

No cougar hunting during deer season in six counties

Local News

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OLYMPIA - Cougar hunting will be closed in six Washington counties during the statewide deer-hunting season that begins Oct. 17, according to a reminder issued today by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Under a new rule approved earlier this year, no cougars may be taken during the early deer-hunting season in the six counties where a pilot hunt for cougars using dogs is scheduled to begin later this year.

The new rule delays the general cougar hunt with modern firearms until Oct. 31 in Chelan, Okanogan, Ferry, Stevens, Pend Oreille and Klickitat counties. In all other counties, the modern-firearms season for cougar will begin Oct. 17, along with early deer seasons.

Donny Martorello, carnivore manager for WDFW, said delaying the general cougar hunt in the six affected counties is designed to help biologists evaluate the pros and cons of using dogs in hunts designed to manage the state's cougar population.

"Deer hunters take cougars under different circumstances than hunters specifically pursuing cougars with the use of dogs," Martorello said. "We need clear information on the effects of those strategies on the cougar population as we develop future hunting seasons."

Martorello said the department is taking extra steps to inform hunters of the new rules - including direct email communications with those who have hunted for cougars during deer season in any of the six affected counties.

"This is the first time in a dozen years that the cougar season hasn't overlapped with the deer season in those counties, so it's a big change," he said. "We want to do everything we can to make sure hunters know about it."

The pilot hunt for cougars with the use of dogs is scheduled to run from Dec. 19 through March 31 in all six counties affected by the new rule.

Information about all of this year's big-game hunting seasons is available in WDFW's Big Game Hunting Seasons and Regulations pamphlet, available online at <http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/game/hunter/hunter.htm> .