

Game Seal Modernization

The use of game seals, also known as tags, is a practice used across Canada and the United States as an allocation, verification, enforcement, and communications tool. Currently, game species that require a game seal to be affixed to the harvested game by a licensed hunter include moose, deer, elk, bear, wolf/coyote (in some areas), and wild turkey.

As part of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry's (MNRF) ongoing commitment to enhance service delivery, regulatory and policy changes to game seals are being considered. The changes would transform the way that game seals or tags are used, how they function and how clients receive them.

Key Proposed Changes

- Clients would print their tag from their own home computer or obtain their tag from one of the 900 licence issuers or 66 ServiceOntario locations who offer MNRF services across the province.
- Tags would be available in the new licensing system for each hunter according to their purchased licences and tags, as well as results for big game draws.
- The Ministry would build in a number of security features into the system to ensure the security of printed tags (see below).
- Hunters would continue to be required to carry their relevant tags when hunting and would need to complete or notch the tag at the time of harvest.
- Hunters would need to attach the tag to the harvested animal only if they were no longer accompanying the animal (e.g. transferring the animal to another person, leaving the animal unattended at a hunt camp, etc.).
- The client would be required to ensure their tag remains intact and readable for compliance and field enforcement purposes. There are a number of products for holding tags – similar to luggage tags – that are available to hunters to assist with protecting their printed tag when it is attached to a harvested animal.

The Ministry is committed to ensuring effective and efficient wildlife management to support ongoing sustainable harvest. The Ministry will provide oversight and checks and balances in the new licensing system. Options that are being explored include:

- Control over the number of times a client may print a document (licence or licence tag), and an audit trail/record of all transactions,
- Digitally-coded documents and tags to provide enforcement officers immediate access to details of each hunter's licences and tags while in the field, and
- Printed watermarks and digitally-encoded information to enhance document security and validation.

Potential Path Forward

The proposed changes are expected to improve client service and modernize service delivery related to the issuance of game tags. For example, they would allow a client to get their tag immediately without visiting a licence issuer, to get all services online, and would reduce reliance on postal services. The changes would also improve consistency, modernize hunting for the future, and reduce financial pressure on the fish and wildlife program and allow repurposing of those savings to other areas within the fish and wildlife program.

The Ministry will continue to work with stakeholders to gather additional input on a number of details associated with this proposed system, including under which circumstances hunters would be required to attach the tag, considerations for size and content of the tag, and possible activities to encourage communication and compliance during transition from Ontario's existing game seal approach to the proposed new tag system.