

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2025 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

House Bill 857

(Delegate Hornberger, *et al.*)

Environment and Transportation

Education, Energy, and the Environment

**Natural Resources - Pursuing Wounded Deer After Legal Hunting Hours and
Using a Light - Authorization**

This bill allows a person who is authorized by the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to hunt deer, who wounds a deer during legal hunting hours, to pursue and kill the deer after legal hunting hours, and to use a light or throw or cast the rays of a spotlight, a headlight, an artificial light, a battery, or any other device while pursuing the wounded deer. The bill requires that the person use only the means authorized for the applicable hunting season or permit to kill the deer. DNR must adopt regulations to implement this bill. **The bill takes effect July 1, 2025.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: The bill does not directly affect State finances.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law:

Restrictions on Hunting Wildlife – Generally

Under § 10-410 of the Natural Resources Article, which establishes restrictions on hunting wildlife, a person may not hunt any game bird or mammal, except raccoon and opossum, at nighttime. “Nighttime” means the time beginning one-half hour after sunset and ending

one-half hour before sunrise the following day, as published in DNR's hunter's guide, unless otherwise provided by statute. In addition, Sunday hunting, on certain Sundays, in certain counties, is restricted to morning hours, from one-half hour before sunrise until 10:30 a.m.

Section 10-410 also prohibits (1) a person or two or more persons together from hunting or attempting to hunt at nighttime any species of wild bird or wild quadruped with a light, including the headlights of any vehicle, and (2) a person from casting the rays of any artificial light when the rays emanate from a vehicle on any woods, fields, orchards, livestock, wild animals or birds, dwellings, or buildings. These prohibitions do not apply to, among other things, the normal use of headlights of a vehicle traveling on any public or private road in a normal manner. In addition, raccoons, fox, or opossum may be hunted on foot at nighttime during open season with the use of a dog or light, or both.

Deer Hunting – Prohibited Methods

A person or two or more persons together may not throw or cast the rays of a spotlight, headlight, artificial light, battery, or other device on any highway or in any field, woodland, or forest while possessing or having under control a firearm or other implement by which any deer could be killed, even though the deer is not shot at, injured, or killed. This prohibition does not apply where the headlight of a motor vehicle, operated by any person traveling on a highway in the usual way, casts a light upon deer on or adjacent to the highway and there was no attempt or intent to locate the deer.

Additional Information

Recent Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: SB 100 (Senator Bailey) - Education, Energy, and the Environment.

Information Source(s): Department of Natural Resources; Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 2, 2025
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