



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

NEWS

FWP Headquarters • 1420 E. 6th Ave. • Helena, MT 59620-0701
Phone: 406-444-2535 • Fax: 406-444-4952 • Website: fwp.mt.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Greg Lemon, 406-444-3051, glemon@mt.gov

FWP takes public comment on new permitting process for training dogs in the open field

A new Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks administrative rule to help clarify an existing statute related to training hunting dogs in the open field around wild game birds is open for public comment.

Montana law prohibits the training of hunting dogs within one mile of nesting birds, wildlife management areas or game preserve without a permit. However, no permitting process is in place and the statute is relatively vague. The proposed rule provides some definition to the existing statute by defining bird nesting areas, open fields and where people can apply for a permit.

The new rule is in response to the recent instances of large-scale dog trainers coming to Montana to train bird hunting dogs on wild birds, often on public land. These trainers are often working with dozens of dogs, follow on horses and are in the field at a time that is problematic for gamebirds – when hen birds are raising their broods.

Flushing coveys of young birds can break up family groups, which can impact bird survival rates and push birds out of their preferred habitat. It can also scatter birds, making them hard to hunt in the fall.

The proposed rule provides clarity for the agency in regard to enforcement of the current statute.

“We’re anxious to see the public comment on this proposed rule,” said Ken McDonald, FWP wildlife division administrator. “We know people have questions about the statute and concerns about how we proceed with enforcing it. This is the first part of a process to better define training, permit criteria, when a permit is needed, and process. The public’s comments are an important part of crafting the best rule we can.”

Comment on the proposed rule must be submitted by June 9. A copy of the rule and a place to [submit comments](#) can be found online at fwp.mt.gov, under news and public notices. Written comments can be submitted attention Mike Lee, PO Box 200701, Helena, MT 59620-0701.

After the comment period closes, the agency will consider comments and make a final decision on the rule this summer.

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