



2026 SPRING WILD TURKEY HUNTING INFORMATION SHEET

Your Spring Wild Turkey Hunting Permit entitles you to participate in the privilege of wild turkey hunting. Please review this information to ensure that you comply with all the wild turkey hunting regulations. While hunting, please respect the rules of good sportsmanship and the property of others. Have a safe and successful hunt.

SPRING TURKEY HARVEST REPORTING

Successful hunters must register their harvest by 10 p.m. on the same calendar day as the turkey was taken by using our automated check-in system as below:

BY TELEPHONE (toll-free): 1-866-452-4325 (1-866-IL-CHECK) OR

ONLINE: <https://www.exploremoreil.com/wildlife/harvest>

We hope you are pleased with the ease and convenience of this system.

Please have a pen/pencil on hand (an extra-fine-tipped permanent marker works best). You will be given a 10-character confirmation number which you must write on the leg tag (this serves as proof you have checked in your harvest). When reporting harvest, hunters will be asked to provide a variety of information to assist biologists in managing Illinois' turkey population. Please look over the questions listed on the back of your permit prior to reporting your harvest.

TAGGING INSTRUCTIONS: *Immediately upon kill, and before the turkey is moved, transported, or field dressed, the hunter must properly attach the temporary harvest tag to the leg. The tag must remain attached to the leg of the turkey until it is at the legal residence of the person who legally took or possessed the turkey, and it has been reported via internet or telephone.*

PERMIT COMPLETION: Before hunting, you must sign your permit. You must carry the completed permit, along with your Hunting, Sportsman's, Youth Hunting/Trapping, or Apprentice License and Habitat Stamp (unless exempt), while hunting wild turkey.

HUNTING REGULATIONS (Shotgun and Archery)

Bag Limit: One male turkey (gobbler); or one hen with a visible beard per permit, with a maximum of 3 permits. Once you have your limit, you may not further participate with a weapon in any turkey hunting party.

Baiting: Use of live or electronic turkey decoys, recorded calls, dogs or bait (an area is considered as baited during the presence of and for 10 consecutive days following the removal of the bait) is illegal.

Calling: It is illegal for any person to use a turkey call that imitates sounds made by a turkey or to attempt to call a turkey by making these sounds while in the field in the Southern Zone from March 15 through the day before the first turkey season and in the Northern Zone from March 22 through the day before the first turkey season. This prohibition only applies in counties open to spring turkey hunting. This prohibition does not apply to participants in the Youth Turkey Hunt with a valid permit, or the accompanying adult, during that season.

Clothing: No special clothing is required.

Hunting Area: Only that county, counties, or special hunt area designated on your permit. Permission to hunt on private property must be obtained from the property owner or tenant. "Property-Only Hunting" permit holders are permitted to hunt on their property ONLY in the counties open for turkey hunting. Special Hunt area permits are not valid anywhere else in the county. County permits are not valid for the Special Hunt areas.

Hunting Hours: One-half hour before sunrise until 1 p.m.

Roost: It is illegal to shoot a wild turkey while it is in a tree BEFORE 7 a.m.

Seasons: A permit is only valid for the one season identified on the permit. A spring wild turkey "Property-Only Hunting" permits is valid for the entire 32 days encompassed by the five seasons in the Northern or Southern zones (depending upon where your land is located) but allows the taking of only one wild turkey. A hunting rights lease, or other non-agricultural lease, is not valid for a "Property-Only Hunting" permit.

Weapons: The only legal hunting devices to take or attempt to take turkey are:

- 1) A long, recurved or compound bow with minimum pull of 30 pounds at some point within the 28-inch draw. Minimum arrow length is 20 inches.
- 2) Crossbows shall meet all the following specifications:
 - a. shall use a bowstring to propel the bolt or arrow and have a minimum peak draw weight of 125 pounds.
 - b. have a minimum length (from butt of stock to front of limbs) of 24 inches.
 - c. have a working safety
 - d. be used with fletched bolts or arrows of not less than 14 inches in length (not including point).

Broadheads must be used. Broadheads may have fixed or expandable cutting surfaces, but they must have a minimum 7/8-inch diameter when fully opened. Broadheads with fixed cutting surfaces must be metal or flint-, chert-, or obsidian-knapped; broadheads with expandable cutting surfaces must be metal.

All other bows and arrows, including electronic arrow tracking devices utilizing radio telemetry, are illegal;

- 3) Shotgun (.410 bore to 10 gauge only); overall minimum length is 26 inches. Minimum barrel length is 18 inches; #4 shot is the largest shot that may be legally used or possessed while turkey hunting.

IT IS ILLEGAL:

- For any person to hunt wild turkey without possessing a Wild Turkey Hunting Permit
- For any person to have in their possession while in the field during wild turkey season, any turkey permit issued to another person.
- To buy, sell, or offer to buy or sell, wild turkeys or any part thereof including their nest or eggs.

2026 SPRING TURKEY HUNTING ZONES AND SEASON DATES

2026 SOUTH ZONE SEASON DATES & COUNTIES		
Season	Beginning Date	Ending Date
1st Season	April 6	April 10
2nd Season	April 11	April 16
3rd Season	April 17	April 22
4th Season	April 23	April 29
5th Season	April 30	May 7

2026 NORTH ZONE SEASON DATES & COUNTIES		
Season	Beginning Date	Ending Date
1st Season	April 13	April 17
2nd Season	April 18	April 23
3rd Season	April 24	April 29
4th Season	April 30	May 6
5th Season	May 7	May 14

Open South Zone Counties

Alexander, Bond, Clay, Clinton, Crawford, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Franklin, Gallatin-Hardin, Hamilton, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Johnson, Lawrence, Madison, Marion, Massac, Monroe, Perry, Pope, Pulaski, Randolph, Richland, Saline, St. Clair, Union, Wabash, Washington, Wayne, White, Williamson

Open North Zone Counties

Adams, Boone, Brown, Bureau, Calhoun, Carroll, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Coles, Cumberland, DeKalb, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Ford, Fulton, Greene, Grundy, Hancock, Henderson, Henry, Iroquois, Jersey, Jo Daviess, Kane, Kankakee, Kendall, Knox, Lake, La Salle, Lee, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Marshall-Putnam, Mason, McDonough, McHenry, McLean, Menard, Mercer, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Ogle, Peoria, Piatt, Pike, Rock Island, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stark, Stephenson, Tazewell, Vermilion, Warren, Whiteside, Will, Winnebago, Woodford

2026 SPRING YOUTH TURKEY HUNT

March 28 & 29 and April 4 & 5, 2026

The North Zone and South Zone are open concurrently for all four days of the Youth Season.

For more information, please visit: <https://dnr.illinois.gov/hunting/youth-turkey-information.html>

Hunting License: In addition to your turkey permit, you must have a valid Illinois Hunting, Sportsman's, Youth Hunting/Trapping, or Apprentice License, unless exempt.

Habitat Stamp: Before any person 18 years of age or older takes, attempts to take, or pursues any species of wildlife protected by the Wildlife Code, except migratory waterfowl, coots, and hand-reared birds on licensed game breeding and hunting preserve areas and state-controlled pheasant hunting areas, he or she shall first obtain a State Habitat Stamp. Disabled veterans and former prisoners of war shall not be required to obtain State Habitat Stamps. Any person who obtained a Lifetime License before January 1, 1993, shall not be required to obtain a State Habitat Stamp.

Firearm Owners ID Card (Issued by Illinois State Police 217-782-7980)

Regardless of who owns the gun, anyone who has a firearm or firearm ammunition in their possession must have a valid Firearm Owners ID (FOID) card unless he or she is:

- A licensed out-of-state sportsman hunting in Illinois.
- Under the age of 21 and under the immediate control of a parent, guardian, or responsible adult who has in their possession a valid FOID Card.

This information is only a guide to the highlights of the rules and regulations governing turkey hunting. For more information, please visit <https://dnr.illinois.gov/adrules.html>

For deer and turkey hunting application/permit questions: 217-782-7305

For hunting license and habitat stamp questions: 217-782-2965

For hunter safety education questions: 1-800-832-2599