



GEORGIA

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

WILDLIFE RESOURCES DIVISION

DOVE HUNTING AND AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES IN GEORGIA INFORMATION FOR HUNTERS AND LANDOWNERS

ABOUT THE MOURNING DOVE

The mourning dove is the most hunted migratory game bird in Georgia. Federal and state laws prohibit hunting migratory game birds over baited areas. What constitutes baiting for mourning doves occasionally has been a source of confusion for hunters, farmers and land managers. The Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division (WRD), in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the University of Georgia (UGA) Cooperative Extension Service, developed this information in an effort to clarify agricultural practices as they relate to baiting. This information also provides tips and strategies for successfully and legally attracting mourning doves.

A "normal" practice or operation is one conducted in accordance with official recommendations of state Extension Specialists of the Cooperative Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In Georgia, these are the UGA Cooperative Extension Service Agronomists, NOT the county extension agent.

Agricultural lands often provide excellent dove hunting opportunities. **The key to hunting doves legally in Georgia is understanding the differences between "baiting" and "normal agricultural operation."**

BAITING

Baiting is the practice of direct or indirect placing, exposing, depositing, distributing, or scattering salt, corn, wheat, or any other grain or feed that could serve as a lure or attraction for doves to, on, or over any areas where hunters are attempting to take them. Dove hunting regulations are part of the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Hunting doves over baited areas is illegal. A person is guilty of hunting over bait if he or she knows, or reasonably should know, that an area was baited.

Furthermore, the person who places bait, or directs the placement of bait, on or near a hunted area, is guilty of baiting. Any baited area remains baited for 10 days following the complete removal of any salt, corn, wheat or any other grain or feed which constitutes bait. Dove hunting over or near a baited area at any time within 10 days after the bait is completely removed is a violation.

LEGAL PRACTICES

Fields Planted in Spring or Early Summer

Hunting doves over manipulated fields that were planted in the spring or in the early summer is a legal activity, and by far the most common situation in Georgia.

Manipulation means the alteration of natural vegetation or agricultural crops by activities that include, but are not limited to, mowing, shredding, discing, rolling, chopping, trampling, flattening, burning, “hogging” or herbiciding. This method of dove hunting requires advanced planting of crops two to four months prior to dove season.

FALLOW FIELDS

Hunting doves over manipulated fallow fields (native vegetation) is legal.

LEGAL PRACTICES

Fields Planted in Late Summer or Fall

Hunting doves over fields planted in late summer or fall is legal provided that the field has been planted as part of a normal agricultural operation. Normal agricultural operation implies a planting that is conducted in accordance with the official recommendations of the UGA Cooperative Extension service. Aerial or topsowing of small grains without covering the seed is not a recommended practice by the UGA Cooperative Extension Service. Dove hunting over a field planted by top sowing is illegal. Normal plantings do not involve placement of grains in piles or other concentrations. The application rate guideline recommended for all small grains (wheat, rye, barley, oats) planted for crop or forage production is 1.5 to 2.5 bushels per acre.

The UGA Extension Service has stated that specific conditions exist whereby top sowing without covering of small grains is recommended and would allow the grower to achieve acceptable stands of cover crop. These circumstances are rare. Examples are (1) wheat or rye aerially sown over cotton or soybeans prior to leaf drop; and (2) top sowing for soil stabilization for post-mining land reclamation on areas with steep slope. Hunters should check with Georgia DNR Law Enforcement before hunting in either of these situations.

Small grains and canola planted within the range of dates listed below are official recommended practices of the UGA Cooperative Extension Service. Hunters may not hunt doves over or around late summer/fall planted fields if the plantings are outside the following dates:

	SMALL GRAINS*	CANOLA**
MOUNTAINS	9/1-11/15	NA
PIEDMONT	9/15-12/1	9/15-12/1
COASTAL	10/1-12/15	10/1-12/15

**Small grains include wheat, rye, oats and barley*

***Planting canola in the mountain region of Georgia is not considered a practical agricultural practice*

LEGAL DOVE HUNTING TIPS

Fields planted in crops that continually supply mature grain are most attractive to doves. Planting multiple crops with varying planting dates well ahead of dove season will ensure a supply of seed prior to and throughout dove hunting season. Start manipulation of crops as they mature and continue throughout the summer and the dove season. For late season dove hunting, leave portions of crops standing until late fall and winter. These standing crops will also provide places for hunter concealment during the early dove season. Most successful crops for attracting doves in Georgia include browntop millet, dove proso millet, sunflowers, corn and grain sorghum. Contact your local WRD Game Management or Georgia DNR Law Enforcement office for more information on proper and legal field management for dove hunting.

For proper field planting, check the following chart for seed maturation times:

SEED	DAYS TO MATURE
Brown Top Millet	60-70
Dove Proso Millet	75-90
Corn	90-130
Sunflower	90-110
Grain Sorghum	90-110

COMMON QUESTIONS

Must wheat or other small grains be sowed on prepared ground?

Yes. They must be sown on a prepared seed bed and drilled, harrowed, dragged, etc. to cover the seed.

How thick can wheat and small grains be sown?

The UGA Cooperative Extension Service recommends 1.5 to 2.5 bushels per acre for crop production. For cover crops, small grain application rates can be as little as 1 bushel per acre, but will vary according to the purpose of the planting, seed quality, seed size and environmental factors.

Can a wheat field be sown several times, for example, every three days, then hunted over?

No. It is not a normal agricultural operation to sow grain several times in succession.

After harvesting a cornfield, can strips be plowed and planted in summer grain before hunting doves.

Yes. "Strip-tilling" a grain such as grain sorghum or millet in early August is a recommended conservation tillage planting by the UGA Cooperative Extension Service. However, top sowing would not be recommended. Planting wheat in plowed strips of a harvested cornfield is not a recommended practice or planting.

COMMON QUESTIONS

Are there situations where wheat or other small grains could be sown prior to the recommended planting dates (i.e. during the month of August)?

No. The UGA Cooperative Extension Service has established the “recommended planting dates” for small grains based on preventing unacceptable losses to disease and insects in the earliest day so the planting windows. However, a grower concerned about cover, forage production or erosion control could plant millet and other summer grains in early August. There would be ample time in Georgia to achieve some useful purpose of such planting. Top sowing in this situation is not recommended.

Can strips be plowed in a standing field of mature millet, and the remaining millet mowed to scatter the seeds?

Yes. This would be an example of manipulation of a standing crop. Virtually any treatment of a standing crop is okay as long as additional grain or feed is not added to the field. Also, after the grain, seed or feed is removed from or stored on a field where it is grown, it cannot be re-distributed or scattered, nor can additional grains be added.

Who are the Extension Specialists in Georgia?

Per the federal regulations, a “normal” agricultural practice or operation is one conducted in accordance with official recommendations of State Extension Specialist of the Cooperative Extension Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In Georgia, these are the UGA Cooperative Extension Service Extension Agronomists. They are not the county extension agents. There are several of these specialists, each dealing with specific crops or agricultural practices, such as grains, soybeans, peanuts, soil erosion, etc.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Bag Limit: No more than the daily bag limit may be in a hunter’s possession on the dove field. If a hunter accepts doves from another hunter, the birds must be tagged with the name, address, and signature of the hunter who killed the birds, along with the total number of birds involved and the dates the birds were killed.

Ethics: Hunters are ethically and legally required to make a reasonable effort to retrieve all downed birds.

Licenses: Dove hunters 16 years of age and older must possess a Georgia hunting license and a Georgia Migratory Bird Stamp. The Georgia Migratory Bird Stamp is required for ALL migratory bird hunters (doves, ducks, geese, woodcock, snipe, coots, rails, or gallinules), even if a hunting license is not required. This stamp is how Georgia participates in the federal Harvest Information Program (HIP). Some licenses allow the license holder to get the Georgia Migratory Bird Stamp at no cost. The Georgia Migratory Bird Stamp is only valid for a single season (March to February). Hunters must obtain a new Georgia Migratory Bird Stamp each season. License info and purchase opportunity found here:

<http://georgiawildlife.com/licenses-permits-passes>

Shotguns: Any autoloading or other repeating shotgun must be plugged to hold no more than three shotshells while hunting dove.

THINGS TO REMEMBER

Shooting Hours: Shooting hours are 12 noon until sunset on opening day of the first season, and one half hour before sunrise to sunset otherwise. Sunrise and sunset times can be found on the Outdoors Ga app (available free on iTunes or in the Google Play store).

Protected Species: Songbirds, hawks, owls, killdeer, nighthawks, chimney swifts, woodpeckers and other species of birds may not be shot. These birds are protected by both federal and state laws and killing them or shooting at them is strictly prohibited.

MOURNING DOVE POPULATION SURVEY

A mourning dove population study currently is underway in several states, including Georgia. As part of this study, several thousand doves have been banded. Any harvested dove should be examined for the presence of small leg bands. If a band is found, hunters are asked to report the information to www.reportband.gov.

REPORT POACHING

A poacher is a thief who steals wildlife that belongs to you and all other Georgians. Poachers rob you of recreational opportunities that you pay for through hunting and fishing license fees.

You can be paid for turning in a poacher! If your TIP leads to an arrest, arrangements will be made for you to receive reward money even if you wish to remain anonymous. If you see or learn of a violation, try to write down: a description of the violator; a description of their vehicle; the location of the violation; and the type of violation.

How to Report Poaching:

- Website: Ranger Hotline <http://gadnrle.org/ranger-hotline>
- Call: 1-800-241-4113 (or *DNR for AT&T Mobility Customers) seven days a week, 24 hours a day
- Email: rangerhotline@dnr.ga.gov

**MORE INFORMATION AND
GEORGIA HUNTING REGULATIONS AT
WWW.GOHUNTGEORGIA.COM**