a good idea to wear a blaze orange cap or gloves while walking. And find a hunting spot that allows you to rest your back against a tree or some other object that is as wide as your shoulders. This helps protect you from not only an errant shot, but from the good vision of the turkey.

Never stalk a wild turkey and don't try to approach closer than 100 yards to a gobbler. The chances of getting close enough for a shot are slim, but the chances of becoming involved in an accident are increased. The less you move the safer and more effective you will be in field.

Follow these simple rules for a safe and successful hunt.

- Identify your target; it's not a good enough reason to take a shot when a hunter only thinks they are seeing a legal target.
- Do not shoot at sound and movement.
- Be certain of your target, what's in front of it and beyond it.
- Avoid wearing red, white and blue. These colors are also shared by gobblers.
- Use gobble calls only to locate a tom, not to attract one. Some other hunter might think you're a turkey.
- Keep hands and head camouflaged when calling.
- Never carry or move an uncovered decoy.

"Continuing Wisconsin's safe hunting tradition is a shared responsibility of all hunters," King said.