

Dept. of Natural Resources: 2020 Wisconsin ring-necked pheasant season opens Oct. 17

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MADISON, Wis. – The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) wishes hunters luck and safety with the upcoming 2020 pheasant hunting season. The season opens statewide at 9 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 17 and runs through Jan. 3, 2021.

Several other seasons also open Oct. 17, including bobwhite quail and Hungarian partridge statewide, and ruffed grouse in Zone B. Like pheasant, the bobwhite quail and Hungarian partridge seasons open at 9 a.m. on the first day of the season. The ruffed grouse season opens with the start of legal shooting hours.

New for 2020, properties that used to have a 2 p.m. closure will now close at 12 p.m. to reduce safety conflicts for staff and to allow pheasants a resting period before being pursued. Hunters should check [Wisconsin Hunting Regulations](#) for a complete list of properties with the 12 p.m. closure rule as well as rules and season structures for other game species they may pursue.

“Pheasant hunting offers a fantastic means to work your hunting dog while also experiencing the unique grassland habitats spread across the southern part of the state,” said Alaina Gerrits, DNR assistant upland wildlife ecologist.

Pheasants are one of the most sought-after gamebirds in North America, and populations do best in the agricultural landscape of southern and western Wisconsin provided there is grassland habitat present in sufficient quantities to meet their food and cover needs throughout the year.

To pursue wild pheasants, hunters should look for areas that contain adequate winter cover, such as cattail marshes and dense brush, intermixed with cropland, hay and idle grasslands which provide food and nesting cover. It will be important for hunters to identify areas with high-quality habitat, concentrating their hunting efforts in those areas.

Wisconsin's [pheasant stamp program](#) uses funds derived from stamp sales to create and maintain the habitat required for pheasants to survive and reproduce year-round.

During the 2019 pheasant hunting season, an estimated 40,831 hunters went out in search of pheasants and reported harvesting approximately 291,400 birds. The 2020 spring pheasant surveys in Wisconsin were canceled out of safety concerns related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

Regulations

A 2020 Pheasant Stamp and a valid small game license are required to hunt pheasants statewide. Please note that the free leg tags previously required on the hen/rooster areas are no longer required. The daily bag limit is one pheasant daily for the first two days of the season and two pheasants daily for the remainder of the season, with a possession limit of three times the daily bag limit. More information is available in the [Wisconsin Hunting Regulations](#).

Pheasant Stocking Program

In addition to wild pheasant hunting opportunities, the DNR wildlife management staff plan to release approximately 50,000 pheasants from the state game farm on over 70 public hunting grounds. These numbers are reduced compared to the 2019 stocking levels. The day-old chick program was also suspended this year due to logistics challenges related to COVID-19 precautions.

A list of all properties stocked with pheasants is available on the [Pheasant Stocking Information page](#).

Where To Hunt

The DNR's free [Hunt Wild Wisconsin mobile app](#) includes a map layer showing where pheasants are stocked on public lands. This is a new feature in 2020. In addition to using it to locate great pheasant hunting opportunities, you can also

view the regulations and buy your license.

Hunters can also use [FFLIGHT](#), the DNR's gamebird mapping web application, to locate and explore properties stocked with pheasants, as well as ruffed grouse and woodcock habitat and managed dove fields. FFLIGHT allows hunters to use aerial maps, topography and measuring tools to easily navigate and identify areas of interest and make their trips more productive and enjoyable.

Land enrolled in the [Voluntary Public Access Program \(VPA\)](#) is open to public hunting this pheasant season. The VPA Program has more than 30,000 acres of private land open to public hunting, fishing and bird watching year-round. Many properties are located within a short driving distance of urban areas and are popular pheasant hunting spots.

Mentored Hunting Program

The Mentored Hunting Program allows any hunter born on or after Jan. 1, 1973, to obtain a hunting license and hunt without first completing Hunter Education, provided they hunt with a mentor and comply with all the requirements under the program. At this time, it is recommended that the mentor be of the same household. For additional information and the requirements of the program, click [here](#).

"Pheasants are a popular gamebird, and they offer a great opportunity for new hunters," Gerrits said. "I wish hunters a safe and enjoyable season."