



Report Back

On Possible Statutory Changes to Facilitate Electronic Turkey

**Report to the 131st Joint Standing
Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife**

Provided by Inland Fisheries & Wildlife

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Directive to Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

After the passage of Public Law Chapter 704 the Department went through a rulemaking process in the summer of 2022 to enable electronic registration of turkey, which is set to begin in spring of 2023. As part of this law the Legislature gave the Department the ability to request statutory proposals in 2023 if there was a need. The Department was able to make the changes necessary in rule, so we are not requesting statutory changes related to electronic turkey tagging.

Further information below provides the law and directive to the Department and the new rule language that was implemented.

PUBLIC LAW 2022 CHAPTER 704 –An Act Related to the Electronic Registration and Tagging of Turkey
(Effective: August 8, 2022)

- It requires IFW to report to the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over IFW matters by November 2, 2022 on additional statutory changes needed in order to facilitate the electronic tagging of turkey. It authorizes the committee to report out a bill related to electronic tagging to the First Regular Session of the 131st Legislature.
- It directed IFW to adopt rules allowing for the electronic registration of turkey beginning in 2023.
- It provided one-time funding for the capture and banding of turkeys and for a hunter survey to prevent loss of important wildlife management information with the implementation of electronic registration and tagging of turkey.

New Rules Related to Electronic Tagging of Turkey

In accordance with Public Law 2022 Chapter 704, the rule changes that were made within Chapter 16 Hunting are to allow hunters, beginning with the Spring 2023 wild turkey hunting season, to register wild turkeys electronically. Hunters will be required to attach a tag bearing the seal number issued by the electronic registration system, until the turkey is processed and packaged for consumption. The rule also clarifies that if a wild turkey is registered electronically, all radio transmitters must be submitted to the Department within 5 days.

Much of the change needed to implement electronic registration is within Department programs and procedures, therefore there were few changes required in rule. The changes are highlighted below.

16.06 Registration, Data Collection and Tagging of Big Game and Furbearing Animals

1. Data Collection; Mandatory Submission of Radio Transmitters, Collars, Ear or Wing Tags & Tooth Submission

D. Turkey: Mandatory Submission of Radio Transmitters, Leg Bands, and Wing Tags

All radio transmitters, leg bands, and wing tags must be submitted reported to the Department at the time the wild turkey is presented for registration or registered electronically. All radio transmitters must be submitted, or arranged for submission, to the Department within 5 days. Any leg bands or wing tags can be retained by the hunter after reporting and following approval by the Department.

2. Registration of Animals taken by hunting

A. Wild Turkey: In accordance with 12 M.R.S. §12301-B and §12302-A, all wild turkey must be presented for registration at the first open registration station for that species of big game on the route taken by the person who killed the big game animal, or registered electronically.

(1) If a wild turkey is registered electronically, upon registration the hunter must immediately attach a tag bearing the seal number issued by the electronic registration system. This tag must remain attached to the turkey until it is processed and packaged for consumption, pursuant to 12 M.R.S. §12302-A.

Update on Capture and Banding of Turkeys

Department staff have begun a significant wild turkey capture and banding effort across several areas of the state. Captures will be completed by late winter 2023, and the harvest ratio of banded turkeys during the spring 2023 hunting season will be used to determine hunter compliance with registration requirements. This will help the Department determine the implications of electronic tagging for our wild turkey population model and harvest management system.