



Understanding New York's New Crossbow Legislation: Guidelines for Hunters

April 11, 2014

Governor Cuomo signed the annual budget bill for 2014-15 which includes language authorizing the use of crossbows for hunting under certain circumstances. Below is a summary of this new law. DEC will draft regulations in the near future, and will implement the new law in time for this fall's hunting seasons. DEC will include all crossbow updates in the 2014-2015 Guide to Hunting and Trapping Laws & Regulations, available when licenses go on sale in August 2014.

General

- Crossbows may not be used in any season until DEC has adopted regulations specifying how and when they may be used.
- Crossbows may not be used for hunting any wildlife in WMU 1C in Suffolk County or in WMU 3S in Westchester County.
- Crossbows may be used only by licensees who are 14 years of age or older.
- Crossbows may not be discharged within 250 feet of any occupied home, school, factory or church; any school building or playground; or any public structure without landowner permission.
- A crossbow may not be carried or possessed in or on a motor vehicle unless it is un-cocked.
- Lessons on crossbow safety will be incorporated in all Standard Hunter Education courses offered by DEC after April 1, 2014.
- Anyone hunting with a crossbow must have:
 - 1) completed a Standard Hunter Education course offered by DEC on or after April 1, 2014; or
 - 2) completed a DEC-approved on-line or other training program (e.g., material provided on the annual hunting guide). Hunters must carry a signed self-certification in the field when hunting with a crossbow as proof of compliance.

Small Game

- Wild turkey - crossbows may **not** be used to take wild turkey during the 2014 spring season, but DEC will adopt regulations allowing use of crossbows for hunting wild turkey by fall 2014 and all subsequent spring and fall seasons.
- Crossbows may not be used to take waterfowl or other migratory game birds.
- Crossbows may not be possessed afield in the Northern Zone when hunting small game (except coyotes) with the aid of a dog or when accompanied by a dog.

- Crossbows may be used to take any other small game or upland game birds during their respective open seasons (once regulations are adopted), or to take unprotected wildlife (e.g., red squirrels and woodchucks) at anytime.

Big Game

- Crossbows may not be used to take deer or bear in WMU 4J in Albany County, WMU 8C in Monroe County, or any part of Suffolk or Westchester counties.
- For licenses, the new law treats crossbows as a “muzzleloader.” Hunters must possess a muzzleloader hunting privilege to legally hunt big game with a crossbow during any muzzleloader season OR during open portions of the early bowhunting seasons. The muzzleloader privilege is not required when hunting with a crossbow during the early bear season or the regular firearms seasons (or for hunting small game and upland game birds).
- Crossbows may be used to take bear during the early bear season, early muzzleloader season in the Northern Zone, regular firearms seasons in the Northern and Southern Zones, and the late muzzleloader season in the Southern Zone.
- Crossbows may be used to take deer during:
 - early and late muzzleloader season in the Northern Zone and late muzzleloader season in the Southern Zone using Bow/Muzz tags, DMPs, DMAP tags, or an unfilled Regular Big Game tag (late season only);
 - regular firearms seasons using a Regular Big Game tag, DMPs, or DMAP tags.
- Crossbows may also be used to take deer or bear during limited portions of bowhunting seasons as follows, provided that the hunter possesses the muzzleloading privilege:
 - During the last 14 days of the early bowhunting season in the Southern Zone (i.e., November 1 – November 14, 2014);
 - During the last 10 days of the early bowhunting season in the Northern Zone (i.e., October 15 – October 24; this includes the 7-day early muzzleloader season in the Northern Zone);
 - Only Bow/Muzz tags, DMPs or DMAPs may be use during these times.
- Junior big game hunters (age 14-15) may not use a crossbow to take a deer during the Youth Deer Hunt weekend (October 11 – 13, 2014). Adult mentors who accompany a junior big game hunter on the Youth Deer Hunt weekend may not possess a crossbow (or firearm) while afield on those days.

Crossbow Specifications

- A legal crossbow consists of a bow and string, either compound or recurve, that launches a minimum 14-inch arrow/bolt, not including point, mounted upon a stock with a trigger that holds the string and limbs under tension until released.
- The trigger unit of such crossbow must have a working safety.
- The minimum limb width of such crossbow shall be 17 inches (outer tip of limbs, uncocked), have a minimum peak draw weight of 100 pounds and a maximum peak draw weight of 200 pounds.

- The minimum overall length of such crossbow from butt-stock to front of limbs shall be 24 inches.

Regular and Bowhunting Deer Seasons – 2014 (pending adoption of regulations)

