



ADMINISTRATIVE RULES OF MONTANA



12.9.1105 HUNTING SEASONS EXTENSIONS

- (1) The commission may determine that the extension of a hunting season may be an acceptable strategy to achieve deer or elk management objectives under the following conditions:
 - (a) a liberal general season deer or elk management package has been in place for two consecutive years, including the year in which the extension is proposed. A liberal season package is established when populations observed in department surveys exceed management objectives. Season packages for deer and elk are numerically described in the department's current Deer and Elk Plans;
 - (b) elk populations are 20% or more over the current department Elk Plan population objectives as determined by department survey, or deer populations are 20% - 30% over the current department Deer Plan population objectives as determined by department survey and as specifically identified in the five ecotypes described in the Deer Plan;
 - (c) public hunting access during the five-week general hunting season was at levels necessary to accomplish harvest management objectives, but management objectives were still not achieved; and
 - (d) weather conditions during the fall hunting season result in a harvest that was substantially below the desired level in districts that are over objective. Evaluation of harvest may include, but is not limited to, field observations, check stations, weather conditions, or public comments.
- (2) Additionally, the commission may consider season extensions in the event of severe winter weather conditions, and these conditions create a situation where game damage complaints occur across multiple hunting districts or represent real opportunity to secure additional needed harvest in districts that are over objective.
- (3) A hunting season extension may begin the day after the close of the general fall hunting season and shall close no later than February 15. If direct harvest reaches levels that are projected to bring the deer and elk populations near population objectives, as indicated by one or more game checking stations located in the area of the hunting season extension, the commission shall close a season that it has extended.
- (4) When the commission determines that a season extension is appropriate, the extension must be applied on an aggregate of hunting districts or regional basis, and the hunt area must be large enough to prevent hunter overcrowding. Season extensions may not be applied in situations where individual properties or small portions of hunting districts are involved and where existing game damage procedures more appropriately apply.
- (5) The commission shall extend hunting seasons according to the following procedures:

- (a) at the end of the fourth week of the general big game hunting season, a regional committee, located within the pertinent administrative region and appointed by the respective regional supervisor, shall consider the criteria listed in (1)(a) through (1)(d) or (2) to determine whether or not season extensions are warranted;
- (b) the committee shall present its recommendation to the regional supervisor for approval; and
- (c) if the regional supervisor and director approve the hunting extension, the department shall present the recommendation to the local commissioner representing the area where the season extension is proposed for review and final approval. In the absence of the local commissioner, the department shall present the recommendation to the commission chair for review and final approval.

Authorizing statute(s): 87-1-301, MCA

Implementing statute(s): 87-1-301, MCA

History: NEW, 2004 MAR p. 2911, Eff. 12/3/04; TRANS, from ARM 12.9.810, 2006 MAR p. 1867, Eff. 7/28/06; AMD, 2007 MAR p. 1442, Eff. 9/21/07.