

By: Representative Ishee

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and  
Parks

HOUSE BILL NO. 340

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 REVISE THE SEASONS FOR HUNTING DEER WITH GUNS AND DOGS AND FOR  
3 HUNTING DEER WITH PRIMITIVE WEAPONS WITHOUT DOGS; AND FOR RELATED  
4 PURPOSES.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 49-7-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
7 amended as follows:

8 49-7-31. (1) The open season for game birds and game  
9 animals shall be as follows:

10 (a) On bobwhite quail: The season shall open on  
11 Thanksgiving day and run through the first Saturday in March next  
12 following.

13 (b) On pheasant: There shall be no open season on  
14 pheasant.

15 (c) On wild turkey: The commission shall fix the  
16 spring season between the Saturday nearest March 20 and May 1 in  
17 designated areas. In addition, the commission may fix special  
18 fall either-sex seasons.

19 (d) On squirrel:

20 (i) Zone 1: For areas north of Highway 82 plus  
21 those portions of Sunflower County and Washington County south of  
22 Highway 82 the season shall open on the Saturday nearest October 1  
23 and run through February 28.

24 (ii) Zone 2: For areas between Highway 82 and  
25 Highway 84, plus such portions of the state south of Highway 84  
26 and west of Interstate 55, the season shall open on the Saturday  
27 nearest October 15 and run through February 28.

28 (iii) Zone 3: For areas south of Highway 84 and  
29 east of Interstate 55 the season shall open on the last Saturday  
30 in October and run through February 28.

31 (e) On deer:

32 (i) With bow and arrow: October 1 through the  
33 Friday prior to Thanksgiving.

34 (ii) With guns and with dogs: December 2 through  
35 December 15.

36 (iii) With primitive weapons and without dogs:  
37 From the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving through December 1.

38 (iv) With guns and without dogs: December 16  
39 through December 23. However, the commission may allow hunting  
40 statewide or in specific areas with any legal weapon which it may  
41 designate without dogs after the end of the last season for  
42 hunting deer with guns and with dogs, but the season with legal  
43 designated weapons and without dogs shall not extend beyond  
44 January 31.

45 (v) With guns and with dogs: December 24 through  
46 a date fixed by the commission that will provide a total of  
47 thirty-nine (39) days of hunting deer with guns and with dogs when  
48 added to the number of days provided for hunting deer with guns  
49 and with dogs in paragraph (e)(ii).

50 (vi) When hunting deer during any gun season on  
51 deer, a hunter must wear in full view five hundred (500) square  
52 inches of solid unbroken fluorescent orange.

53 (vii) In order to set and regulate the deer  
54 seasons, the commission may:

55 A. Set and regulate the deer seasons on  
56 wildlife management areas which it administers;

57 B. Allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in  
58 the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive  
59 director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and  
60 research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is

61 necessary to properly manage the herd. The commission, only upon  
62 the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the  
63 harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and  
64 with dogs by a majority vote of the commission. Nothing in this  
65 section prohibits the harvesting of either sex deer by landowners  
66 or leaseholders on private lands under a deer management program  
67 prescribed or approved by the executive director.

68 C. Provide a special permit for the  
69 harvesting of deer when they are depredating and destroying crops.  
70 The department shall supervise the harvesting and provide for the  
71 salvaging of the meat of the animals. The commission may  
72 authorize the department to assist any farmer in this state, who  
73 sustains crop damage by wildlife, in eradication of the problem  
74 wildlife.

75 (viii) The commission shall establish a special  
76 hunting season for youth under the age of sixteen (16) and for  
77 handicapped persons in the Natchez State Park. The commission  
78 shall also establish a primitive weapon season in the Natchez  
79 State Park. The selection of participants in the primitive weapon  
80 season shall be by public drawing from all qualified applications.  
81 The commission shall set the number of permits to be issued and  
82 the length of the special seasons. The commission may also  
83 establish a special hunting season for youth and handicapped  
84 persons or a primitive weapon season as provided in this  
85 subparagraph in any other state park under the jurisdiction of the  
86 department but shall only do so upon the recommendation of the  
87 staff of the department as approved by the commission. The  
88 commission shall select participants and set the number of permits  
89 to be issued and the length of the special seasons in the manner  
90 provided in this subparagraph.

91 (ix) The commission may establish and regulate  
92 special youth hunts for all nonmigratory game birds and animals

93 outside of the open season on wildlife management areas and on  
94 private lands.

95 (f) On fur-bearing animals: The commission may fix the  
96 open season on fur-bearing animals between November 1 and March 1  
97 next following and fix the open season for hunting opossums,  
98 raccoons and bobcats with dogs and guns by licensed hunters from  
99 October 1 to February 28 next following; but raccoons and bobcats  
100 may be run, hunted, chased or pursued throughout the year with  
101 dogs by licensed hunters. The commission may establish an  
102 additional open season on raccoon from July 1 through October 1,  
103 and the bag limit on raccoon during the additional open season  
104 shall be one (1) per party, per night.

105 (g) On rabbits: The season shall open on the Saturday  
106 nearest October 15 and run through February 28 next following, and  
107 when rabbits are depredating or destroying crops, the owner of the  
108 crops or his tenants may shoot the rabbits with guns.

109 (h) On predatory animals: The hunting of predatory  
110 animals shall be restricted to the open seasons for hunting any  
111 game animal or game bird, using only the firearms, ammunition,  
112 primitive weapons or archery equipment legal for use during that  
113 open season. Landowners, agricultural leaseholders or their  
114 designated agents may take predatory animals year-round on lands  
115 owned or leased by them. The taking of any animal or animals  
116 other than beavers or coyote by the use of a trap or traps is  
117 unlawful except during the time the season is open for the taking  
118 of fur-bearing animals. Fox and coyote may be run, chased or  
119 pursued with dogs except as provided in Section 49-7-32 year-round  
120 by licensed hunters.

121 (i) On migratory birds: The open season for migratory  
122 birds shall be the season prescribed by the Federal Migratory Bird  
123 Treaty regulations.

124           (j) It is unlawful to trap fox after the closed season  
125 for trapping of other fur-bearing animals, except on property  
126 owned or leased by the person trapping.

127           (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that the open season  
128 for game birds and game animals shall be stabilized unless some  
129 unforeseen calamity affecting the resource necessitates earlier  
130 change.

131           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
132 and after July 1, 2004.