

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

To: Wildlife, Fisheries and Parks

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 PRIVATE LANDS WITHIN A  
3 SPECIFIED ZONE IN THE SOUTHEASTERN PART OF THE STATE AND RESTRICT  
4 THE MINIMUM INSIDE SPREAD OR MAIN BEAM LENGTH OF ANTLERS FOR LEGAL  
5 BUCKS THAT MAY BE TAKEN; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

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

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

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

16 (c) On wild turkey: The commission may fix the spring  
17 season between March 1 and May 15. In addition, the commission  
18 may fix special 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) (i) On deer (except as provided in subparagraph  
32 (ii) of this paragraph (e)):

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

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

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

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

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

51 (ii) On deer (On private lands only south of U.S.  
52 Highway 84 and east of Mississippi Highway 35):

53 A. With bow and arrow: Legal bucks from  
54 October 15 through October 31.

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

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

61 D. With primitive weapons and without dogs:  
62 Legal bucks and antlerless deer from December 2 through December  
63 15.

64 E. With guns and without dogs: Legal bucks  
65 from December 16 through December 23.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

89 B. Allow the harvesting of antlerless deer in  
90 the districts or zones upon the recommendation of the executive  
91 director based upon good and substantial quantitative data and  
92 research evaluations that demonstrate that the harvesting is  
93 necessary to properly manage the herd. The commission, only upon

94 the recommendation of the executive director, may allow the  
95 harvesting of antlerless deer during the deer season with guns and  
96 with dogs by a majority vote of the commission. Nothing in this  
97 section prohibits the harvesting of either-sex deer by landowners  
98 or leaseholders on private lands under a deer management program  
99 prescribed or approved by the executive director.

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

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

123 (vi) The commission may establish and regulate  
124 special youth hunts for all nonmigratory game birds and animals  
125 outside of the open season on wildlife management areas and on  
126 private lands.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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