

FINLAND OPENS DEER, WILD BOAR AND MOUFLON HUNTING FOR BOWHUNTERS

August 1. 2017 Finland got a new hunting law and additional regulations (lower degree rules).

Now possible to hunt all game birds and small game, beavers included and roe deer + whitetail deer, fallow deer, forest reindeer, red deer, sika deer, mouflon and wild pigs. So, possible to hunt everything else except the moose, bear and other big predators.

When hunting deer and pigs, one has to pass a shooting test = 3 field point arrows in a 23 cm ring from 18 meters. (more details below)

There are certain seasons for various game species. The seasons may change yearly and also depending in the area too. So, it's not possible to give exact dates.

Most seasons are in the fall. Earliest are woodpigeon August 10. and ducks August 20. other game birds begin in September depending on species. Also hare season starts in Sept.

Deer hunting starts in September.

Certain species (other deer except the roe deer) do need a license that Finnish Wildlife Agency provides to different areas, hunting clubs etc. The hunting clubs etc. need to apply for the licenses, thus one can't just buy the big game licenses/tags from shops. The moose and bear and other large predators also are hunted according to available licenses.

Other species may have certain bag limits according to hunting club/local decisions.

The seasons and bag limits are the same for gun and bowhunters.

All Finnish hunters need to pass the hunter education and theoretical test. There is no mandatory bowhunters education, but the IBEP is used as additional voluntary education.

BOWHUNTING IN GENERAL

Bowhunting has always been legal in Finland, but only during the past almost 30 years the national bowhunting associations and hunting associations have been actively driving bow and arrow towards equal legal status with other hunting weapons.

In Finland, there are over 300 000 hunters and according to surveys, the approximate number of bowhunters is somewhere between 15 000 and 16 000. This is an estimation, since not all bowhunters belong to local clubs or national associations and therefore are not registered. This estimated number includes hunters using both bow and firearm for hunting and those who only use bow for hunting.

Buying and selling hunting bows and related equipment do not require any permit or license from authorities. Importing hunting bows and related equipment to Finland for hunting trips is also relatively easy.

Finnish Wildlife Agency has 15 regional offices, responsible for district level hunting supervision and management and inside these districts there are 295 game management associations responsible for local hunting operational activities, management and monitoring. Inside the districts, Finland has several hundred (if not thousand) local hunting clubs and out of these the number of local bowhunting clubs is approximately 30-40 (meaning clubs concentrating only on bowhunting). In addition, some "regular" hunting clubs have bowhunting divisions and some bigger target archery clubs, especially in Southern Finland, have bowhunting divisions.

The hunting legislation and requirements are the same for compound bow and traditional bow; from legal perspective they are treated exactly the same way. The same bowhunting legislation applies for the whole country, with the exception in hunting regulations in Åland island (Åhvenanmaa) on the south coast of Finland (Åland island is a semi-autonomous area of Finland and they have slightly different legislation for many things, including hunting and bowhunting regulations). However, there are some variations in the game specific hunting seasons length depending on the geographical area of Finland. Also, based on annual game population calculations, some game animals may be protected during some seasons or the quota of hunting permits granted for specific game may vary depending on the strength of the game population.

2017 new situation:

1. As of 1.8.2017 new Finnish hunting legislation came into effect. Concerning bowhunting regulations, the legislation consists of:
 - a. The hunting law as legal frame
 - b. Additional regulations defining legal bowhunting equipment and legal game animals
 - c. Additional regulations defining the bow shooting test
 - d. The hunting law came into effect as of 1.8.2017
 - e. The additional regulations came into effect as of 7.8.2017
 - f. Bow shooting tests started 9.8.2017 in Finland and are in currently progress nationwide.

2. According to the new law and additional hunting regulations the legal bowhunting game animals in Finland are now as follows:
 - a. Rabbit
 - b. Mountain hare
 - c. Brown hare
 - d. Red squirrel
 - e. European beaver
 - f. Canadian beaver
 - g. Muskrat
 - h. Nutria
 - i. Farmed arctic fox
 - j. Red fox
 - k. Raccoon dog
 - l. Raccoon
 - m. Badger
 - n. Ermine
 - o. Polecat
 - p. Pine marten
 - q. Mink
 - r. European roe deer
 - s. Wild boar
 - t. White tail deer
 - u. Fallow deer
 - v. Red deer
 - w. Sika deer
 - x. Finnish forest reindeer (we also have separate domestic reindeer – not huntable)
 - y. Mouflon (very rare and small population, exists only on 7 islands on the Finnish south-west coast)
 - z. Birds belonging to game animals (e.g. black grouse, wood grouse, hazel grouse, duck, goose, pheasant etc.)
 - aa. Unprotected animals.

3. More accurate requirements for hunting bow and arrow, according to additional hunting regulations:

- a. Only a bow with minimum draw weight of 180 newtons (180 N) may be used for hunting game animals. This equals roughly to 40,5 lbs draw weight.
- b. The tip of an arrow to be used for shooting small game animal must be “such that an accurate hit is fatal on impact” = suitable hunting tip, no target point.
- c. If a bow and arrow is used for shooting any deer type, wild boar, mouflon, European beaver, Canadian beaver or European roe deer, the arrow must have a cutting tip (broadhead) with a minimum diameter of 22 millimeters.
- d. If a bow and arrow is used for shooting European beaver or Canadian beaver the arrow must be attached to the bow with a fishing line or similar. In practice, this means reel of some sort attached to the bow.
- e. When hunting wild boar, any deer type and mouflon, passing bow shooting test is mandatory.

4. Bow shooting test

- a. The test became mandatory as of 7.8.2017, following the additional shooting test regulations.
- b. Bow shooting certificate is now mandatory if you want to hunt:
 - i. Any type of deer
 - ii. Wild boar
 - iii. Mouflon
 - iv. For European roe deer, there is a transition period. Until the end of 2017, you may hunt European roe deer without the shooting test certificate, but beginning from 1.1.2018 passing shooting test will be mandatory also for this game animal (before the new hunting law 1.8.2017, European roe deer was the biggest game animal legally allowed for bow and arrow and no shooting test was mandatory for any type of game animal).
 - v. Rest of the (small) game animals do not require shooting test certificate.
- c. Bow shooting test:
 - i. Responsibility for arranging bow shooting test is placed on regional game keeping districts. The same game keeping district authorities are responsible for arranging both bow shooting tests and rifle shooting tests.
 - ii. Bow shooting test invitation must be published at least 1 week in advance in the internet on the Finnish Wildlife Agency web page. The bowhunter may shoot the test on any game keeping district and it is valid in the whole country (except for Aland island (Ahvenanmaa) on the south coast).
 - iii. Test fee is 20 € per test.
 - iv. The bowhunter has 180 seconds time to shoot 3 arrows to 23 cm diameter target from distance of 18 m. All 3 arrows must hit the target, or at least break the outer line of the target.
 - v. The shooter may choose the shooting position: standing position, sitting position or kneel down position.
 - vi. The bowhunter may try the test 5 times during one test session. 5 failures in a row means you have to come back another day or drive to another game keeping district for the test, if there is one available during the same day.
 - vii. The draw weight of bow you use in the test must be min. 180 N (40,5 lbs).
 - viii. Test is shot using target points in the arrows (no broadheads). Arrow material, fletching etc. does not matter.
 - ix. The test is relatively easy, at least for bowhunters using compound bow with sights

5. Foreign bowhunters in Finland

- a. Foreign bowhunter will need Finnish hunting license. The bowhunter can get it as follows:
 - i. Foreign bowhunter can hunt in Finland if bowhunter is able to present his or her national hunting license to local Finnish authorities (Game management association) or proof that he/she can hunt the same size game in his/her own country.
 - ii. This local Finnish authority (Game management association) will then grant the Finnish hunting license.
 - iii. This procedure applies to all hunting (rifles and shotguns, too). If bowhunter is not able to present his or her local hunting license copy, the hunter must then pass the Finnish hunting exam.
 - iv. So, some preparation time and a local contact is required for foreign bowhunter.
 - b. Bow shooting test for foreign bowhunters (for big game):
 - i. If bowhunter can present a valid certificate of similar kind of official bow shooting test in his or her home country, it applies also for Finland. In this case Finnish shooting test is not required.
 - ii. Or, if bowhunter can present valid certificate or document that he or she has right to hunt the same game animal in his or her home country, the Finnish shooting test can be skipped.
 - iii. Otherwise, foreign bowhunter must pass Finnish bow shooting test and get the test certificate.
 - c. Documents required from foreign bowhunter
 - i. Copy of bowhunters valid National hunting license
 - ii. Copy of bowhunters valid shooting test certificate for particular game (all deer types, wild boar, mouflon). Or, copy of valid permit of bowhunters permission to hunt e.g. whitetail in the hunter's home country.
 - iii. ID copy (passport usually, or ID card if you are EU citizen)
 - iv. In case of license inspection during a hunting trip, all the documents above must be presented. The police or game wardens sometimes make random inspections.
6. Transporting hunting bow
- a. There are some regulations in the hunting law for transporting the hunting bow outside the area you have hunting permit for. In practice this means e.g. that bow must be transported in a bow case or bag or in the car trunk, out of sight.
7. Bow types
- a. All the legal requirements mentioned above (in the hunting law and in the additional regulations) concern compound bows and traditional bows equally. Crossbow hunting is prohibited by law in Finland (since 1995).
8. Whitetail deer in Finland
- a. White tail is imported species in Finland. First animals were imported to Finland during the early 1930s and released into the wild 1938.
 - b. After that, the population has grown and currently estimated population is 70 000 individuals. The number has roughly doubled during the past 10 years.
 - c. During last season, roughly 26 000 whitetail deer were hunted.
 - d. Population mainly exists in southern parts of Finland. Global warming is benefit for the whitetail, allowing them slowly to spread towards north.
 - e. Appr. 3000 car accidents with white tails are reported annually.
 - f. The trend seems to be to grant more white tail kill permits in the near future.
9. Other:

- a. Whitetail and other big game (except roe deer, mouflon and wildboar) hunting requires permission for killing the game. This is the same for bowhunters and rifle hunters equally. In practice it goes so that local hunting clubs apply for specific amount of kills every year from the Finnish Wildlife Agency. Then, Agency grants kill permits according to previously conducted game animal calculation on the specific area. This granted quota must be met but not exceeded. This is part of game animal quantum regulation, applied for game like white tail, moose, bear, wolf, lynx.
 - i. So, foreign bowhunter should have a local contact in a local hunting club or contact a local outfitter/hunting agency. Some clubs sell their kill permits to allow foreign hunters hunt the deer etc.
- b. By the law, the minimum connected, unified ground area for hunting white tail is 500 hectares. If the connected area is smaller, no kill permits are granted.
 - i. European roe deer, mouflon, wild boar and other small game do not have such minimum area requirements
- c. For all hunting, one needs the permission from the hunting ground owner. Ground owner can be a private person, company or government or combination. It is typical that hunting clubs need to make several contracts with land owners, in order to meet the 500 hectares requirement (for moose the requirement is 1000 hectares).
- d. The same hunting legislation applies to Finland as whole. However, hunting seasons may vary slightly depending on geographical area of Finland. E.g. grouse hunting season is longer on some areas and moose hunting may begin at slightly different time on specific areas. Also, if the game animal numbers are weak some year, there may be temporary protection for specific species in order to revive the population.
- e. It is legal in Finland to fish with bow and arrow.
- f. International certificates like IBEP is not mandatory in Finland.
- g. The estimated number of bowhunters in Finland vary between 15 000 -16 000. Not all belong to clubs so we do not have exact statistics. The trend is growing, especially now after new hunting law became active.

You can find the hunting seasons of various species at www.riista.fi – click English!