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MDC Encourages Turkey Hunters to Think Safety While Hunting This Spring

APRIL 17TH 2018 BY DEE LOFLIN

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*MDC encourages turkey hunters to think safety while hunting this spring
Be aware of all surroundings while hunting this time of year because the woods are full of outdoor enthusiasts.*

The Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC) encourages hunters to think safety while in the woods turkey hunting. Youth spring turkey hunting season is April 7-8 and regular spring turkey hunting season begins April 16 and runs through May 6. Shooting hours for regular turkey season are from a half hour before sunrise to 1 p.m.

MDC Protection Field Chief Randy Doman stresses that the most common cause of a turkey hunting incident is a hunter being mistaken for game.

“Each year, most turkey hunting incidents involve hunters who shoot at sound, color, or movement,” Doman said. “It’s very important to always identify your target and know what’s beyond it before aiming the gun at it and squeezing the trigger.”

The popular fad of fanning turkeys is catching on and could be dangerous. The fanning technique involves someone hiding behind a turkey fan of tail feathers and moving it around to attract other turkeys.

“The fanning technique is not recommended because you could potentially be mistaken for a gobbler and become a victim of a hunting incident,” MDC Hunter Education and Shooting Coordinator Kyle Lairmore said.

Lairmore encourages turkey hunters to wear hunter orange while moving throughout the woods.

“Wearing hunter orange lets other hunters know that you’re in the area,” he said. “It’s also important to remember to never carry a harvested turkey in the open. Be sure to cover them with a hunter orange vest or put them in a game bag.”

Lairmore added anyone in the woods during turkey hunting season should also wear hunter orange.

“This time of year we also have mushroom hunters, hikers, birders, and others sharing the woods with turkey hunters,” he said. “It is a good safety measure for these other outdoor enthusiasts to make themselves clearly visible to hunters.”

MDC also offers the following safety tips for spring turkey hunting:

Identify a turkey’s head and beard before aiming.

Never shoot at sound or movement. Assume it is another hunter until you can clearly see a turkey’s head or beard.

Wear hunter orange when walking through the woods.

Use hunter orange to identify your hunting location.

Wrap a bagged turkey or decoy in hunter orange when transporting it.

Dress defensively. Never wear red, white, blue, or black clothing because it resembles a turkey.

Be sure of your target and what lies beyond.

Never follow the sound of a gobbling turkey or attempt to sneak up on turkeys. Always call turkeys to you.

Sit against a large tree or other natural barrier to shield yourself from hunters approaching from the rear.

Shout “STOP” when another hunter approaches. Don’t move, wave, whistle, or make turkey calls to get their attention.

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