



SPOTLIGHTING / NIGHT HUNTING – Frequently Asked Questions 1/4/23

Q: What is the law regarding spotlighting?

A: Between sunset and sunrise, no person may use or possess night-vision equipment or throw or cast the rays of a spotlight, motor vehicle headlight, or other artificial light onto a highway, or into any field, pasture, woodland, forest, or prairie, for the purpose of spotting, locating, taking, attempting to take, or hunting any animal, if the person is in possession or control of a firearm, bow, or other implement by which an animal could be killed.

Q: What is “night-vision equipment”?

A: An electronic or battery-powered device that enhances a person’s ability to see in the dark.

Q: What is “artificial light”?

A: A man-made light or lighting device that projects lumination for an unaided eye.

Q: Are there exceptions for raccoon hunting with dogs at night?

A: Yes, residents may use a handheld light while on foot to take raccoons after they have been treed by dogs. No nonresident may use a dog as an aid in taking raccoons.

Q: What about the use of lights while trapping?

A: A person may use a handheld light while on foot to engage in lawful trapping activity and to take trapped fur-bearing animals.

Q: Is night hunting allowed on lands owned, leased, or managed by the Department of Game, Fish and Parks?

A: Yes, from January 1 to August 31 a person may use night vision equipment, but not artificial light.

Q: What about Walk-In Areas?

A: From January 1 to August 31, with landowner permission a person may use night vision equipment but not artificial light on Walk-in-Areas.

Q: What about other publicly owned lands; state or federal?

A: Yes, from January 1 to August 31 a person may use night vision equipment, but not artificial light.



SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS

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Q: Can I use a spotlight or other artificial light to locate animals if I don't have any weapons along?

A: Unless an individual qualifies under one of the aforementioned exceptions, it is illegal to cast the rays of a spotlight, or any artificial light other than a motor vehicle headlight, into any field, pasture, woodland, forest, or prairie for the purpose of spotting or locating any wild animal between 10 p.m. and sunrise, from September 1 through January 31. Outside of these timeframes, it is permissible to use any artificial light to locate animals provided you do not possess or control a firearm, bow, or other implement by which an animal could be killed.