

Crossbow Hunting Permit

Fact Sheet - applies during 2020-2022 hunting seasons



Safety Course, License and Permit Requirements:

- To purchase a crossbow hunting permit, a person must have a current Maine firearms hunting license or a current Maine archery hunting license and
 - successfully have completed a crossbow hunting education program
- **OR**
 - have the ability to show proof of having previously held a valid permit or license that authorized the use of a crossbow in any year after 1979 (that is not a junior hunting license or an apprenticeship hunter license).
- NOTE: Existing license holders who have already held an archery or hunting license and want to try crossbow hunting only need to complete either the online crossbow course for \$30 or attend one of the in-person crossbow courses (often free but facility fees may apply) that the Department offers periodically, to become eligible to purchase a crossbow permit.
- When proof or evidence cannot be otherwise provided, the applicant may substitute a signed affidavit that the applicant has previously held a valid permit or license that authorized the use of a crossbow (that is not a junior hunting license or an apprenticeship hunter license).
- Crossbow hunting courses are now available online or in-person classes listed on our website. Check mefishwildlife.com for more information.

Junior hunters and apprentice hunters:

- Valid junior hunting license holders may hunt with a crossbow without completing any hunter education courses or purchasing a crossbow permit but both junior hunters and apprentice hunters must be under supervision of a hunter supervisor who meets the legal requirements to supervise them.
- Hunters who have turned 16 but who continue to hunt on their junior hunting license for the remainder of that calendar year must have completed the hunter safety course for the implement in which they choose to hunt if they want to hunt unsupervised.

Hunters Under the age of 65:

- May hunt any wild bird or animal with a crossbow during any open season on that bird or animal while still following all other laws pertinent to that species including:
 - Hunt deer, moose, and bear with a crossbow during the applicable firearms seasons, hunt turkey in both the spring and fall turkey seasons with a crossbow and hunt deer during the regular October archery season on deer.
 - Take an antlerless deer by use of crossbow during the regular October archery season on deer if that person has an antlerless deer permit via the antlerless deer permit lottery.
 - Take an antlerless deer by use of crossbow during the Firearms season on deer if that person has an antlerless deer permit via the antlerless deer permit lottery.
- May not hunt deer with a crossbow:
 - during the muzzleloader season; or
 - during the expanded archery season (Except during the regular October archery season. Deer killed with a crossbow may not be registered with an expanded archery permit.)

Hunters age 65 and over and hunters who have a special permanent disability permit to hunt with a crossbow:

- May hunt any wild bird or animal with a crossbow during any open season on that bird or animal while still following all other laws pertinent to that species including:
 - Hunt deer, moose, and bear with a crossbow during the applicable firearms seasons, hunt turkey in both the spring and fall turkey seasons with a crossbow and hunt deer during the regular October archery season on deer.
- May hunt deer with a crossbow:

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- during the muzzleloader season;
- during the expanded archery season under the authority of the expanded archery permit; and
- Take a deer of either sex during the regular October archery season without having an antlerless deer permit (only in wildlife management districts in which antlerless deer permits have been issued).

Other specific areas where use of crossbow is not permitted even during the 2020, 2021, 2022 regular October archery hunting seasons. NOTE: the term archery equipment as used within the following statutes is interpreted by IFW to mean traditional bow and arrow equipment not crossbows, therefore crossbows will be considered prohibited for use in the following locations:

- **The Town of Islesboro**, due to the statute that allows for hunting with bow and arrow only as described within 12 MRS § 11402;
- **Cranberry Isles in Hancock County** as described within 12 MRS § 11402. Shotgun and archery equipment are permitted however the legislative body of the affected town would need to approve a change in hunting method; and
- Locations described within IFW rule Ch 16.07 under the open and closed seasons including:
 - **The area within Prout's Neck: Richmond's Island, Cape Elizabeth Sanctuary** described below shall be open to deer hunting with bow and arrow only during any open hunting season that allows archery hunting of deer;
 - **The area within the Beauchamp Sanctuary situated in Rockport and Camden in the County of Knox:** shall be open to archery hunting of deer during any open hunting season that allows archery equipment to be used to hunt deer;
 - **The whole of Cranberry Isles in Hancock County:** shall be open to the hunting of deer with a shotgun or archery equipment during any open hunting season that allows a shotgun or archery equipment to be used to hunt deer;
 - **The area within Drake's Island and Wells Sanctuaries, situated in the Town of Wells in the County of York:** shall be open to the hunting of antlerless deer with a hand-held bow and arrow by permit only during a specified period between November 1 and January 30; permits may be issued by the department to licensed archery hunters authorized by a landowner; and
 - **Marsh Island situated in City of Old Town in the County of Penobscot:** shall be open to the hunting of deer with a handheld bow and arrow by permit only during a specified period between September 1 and December 31; permits may be issued by the department to licensed archery hunters authorized by a landowner.

Laws specific to Crossbow equipment:

- Only crossbows with a shoulder-type stock may be used.
- Draw weight must be at least 100 lbs. There is no maximum.
- Arrowheads, including mechanical broadheads when open, must be at least 7/8" wide.
- Crossbows must be equipped with a mechanical trigger safety device in working condition.
- Hand-held pistol-type crossbows are prohibited.
- Arrows with explosive or poisonous tips are prohibited.
- Crossbows with scopes or sights may be used.

Hunter Orange Requirements Related to Crossbow Use:

- A person may not hunt with firearms or crossbows during the open firearm season on deer unless that person is wearing 2 articles of hunter orange clothing, 1 being a hat and the other must cover a major portion of the torso and be 50% hunter orange in color.
- Any person who hunts with a firearm or crossbow within any WMD open to moose hunting during the open season on moose shall wear one article of solid-colored hunter orange clothing, except 2 articles of hunter orange (as described in the above bullet) must be worn during the open firearms season on deer. *UPDATED: 10/14/20*