

By: Representatives Parker, Lott, Bentz, Broomfield, Dedeaux, Fillingane, Frierson, Guice, Hamilton (109th), Ishee, Patterson, Pierce, Read, Shows, Staples, Taylor, Wells-Smith, Zuber, Upshaw

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE  
FOR  
HOUSE BILL NO. 887

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 49-7-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972, TO  
2 ESTABLISH SEPARATE DEER HUNTING SEASONS ON PUBLIC OR PRIVATE  
3 LANDS, EXCEPT WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREAS, WITHIN A SPECIFIED ZONE  
4 IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THE STATE AND RESTRICT THE MINIMUM  
5 INSIDE SPREAD OR MAIN BEAM LENGTH OF ANTLERS FOR LEGAL BUCKS THAT  
6 MAY BE TAKEN; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

10 49-7-31. (1) The open season for game birds and game  
11 animals shall be as follows:

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

15 (b) On pheasant: There shall be no open season on  
16 pheasant.

17 (c) On wild turkey: The commission may fix the spring  
18 season between March 1 and May 15. In addition, the commission  
19 may fix special fall either-sex seasons.

20 (d) On squirrel:

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

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

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

32 (e) (i) On deer (except as provided in subparagraph  
33 (ii) of this paragraph (e)):

34 A. With bow and arrow: October 1 through the  
35 Friday prior to Thanksgiving.

36 B. With guns and with dogs: From the  
37 Saturday prior to Thanksgiving through December 1.

38 C. With primitive weapons and without dogs:  
39 December 2 through December 15.

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

47 E. With guns and with dogs: December 24  
48 through a date fixed by the commission that will provide a total  
49 of thirty-nine (39) days of hunting deer with guns and with dogs  
50 when added to the number of days provided for hunting deer with  
51 guns and with dogs in subparagraph (i)B. of this paragraph (e).

52 (ii) On deer (on public or private lands, except  
53 wildlife management areas, south of U.S. Highway 84 and east of  
54 Mississippi Highway 35):

55 A. With bow and arrow: Legal bucks from  
56 October 15 through October 31.

57 B. With bow and arrow: Legal bucks and  
58 antlerless deer from November 1 through the Friday before  
59 Thanksgiving.

60 C. With guns and with dogs: Legal bucks and  
61 antlerless deer from the Saturday before Thanksgiving through the  
62 Saturday following Thanksgiving.

63 D. With primitive weapons and without dogs:  
64 Legal bucks and antlerless deer from the Sunday following  
65 Thanksgiving through December 15.

66 E. With guns and without dogs: Legal bucks  
67 from December 16 through December 22.

68 F. With guns and with dogs: Legal bucks from  
69 December 23 through a date fixed by the commission that will  
70 provide a total of thirty-nine (39) days of hunting deer with guns  
71 and with dogs when added to the number of days provided for  
72 hunting deer with guns and with dogs in subparagraph (ii)C. of  
73 this paragraph (e).

74 G. With guns and without dogs: Legal bucks  
75 beginning after the end of the last season for hunting deer with  
76 guns and with dogs through January 31.

77 H. With primitive weapons/bow and arrow and  
78 without dogs: Legal bucks from February 1 through February 15.

79 For the purposes of subparagraph (ii) of this paragraph (e)  
80 the term "legal buck" means a deer with antlers of four (4) points  
81 or greater having a minimum inside spread of ten (10) inches or a  
82 minimum main beam length of thirteen (13) inches.

83 (iii) When hunting deer during any gun season on  
84 deer, a hunter must wear in full view five hundred (500) square  
85 inches of solid unbroken fluorescent orange.

86 (iv) In order to set and regulate the deer  
87 seasons, the commission may:

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

90 B. Allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in  
91 the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive  
92 director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and

93 research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is  
94 necessary to properly manage the herd. The commission, only upon  
95 the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the  
96 harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and  
97 with dogs by a majority vote of the commission. Nothing in this  
98 section prohibits the harvesting of either-sex deer by landowners  
99 or leaseholders on private lands under a deer management program  
100 prescribed or approved by the executive director.

101 C. Provide a special permit for the  
102 harvesting of deer when they are depredating and destroying crops.  
103 The department shall supervise the harvesting and provide for the  
104 salvaging of the meat of the animals. The commission may  
105 authorize the department to assist any farmer in this state, who  
106 sustains crop damage by wildlife, in eradication of the problem  
107 wildlife.

108 (v) The commission shall establish a special  
109 hunting season for youth under the age of sixteen (16) and for  
110 handicapped persons in the Natchez State Park. The commission  
111 shall also establish a primitive weapon season in the Natchez  
112 State Park. The selection of participants in the primitive weapon  
113 season shall be by public drawing from all qualified applications.  
114 The commission shall set the number of permits to be issued and  
115 the length of the special seasons. The commission may also  
116 establish a special hunting season for youth and handicapped  
117 persons or a primitive weapon season as provided in this  
118 subparagraph in any other state park under the jurisdiction of the  
119 department but shall only do so upon the recommendation of the  
120 staff of the department as approved by the commission. The  
121 commission shall select participants and set the number of permits  
122 to be issued and the length of the special seasons in the manner  
123 provided in this subparagraph.

124 (vi) The commission may establish and regulate  
125 special youth hunts for all nonmigratory game birds and animals

126 outside of the open season on wildlife management areas and on  
127 private lands.

128 (f) On fur-bearing animals: The commission may fix the  
129 open season on fur-bearing animals between November 1 and March 1  
130 next following and fix the open season for hunting opossums,  
131 raccoons and bobcats with dogs and guns by licensed hunters from  
132 October 1 to February 28 next following; but raccoons and bobcats  
133 may be run, hunted, chased or pursued throughout the year with  
134 dogs by licensed hunters. The commission may establish an  
135 additional open season on raccoon from July 1 through October 1,  
136 and the bag limit on raccoon during the additional open season  
137 shall be one (1) per party, per night.

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

142 (h) On predatory animals: The hunting of predatory  
143 animals shall be restricted to the open seasons for hunting any  
144 game animal or game bird, using only the firearms, ammunition,  
145 primitive weapons or archery equipment legal for use during that  
146 open season. Landowners, agricultural leaseholders or their  
147 designated agents may take predatory animals year-round on lands  
148 owned or leased by them. The taking of any animal or animals  
149 other than beavers or coyote by the use of a trap or traps is  
150 unlawful except during the time the season is open for the taking  
151 of fur-bearing animals. Fox and coyote may be run, chased or  
152 pursued with dogs except as provided in Section 49-7-32 year-round  
153 by licensed hunters.

154 (i) On migratory birds: The open season for migratory  
155 birds shall be the season prescribed by the Federal Migratory Bird  
156 Treaty regulations.

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

160           (2) It is the intent of the Legislature that the open season  
161 for game birds and game animals shall be stabilized unless some  
162 unforeseen calamity affecting the resource necessitates earlier  
163 change.

164           **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
165 and after July 1, 2005.