ARC 0696D

NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION[571]

Adopted and Filed

Rulemaking related to small game hunting

The Natural Resource Commission (Commission) hereby amends Chapter 96, "Small Game Hunting," Iowa Administrative Code.

Legal Authority for Rulemaking

This rulemaking is adopted under the authority provided in Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39 and 481A.48.

State or Federal Law Implemented

This rulemaking implements, in whole or in part, Iowa Code sections 481A.38, 481A.39 and 481A.48.

Purpose and Summary

Chapter 96 governs small game hunting by residents and nonresidents in Iowa. Specifically, this chapter regulates small game hunting and sets forth season dates, bag limits, possession limits, shooting hours, areas open to hunting, and transportation requirements.

The rule defines annual nonresident small game hunting license parameters and designates resident-only hunting periods on public lands. In more detail, the rule designates a few blocks of time as resident-only for public lands, namely the opening week of the pheasant season and a four-week block in late fall for rabbit, squirrel, and grouse. Importantly, nonresidents visiting Iowa to hunt small game on private land by themselves or with family or friends will not be impacted by this change. The resident-only portions of the rule will only apply on public lands.

The rule will more evenly distribute small game hunting pressure on public land providing for a safer and more enjoyable experience for resident and nonresident hunters alike. Additionally, a typical nonresident hunter spends five days or fewer hunting small game in Iowa annually. The rule provides for up to 14 days of hunting on an annual nonresident license, with the option to purchase multiple annual licenses. In other words, this change allows nonresident small game hunters to visit and hunt in Iowa for more days than they have historically chosen to. Finally, and importantly, the rule does not change the fees for small game hunting licenses for either residents or nonresidents.

Public Comment and Changes to Rulemaking

Notice of Intended Action for this rulemaking was published in the Iowa Administrative Bulletin on September 2, 2026, as **ARC 0548D**. A public hearing was held on the following date(s):

- September 22, 2026

Two people attended the public hearing.

Two hundred and thirty-seven public comments were received. Of the comments received, 131 supported the amendments, 75 opposed, and 31 supported varying parts, but not all, of the changes. Nearly all of the 75 comments opposing the changes came from nonresidents who live a short distance from one of Iowa's borders. These hunters regularly make day trips to hunt in Iowa and expressed frustration at a perceived loss of flexibility. Adopting the changes will temporally spread out the hunters that choose not to purchase additional licenses.

No changes from the Notice have been made.

Adoption of Rulemaking

This rulemaking was adopted by the Commission on October 8, 2026.

Fiscal Impact

This rulemaking has no fiscal impact to the State of Iowa. As noted above, the rule does not change the fees for small game hunting licenses. No change in license sales is expected from this rulemaking. As noted above, this change allows nonresident small game hunters to visit and hunt in Iowa for more days than they have historically chosen to.

Jobs Impact

After analysis and review of this rulemaking, no impact on jobs has been found.

Waivers

Any person who believes that the application of the discretionary provisions of this rulemaking would result in hardship or injustice to that person may petition the Commission for a waiver of the discretionary provisions, if any, pursuant to 7—Chapter 2504.

Review by Administrative Rules Review Committee

The Administrative Rules Review Committee, a bipartisan legislative committee which oversees rulemaking by executive branch agencies, may, on its own motion or on written request by any individual or group, review this rulemaking at its regular monthly meeting or at a special meeting. The Committee's meetings are open to the public, and interested persons may be heard as provided in Iowa Code section 17A.8(6).

Effective Date

This rulemaking will become effective on January 1, 2027.

The following rulemaking action is adopted:

ITEM 1. Adopt the following **new** rule 571—96.10(481A):

571—96.10(481A) Small game hunting by nonresidents.

96.10(1) Small game species for nonresident hunting include pheasant, quail, partridge, grouse, dove, rabbit, and squirrel.

96.10(2) Nonresident small game hunters purchasing a nonresident annual hunting license shall be limited to two 7-day periods totaling not more than 14 days per annual license purchased. Multiple nonresident annual hunting licenses may be purchased.

96.10(3) The two seven-day periods must be designated at the time the annual license is purchased and may be consecutive. The seven-day periods must fall within the season dates defined in rules 571—96.1(481A) through 571—96.4(481A) and this rule, except:

a. Small game hunting by nonresidents is not allowed on public land during the first seven days of the pheasant season as defined in subrule 96.1(1).

b. Rabbit, squirrel, and grouse hunting by nonresidents is not allowed on public land from the third Saturday in October through the third Saturday in November.

96.10(4) A designated period may be changed prior to the beginning date of the period by contacting the department.

96.10(5) The nonresident five-day hunting license may be purchased independently or in conjunction with a nonresident annual hunting license.

[Filed 10/8/26, effective 1/1/27]
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EDITOR'S NOTE: For replacement pages for IAC, see IAC Supplement 10/28/26.