

# Dove Hunting

## Dove Hunting 101: What to Know Before You Go

Iowa's first new hunting season since turkey season was added in the 1970s, dove season is expected to attract about 20,000 resident hunters when it opens Sept. 1.

Hunters may use lead shot unless they are hunting on a Wildlife Management Area that requires nontoxic shot to hunt all species except deer or turkey, listed on p. 16 of the 2011-12 Iowa Hunting and Trapping Regulations. Hunting regulations can be found online.

Since mourning doves are listed as a migratory game bird, hunters must register with the Harvest Information Program (HIP) before hunting. Dove hunters can register with HIP when they buy their small game hunting license or by calling 1-855-242-3683 or by going to [https://jc.activeoutdoorsolutions.com/ia\\_customer/app/goHome.do](https://jc.activeoutdoorsolutions.com/ia_customer/app/goHome.do) to register.

The Iowa DNR has a webpage with resources and laws covering dove hunting at:

<http://www.iowadnr.gov/Hunting/MigratoryGameBirds/MourningDoves.aspx>

### Dove Hunting

Season: Sept. 1 – Nov. 9

Shooting Hours: One-half hour before sunrise to sunset

License requirements: Small game license and habitat fee. The federal and state migratory game bird fee is not required to hunt doves in Iowa.

Federal Migratory Game Law Requirements: Hunters must register with the Harvest Information Program (HIP) before hunting doves. Shotguns must be plugged to hold no more than three shells; hunters cannot use live birds as decoys, or recorded or electronically amplified bird calls, imitations or sounds. There is no hunting over baited fields.

Bag Limits: Daily limit of 15 and possession limit of 30

Where to hunt: Mourning doves prefer feeding on open ground and eat a variety of seeds and grains. Look for doves near low-standing or harvested crops mixed with bare soil areas or along field edges; near pastures, recently mowed native grasses or hayfields, sunflower fields or

newly seeded CRP lands with areas of bare or open ground and near watering holes with bare shorelines.

Many DNR wildlife management areas have established plantings that will attract doves. A list is available at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov) under the "Hunting" tab.

Gun Choice: Any gauge or type of shotgun will work well, but 20 and 12 gauges are most popular. An open to moderate choke will increase a shooter's chance of success. Shots are typically 35 yards or less.

Ammo Choice: The preferred loads are #7-1/2 or #8 in lead shot or #7 or #6 in nontoxic shot. There are a number of wildlife management areas that require nontoxic shot for hunting all species except deer and turkey. Those areas are listed on p. 16 in the 2011-12 Iowa Hunting and Trapping Regulations.

Hunting Tips: Doves are more active in mornings and evenings and this is often the best time to hunt. Set up along a fencerow or other cover near food sources or water, wear camouflage and bring a bucket to sit on and to carry gear and doves.