



MASSWILDLIFE

Massachusetts Division
of Fisheries & Wildlife
Hunter Education
Program Newsletter

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MASSACHUSETTS HUNTER EDUCATION PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

IN THE KNOW

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November 2024

PLEASE START PLANNING 2025 COURSES

It's that time of year again when we ask you to please think about scheduling courses for the coming year.

We have received information from a few teams who have scheduled courses for winter and early spring and even if your team has been considering an early January course, you still have time to submit course forms.

We ask all teaching teams to please collaborate, discuss 2025 course schedules, and consider sending in course information well in advance of your courses.

The MA Hunter Education Program has thousands of requests for Basic Hunter Education courses across the state and we find that many of our potential students

look for courses early and want to be notified several weeks in advance. We also notice that it takes 45-55 days to fill a class. So, while we specify that course forms be received six weeks prior to a course, we ask that you submit your request as far in advance as you are able and at least eight weeks is preferred.

You can find a copy of the "conduct a course" form on the instructor webpage or you can complete and submit the form electronically at www.mass.gov/forms/conduct-a-hunter-education-course or you can simply call the office (508.389.7825) and we will submit the request for you. Office hours are Monday through Friday 8:00am—4:00pm.

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2025 Licenses & Guide AVAILABLE

Celebrate the new year by spending more time outdoors. **2025 fishing and hunting licenses are available December 1st** online through MassFishHunt, or at vendor locations.

The 2025 Guides are also available. A printed copy is provided with this mailing

What's NEW for 2025:

Massachusetts Firearms Laws: Significant changes were recently made to Massachusetts firearms laws and they took effect in October 2024. The information in this Guide does not include all applicable firearms laws and is subject to change but does address some guidance for hunters. See page 24 for more information.

You can also find information on our new website **Hunting with a Firearm in Massachusetts**. This website will be routinely updated as more information becomes available. Bookmark this page and check back for updates

www.Mass.Gov/hunting-with-firearms



IN THE KNOW

WILDFIRE NOTICE FOR OUTDOOR USERS

Massachusetts is experiencing many wildfires statewide. Take precautions when venturing into the woods.

Massachusetts is dealing with widespread wildfires and severe drought, both of which heighten the risk of additional fires. MassWildlife staff are assisting the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and local fire departments in the ongoing effort to contain wildfires across the state. When venturing into the woods, MassWildlife is advising all outdoor users to take the following precautions to keep yourself and others safe:

- Stay away from active fires. Some may appear out but could still have a fire burning underground. Call 911 to report new fires. A map of active fires can be accessed here <https://data.usatoday.com/fires/>
- Properly extinguish and dispose of smoking materials such as cigarette butts.
- When visiting wooded areas, park vehicles away from dry grass and leaves and do not block access gates.
- Avoid recently burned areas because of the risk of falling trees weakened by fire.
- If you see or smell smoke, be safe and leave the woods. Fire can move quickly under windy conditions.
- Refrain from any outdoor activity involving open flames. There is a ban on outdoor open burning statewide.
- In addition to taking precautions while enjoying the outdoors, your actions at home can make a difference in preventing wildfires and conserving water.
- About 45 percent of Massachusetts homes are in or near areas at severe wildfire risk, meaning that any significant fire will put people and property in danger. To help reduce the risk, you can find tips on water conservation at www.mass.gov/conservemawater



THANK YOU FOR WELCOMING NEW INSTRUCTORS

Hello Volunteers! We have spent the recent months training new volunteers, building new volunteer teams, and re-engaging clubs and teams that were ready to get going again. Many of you have invited our new instructors to join your courses and we thank you. While these new instructors have attended an introductory workshop, they are still learning their roles and would benefit from working closely with the seasoned instructors on your teams. When communicating with them, ask what lessons they are comfortable teaching, or better yet offer some ideas. For example,



Lessons 11 and 13 (Field Carries and Zones of Fire) are hands-on exercises for small groups of students that allows two instructors to work together nicely. The new instructor can observe the lesson once or twice, then try leading or co-teaching during the third and fourth rounds. It is appropriate to “coach” the instructor and fill in any missing information when it pertains to the lesson objectives and provide hints between groups to help with timing and flow. Many lessons can work this way, and by giving our newest instructors practice, it helps them become more confident in their teaching. Another bonus of the co-teaching approach is that it helps the veteran instructor stay sharp! Remember that all lessons can be found on the Instructor Resources webpage, www.mass.gov/resources-for-volunteer-instructors.

Enjoy the holidays! We look forward to seeing you in the New Year!

MASSWILDLIFE

1 Rabbit Hill Road | Westborough, MA 01581 | mass.gov/masswildlife

HELP COMBAT HUNGER THIS GIVING SEASON

MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest program distributes venison to Massachusetts residents facing food insecurity. Learn more about the program and how you can support the cause.

MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest program provides an outlet for hunters to donate venison to Massachusetts residents facing food insecurity. Since the program's inception, more than 20,000 meals have been distributed to families in need.

November marks the arrival of crisp autumn air, the excitement of fall hunting, and the start of the giving season. In celebration of all 3 seasons, MassWildlife is proud to announce that the Hunters Share the Harvest venison donation program has expanded in 2024. This impactful program provides the opportunity for hunters to donate and share venison with those in need, while supporting forest conservation by utilizing hunting to manage deer populations.

Fittingly, the Share the Harvest Program in Massachusetts was first launched on Thanksgiving Day 2022. In its pilot year more than 3,000 meals were distributed to 378 families through the Food4Vets program. By the end of the 2023 deer hunting season, 3 participating venison processors and 5 food distribution organizations joined the effort, and another 17,800 nutritious meals were given to families struggling with food insecurity.

Heading into the 2024 season, we now have 10 participating processors, and 14 food distribution organizations spread across Massachusetts. Thanks to generous hunters, we expect a record number of donated deer this year, leading to new milestones for meals distributed through this program to families in need.

Partner spotlight: Daniel's Table

Since 2023, Daniel's Table has distributed donated venison from the Share the Harvest Program to Massachusetts families in need. Image credit: Daniel's Table

Daniel's Table, a distribution partner added in 2023, is an incredible community resource for Framingham. They provide almost 400,000 full meals annually through their weekly farmer's market, onsite food services, 20+ community freezers, grocery delivery, and more. Their farmer's market is a unique program where approved families choose what produce and proteins they would like based on their allotment. Of particular interest are their live cooking demonstrations held during farmer's markets by professional cooks who teach recipient families how to cook the different products available. After Daniel's Table conducted a demonstration with donated venison, it became one of the first items to run out each week due to high demand.



Stars represent participating venison processors and drop-off locations.

Learn more at www.mass.gov/sharetheharvest.

This program would not be possible without the participating processors and the incredible donation of harvested deer by hunters.



Use the QR code or link for more information about MassWildlife's Hunters Share the Harvest Program.

mass.gov/sharetheharvest

IN THE KNOW

MASSWILDLIFE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2024

November 26: Living with Wild Turkeys in Massachusetts, Virtual event – Join MassWildlife staff for a webinar to learn about wild turkey biology and behavior, as well as how residents can coexist with these beautiful birds. This event is hosted by the Tewksbury Public Library and will take place virtually via Zoom from 10:30–11:30 a.m.

DECEMBER 2024

December 4: Fisheries and Wildlife Board Meeting, Dalton – The December monthly business meeting of the Fisheries and Wildlife Board will be held at 4:00 p.m. at the Stationery Factory, 63 Flansburg Avenue, Dalton.

Virtual event December 9th: Mentoring Mondays - Hunting and Fishing Q&A,

Get answers to your hunting and fishing questions during a virtual mentoring sessions on the second Monday of the month! A panel of experts will start the event with a brief presentation on a featured topic, then participants can ask questions about anything related to the activity in Massachusetts. December's featured topic is **deer hunting**. This event takes place virtually via Zoom from 6–7 p.m. **Registration is required**; Once registered, you will receive an email with the event reminder and link to the meeting.



Visit: www.Mass.gov/LearnToHunt or scan the code to register



2025 COURSES — Continued from page 1

Delivery methods

As a reminder, we conduct courses in two learning formats including the in-person traditional format for all disciplines and a blended format for Basic Hunter Education and Trap-per Education courses.

Some recent research showed that agencies should provide Hunter Education courses using different delivery methods so students can select the course that best suits their needs. Also, about **50% of prospective students would prefer an all in-person course** and performed better when these courses were offered in three or fewer sessions which did not exceed 8 hours and included firearms handling. If your team offers a few Basic Hunter Education courses each year, please consider offering at least one in the traditional format.

The second option is the blended learning format which combines home study and hands-on learning. For Basic Hunter Education courses, students first complete the Massachusetts hunter safety study guide on their own and submits proof before enrolling and attending the in-person class for hands-on practice and to take the final exam. Your teaching team would be responsible for scheduling and offering the in-person class (aka Field Day) including the final exam. More information about this format for Basic Hunter Ed courses can be found at www.mass.gov/huntsafe. Thank you

NEW GRADUATE STICKER

In the survey conducted last year, several instructors requested that we come up with an item that could be distributed to graduates as a replacement for the patches that were discontinued several years ago.

We settled on a graduate sticker with a new contemporary design that could be used in all classes for all graduates.

You will find these items in with the materials for your courses. Please look for these stickers and distribute them to the graduates in your classes.

