

## LEGISLATIVE BILL 126

Approved by the Governor August 17, 2020

Introduced by Hughes, 44.

A BILL FOR AN ACT relating to the Game Law; to amend section 37-455, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2019; to provide for additional limited landowner deer hunting permits as prescribed; and to repeal the original section.  
Be it enacted by the people of the State of Nebraska,

Section 1. Section 37-455, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2019, is amended to read:

37-455 (1) The commission may issue a limited permit for deer, antelope, wild turkey, or elk to a person who is a qualifying landowner or leaseholder or a member of such person's immediate family as described in this section. The commission may issue nonresident landowner limited permits after preference has been given for the issuance of resident permits as provided in rules and regulations adopted and promulgated by the commission. Except as provided in subsection (4) of this section, a permit shall be valid during the predetermined period established by the commission pursuant to sections 37-447 to 37-450, 37-452, 37-456, or 37-457. Upon receipt of an application in proper form as prescribed by the rules and regulations of the commission, the commission may issue (a) a limited deer, antelope, or wild turkey permit valid for hunting on all of the land which is owned or leased by the qualifying landowner or leaseholder if such lands are identified in the application or (b) a limited elk permit valid for hunting on the entire elk management unit of which the land of the qualifying landowner or leaseholder included in the application is a part.

(2)(a) The commission shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations prescribing procedures and forms and create requirements for documentation by an applicant or permittee to determine whether the applicant or permittee is a Nebraska resident and is a qualifying landowner or leaseholder of the described property or is a member of the immediate family of such qualifying landowner or leaseholder. The commission may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations that create requirements for documentation to designate one qualifying landowner among partners of a partnership or officers or shareholders of a corporation that owns or leases eighty acres or more of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes and among beneficiaries of a trust that owns or leases eighty acres or more of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes. Only a person who is a qualifying landowner or leaseholder or a member of such person's immediate family may apply for a limited permit. An applicant may apply for no more than one permit per species per year except as otherwise provided in subsection (4) of this section and the rules and regulations of the commission. For purposes of this section, member of a person's immediate family means and is limited to the spouse of such person, any child or stepchild of such person or of the spouse of such person, any spouse of any such child or stepchild, any sibling of such person sharing ownership in the property, and any spouse of any such sibling.

(b) The conditions applicable to permits issued pursuant to sections 37-447 to 37-450, 37-452, 37-456, or 37-457, whichever is appropriate, shall apply to limited permits issued pursuant to this section, except that the commission may pass commission orders for species harvest allocation pertaining to the sex and age of the species harvested which are different for a limited permit than for other hunting permits. For purposes of this section, white-tailed deer and mule deer shall be treated as one species.

(3)(a) To qualify for a limited permit to hunt deer or antelope, the applicant shall be a Nebraska resident who (i) owns or leases eighty acres or more of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes or a member of such person's immediate family or (ii) is the partner, officer, shareholder, or beneficiary designated as the qualifying landowner by a partnership, corporation, or trust as provided in the rules and regulations under subdivision (2)(a) of this section or a member of the immediate family of the partner, officer, shareholder, or beneficiary. The number of limited permits issued annually per species for each farm or ranch shall not exceed the total acreage of the farm or ranch divided by eighty. The fee for a limited permit to hunt deer or antelope shall be one-half the fee for the regular permit for such species.

(b) A nonresident of Nebraska who owns three hundred twenty acres or more of farm or ranch land in the State of Nebraska for agricultural purposes or a member of such person's immediate family may apply for a limited deer or antelope permit. The number of limited permits issued annually per species for each farm or ranch shall not exceed the total acreage of the farm or ranch divided by three hundred twenty. The fee for such a permit to hunt deer or antelope shall be one-half the fee for a nonresident permit to hunt such species.

(c) The commission may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations providing for the issuance of an additional limited deer permit to a qualified individual for the taking of a deer without antlers at a fee equal to or less

than the fee for the original limited permit.

(4)(a) In addition to any limited permit to hunt deer issued to a qualifying landowner under subsection (3) of this section, the commission shall issue up to four limited permits to hunt deer during the three days of Saturday through Monday immediately preceding the opening day of firearm deer hunting season to any qualifying landowner meeting the requirements of subdivision (b) of this subsection and designated members of his or her immediate family. The fee for each permit issued under this subsection shall be five dollars. Permits shall be issued subject to the following:

(i) No more than four permits may be issued per qualifying landowner to the landowner or designated members of his or her immediate family, except that no more than one permit shall be issued per person for the qualifying landowner or any designated member of his or her immediate family;

(ii) Of the four permits that may be issued, no more than two permits may be issued to persons who are younger than nineteen years of age and no more than two permits may be issued to persons who are nineteen years of age or older; and

(iii) For a Nebraska resident landowner, the number of permits issued shall not exceed the total acreage of the farm or ranch divided by eighty, and for a nonresident landowner, the number of permits issued shall not exceed the total acreage of the farm or ranch divided by three hundred twenty.

(b) For purposes of this subsection, the qualifying criteria for a Nebraska resident described in subdivisions (3)(a)(i) and (ii) of this section and the ownership criteria for a nonresident of Nebraska described in subdivision (3)(b) of this section apply.

(c) The commission may adopt and promulgate rules and regulations to carry out this subsection.

(5)(a) (4)(a) To qualify for a limited permit to hunt wild turkey, the applicant shall be a Nebraska resident who (i) owns or leases eighty acres or more of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes or a member of such person's immediate family or (ii) is the partner, officer, shareholder, or beneficiary designated as the qualifying landowner by a partnership, corporation, or trust as provided in the rules and regulations under subdivision (2)(a) of this section or a member of the immediate family of the partner, officer, shareholder, or beneficiary. The number of limited permits issued annually per season for each farm or ranch shall not exceed the total acreage of the farm or ranch divided by eighty. An applicant may apply for no more than one limited permit per season. The fee for a limited permit to hunt wild turkey shall be one-half the fee for the regular permit to hunt wild turkey.

(b) A nonresident of Nebraska who owns three hundred twenty acres or more of farm or ranch land in the State of Nebraska for agricultural purposes or a member of such person's immediate family may apply for a limited permit to hunt wild turkey. Only one limited wild turkey permit per three hundred twenty acres may be issued annually for each wild turkey season under this subdivision. The fee for such a permit to hunt shall be one-half the fee for a nonresident permit to hunt wild turkey.

(6) (5) To qualify for a limited permit to hunt elk, (a) the applicant shall be (i) a Nebraska resident who owns three hundred twenty acres or more of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes, (ii) a Nebraska resident who leases six hundred forty acres or more of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes or has a leasehold interest and an ownership interest in farm or ranch land used for agricultural purposes which when added together totals at least six hundred forty acres, (iii) a nonresident of Nebraska who owns at least one thousand two hundred eighty acres of farm or ranch land for agricultural purposes, or (iv) a member of such owner's or lessee's immediate family and (b) the qualifying farm or ranch land of the applicant shall be within an area designated as an elk management zone by the commission in its rules and regulations. An applicant shall not be issued a limited bull elk permit more than once every three years, and the commission may give preference to a person who did not receive a limited elk permit or a specified type of limited elk permit during the previous years. The fee for a resident landowner limited permit to hunt elk shall not exceed one-half the fee for the regular permit to hunt elk. The fee for a nonresident landowner limited permit to hunt elk shall not exceed three times the cost of a resident elk permit. The number of applications allowed for limited elk permits for each farm or ranch shall not exceed the total acreage of the farm or ranch divided by the minimum acreage requirements established for the property. No more than one person may qualify for the same described property.

Sec. 2. Original section 37-455, Revised Statutes Supplement, 2019, is repealed.