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SENATE BILL NO. 770

Offered January 22, 2026

A BILL to amend and reenact § 29.1-516 of the Code of Virginia and to amend the Code of Virginia by adding sections numbered 29.1-513.1 and 29.1-513.2, relating to Board of Wildlife Resources; early special deer muzzleloading season; hunting with dogs.

Patron—Reeves

Referred to Committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Natural Resources

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

1. That § 29.1-516 of the Code of Virginia is amended and reenacted and that the Code of Virginia is amended by adding sections numbered 29.1-513.1 and 29.1-513.2 as follows:

§ 29.1-513.1. Early special deer muzzleloading season.

The Board shall prescribe an early muzzleloading season to hunt deer that shall be no less than three weeks in duration.

§ 29.1-513.2. Hunting with dogs prohibited following early special deer muzzleloading season.

A. No person shall hunt any game or nuisance species with dogs during the three-week period following the early special deer muzzleloading season prescribed by the Board pursuant to § 29.1-513.1.

B. The provisions of this section shall not apply to the use of tracking dogs to retrieve a wounded or dead bear, turkey, or deer pursuant to § 29.1-516.1.

§ 29.1-516. Game animals.

The following provisions shall apply to the killing and hunting of the particular game animals listed:

Black bear. -- A black bear may be killed by any person when (i) it is inflicting or attempting to inflict injury to a person or (ii) when a person is in pursuit of the bear commenced immediately after the commission of such offense. Any person killing a bear under this provision shall immediately report the killing to a state conservation police officer.

Deer. -- It is unlawful for a person to kill or attempt to kill a deer in the water of any stream, lake, or pond. It is unlawful to hunt deer with dogs in the counties west of the Blue Ridge Mountains.

Fox. -- There is a continuous open season for hunting with dogs only, except for the three-week period pursuant to § 29.1-513.2. The hunting or pursuit of foxes shall mean the actual following of the dogs while in pursuit of a fox or foxes or the managing of the dog or dogs, including by the use of a Global Positioning System (GPS) or other electronic tracking device, while the fox or foxes are being hunted or pursued. Nothing in this section shall preclude the managing of dogs by the use of a GPS or other electronic tracking device by hunters when hunting other game animals. Foxes may be killed at any time by the owner or tenant of any land when such animals are doing damage to domestic stock or fowl.

Rabbits and squirrels. -- It is unlawful to kill rabbits or squirrels during the closed season; however, the following persons may kill rabbits or squirrels for their own use during the closed season:

1. A landowner and members of his immediate family;
2. Resident members of hunt clubs who own the land in fee, either jointly or through a holding company;
3. Tenants residing on the premises, with the written permission of the landowner.

When such animals are committing substantial damage to fruit trees, gardens, crops, or other property, the owner of the premises may kill the animals or have them killed under a permit obtained from the conservation police officer.