

4VAC15-50-120

Game: Bear: Bear hound training season

Summary:

The recommendation is to amend the opening day of the bear hound training season established in subsection E from the first Monday in December to the Monday nearest December 2.

Recommended Language of Amendment:

4VAC15-50-120. Bear hound training season.

A. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from August 1 through the last Saturday in September, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Albemarle, Alleghany, Amherst, Augusta, Bath, Bedford, Bland, Botetourt, Brunswick, Buchanan, Carroll, Charlotte, Craig, Culpeper, Dickenson, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Grayson (east of Route 16), Greene, Greensville, Highland, Lee, Lunenburg, Madison, Mecklenburg, Montgomery, Nelson, Page, Pulaski, Rappahannock, Roanoke (west of I-81), Rockbridge, Rockingham, Russell, Scott, Shenandoah, Smyth (except for the part southeast of I-81 and west of State Route 16), Tazewell, Warren, Washington (northwest of I-81), Wise, and Wythe and in the Cities of Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Virginia Beach.

B. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 14 days following, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Amelia, Brunswick, Campbell (east of the Norfolk Southern Railroad), Charles City, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Essex, Gloucester, Greensville, Isle of Wight, James City, King and Queen, King George, King William, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Northumberland, Nottoway, Pittsylvania (east of the Norfolk Southern Railroad), Prince George, Richmond, Southampton, Surry, Sussex, Westmoreland, and York.

C. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for 12 days following, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Appomattox and Buckingham.

D. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from the Saturday prior to the third Monday in November and for eight days following, both dates inclusive, in the Counties of Charlotte, Halifax, Mecklenburg, and Prince Edward.

E. It shall be lawful to chase black bear with dogs, without capturing or taking, from the ~~first Monday of December~~ Monday nearest December 2 and for 19 days following, excluding Sundays, in the Counties of Albemarle, Alleghany, Amherst, Appomattox, Augusta, Bath, Bedford, Botetourt, Buckingham, Clarke, Culpeper, Fauquier, Frederick, Greene, Highland, Madison, Nelson, Page, Rappahannock, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, and Warren.

F. It shall be unlawful to use any firearm, bow, crossbow, or any weapon legally permissible for taking a black bear for the specific purpose of harvesting or killing a black bear while

participating in the bear hound training season.

Rationale:

This recommendation corrects a staff oversight and aligns the regulation language with the Board’s intention during the 2025-2026 regulation review and amendment process. During that regulation review and amendment process, the bear firearms season was reduced by 25 days within 24 northwestern counties to address bear population declines resulting from the impacts of mange, high female harvest levels, and other factors. On 18 of the 25 days removed from the bear firearms season, hounds could be used to hunt bear in 23 of these counties. To continue providing as much recreational opportunity as possible during the reduced firearms season in these 23 counties and without impacting bear populations, the Board of Wildlife Resources adopted regulation amendments intended to enable hunters to continue to chase bears with hounds, without harvesting them, on the 18 days that had been removed from the bear firearms season. Although the language of the regulation amendment adopted by the Board of Wildlife Resources would provide 18 days of bear hound training opportunity during some years (e.g., this past season), it would provide less than the intended number of days during other years (e.g., the upcoming 2026-2027 hunting season).